There Was a Man of UNRRA:
Internationalism, Humanitarianism, and the Early Cold War in Europe,
1943-1947

A Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), a postwar humanitarian organization. UNRRA represented a new internationalist spirit in humanitarian cooperation, but its demise after only three years of operation reflects the emerging divisions between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union. UNRRA leadership and personnel faced daunting challenges in confronting the refugee crisis and rebuilding devastated nations. Because UNRRA was an innovation in international humanitarian cooperation, no precedent existed for those on the ground. Relief became politicized, as UNRRA staff sought to remain neutral in an increasingly bipolar context. In Greece and Italy, UNRRA implemented vital public health programs that eased the suffering of the populations in those nations. In Poland and Yugoslavia, UNRRA was caught between its neutral mission to provide relief to anyone in need, and the increasing pressure from the United States not to feed Communists. In Germany, leadership undermined the mission to provide help for displaced persons. In Ukraine and Byelorussia, American leadership overcame significant negative public opinion to deliver relief. Ultimately, UNRRA and the internationalism that created it fell victim to the breakdown of the postwar alliance.
To my mother,

Who loves and works with equal passion
Acknowledgments

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Introduction

In March of 1946, former New York mayor Fiorello LaGuardia received a call from Secretary of State James F. Byrnes asking him to replace Herbert Lehman as head of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Tired after forty years of service, LaGuardia had left public life only a few months earlier. His initial inclination was to decline the offer, although he would eventually agree to serve. Conceived by the much-admired Franklin D. Roosevelt, UNRRA had promised to be the greatest relief operation in history at its founding in 1943, but it was widely regarded as a disappointment two years into its operations. Allied military authorities regarded UNRRA as a weak civilian organization and had little inclination to share their authority. With its prestige waning, UNRRA’s first General Director Herbert Lehman had resigned for health reasons. In a conversation with his close advisor, Ira Hirschmann, LaGuardia argued that UNRRA must deliver food to the people quickly and address the problem of displaced persons. Hirschmann added that the organization would have to break with precedent to be effective, possibly offending the British Foreign Office and the State Department along the way. As the two friends
discussed plans excitedly, LaGuardia settled on the slogan for his leadership of UNRRA: “save them first and argue after!”

Solving UNRRA’s problems would take more than a slogan and LaGuardia’s patented enthusiasm for reform. The organization represented an innovation in humanitarianism: the partnership of multiple nations in pursuit of postwar stability through the relief and rehabilitation of conquered nations. Beyond its core mission, UNRRA represented a commitment to internationalism and neutrality. UNRRA operated while the wartime alliance between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union remained intact, but met a premature end as the spirit of internationalism waned in 1946. UNRRA’s continued existence relied heavily on that tenuous relationship, in particular the United States’ willingness to support an internationalist organization rather than forge a unilateralist path. For a brief moment, UNRRA embodied hopes of continued postwar cooperation that would soon be dashed by the hardening divisions of the Cold War.

This project will analyze UNRRA’s successes and failures as an international organization. At a critical point in 1943, it emerged to address the overwhelming destruction of the war and displacement of millions of people. It represents the best of the immediate postwar internationalist moment. That internationalism constituted the desire to remake the international system with the input of a large share of the world’s nations in a way that would encourage peace and prosperity. Internationalism under this definition is multilateral, not

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unilateral or bilateral. It would promote intergovernmental cooperation on a
number of issues including world governance, human rights, war crimes, public
health, refugees, and monetary policy. For its proponents, internationalism would
be the key to collective security, a replacement for the balance of power system of
the nineteenth century and the weakness of the League of Nations in the interwar
period. The United Nations, established in San Francisco in 1945, would be the
long-term embodiment of this commitment to internationalism, while UNRRA’s
tenure would last only three years despite the ongoing challenges of rebuilding
and resettling displaced persons. Why?

The commitment to internationalism on the part of the United States and
to UNRRA specifically depended on the perception that the organization fulfilled
American objectives. Within the emerging scholarship on internationalism in the
twentieth century, broad consensus exists that internationalism and nationalism
are intertwined. The nature of that relationship, and the extent to which either
force subsumes the other, is the central question. Patricia Clavin argues that “the
drive to international organization would be no antidote to great-power politics,”
describing the influence of small states in the League relative to the dominance of
a few powers in the early days of the United Nations.\(^2\) According to Glenda Sluga,
many hoped that internationalism would be such an antidote. She defines liberal
internationalism as a broad range of activities that promote global peace and
cooperation. Nationalism is the natural enemy of this movement as it fosters

\(^2\) Patricia Clavin, “International Organizations,” *The Cambridge History of the
rivalry and competition. In reality, the relationship between internationalism and nationalism lies somewhere in between. States use internationalism to their own ends, as the promotion of peace and prosperity ensures stability. Jessica Reinisch offers synthesis in *The Reluctant Internationalists*, a research project that explores the role of public health in Europe and its connections with the world in 20th century. Concerns about public health crises such as the outbreak of epidemics, the resettlement of refugees, malnutrition, and venereal disease spurred policymakers into action that they often undertook with considerable reluctance. Reinisch and Matthew Frank argue against an idealistic internationalism, but rather say that policymakers had national interests at heart when dealing with refugees. For example, Italy and Austria sought diplomatic rehabilitation after their role in the Axis alliance, while France sought to use international organizations rather than creating its own program to resettle refugees. Similarly, the US had its national interests at heart.

The national interest of the United States and its relationship to internationalism shifted unpredictably as the war drew to a close. The year 1945 was not simply the break between World War II and the Cold War; in fact, there was tremendous fluidity in the immediate postwar years. These were the years in which UNRRA was in existence and the events of the period shaped profoundly

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the course of UNRRA’s operations. The death of Roosevelt in April 1945 and
Winston Churchill’s removal as prime minister in July 1945 changed the
personalities leading the wartime alliance. Over the next year, President Harry
Truman and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin suspiciously eyed one another as a series
of events unfolded: the dropping of the atomic bomb and the end of the war with
Japan, the resumption of the Chinese civil war between Nationalist and
Communist forces, Stalin’s speech predicting a future clash between capitalist
and socialist nations, the release of George Kennan’s Long Telegram, Winston
Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech, and the outbreak of the Greek Civil War.

Historians of the Cold War have argued extensively over the meaning of these
events and the reactions of both leaders to them.

The debate over the beginning of the Cold War really starts with events
that occurred long before 1945. In the nineteenth century, writer Alexis de
to Tocqueville and Secretary of State Edward Seward predicted that the United
States and the Russian Empire would someday clash. Although historians
including Carole Fink have argued that the origins of the Cold War stretch back to
the Russian Revolution, the debate among most historians focuses on the war and
its immediate aftermath. The central questions of this debate revolve around
periodization and agency, namely when did the Cold War start and who
shoulders the blame for its existence.

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6 Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York: Penguin, 2003) and
Howard I. Kushner, “The Russian Fleet and the American Civil War: Another
7 Carole Fink, Cold War: An International History (Boulder, CO: Westview Press,
2013).
The internationalism that birthed UNRRA influenced both American and Soviet policymakers. Using sources from both sides of the Iron Curtain, Ilya V. Gaiduk illustrates that both the Soviet Union and the United States made efforts to ensure that the United Nations would make a contribution to collective security in 1944-45. He argues that the Soviets remained committed to the idea that the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China would act as the “four policemen” long after the Roosevelt administration had discarded it. In addition, Gaiduk points to American reluctance to press the Iranian issue in the UN for fear of damaging international cooperation. Stalin was not ready to abandon cooperation with the Western allies as late at April 1946. Gaiduk thus places the beginning of the Cold War with the confrontations of late 1946. In his work, he responds directly to Mark Mazower’s call to bring the Soviet perspective into discussions of international law and human rights by using the lens of the United Nations to understand Soviet and American intentions.

If the intentions of American and Soviet policymakers tended toward cooperation through 1945, then what caused the complete breakdown of the alliance the following year? The structure of the international system and the motivations of Truman and Stalin are key. The destruction of World War II left the United States at its most powerful relative to other states in its history. Postwar American national security emphasized strength that at its best embodied the Four Freedoms and Wilsonian internationalism; and at its worst, 

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the same impulse led to a skewed threat perception and overextension.\textsuperscript{10}

American policymakers worked to reconstruct Europe and Asia in a way that would replicate their intertwined values and interests, and created what Geir Lundestad has termed an “empire by invitation.”\textsuperscript{11} The Soviet Union, devastated twice within a generation by German power, had legitimate security threats to consider. Stalin’s obsession with a buffer zone in Eastern Europe was not unreasonable based on recent history. Rather, it was a response to repeated German invasion and the perception of growing capitalist encroachment. The paranoia and fear of capitalist encirclement that led him to magnify the threat perception was based in reality. Beyond security concerns, the core political ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union clashed. While scholarship has moved beyond the assumption of the righteousness of American democracy, its incompatibility with Soviet communism cannot be dismissed as an essential component to the division between the two nations.

Personality and leadership matter in any worthy analysis of the Cold War, as they also figure prominently in the story of UNRRA. Truman and Stalin reacted to the international system and the choices they made shaped the course of the early Cold War. Historian Melvin Leffler argued, “The Cold War came because


conditions in the international system created risks that Truman and Stalin could not accept and opportunities they could not resist. Neither... was in control of events. And the beliefs and experiences of both men magnified their perception of threat and fear of betrayal."¹²

Truman’s beliefs and experiences have long been the subject of extensive study. A compromise candidate for vice president in 1944, Truman knew little about the deliberations at Yalta or the development of the atomic bomb when he came to the presidency upon Roosevelt’s death. Roosevelt’s reticence to include Truman in his inner circle, perhaps one of the greatest failures of an otherwise brilliant president, left the latter at a distinct disadvantage. Truman’s inexprience surfaced in a series of blunt encounters with the Soviets in the weeks after Roosevelt’s death in April 1945. His style was considerably more direct than the oft elusive yet always diplomatic Roosevelt, and the substance of his policy toward the Soviets was unknown so early in his presidency. Leffler describes Truman as motivated by a “beautifully blended parochial nationalism [and] incipient internationalism.”¹³ Although he believed that the Soviet Union posed an existential threat to the American way of life, he also remained committed to some form of international organization.¹⁴ Paul Kennedy pointed out in his history of the United Nations, The Parliament of Man, that Truman kept a copy of Lord Tennyson’s Locksey in his wallet for years. In the poem, Tennyson

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¹² Leffler, For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War (New York: Hill and Wang), 58.
¹³ Leffler, For the Soul of Mankind, 39.
waxes about the possibility of an international organization committed to cooperation, what he calls a “parliament of man.”

Still, Truman’s emerging internationalism conflicted with his sincere belief that the Soviet Union must be confronted in order to protect the democratic system of the United States. He emphasized strength along the lines of Churchill and American diplomat George Kennan. The United States must pursue dominance in all realms and prevent totalitarian regimes from rising. To project a “preponderance of power” during the Truman administration, the United States would disperse aid through the Marshall Plan, establish the Central Intelligence Agency, and increase its stores of nuclear weapons. In comparison to UNRRA, the Marshall Plan would project American power rather than a universalism.

The uncertain status of an international organization such as UNRRA in an era of increasing division did not temper the necessity of its humanitarian mission.

The breakdown of the League and the barbarism of the Nazis stimulated a period of intense innovation in international organizations to address issues of humanitarianism and human rights. The American vision for humanitarian activism and protection of human rights has evolved since the period of the Revolution. While late eighteenth century humanitarians would have referred to themselves as “philanthropists,” we would recognize their work in disaster relief, their calls to end the slave trade, and attempts to provide medical care to the poor as forerunners to twentieth century movements for humanitarianism and

\footnote{Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*.}
human rights.\textsuperscript{16} As Gary Bass has detailed, nineteenth century activists in Great Britain, France, and the United States stimulated an impassioned debate about human rights and imperialism facilitated a widely distributed free press.\textsuperscript{17} The arrival of the United States as a Great Power after the Spanish-American War ushered in a new era of engagement for the nation. American progressive reform emphasized the ability of society to improve itself, resulting in a wide range of reforms that targeted political corruption, monopolistic trusts, worker safety, and public health. The progressive impulse extended to American foreign relations, forming part of the rationale for imperialistic forays into Cuba and the Philippines.\textsuperscript{18} Beyond direct military and diplomatic interventions, American-led humanitarian organizations constituted a softer form of imperialism favored by


American progressives. In the wake of World War I, the American Relief Administration (ARA), the American Red Cross, and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) administered relief in Europe and Soviet Russia in order to stem the ravages of famine. These efforts were privately funded, as the state had not yet taken on the responsibility for humanitarian relief that it would after World War II. Between the two wars, the rise of social democracy in Europe and the New Deal programs in the United States heightened public expectations of government’s role in society. Funded with public money, UNRRA reflected the shift from private charity to state intervention. In his book Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism, Michael Barnett describes UNRRA as “neo-humanitarianism.” He writes that after World War II, “the willingness of states to become more involved in the organization and delivery of relief owed not only to a newfound passion for compassion but also to a belief that their political, economic, and strategic interests were at stake. In short, states began to put their stamp on humanitarianism.”

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UNRRA emerged as a concerted effort on behalf of member governments to address the aftermath of the war. Although UNRRA did successfully provide extensive relief and rehabilitation around the world after its establishment in 1943, its short four years of existence were marked by a decrease in funding from member governments that reflected a change in political will among those states. The formation of UNRRA during the war reflected awareness of the enormous humanitarian crisis that would face the Allies in the formerly occupied territories, a development noted by relief worker Francesca Wilson: “we have at last become planning-minded.”21 However, relief became a complicated political issue in areas such as Eastern Europe as soon as the wartime alliance began to break down in the summer of 1945. UNRRA lost whatever prestige it had managed to accumulate because it had little assistance to offer as financial backing went increasingly toward organizations with political philosophies and objectives that reflected the visions of rival governments. UNRRA was a casualty of the breakdown of internationalism, an agency that did not fit into the emerging Cold War framework. In the case of UNRRA, the “stamp” referred to by Barnett was short-lived. It was precisely because the United States could not control decision-making in UNRRA that it abandoned the relief organization.

This division between the Western democracies and the Communist nations of Eastern Europe challenged the neutral internationalism that UNRRA represented. UNRRA’s guiding principle of neutrality rested on two assumptions that proved faulty in practice: first, that humanitarian aid could be insulated from

21 Francesca Wilson, In the Margins of Chaos: Recollections of Relief Work in between Three Wars (London: Macmillan Company, 1944), 269.
politics; and second, that its international civil servants could detach from the interests of their home countries. Further, the question of who should get relief became increasingly complicated. UNRRA’s charter indicated that any nation that had been the victim of Axis aggression would be eligible for relief. When Italy and Austria applied for aid on those grounds, the Soviets were completely opposed to extending relief to those nations they saw as Nazi collaborators when so many Allied countries remained in need. The British and Americans argued that real rehabilitation could not take place with Italy and Austria left out, and that even Germany must be considered. In the end, Italy and Austria both received UNRRA missions, while the considerable UNRRA presence in Germany was to provide relief and rehabilitation to displaced persons but not the German people.

The internationalism that gave rise to UNRRA reached a high point during the war but it would falter soon after. Allied planners agreed that the delay in getting relief to devastated areas after World War I caused a humanitarian crisis that exacerbated the political and economic breakdown. Therefore, coordination of relief must begin long before the end of the present war. The first example of this new commitment to organized relief emerged only two years into the war with the establishment of the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements, a group that agreed to collaborate in the work of estimating the needs of liberated countries. In 1942, the British formed the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA), while the Roosevelt administration had a direct hand in creating its counterpart, the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (OFFRO). As Roosevelt told Congress in December 1942, successful
relief and rehabilitation must be “a combined operation in the same sense as the military operations themselves.” With Herbert Lehman at its helm, OFFRO was supervised by the State Department and received its funding through the Lend-Lease administration. Issues of oversight and funding would later become crucial as OFFRO activities were folded into those of UNRRA.

From its inception at the Atlantic City conference in November 1943, UNRRA was a test of a new spirit of international cooperation since the demise of the League of Nations. Led by the United States and the United Kingdom, forty-four nations signed the UNRRA agreement. These nations would now engage in publicly funded humanitarianism on a much grander scale than earlier private efforts after World War I. Total funding for UNRRA over its four years in existence reached $3.7 billion, of which the United States contributed $2.7 billion and the United Kingdom $625 million. Although it received the vast majority of its funding from a few concentrated sources, UNRRA’s mission spanned the globe. The nations that received the largest shares of aid were China, Poland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, Czechoslovakia, the Ukraine (USSR), and Austria. In these cases, UNRRA seems decisive in averting worse outcomes for those displaced by war. The specific services that UNRRA provided in these areas varied widely depending on the situation. Led by a mission chief in a central location, country missions performed a variety of functions, including providing food and medical

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22 Franklin D. Roosevelt, “7th Lend-Lease Report to Congress,” 11 December 1942, National Archives and Records Administration, 840.50 UNRRA/131.
care, assessing and repairing infrastructure, and managing the flow of displaced persons.

The Allies formed UNRRA to address the humanitarian problems of postwar reconstruction and refugees, but that work continued beyond its end in 1947. International institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) assumed most of the functions that UNRRA had performed since 1944. The United Nations has a maturing historiography, and within it lays the central question of the efficacy of internationalism. The failure of the League of Nations to prevent war cast doubt on that goal as a realistic function for an international organization, but the League had already shifted toward a more humanitarian mission by 1939. The events of the 1930s and 1940s showed that the United Nations must be an evolution of the League in order to promote collective security. Its work must extend to conflict resolution, human rights, and economic affairs. However, the United Nations would be subject to the same constraints that the League and UNRRA labored beneath, what Paul Kennedy termed “the paradox of international bodies”: they can only function effectively with the support of their member governments. Mark Mazower has argued against the conception of the UN as the epitome of internationalism at its founding; rather, he claims that its founders created an organization intended to protect the interests of empire.

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25 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) replaced the IRO in 1952.

However, the forces of economic globalization and development politics ensured that the divide between the most powerful states and those only emerging from colonization would endure despite a commitment to an increase in the quality of life for all.\footnote{See Amy L. S. Staples, \textit{The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945-1965} (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2006).}

Human rights, the close relation of humanitarianism, had evolved as a concept since the period of the Enlightenment. Debates about natural rights furthered by David Hume, Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke inspired the American and French Revolutions. In the nineteenth century, human rights campaigns became transnational: the abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself; the movement for workers’ rights; and the right of women to political and legal equality. With perhaps the exception of Woodrow Wilson’s call for self-determination in the Fourteen Points, the call for human rights remained primarily under the purview of non-governmental organizations and religious groups until World War II. The vast destruction of that war coupled with the
stated war aims of the Allied Powers engendered a new era in human rights law and advocacy.

The language and legal status of human rights evolved during the 1940s. In *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights*, Elizabeth Borgwardt describes how New Deal liberals applied their vision of human rights to create new international institutions after World War II. She argues that the rhetoric of the war became the basis for a transformation of international law. For example, she points to the Atlantic Charter as foundational not only for elucidating the war aims of the Allies but also for human rights. “The charter’s call for ‘all men in all lands’ to be able to live out their lives in ‘freedom from fear and want’ crystallized an ongoing transformation in the ideas and institutions underlying the modern human rights regime.”

However, the charter did not use the term human rights specifically, and the Declaration of the United Nations in January 1942 and the UN Charter in 1945 called for the protection of human rights, but made no further claims as to what those rights might be. It was not until the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on December 10, 1948 that a document would lay out the general principles of human rights and a specific description of individual rights.

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What then is UNRRA’s place in the growing field of humanitarianism and human rights? As I began my earliest explorations into UNRRA in 2012, I believed that an organization of its size and scope must have a mature historiography. I was surprised to find that little had been written about the organization itself, but it was a prominent subject in studies of the postwar and refugees. Interest in the subject has grown significantly in the past decade as scholars recognize that the aftermath of the war is in many ways as crucial to understanding the history of the twentieth century as the war itself.

Historians have integrated UNRRA into larger studies of the refugee crisis as a whole. Michael Marrus has argued that the refugee crisis of the twentieth century represented a distinctly modern phenomenon. In the early modern period, Europeans moved frequently between states, but the institution of more restrictive passport laws and the growing responsibility of the state to care for its citizens placed refugees in the position of being an unwanted other. Mark Wyman later focused on the experience of displaced persons using extensive

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31 G. Daniel Cohen has challenged the present-day tendency to claim these four documents as products of the Holocaust. He sees the Nazi genocide of the Jews as a triggering event, but argues that contemporaries “universalized the Holocaust without negating its historical significance.” He disagrees with Mark Mazower and Samuel Moyn’s tendency to dismiss the concept of a human rights revolution. See Cohen, “The Holocaust and the ‘Human Rights Revolution’: A Reassessment,” in The Human Rights Revolution, eds. Iriye, Goedde, and Hitchcock, 57.

interviews with former refugees and officials of UNRRA and the IRO.33 William I. Hitchcock and Ben Shephard have written more recent and exhaustive studies of postwar Europe and the status of refugees, and UNRRA figures prominently in each work. Hitchcock notes that historians have given UNRRA the “short shrift” despite extensive archival materials.34 He uses those materials to argue that UNRRA exemplifies the difficulties of postwar relief. Lacking clear direction and facing challenging relationships with the Allied armies and other relief agencies, UNRRA nonetheless “succeeded on a human scale.”35 Shephard is particularly interested in the human aspect of the story, and his interest in psychology and memory permeates The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War. Shephard offers a comprehensive portrayal of the experience of the many different groups of displaced persons (DPs): Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Balts, Poles and many more. He makes use of UNRRA sources extensively, and paints a generally sympathetic view of the organization. He critiques bureaucratic blunders and inefficiency but gives UNRRA credit for preventing mass starvation in Europe.36 While Hitchcock and Shephard used UNRRA archives extensively to understand the experience of the displaced persons broadly, Adam Seipp used UNRRA sources as part of the foundation of his local study of the interactions

35 Hitchcock, The Bitter Road to Freedom, 216.
between displaced persons, German expellees from the East, officials of various NGOs, American soldiers, and townspeople in Wildflecken, a town in Bavaria.\footnote{Adam R. Seipp, \textit{Strangers in the Wild Place: Refugees, Americans, and a German Town, 1945-1952} (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013).}

A number of studies have focused on Jewish displaced persons specifically. Atina Grossman’s \textit{Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany} is a rich social history of the interactions between three groups in the postwar period. Grossman focuses primarily on the Jewish community’s redefinition of identity in the wake of the Holocaust. This process unfolded in Jewish displaced persons camps, primarily in the American occupation zone.\footnote{The concentration of Jewish DPs in the American zone was a direct result of the Harrison Report. In July 1945, President Harry Truman sent Earl G. Harrison to review conditions in displaced persons camps. His report sharply criticized the treatment of Jewish DPs, describing conditions as similar to those inflicted by the Nazis. Harrison argued that Jewish DPs should be treated as a special group due to Nazi anti-Semitism. In the American zone, Jewish DPs were segregated as a group to receive better rations and housing. Jews in the other three occupation zones were divided based on nationality. For further context, see Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, \textit{American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945} (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1987).} Grossman argues that the concentration of Jews within camps fostered a sense of Jewish and Zionist identity. Marriage and maternity were foundational to the revival of Jewish life as those institutions would rebuild the community.\footnote{Atina Grossman, \textit{Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).} Margarete Myers Feinstein builds on Grossman’s work by delving deeper into the recovery of Jewish survivors and their relationship with the German people, culture, and environment. Relying on memoirs and interviews, she describes the
reconstruction of Jewish daily life.\textsuperscript{40} Myers agrees with Grossman that maternity could be a healing process for Jewish women, but presents evidence that bearing children was far from joyful for many women as they had experienced incredible loss under the Nazis. Kierra Crago-Schnieder built further on the topic of Jews in postwar Germany in her 2013 dissertation.\textsuperscript{41} She analyzes the economic exchanges, both legal and illegal, near Jewish DP centers in Bavaria in a way that compliments the social histories presented by Grossman and Feinstein.

The history of Jewish DPs differs markedly from non-Jewish DPs and German expellees from the East. Ulrich Herbert’s major study of forced labor in Nazi Germany provides context for the experience of non-Jewish DPs during the war.\textsuperscript{42} Both Anne Applebaum and Timothy Snyder addressed the ethnic cleansing of Eastern Europe as major themes in their recent studies.\textsuperscript{43} Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron edited a volume on postwar resettlement in Eastern Europe that includes essays on Lithuanian, Latvian, Armenian, Ukrainian, Estonian, and Polish refugees.\textsuperscript{44} Of particular note, Baron and Siobhan Peeling analyze mistreatment

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\textsuperscript{40} Margarete Myers Feinstein, \textit{Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).


of Soviet displaced persons under suspicion by their government due to lengthy imprisonment in Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{45} The role of the Grand Alliance and the trauma of forced repatriation is the central theme in further studies of Soviet refugees.\textsuperscript{46}

For German expellees from the East, resettlement was no less traumatic but silence surrounded their experience until the past twenty years. While some had moved East with the conquests of the Wehrmacht, others had never lived in the German state. R. M. Douglas estimates their numbers at 12 million, or the largest expulsion of a people in human history. The young Federal Republic of Germany sought to integrate the arrivals in the process of nation building undertaken in the late 1940s and 1950s.\textsuperscript{47}

UNRRA and the IRO are the key aid organizations profiled in recent works that study the postwar refugee crisis more broadly. UNRRA appears in Gerard Daniel Cohen's \textit{In War’s Wake: Europe’s Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order},

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but this study’s focus is primarily on the IRO. Unlike Grossman or Feinstein, Cohen says little about the daily lives of DPs, but rather places them within the realm in international history. He argues that the DP issue was one of the earliest clashes of the Cold War, and that it would ultimately contribute to the redefinition of humanitarianism and human rights in the late 1940s. Tara Zahra’s *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe’s Families after World War II* is also a work of international history that focuses on the return of refugee children. UNRRA’s family-centric approach to the psychological recovery of children contrasted with the collectivist approach favored by Jewish relief agencies. Pamela Ballinger has written on nationalism and repatriation in Italy and Yugoslavia, and UNRRA played a role in those contexts as well.

As for work on UNRRA itself, the historiography began with an official history published in 1950. George Woodbridge led a team of historians that collected interviews, meeting reports, and statistical data while UNRRA operated. Called the Office of the Historian, this group produced a three-volume history that attempts to be neutral even as its presumptive purpose was to create a favorable legacy for UNRRA. From the beginning, UNRRA faced criticism for the way in which it carried out its mission; by writing its own history, UNRRA could

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control the conversation at least temporarily. The Woodbridge history avoids politics and overt criticism of the mission countries in its attempt to be neutral, and so fails to offer a real argument. It is a history generated by the organization itself, so it must be used with an awareness of that inherent bias. With those caveats in mind, it does provide the most comprehensive review of UNRRA’s Central Committee and the individual country missions. It has also proven a useful guide to the records contained in the UNRRA collection at the United Nations Archive. However, there is no general history of UNRRA since the original Woodbridge version more than sixty years ago.

An emerging scholarship on UNRRA has begun to flesh out the picture of the oft-neglected organization. In recent years, Jessica Reinisch has written several articles on UNRRA with a focus on the emerging internationalism of UNRRA and the effect of UNRRA aid in Poland.51 Her first book compares approaches to public health in the four occupation zones of Germany in the aftermath of World War II. UNRRA plays a limited role in this study as it only operated in displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany, but did not serve the German population itself. Reinisch is currently researching a book-length study of UNRRA that will focus on the management of refugees in Central and Eastern Europe after 1945. Still, her work would focus on Europe, leaving out UNRRA’s

work in Asia. This book is part of a larger project about ideas and forms of internationalism in the twentieth century, particularly as they relate to public health.52

Reinisch’s appointment at Birkbeck College, University of London reflects that institution’s focus on scholarship about the postwar era. From 2005-2008, a series of annual workshops there brought together scholars of the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. UNRRA has been discussed often at these workshops, but generally in conjunction with comparative national studies. In 2008, the Journal of Contemporary History dedicated an entire issue to post-war relief.53 Here Ben Shephard anticipated his later book with an article that described the Allies’ planning for the postwar.54 Silvia Salvatici’s recent article suggests that UNRRA workers viewed the refugees as victims and themselves as rescuers.55 Katerina Gardikas, Andrew Harder, Laure Humbert, and Flora Tsilaga have evaluated the missions in Greece, the Soviet republics, the French occupation zone of Germany, and the Cyclades Islands, respectively.56 Birkbeck also hosted a conference in 2010 entitled, “The Forty Year Crisis: Refugees in Europe, 1919-1959,” where scholars debated the utility of viewing that period as

53 “Relief in the Aftermath of War,” Journal of Contemporary History, 43:3 (July 2008).
a single crisis and the challenges of integrating the history of refugees and displaced persons into the broader narrative of the twentieth century. Work at Birkbeck continues as the home of the Reluctant Internationalists, the research project headed by Reinisch that studies how policymakers in Europe and the world responded to public health crises in the twentieth century. Reinisch and her team trace how policymakers balanced conflicting agendas to create new systems and institutions.

In addition to Reinisch and the work done at Birkbeck, a few recent and forthcoming studies seek to shed light on UNRRA’s role in the aftermath of World War II. These studies suggest the range of ways in which UNRRA contributed to postwar reconstruction, from the regeneration of the intellectual community to the creation of public health initiatives that long outlived the organization itself. Anna Holian argues that historians have tended to focus on national groups when studying displaced persons when in fact institutions such as UNRRA University in Munich imbued students with both a transnational experience and internationalist views. Susan Armstrong-Reid and David Murray argue that Canadians had a particularly internationalist outlook in the 1940s that stimulated their outsized role in UNRRA. They bring to light Canada’s influence on the foundations of UNRRA and the contributions of individuals such as Charles Drury.

head of the Poland mission, and George Mooney, the executive director of the European Regional Office.\footnote{Susan Armstrong-Reid and David Murray, Armies of Peace: Canada and the UNRRA Years (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).} After the United States and the United Kingdom, Canada was the third-largest financial contributor to UNRRA.\footnote{With a contribution of $139 million, Canada’s contribution was proportionally much smaller than the United States or the United Kingdom ($2.7 billion and $625 million respectively).} In his 2012 dissertation, Charles Sharpe picked up on this Canadian contribution and describes how that country placed considerable pressure on Great Britain during the UNRRA charter negotiations through the threat of retraction of its military commitment. The Canadians wanted a larger role for nations beyond the Four Powers—the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China—and their efforts shaped UNRRA into the internationalist body it became. That exact internationalist character would ultimately trigger its downfall in favor of the United Nations where the Four Powers had a stronger hold on policy decisions in the 1940s. The contingencies of war forced the United States to make concessions in the UNRRA charter, but it would not make the same mistake after 1945.\footnote{Charles W. Sharpe, “The Origins of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 1939-1943,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2012.}

UNRRA’s significant work in public health has appeared in Hitchcock and Reinisch, but Stanislaw Lotysz focuses on one specific program to illustrate the ways in which relief became subject to political conflict in the early Cold War. He traces the UNRRA program to build a penicillin factory in Poland (other plants were built in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Italy as well).
commencement of production faltered as hostilities between East and West intensified and UNRRA’s funding disappeared in 1947, but would eventually begin with assistance from the World Health Organization (WHO). Lotysz lays much of the blame for the slow beginning of penicillin production at the feet of the United States, who he argues was more concerned about the possibility of the Soviets gaining access to Western technology than producing a life-saving medication. Even in this small episode so early in the Cold War, we can see the United States choosing national security over human rights.\textsuperscript{62}

Most recently, David Mayers adds to the extensive literature on the postwar reimagining of international law and organizations by comparing UNRRA and the failed 1946 Acheson-Lilienthal proposal to limit nuclear arms. Mayers describes both endeavors as representative of a new type of diplomacy necessary to protect human beings in the face of massive destruction.\textsuperscript{63} The number and variety of these studies shows that UNRRA has begun to move toward the center of the story of postwar reconstruction.

In joining the ranks of the growing literature on the postwar, displaced persons, and UNRRA, this project takes a closer look at the organization itself: its


\textsuperscript{63} David Mayers, “Destruction Repaired and Destruction Anticipated: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the Atomic Bomb, and US Policy, 1944-1946,” \textit{The International History Review} (online). UNRRA also figures prominently in forthcoming dissertations. James Lin at the University of doctoral candidate at the University of California at Berkley has found UNRRA to be a central factor in the transformation of the agrarian societies of China and Taiwan into modern states through funding for infrastructure and public health. Katherine Rossy at the University of London will analyze tracing polices for refugee children in the French and British zones of occupation.
leadership, its personnel, and six country missions in Europe. The focus on that region reflects its position as critical in the early years of the Cold War. This project includes a unique variety of sources that allow me to build on the work of Hitchcock, Shephard, and Reinsich. I reviewed the administrative records of UNRRA housed at the United Nations Archives, but to understand UNRRA’s leadership I explored archives that would reveal more about each individual. Columbia University’s Lehman Collection includes the personal papers of Herbert H. Lehman, as well as those of Robert G. A Jackson, Hugh Jackson, Richard Scandrett, and Marshall MacDuffie. While the bulk of the papers of Fiorello LaGuardia are at the New York Public Library, records of LaGuardia’s service to UNRRA are at the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives at LaGuardia Community College on Long Island. In the United Kingdom, the Imperial War Museum in London and the United Nations Career Record Project at Oxford served as useful sources of material about the service of British nationals in UNRRA.

By limiting the scope to Europe, I can make comparisons between country missions within that context in order to understand how internationalism broke down. In fact, UNRRA’s largest mission in terms of both financial expenditure and staff size operated in China. The structure of UNRRA operations in China looked quite different from that in Europe, and the resumption of the Chinese Civil War in January 1946 made UNRRA’s work in public health and the building of infrastructure, particularly dams, all the more necessary. An entire monograph could be written on UNRRA’s work in China.
Whether in China and Europe in the 1940s or in Africa and Southeast Asia today, humanitarian relief is not immune from the ever-changing political motivations of donor nations. In UNRRA’s case, the distribution of relief was political, and the lines drawn reflected the divide between the Western democracies and the Communist nations of Europe. In the United States and Europe, a broad consensus existed in the 1940s that refugees should be helped but UNRRA’s purpose to provide “relief and rehabilitation” beyond the immediate needs of those displaced by war became politicized. Providing refugees with food, shelter, and medical care for a limited period of time as they returned to their country of origin (assuming that could be determined, as it often could not) was a short-term commitment that must be carried out immediately using existing channels and institutions.

However, programs that would teach Polish farmers to use American-made tractors or train Ukrainian doctors to use new medical equipment constituted reconstruction. American policymakers did not trust an international organization to carry out those long-term goals critical to building a liberal world order led by the United States. UNRRA was not made in the image of the United States and included administrative and political elements beyond its reach. The United States would not concede leadership and its national interest to an organization it could not control. UNRRA would not be one of the institutions through which the United States would lead the world into the mid-twentieth century.
UNRRA’s work in Europe illustrates two conflicting challenges for it as an international organization. Its staff often worked in contexts that challenged its political neutrality and undermined its reputation, but its very survival depended on its perception in the United States. UNRRA could only fulfill its internationalist mission as it continued to garner American support, but that very support relied on UNRRA serving American interests. Various examples from UNRRA’s leadership and its European missions demonstrate this conflict. Herbert Lehman, the committed humanitarian and former governor of New York, struggled early on to secure the personnel and supplies needed to fulfill UNRRA’s mission in its early days. As Lehman pressed member governments to provide the help they had promised, the fracturing of the wartime alliance compromised UNRRA missions. UNRRA represented the possibility of multilateral cooperation but it over promised and under delivered, thus contributing to the loss of critical American support. Fiorello LaGuardia, the second director general of UNRRA, put aside his conflicted thoughts on internationalism to fight to secure continued funding for UNRRA because he believed it was the only major organization that could prevent widespread starvation in Europe in the winter of 1946-47.

The threat of starvation and epidemic disease was a real in Europe during the postwar period, as the leaders of UNRRA recognized. Meeting the needs of the population would fulfill UNRRA’s humanitarian mission but also serve the American interest in stability. In Greece and Italy, the presence of anti-Communist governments encouraged partnerships between UNRRA, public health officials, and non-governmental agencies that significantly improved
public health and eventually helped to bring those nations into the Western camp. In Poland and Yugoslavia, the evolving political situations made control of the distribution of relief a political issue. The United States balked at reports that American supplies were distributed by Communist factions and could thus be bolstering the popularity of an ideology anathema to a capitalist democracy. In Germany, UNRRA ran displaced persons camps that became ground zero for debates about nationality and repatriation. In the Soviet republics of Byelorussia and Ukraine, badly needed relief became the subject of a battle in the United States Congress even as American mission chiefs argued passionately about the need to put aside politics to feed starving people.

Within each of the four chapters of this dissertation, the themes of internationalism and leadership will serve as a lens to analyze the successes and failures of UNRRA in Europe across multiple contexts. This comparative approach will show how internationalism broke down and the significant ways in which individuals shaped UNRRA for better or worse. Chapter 1 describes the founding of UNRRA and explores the roots of its personnel problem. Inflated rhetoric swirled around the reports of UNRRA’s mission and resulted in high expectations that the organization could hardly meet in a time of war. General Director Lehman contributed to that rhetoric, and his words reflected his true commitment to humanitarianism. He assembled an executive staff to manage UNRRA’s operations. UNRRA hired thousands of people to work in its missions around the globe, but these early hires failed to meet minimums of competency in some cases. As the war shifted in its closing months and then ended in Europe in
May 1945, more capable military personnel become available to work for UNRRA.
The quality of the staff in a given country mission largely determined its
effectiveness and therefore broader perceptions of the effectiveness of UNRRA as
a whole. The most important perception was that of the United States, the
primary sources of funding for UNRRA.

The latter three chapters include cases studies of individual missions that
illustrate the themes of internationalism and leadership along with extensive
analysis of the influence of UNRRA’s two director generals. Chapter 2 focuses on
Greece and Italy, two nations that faced severe economic and political instability
during the mid-1940s but ultimately remained within the Western camp during
the Cold War. UNRRA established a presence in these countries in 1944. In this
context, UNRRA controlled the distribution of relief rather than handing over that
responsibility to local governments or charities. This relatively high degree of
control over distribution shielded UNRRA from criticism that its goods could be
used to further the political aims of undesirable elements. UNRRA’s program to
combat infectious disease and rebuild the public health system stabilized these
countries and therefore contributed to collective security in Europe. The positive
leadership of the Italian mission chief, Spurgeon Keeny, represents one of the
examples of effective mission leadership.

Chapter 3 evaluates the UNRRA missions in Poland and Yugoslavia along
with its displaced persons operations in Germany, all of which began in 1945.
Distribution of relief became politicized here, as UNRRA’s standard operating
procedure to allow the dispersal of aid through local channels meant that relief
was provided to and for Communists. The leadership of the Polish and Yugoslav missions illustrates both the best and worst of UNRRA: Charles Drury and Mikhail Sergeichic sought to look beyond national and political differences to provide aid to those who needed it, while Mikhail Menshikov used his position in UNRRA to slow the distribution of aid in Poland and report back to the Soviet government on UNRRA's internal operations. In Germany, UNRRA participated in the forced repatriation of displaced persons while caring for those who refused to return to their country of origin. Sir Frederick Morgan, head of UNRRA operations in Germany, publicly criticized UNRRA as a haven for Zionist agitators and Communist spies. In central Europe, the issues of distribution, repatriation, and immigration became highly political.

Chapter 4 shifts eastward to evaluate the missions in the Ukraine and Byelorussia and forward in time to when LaGuardia assumed the position of Director General. By the time UNRRA arrived in the two Soviet Republics and LaGuardia took office in the spring of 1946, the Cold War had begun. The missions in the Ukraine and Byelorussia were successful in providing desperately needed food aid. However, these missions became political flashpoints as American Congressmen and the press questioned whether relief should be distributed in the Soviet Union. The leadership of the two missions, Richard Scandrett and Marshall McDuffie, and LaGuardia argued mightily that UNRRA had a mission to provide relief to countries victimized by Axis aggression regardless of their political system. Critics of UNRRA declared that cooperation with the
Soviet Union could not stand. When UNRRA stood by its mission, it ensured its early demise in a bipolar world.

The question of success versus failure dogged UNRRA from its earliest days. Early failures to secure shipping and supplies coupled with a lack of competent personnel meant that UNRRA was not able to meet the very high expectations it had set, particularly in the view of the United States. Despite its later successes, chief among them a critical part in ensuring that widespread starvation and epidemic disease did not spread in Europe during the winter of 1945-46, UNRRA would never be lauded as a great force for humanitarianism. It is hardly remembered or celebrated because its success proved that internationalism could work. That outcome could not stand and be recognized in an increasingly bipolar world in which the United States was the savior and the Communist world the villain. UNRRA was a moral success but it was not an achievement that could be fully owned by the United States, or even only the Western democracies, despite their overrepresentation in its funding and personnel. The United States defined UNRRA, and it could not be declared a success because it did not conform to American aims. Its forgotten status is a function of the fact that it was the road not taken. UNRRA must be recognized in the postwar literature for the outsized role it played in relief and rehabilitation. In many ways this project is an attempt to rescue its legacy from obscurity.
Chapter 1

Why UNRRA?: Internationalism’s Flawed Vessel

“The Ghost of UNRRA”

There was a man of UNRRA
Who went from place to place
And brought relief to thousands
Where’er he showed his face.

The north and south, to east and west,
He travelled far and wide,
And visited many a city
And many a countryside

He studied war’s calamities
Successes and reverses;
He visited the hospitals
And photographed the nurses.

He had a sense of duty
That was never at a loss;
He wrote reports on Saturdays
And mailed them to his boss.

He throve on Travel Status
And came back to his station
Only to buy a ticket
To another destination

Now when the task of UNRRA
Was completed, signed, and sealed,
That man of UNRRA still remained
On Travel in the Field
For Personnel had lost his file,  
Finance had lost his credit;  
And though he sometimes wrote his name,  
Nobody ever read it.

And when the last of UNRRA  
Had been processed, paid, and cleared,  
That man, by all forgotten  
Had completely disappeared.

And through the snows of winter  
And when the fields are green,  
His ghost, without Subsistence,  
On Travel still is seen.

The people cry, “Relieve us  
From this spectral visitation!”  
But UNRRA brings no more relief  
Or Rehabilitation!”

As amateur poet Rundell M. Lewis so aptly describes, the officials of the UNRRA embarked on an endeavor to confront the humanitarian problems of the post-World War II era with much promise but faced a daunting task that often overwhelmed their resources and abilities. They were a decidedly mixed bag, a diverse group that included both highly capable, motivated individuals and an opportunistic few looking to enrich themselves by selling supplies on the black market. The portrait of an UNRRA worker that Lewis paints in his poem is not entirely flattering, but in fact captures a middling subsection of UNRRA workers: travelling from place to place, observing and reporting on the conditions of refugees, but doing little to actually impact their situation. The poem also

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critiques the UNRRA administration explicitly, indicating that its ineptitude
cause inefficiencies such as lost records. That may be an overly harsh
assessment, as officials worked in ever changing circumstances with limited
direction from UNRRA leadership. The most significant message of the poem is
that the international community has forgotten UNRRA, like the central character.
Vestiges of its impact—tractors; clothing; medical equipment; tin food cans; all
bearing the UNRRA insignia or its acronym—remain as reminders of the largest
publicly-funded international relief organization during its existence. Large-scale
infrastructure projects from hospitals to dams to roads are the physical remnants
of the ghost of UNRRA.

UNRRA’s forgotten status stems from a number of causes. The geopolitical
conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union certainly played a major
role. The United States would abandon UNRRA once it became clear that
UNRRA’s internationalist mission meant political neutrality and therefore aid for
Communists. However, the external causes cannot alone explain UNRRA’s
widespread reputation for failure and its shadowed legacy. The American
perceptions about UNRRA’s ineffectiveness and incompetence did not arise from
nowhere. From its beginning in 1943, personnel were a key weakness for UNRRA.
Member governments including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada,
and Australia pledged to financially support the new organization, but were
reluctant to release their most capable and internationally experienced officials
while the world war continued. The majority of mid-level bureaucrats hired by
UNRRA in its early months were later judged by senior officials to be of mediocre
quality. These average to below average administrators faced impressive challenges as the Allies made significant military progress in 1944. Due to the sensitivity of military operations, UNRRA officials never knew where or when their services would be needed. Field directives from UNRRA’s central leadership were often vague and in need of interpretation on the ground, a situation that resulted in varied practices from team to team. The combination of these factors produced a highly inefficient and only partially successful dispensation of aid in the months before the end of the war.

UNRRA faced a period of transition in Europe after the German surrender in May 1945. As military operations ceased, the work of providing relief and rehabilitation commenced. UNRRA’s central leadership recognized the deficiencies in its personnel and sought to reduce and replace its ineffective staff in the summer of 1945. This leaner version of UNRRA seems to have been more effective than its wartime counterpart. However, the removal of the common German enemy renewed the suspicions between the West and their former Soviet allies. UNRRA’s international mission fell victim to the emerging Cold War paradigm, a situation felt on the ground by its workers as their relief missions turned political. While few intended that UNRRA exist in perpetuity, its end came earlier than expected because its internationalist ideals no longer fit into a bipolar world.

While UNRRA staff struggled on the ground to interpret policy handed down from the top and to implement those directives in a meaningful way,

\footnote{See Jackson to Ernest Bevin, 25 August 1947, Robert G. A. Jackson UNRRA Papers, File 50, Lehman Collections.}
UNRRA leadership faced remarkable logistical challenges and growing political hostility to the organization’s internationalist mission. Herbert Lehman, former governor of New York and a dedicated internationalist, served admirably as the organization’s first director general. However, his personality and leadership style may have played a role in UNRRA’s early difficulties. Although he was a capable manager and a prudent financial planner, Lehman lacked the charisma to inspire his staff and impress the public. Lehman’s leadership style stands in stark contrast to that of his successor, Fiorello LaGuardia. Openly critical of UNRRA and its earlier failures, LaGuardia later mounted a ferocious defense of the organization when its early demise could have led to massive starvation in Europe during the winter of 1946-1947. A committed humanitarian, LaGuardia championed UNRRA’s political neutrality to the United States Congress as it threatened to cut funding to Communist countries.

The director general oversaw an extensive bureaucracy that included both highly capable personnel and controversial figures who brought negative publicity to UNRRA. Based in Washington, the director general’s staff and the Central Committee were the primary governing bodies of UNRRA. The Central Committee met periodically with the director general. The European Regional Office (ERO) in London oversaw the European missions. Individual country missions included a mission chief, supply manager, welfare officer, and public

3 The original Central Committee included representatives from China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Canada and France became members in August 1945, followed by Australia, Brazil, and Yugoslavia in March 1946.
information officer. At its height in 1946, UNRRA employed more than 25,000 staff members.

After UNRRA was formed in November 1943, Lehman sought to prepare his organization for the humanitarian challenges that would arise as the Allies liberated areas from Axis control. In theory, UNRRA would marshal its resources to arrive quickly in a newly held area and provide food and medical relief immediately. However, Allied authorities refused to provide any sense of where UNRRA might be required next due to the sensitive nature of military planning. The demands of the military for resources of various kinds made it difficult for UNRRA to stockpile any material. Senior Deputy Director General Robert G. A. Jackson, an Australian with a talent for overcoming bureaucratic hurdles, served as Lehman's right hand man. In 1947, he recalled the early days of UNRRA in a letter to the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin, “Thus, for the first fifteen months of its life, UNRRA, after much initial publicity, did, in fact, practically nothing. Inferior staff and administrative inefficiency all helped to give the dog a very bad name.”

The publicity that General Jackson alludes to was a further hindrance for UNRRA. From the beginning, top UNRRA officials used the language of human rights and humanitarianism to generate positive attention in the press. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Dean Acheson, one of UNRRA's chief architects at the Atlantic City conference, argued that the organization would be

4 Jackson to Bevin, 25 August 1947, Robert G. A. Jackson UNRRA Papers, File 50, Lehman Collections. I refer to Robert G. A. Jackson as General Jackson to differentiate him with Hugh Jackson, the Special Assistant the Director General.
critical to winning the peace. In 1943, he told a radio audience that victory accompanied by disease and economic insecurity would be “hollow indeed.” The internationalist goals of peace and prosperity aligned with similar American national interests, thus Acheson’s commitment to UNRRA for multiple reasons. Lehman echoed this sentiment throughout 1943, often using the rhetoric of Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms and imploring audiences to recognize the connection between relief, rehabilitation, and peace. In a speech to the influential Foreign Policy Association in June 1943, Lehman outlined the case for the formation of UNRRA. He argues that the “peace we all seek must be rooted in the first hurried work of rehabilitation and reconstruction,” and that only an internationalist approach to humanitarian relief could confront the enormous task at hand:

America cannot feed the world from its resources alone. Neither can Britain nor Russia nor China nor any other one of the American Republics. Satisfaction of the wants of the millions of suffering men, women and children can be accomplished only by the action of all the nations whose productive resources were fortunately spared the fire and destruction of modern warfare.

As Lehman made the case for UNRRA, he also elevated it as the solution to the problem of postwar reconstruction. While he explicitly advocated for international cooperation, he called on “all of the nations whose productive resources were fortunately spared.” Certainly, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China could not be counted as nations who productive resources were spared. Only the United States had the capacity in the immediate postwar to provide the

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5 Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, 218.
6 Herbert Lehman, “Relief and Rehabilitation: The Supreme Test for Permanent Stability” (speech, Foreign Policy Association, New York, 17 June 1943), Academic Search Complete.
relief to meet the extensive demand. Even as he used the language of internationalism, Lehman called on the United States to lead the effort of postwar reconstruction to an audience of influential American foreign policy experts. The fulfillment of UNRRA’s internationalist mission would depend on a commitment of American leadership. Further, this inflated rhetoric was counterproductive because UNRRA could not deliver on these promises in the first years of its operation. The great exultations of UNRRA’s mission heightened expectations for the organization, so that its failure to deliver relief quickly and efficiency during 1944 and 1945 produced negative publicity.

Origins: The Inspiration of Humanitarianism and Internationalism

Before the end of the war, UNRRA’s international humanitarian mission drew tens of thousands of people into service. Its staff included three classes of personnel. Class I personnel were recruited to work outside their home country, while Class II employees were recruited locally by an office or mission and only worked in that location. Class III employees were not paid by UNRRA, but rather other international agencies who worked under and within its administration. At its height in June 1946, UNRRA included 12,889 Class I personnel, 9,962 Class II, and 1,398 Class III. The gender distribution among Class I personnel was remarkably even for the time, with 58 percent men and 42 percent female. National breakdown among Class I personnel was United States 35 percent, United Kingdom 34 percent, other European countries 22 percent (with France contributing 30 percent of that total), British Dominions 7 percent, Central and
South America 1 percent, and other countries 1 percent. Two-thirds of all volunteers were from English-speaking countries, so English became the lingua franca of UNRRA. Of Class I employees, 1,823 worked at UNRAA’s headquarters in Washington, 1,601 at the European Regional Office (ERO) in London, 1,214 in the China Office, 5,191 in Displaced Persons Operations in Germany, and 2,519 in the various European missions.⁷

While the overall majority of interactions between staff members were cordial, tensions persisted between Class I and Class II employees in some contexts. In many instances, the perception existed that Class I personnel received more privileges and higher wages than their Class II counterparts even when the work they performed was roughly equivalent.⁸ George Woodbridge, UNRRA’s chief historian, explained this inconsistency by pointing to the conditions of the local labor markets, saying that higher pay from UNRRA would have disrupted those norms and upset local governments and Allied military and civilian agencies competing for the same workers.⁹ Nonetheless, the workers themselves felt this difference and complained to the administration. In China, and particularly Shanghai, UNRRA recruited a number of people of European origin who had the administrative and language skills needed. Though they were categorized as Class II, these European workers in China demanded high wages as maintaining a European standard of living was more expensive and UNRRA met those demands because their skill set was in demand. Educated Chinese

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⁷ Woodbridge, Vol. I, 244.
Class II employees criticized the administration for practicing racial discrimination.

According to its policy, UNRRA aimed to have an international staff but prioritized quality and competence over the need for fair representation from all member nations. For senior staff, UNRRA and the member governments worked in coordination to make appointments, with the director general having the final word. Lehman and his close advisors wanted to avoid the appearance or the reality that the United States dominated key positions, but few European nations had candidates to offer. Before the end of the war, only refugees in the United States or Great Britain could serve; after the war, others suffered from the trauma of the war or faced suspicion as collaborators.\(^\text{10}\) Of 64 mission chiefs who led UNRRA’s efforts in a given nation, 48 were either American or British. Of UNRRA’s top leadership in Washington and London, 64 of 83 officials were Anglo-American.\(^\text{11}\) Despite the efforts of the administration, the leadership of UNRRA was decidedly Anglo-American.

Hopes were high in late 1943 and early 1944 that UNRRA could have a positive impact on populations liberated by the Allies and that it could recruit the type of personnel that would make policy a reality. Joseph P. Harris, UNRRA’s first Director of Personnel, established guidelines for the development of its staff. Although the leadership of UNRRA would remain primarily American and British with significant representation by former OFFRO and COBSRA officials, the vast

\(^\text{10}\) Woodbridge, Vol. I, 245.
majority of staff was to be “international in character, selected upon the basis of individual competence, character, and integrity without discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, nationality or creed.”

Such a statement, that values and calls for diversity while rejecting common biases, was unique at that time. Harris and UNRRA recruiters emphasized that new hires should be able to communicate with and relate to people of other cultures. They must possess a certain level of cultural awareness and be able to adapt to foreign places and a certain level of deprivation resulting from war conditions.

In theory, UNRRA officials would “help the people help themselves” as Herbert Lehman suggested in 1943, but what exactly that meant remained the subject of debate throughout the organization’s history. At UNRRA’s First Council Session in Atlantic City in November and December 1943, it was clear that immediate relief in the form of food, clothing and medical care would be its central function, but delegates argued the extent to which help should be provided beyond that point. A group of New Deal-inspired council members prevailed, urging that “rehabilitation” be added to the organization’s name.

However, the term rehabilitation was never clearly defined and UNRRA officials had to interpret vague instructions from the central administration on the ground. Rehabilitation did imply a long-term commitment to refugees beyond

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12 Joseph P. Harris, “The Development of an International Civil Service for the Administration of Relief and Rehabilitation of War Devastated Areas,” UNRRA Microfilm, DG/5, Personnel Policies, Lehman Collections, Columbia University.


providing basic necessities, but how long and in what form that help should take remained an open question.

To further complicate matters, UNRRA never clearly defined who might be the ideal candidate to work in the emerging field of international relief work. Various characteristics had to be weighed when considering any potential recruit: education, job history, personality, motivation, and skills. Social workers possessed the experience and temperament to succeed at relief work, but many had limited understanding of the challenges of handling refugees. Typical mental health training had little to offer at this time about how to treat the severe psychological trauma of war and displacement. Sir Frederick Morgan, head of UNRRA’s displaced persons camps in Germany and a strong critic of UNRRA personnel, noted, “next came the American contingent which, paradoxically enough suffered mainly from a preponderance of professional welfare workers whose training in the United States seems to provide them with nothing much more than a completely incomprehensible language and very little that is of practical use.” The evolution of social work in the United States versus Great Britain reflects Morgan’s comments, as the standards of qualification were quite different. While Americans based their profession on codified concepts of knowledge such as how to build an administration or implement a welfare program, the British recruits were more likely to have an intrinsic desire to help without similar levels of professional training.

15 Morgan to Under Secretary of State Orme Sargent, 14 September 1946, Papers of Sir Frederick Morgan, 02/49/1, FM 6/1, Imperial War Museum.  
16 Salvatici, “’Help the People to Help Themselves,’” 431. 
Two notable British UNRRA workers commented on this difference in memoirs of their service. Iris Murdoch, the famed novelist, worked at various DP camps in central Europe during 1945-1946. She joined UNRRA with little background in social work, but a desire to contribute to the new international order. On the quality of UNRRA officials from the United States, she said, “I thought that the Americans showed up very well, particularly the women, because there was really quite a large number of trained welfare women who were absolutely on top of the whole business and were like nurses. They could do anything and were very efficient, and they had been trained to expect what was going to happen.”¹⁷ In contrast, British Quaker and veteran relief worker Francesca Wilson viewed the Americans as perhaps too efficient, and less intimate, with refugees than their counterparts: “Many of their schemes were excellent on paper, but sometimes they seemed to hesitate about trying them out themselves in the rough-and-tumble of the field and prefer supervising those who did.”¹⁸ These alternate approaches competed with one another throughout UNRRA’s tenure, and produced some tension between American and British officials.

While social workers constituted the core of UNRRA workers, former soldiers and military officers swelled the ranks as the war came to a close in the summer of 1945. Soldiers had experience in the upheavals of wartime, as well as logistical and administrative knowledge that would benefit UNRRA, but their

commitment to international humanitarianism was often limited and their insistence on military discipline alienated them from other UNRRA staff. The massive recruitment drive in the winter and spring of 1945 coupled with the disbandment of military regiments greatly increased the proportion of military men in UNRRA uniforms. Marvin Klemme, who had spent the war years as a recruiter for the United States Marines, joined UNRRA not out of a sense of commitment to humanitarianism or internationalism, but because he needed a new job. In his memoir, he writes disdainfully of the idealism of UNRRA and laments the fact that the military had no hand in the training of UNRRA staff.\(^{19}\)

Despite the challenges of recruitment in its early days, UNRRA achieved a remarkably high level of national, ethnic, regional, and gender diversity. This diversity was a conscious decision on the part of UNRRA planners to reflect the internationalist mission. While the leadership and Class I employees were overwhelmingly Anglo-Americans, Class II and III employees represented a wide range of national and ethnic origins. Considerable diversity marked the Americans who served UNRRA as well. In contrast to the State Department, which tended to employ primarily white male elites from the East, Americans in UNRRA came from much more varied backgrounds.\(^{20}\) While the East Coast and its elite institutions were certainly represented, a number of officials hailed from other areas such as Deputy Director for the Bureau of Supply Roy Hendrickson of


Minneapolis or Special Assistant to the General Director Hugh Jackson of Kentucky. Ethnically, the American group was quite mixed as well, including both naturalized citizens and resident aliens whose unique cultural and language skills made them ideal recruits for UNRRA. Kwang Yuan Chen, head of the Far East Division, was born in China but educated at the University of Illinois. His professional career included engineering posts in both China and the United States.

Women also had a strong presence in UNRRA. Eleanor Roosevelt and women's rights activists including Mary E. Woolley and Mary A. Dingman lobbied Roosevelt administration officials to include women in UNRRA’s initial planning conference to send a message about gender equality. Equal opportunity for women would be an American value that the administration sought to export. While many women filled their traditionally expected roles as secretaries and nurses, a number took on leadership positions in unexpected places. They, too, reflected the national and ethnic diversity of UNRRA. Mary Craig McGeachy headed the Bureau of Welfare and was the highest-ranking woman in UNRRA.

22 “Kwang Yuan Chen,” UNRRA Microfilm, DG/5, Personnel Policies, Lehman Collections.
Canadian, McGeachy had worked in public relations at the League of Nations and the British Ministry of Economic Warfare before serving as first secretary at the British embassy in Washington, DC. In an otherwise stellar career, McGeachy’s time at UNRRA could be characterized as one of the most difficult. McGeachy’s dedication and ambition helped to propel her in a diplomatic field dominated by men, but her frequent status as the lone woman left her open to criticism. Her appointment as Director of Welfare came as a surprise, as she was better known in public relations circles. The post seems to have been a mismatch in terms of her skill set, as her lack of familiarity with the challenges of welfare soon became apparent. Proficient at the type of conversation and networking useful in diplomacy, McGeachy’s detractors claimed she possessed limited knowledge of the core issues confronting the Welfare Division such as nutrition, healthcare, and child welfare.  

One UNRRA official surmised that her connections had secured her the post: “He would give a good deal to know whether the British put her into UNRRA because they thought she would be useful tool for them or simply because they wanted to get her out of the Washington Embassy. He mentioned her high connections in British circles, from Churchill on though, and assumes that is why she was sacrosanct.” While it remains unclear whether the dislike of McGeachy stemmed from her gender or her job performance, it appears that both were factors in her generally negative reputation at UNRRA.

26 “Interview with Greenstein (no date),” Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UN Archives.
Women occupied other high level positions at UNRRA. Dr. Helen Mitchell, a specialist in the evolving field of nutrition, collected data to make recommendations to the Division of Transportation and Supply.\(^{27}\) Caroline Flexner of Louisville, executive assistant to Director General Lehman, served as an advisor on refugee issues, particularly the administration of camps for dislocated persons.\(^{28}\) Cicely A. Ryshpan, a member of Lehman’s general staff, developed area studies and programs.\(^{29}\) For an agency of its time, UNRRA included a larger proportion of women overall and a number of those women served in leadership roles that influenced policy. The number of female staff members reflects the concentration of women in the fields of social work and nursing.

Although UNRRA appears to have achieved its intent to create a diverse organization overall, its leadership and the policy-making body of the Central Committee remained firmly Anglo-American. Polish Ambassador to the United States Jan Ciechanowski protested the lack of representation for smaller nations who might soon be in a position to help themselves. To him, UNRRA represented a dictatorship of the major powers.\(^{30}\) British Ambassador to the United States

\(^{27}\) “Biography: Dr. Helen Mitchell, Nutritionist – Division of Transportation and Supply,” UNRRA Microfilm, DG/5, Personnel Policies, Lehman Collections.
\(^{28}\) “Caroline Flexner,” UNRRA Microfilm, DG/5, Personnel Policies, Lehman Collections.
\(^{29}\) “Mrs. Cicely A. Ryshpan,” UNRRA Microfilm, DG/5, Personnel Policies, Lehman Collections.
\(^{30}\) “Draft agreement for a United Nations relief and rehabilitation administration—meeting with Mr. Ciechanowski (Polish Ambassador), Mr. Domaniewski (Commercial Counselor of the Polish Embassy), Mr. Lychowski (Chief of Economic Section of the Polish Ministry and Commerce, Industry and Shipping in
Lord Halifax expressed similar reservations about the makeup of UNRRA, suggesting that while military planning should remain the realm of the four powers, relief or international work should include all parties with a stake in the outcome. In a sense then, diversity became a central theme for criticism of UNRRA. For some critics in the United States, the presence of Soviet or Communist elements made the organization as a whole suspect and potentially dangerous. Those elements could not be trusted to represent American interests even though UNRRA’s mission did so in the broad sense of promoting peace and prosperity. On the other hand, diplomatic officials expressed concern that UNRRA was not diverse enough, as it retained an overall Anglo-American character.

After a staff member was hired, he or she would undergo training in the UNRRA philosophy in addition to a more specialized orientation based on location of assignment and field of work. Trainees were expected to arrive ready to engage in relief work immediately. Training centers in Washington, London, and Granville, France received new recruits for a few short weeks before they were divided into teams and sent into the field. The effectiveness of the training appears to be minimal; lectures covered the culture, history, and language of the recruits’ destination, but offered little insight into the DPs themselves. Recruits learned little practical knowledge that could help them in the field, and recruits later criticized UNRRA for failing to prepare them for the enormous logistical

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31 Lord Halifax to Dean Acheson, 24 January 1943, Hugh R. Jackson Papers, Folder 49-2, Lehman Collections.
32 Salvatici, “‘Help the People to Help Themselves,’” 431.
challenges that lay ahead. In her memoir, American social worker Susan Pettiss remembered that the only useful thing she took away from the training was to put meal or travel tickets in the mouths of DPs whose arms were loaded down with their possessions.33 Public Information Officer W.B. Phillips noted the poor conditions and training at the French training center: “Things were so bad at Granville that the best thing PI could do was keep it out of the news.”34

Once they had completed training, recruits waited for assignments, in some cases for weeks or months. Canadian Donald Newton, who would eventually work with the Austrian Displaced Persons Mission, remained at the UNRRA Liaison Office in Caserta, Italy for most of the summer of 1945. He attributed the long wait to poor communication in the immediate aftermath of the war, but nonetheless reported that he and many other UNRRA workers had remained idle for weeks before receiving assignments.35

Director General Herbert Lehman was rarely an idle man during his tenure at UNRRA despite the negative effects on his own health. On March 28, 1946, Lehman celebrated his sixty-eighth birthday “completely exhausted” by the burden of leading UNRRA for more than two years. Although he had spent decades in public service, he had never before faced such unrelenting responsibility and so many urgent challenges. As governor of New York, he had possessed “ground rules” to guide him, but UNRRA’s powers remained undefined

34 Interview with W. B. Phillips, 15 November 1946, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UN Archives.
until after the end of the war.\textsuperscript{36} The complex logistics involved in coordinating the needs of recipient countries with available materials while ensuring continued support from member nations had taken its toll. Never a happy flyer, Lehman had crisscrossed the globe as he endured incessant criticism of UNRRA, obstructionism from the Soviet Union, and faltering support from the United States. He resigned his post with a heavy heart, fully aware that the need for humanitarian relief in a postwar world would only become more acute. UNRRA had established missions to Greece and Italy while the war continued, but the work in Eastern Europe and China had only just begun.

For Lehman, his time as head of UNRRA was the most important in his life. The post allowed him to work on behalf of a massive refugee population in dire

\textsuperscript{36} Allan Nevins, \textit{Herbert H. Lehman and His Era} (New York: Schribner’s Sons, 1963), 296. The historiographical coverage of Lehman himself is surprisingly thin, considering his extensive public life and service. His authorized biographer Nevins acknowledged that his treatment was sympathetic and that he had the input of his subject, but on balance the study is exhaustive and fact-based. Duane Tananbaum, a professor at Lehman College in the Bronx, has worked in Lehman’s papers at Columbia to produce a book focused on Lehman’s love of political cartoons and an article examining his relationship with Roosevelt, as well as a forthcoming political biography of Lehman. Duane Tananbaum, \textit{Drawn to Public Service: Political Cartoons from the Papers of Herbert H. Lehman} (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2009); “‘I Can Leave the Combination of My Safe to Colonel Lehman’: Herbert Lehman and Franklin Roosevelt: Working Together to Improve the Lives of New Yorkers and People All Over the World,” \textit{New York History} 87:1 (Winter 2006), 107; “\textquote{I Will Not Compromise with My Conscience}”: \textit{A Political Biography of Herbert H. Lehman} (Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming in December 2016). Lehman’s family and his cohort have also been the subject of study. Stephen Birmingham’s excellent work on the elite Jewish families of New York provides a useful picture of Lehman’s milieu that has informed my conclusions on the formation of his identity. Stephen Birmingham, \textquote{Our Crowd}”: \textit{The Great Jewish Families of New York} (New York: Harper Row, 1967). Works on the Lehman family itself include Roland Flande, \textit{The Lehmans: From Rimpar to the New World} (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999) and Peter Chapman, \textit{The Last of the Imperious Rich: Lehman Brothers, 1844-2008} (New York: Portfolio, 2010).
need of essential food, clothing, and medicine. His biographer Allan Nevins asserts that UNRRA was the cause dearest to his heart, and in 1954 his UNRRA deputy General Jackson agreed, noting that “the Governor has often remarked to me that he feels the time he spent in UNRRA has been the most rewarding period of his life.”37 For a man with such a record of public service and philanthropy, this statement illustrates the significance Lehman placed on the organization and his leadership of it.

Meticulous and conscientious to a fault, Lehman worked tirelessly on behalf of UNRRA and the refugees it served, but often found himself without the tools needed to solve urgent problems. As head of the State Department’s Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (OFFRO) in 1942-43 and then UNRRA, Lehman struggled to receive clarification about his authority from the Roosevelt administration while battling with the military over supplies and shipping. Although Lehman recognized that the war effort must be the first priority, military obstructionism severely hampered the humanitarian effort in 1943-44. Goods, transportation, and personnel flowed more freely once the war ended, but new challenges arose as the wartime alliance broke down. The Soviets needed access to the relief provided by UNRRA, as they had suffered immense destruction as a result of Nazi aggression. However, their truculence in their relations with UNRRA, from demands to control distribution to spying by Soviet staff members, forced Lehman to find a delicate balance as the head of an

37 Nevins, Herbert H. Lehman and His Era, 238; Robert G. A. Jackson, UNRRA Papers, 31 August 1954, C256, Lehman Collection, Columbia University.
international organization whose funding came primarily from the United States. That support remained precarious throughout UNRRA’s short life. Isolationists in Congress and the press decried the use of American funds to help those overseas, particularly Communists, when shortages continued in the United States. The death of Roosevelt, a committed supporter of UNRRA who was also a close ally of Lehman, and his replacement with the more unilateralist Harry S. Truman, further complicated UNRRA’s relationship with the United States. Particularly early in his presidency, Truman was far less likely than Roosevelt to see the value of UNRRA for the United States.

Lehman navigated these problems with a unique blend of experience and essential personality characteristics that informed his leadership style. His friends and family often worried about his health, as he would pace nervously around the room while thinking or stay up late worrying about a problem. Renowned for his conscientiousness, he often worked himself to exhaustion over his concern for small details as he dedicated himself completely to the task at hand. Physical ailments, such as a bout of appendicitis during negotiations over New York City’s near bankruptcy in 1933 or a broken leg while in Algiers on behalf of UNRRA in 1943, barely slowed him down to the point that his family and staff intervened to force him to take time for his health. Over time, he came to recognize this reality about himself, and tried to take time away from public service, but was drawn back by circumstances beyond his control. Even though he had publicly announced that he would not run for re-election as New York’s

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governor in 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s intervention forced his acquiescence.39

Lehman’s commitment to public service and scrupulous handling of his duties solidified his reputation as a leader. As governor of New York, he made difficult choices based on his sense of fairness and social justice. He was both social and modest, enjoying the required entertaining of public office, but keeping expenditures limited during the dark days of the Great Depression. His wife Edith Altschul Lehman renovated the governor’s mansion in Albany at their own expense without the use of public funds. He felt a deep sense of responsibility for his duties, never leaving home on the evening of a scheduled execution in case he would need to grant a stay for any reason.40

In each of his various posts, from the governorship to the board of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Lehman brought his business sensibilities and analytical mind to bear on problems. He was a tactful and efficient manager of people and materials guided by order and method. Unlike his friend Franklin D. Roosevelt, he was not a gifted politician but the consummate businessman. Unlike his successor Fiorello H. LaGuardia at UNRRA, he did not possess a flair for the dramatic, but rather a steady, unassuming comportment.

Lehman’s character was certainly shaped during his early years. He was born in New York City in 1878 as the eighth and final child of Mayer and Babette Lehman. Mayer and Babette instilled a sense of social justice in young Herbert, insisting that he had a responsibility to help others and do good works. In

40 Nevins, Herbert H. Lehman and His Era, 153.
addition, his father imbued him with a strong patriotism typical of immigrants who had succeeded in their adopted homeland, and a love of outdoor exploration that suited the youngest Lehman far better than the classroom.

The story of Lehman Brothers had begun nearly three decades before Herbert’s birth. With his older brothers, Henry and Emmanuel, Mayer established a general store in Montgomery, Alabama and later they became cotton brokers with an office established in New York City in 1858. The firm grew rapidly as it capitalized on the slave asset bubble that preceded the Civil War. Beginning in the 1830s, banks had offered mortgages on slaves to slave owners for the purpose of purchasing more slaves. To raise capital for these loans, banks sold bonds around the world, thus securitizing (in modern terms) human bondage. Lehman Brothers was one of many commodities firms that benefitted from the inflated prices that securitization caused. The Civil War complicated business, but the brothers were able to breach the Union blockade and maintain their business.

After the war, Mayer and his young family moved to New York, and Lehman Brothers grew to be the leading cotton and commodity broker in the nation by 1900. When more established firms would not deign to back textile manufacturers, retail stores, or mail-order houses, Lehman Brothers, along with Goldman, Sachs & Co., took risks on these types of companies that would grow as

42 A Southern patriot, Mayer had ties to the upper levels of the Confederate government, naming his youngest son after Alabama political leader Hilary A. Herbert. Lehman’s reputation as a humanitarian stands in stark contrast to the way in which his family made their fortune.
consumer culture boomed.\textsuperscript{43} Herbert eventually joined the family business after his graduation from Williams College in 1899. During World War I, he secured a position as a purchasing agent with the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts in the Navy Department specializing in textiles. There, he would begin to work closely with Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, the first of many instances of collaboration between the two. He would reach the rank of colonel on the U.S. Army General Staff by the end of the war.

In those early years of his career, Lehman’s Jewish culture informed his character as it imbued him with piety, idealism, and intellectual seriousness. Raised as a Reform Jew, he followed the basic laws and traditions of the faith with a healthy respect for reason and the realities of modern life.\textsuperscript{44} Like most other members of the wealthy Jewish families of New York, Lehman was not a Zionist, but was deeply committed to Jewish causes and reflected the tradition of Jewish philanthropy. He was an active volunteer at the Henry Street Settlement, a Lower East Side agency founded by Lillian Ward that primarily served the recently arrived, poverty-stricken Eastern European Jews who shared little beyond religion with the powerful, assimilated German Jewish community of the Upper East Side.\textsuperscript{45} He was also a founding member of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, known as the Joint, a relief organization founded to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[43] Birmingham, \textit{Our Crowd}, 361.
\item[44] Founded in Germany in the nineteenth century, Reform Judaism emphasizes ethical aspects over ceremonial observance. Its adherents view Jewish law as non-binding and remain open to progressive values.
\item[45] The Henry Street Settlement was a popular cause for prominent Jewish philanthropists, among them Jacob Schiff and Morris Loeb, both of Kuhn and Loeb.
\end{footnotes}
coordinate the efforts of the various Jewish agencies in response to the massive humanitarian crisis of the First World War. Lehman contributed his talent for business and accounting to the fundraising effort, helping to raise $27 million dollars in 1919-1920.46

Lehman was culturally Jewish and devoted to Jewish causes, but his active role in New York public life brought him into contact with prominent New York politicians and Democratic Party insiders beyond that community. In particular, Lehman’s friendship with New York governor and later presidential candidate Alfred E. Smith paved his way to politics. By the mid-1920s, Lehman had formed a warm affection for Smith and admired his talent for government. Despite their differences—Smith had risen from a working class Irish Catholic family on the Lower East Side through the ranks of Tammany Hall—Lehman admired Smith’s touch with the people and worked on his 1928 campaign for president.47

Lehman’s support of Smith’s failed presidential campaign did not hurt his own political aspirations; he was elected Lieutenant Governor of New York, serving under Franklin Roosevelt. Lehman formed a close partnership with Roosevelt that was mutually beneficial for both men. Lehman’s attention to detail

46 Nevins, 73. That amount would equal more than $354 million in 2012. The efforts of the Joint were complemented by many others, including the American Relief Administration (ARA) and the American Red Cross.
47 Smith self-identified as Irish-American, but his ancestry also included German, Italian, and English. His father changed his name from Ferraro, the Italian for blacksmith. Smith’s campaign manager was Belle Moskowitz, another Jew with German roots. The election of 1928 laid bare the many divisions in American society at the time. Al Smith was emblematic of the urban, progressive element of the North and East at odds with the rural, conservative areas of the South and West. The combination of Smith’s Catholicism, anti-Prohibition stance, championship of immigrants, and Tammany ties proved unpopular, and he lost the election to the Republican Herbert Hoover.
complemented Roosevelt’s grasp of the big picture. Roosevelt made decisions without a second thought, while Lehman paced endlessly over a difficult choice.\footnote{Eleanor Roosevelt, \textit{This I Remember} (New York: Harper Brothers, 1949), 68.} In Lehman, Roosevelt sought not a placeholder, but rather a partner whom he could trust to have the best interests of the state at heart. Referring to Lehman’s integrity, Roosevelt joked with reporters that if he ever had to leave the state, “I can leave the combination of my safe to Colonel Lehman, knowing it will be in safe hands.”\footnote{“Governor Roosevelt’s Address,” \textit{New York Times}, 5 October 1932. Lehman} When Roosevelt decided to run for president in 1932, he naturally nominated Lehman as his replacement, referring to him as “that splendid right hand of mine.”\footnote{Roosevelt used this phrase numerous times, including the occasion of the Democratic convention nominating Lehman for governor of New York.} Indeed, Lehman implemented a “Little New Deal” in New York that reflected (and in some cases, anticipated) larger federal programs. These achievements included a minimum wage and reduction of working hours for women and children, relief for the unemployed and disabled, unemployment insurance, worker’s compensation, mortgage relief for homeowners, a limit to the use of injunctions in labor disputes, public housing, cheaper utility rates, and assistance for farmers.\footnote{For more on the Little New Deal, see Robert P. Ingalls, \textit{Herbert Lehman and New York’s Little New Deal} (New York: New York University Press, 1975).} While far left Roosevelt advisors Felix Frankfurter and Harold Ickes criticized Lehman’s measured approach as not radical enough, he remained consistent in his commitment to social justice over political expediency.
In 1937, Lehman broke ranks with Roosevelt over his court-packing scheme.\textsuperscript{52} The rift would remain until Lehman reached out to Roosevelt the following year, and the president in turn invited the Lehmans to the White House.\textsuperscript{53}

Lehman’s rapprochement with Roosevelt came as the situation for German Jews continued to deteriorate. Ever since the Nazis had taken control of the German government in 1933, Lehman had tried to influence Roosevelt to act, with little success. In 1933, Lehman urged an official protest of the German government on behalf of American Jews. When the Nazis stripped Jews of their citizenship in 1935, Lehman appealed to Roosevelt to utilize the German immigration quota more effectively to save Jews.\textsuperscript{54} While Roosevelt expressed his sincere desire that the quotas be filled, he pointed out that only those who could prove that they would not become a public charge would be granted visas. The quotas remained largely unfilled during the 1930s. Although he was not a Zionist, Lehman became concerned about the restrictions placed on Jewish immigration to Palestine by 1938. Lehman’s appeals to Roosevelt to pressure the British government to keep the promise of Balfour were largely ignored.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} Frustrated by a number of split decisions in the Supreme Court had ruled that much of the New Deal was unconstitutional, Roosevelt proposed to “reorganize” the federal court system by adding new justices. The suggestion was highly unpopular, with many in the public believing that Roosevelt had gone too far.
\textsuperscript{53} Tananbaum, “I Can Leave the Combination of My Safe to Colonel Lehman’, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{54} The State Department granted visas for only ten percent of the German quota of 25,000 immigrants in 1935. See Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, \textit{American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945} (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1987).
\textsuperscript{55} During World War I, the British had made conflicting promises to the Jewish and Arab populations in the area. Jews generally interpreted the Balfour Declaration of 1917 as a commitment from the British that Palestine would be the Jewish national home, while Arabs interpreted the Sykes-Picot agreement as
Resisting entreaties to run for governor again in 1942, Lehman sought a larger role in the American war effort. His experience in administration and international relief efforts made him well-suited for a new opportunity. Allied planners agreed that the delay in getting relief to devastated areas after World War I had caused a humanitarian crisis that exacerbated the political and economic breakdown. Therefore, coordination of relief must begin long before the end of the present war. In 1942, the British formed the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA), while the Roosevelt administration created its counterpart, the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (OFFRO). Roosevelt commented on his appointment of Lehman of November 1942:

After all that Hitler has done to the Jews of Germany and of every nation he has conquered, I think it would be wonderful, poetic justice if we could get a Jew to head the agency which is going to feed and clothe and shelter millions whom Hitler has robbed and starved and tortured—a member of the group Hitler first selected for extermination. It would be a fine object lesson in tolerance and human brotherhood to have a Jew head up this operation, and I think Herbert would be fine.

Roosevelt was well-acquainted with Lehman’s organizational abilities, and his Jewish background made his appointment all the more fitting. With Lehman at its a promise that the area would become an Arab state. However, increasing Jewish immigration during the 1930s had strained the triangular relationship among the British, Jews and Arabs. In 1939, the British issued a White Paper that severely restricted Jewish immigration in the hopes that further conflict could be mitigated as the situation in Europe worsened.

56 For more on the connection between UNRRA and the new commitment to internationalism, see Jessica Reinisch, “Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA,” Past and Present, Supplement 6 (2011): 258-289.  
helm, OFFRO was supervised by the State Department and received its funding through the Lend-Lease administration. Issues of oversight and responsibility remained problematic for Lehman as he struggled to gain clarification of his authority and duties.

Lehman spent much of his short time at OFFRO fighting the battle of the Potomac. Between the State Department, the Lend Lease Administration and the Red Cross, Lehman struggled to secure funding and the authority to use that funding. Lehman reflected later, "I found the responsibilities were there, but the authority was sometimes very much lacking. There was a good deal of jealousy. . . while on the surface I had cooperation, actually, I frequently did not have it; quite the opposite. This was partly due to the fact that everyone in Washington was fighting for power." 58 No stranger to bureaucratic infighting, Lehman appealed directly to Roosevelt to clarify his authority because an executive order had created OFFRO. Lehman received his specific instructions by letter on March 19, 1943, and he presented those credentials to various government agencies to little effect. The realities of Washington power grabs partly explain this reaction, but discussions about the formation of UNRRA itself made clear that OFFRO would soon be defunct.

However, in the meantime, Lehman was acutely aware that every day counted in humanitarian relief, and that precedents set at OFFRO could translate into protocol at UNRRA. In August 1943, he appealed vigorously to Roosevelt in a lengthy letter that OFFRO needed the proper authority to carry out its duties. At

58 Nevins, Herbert Lehman and His Era, 226. Quoted from Lehman’s Oral History Memoir at Columbia University.
the time, Lehman had no reserves of food, clothing, or equipment; no direct source of funding; and no sense of how to plan for the next operation.

The constant efforts to reduce the scope of my work have little by little whittled away my authority to carry out the responsibilities imposed on me. It is an accurate statement that today I can do nothing of any importance that is not subject to the veto of two or more agencies. My responsibilities are very great- my independent authority is virtually nil... the invasion of my own powers is not, however, the point of my gravest concern. My concern is for the success of this Government’s program for liberated areas and for what a successful program may contribute to winning the war and to securing a stable peace.59

Clearly, Lehman felt crippled by his lack of authority relative to other agencies and his limited ability to provide any relief. In his typical unassuming fashion, he asserts that his complaints have nothing to do with his own lack of power, but rather the ultimate success of relief operations that could ensure peace. As he would as head of UNRRA, Lehman appealed here for American leadership in the program for postwar reconstruction. In the original letter, the above statement by Lehman is underlined, along with a few other passages.

Lehman did not frequently employ this form of punctual emphasis, a fact that illustrates how strongly he felt about the issue. Knowing Roosevelt as well as he did, Lehman recognized that he must be clear and emphatic in order to catch the President’s attention and compel him to act. He further appealed to Roosevelt on a personal level, saying, “I am confident that you know me well enough to be assured that power for its own sake means nothing whatsoever to me. But power to do the job for which I shall be held responsible is essential.” The establishment

59 Herbert H. Lehman to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 30 August 1943, Lehman Special Correspondence Files, Columbia University.
of UNRRA in November 1943 answered this plea from Lehman, as he would now head an organization receiving direct funding from its member governments, the United States being the largest. However, he would remain acutely aware of the need to balance UNRRA’s commitment to internationalism with American interests.

**Delivering on the Mission: Shipping, Supply, and Publicity**

However, Lehman’s struggles to make the organization an effective means of supplying relief were only beginning. Despite a commitment of two billion dollars per year in funding for UNRRA, Lehman now had to grapple with issues of scarcity and logistics. In 1944, UNRRA had a will, but no way. First, funding and the organization itself were secure, but the actual supplies of relief—food, clothing, medicine, and equipment—remained largely unavailable. Writing to a deputy in January 1945, Lehman remarked, “The office is running reasonably well, although we have the usual number of serious problems, some of which like supplies for Poland and Czechoslovakia, the situation in Greece, and Yugoslavia, continue to be pretty much beyond our control.”

The incongruity of UNRRA’s full coffers and its lack of actual distribution of relief contributed to its poor reputation in its early days. Both Lehman and General Jackson noted that they heard frequent criticism of UNRAA, as observers overestimated its potential to help immediately and charged it with callousness when that help was not forthcoming.

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60 Lehman to Sir Arthur Salter, 18 January 1945, Lehman Special Correspondence Files, Lehman Collection, Columbia University.
The second logistical problem was shipping. As the vast majority of goods supplied by UNRRA came from the United States, they had to be shipped to Europe. The significant military advancement of 1944 made shipping extremely tight, and the successful procurement of goods could accomplish little without transportation. Throughout the fall of 1944, Lehman became increasingly concerned about the lack of shipping space afforded to UNRRA. While he understood the priority of military objectives, he continued to appeal for more space. At a Thanksgiving meeting in the Foreign Office with Secretary Anthony Eden, Lehman tried to dispel the criticisms of UNRRA, “I laid main stress on the inadequacy of shipping; it would not do very much good to have supplies or a good organization unless we could deliver the groceries. Military needs were of course paramount—but the military must realize that other needs were paramount too.”

The recruitment and training of personnel was another great challenge for Lehman. In the early days of UNRRA, it was extremely difficult to obtain talented personnel because the best candidates were already serving in the military or some other government position contributing to the war effort. Lehman could do little to improve this situation. General Jackson stressed this point, remembering, “In general, and from my own experience, the Governments made all the right noises about providing first class personnel for the UNRRA administration, but, in the event, did practically nothing to help Governor Lehman and his senior staff.”

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Logically, Lehman understood that the best men and women must continue to work toward the war effort, but he nonetheless continued to lobby member governments for qualified staff. In the spring and summer of 1945, the staff situation improved considerably, as the end of the war made military and government officials significantly more available for UNRRA posts. Lehman took extraordinary efforts to recruit these experienced personnel as they became available.

Lehman’s execution of his duties as head of UNRRA depended on the support of his closest deputies. Although finding capable men and women to fill middle and lower level staff positions remained difficult until the war’s end, Lehman assembled staff for the top positions whose credentials and capabilities were remarkable. Francis B. Sayre, formerly of the State Department, acted as diplomatic advisor; Roy F. Hendrickson, a former journalist and official in the Interior and Agricultural Departments, controlled supplies (a crucial appointment for UNRRA); Hugh R. Jackson was Deputy Director General for regional liaison; P. W. Kuo of China headed the secretariat; and the Soviet Mikhail A. Menshikov served as Deputy Director General for area studies and plans, later replacing Hendrickson in supplies.

In the Washington office, Sir Arthur Salter was appointed Senior Deputy Director General, essentially Lehman's chief of staff. Salter, a member of Parliament with an Oxford chair who had authored numerous books on international relations, possessed a keen intellect and a talent for planning and writing. Salter nevertheless found his work at UNRRA highly frustrating. As he
wrote in his autobiography, "... an attempt to plan relief for an unknown date and unknown circumstances is likely rather to hamper the actual work, when the time comes, through unsuitable plans and rules, than to help it." Salter correctly anticipated that the publicity surrounding the meeting of the UNRRA Council in Montreal in September 1944 would place high expectations on the organization that it could not possibly meet considering the state of the war and the availability of goods. Salter later complained that, "the planning at this time was in my view worse than useless." He advocated a decentralized structure that would allow actors on the ground to make decisions, rather than a highly centralized organization with policy emanating from the top:

> Almost everything would depend upon choosing the most competent man available to direct each unit and then giving him the greatest possible liberty of action, the Washington office must of course decide the proportions in which the available resources should be divided and arrange for the bulk purchase and transport of the main supplies. But the more detailed regulations devised prematurely and in ignorance could be scrapped or disregarded the better. When and where UNRRA in the event did well—and its record is a mixed one—its success was mainly the result of following this course.64

In typical fashion, Salter never fails to be self-congratulatory, but he makes a critical point about UNRRA. Its success depended on the competency of its actors on the ground because of the decentralized nature of its administration. Salter then casts doubt on UNRRA’s ability to transition from military to civilian

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As UNRRA moved from the theoretical to the actual, Salter resigned his post, as he was not suited to operations work.

After Salter’s resignation, General Jackson became Lehman’s second in command. Jackson agreed with Salter that UNRRA must be decentralized, but that structure meant that competent personnel were key to its success. It also meant that the political leanings of a given official would have considerable ramifications for UNRRA if that person represented attitudes unfavorable to the United States. A remarkable Australian with a quick wit and a forceful personality, Jackson would become invaluable to Lehman in UNRRA’s European Regional Office in London. “Jacko” to his friends, he was a commander in the British Navy who had impressed his superiors with his leadership of the Middle Eastern Supply Centre. Appointed in February 1945, Jackson had the responsibility of ensuring that all of the administration’s policies and operations were executed promptly and efficiently. Both Jackson and Lehman viewed their partnership at UNRRA as a highly effective one, and they remained close friends until Lehman’s death in 1963. Jackson always had high praise for the governor, saying “he adhered to principle at all times” and “the basic goodness of his character has shown itself in very action.” Like Salter, Jackson recalled that Lehman’s character and integrity endeared him to his staff, and even those who opposed him politically. Regarding Lehman’s empathy, he commented, “I have never known him to hurt another human being if it were at all possible for him to avoid this without sacrificing principle. We had to make many changes in the staff of

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65 Salter, Memoirs of a Public Servant, 278.
UNRRA, and he was always sensitive to the distress that these changes might bring into other people’s lives.” Speaking of Lehman’s generosity, Jackson recounted that the Governor, as he was known, had never taken a salary from UNRRA and hosted thousands of staff and dignitaries for UNRRA’s Second Council Meeting in August 1945 at his own expense.66 Even months after Lehman’s resignation, Jackson wrote him a telegram on the occasion of UNRRA’s final council meeting in December 1946 to emphasize his role in the organization: “You... are constantly in the thoughts of all members of your old team and whatever has been achieved by UNRRA... will be to us simply an acknowledgement of the leadership and inspiration which you gave to this organization and all its staff from the moment you became its one and only Director General.”67 As these examples suggest, Lehman’s character inspired loyalty from his staff and commanded respect from his adversaries.

Lehman’s status as an American national certainly influenced his leadership of UNRRA. His proximity to the American president, concern about the public image of UNRRA at home, and dealings with the Soviet missions make that clear. Throughout his tenure at UNRRA, Lehman had to maintain a delicate balance between UNRRA’s status as an international organization and the reality of significant American involvement. On one hand, Lehman promoted UNRRA as a lofty example of international cooperation and the key to postwar peace. On the

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67 Telegram from Jackson to Lehman, 10 December 1946, Lehman Special Correspondence, Columbia University. Jackson’s reference to Lehman as UNRRA’s “one and only Director General” betrays his feelings about LaGuardia, Lehman’s successor.
other, he managed American influence critical to UNRRA’s continuation. As discussed earlier, Lehman’s long relationship with Roosevelt resulted in his appointment to OFFRO and then UNRRA. Because the United States invested so heavily in UNRRA, and a large minority of the staff was American, an American director general was a fait accompli. Roosevelt chose Lehman because of his record of humanitarianism and his reputation for good judgment.

However, Roosevelt’s successor, Harry S. Truman, arrived at the White House skeptical of UNRRA. By temperament and political conviction, Truman was not as internationally minded as Roosevelt, particularly at the beginning of his presidency, and favored a more unilateralist approach to relief. Lehman feared that Truman did not share Roosevelt’s vision for an international solution, and those fears were confirmed when Truman tapped former President Herbert Hoover to survey the needs of Europe and Asia for food. Hoover’s survey would turn up little new information to what UNRRA had already collected, and his isolationist politics were well known. Jackson commented later:

... I soon received the impression that the relationship between UNRRA and the United States Government would require very careful handling, and that many facets of this relationship would require very careful consideration. I believe that the Director-General received real support from President Truman, but, of course, the personal and intimate relationship which he had enjoyed with President Roosevelt no longer existed.

In addition, Truman’s selection of Fiorello H. LaGuardia, the former New York City mayor who spoke loudly and publicly about the need to end

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68 In practice, the President of the United States made the selection of the director general and then the UNRRA Central Committee made the appointment.
UNRRA, to succeed Lehman in April 1946 made clear that the organization would not survive much longer. Lehman despaired at the direction of Truman’s policy, but could do little to change it.

Lehman’s concerns about UNRRA’s financial health extended to his oversight of its budget. Lehman’s banking background figured into his leadership of UNRRA and influenced his financial decision-making. While UNRRA faced intense criticism about its resource management by mid-level personnel, Lehman’s budgetary leadership at the top was judicious. He had worked in his family’s firm before and after his time in Washington during World War I, but he was not a businessman at heart. He preferred the challenges of government and sensed that he could make a larger contribution as a humanitarian. He left Lehman Brothers in 1928 to become Lieutenant Governor of New York, and never looked back. However, the experience he gained managing money and balance sheets ensured that he was a prudent financial manager in government and as head of UNRRA. According to Jackson, Lehman strongly believed that the distribution of UNRRA relief must be done in a way that would not upset the fragile recovering economies of the mission countries. To discourage the rampant inflation facing local governments, Lehman advocated that countries pay some small amount for UNRRA supplies, and then in turn, sell those goods at a very low cost. Local governments could then improve their financial standing and begin to provide services.70

As Lehman and Jackson struggled to ensure shipping routes, plan distribution channels, and monitor UNRRA’s financial health, staff on the ground faced real-life challenges that few bureaucrats could imagine. Their recollections exemplify how the decentralized nature of UNRRA’s administration allowed for a broad range of effectiveness and competency within its missions. Once UNRRA officials met up with their team and arrived at their location, the real work of relief began. Many reported feeling overwhelmed and unsure of themselves when faced with the reality of providing care for thousands of destitute refugees. Irene Callow-Miles spent her first few days in war-torn Germany with feelings of depression and desolation: “Looking out of my window I was appalled by the people I saw wandering in the yard. . . . with expressionless faces, shriveled up, miserably clad in tatters. As I watched, I forgot myself, my own feelings, and I became possessed with an urge to help these people in whatever small way I could. It was a gigantic task needing the efforts of many.”

Like other UNRRA recruits, Callow-Miles experienced a period of shock when she first encountered the devastation of central Europe and the needs of the DPs, but ultimately she chose to channel her efforts to alleviate the situation in some small way. Her training had certainly not prepared her for what she would encounter, nor how she should perform her job. When she arrived at Marienthal, “I was handed over responsibility for running the office. I had no idea of the working of a Displaced

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Persons Assembly Centre, or really what I was expected to do. There was no one to tell me. .” 

That initial shock was compounded by the fact that UNRRA officials had to learn to live and work in intimate quarters with their fellow relief workers. Kathryn Hulme, whose work experience before UNRRA included freelance journalist and shipyard welder, described the close quarters with people of various ethnic and national backgrounds: “thrown off into the wilderness of World War II’s destruction like small wandering tribes from Babel, to live together all twenty-four hours around the clock with no escape in any direction, to break bread together three times daily and to do a work that had never been done before.” Hulme clearly communicates the difficult tasks UNRRA workers faced under extremely challenging conditions.

That work that had never been done encompassed a wide range of activities on any given day. UNRRA officials engaged in limited casework and counseling, pursuits central to the traditional American model of social work. Procuring and distributing housing, food, clothing, and medical care were of utmost importance for the welfare of the displaced persons. Beyond those immediate needs of relief, rehabilitation took various forms and served to prepare DPs to return to civilian lives. Educational opportunities included vocational training for men, handiwork training for women, and English classes. As Silvia Salvatici has suggested, recreation was rehabilitation, as the

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73 Kathryn Hulme, The Wild Place (London: Frederick Muller, 1954), x-xi.
organization of theatre performances and sports leagues encouraged a re-
civilization, complete with rules, standards, and fair practices. Recreation also
included holiday programming, weddings, and the celebration of national
holidays. Such festivities offered a sense of belonging within an ethnic, national,
or religious group, a process of identity formation that many camp directors
viewed positively. Identity formation could help heal psychological wounds, but
would also encourage repatriation. Harry Heath and his wife Muriel headed
UNRRA Team 27, which ran a DP camp in Hanau occupied primarily by Poles and
Balts. In an interview given after his return to Britain, Heath commented that
national groups converged quite naturally, with Poles first setting up churches,
Russians a theatre, and Jews a barber shop. Heath gave those remarks in a
public address once he had returned home to Britain, so his neat characterization
of the DPs as fitting easily into these groups seems unlikely. The picture of a
harmonious camp environment might be more of a reflection of his desire to
shape his own legacy than reality.

Maternity could also function as rehabilitation for DP women, but UNRRA
officials charged with the care of mothers and children often had concerns about
how they performed that role, specifically whether it fit with standard Western
models of motherhood. Danish nurse Margrethe Christiansen ran child welfare
clinics and coordinated prenatal and postnatal care in the Hamburg area from

74 Salvatici, “‘Help the People to Help Themselves,’” 438.
75 “Practical Christianity: Major Heath’s Address on German D.P. Camp,” Private
Papers of Mr. and Mrs. H. Heath, Documents.7908, IWM.
1945 to 1947. Her attitude of concern mixed with pity and condescension reflects that of a number of UNRRA nurses charged with mother and child care:

> It was a queer feeling to work with these people whom you very often did not understand at all, but they were often pathetic and thankful when you helped them with their children. There was still much to learn just such a thing as to find out what was the best way of treating them. I tried to adopt a friendly attitude, but very often I had to be firm with them.\(^76\)

Reports from UNRRA nurses often commented on the weakness of the maternal instinct among DP mothers and the poor condition of the children as a consequence. UNRRA officials organized the “Baby Show” in camps to reward Western standards of care with prizes that included such essentials as layettes, bottles, and baby formula.

For Jewish women living in DP camps run by UNRRA, the experience of pregnancy and childbirth unbound fears of familial separation and medical professionals. The supposedly weak maternal instinct noted by UNRRA workers was more commonly a fear of seeking medical care from German or non-Jewish DP doctors whether in the form of standard prenatal care or the treatment of underlying conditions that could complicate a pregnancy such as malnutrition or vitamin deficiency. Women with young children were highly vulnerable during the Nazi period, and survivors felt intense anxiety at the prospect of pregnancy and childbirth with the awareness that they may not be able to save themselves or their children. Still, the desire to resume daily life and rebuild the destroyed

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\(^76\) Letter to R.N.O. Capt. H. Hubbell (Field Supervising Nurse), 16 November 1946, Private Papers of Mrs. M. Christiansen, Documents.3675, IWM. Later in the letter, Christiansen expresses her dismay that births continue to occur in the camps.
Jewish communities stimulated both marriages and maternity.\(^77\) While UNRRA workers tended to dismiss complaints from Jewish DPs as exaggeration, at least one recognized the challenge posed by using German medical personnel in UNRRA hospitals. Muriel Doherty, the supervising nurse at the UNRRA hospital at Belsen, described nurses and doctors indoctrinated with Nazi racial theories that were not soon overcome. She recommended constant monitoring by other UNRRA personnel to ensure reasonable care.\(^78\)

Doherty’s specific concern about the treatment of Jewish DPs by German doctors and nurses employed by UNRRA illustrates a particularly concerning deficiency, but criticism of other UNRRA staff for more mundane reasons was quite common. Interestingly, many memoirs of UNRRA workers include negative comments about fellow staff—the term “mixed bag” is used quite often—but the individuals see themselves as heroic in the face of enormous challenges. While that may be true in some cases, there are memoirs that perhaps overstate the contribution of the writer. Danish nurse Margrethe Claudine Langdon peppered her narrative with references to her bravery in requisitioning buildings and supplies for use by UNRRA. She used her uniform and the threat of a pistol to make her point.\(^79\) Neville Miller expressed a cynical view of the motivations of some of his fellow staffers, and pointed out that UNRRA’s desperate need for volunteers made discipline nonexistent:

\(^{77}\) Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957*, 133-137.
\(^{78}\) Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957*, 143-144.
\(^{79}\) Interview, Margrethe Claudine Langdon (Pip), 21 March 1992, Documents.12518, IWM.
We have invested in sending a person out there. He may be doing his job just half as well as he should be, be he is at least doing half a job, and if you fire him you haven’t anybody doing the job. That tends to lower the standards all the way along. You could never throw the fear of God into the staff as they know you aren’t going to fire them. And some of these have been over there for a couple of months, and are ready for a trip home. Another thing that you’re up against is that the staff had been built up too much on a kind of Cook’s Tour. They tried to detour some of them, and every girl that was detoured thought that UNRRA had broken its contract. And as soon as they got to Greece and Yugoslavia, and when they had been there, they wanted to go to London or China. Their desire to see the world was their principle motive and service was the second.\(^8\)

Miller offers counterexamples to the image of the altruistic relief worker. In a different way, Canadian Donald Newton undermined the “heroic” image of the UNRRA worker. When contacted in 1991 to provide his memoirs to the United Nations Career Records Project, Newton heartily agreed, sending dozens of pages detailing his period of service. However, Newton’s “service” included lengthy periods of time spent idle while waiting for instruction and various meetings with senior officials that seemed to produce no results. While conscious to drop the names of notables and complain about the lack of proper accommodations, Newton spends little time discussing the DPs and their needs. Unwittingly, Newton casts himself as exactly the type of un-heroic UNRRA official that gave its staff a bad reputation for inefficiency.

That reputation was in some cases well-founded, but some media outlets cast a particularly critical tone when covering UNRRA. Henry Booth Luce’s publications *Time* and *Life* were among the most skeptical, perhaps no surprise

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\(^8\) Interview with Neville Miller, 27 April 1945, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA. When Miller mentions “a kind of Cook’s Tour,” he makes reference to the well-known British travel agency Thomas Cook & Son.
considering that Luce had coined the term “the American Century” in 1941. Luce and his publications touted American leadership in foreign relations and developed a strong anti-Communist stance. It may be no surprise then that these publications were often critical of UNRRA and whether its work aligned with American objectives. Luce advocated a distinctly American approach to relief that made no lip service to internationalism.

On May 15, 1945, one week after the war ended in Europe, *Time* published a scathing article on UNRRA’s progress. It outlines some of the familiar challenges: shipping, acquiring supplies, strained relations with the military. But the magazine saves its harshest criticism for the personnel of UNRRA. Describing Lehman as “balding [and] easygoing,” the article later compares the director general with another American who headed relief work after World War I, proclaiming him “no Herbert Hoover in his performance up to now.” These descriptors do not paint Lehman as the man for the job, but rather belittle him and his appearance as reflective of some level of incompetence. Further, the magazine detracts from the organization’s internationalist mission, saying, “Relief Administrator Hoover had one great advantage: he was the absolute boss, responsible to no one except the President; there were no international complications. But he also moved with vigor and energy.”\(^8\) Clearly, the editors at *Time* did not believe Lehman to be the leader the Hoover was. His status as a Democratic former governor of New York may have had some influence here. Of UNRRA’s staff, *Time* also held a narrow view. “But not even UNRRA’s staunchest

\(^8\) “What of UNRRA?” 14 May 1945, 45:20, 33.
defenders claim that its personnel is anywhere near competent. . . Starting late in the hiring field, UNRRA found most capable men already in the Army or in better-paying Government or private jobs. What UNRRA got, in general, were culls, drifters through Government hiring halls, and plain incompetents.82

UNRRA’s Office of Public Information was well-aware of the organization’s bad reputation and sought to counter it with limited success. The office was small but performed an essential function for UNRRA. Staff member W.B. Phillips recalled with some anger the challenging circumstances faced by UNRRA personnel and vouched for their overall pure motivations. He refers to the Time story quoted above.

There was a vicious story in Time about the riff-raff who were working for UNRRA – but whatever the deficiencies of those people, they had a tremendous amount of good will for the most part, and wanted to do a good job. To have smart-Alec people on the outside say that they were all no good did more damage than the deficiencies of the people themselves. If they had had good direction they would have done a much better job. It is unfair to say that the personnel was bad.83

Phillips places more blame on the UNRRA bureaucracy than the personnel themselves. Here there is an inherent criticism of Lehman and the decentralized policy making structure of UNRRA. With more direction, perhaps staff on the ground could have been more effective. However, the central bureaucracy was

83 Interview with W. B. Phillips, 15 November 1946, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA.
unwilling to offer extensive direction because of the unpredictable nature of delivering wartime relief.

The challenges of providing wartime relief and the subsequent battering that UNRRA took in the press left Lehman weary. He had left a much-needed vacation in California to return to Washington, DC in the spring of 1946. He was mentally and physically exhausted by his position, and decided that he must resign for health reasons. He tendered his resignation on March 12, 1946. His departure came as a surprise to many who knew his dedication to the organization and those it served. General Jackson expressed his feelings about Lehman’s departure:

This was naturally a shock to all the senior members of the staff, and a great blow to me personally. Mrs. Lehman made it clear to me that she felt the great and intense responsibilities which had been placed on the Governor during the last three years had been such a burden that his health was in danger. Great as was my regret at hearing of the Governor’s decision, I could very naturally understand Mrs. Lehman’s attitude, and I made no attempt to dissuade him from his intention.84

The end of Lehman’s tenure was not just a transition for him personally, but for UNRRA as an organization. It signaled the beginning of the end for UNRRA, as Lehman’s absence would allow those who called for its demise to prevail. He always felt that UNRRA’s work should continue until at least 1948, but he no longer had the ability to fight for its prolongation.

Immediately after his resignation, Lehman traveled to Atlantic City to oversee UNRRA’s Fourth Council meeting. Knowing this would be his last major engagement as head of UNRRA, Lehman urged continued dedication to relief and

emphasized that there was still much to be done. Speaking directly to the member governments, Lehman described the serious consequences of ending UNRRA’s mission too early. In fact, negotiations at this meeting established some of the successor agencies that would take on the challenges that UNRRA had faced. The IRO would assume responsibility for the remaining DPs, the World Health Organization would take on medical issues, and the United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF) would care for disadvantaged children, a cause that had always been particularly dear to Lehman’s heart. Lehman then retired to his apartment on Park Avenue in New York City to rest, expressing regret that he could not remain head of UNRRA until its end and that his work was somehow unfinished.

Lehman’s leadership of UNRRA must be evaluated in context. His experience with and dedication to humanitarian issues enabled him to make thoughtful decisions about problems that he cared about deeply. His connections in the highest levels of government and international affairs provided a foot in the door to lobby on behalf of UNRRA. However, the challenges of post-war planning made Lehman’s job extremely difficult. He received pledges of support that often never materialized, or did so many months later. His pragmatism and decency endeared him to many, inspiring intense loyalty from his staff. Perhaps his main area of deficiency was one of public relations; try as he might, Lehman

85 Lehman and his wife were particularly fond of children. In addition to the three children they adopted, the couple dedicated much of their philanthropy to children’s causes. As Governor, one of Lehman’s most cherished duties was hosting a celebration for orphaned and disadvantaged children during the holidays.

86 Nevins, *Herbert Lehman and His Era*, 299.
was not a dramatic speaker who could incite action on the part of the public. His successor LaGuardia, famous for his oratory ability, was more successful in this vein, but brought an entirely different set of leadership qualities and aspirations to the director general’s chair of UNRRA.

The bad reputation of UNRRA’s personnel reflected poorly on the organization itself, not only on the local level, but also at the highest levels of diplomacy. Dean Acheson, Under Secretary of State during UNRRA's existence, was also critical of UNRRA and its “weak” staff, saying that too often, UNRRA supplies ended up on the black market, “but, far more serious, the bulk of them, from our point of view went to the wrong places and were used for wrong purposes... the great bulk of relief, largely supplied or paid for by the United States, went to Eastern Europe and was used by governments bitterly hostile to us to entrench themselves...” Here Acheson aptly summarizes both the internal and external challenges to UNRRA, namely weak staff and the increasing suspicion that American funding was used to support hostile governments. Acheson, one of the early American proponents of UNRRA, steadily backed away as it no longer served to further American interests.

UNRRA’s personnel issues damaged its reputation from its earliest days, and led the United States to pursue alternatives to fund European recovery. The Marshall Plan would deliver nearly $13 billion in grants and loans from 1948-1952, a much larger amount than the total American contribution to UNRRA of $2.7 billion from 1943-1947. While an idealistic humanitarian vision did guide

87 Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: Norton, 1969), 201.
the work of many talented and committed people, too often UNRRA staff became synonymous with inefficiency and incompetence. Improvements in those areas came too late, as Richard Symonds of the Austrian mission observed, “My own feeling was that the Headquarters in Vienna, we’d only really just shaken out the undesirable characters, the thing was really running rather well, by June ’47, but then it all stopped.”

UNRRA’s internal problems and the extreme difficulty of delivering relief at the end of the war tarnished its reputation, but its most important deficiency for the United States was its failure to consistently serve American interests. The combination of these factors would lead to declining support from an emerging superpower that would support internationalism only to the extent that it aligned with strategic goals.

Chapter 2

“Don’t Abandon the Victory”:
Public Health as Collective Security in Greece and Italy

Greece and Italy faced severe destruction after World War II. Both nations applied for UNRRA assistance soon after the founding of the organization, at a time before support for UNRRA became controversial in the United States. Helen Gahagan Douglas, a liberal Democrat from California who was one of only a few members of Congress that supported UNRRA completely throughout its existence, said, “We won the war at great cost, but we can throw away the victory if we do not see that an orderly world emerges from the destruction. If we abandon these recently liberated peoples before their normal economies are functioning again, we deliver them in a sense to the leaders of violence and revolution.”¹ The situation on the ground in both Greece and Italy was decidedly not orderly, and UNRRA quickly formed missions that arrived before the war had ended. Health and welfare matters soon took precedence over rehabilitation, as civil war in Greece and extreme political instability in Italy rocked the foundations of both societies.

¹ Quoted in Shepherd, The Long Road Home, 156.
In both Greece and Italy, the war did not conclude with the end of the German occupation. In the 1990s, historians of the European crisis of the 1940s reassessed the meaning of the war, arriving at the conclusion that defeat and occupation laid bare political and ethnic divisions that destroyed the existing social order. In describing this assessment, Mark Mazower credits Claudio Pavone and related work in French history as “focus[ing] attention on... the moment in which the violence of the resistance itself and the impotence of the traditional state, tainted by accusations of collaboration, became manifest.”

Greece descended into civil war after the end of the German occupation, and Mazower compares the unrest with resistance to Communism in Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic States. Italians call this period the dopoguerra in reference to the two stages of conflict, one under occupation and one afterward.²

UNNRA arrived in Greece and Italy during this second stage in a decade of war. Both ultimately remained in the Western camp during the Cold War despite critical moments when Communist factions challenged those in the political center and right. In both cases, Communist groups never gained enough strength to dominate the government. In turn, UNRRA relief in Greece and Italy was not politicized in the same way as it was in the other contexts. Rather, UNRRA worked in conjunction with the State Department and non-governmental organizations like the Rockefeller Foundation to improve the health and welfare

of Italians and Greeks. These efforts were part of a larger movement to modernize these nations through improvements in public health. Massive political disorganization in both nations severely hampered the ability of the government to administer public health programs as they had before the war, so that area was the primary focus for UNRRA. Public health, particularly malaria eradication, became central to UNRRA’s mission in Greece and Italy even as that focus reflected a larger recognition that attention to public health pays political and economic dividends in the form of stability.

UNRRA staff within each country would need to devise programs to address the problem of public health. While other missions seemed plagued by leadership and staff issues, the missions in Greece and Italy did not receive the level of criticism heaped on those officials serving further east. After some initial problems of adjustment, both the staff and leadership proved competent and effective. While the Soviet heads of the missions to Poland and Yugoslavia aroused suspicion and the accusations launched by John Fischer from the Ukrainian mission provoked anti-Soviet feeling, the Greek and Italian missions faced no similar accusations of being political in their distribution of relief. That was primarily due to the fact that UNRRA distributed relief directly rather than through local governments or aid societies. Government function in both contexts had broken down so completely that officials wanted UNRRA to be the direct distributor of relief. With UNRRA and associated relief organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation actually distributing aid directly as opposed to using local welfare infrastructures to do so, there could be little opportunity for critics to
imply that it could be used for political ends. UNRRA’s relatively more active role in distribution in these contexts therefore deflected criticism that it was supporting Communist groups.

“UNRRA Must Not Fail”: UNRRA in Greece

UNRRA arrived in Greece in April 1944 in the midst of a dramatic decade of upheaval for that nation. Communist or Communist-backed insurgents sought unsuccessfully to gain control of Greece during three periods: the German occupation from October 1943 to February 1944, the restored Greek government after liberation in December 1944, and the period of the civil war from 1946 to 1949. After the Axis invasion in April 1941, the Greek king George II had escaped to Egypt where he declared a government in exile that never gained a strong following as the various resistance groups descended into factionalism. Greek resistance during the German occupation successfully challenged the occupiers, but various groups remained hostile to one another and never coalesced into a unified national government after the Axis withdrew from the mainland in October 1944. Hostilities erupted between right-leaning government forces and leftist factions in a month long battle beginning in December 1944. Supported by the British, the government forces eventually emerged victorious and unleashed retribution against Communist rebels.

A state of civil war existed in Greece between 1946 and 1949, with anti-Communist government forces defeating leftist factions. As one of the first confrontations in the Cold War, foreign involvement influenced the outcome of
the Greek Civil War significantly. The Truman Doctrine, NATO, and the Marshall Plan illustrated the United States’ commitment to preventing a Communist victory in Greece, while Stalin disagreed with Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito’s support of the Communists. The relative weakness of Communist forces and the lack of unified foreign support for them contributed to their defeat.  

UNRRA’s lengthy presence in Greece from October 1944 to June 1947 coincided with the emergence of tensions between the government and Communist forces. However, little evidence exists that relief became politicized in the same way as it did in the Soviet republics, Poland, and Yugoslavia, as much of UNRRA’s work there occurred before the outbreak of the civil war in 1946. Communist forces in Greece were relatively weak before that point and had little foreign support from Moscow or elsewhere. Even though Greece would soon become a hot spot in the Cold War, the period of UNRRA operations preceded that crisis and so American concerns about Communist influence were minimal. Press reports remained overwhelmingly positive, and UNRRA records show no evidence that its officials felt the need to defend their internationalist mission to provide relief to any person who required it. The combination of a weak Communist opposition and UNRRA’s direct distribution of relief made the Greece mission less prone to political criticism.

The Greeks were the first to request UNRRA assistance after its founding in November 1943. It established a mission in October 1944, but the majority of the staff was evacuated in December 1944 due to the outbreak of armed hostilities between the government and Communist forces. Full operations commenced in April 1945, with Buell F. Maben heading the staff as Chief of Mission. As each UNRRA mission did, they faced the daunting task of providing relief to a war-torn nation. Although war damage in Greece was less extensive than in other countries due to relatively less combat, it was nonetheless disastrous. The German invasion and occupation had disrupted the already limited government services provided. Of a population of seven million, one to two million had contracted malaria. Greece’s primary port at Piraeus had been completely destroyed, a circumstance that made it extremely difficult for UNRRA to ship relief supplies into the country. Greek infrastructure was badly damaged: very few vehicles remained, no railroad lines remained intact, and one-fifth of the population had lost their homes. In 1945, agricultural output stood at 40% of pre-war levels and industrial output at 10% of per-war levels. As a sea-faring nation with limited arable land, Greece had historically relied heavily on imports but that need had increased significantly as a result of wartime deprivations. However, its government disorganized and its currency vastly inflated, Greece had no way to finance its purchase of imports.

From the beginning, UNRRA leadership recognized that the organization’s record in Greece would be critical to its global reputation and therefore the

continuation of its mission. As the first nation to receive an UNRRA mission, Greece would be a testing ground. UNRRA faced unique challenges in Greece related to its request for assistance before the end of the war and the high level of disorganization of its government. The destruction of Greek ports made the importation of goods nearly impossible until suitable repairs could be made. During the war, Greece had experienced the highest inflation in Europe. The weak central government could provide little in terms of services for its people, and in fact relied on UNRRA to take an active part in devising agricultural forecasts, requesting relief supplies, and distributing those supplies. The Greek government still distributed the majority of supplies, but concerns that relief was politicized did not arise; rather, the causes of misappropriation of supplies tended to center around corruption and favoritism toward Athens at the expense of the countryside.

General Jackson, Lehman’s deputy, expressed his concern about the mission to John G. Winant, the American ambassador to Great Britain, in a letter on May 23, 1945:

The most difficult task facing UNRRA is in Greece. The general condition of that country is well known to the American and British Governments. UNRRA is finding great difficulty in providing effective assistance, mainly owing to the administrative weakness of the Government machine. The task of rehabilitating Greece is such that UNRRA must obtain a staff composed of the personnel of the highest caliber. This is not the case at present.7

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In a letter to Lehman two days later, Jackson described his thoughts on Greece with more detail. He is particularly critical of Buell Maben.

Maben is definitely not the answer in Greece. Every bit of information which I obtain confirms this view. On the other hand I am certain we have taken the right decision in confirming Maben, with White as his deputy, as an immediate step. But having regard to the situation in Greece, and the reports which reach me of the actual condition of our staff, then it is clear that – as I have always said – we must raise our sights and get a much stronger team together. That is going to be far from easy... Greece is one of the three places in which U.N.R.R.A. must not fail. We can take no risks. I can expand on the Maben situation as necessary, but I have too much else to put in this letter to permit me to enter into much detail. There is no doubt, however, that a bigger and more effective man must be found as soon as we can lay our hands on him.⁸

Jackson, a keen observer whose opinion was well-respected throughout his career in international service, clearly had doubts about the Greek mission and its leader Maben. Jackson never comes out to say why he finds Maben ill-suited, but he agrees that his appointment was the right choice at the time. As a military man with extensive experience in the eastern Mediterranean, Jackson also implied that stability in Greece is critical for strategic reasons. In a 1954 letter reflecting on his service with Lehman, he again asserts that the Greek mission was never particularly strong and that the UNRRA leadership was never able to convince a suitable candidate to accept the position as head of the mission.⁹ The likely reason Jackson (and probably Lehman by extension) could not find an ideal candidate to lead the Greek mission was the fact that the war had not ended at the time that the mission began its work. Before the end of the war, securing able

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personnel was a major challenge for UNRRA, and the source of much of its negative reputation. Despite Jackson’s misgivings, the Greek mission did succeed in providing a health and welfare program that the Greek government could not.

UNRRA personnel were central to the running of the mission, and accounts agree that after some early issues the Greek mission staff ran its affairs with competency and as much efficiency as the circumstances would allow. The arrival of mission staff in October 1944, their subsequent evacuation in December, and their return in April 1945 disrupted the mission’s work and discouraged staff members. In the first several months, inevitable inefficiencies arose from the precarious political situation in the country and the staff’s lack of familiarity with local conditions. Office locations changed frequently in the early months, and a lack of typewriters and other office equipment made communication difficult. By May of 1946, the mission staff reached its peak with 563 in Class I (of which 511 were British or American), 2757 in Class II, and 182 in Class III.\(^\text{10}\) According to personnel reports, relations between the staff were quite good. Conditions required that all staff eat, sleep, and work together, and that circumstance seems to have contributed to a sense of camaraderie across national lines. The mission had an unusually high concentration of specialists in health, welfare, and infectious disease, as malaria eradication was a cornerstone of the UNRRA program in Greece.

However, mission personnel did face challenges. While relations with the government were friendly, UNRRA staff found itself taking on many of the

\(^{10}\) “Greece Missions: History of the Personnel Division,” Office of the Historian, Monographs: Greece and Division of Personnel, UNRRA, UNA.
functions performed by the government in other mission contexts. The disorganization of the Greek government was such that UNRRA staff devised and recommended policy. For example, the Food Division would make agricultural predictions, and then generate requests for UNRRA food supplies whereas normally the government would produce those reports. In addition, frequent strikes by Class II personnel made running the mission difficult. Class I staff recognized the possibility that local staff would tend to strike to secure better working conditions, so leadership attempted to address concerns quickly, even establishing a staff restaurant to keep workers content. Strikes occurred not due to conditions at UNRRA, but rather out of solidarity with other workers. In addition, transportation remained a serious problem throughout the life of the mission. Shipping and air service were unreliable, while destroyed roads and rail made those modes nonexistent.\footnote{11} In spite of the challenges, the Greek mission personnel earned praise from the press. The \textit{New York Times}, a publication that had often been critical of UNRRA in its early days, proclaimed the Greek mission “the fairest possible program, giving indispensible services industriously and equitably.”\footnote{12}

Remarkably, the fact that the \textit{New York Times} heaped such praise on the mission seems to be linked to its unique role in distribution of relief. Initially, UNRRA expected the Greek government to distribute relief supplies as governments would in other contexts. After a debate at the highest levels of

\footnote{11} “Greece Missions: History of the Personnel Division,” Office of the Historian, Monographs: Greece and Division of Personnel, UNRRA, UNA.
leadership, Lehman decided that it would be impossible for UNRRA to hire the number of staff members it would need to distribute relief directly in every one of its missions. Rather, UNRRA would rely on national and local governments and established channels for distribution. In Poland and Yugoslavia, that arrangement left UNRRA vulnerable to criticism that Communist groups within the government were directing relief as they saw fit rather than in a politically neutral way. However, in Greece, the government purged its Communist elements and allowed UNRRA to play a more active role in distribution. From its initial arrival in Greece, UNRRA staff realized that the government could not distribute relief because it was so disorganized that it had no mechanisms for doing so. That circumstance seems to have deflected the criticism that plagued the other missions.

In Greece, distribution of relief was plagued by a different set of problems, at best reflecting market forces and at worst constituting corruption and black market profiteering. In a report to Lehman, Chief of Mission Maben noted perhaps too kindly that in many cases, Greek government officials were not equipped to handle the responsibility thrust on them by the Greek government. UNRRA negotiated with the government constantly to ensure the fair distribution of goods and supplies, but faced significant challenges in keeping that distribution equitable. The program to distribute clothing, textiles, and footwear offers a good example. UNRRA wanted to distribute these goods using a rationing

\[\text{\textsuperscript{13}}\text{Report to the Director General from the Chief of the Mission on the UNRRA Mission to Greece, November 1944-June 1945," Office of the Historian, Monographs: Greece, UNRRA Mission Greece Organization and Operation} \]
system that would attempt to provide them to those areas where they were most needed, but the government continually favored Athens at the expense of the countryside and civil servants at the expense of everyone else. The production of raw cotton posed a similar problem. While UNRRA encouraged manufacturers to produce utility cloth for general use, manufacturers preferred to produce better quality cloth that would sell for a higher price. UNRRA could never properly resolve the problem, and so the production of utility cloth lagged far behind schedule.\textsuperscript{14}

Compared to clothing and textiles, food constituted a much larger proportion of UNRRA’s program in Greece. However, the challenges to its distribution were often similar. Fifty-nine percent of the total supply program for Greece went to food. The food situation in Greece was a critical part of UNRRA’s success there. According to an UNRRA report, “The people were demanding food, and all could see that unless food was distributed without delay the chances of maintaining economic and political stability were nil.”\textsuperscript{15} After the war, Greece had to import half of its food to maintain a subsistence level of 2000 calories per person per day. Initially, the food situation was stable because Greece was the first country to begin to receive relief. By December 1945, food supplies had plummeted due to increased demand and the European wheat drought. While the UNNRA leadership originally envisioned the Food Division as playing merely an advisory role, the disorganized Greek government came to depend on it to both

\textsuperscript{14} Woodbridge, \textit{UNRRA, Vol. II}, 120-122.
\textsuperscript{15} “Adequacy of Food Imports,” Office of the Historian, Greece Food Division, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.
produce and to implement a food strategy. In most cases, governments requested food in various amounts based on need. In Greece, UNRRA produced those estimates itself. The Greek government also relied on UNRRA to distribute some of the food domestically. Common practice was for UNRRA to import food, and then turn it over to government for distribution, playing only an oversight role thereafter. Circumstances in Greece required a much larger number of personnel than originally estimated due to these added responsibilities. By the end of its tenure, UNRRA reverted back to the role it had originally intended.\textsuperscript{16} Significant concerns remained, however, that once UNRRA closed its mission, the Greek government would not be able to acquire enough imported food because it still could not produce the reporting that the International Emergency Food Council required for donations.\textsuperscript{17}

In Greece as well as several other war-torn nations, UNRRA goods and supplies were prime targets for black market profiteering. The only significant criticism of the Greek mission came as a result of the appearance of UNRRA material on the black market. In July 1945, Lehman responded to a call from Senator Everett Dirksen for a Congressional investigation of UNRRA. A consistent critic of UNRRA, Dirksen’s claims included large amounts of UNRRA food being sold on the black market in Athens, two hundred tractors left at the port for months, and a British intelligence investigation into corruption. Lehman denied that a significant amount of food made its way onto the black market, explained

\textsuperscript{16} “The Role of the Food Division,” Office of the Historian, Greece Food Division, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.

\textsuperscript{17} “Food Situation at the End of the UNRRA Period,” Office of the Historian, Greece Food Division, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.
that the tractors left on a dock were probably due to the enormous transportation problems in Greece, and said he was unaware of any British intelligence investigation. According to Food Division records, it was common practice for families to sell part of their rations on the black market in order to get other foodstuffs they may need, for example selling meat or sugar to buy more bread.

While food and clothing were essential parts of the UNRRA program in Greece, perhaps no program was more successful than malaria eradication. In a few short years, malaria went from a major threat to public health to a minor concern. Before the war, Greece consumed one-fifth of the world’s quinine and was the most affected country in Europe. One to two million people out of a population of seven million had the disease each year and lost an average of thirty days of work per year to it. In 1946, after the UNRRA intervention, there were only 50,000 cases. Farm production increased 40 percent, helped by the wartime recovery. This transformative change occurred as the result of the application of the recently discovered “wonder chemical” dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, better known as DDT. Swiss chemist Paul Hermann Mueller first recognized the insecticidal properties of DDT in 1939. During and after the war, DDT figured prominently in efforts to eradicate insect borne diseases such as malaria and typhus as UNRRA imported seven hundred tons of it to Greece.19

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19 “Health increased in Greece since ’45: Malaria curbed by DDT action begun by UNRRA - Our aid has advanced program,” *New York Times*, 9 Nov 1947.
Led by Colonel Daniel E. Wright of the United States Health Service and in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation, UNRRA’s DDT program consumed half of US industrial production of the substance. Charged with carrying out the eradication effort, the Sanitary Engineering Section in Greece was second only to that of the entire China mission in size. Historian David Kinkela has studied the use of DDT in disease eradication programs during the post-war period. He describes DDT as distinctly American, in that its production and distribution were done primarily through American channels. DDT fit perfectly with the Rockefeller Foundation’s modernizing project, and reflected what magazine magnate Henry Luce called the “American Century.” DDT would help people around the world live healthier and more productive lives. As an American export, DDT would save lives while enhancing the image of the United States. Scholar Katerina Gardikas traces the connections between the Rockefeller Foundation, UNRRA, and the World Health Organization (WHO). “The same relief effort also launched the invasive ideology of global disease eradication, which the WHO inherited from UNRRA. For this latter program, the WHO, by disassociating itself from the broader international tensions of the Cold War, offered Greece a viable peacetime answer.” In the wake of revelations about the harmful effects of DDT, Greece outlawed its use in 1971.

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However, the program faced stiff opposition from the right-wing Greek government after the outbreak of the civil war. Concerned about Communist infiltration, it questioned UNRRA’s neutrality, pulled back on health initiatives, and purged leftist medical personnel. During Director General LaGuardia’s visit in July 1946, the Greek government asserted its sovereignty and demanded to take over the program. LaGuardia acquiesced, leaving UNRRA in an advisory role. Internal reports from the Welfare and Repatriation Division, the internal department that oversaw the Sanitary Engineering Section and the malaria eradication program, thus viewed his visit as entirely negative. The Welfare Division was highly critical of Washington Headquarters and the European Regional Office (ERO) because it believed that welfare was critical to UNRRA’s mission, but received little attention from the leadership. LaGuardia’s actions in handing over the malaria program to the Greek government seemed to support this view.

“Heavier, Healthier, Happier”: UNRRA in Italy

Like Greece, Italy received UNRRA aid before the war ended. When an UNRRA Observer Mission arrived in July 1944, Italy was in the midst of what Claudio Pavone called “a patriotic war, a civil war and a class war.” Italy’s

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22 Gardikas, 506-507.
24 Claudio Pavone, A Civil War: A History of the Italian Resistance, trans. Peter Levy (London: Verso, 2013). Originally published in Italian as Una guerra civile in 1991, Pavone’s work was innovative in its analysis of these three simultaneous wars. As an affirmed anti-Fascist, his embrace of the term ‘civil war’ acknowledged the
economy lay in ruins; Benito Mussolini’s fascist government had created a planned economy with little ability to withstand the stress of total war. The collapse of the Fascist government in July 1943 after the Allied invasion of Sicily led to Italy’s armistice with the Allies in September 1943 under the government headed by King Victor Emanuel. By October, Italy had declared war on Germany as the Nazis sought to arrest the Allied march to Rome.

The period from September 1943 to April 1945 is thus one of intense chaos in Italy. Pavone defines the patriotic war as Italy’s attempt to rebuild its national identity as it realigned with its World War I allies Britain and the United States and rejected Nazi Germany. The civil war constitutes the struggle between the Fascists and anti-Fascists, or the Resistance. At the heart of this war remained unresolved questions about the meaning of Fascism and the Resistance that arose to oppose it, a splintered group led by Communists that also included anarchists and followers of the liberal socialist thinker Carlo Rosselli. The class war between workers and capitalists threatened the patria, and Pavone argues that the leaders of the left kept the class struggle alive amid calls for national unity.

The death of Mussolini and the conclusion of the war in Italy in April 1945 ended the destruction but questions remained about the identity of the new Italian state. In June 1946, the Italians voted to abolish the monarchy and create a power struggle between Fascist and anti-Fascist factions from 1943 to 1945 as opposed to the myth that the Italians had rejected Fascism from the time of the Allied armistice in September 1943.

25 Pavone, 205-267.
26 Pavone, 375-377.
republic with a constitution that will take effect in 1948. These developments did not signify the end of Fascism, but rather a reorganization of the Italian right to operate in a parliamentary democracy. The various elements of the Resistance formed the left in post-war Italy.

The decision to provide aid to Italy was not an easy one for the Allies, or the UNRRA General Council. As a former enemy combatant, Italy received limited sympathy from the members of the United Nations. Lehman had mixed feelings about extending aid to Italy in light of UNRRA’s consistently precarious financial situation. The Communist member states within the Council had their own misgivings. “There was a strong feeling in the Council that no aid should be given to an ex-enemy country until the essential requirements of liberated Allies had been met; there were doubts—not to put it more strongly—by the Soviets and Yugoslavs regarding UNRRA aid to Yugoslav displaced persons in Italy who were opposed to the new regime in Yugoslavia.” Interestingly, at the very highest levels of policymaking, relief was politicized. The issue of displaced persons with origins in Communist countries became a serious political issue for UNRRA in Italy.

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30 Ethnic Italians living in Istria, Dalmatia, and Albania migrated to Italy from the new Yugoslav state during the postwar period. See Pamela Ballenger, "Borders of the Nation, Borders of Citizenship: Italian Repatriation and the Redefinition of
UNRRA’s program in Italy evolved considerably in its three years of existence. From a limited program to provide supplemental nutrition and assistance to refugees, the Italian mission would expand to provide grants to the government for agricultural and industrial rehabilitation and a major program to rebuild destroyed housing. In contrast, Germany would only receive aid for the management of displaced persons. As in Greece, UNRRA would embark on a program of malaria eradication that employed massive amounts of the insecticide DDT. UNRRA would face similar challenges to successful distribution as it had in other contexts, but strong leadership and a generally positive reputation in the press contributed to the overall success of the mission.

The Italian mission benefitted from consistency in leadership. Spurgeon Milton Keeny was sent to Rome in November 1944, and remained mission chief until its end in June 1947. A Rhodes scholar, Keeny had worked for the YMCA during WWI, and then with Herbert Hoover at the American Relief Administration from 1922-1924. Known as “Sam,” Keeny later worked for UNICEF to implement family planning and children’s healthcare programs in Asia. As Mission Chief, Keeny took an active role in the mission’s activities and in negotiations with the Italian government. He recorded his experiences in *A Mission Is Born*, stating in the introduction his purpose: “And so I took out these old letters, and I am sending them along to the Historians in the hope that they may help recapture something of the color of life that is missing from our more

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formal reports.” He does in fact provide colorful accounts of his time in Italy, descriptions that highlight the human story at the heart of UNRRA’s mission. However, his letters often brim with optimism, and it seems unlikely that he would let on even if the situation called for some realism.

With an experienced and respected head, the Italian mission required a sizeable staff to carry out its mission. The task would not be easy. During the summer of 1945, UNRRA interviewed 50-60 applicants per day, six days a week. Many were former US Service personnel. Only a small percentage possessed the skills needed to serve and were referred for employment, despite the fact that UNRRA was in serious need of staff. Most of the Class I staff was British or American, but they also included a Haitian and two Russians. Personnel reports describe a level of dissatisfaction with disparity in salaries based on nationality. The Personnel Division struggled to explain the reason for the difference, as the cost of living in Italy is the same for all workers.

In Italy, the presence of staff committed to their work and the purpose of the mission illustrate larger personnel issues within UNRRA as a whole. Different nationalities working together can provide opportunity for exchange and understanding, but some came away with their own prejudices confirmed. According to a history of the Food Division, “this was partly due to a lack of real interest in their work shown by a few Class I staff members and their all too

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obvious interest at an early date in their post-UNRRA plans.”33 While a few disinterested staff may have worked in the mission, the best staff members proved themselves capable of dealing with complex situations in creative ways. A Welfare Division report asserted as such, “In the experience of the mission, it was found that highly qualified specialists in particular lines performed satisfactorily only if they were persons of great flexibility and were willing to adapt themselves to utilizing a variety of skills and to performing the various aspects of work which were required in different parts of Italy.”34

As that sentiment could be applied universally to UNRRA staff, so too could the assertion that nearly every mission struggled to secure shipping for supplies.

Allied Force Headquarters were willing to provide its limited shipping for the initial 100,000 tons of UNRRA supplies, but not in excess of that amount.35 Initially, UNRRA had serious difficulty convincing the military to take it seriously. Attitudes improved when UNRRA operations commenced in full and “it became clear to them that organization was starting to achieve its object.” According to an UNRRAA report on the history of its engagement with Allied HQ, the limited staff recruitment before the end of the war produced administrative weakness that irked the military.36

33 “Program purpose and function,” Monographs, Italy: Food Division, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.
35 Woodbridge, UNNRA Vol. II, 262.
The tension between the military and UNRRA led Lehman to reluctantly make a personal appeal to Roosevelt, his longtime political colleague and sometime ally and friend. Roosevelt had promised that the military would provide UNRRA with the necessary means to ship relief supplies, but the situation on the ground did not reflect that promise. Typically, Lehman is at his most passionate when appealing for the needs of children, in this case for the delivery of much needed food and medical supplies to Italy. In a cable on December 7, 1944, he wrote:

You will recall that the UNRRA program for Italy, which was most urgently recommended by yourself and Mr. Churchill, was clearly understood to be a supplementary program, and not a substitute for the basic program of civilian relief supplies which was to be carried on by the American and British Governments. Unless extra shipping is allotted... UNRRA will not be able to undertake this program of assistance to Italy, and in addition, the administration will be placed in the invidious position of not being able to proceed with an undertaking which was highly publicized... I respectfully but urgently request that you issue instructions allotting the additional tonnage which will be required for the movement of UNRRA supplies to Italy.37

Lehman says that the reputation of UNRRA hinges on being able to deliver supplies. Late in 1944, UNRRA’s reputation had begun to unravel due to its failure to deliver promised goods to Europe. Lehman’s appeal to the President illustrates the importance of securing shipping for UNRRA materials.

Those supplies would form the basis for the UNRRA programs that dealt with infectious disease and nutrition and that would have the most lasting effects in Italy. Less industrialized, particularly in the south, than many of its European neighbors to the north, Italy faced the severe threats of disease and starvation.

37 Nevins, Herbert Lehman and His Era, 257.
Before the war, health conditions in Italy had steadily improved. The war hastened the spread of infectious disease while breaking down basic transportation and communication so as to negatively affect the delivery of public health services. Public welfare services suffered as funds and medical personnel dispersed. Nutritional deficiencies caused by scarcity contributed to the spread of disease. After the war, the combination of meager food rations and a limited black market provided the average Italian with a daily consumption well below the subsistence level of 2000 calories. The result was a tuberculosis rate triple that before the war, and a greatly increased infant mortality rate.\(^{38}\)

The UNRRA food program in Italy aimed to address these issues immediately. Representing 55% of the total budget for the Italian mission, the $36 million feeding program would provide 750 extra calories to 1.7 million children and 300,000 pregnant and nursing mothers. A significant proportion of Italian women and children benefitted from the program. In June 1945, 250,000 received supplemental food rations each month. One year later in June 1946, that number had peaked at 2,000,000, and continued steadily until UNRRA ceased operations in 1947.\(^{39}\)

In his characteristic way, Spurgeon Keeny reflected on these numbers poetically, “It is now ten months since we signed the first agreement with the Italian government for a limited relief and rehabilitation program. We worked


together, and before the end of the year, more than 1,000,000 children were a little heavier, healthier, and we hope, happier..."40

Improvements in nutrition complemented efforts to address epidemic disease. As in Greece, malaria eradication figured prominently into the effort. In Littoria (Latina) province, the Pontine Marshes had long been a swampy, uninhabitable plain long avoided by both travelers and settlers. Mussolini cleared the marshes as part of a major modernization project, but during the German occupation soldiers dismantled much of the reclamation by destroying bridges, canals, and pumping stations. Travel became difficult, and malaria surged back. Historian Frank Snowden argues that this was a form of biological warfare.41

With a grant from UNRRA and oversight by its officials and those of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Italian government resumed its battle against malaria using DDT.

The grant used to fund the resumption of malaria eradication came from the Lire Fund. Unique to the Italian mission, the Lire Fund was the Italian government’s contribution to pay for UNRRA services in local currency. During 1945, the Lire Fund was used primarily for warehousing, transportation, and other internal distribution costs. The first concrete request from the Lire Fund was $130,000 for malaria eradication in the Pontine Marshes. Woodbridge, the

UNRRA historian, inserted an uncharacteristic level of opinion in his discussion of the Lire Fund in the history of UNRRA:

The fact that the Italian Government had remained curiously unaware of the importance of the Lire Fund and that most of the ministries had failed to grasp its possible use to assist in financing their programs had retarded competition for the resources represented by the Fund and had thus obscured the need for general planning. . . With embarrassing suddenness, the Italian government became aware of this hitherto overlooked 85,000 million lire. Invariably, every ministry and many other agencies scrambled for a share. Simultaneously, the Treasury, alarmed by the impetus that any new large-scale expenditure might have on an already inflationary situation, took a line that amounted to saying that the Lire Fund should not be spent at all!42

Keeny also noted the Italian government’s volte-face, commenting “because of the difficulty of getting money out of the government budget, some of the Italians who had viewed our Lire Fund with suspicion are beginning to see that it is as handy as a pocket on a shirt.”43 Concerned about the inflationary effect that a sudden influx of cash would have on the economy, UNRRA agreed that Lire Fund expenditures should be spread out over six years.

UNRRA’s final significant program in Italy aimed to rebuild housing and restore the agricultural life of the nation. The CASAS Project started with UNRRA transporting 90,000 Italians from refugee camps to their homes. The UNRRA Council had charged the Italian mission with the formidable task of assisting and resettling internally displaced Italians and repatriated refugees. In addition to the internally displaced, Italy faced a serious refugee crisis with the return of ethnic Italians from lost territory as approximately 250,000 had left Yugoslav-controlled

42 Woodbridge, UNRRA Vol. II, 293.
Istria and Dalmatia.\textsuperscript{44} The CASAS program had three parts: repair of damaged buildings, construction of a limited number of houses of standard type with four apartments each (with a small vegetable garden for each), and aid in the rehabilitation of local production of building materials such as the repair of brick and tile works, for example. CASAS activity concentrated in Emilia, Tuscany, Latium, and Abruzzi, along the “Gothic” and “Gustav” lines that had seen heavy fighting. By the spring of 1947, CASAS had created new houses for 103,725 persons.\textsuperscript{45}

Agriculture was central to the Italian economy. Normally, half of the population was employed in agriculture and 36% of the national income was derived from forestry and agriculture. The UNNRA food program was to provide essential imports for immediate consumption, and the long-term goal was to rehabilitate the agricultural sector. UNRRA had no intention of returning to Mussolini’s policy of self-sufficiency, but wanted to put Italy on a sound economic base with respect to its natural resources and the climatic conditions of the country. However, the issue of land reform loomed over these considerations. According to Woodbridge:

\begin{quote}
UNRRA very properly avoided becoming involved in it, and a discussion of its merits would be out of place here; it can be said, however, that the general uncertainty created by the impending possibility of land reform delayed and complicated the rehabilitation of Italian agriculture. The repair of direct war
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{45} Woodbridge, \textit{UNRRA Vol. II}, 266 and 290-291.
damage was undertaken by Italian peasants with enthusiasm and success.... but the political uncertainly and the possible changes in land tenure discouraged any significant capital investment and were a general deterrent to new enterprise.46

UNRRA, always aiming for neutrality, sought to avoid any entanglement in the politically charged issue of land reform proposed by the Italian left.

UNRRA’s work in Greece and Italy had profound and lasting effects on the health and welfare of the people of those nations. Its intervention reversed the effects of disease and starvation in both contexts even as it acted as an agent of modernization. In many ways, these two missions represent the best examples of UNRRA’s work in Europe. In the short term, food and medical care prevented calamitous outcomes for the populations. In the long term, UNRRA planted the seeds for the creation of modern agricultural and healthcare systems. In terms of personnel and leadership, these missions make a strong case that their competency and motivation have significant influence over outcomes. In the Greek context, UNRRA personnel assumed the government responsibility for assessing current and future needs while also acting as direct agents of relief. In Italy, Sam Keeny provided consistent leadership and an optimistic attitude despite great challenges. Further, these missions never became tainted by suspicion that they aided Communists; rather, their work in public health exemplified the ways in which humanitarian aid can serve strategic goals. American groups such as the Rockefeller Foundation worked with UNRRA to improve public health. The combination of these factors made the missions in Greece and Italy two of UNRRA’s success stories.

46 Woodbridge, *UNRRA Vol. II*, 278.
On April 23, 1945, President Harry Truman met with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. The death of Roosevelt two weeks earlier had brought the former Missouri senator to the White House, and he had little inclination to handle the Soviets as diplomatically as FDR had. In no uncertain terms, Truman dressed down Molotov for the Soviet failure to uphold the commitment to democratic elections in Poland. When Molotov responded that he had never been spoken to in such a manner, Truman retorted that the Soviet should keep his promises then.\(^1\) This famous exchange illustrates the breakdown of the wartime alliance even before the German surrender. The removal of the common Nazi enemy revealed the vast ideological and security differences between the Western Allies and the Soviets.

As the wartime alliance cracked, UNRRA faced an internal crisis of its own in the spring and summer of 1945. It would need to undergo a major reorganization to address efficiency and competency. The initial publicity of UNRRA had set impossibly high expectations for the organization that had little

chance of being met as the war came to a close. Lehman and the member
governments recognized that something must be done. Proposals to end UNRRA
were shelved in light of the United Nations conference that was about to take
place in San Francisco. Advocates of internationalism expressed concern that the
abandonment of UNRRA would taint future efforts at cooperation. Furthermore,
the new UN would have no chance of providing adequate relief for the coming
winter of 1945-46, so delegates at a conference in London in May 1945
determined that the existing UNRRA apparatus must be utilized after major
reforms.2

In light of the crisis, General Jackson and a subcommittee recommended
that UNRRA address the serious issues of personnel and supply. The
organization had hired more than eight thousand people in its first months, but
the vetting process for those new employees had been lax at best. Nearly half of
the workforce received notice of their dismissal, and future hires faced a more
rigorous evaluation. Also, the committee recommended that several new
management positions be created and staffed by highly capable men. These new
managers included public relations officials, accountants, and administrators
charged with displaced persons in various theatres. With the end of the war in
Europe, the challenge of shipping supplies would soon improve, but the
acquisition of those supplies would require the best personnel UNRRA could
recruit.

2 Jackson to Bevin, 25 August 1947, Robert G. A. Jackson UNRRA Papers, File 50,
Lehman Collection.
Not surprisingly, the committee emphasized that personnel in the Bureau of Supply must be improved. That department, headed by a Soviet, had a reputation for being disastrously inefficient, a situation that became increasingly more politically sensitive as the relationship between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union deteriorated.\(^3\) Supplies of all kinds were in extremely short supply at the end of the war, so any inefficiency appeared all the more glaring. Even with the appointment of American Roy F. Hendrickson, General Jackson commented in December 1945 that, “If we cannot afford to make a major change in the leadership of the Bureau of Supply at the present time, then we have no alternative but to accept certain inefficiencies. This I find distasteful, but clearly there is no alternative.”\(^4\) The Bureau of Supply remained a problematic area for UNRRA for the whole of its existence, but the reorganization did succeed in improving that department enough that it could function properly by the winter of 1945-46.

The supplies that UNRRA did provide had to be distributed in some manner. The issue of distribution became central to the political nature of relief, as the distributor of relief earned the admiration of the local population. Within Lehman’s staff, two camps emerged regarding distribution. Jackson and the first Deputy Director General Arthur Salter favored strong distribution power for UNRRA, while staffers David Weintraub and George Perazich argued that the strength of organized resistance movements in occupied countries gave cause to

\(^3\) Jackson memo to John Gilbert Winant (US Ambassador to UK), 29 May 1945, Robert G. A. Jackson UNRRA Papers, File 7, Lehman Collections.

believe that those same groups could handle distribution. The latter won out initially, but UNRRA’s involvement in distribution differed depending on the circumstances within each nation.\(^5\)

The thorny issue of distribution made UNRRA vulnerable to attacks that it was in some way supporting Communist factions within Europe. Doubts about internationalism itself, coupled with reports of UNRRA’s inefficiencies, damaged the organization’s image in the mind of the American public. Lehman faced the prospect in late 1945 that the US Congress would not agree to provide the remaining $550 million in funding that the US had pledged.\(^6\) He decided to take his case directly to the American people by making numerous public appearances highlighting the achievements of UNRRA and warning that the cessation of funding would be disastrous for those who depended on its relief. Lehman and Jackson made direct appeals to Congressmen, with the director general working his fellow Democrats and his tireless deputy, the Republicans. In an about face, Truman agreed with Lehman that funding UNRRA in the short term would be crucial to prevent widespread food shortages in the winter of 1945-46. He introduced a separate bill that would provide an additional $1.35 billion, stating, “America will not remain indifferent to the call of human suffering.”\(^7\) However, that support did not insure passage of either bill, both of which became the subject of public and Congressional debate in November and December 1945. In

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\(^5\) Interview with George Perazich, 11 February 1948, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, United Nations Archives. Both Weintraub and Perazich later faced accusations that they acted as spies for the Soviet Union. Investigations proved inconclusive.


\(^7\) “UNRRA must be sustained,” *New York Times*, 18.
December 1945, Congress did approve both bills, providing a torrent of financial assistance just as UNRRA’s remaining reserves had nearly dried up. This triumph marked a high point for UNRRA. With the renewal of funding, it was able to function effectively to provide relief during the winter of 1945-46.

The reorganization of UNRRA and the renewal of funding for 1946 allowed it to continue its operations in three key areas: Poland, Yugoslavia, and Germany. Poland and Yugoslavia had particularly difficult experiences in World War II and its aftermath. Several years of conquest by Nazi aggressors preceded bitterly fought civil wars that resulted in Communist regimes. Both nations resisted German occupation with intense ferocity, resulting in high death tolls and destroyed infrastructure. In Poland, waves of conquest from both the German and Soviet sides passed through in 1939, continued in 1941, and then again in 1944-45. For Yugoslavia, the war was multi-dimensional, an ethnic and ideological civil conflict in addition to a war of national liberation from the Nazis. The level of destruction and suffering made clear the need for UNRRA to send missions to help mitigate the circumstances wrought by war. Germany, of course, had been the aggressor nation. UNRRA confined its operations in Germany to the care and repatriation of displaced persons. It would not take up the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Germany.8 Interestingly, despite the Soviet role in the

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8 The Office of the Military Government, United States (OMGUS) was the military occupation administration for Germany in the American zone of occupation. The Marshall Plan would later provide more than $1 billion for the reconstruction of West Germany. Although East Germany was also eligible for aid, the Soviet Union blocked its Eastern satellites from receiving it.
conquest of Poland in 1939 following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviets would receive aid in the Ukraine and Byelorussia.9

This chapter analyzes UNRRA’s role in the reconstruction of Poland and Yugoslavia and the administration of displaced persons camps in Germany. In each context, UNRRA sought to fulfill its internationalist mission in the face of severe destruction and deprivation as well as the fracturing of the wartime alliance. In Poland and Yugoslavia, statistics bear out the particularly destructive nature of the war for these two countries. In Yugoslavia, ten percent of the population perished, while half of the livestock and rail lines, three fourths of the plows and rail bridges, three fifths of the road surfaces, a third of the industrial value, and a fifth of the housing stock was destroyed. In Poland, six million died, about one fifth of the pre-war population. One third of the total housing was destroyed, while in Warsaw the figure was ninety percent. Both nations mounted considerable resistance movements against the Nazi occupiers. The Polish resistance tied down nearly 500,000 German troops and prevented one eighth of troop transports to the Soviet Union, as major uprisings in Warsaw, the Warsaw ghetto, Bialystok and Vilna caused considerable casualties for the Germans.10 Despite the effort made by the Polish Home Army and Draža Mihailović’s Cetniks, the Western powers ultimately abandoned them (although Nazi collaboration

9 The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, or the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, was a neutrality pact signed on August 23, 1939. It divided Poland into spheres of influence and predated the Nazi invasion of western Poland on September 1, 1939, followed by the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland on September 17, 1939. It remained in effect until the Nazi invasion of eastern Poland on June 22, 1941.
tainted the credibility of the latter). In both cases, governments-in-exile remained active in London during the war, but were soon neutralized once they returned, never to exercise any real political leverage. For UNRRA, concerns that its activities supported Communist ends would be a major problem for the organization in the court of American public opinion in both contexts.

However, these two cases are not identical, and their differences presented unique challenges for UNRRA. While the Communist state was a reality in Yugoslavia as the war ended, the Polish situation remained much more in flux through 1947. The nature of Communism in these two countries varied considerably, as Tito forged his own brand while the Polish Communists remained very much under the thumb of the Soviet Union. Demographically, the two nations emerged from the war looking very different from when it began. Poland’s wartime experience and its redrawn borders created a more homogenous population, while Yugoslavia remained a highly multiethnic state. Interestingly, these two populations had quite different relationships with their governments. Polish skepticism and mistrust of government ran high at this time, but Tito’s efforts to foster nationalism and unity in Yugoslavia were succeeding.¹¹

In the summer of 1945, Germany was destroyed. Unconditional surrender meant invasion and occupation by the Allies. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower to treat Germany as a defeated nation and to ensure that it would never again threaten the peace. That directive would guide the Western Allies in their administration of the western occupation

¹¹ Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*. 

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zones. In the long term, West Germany would become a pillar of European recovery, but its bombed out buildings and hungry population seemed just retribution for the vicious manner in which it waged war for six years. The German war machine had imported more than twelve million people as forced laborers during the war. By the end of the war, approximately eight million remained in Germany and qualified as displaced persons. By the fall of 1945, UNRRA and the Allied authorities succeeded in returning six to seven million of that total to their country of origin. Although UNRRA was internationalist in character, it was highly committed to the concept of national borders and an individual’s nationality, much to the detriment of DPs whose ethnicity, nationality, or politics did not align. Tragically, forced repatriation was common, particularly for Soviet nationals whose extended residence in Nazi Germany would label them as traitors. The so-called “last million” included refugees remaining for a variety of political, economic, and psychological factors. Occupation authorities soon concluded that this remaining group would require much more than immediate relief. UNRRA managed the initial surge of repatriation in 1945, and then grappled with the complex problem of the remaining displaced persons in 1946.

UNRRA was in some ways its own worst enemy in Central and Eastern Europe. In each case, UNRRA’s effectiveness suffered for want of a competent staff, particularly in the early days. The Yugoslav mission suffered from this deficiency acutely in early 1945, and in many ways illustrated the larger problem of staff incompetency at UNRRA. The first heads of the missions did not help

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12 Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 5.
matters, although each one affected the situation differently. In the Polish case, Mikhail Menshikov, the highest-ranking Soviet at UNRRA, negotiated the agreement for the mission with the government, making some questionable concessions along the way. In the Middle East Relief and Recovery Administration (the forerunner to the Greek and Yugoslav missions), Sir William Matthews failed as a leader, spending more time at his private villa than presiding over mission work. In Germany, the inflammatory remarks of Sir Frederick Morgan called into question his fitness to lead a mission whose only responsibility was caring for displaced persons. Perhaps more so than personnel, distribution challenges plagued UNRRA’s work in Poland and Yugoslavia. In both cases, the destruction of ports and the priority of the military over humanitarian efforts hampered the speedy arrival of goods and materials. Distribution was also political, as controversy lingered over the proper channels through which goods should go, and whether those who distributed them did so for their own political gain.

UNRRA arrived in Poland and Yugoslavia with high hopes to improve the postwar outlook, but the particular challenges within each country often proved too daunting for overwhelmed and understaffed missions. In Eastern Europe, perhaps more so than anywhere else it operated, UNRRA officials confronted the political nature of relief. UNRRA officials arrived in Yugoslavia in the spring of 1945 and in Poland later that fall. At those points in time, Yugoslavia had an established Communist government, while Poland’s political future remained unclear. Through their notes and recollections, we know that UNRRA staff
observed the changing political climate in both countries and understood that it affected UNRRA’s ability to provide relief.

With eighty percent of its funding from the United States, UNRRA had an internationalist mission with significant strings attached. During its lifespan, UNRRA’s reputation as an international organization with a humanitarian mission became untenable to both the United States Congress and public, particularly in light of the situation in Eastern Europe. After an extended internal controversy in 1944, UNRRA’s top leadership had decided that it could not feasibly control distribution of goods, but rather it would work with local governments to determine need and then allow distribution to happen within established channels. Predictably, this issue of distribution politicized relief, as those who distributed aid may or may not hold political beliefs condoned by the American government. Because the United States provided such a large share of UNRRA’s funding, its lawmakers demanded that American money not be used against it. The desire to control distribution, and the realization that UNRRA would not alter its mission, led the American government to contemplate other solutions to the economic crisis of the postwar period. The Marshall Plan, a unilateralist approach to relief and reconstruction, was the direct result of the abandonment of UNRRA.

In each country in which it operated, UNRRA officials confronted a particular culture and society, one that had been disrupted by years of war. Poland and Yugoslavia were no exception, and so a review of the war experience and aftermath of both provides context for the situation into which UNRRA
entered in 1944 and 1945. For Poland, the war began on September 1, 1939, as the Germans invaded from the west, followed soon after by the Soviets from the east. The territory conquered by the Germans contained much of Poland’s industrial strength and a majority of the Polish population. The Nazis annexed western and northern areas directly into the Reich, and created the General Government in central and southern Poland. Immediately, they initiated policies to alter the ethnic makeup of Poland, including the deportation of Jews and Roma from the Reich to the General Government, the elimination of the intelligentsia, and the reduction of the Poles to a vast labor source. As Anne Applebaum asserts, “the object of the German occupation of Poland had been to destroy Polish civilization, to turn Poles into an illiterate workforce, to eliminate the Polish educated class.”13 As Germany completed its conquest, the Soviets invaded on September 17, 1939, touting claims of protection for the Byelorussian and Ukrainian populations. The Soviets socialized private property, collectivized land, and deported at least 1.25 million people into the Russian interior. Similar to the Nazis in western Poland, the Soviets targeted local elites and the intelligentsia specifically.14

The invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany would signal a turning point in the war for Europe, and for Poland. The division of Poland at the Molotov-Ribbentrop line held until June 22, 1941, when the Wehrmacht launched Operation Barbarossa. Motivated by dreams of imperialism, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union to gain control of its vast agricultural lands and the oil reserves in

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13 Applebaum, Iron Curtain, 118.
the Caucasus.\textsuperscript{15} After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the resumption of
diplomatic ties between the Soviets and the Poles remained tenuous and fraught
with distrust. The Polish government-in-exile attempted to raise an army from
units captured by the Soviets in 1939, but found that the Soviets starved them of
rations and equipment. In 1943, the exposure of the massacre of 15,000 Polish
officers at Katyn three years earlier poisoned the relationship even further.
However, the common enemy of the Nazis and the brief period of Soviet conquest
allowed the Soviets to maintain influence in Poland. Despite his poor treatment of
the evacuated Polish army, Stalin was able to shape its remnants into new units
loyal to the Soviets that would eventually form the core of the postwar Polish
army. He also encouraged the formation of a Polish Communist underground to
compete with the longer established and more authentically national Home Army.
When the Soviets crossed the Bug River in July 1944, Moscow unveiled the Polish
Committee of National Liberation that would become the Provisional
Government of Poland. Poles who remained loyal to the government-in-exile
faced execution or conscription. The Soviets did not intervene in the Warsaw
Uprising of August 1944 so that the Germans could crush the last vestiges of the
Polish elite. The Polish question was central to the negotiations at Yalta and
Potsdam, where the British and Americans accepted the Provisional Government
on the condition that it hold free elections.

Though we know the outcome for Poland, its transition into a Soviet-
controlled Communist state was far from preordained. A state of civil war existed

\textsuperscript{15} Snyder, \textit{Bloodlands}, 158-159.
in Poland through 1947, and UNRRA confronted this chaotic situation as it attempted to provide relief. Poland itself looked quite different than it had at the beginning of the war. The westward shift of the border, combined with population transfers and a horrific genocide, transformed Poland from a multiethnic state to a largely homogeneous, Roman Catholic one.\textsuperscript{16} It gained Baltic coastline and harbors, along with industrial and agricultural lands far more valuable than those that it lost. These changes certainly influenced the political unrest.

For the Communists, the presence of active Soviet sponsors strengthened their position relative to the London Poles and the West. They gained control of the Ministry for Regained Territories, which allowed them to distribute the lands and assets of large agricultural estates throughout Poland to the peasantry. However, the Socialist and Peasant parties remained influential voices in the postwar government. According to Applebaum, leftist parties across Eastern Europe believed that democracy would work in their favor. Stalin was more cynical, and continued to watch Polish politics closely.\textsuperscript{17} The successful abolition of the interwar Senate in a referendum of June 1946 convinced the Communists that they could in fact win or successfully rig parliamentary elections. In January


\textsuperscript{17} Applebaum, \textit{Iron Curtain}, 194-197.
1947, the Communists won a predictable victory amidst widespread terror and fraud.\textsuperscript{18}

Unlike in Poland, the Yugoslav government had already declared itself to be Communist when UNRRA arrived. Its path to Communism had begun during the war, which was both a quest for national liberation and a bitterly fought civil conflict. Yugoslavia’s regent, Prince Paul, sought to avoid war by joining the Tripartite Pact in 1941, whereby Hitler ensured the nation’s territorial integrity. Some historians have criticized this move as short-sighted and ineffective, but Rothschild and Wingfield argue that the government did not have the domestic consensus, military strength, or industrial power to repel an Axis offensive.\textsuperscript{19} The agreement further fractured the tense internal relations within Yugoslavia. The Serbs bitterly resented the pact as a betrayal of their national honor, as they had repulsed the German and Austro-Hungarian armies at the end of World War I and paved the way for the future Yugoslav state. Weeks after his agreement with the Axis, Prince Paul was overthrown in a coup that placed his teenage nephew, King Peter II, on the throne. Serbia welcomed the coup enthusiastically, but Croatia and Slovenia resented the action as it would certainly mean war. Hitler launched

\textsuperscript{18} While the earliest accounts of these events focused on the illegitimacy of the Polish Communists and the machinations of Stalin, later scholarship has expanded the understanding of the social and local history of the Communist revolution in Poland. Examples of the former are Zbigniew Brzezinski, \textit{The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, \textit{The Pattern of Soviet Domination} (London: Sampson, Lowe, Marston, and Co., 1948). Padraic Kenney gives agency to Polish workers as they sought to maintain control of their moral community in the face of totalitarianism in \textit{Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950} (Ithaca: Cornell, 1997).

\textsuperscript{19} Rothschild and Wingfield, \textit{Return to Diversity}, 35.
the Nazi invasion on April 7, 1941, and the country fell on April 17. The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union that summer put Yugoslavia on the backburner, but the maintenance of Axis authority there turned out to be much more expensive than the Nazis expected. Resistance movements emerged that would occupy 125,000 German troops by 1944.

The coup and invasion engendered the emergence of various ethnic and political groups who struggled for power during the war years. The ultranationalist Ustaša seemed on the ascent in Croatia for a period of time, but soon alienated many with its extreme measures, such as the expulsion or extermination of non-Catholic Croats. Its cession of territory to Italy and dependence on Germany contributed to its ultimate failure to seize power. Postwar Yugoslavia’s leader Josip Broz Tito emerged during the war and gained mass support as an alternative to the interwar government and divisive ethno-nationalist groups. Tito’s Partisans protected any Yugoslav regardless of ethno-nationalist status from indiscriminate German reprisals. Liberated zones emerged that contained authentically participatory political mechanisms and popular institutions. With the establishment of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in November 1942, Communists and non-Communists administered the liberated zones and committed themselves to a federalist solution to the country’s ethno-national problems.

Tito showed early indications that his Communism and Yugoslavia would not fall into line with Soviet expectations. The proclamation of AVNOJ as the provisional government of Yugoslavia occurred without Soviet intervention, and
solidified Tito’s commitment to a federalist solution to the country’s ethno-national problems.\textsuperscript{20} The collapse of the interwar regime and the ruthless collaboration of fascist groups had opened many to the Communist option. Tito’s collectivism appealed to Yugoslavia’s mountain peoples, while others were attracted by the possibility of quick industrialization. Previously apathetic or pre-political sectors became active as a result of the war and the pace of industrialization, and the Communists appealed to these awakened political actors because they had not collaborated or participated in interethnic atrocities. The Yugoslav regime was authentic and therefore legitimate relative to its Eastern European neighbors, allowing Tito to defy Stalin in the late 1940s. Wartime experience had allowed the partisans to develop an administrative structure and the sociopolitical legitimacy to run the country after its liberation.\textsuperscript{21} Postwar, the Communists wasted no time eliminating their opposition to secure control and implement a program of rapid collectivization of land. By 1950, a greater proportion of industry, commerce and agriculture in Yugoslavia had undergone socialization than elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

UNRRA’s work in both Yugoslavia and Poland proved decisive to the survival of considerable numbers of people in these nations, despite the challenges of personnel and distribution. UNRRA, and by extension the United States, Great Britain, Canada and others, made financial contributions of nearly a billion dollars to stabilize the postwar chaos. Poland received $485 million in aid,

with $200 million of that total in food. UNRAA’s contribution to Yugoslavia was more than $415 million.

‘A Realization of All Promises’: UNRRA in Poland

According to its mission, UNRRA provided not only food relief, but also rehabilitation that took many forms. Because the Poles had been exploited as slave labor during the war, the need for clothing and footwear was much higher than in other European countries.\(^\text{22}\) The proportion of funds that supplied those items ranged from 17 to 21 percent over the course of the mission, an amount much higher than in other contexts.\(^\text{23}\) In Poland, agricultural rehabilitation included the importation of tens of thousands of tractors. Before the war, few Poles had used tractors and the American models supplied by UNRRA were unfamiliar to those who did use them. Recognizing the need, the mission arranged for training programs to teach farmers how to properly operate and maintain the machines.\(^\text{24}\) Canning programs addressed the necessity of food and the rehabilitation of its distribution network. Poles had eaten few canned foods, with the exception of sauerkraut and pickles. During the occupation, the Germans

\(^\text{22}\) The Nazis deployed Poles to Germany as forced labor beginning in 1939 and 1940, the first group of foreign workers to be sent from the conquered territories for that purpose. Ulrich Herbert argues that Germany’s use of foreign workers was critical to its war effort in *Hitler’s Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany Under the Third Reich*, trans. William Templer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).


\(^\text{24}\) “Reports - R. Nelson,” Box S-0527-1107, Folder 86, Poland Mission, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, United Nations Archives.
introduced food processing plants for the drying of fruits and vegetables. UNRRA worked with local farmers’ cooperatives to distribute equipment and plan training courses with the intent of establishing more canning plants in Poland. Acute medical needs also fell within UNRRA’s purview of relief and rehabilitation. Director General Lehman negotiated directly with the Polish government to import narcotics for medical purposes.\textsuperscript{25} UNRRA also supplied a complete set of medical instruments so that the country’s five remaining neurosurgeons could perform surgery.\textsuperscript{26}

In Poland, UNRRA’s mission suffered initially from the curious motives of Mikhail Menshikov, but later garnered admiration under Charles Drury. The early damage done by Menshikov was repaired in due course, but the Polish mission’s slow start certainly impacted its overall effectiveness. In September 1945, Menshikov arrived in Poland to negotiate an agreement between its government and UNRRA regarding a mission there. In the course of the negotiations, Menshikov conceded easily to the government’s request for a small mission of no more than thirty people and that there be no regional offices. He represented these provisions as being within the UNRRA position, but such a small contingent seems nonsensical considering the level of destruction and the humanitarian need in Poland.\textsuperscript{27} For his part, Lehman found Menshikov untrustworthy, reporting in his biography that, “It was Menshikov’s habit to keep his ears open.

\textsuperscript{25} “Telegram from Lehman, 28 February 1945,” Box S-0527-1044, Folder F29, Poland Mission, UNRRA, UNA.
\textsuperscript{26} Armstrong-Reid and Murray, \textit{Armies of Peace}, 88.
\textsuperscript{27} “Meeting minutes, 5 September 1945,” Box S-0527-1062, Folder: Chief of Mission, Vol. 1, Poland Mission, UNRRA, UNA.
Whenever he heard anything that affected Russia, or the relations of the Soviet Union with other countries, he slipped around to the Soviet embassy in Washington. No matter how sternly we emphasized the rule of secrecy, he leaked all he knew.”

Menshikov’s motives in Poland elicited suspicion immediately. Many within the UNRRA bureaucracy whispered that Menshikov had been sent at Russian insistence, but UNRRA General Counsel Abraham Feller reported that he had chosen the Deputy Chief of the Bureau of Supply as the best candidate because the Soviets would not protest the appointment. Feller felt it critical to get an UNRRA representative to Poland as quickly as possible. For his part, Menshikov resented the appointment and felt it a demotion from his duties in Washington. Frank Weisl, the Czech national who served as second in command in Poland, corroborated Feller’s account, saying that Menshikov insisted on a quick return to UNRRA’s central administration and suggested the name “Temporary UNRRA Delegation to Poland” to indicate clearly that he had no intention of staying in Poland long term. Despite these indications that Menshikov did not relish his assignment to Poland, no matter how temporary it might be, he took advantage of the appointment to concede to the limitation of the size of the mission. At its height in 1946, the Polish delegation would include

29 “Interview with Abraham Feller, 1 October 1945,” Box S-0556-0006, Folder 8, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA. In 1946, Feller joined the staff of the first UN Secretary General Trygve Lie as head legal counsel. After a mental breakdown caused by the stress of defending the Secretariat against McCarthyist attacks from the American right, he committed suicide in 1952.
30 “Interview: T.J. Maycock with Frank Weisl, 10 October 1947,” Box S-0556-0006, Folder 9, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA.
some 422 people. Clearly, the small size of the mission negotiated by Menshikov indicates some questionable motives. The placement of Menshikov at the head of the negotiations for the new Polish mission put it at a disadvantage in the short term, as many within the UNRRA bureaucracy and his successor found his motives suspect.

Charles Drury arrived in October 1945, and immediately set to work to counteract the impression left by Menshikov and to ensure that the Polish mission operated in line with established UNRRA policy. The only Canadian to serve as an UNRRA mission chief, Drury was largely successful due to his strong leadership and the immense popularity of UNRRA in Poland. Drury’s appointment came by way of the recommendation of the Canadian Ambassador to the United States, Lester “Mike” Pearson, who noted that the military man would be able to maintain diplomacy in politically sensitive situations.  

31 Director General LaGuardia confirmed this assessment, saying, “his honesty of character and his obvious desire to be absolutely fair with the Government have put him in a position where he is quite clearly recognized by the Government and the people of Poland as being a true friend of their Country.”  

32 Drury’s character and reputation for fairness served him well, as he tackled the controversial issue of distribution. He aimed for effective distribution without provoking Soviet ire, as the Red Army was omnipresent. Recognizing the strategic and symbolic importance of Poland in the struggle between the West and the Soviet Union,

31 Pearson later served as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. 
32 Armstrong-Reid and Murray, Armies of Peace, 91.
Drury argued that aid was essential as popular support for UNRRA began to waver. The West could serve its long-term interests by providing aid, as the only other source would be the Soviet Union. Drury predicted in a speech in Canada in 1946 that Poland would not become Communist because of the individualistic qualities of the people and the influence of religion. He was wrong, but his statements reflect the fluctuating political situation in Poland.

Beyond the immediate material needs of the Polish people, Drury needed to address the issue of staff immediately upon his arrival. The handicap that Menshikov had left in that area required intense lobbying by Drury to correct. He argued at length with the Polish government to lift the limitation on staff size. On November 16, Drury wrote to European Regional Office head Humphrey Gale in London to implore him to send more staff: “I appreciate the needs of China, but will continue to hope that ERO will dredge the personnel pond for Poland. I am continually being reminded that UNRRA has only thirteen more months of existence and to date we have not made a very rapid start.” Aware of UNRRA’s expiration date based on its charter, Drury felt the pressure to begin the work of relief as soon as possible. His requests received limited response, as numerous cables and letters in the first weeks resulted in “a total of two bodies, a secretary and an assistant Port officer. The situation is now desperate but at least not hopeless.” Once staff did arrive, Drury reported publicly that he found them to

34 “Letter from Drury to Gale, 16 November 1945,” Box S527-1046, Folder RF 40, Poland Mission, UNRRA, UNA.
35 “Letter from IDB to E. Wyndham White, 17 November 1945,” Box S-0527-1046, Folder RF 40, Poland Mission, UNRRA, UNA.
be competent and willing. However, many had reservations about taking an appointment with a temporary international organization, and that sentiment reflects a general difficulty in recruiting top staff. The mission slowly overcame early recruitment difficulties during 1946, and many later reported that they did not want to leave when the mission ended in 1947. Drury attributed this to the hospitality and the friendliness of the Polish people, rather than the amenities as the staff had very few comforts.36

The destruction of the war left few comforts for anyone in Poland, and the resumption of even rudimentary transportation and services began slowly. Logistics and distribution were among the most difficult puzzles for UNRRA’s Poland mission. Poland’s major ports of Gdansk and Gydnia were completely destroyed, and none of the alternatives proved efficient. The London Poles pushed for the delivery of supplies through Murmansk on the Barrents Sea, Vladivostok, and the Persian Gulf, but all of these options included significant and very costly overland transportation that made them utterly impractical. In January 1945, the Soviets offered the Black Sea port of Constanza in Romania. Goods were offloaded onto trains and then delivered to Poland and Czechoslovakia. In September 1945, UNRRA ships finally docked at Gydnia, but it was not until early 1946 that the port situation improved dramatically with the introduction of new equipment and the steady recovery of manpower.

UNRRA maintained fairly good relations with the government of Poland during the period of the mission. When the Temporary Delegation arrived in

36 Armstrong-Reid and Murray, Armies of Peace, 88.
Poland in 1945, the Polish Provisional Government had only existed for three months, and in fact, seemed unprepared for UNRRA’s arrival.\textsuperscript{37} As government officials witnessed the impact of UNRRA’s contribution and realized that the supplies were donations, their position softened. The government and UNRRA formed a solid working relationship once they settled the issues of mission size and regional offices. At Drury’s insistence, the mission remained as politically neutral as possible, focusing on food and relief. However, Vice-Premier Wladyslaw Gomulka charged privately and then publicly that UNRAA food was being used as a political weapon, a charge that UNRRA officials immediately countered with evidence that it was in fact the world food crisis that had caused the disruption in food supplies. Recognizing that their food supply could be in jeopardy, the Polish government changed course with a public campaign to continue UNRRA food supplies and an agreement to allow the mission to review further statements regarding UNRRA.\textsuperscript{38}

Public perceptions of UNRRA played a key role in its ability to provide relief, and the mission’s management of both the local and Western press was crucial. As Jessica Reinisch points out, public perceptions of UNRRA’s mission in Poland varied from holding it as a model of international cooperation to accusing it of “pandering to Soviet ambitions.”\textsuperscript{39} Because the vast majority of UNRRA’s funding came from the United States and Great Britain, its positive reputation in

\textsuperscript{37} “Interview: T.J. Maycock with Frank Weisl, 10 October 1947,” UNA.
\textsuperscript{38} Woodbridge, \textit{UNRRA, Vol. II}, 207-208.
\textsuperscript{39} Jessica Reinisch, “‘We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation’: UNRRA, Internationalism and National Reconstruction in Poland,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary History}, 43:3 (July 2008), 453.
those public spaces determined its viability. That reputation depended on the perception that UNRRA’s distribution practices were both fair and apolitical. However, that perception became muddled with doubt as the situation in Poland shifted over the course of 1945 and 1946. In 1944, Lehman and his top staff determined after significant discussion that UNRRA would be a procurement organization that would stop short of distribution within the mission country. Despite the valid argument that relief supplies could fall into the wrong hands or be used inefficiently, Lehman argued that local governments would have a better sense of what was needed where, and the additional number of staff needed for distribution would be enormous. The decision made, UNRRA officials would now need to convince local governments and organizations to distribute goods in a way that would fulfill UNRRA’s mission while remaining politically neutral. UNRRA furnished staff from its regional offices to observe distribution to ensure that practices were not discriminatory.

Such an undertaking proved difficult, as the press picked up on indications that relief could be politicized in a manner that benefited Communist factions in Poland. Perhaps the most damaging episode for the Polish mission was a disparaging Life magazine article published in December 1946 that accused the Polish government of distributing UNRRA supplies on a political rather than humanitarian basis, and allowing those goods to be sold on the black market. The article employed vivid imagery to make its point that UNRRA funds were being misappropriated in Poland, citing various unnamed sources within the country. “At Warsaw’s Hotel Polonia, if you are willing to pay the price, you can drink
vodka cocktails made with UNRRA grapefruit juice intended for Poland’s undernourished children.”

Drury wrote a strong letter to the editor refuting the conclusion of the article and questioning its sources, but it was never published. The damage done, the article reflected the opinion of a powerful segment of the American population who wanted to end funding for UNRRA.

Aware of its precarious position, UNRRA officials in Poland tried to manage the situation on the ground as best they could while not being directly responsible for distribution. For example, UNRRA requested that the government end the practice of selling UNRRA food supplies on the free market because of bad press. The government argued that it only sold items considered luxuries, then used the proceeds to buy grain to distribute through rations. It then acceded to UNRRA’s point, and began to distribute luxury items through rationing as well. However, the net effect was the same, as Poles who received those items sold them on the free market. Despite efforts by Drury and his staff, Western perceptions of the Polish mission became increasingly colored by the idea that distribution was politically motivated.

In Poland, as in other contexts, local governments and organizations provided UNRRA with requests for relief based on forecasts of need. UNRRAA planned the delivery of aid accordingly, but promised aid did not always materialize due to any number of logistical problems. In response to this apparent failure on the part of UNRRA, the Polish press lambasted the

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41 “Interview: T.J. Maycock with Frank Weisl, 10 October 1947,” Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA.
organization. Drury called for the press to be more responsible in its reporting, and to recognize that forecasts are not commitments.\textsuperscript{42}

Despite some disappointments and misperceptions, the Polish mission managed to earn itself a strong reputation with the Polish people themselves. During its tenure, the mission provided $485 million in aid, of which $200 million was food. The Polish government combined UNRRA supplies with indigenously produced food and then distributed it based on rationing. According to a self-produced study, Drury estimated that UNRRA provided 1100 of the 1500 calories in the urban Polish diet in June 1946.\textsuperscript{43} He hoped that UNRRA’s contribution to Poland would engender mutual understanding and good will in the future. In fact, according to Weisl, the Poles’ dependence on UNRRA grew too strong. “After the initial distrust of UNRRA had been overcome, the difficulty was not so much in assuring the Poles that UNRRA really meant to help them, but rather disabusing them of the idea that UNRRA would provide everything.” After opening of the ports at Gdynia and Gdansk, the railroad to Lodz was reserved for UNRRA goods. Weisl noted, “the trains went by all day and the population began to overestimate the extent of UNRRA aid.”\textsuperscript{44}

Some actions by the Polish government obfuscated the contribution of UNRRA, a matter that the mission staff endeavored to correct. Acting Mission Chief M. E. Hayes wrote a lengthy letter to Zygmund Modzelewski, UNRRA’s

\textsuperscript{42} “Notes of a Meeting of Polish Ministries and UNRAA regarding Program of Operations for the last half of 1946,” 29 April 1946, Box S-0527-1063, Folder: Meetings with Ministers, Poland Mission, UNRRA, UNA.
\textsuperscript{43} Armstrong-Reid and Murray, Armies of Peace, 88.
\textsuperscript{44} “Interview: T.J. Maycock with Frank Weisl, 10 October 1947,” UNA.
primary contact in the Polish government, in October 1945 outlining these concerns. Hayes noted that confusion had arisen about the role of UNRRA vis-à-vis the Polish government and its representatives. For example, a Polish newspaper reported that UNRRA officials had attended a meeting to control the distribution of UNRRA goods, when in reality Polish officials working with UNRRA had attended. At the port of Gydnia, Polish government employees had taken to wearing UNRRA armbands, even though they were not employed by UNRRA. Most significantly, Hayes pointed to numerous cases where the UNRRA insignia on UNRRA-supplied trucks and tractors had disappeared. Hayes objected to these instances on the grounds that UNRRA must maintain its positive image in the public mind to continue its work: “It is felt that to get the maximum benefit of UNRRA contributions from contributing countries, it would be very helpful if we could see that all such goods of this character are stamped with the UNRRA sign.”

The reputation of UNRRA rested on its ability to provide relief, and it must receive public acknowledgement for its success in doing so. Its continued existence, and the fulfillment of the needs of those who relied on it, depended on publicity of its good works.

For Poland, UNRRA’s contribution came at a critical time in its history. UNRRA provided food and medical relief that prevented starvation and disease. In addition, UNRRA furnished supplies to reinvigorate Poland’s industrial and agricultural sectors. For the Polish people, these contributions offered hope and a

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45 “Letter from M. E. Hayes to Zygmund Modzelewski, 30 October 1947,” Box S-0527-1045, Folder RF 37, Poland Mission, UNRRA, UNA.
boost in morale. Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, then Vice-Premier of Poland, put it this way:

UNRRA’s help came as a realization of all the promises given to Poland in the hardest time of the German occupation. So UNRRA became for Poland not only a source for the most needed supplies, but an expression of the appropriateness and practicality of international agreements, and a symbol of mutual collaboration and protection.  

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Aid as a Political Weapon: UNRRA in Yugoslavia

As in Poland, UNRRA played a key role in providing immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation for Yugoslavia. UNRRA spent more than $415 million in this small country, and played a vital role in feeding its people from 1945 to 1947. However, UNRRA operated in a political minefield, as early distrust between the Yugoslav government and the embassies of the United States and the United Kingdom forced the organization to find a neutral position that would ensure the continued delivery of relief. The adherence to a middle road that did not choose politics over relief created lingering suspicion of UNRRA and its practices in Yugoslavia from Western media and governments, and led to an internal commission inquiry in 1946 that determined no wrongdoing.

In terms of the challenges faced by UNRRA in Yugoslavia, there are a number of parallels with the Polish case. Weak leadership in the early months created chaos and inefficiency, but the appointment of the highly competent Soviet Mikhail Alexeivitch Sergeichic resolved the executive problem. The

shortage of experienced personnel led to instability and high turnover rates, particularly in the first year of the mission’s existence. UNRRA’s practice of handing over goods to the government for distribution again invited controversy, as accusations of misappropriation, later found to be baseless in the vast majority of cases, abounded. The political upheaval in the country had a profound effect on UNRRA’s operations, and its reputation in the West. While Sergeichic and the UNRRA leadership tried to remain neutral, accusations of mishandled goods, anti-Communism, pro-Communism, and espionage in the mission made its operations in Yugoslavia difficult. Ultimately, the investigation ordered by Director General LaGuardia found no widespread abuse.

By several accounts, the early leadership in the Balkans was very poor indeed. As the war continued in central and western Europe, UNRRA arrived in the liberated areas of the Balkans in 1944 under the direction of the Middle East Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (MERRA) based in Cairo.47 The distance between headquarters and the relief site, compounded by the poor leadership of Sir William Matthews of Great Britain, led to a slow and ineffectual start. Accounts of his leadership are almost comical. According to staffer Haskell, the mission was “the most badly organized organization I have ever seen in my life.” Matthews ordered the office closed for a nap from 12:30 to 4:30 pm, tea from 4:30 to 5:30, and closed the office at 7:30. He told British mission members that UNRRA would be around for a long time and that when the Americans left, more

47 MERRA served as an umbrella organization to launch UNRRA’s earliest attempts at relief in Europe while the war continued. As the Allies steadily made progress in 1944 and 1945, UNRRA established individual country missions for newly liberated areas.
jobs would open for them. A second staffer noted that "being knighted seemed too much for him" and that he enjoyed his villa too much to move closer to the mission location. Clearly, a suitable replacement would need to be found to change the course of the mission.

Sergeichic was a welcome change after Matthews, but his status as a Soviet made him suspect to some UNRRA watchers even as he displayed an initial mistrust of the motives of both the Yugoslavs and Americans. Before he assumed control of the mission on May 19, 1945, Sergeichic had handled supplies for the Soviet government in Iran.

While the leadership issue resolved itself after the arrival of Sergeichic, personnel problems plagued the mission throughout its existence. Early on, Matthews’ example poisoned the staff’s morale and influenced them to spend too much time meeting “key” people rather than building the mission. Acting Deputy Chief of Staff Neville Miller arrived in Cairo after Matthews and most of the staff. He claimed that the staff had developed poor habits and believed that they already knew how to do their jobs, so that issues of authority arose. Primarily, the mission suffered from an acute lack of competent staff, particularly in the Department of Finance and Administration. High turnover rates contributed to instability, and those rates were especially high for local personnel who the Yugoslav government refused to confirm. UNRRA hired locals and then

48 “Interview with Haskell, 28 April 1945,” Box S-0556-0006, Folder Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA.
49 “Interview with Colonel Cochran, 28 April 1945,” Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA.
50 “Interview with Daniels, 27 April 1945,” UNA.
51 “Interview with Neville Miller, 27 April 1945,” UNA.
submitted their approval to the government, and trained those staff members in the interim. With many failing to gain approval, the time and money spent on their training and acclimation to the job was wasted. In Leghorn and Trieste, instances of extreme irregularity proved true, when an executive officer in each location used their position within UNRRA to increase their personal fortunes through the black market.52 By August 1946, the staff numbered 518 people, with 370 of those being locals categorized as Class II personnel.

As in Poland, the means and methods of the distribution of relief provoked controversy and accusations that politics dictated who received that relief. In November 1944, Lehman and his deputy Sir Frederick Leith-Ross met with a Yugoslav government fearful of outside interference. According to Lehman, “they were afraid that we would employ our goods as a political weapon against them.”53 George Perazich, the Supply Chief for the Yugoslav Mission, confirmed this assessment that the Yugoslavs saw distribution as an issue of sovereignty.54 The director general explained that goods would be turned over to the government for distribution, so UNRRA could not possibly use supplies for any political end. The organization would provide some observers to ensure proper distribution and report back to the international community. Any local currency earned would be used in turn to buy more relief supplies. Satisfied with these answers, the Yugoslav government began negotiations on a draft agreement with UNRRA.

52 Woodbridge, UNRRA: Vol. II, 144.
53 Nevins, Herbert Lehman and His Era, 249.
54 “Interview with George Perazich, 11 February 1948,” Box S-0556-0006, Folder 9, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA.
In terms of distribution, the negotiations between UNRRA and the Yugoslav government produced a curious department that did not exist in other missions, the Office of Field Operations and Distribution. This department operated directly under the mission chief, and was the liaison with the government on matters of distribution. This peculiar arrangement raised eyebrows outside the mission, and gave critics ammunition to suggest that it gave the mission chief the opportunity to subvert normal protocol. The fact that Sergeichic was a Soviet made those suggestions seem more plausible. However, George Perazich contended that no abuse or mishandling occurred. There was a sense of resentment among those in Perazich’s department toward the special office as it was seen as usurping the former’s purpose.\textsuperscript{55} Still, Perazich said that the Yugoslavs had such need that they had every incentive to use supplies to their best advantage, and that UNRRA could never have recruited the staff to control distribution throughout Yugoslavia. On Sergeichic, he claimed that the mission chief vigorously objected to any misuse of supplies and was in full accordance with UNRRA’s principles.\textsuperscript{56}

Outside the mission, the political climate presented extensive challenges to the distribution of relief. As UNRRA arrived in Yugoslavia, Tito’s regime consolidated its control of the country. Public Information Officer Bill Morrell

\textsuperscript{55} “Interview with George Perazich, 11 February 1948,” Box S-0556-0006, Folder 9, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA. Perazich was born in Montenegro and immigrated to the United States in 1927. He also served as Director of Industrial Rehabilitation in the mission. After the war, he became an expert in energy and atomic power at the University of Chicago who consulted with the World Bank and various state governments.

\textsuperscript{56} “Interview with George Perazich, 11 February 1948,” Box S-0556-0006, Folder 9, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, UNA.
commented that inexperience reigned at all levels of government and that the internal press was tightly controlled. In July 1945, Lehman visited Belgrade to meet with Tito about the frayed relationship between his government, the United States, Great Britain and UNRRA. Mutual suspicion had cast UNRRA in the middle of a standoff between Tito and the West. The Yugoslavs welcomed Lehman graciously, as their need for UNRRA supplies continued unabated. The director general explained to Tito that American and British diplomats in his country objected to constant surveillance and that the press disseminated stories that UNRRA goods were being misused. When Tito expressed gratitude for UNRRA and the materials it supplied, Lehman suggested that he make a public statement to that effect in an attempt to sway public relations. Tito did so, and the New York Times reported on it the next day.

However, that type of positive press was not indicative of much of the coverage of UNRRA in Yugoslavia. A series of incidents and accusations led to dispatch of a special commission to Yugoslavia to determine whether abuses existed there. The first was the dismissal of Leo Hochstetter, an American who ran the mission’s Public Information Office. Hochstetter accused Sergeichic of censorship, specifically that the mission chief prevented the Yugoslav public from knowing the extent of UNRRA’s activities and the source of its funding. To the New York Times, Hochstetter stated, “It is my view that a public information officer in UNRRA is an international public servant, charged with the twofold

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57 “Interview with Bill Morrell, 12 November 1946,” UNA.
58 Nevins, Herbert Lehman and His Era, 265-266.
responsibility of explaining all aspects of UNRRA’s program to beneficiaries and accounting for UNRRA’s activities to the contributors.”

In particular, he objected to Sergeichic’s mandate that all press releases related to UNRRA must be personally approved before release to the Yugoslav press.

However, Public Information Officer Bill Morrell contends that it was Hochstetter’s own bias that made him a poor fit for the job. Morrell claims that Hochstetter’s profound dislike of Communism made it impossible for him to work with Sergeichic. He demanded that the mission chief dismiss two women on his staff that he accused of Communism, but Sergeichic chose to remove him instead. Morrell further called him “unbalanced” and possessing a “poor work ethic.”

Hochstetter went on to write a scathing indictment of the UNRRA mission in Yugoslavia in the popular Saturday Evening Post. His palpable distaste for Sergeichic evident, he saved his strongest criticism for American and British officials whose Communist sympathies betrayed their national loyalties, “they are poor international servants because they refuse to divest themselves of their ideologies in carrying out their UNRRA duties.”

The dismissal of Hochstetter in June 1946 preceded a serious diplomatic crisis between the United States and Yugoslavia. On August 9, 1946, Yugoslav fighter planes forced an American C-47 transport plane on a standard route from Vienna to Udine to land near Ljubljana. Claiming that the plane had violated

61 “Interview with Bill Morrell, 12 November 1946,” UNA.
Yugoslav airspace, the government detained its passengers and crew and denied them access to consular counsel. The United States launched a strong protest, saying the plane had merely flown off course due to bad weather. On August 19, a second plane was shot down, killing all on board. UNRRA officials reported in the press that overcast conditions existed that day as well, refuting Tito’s claim that the skies were clear that day. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes demanded an explanation from vice-premier Edvard Kardelj, who repeated the claim that the plane had violated Yugoslav airspace. The US called for the immediate release of the passengers of the first plane, or the matter would go to the United Nations Security Council. Ambassador Richard C. Patterson met with Tito on August 22, and the Yugoslav leader informed him that the passengers had been released and a search had begun for the wreckage of the second plane. Tito promised that foreign planes would not be at risk over Yugoslavia any longer, but maintained that the US had ignored Yugoslav sovereignty. These attacks created uproar in the US public and media who viewed Tito as a hostile leader controlled to some extent by Moscow. The Truman administration shared this tunnel vision, but studies of Yugoslav sources show that this incident was an early indication of Tito’s independent style that would be consistently misinterpreted by the West.

The fallout from the plane attacks added to the already damaged reputation of the UNRRA mission in Yugoslavia. The pervasive distrust between the United States and Yugoslavia bled into UNRRA’s humanitarian operations. In

64 Lorraine Lees, Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War, 1945-1960, (State College, PA; Penn State Press, 2005), 14-15.
65 Lees, Keeping Tito Afloat, 17.
this climate, accusations of espionage did not seem far-fetched in the least. On September 27, the Yugoslav government arrested Robert Burnup, an American who had worked for UNRRA for five months as a construction engineer. A native of Independence, Missouri, Burnup had allegedly worked in collusion with the government’s rival Chetnik forces. General Director Fiorello LaGuardia demanded his immediate release based on diplomatic immunity. Burnup’s arrest only exacerbated the frayed relationship between the US and Yugoslavia. In reporting on the incident to the State Department in a telegram, Ambassador Patterson suggested that Yugoslavia’s transgressions could result in the end of the UNRRA mission, “My opinion on basis agreement violations justification can be found immediate discontinuance entire program.” Despite Patterson’s musings, the United States did not have the power to end the mission unilaterally even though it provided the vast majority of the funding. While the US had threatened to pull UNRRA’s aid to Yugoslavia to pressure its government to negotiate, it could not easily do so because UNRRA was an international and humanitarian organization that served any nation in need as a result of the war. That restriction with regard to UNRRA contributed to the desire of US policymakers to find another way to rebuild Europe.

In the wake of the Burnup incident, LaGuardia wrote to Tito to appeal for a softer stance that would lessen the risk that the United States would take steps to reduce UNRRA’s funding, and in turn, the aid that it could provide to Yugoslavia.

67 “Telegram from Patterson to C. Tyler Wood,” Box 26B1, Folder 15, UNRRA Series, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Documents Collection, LaGuardia and Wagner Archives.
In his normally frank style, LaGuardia spoke to the Yugoslav leader from the
card. The former mayor had spent his early professional career as a clerk at the
US consulates in Trieste and Rijeka, Croatia. Further, his parents had met and
married in Trieste, so LaGuardia had a personal affinity for the region. He
explained to Tito that the actions of his government had made it very difficult for
those who wanted to help his nation, or any other in need of UNRRA aid.
LaGuardia mentions the “irreparable” damage done by the downed aircraft, the
oft-repeated charges of diverted materials to the army, and the current trial of a
Croatian bishop that many Americans found a distasteful attack on a religious
institution. LaGuardia informed Tito that he had ordered a special commission to
investigate all accusations of wrongdoing, and asked that he cooperate fully for
the good of international humanitarian cooperation. He concluded his letter with
a plea for religious tolerance, “Please as I asked at the shore of the lake, do not
take their one hope from them. They believe in the Mother of God. They were
born with it. Don’t permit this one solace that they have carried through the
centuries be destroyed.”

Whether swayed by LaGuardia or recognizing what he had to gain with his
cooperation, Tito and his government complied fully with the investigation.
LaGuardia sent a top team headed by his deputies Robert Jackson and Alfred
Katzin. Katzin of South Africa, C. Hart Schaaf of the United States, and Jean Burnay
of France conducted the investigation. LaGuardia wanted the commission to seek

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68 “Letter from LaGuardia to Tito, 9 October 1946,” Box 26B1, Folder 15, UNRRA
Series, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Documents Collection, LaGuardia and Wagner
Archives.
out evidence that any of the allegations floating around in the press over the past several months had any merit. Among the most serious charges were those accusing the Yugoslav government of diverting a significant amount of UNRRA supplies to the army, the misuse of UNRRA foodstuffs and vehicles by the army, and widespread abuse in distribution practices.

After an investigation, the commission concluded that no widespread abuse of irregularities existed, and called charges to the contrary “frivolous and misleading.”

While the commission acknowledged and documented a few specific instances of misappropriation, it argued that these were exceptions to the rule that the press had taken to be the rule as opposed to the exception. The report commented further on how these charges have affected the functioning of the mission. For the staff, the accusations had seriously compromised morale, particularly for Americans. Many expressed concern for their future job prospects, saying that their association with the Yugoslav mission made them subject to anti-Communist discrimination.

The commission wrote in strong support of Sergeichic, noting his fair-mindedness and even judgment. Such an assessment would be crucial to dispel those rumors that Sergeichic could not be trusted simply because he was a Soviet. UNRRA’s relationship with the US Embassy also merited review by the commission. Katzin and his team found that Ambassador Patterson was wary of the Yugoslav government, and its close working relationship with UNRRA made the latter suspect in his eyes. Patterson’s

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contention that the Yugoslav government had violated its agreement with UNRRA tainted his perception, and poisoned the working relationship between the three entities. While the commission did not find the Yugoslav government in violation of the agreement, the perception that abuses occurred became reality.

Controlling perception proved difficult, as UNRRA’s Office of Public Information found. Guy Hicock, the second Chief of Information from the Poland Mission, offered some of his thoughts on the ways in which the perceptions of the missions in Greece and Italy differed markedly from those of Poland and Yugoslavia. Being a journalist by trade, it is no surprise that he argues that the failure of the Public Information Offices in Poland and Yugoslavia sits in stark contrast to the success of those in Greece and Italy. Reporters had to wait months for visas to Poland, as opposed to near immediate issuance to Greece and Italy. That provoked suspicion among journalists that the delay was deliberate. Already aware of the widening gulf between the Americans and the Soviets and its implications for Eastern Europe, journalists were quick to blame the delay on nefarious causes rather than administrative backlog. “Those who came to Poland, and who reported news from Poland, realized that in most respects ‘iron curtain’ was an inaccurate term; but those who came were a handful compared to those who felt that the ‘iron curtain’ had left them out.” He continues that the “worst offender” in this regard was not Poland, but Yugoslavia where “both government and Mission chief seem to conspire to put the country’s worst foot forward. . . . It is more than possible that if one could weigh all the influences in the 1946 appropriation being the last, it would be found that the press situation in
[Y]ugoslavia tipped the balance.” Hicock directly links the end of UNRRA in terms of its funding from the United States to the bad press it received in Yugoslavia. In Poland, the Public Information Office did not interface with the press well, whereas in Italy and Greece it attempted to ingratiate itself with reporters by providing housing and transportation assistance. Both the Italian and Greek missions produced photography of UNRRA activities that could be provided to correspondents, while Poland did not. Hicock summarized his thoughts in the following way: “… The Mission Chiefs in Greece and Italy were aggressive in the search for good publicity, and both were keenly aware that it was more effective, propaganda-wise, to have many disinterested people, i.e. press correspondents, say good things about their missions than it was for a member of the mission to make a statement that it is good.”

Recognizing the power of the press to shape public opinion, Hicock blasts the Polish and Yugoslav missions for failing to court the press in the way that the Greek and Italian missions did. In his opinion, that lack of interest in the press had significant ramifications for UNRRA’s funding and future.

In many ways, Poland and Yugoslavia were ground zero for the man-made disaster of World War II. The destruction it wrought required a massive response to provide for the immediate needs of the population and offer hope for recovery. With a combined aid package of $900 million for these two nations, UNRRA arrived to try to ameliorate the postwar deprivations and help to build a new future. However, UNRRA’s official commitment to political neutrality made it

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71 “Public Information Division,” Office of the Historian, Monographs: Poland, Public Information, UNRRA, UNA.
suspect in the eyes of both Communist and anti-Communist factions. For the Communists, UNRRA provided much needed aid to their countries, but that aid came from Western capitalist states. For the United States, UNRRA’s decision to allow distribution to occur through local channels raised red flags that Communist groups may use supplies to their political advantage. In the press, perception became reality, and the idea that UNRRA favored the Communists persisted despite a lack of evidence to support it. UNRRA’s employment of Soviets in positions of power made those individuals immediately suspect; in the case of Menshikov, those suspicions seem well founded, but in the case of Sergeichic, they do not. UNRRA’s mission as a neutral humanitarian organization became steadily incompatible with the hardening realities of the Cold War. Because it would not choose a side, UNRRA became sidelined in favor of programs with a specific political end.

“Exactly Like ‘là-bas au Congo’”: UNRRA and DPs in Germany

American Kathryn Hulme wrote two memoirs about her time as an UNRRA staffer in displaced persons camps in Germany. At Wildflecken on the border between Bavaria and Hesse, Hulme managed the repatriation of Polish forced laborers. She describes how she and her fellow staffers were initially shocked by the condition of the camp and its inhabitants when they arrived in July 1945, and that the development of a stoic exterior often belied anxiety, depression, and hopelessness caused by bearing witness to the human cost of war. A true believer in UNRRA’s internationalist mission, Hulme nonetheless
remained cognizant of how the destructive nature of nationalism endured: “I was a torch carrier for the international idea from the beginnings of my days in the base camp, through all I saw at first was nationalism vociferously, sometimes vengefully expressed.” She describes the tendency of national groups to stay together, and the feelings of vengefulness expressed by Europeans toward the Germans. Her close friend and fellow UNRRA staffer, a Belgian nurse who had recently left a convent, compared Wildflecken to her seven-year posting in the Belgian Congo. In Hulme’s words, “Our vast supine population being cared for paternally, our group of caretakers representing in general only mediocre intelligence, only average decency, exactly like any cross section of society anywhere, n’est-ce pas? Exactly like ‘là-bas au Congo.’” Hulme’s characterization of a “supine” population certainly does not square with historical studies of the agency of DPs, and the abuses inflicted by the Belgian administration in the Congo are now notorious. However, Hulme’s point about the averageness of UNRRA staff was as true in Germany as it was throughout the UNRRA administration.

To Sir Frederick Morgan, the head of UNRRA operations in Germany, average was not enough. His embattled tenure at UNRRA illustrates the intersection between relief and politics. Morgan, a British general who had been one of the principal planners of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, was appointed to head UNRRA’s Displaced Persons Operations in Germany in September 1945.

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73 Hulme, *Undiscovered Country*, 236.
From the beginning, Morgan’s relationship with UNRRA was rocky. Although Morgan brought military planning and precision to the German DP camps, and by all accounts, made some improvement to the conditions within them, he remained throughout his tenure scathingly critical of UNRRA’s inner workings, particularly its personnel and lack of organization. In his autobiography, Morgan professed his shock that “the world outside the British Army bears little resemblance to that within its ranks.”74 He filled his diary with his critical assessment of the state of affairs. Coming from a highly disciplined military background, Morgan described many of the staff he met as inadequate and unmotivated. He complains that his staff at Headquarters would consider taking Armistice Day as a holiday when there is so much work to be done.75 Morgan’s personal papers also contain many lengthy passages displaying his palpable contempt for the poor quality of UNRRA staff and the lack of administrative efficiency. For example:

I was therefore prepared to find that things were not apple pie order but I must admit that the actual state of chaos that I found existing amongst the UNRRA employees in Germany far exceeded anything I could have possibly imagined. I estimate that for the first few months of office I was obliged to devote upwards of 90% of my time and attention to attempting to regulate the varied excesses and deficiencies of the UNRRA personnel. In the course of my eleven months of endeavour, I was able to reduce this percentage I should say to the neighbourhood of 50%. The remainder of my

75 Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Morgan: Personal Diary, 12 November 1945, Private Papers of Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan KCB, Documents.12511, IWM.
time and attention I was able to give to the displaced persons themselves.\textsuperscript{76}

Morgan does display genuine concern for the displaced persons, but expresses considerable frustration that he has to devote so much time to personnel and administrative issues that reduce his effectiveness in dealing with the real problems of relief. A few examples from Morgan's diary further illustrate his views of individuals within UNRRA:

Knowing nothing whatever about China and having no experience in the field, she has been sent off to Germany from Washington to recruit personnel serving in Germany for transfer to the UNRRA Mission in China... surely it would be possible to send somebody who had some practical experience of some kind somewhere.\textsuperscript{77}

Though Peter is no great brain or ball of fire, he is nevertheless one of that depressingly small minority in UNRRA who are thoroughly earnest and honest and can be relied upon in any and every circumstance.\textsuperscript{78}

I have rarely met a more futile individual but his case makes one wonder as to the efficacy of our educational system... I have known him since I joined UNRRA last September and I know from personal observation that since that time his output of useful work in any direction whatever has been exactly zero.\textsuperscript{79}

While Morgan's cutting language reveals him as highly critical of UNRRA, his assessments should be viewed as reliable because of his experience at the highest

\textsuperscript{76} Draft of a letter from Morgan to the Under Secretary of State, 14 September 1946, Papers of Sir Frederick Morgan, 02/49/1, FM 6/1, Imperial War Museum (IWM), London.

\textsuperscript{77} Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Morgan: Personal Diary, 13 November 1945, Private Papers of Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan KCB, Documents.12511, IWM.

\textsuperscript{78} Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Morgan: Personal Diary, 14 May 1946, Private Papers of Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan KCB, Documents.12511, IWM.

\textsuperscript{79} Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Morgan: Personal Diary, 31 May 1946, Private Papers of Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan KCB, Documents.12511, IWM.
levels of the Allied military effort. During the first several months of his tenure as Chief of Operations in Germany, Morgan sought to correct what he saw as an extremely inefficient bureaucracy staffed with mediocre officials.

Morgan’s concerns about the quality of UNRRA staff reflected not just concerns about their overall competence, but also their engagement in black market activity and spying for the Soviets. As Morgan himself acknowledged, black market profiteering was quite common at the end of the war: “… it is hardly an exaggeration to say that every man, woman, and child in Western Europe is engaged to a greater or less degree in illegal trading of one kind or another… it is hardly possible to support existence without doing so.”

In Germany in particular, the inadequacy of the legal ration system and the inflation of the Reichsmark made trade, barter, and black market activity commonplace in Germany. However, Morgan found cases of UNRRA workers profiting from such activities offensive. In some cases, DPs chose to sell personal possessions to obtain extra food, but the more concerning incidents involved those with access to food stores profiting handsomely.

Numerous examples support Morgan’s suspicions. At a camp in Hanau, director Harry Heath was to receive 2300 calories per displaced person, but only 1600 calories per person arrived on the transports. Following an investigation, Heath found that the former American army sergeant charged with delivering foodstuffs to the camp had been selling the additional calories on the black market.

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80 Draft of a letter to Under Secretary of State, 14 September 1946, p. 4; Papers of Sir Frederick Morgan, 02/49/1, FM 6/1, IWM.
81 Crago-Schneider, “Jewish ‘Shtetls’ in Postwar Germany,” 148.
market and enriched himself with ten thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{82} Irene Callow-Miles, working as an administrative assistant in Germany and Austria, described that materials such as surgical instruments and light bulbs constantly went missing during the establishment of a hospital in Marienthal.\textsuperscript{83} Hulme recalled her astonishment when two UNRRA drivers she described as “simple honest mechanics who had never before in their lives stolen anything” absconded with an UNRRA truck “with enough black-market goods aboard to assure them a fine head start toward resuming their normal lives again.”\textsuperscript{84} Although Hulme wonders at the dire circumstances that would compel seemingly decent human beings to steal rations from displaced persons, Morgan tended to take a more negative view of the propensity for humans to act selfishly. The general frequently heard stories of corruption and dishonesty that he “had never heard anything like it even in the worst days of the British Army after the last war.”\textsuperscript{85}

Deeply disappointed upon his arrival, Morgan set to work recruiting UNRRA officers for Germany that would meet a higher standard. Using his connections and influence, he was able to recruit military officers released from the front with the end of the war. By the spring of 1946, he believed that the staff had improved considerably and he was able to devote more of his attention to the displaced persons themselves. However, the outspokenness displayed in his

\textsuperscript{82} “Practical Christianity: Major Heath’s Address on German D.P. Camp,” Private Papers of Mr. and Mrs. H. Heath, Documents.7908, IWM.
\textsuperscript{84} Hulme, Undiscovered Country, 235.
\textsuperscript{85} Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Morgan: Personal Diary, 13 November 1945, Private Papers of Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan KCB, Documents.12511, IWM.
diary entries became a very public liability when he implied in a press conference that Zionist organizations were actively encouraging European Jews to emigrate to Palestine in violation of the mandate.

In January 1946, Morgan’s comments about Jewish displaced persons threatened to damage UNRRA’s reputation severely. Because Morgan’s outspokenness and righteousness were well known in British military circles, Jackson had personally warned him not to make any statement on the Zionist problem unless vetted by Director General Lehman himself. Zionist groups posed particular problems for UNRRA in Europe. Since the end of the war in Europe and the liberation of victims of the Nazis, the British position in Palestine had grown more precarious as thousands of Jewish refugees sought to emigrate from Europe. Historians have documented Zionist activity in the DP camps, but the acknowledgement of that fact was politically dangerous at the time. Morgan had grown conflicted about the plight of Jewish refugees in Germany and his role as an officer of the British government that restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine. On the one hand, he came into daily contact with Jewish Holocaust victims who had little desire to return to their country of origin, and understood their motivation to emigrate elsewhere. On the other hand, UNRRA had committed to encouraging repatriation and the British government did not want to encourage emigration to Palestine. Morgan found Zionist activity in the camps

as undermining those policies, and as an active member of the British military, he strongly opposed it.

In January 1946, Morgan commented on Zionist activity in DP camps at a press conference. No transcript or recording of the press conference exists, but reports that emerged cast Morgan as an attacker, claiming that a Zionist “plot” existed to smuggle Jews out of Europe to Palestine. Jewish leaders and the press went on the offensive against Morgan. The tone of his characterization of Jewish activity harkened to centuries old fears of Jewish conspiracy, and they rightly attacked his rhetoric. *The New York Times* said Morgan’s remarks were an insult to the Jewish victims of Hitler, while columnist Walter Winchell called for Morgan’s ouster not only from UNRRA, but the British military as well.87

For his part, Morgan was genuinely taken aback by the reaction to his comments and stood by their essential truth, if not the tone in which the press conveyed them. He later commented in his autobiography:

I had been able to piece together a reasonably comprehensive picture of the way in which the UNRRA set up was being most skillfully used to promote what was nothing less than a Zionist campaign of aggression in Palestine. In defiance of the prohibition by the British Mandatory power, reluctant as ever to employ decisive means, the admirably organised Zionist command was employing any and every means of forcing immigration into the country irrespective of the hardship and sufferings of the immigrants, few of whom seemed to have spontaneous enthusiasm for the Zionist cause. The whole project evidently had Russian connivance, if not actual support, since its success would conduce to the elimination of British authority in a vital area of the Middle East.88

88 Morgan, *Peace and War*, 245.
While it is unclear what Morgan said at the time, his later reflections make plain that he saw what he perceived as Zionist motivation to recruit emigrants to Palestine despite the desires of the potential emigrants themselves. Beyond concern for the refugees, Morgan points out that Zionist activity in UNRRA camps could threaten the British Empire and destabilize the entire Middle East, an outcome advantageous to the Soviet Union. Morgan was correct that the Soviets would gladly expand their sphere of influence into that area, but his generalization that Jewish DPs had little interest in Zionism rings hollow. The increasingly complicated situation in Palestine would have made Morgan’s comments all the more incendiary to the press.

The media firestorm that erupted from Morgan’s comments required swift reaction from Lehman, who faced a difficult decision. As head of UNRRA, he needed to protect its reputation, one that had already been battered by criticism of its staff and its effectiveness. Now a very senior level official had made comments that the press interpreted as saying that UNRRA was a tool of both the Zionists and the Soviets. Although Morgan’s comments had hurt Lehman “personally, officially, and politically,” he chose to deal with the issue in a generous and tolerant manner, according to General Jackson.89 Despite Morgan’s comments, Lehman recognized that UNRRA needed a respected military official in Germany because Allied military authorities held the power there, and UNRRA’s only hope to secure logistical cooperation would be to have one of the military’s own at its head. Morgan’s ouster would only hurt the DPs, so Lehman

determined to work with him to keep him on while addressing the public relations mess.

For his part, Morgan had little inclination to recant assertions that he believed to be true, but that the press had exaggerated. He entered a series of meetings with Lehman in late January with a characteristic sense of his own correctness. His curt characterization of Lehman’s concern over the scandal illustrates his rather snobbish attitude toward UNRRA and its leadership. His diary records his impressions of how the scandal affected both Lehman and his deputy, Jackson. Regarding Lehman, Morgan noted: “The poor little man was in a state of acute nervousness. . . I fancy it is largely a case of windup and there seems plenty for him to be scared of, he did his best to impress me but failed rather pathetically.” As for Jackson, whom he had known for many years as part of the elite in the British military, “He is in a most shocking state, three parts demented, his face covered with sores, and while talking, he is continually yawning and scratching himself. . . He treats the Governor rather as the head prefect, conscious of his special privileges, would treat an indulgent and rather indifferent headmaster.” On Mrs. Lehman, who presided over a meal served to the men, Morgan noted that she “obviously wears the pants.”

In many ways, Morgan’s observations say more about him than they do about his colleagues. His tone is highly critical, and he seems to express a lack of respect for Lehman and Jackson, despite the fact that they are his superiors. Morgan’s attitude here is perhaps indicative of his personality as a whole, but

90 Private Papers of Sir Frederick Morgan KCB, Imperial War Museum, 26 January 1946.
also his status as a revered British general taking orders from a civilian leader of a humanitarian agency. His tenure at UNRRA had rudely awakened him to the differences between military and civilian organizations, the former which he of course preferred.

For his part, Lehman was anxious to smooth over the controversy and urged Morgan repeatedly, when the two men met, to issue an apology. While Lehman’s biography paints the meetings between the two men as “amicable,” Morgan recounts the episode entirely differently in his diary:

I was sorely tempted to take the whole thing and throw it in the Governor’s teeth and tell him to go to hell and take UNRRA with him and everything else… [I] of course realized that the little satisfaction this might give would bring no benefit to anybody. I therefore decided to eat the small portion of crow that was demanded of me and let the affair take its course.91

He describes the meeting similarly in his 1961 autobiography, but with considerably less emotional verve. Rather than painting Lehman as his adversary as he does in his diary, he says, “[Lehman] obviously hated the whole business as much as I did but he, poor man, had much more at stake than I.”92 He compliments Lehman as a man of substance and balanced judgment who had been thrust into an unenviable position. Morgan recalled that the tension subsided quickly once he agreed to make a public statement clarifying his remarks, and rejecting the characterization of him as an anti-Semite. Just as many media scandals do, the Morgan incident faded quickly from the headlines. The

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91 Nevins, Herbert Lehman and His Era, 294; Morgan Diary, 26 January 1946, IWM.  
92 Morgan, Peace and War, 248.
situation illustrated some of Lehman’s better leadership qualities, namely, sound and balanced judgment.

Morgan would remain in his post, but he would soon confront Lehman’s successor Fiorello LaGuardia. Morgan agreed with the general assessment that LaGuardia had been a gifted mayor, but might not be able handle the scale of an international organization and its politics. He took things a step further by asserting that LaGuardia remained beholden to a Zionist agenda because of his political ambitions, saying in his autobiography, “all that matters to him was that the resources of U.N.R.R.A. should be devoted as far as possible to the support of Zionist ambitions which should have beneficial results on his political campaign in New York.”93 In a suggestion that would reflect the charges of United States Congressmen, Morgan also accused LaGuardia of being soft on Communism because of his stance that UNRRA would continue to provide relief to Communist countries. Morgan’s assessment must be taken in the context of his larger biases, namely his tendency to see Zionist and Communist conspiracies everywhere.

As he privately questioned the loyalty of the director general himself, Morgan’s public suspicions about the political loyalties of UNRRA staff contributed to the perception that it was a safe haven for Communists. During his tenure as Chief of Operations in Germany, Morgan commented publicly in 1946 that UNRRA was “honeycombed with spies.”94 After a press report cited an Allied military source describing UNRRA as infiltrated with Russians and criminal elements, LaGuardia launched an investigation. When that investigation

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93 Morgan, Peace and War, 256.
determined that Morgan was the source, LaGuardia dismissed him.95 The director
general could not condone such a public act of insubordination, even though
Morgan’s claims about spying and black market activity would later prove
partially true, albeit exaggerated. At that point in time, only one UNRRA employee
had proved to be a spy for the Soviets, but the American army would uncover
nearly a dozen more by 1947.96

The replacement of Morgan with Myer Cohen ushered in a period of
intense effort to repatriate the remaining displaced persons in UNRRA camps in
Germany. LaGuardia offered two months’ rations to any Pole willing to repatriate,
and advocated strongly for the emigration of Jewish DPs to Palestine.97 He called
on UNRRA member nations to accept refugees, with the United States leading the
way by admitting 120,000 to 150,000. In a speech in New York City in October
1946, LaGuardia described the difficulty of convincing the remaining DPs to
return home due to trauma and the fear of the current political situation in their
home country. In particular, Jews poured into the American occupation zone in
Germany because the British military categorized them based on national origin
rather than religion or ethnicity, a classification that many rejected. He also
referenced the Nazi Lebensborn program where Aryan-looking children were
kidnapped from occupied countries and then tested for fitness and intelligence.

95 Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Great Britain, the United States, and
Kochavi argues that the British Foreign Office opposed Morgan’s dismissal
because it feared his replacement would be too sympathetic to Jewish calls for
passage to British-controlled Palestine.
96 See Reinisch, “'Auntie UNRRA’ at the Crossroads,” 97.
97 Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 323.
Those deemed appropriate were placed in German orphanages or with families, while those deemed unfit were subjected to eugenics experiments. LaGuardia described the discovery of these children to support his assertion that the United States must act to offer an opportunity for immigration to these children and other persecuted people.98

LaGuardia made these comments in a period of shifting public opinion regarding immigration. Remarkably, the war and the resulting refugee crisis did little to change anti-immigration views in the United States immediately after the war. The humanitarian need to accept refugees conflicted with Americans' view of their own self-interest after fighting a long and difficult war. Many Americans were not ready to return to the interventionist mode of World War II. Families wanted their loved ones home, and politicians wanted to be reelected. The massive demobilization of 1945-46 reflects these impulses.99 This insularity extended to immigration. According to a poll, seventy-two percent of Americans opposed a plan introduced by Truman in August 1946 to admit an unspecified number of DPs to the United States.100 Gradually though, opinions began to change. According to Ben Shephard, the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons had a decisive role in this shift.

Established by former Sears, Roebuck head Lessing J. Rosenwald and Earl

100 Shephard, *The Long Road Home*, 373.
G. Harrison, the Citizens Committee launched a highly effective media campaign to educate politicians and the American public about the plight of the DPs.\textsuperscript{101} In particular, it aimed to alter the impression that all DPs were Jewish, therefore removing anti-Semitic reasons to oppose an increase in immigration. Prominent Christian organizations began to speak in favor of admitting large numbers of refugees, as several Congressmen visited DP camps in Europe to discover that more than eighty percent of those seeking to emigrate were Polish, Ukrainian, Baltic, or Yugoslav. The events of 1947 and 1948 – the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the Berlin Airlift, and the announcement of the Marshall Plan – solidified shifting support for the admittance of large numbers of DPs because the issue was now political rather than ethnic. Once the refugees were seen as political refugees from Communism as opposed to foreign ethnic groups, public opinion and then public policy changed. The humanitarian need now aligned with US national interests, and so the shift occurred. Accepting refugees would promote peace and prosperity while undermining Communism. Subsequent legislation permitted the immigration of 380,000 DPs by 1952, by far the greatest number of any nation.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{101} Harrison had written the influential report to Truman that criticized the Allies treatment of displaced persons, particularly Jews. The Harrison Report resulted in separate camps for Jewish displaced persons.

\textsuperscript{102} Shephard, \textit{The Long Road Home}, 382. See also Haim Genizi, \textit{America’s Fair Share: The Admission and Resettlement of Displaced Persons, 1945-1952} (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1993.)
In central Europe, UNRRA operated missions to provide relief and rehabilitation. In Poland and Yugoslavia, UNRRA leadership worked both for and against that goal. In Germany, the controversy surrounding General Morgan certainly detracted from the mission. Morgan’s comments further eroded UNRRA’s reputation as a haven for incompetents and Communists. Certainly such a flawed organization could not be fulfilling its internationalist mission and serving American interests. Distribution, repatriation, and immigration were all political in the above contexts. UNRRA sought to remain politically neutral, but faced criticism from the United States that such neutral policies were by their very nature favoring Communists.
Chapter 4

“Communists Need to Eat, Too”:

Delivering Relief to Ukraine and Byelorussia

On February 9, 1946, Joseph Stalin gave his first major public speech since the end of World War II. Addressing the Soviet radio audience, he resumed the confrontational, ideological rhetoric that had been absent during the war in deference to the alliance. He predicted a clash between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union as inevitable due to capitalist development, and called for the Soviet Union to strengthen its national security measures. One month later, former Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered his famous Iron Curtain speech where he described Soviet control of Eastern Europe. President Harry Truman privately endorsed the speech. Longstanding debates about the beginning of the Cold War will certainly rage for decades to come, but the spring of 1946 is clearly a turning point as these very public pronouncements transformed a former ally into an enemy. The resumption of the Chinese Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists in January, the issuance of
George Kennan’s Long Telegram in February, and the outbreak of the Greek Civil War in March heightened the division between East and West.¹

For UNRRA, the spring of 1946 was another period of transition. Herbert Lehman had resigned in March, and Fiorello LaGuardia succeeded him in April. Like Lehman before him, LaGuardia believed that humanitarianism was essential to the postwar recovery. Both men shared a set of liberal values that led them to champion New Deal programs such as a mandated minimum wage, worker’s compensation, unemployment insurance and public housing. Both products of New York City, these men from opposing political parties actually found common ground throughout their parallel political careers. However, in temperament and personality, the two men could not have been more different. Lehman was a disciplined administrator, while LaGuardia tended to make both speeches and decisions at a moment’s notice. The careful, calm Lehman contrasted sharply with the impassioned orator known as the “Little Flower.” By its very nature, personality shapes leadership, and the two General Directors of UNRRA were no different.

While he would prove to be a controversial choice to head UNRRA, LaGuardia’s executive talents were well-known. He had served in Congress, championing workers’ rights. Then as mayor of New York City for three terms from 1934 to 1945, he reformed the civil service and modernized the infrastructure as he ended the long reign of Tammany Hall as the power broker

¹ George Kennan’s analysis of Soviet intentions would serve as the basis for containment policy.
in the city. Although small in stature, LaGuardia was a natural showman whose campaign speeches and radio addresses drew loyal audiences. However, he was not an easy man to work with. Historian Robert Caro described him in this way: “Men who distrusted excess distrusted him. And he did not hesitate to play melting-pot politics, to wave the bloody flag, to appeal, in one of the seven languages in which he could harangue an audience, to the insecurities, resentments and prejudices of the ethnic groups. . . . His naked ambition for high office, his cockiness, truculence and violent temper. . . . repelled them.”

Lehman was one of those men who had often been repelled by LaGuardia’s style.

As LaGuardia took over for Lehman in the spring of 1946, Richard Scandrett and his staff of nine UNRRA officials arrived in the devastated Soviet republic of Byelorussia. In their first weeks there, the mission staff traveled widely to assess the damage done by the war and the most pressing material needs. In the city of Vitebsk, Scandrett visited the site of a blood bank where townspeople alleged that the Germans had kept one hundred children at a time to harvest their plasma until they died. He spoke with a woman, who as the sole survivor of a massacre of her village of fourteen hundred people, had escaped to the partisans in the forest. Every person Scandrett spoke to had lost someone but

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2 Founded in 1786, Tammany Hall was the Democratic political machine that ran New York City into the twentieth century. Using political patronage, Tammany controlled elections and helped immigrants, particularly the Irish, gain a foothold in New York politics. See Terry Golway, Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Making of Modern American Politics (New York: Liveright, 2014).


4 For the purposes of this chapter, I will use the terms “Byelorussia” and “the Ukraine” to refer to the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as they existed in 1946.
few mentioned it unless asked: “It is such a usual experience that everyone in Byelorussia is surprised when you are shocked. To them it is like ‘dog bites man’ is [to us].”\(^5\) According to Scandrett’s estimates, the death toll for civilians in Byelorussia was approximately two million, with nearly 300,000 children left orphaned to be cared for by the state.\(^6\)

The experience of those early weeks impressed upon Scandrett the dire need of the Byelorussian people for a major infusion of aid from UNRRA. While half of the initial $61 million grant would pay for food, the other half would secure desperately needed medical, industrial and agricultural equipment that the Germans had efficiently dismantled and sent back home.\(^7\) The lack of modern farming equipment had caused some regions to revert to an essentially pre-industrial state with few opportunities to create the surpluses needed to cope with the harsh Soviet winters.

The conditions were much the same in the Ukraine, where Marshall MacDuffie headed a UNRRA mission in 1946. The war had caused major shortages of manpower, horses and equipment. Farm production was at less than half the pre-war yield.\(^8\) MacDuffie wrote, “I have seen the destruction of the war in Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Ethiopia, in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Poland, 


\(^7\) The grant to Byelorussia was part of a larger $250 million UNRRA grant to the Soviet Union. The Ukraine received the remaining $189 million.

Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy and Germany. All that cannot even compare to the devastation in the Ukraine is Warsaw and some bombed out German cities.”

Scandrett and MacDuffie were deeply affected by the situation in their respective mission countries and worked to ensure that politics would not curtail the distribution of relief. A Republican and a lawyer, Scandrett had run for Congress unsuccessfully in 1938 and supported Robert A. Taft’s nomination for president in 1940. He had most recently served on the Allied Reparations Commission. As a Republican, Scandrett could avoid questions of his political loyalty in light of the reputation of UNRRA in conservative circles as an organization of the far left. An influential New York Democrat, MacDuffie had served in several posts overseas during the war, and would later work in high-level positions on Adlai Stevenson’s presidential bid and Herbert Lehman’s campaign for the Senate. While hardly Russophiles, both men came to admire the Ukrainian and Byelorussian peoples and believed that there was common ground between the Soviet Union and the United States. Furthermore, both men asserted that the distribution of relief by an international organization must not be politicized because the need was so obvious and so great. For both Scandrett and MacDuffie, the denial of relief to a desperate population based on the political system under which they lived would be a tragedy.

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However, the fact that an average of eighty percent of UNRRA funding came from the United States ensured the American government would have a significant say in that distribution, a circumstance that led to a serious threat to the flow of relief. The resistance of the US Congress to authorize the release of previously promised funding to UNRRA based on the perception that Moscow censored journalists reporting on the Soviet missions led to the resignation of MacDuffie and the near resignation of Director General LaGuardia. Both Scandrett and MacDuffie spoke out to the press extensively to condemn what they perceived as a political attack on relief that would seriously undermine the recovery efforts already underway in the Ukraine and Byelorussia. LaGuardia, in his outspoken way, launched a very public campaign to ensure the approval of the funding, arguing that UNRRA’s mission was to feed and clothe those who had suffered at the hands of the Nazis and not a place to make an anti-Communist statement.

The UNRRA missions to the Ukraine and Byelorussia illustrate a number of important points about the post-war political climate between the United States and the Soviet Union as well as the significance of competent leadership and personnel. These missions offer a glimmer of hope for East-West cooperation in the pursuit of larger humanitarian goals. Scandrett and MacDuffie forged friendly relationships with local officials who sought to ensure that UNRRA assistance went to the neediest cases despite attempts by Moscow to control distribution centrally. Both mission chiefs made a concerted effort to speak to the international, and particularly American, press about the purpose of
the missions, the need of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian peoples for aid, and the sincere gratitude that many average people expressed for the help. Much to the ire of Scandrett, MacDuffie and LaGuardia, those efforts were counterbalanced by a larger number of politicized press reports warning of the “Russian menace.” In particular, several articles and a book written by John Fischer, a member of the Ukrainian mission, stirred controversy with attacks on the Soviet political and economic system. Finally, the threats by the United States Congress to withhold funding for UNRRA based on reports that Moscow censored media reports of relief distribution illustrate the extent to which humanitarian missions operate under precarious political circumstances thereby endangering the flow of supplies to those who need them.11

11 Since 1991, Soviet archives have opened to scholars seeking a better understanding of the Soviet Union after the war. Elena Zubokova’s Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957, trans. Hugh Ragsdale (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); and Amir Weiner’s Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) are two notable contributions. In particular, Zubkova’s treatment of the Partisan leadership informs how those same officials would work in a practical rather than ideological way with UNRRA after the war. Scholarship on UNRRA remains a small part of the larger literature on postwar refugees and displacement, but the vast majority of studies do not look deeply into the organization itself. In 2012, Andrew Harder sought to bridge this gap with an article on the UNRRA missions in the Ukraine and Byelorussia: “The Politics of Impartiality: The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in the Soviet Union, 1946-47,” Journal of Contemporary History, 47:2 (April 2012), 347-369. While Harder uses a similar source base to my own, his central argument that the conditions in the Soviet republics made the mission chiefs more committed to their humanitarian work deserves further attention. I have built on this work with further analysis of the leadership and personnel that made these missions both unique and successful.
The Best Hope for Now: LaGuardia’s Conflicted Internationalism

With UNRRA committed to providing relief in two Soviet Republics, its director general assumed the fight to maintain the funding to provide it. LaGuardia’s childhood and background shaped his outlook and commitment to public service, as well as his ambitious and often explosive personality. His parents, Archille and the former Irene Coen, had arrived in the United States in 1880 at the beginning of the great wave of Italian immigrants. Archille, a lapsed Catholic with a taste for adventure and an aptitude for music, had traveled the world as a composer, arranger and accompanist. Irene, descended from the scholarly Luzzatto family on her mother’s side, was raised in the Orthodox Judaism of her father.12 Her decision to marry outside the faith hints at one of the lessons she would impart on her son, namely that “all people were to be judged solely on what they were, as opposed to who they were.”13 They welcomed Fiorello on December 11, 1882. On a 1946 trip to Italy, Fiorello reflected on how far his family had come from their humble beginnings: “When my parents immigrated from Italy, they were so down that they didn’t have a single relative. Now, all of Italy are my relatives.”14

Unlike many newly arrived immigrants, Archille recognized that the streets of America were not in fact paved with gold, and he enlisted in the U.S. Army as a bandmaster to ensure a stable living for his family. From an early age,

12 The Luzzattos descended from Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746), an Italian rabbi and philosopher.
Fiorello lived with his family on a series of remote and diverse posts that shaped his character in profound ways. From North Dakota to New York, the future mayor adapted, with the help of his outgoing mother, to new places and people with ease. He spent his happiest years in Arizona, where the still open spaces of the rapidly closing frontier offered a paradise for a young boy. LaGuardia developed traits and values in the West that came to identify him as a politician in New York City, particularly self-reliance, independence, a commitment to social justice, and a hatred of political corruption.

The nurture effect of the frontier on LaGuardia’s character was not the only defining piece of his childhood; rather, his in-born characteristics formed a core part of his nature. From a young age, he was a precocious speaker. LaGuardia seemed undeterred by his diminutive size, once retrieving a chair during a fight to better reach the other boy’s face. In fact, his size seemed to spur him to be scrappier and more determined. His persistence eventually won over other children, who followed his lead. Although he was not a star student, Fiorello showed a strong interest in politics from a young age. As a teenager, he assiduously read accounts in Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* of the corruption of Tammany Hall, the political machine in control of the city of his birth.

As he embarked on his professional career, LaGuardia viewed himself as a leader for the weak versus the moneyed, corrupt interests in power. After a

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16 Archille LaGuardia’s experience in the Spanish-American War would cement Fiorello’s feelings about corruption. Stationed in Tampa in anticipation of a deployment to Cuba, Archille grew violently ill after eating “embalmed meat” sold to the Army by corrupt contractors. The collusion of the meat packaging company
period working at the American consulates in Budapest and as a consular agent in Fiume, where he processed emigrants for medical clearance before their journey to the United States, LaGuardia applied for a number of higher-level positions with the Department of State and Immigration Service of New York. His applications denied on account of his lack of education and social connections, LaGuardia resolved to return to the United States and to continue his education and launch a career in public service. After a stint of jobs that included making bricks in Portsmouth, Ohio and working as a stenographer at the clothier Abercrombie & Fitch, LaGuardia passed the U.S. Civil Service exam and earned an appointment as an interpreter at Ellis Island due to his command of Italian, German, Hungarian and Croatian. He also gained admittance to New York University Law School. LaGuardia’s work at Ellis Island, and two years later, in the Magistrate’s Night Court, brought him into constant contact with both the desperation of immigrant workers and the corruption of the city’s Tammany-controlled institutions. He graduated from law school in 1910, and began a law practice in the city. Over the next decade, LaGuardia was elected to Congress, commissioned to the United States Army Air Service in World War I, and then elected as president of the Board of Aldermen of New York City.

Armour with unscrupulous Army purchasing agents made a lasting impression on the young Fiorello, who called it “one of the worst scandals of our entire military history.” Lacking prospects in the United States, the LaGuardias returned to Trieste where Archille’s pension would stretch further. After his death six years later, Irene’s two-year legal battle to claim her husband’s pension sparked her son’s intense hatred of bureaucracy and red tape. His parents’ mistreatment at the hands of the government and the “Interests” fueled Fiorello’s desire to fight on behalf of the politically and economically disadvantaged. See Brodsky, The Great Mayor, 13.
Much has been written about LaGuardia’s time in Congress from 1922-1933 and his leadership as mayor of New York City.\textsuperscript{17} A review of his major accomplishments in those roles will shed light on his appointment as the second director general of UNRRA. Elected as a Republican from the heavily Italian East Harlem district, LaGuardia became a leading liberal reformer who sponsored progressive legislation supporting workers and immigrants. The Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932 strengthened labor unions and a worker’s right to join a union. He called for progressive income taxes, government oversight of Wall Street, and unemployment insurance for workers. He opposed Prohibition and xenophobic restrictions on immigration, but supported women’s suffrage and child labor laws. Always an internationalist, LaGuardia supported the League of Nations and advocated using American influence abroad to counteract autocracy.

In 1929, LaGuardia ran for mayor of New York for the first time but was unable to defeat the affable and popular Tammany Democrat Jimmy Walker. When scandal forced Walker from office, LaGuardia won the 1933 election with a coalition that included middle class Republicans, reform-minded Democrats, and a decisive majority of Italians that had previously supported Tammany. In his first hundred days in office, LaGuardia used New Deal grants to expand federally funded work relief programs that transformed the city. LaGuardia worked closely with Parks Commissioner Robert Moses and governor Herbert Lehman to initiate

\textsuperscript{17} Lawrence Elliot, \textit{Little Flower: The Life and Times of Fiorello LaGuardia} (New York: Morrow, 1983); Howard Zinn, \textit{LaGuardia in Congress} (Ithaca: Fall Creek Books, 2010).
public works projects that would improve the decaying infrastructure of the city. A physical representation of LaGuardia’s legacy, these projects include the West Side Highway, the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, the Triborough Bridge, and the two airports that later became known as John F. Kennedy International Airport and LaGuardia Airport. Further, his defeat of Tammany signaled the end of “boss politics” in the City of New York. He targeted corruption in government while also attacking the racketeers and mobsters who had long used bribes and threats to control local services.

LaGuardia’s close relationship with Roosevelt in enacting New Deal programs in New York and reducing Tammany influence continued during World War II. Roosevelt appointed LaGuardia as the first director of the Office of Civilian Defense, an agency that would prepare the population for air raids and run shelters. Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the job became too much for one man to manage while also running a city. During the war years, LaGuardia’s popularity slowly slipped, and the new Democratic president Harry Truman declined to support a Republican for reelection. LaGuardia chose not to run in 1945. His failure to receive a military commission during the war frustrated him, and he began to look for new avenues. After leaving office in early 1946, LaGuardia joked that he had been “looking through the want ads,” but in fact, he commenced work on his memoirs, delivered radio addresses, wrote newspaper columns, and represented the United States at the inauguration of Brazil’s president.18

Truman had not supported LaGuardia’s bid for reelection, but in March 1946 he asked the former mayor to succeed Lehman as director general of UNRRA. The selection was a surprise to observers who had talked of former American ambassador to the United Kingdom John Winant or FDR’s longtime confidant W. Averell Harriman. Neither of those choices had the expertise on food that LaGuardia did, nor his tireless commitment to honest government. Criticism of UNRRA had reached a fever pitch, with accusations of misallocations and scandal reaching a fever pitch. LaGuardia was a committed humanitarian and internationalist, but no fan of UNRRA as an organization. The selection of LaGuardia by the United States seemed a clear indication that its support for UNRRA was waning.

To many within UNRRA itself, LaGuardia seemed an odd choice. From the beginning, LaGuardia made no secret of the fact that he believed that UNRRA should be disbanded and its functions immediately transferred to newer institutions such as the World Bank and the IRO. In a letter to Lehman dated April 17, 1946 he wrote: “Thanks so much for the photograph. I wanted it in the office. I will not permit UNRRA to put a number on it as I intend to take it with me when I go, which I hope will be soon.”

Even as LaGuardia decorated his office, he was planning for his imminent departure.

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19 Fiorello LaGuardia to Herbert Lehman, 17 April 1946, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, Special Correspondence File of Herbert H. Lehman, Lehman Collections, Columbia University.
LaGuardia’s public statements in the spring and summer of 1946 suggesting that UNRRA be disbanded further damaged its fragile public image. LaGuardia’s statements generated confusion over the necessity to continue funding UNRRA heading into the second winter after the war, even as concerns grew about shortages and the potential for political unrest as a result. According to his deputy General Jackson, who had stayed on to serve under the new director, LaGuardia abandoned his plan to kill UNRRA when it became clear that no other organization possessed the administrative machinery yet to provide relief for the winter of 1946-47. Once he became director general, LaGuardia recognized that UNRRA must be the vehicle for relief in the short term despite its flaws. Although he was not the seasoned diplomat that may have been a better choice to lead an international organization, nor the disciplined administrator that Lehman was, LaGuardia’s pushy personality may have been just what UNRRA needed at the time. Faced with an imminent lack of funding and a widespread perception problem, LaGuardia took his case to the American public.

Although LaGuardia’s bona fides as a humanitarian were never in doubt based on his public record, LaGuardia’s appointment was controversial behind closed doors because of his outspoken critiques of the organization. Many UNRRA

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officials with whom LaGuardia would soon work disagreed with Truman’s pick.\textsuperscript{22} According to General Jackson, the Central Committee had agreed early on that the director general would always be an American. However, Jackson reflected widespread disapproval of the selection of LaGuardia, commenting, “To many, this appointment meant a decisive indication that the United States was determined to bring UNRRA to an end as quickly as possible. Subsequent events were to prove that this analysis was correct.” He continues that Lehman agreed with this assessment and had serious concerns about the appointment because he was unsure that LaGuardia could manage a large international organization.\textsuperscript{23} Lehman’s Canadian speechwriter Alastair Taylor echoed this sentiment, reporting that Lehman had commented that he did not know anything of the appointment and that he would not have chosen LaGuardia.\textsuperscript{24}

Well-acquainted with LaGuardia from their days in New York politics, Lehman had decidedly mixed feelings about this man who was in so many ways his opposite. According to Lehman’s biographer Allan Nevins, the former governor was never a political supporter of LaGuardia, but had great admiration for him as a man. LaGuardia’s aggression and flamboyance alarmed Lehman, but he recognized the former’s untiring commitment to his purpose. In 1933, while mayor of New York City, LaGuardia proposed a bill to the New York legislature

\textsuperscript{22} The president of the United States had a strong influence on the choice for director general. In all three cases, the Central Committee approved the selection made by the president.

\textsuperscript{23} Jackson on Lehman, Robert G.A. Jackson Papers, Lehman Collection, Columbia University, 40.

\textsuperscript{24} Conference with Alastair Taylor, 25 October 1946, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, United Nations Archives. Lehman made this statement in a conference that included Taylor, Robert Jackson, and Harold Caustin.
that would give him the power to abolish any agency of government, establish new agencies, and override state laws affecting the city. Lehman was shocked, and responded that the desperate times did not call for such power concentrated in the mayor's hands. Ultimately, he granted LaGuardia temporary dictatorial powers while enlarging the power of the aldermen to oversee him. The two continued to clash in both personality and politics in the ensuing years, but generally maintained an amicable working relationship. In effect, Lehman respected LaGuardia's character if not his politics.25

Jackson, and by his account Lehman, were not the only senior UNRRA officials who questioned the choice of LaGuardia. Canadian George S. Mooney, Executive Secretary of the UNRRA Secretariat, noted that:

Knowing the Little Flower fairly well, I know something of his susceptibility to moods and temperament. He's a great guy; but a prima donna, and you have to appreciate this factor in all that he does. He lives on crises; and if there isn't one, then he makes one. He'd wilt unless there was some fire to put out somewhere!! He's an extraordinarily dynamic person, a bundle of nerves and hunches, a direct shooter and fundamentally sincere and honest. He was tailor-made for the job of running New York but in my opinion is wrongly cast in his present role with UNRRA.26

In a straightforward manner, Mooney expresses here the general sense of misgiving that many UNRRA officials felt regarding LaGuardia. While no one questioned his character or commitment to humanitarianism, there was a sense that his unpredictable and intense personality was ill-suited for leading an international organization. LaGuardia was not known for his diplomatic skill or

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25 Nevins, Herbert Lehman and His Era, 146.
26 Mooney to Cas [Casgrain], 17 July 1946, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.
his knowledge of world affairs. His assistant Jane Plimpton commented that
LaGuardia did not understand the approach to international cooperation so
carefully fostered by Lehman. Further, “[He] was most effective in dealing with
U.S. Government agencies where he knew the personnel. Representatives of other
countries however were likely to look askance at his frequent use of ‘my country,’
‘my government,’ etc.”27

LaGuardia’s rocky relationship with UNRRA’s Central Committee seemed
to confirm doubts about his ability to lead an international organization.
Consisting of members from the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet
Union and China, the Central Committee worked in tandem with the director
general to implement policy determined at the Council Sessions and make
emergency decisions.28 His assistant Jane Plimpton asserted that LaGuardia’s
early treatment of the Central Committee created tension because he seemed
determined to do what he wanted without consulting that body. The new director
general succeeded in offending most of its members, who felt they deserved more
respect than to be cast aside. Plimpton remembered that while the US and UK
members were generally less bothered by LaGuardia’s style,

Yugoslavia and USSR were quite hurt and more than ever
convinced that the United States was running the show. LaGuardia
had the habit of going through the agenda like a hot knife through
butter, showing his own ignorance of the matter at hand, yet
castigating Feonov, for instance, if the Russian wanted to postpone

27 Interview with Jane Plimpton, 20 March 1947, Office of the Historian, UNRRA,
United Nations Archives.
28 The Central Committee was later enlarged to include Canada, France, Australia,
Brazil, and Yugoslavia.
some item on the grounds that he had not had time to consider it.”

In New York, LaGuardia’s hard-charging style gave him the reputation of a man who could get things done, but in the international context of UNRRA, that same approach alienated members whose relationship with the Western democracies was already tenuous.

UNRRA’s continued existence relied heavily on that tenuous relationship, in particular the United States’ view of internationalism. Harry Truman had entered office in April 1945 skeptical of the international approach of Roosevelt. Over time, his view tempered but he was never a strong supporter of UNRRA or its mission. As a consequence, Truman considered what might replace UNRRA. In March 1946, he tapped Herbert Hoover to study the food situation in Europe and Asia. During World War I, Hoover had directed an innovative relief program in Belgium and other areas. He had advocated to Lehman, Roosevelt, and Churchill that they adopt a similar program to ship food to the suffering peoples of Western Europe, but transport challenges and food scarcity made that impossible while World War II continued. Hoover’s tour lasted mere weeks and covered areas that UNRRA had already studied.

Like Lehman, LaGuardia questioned the purpose of Hoover’s tour and concluded that it was a sign that Truman planned to move in a unilateral direction that would preclude UNRRA. On March 30, 1946, the same day that LaGuardia delivered a speech accepting his role as director general, Hoover

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29 Interview with Jane Plimpton, 20 March 1947, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.
30 Nevins, *Herbert Lehman and His Era*, 297.
released his findings. While LaGuardia praised Truman in his speech, he took umbrage with the appointment of Hoover as a special appointee to study the food problem in Europe. LaGuardia found Hoover’s work redundant, and saw it as undermining UNRRA’s purpose. He calls Lehman a “mentor,” and notes that the first director general’s in-depth departing report called the food crisis a two-year campaign: “It is not a quick airplane view of the situation—it comes from day-to-day reports.” By implication, LaGuardia criticizes Hoover, who called the problem a 120-day food emergency.\(^\text{31}\) The difference in the severity of the crisis as understood by the two men extended to their proposals for solutions. LaGuardia called for rationing in the US to increase the food available for Europe and Asia, a measure rejected by Hoover.\(^\text{32}\)

Typical of LaGuardia, he began appealing to the public through the press about the dire food situation in Europe. During his acceptance speech in March 1946, he said, “ “It is food that we need. The people are crying for bread, not advice. . . . People can’t eat resolutions, and even the people in our country have learned through a period of depression that ticker tape ain’t spaghetti.”\(^\text{33}\)

Throughout that speech, which was reprinted in the *New York Times*, LaGuardia calls for action, describing relief as a duty. Unlike his predecessor Lehman, who preferred to keep his faith private, LaGuardia made several references to Christian scripture and its call for the faithful to serve the needs of others: “We

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are united to preserve life, to build, not to kill, not to destroy... There is precedent—the spirit of UNRRA. There is precedent for it in the old scripture, in the new scripture, to love our neighbor, to aid the needy. That is not original. It just hasn't been carried out." LaGuardia continues his connection between Christian values and UNRRA, quoting from the Lord’s Prayer:

As the sun rises from place to place, there is one continuous prayer, to hear the gods asking for the heavenly kingdom to come to earth, and then in every language spoken by man, in every dialect in every language, give us this day our daily bread. That is our call. That is all there is to it, to respond to that prayer. We then become a great army of mercy, great army, carrying out God Almighty’s response to the call for daily bread, and I refuse to be stopped by pettiness, the greed of selfishness of man. That is the mission of UNRRA, and that is the army I am going to lead.34

This strong religious rhetoric reflects LaGuardia’s faith as a devout Episcopalian, raised by a Jewish mother and a father who had rejected the Catholic Church of his birth. He viewed UNRRA as an army, but an army that would build rather than destroy. And LaGuardia, who had been denied a military commission in World War II despite his desperate desire to obtain one, would lead this army.

To continue its work, LaGuardia’s army would need a massive amount of food supplies. In May 1946, he announced that UNRRA required 700,000 tons of wheat per month in the first two quarters of that year, but delivered levels had so far fallen well below those targets: 400,000 in January; 390,000 in February; 400,000 in March; 300,000 in April.35 The failure to deliver was primarily the

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35 “UNRRA Director General LaGuardia’s Address to Members of the National Press Club,” 10 May 1946, Press Clippings, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, LaGuardia and Wagner Archives.
result of actions taken by the US Department of Agriculture. American agronomists became anxious that the end of the war would bring a dramatic drop in the demand for food, so instituted a “bare shelves” policy for 1945 despite warnings from European sources and the horrific deprivations reported after the invasions of Italy and France in 1943-44. For example, the department ordered only 280 million bushels of wheat stockpiled for 1945 compared to 630 million in 1942.\textsuperscript{36} LaGuardia’s difficulty securing enough wheat to satisfy UNRRA’s need was primarily the result of that shortfall.

LaGuardia’s calls for rationing that could alleviate shortages of wheat and other foodstuffs received lip service but limited action in the post-war United States. After the deprivations of the war years (that in reality paled in comparison to those in Europe and Asia), Americans resisted calls for rationing and politicians saw the issue as one with a constituency outside the electorate. President Truman, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and the American Federation of Labor all made statements that Americans should eat less, but took no real action. The average daily calorie consumption for Americans rose to 3,300 in 1945, compared to an average of 1900 calories in Europe.\textsuperscript{37} The War Food Administration, a division of the Department of Agriculture, acted in Americans’ self-interest and ensured that food would remain plentiful. In 1945, Truman appointed Clinton P. Anderson as Food Administrator. Anderson, a long-time critic of the government’s handling of food whose primary concern was

\textsuperscript{37} Collingham, \textit{The Taste of War}, 478.
protection of the consumer, implemented wheat-saving measures and imposed limits on distilleries, but firmly opposed rationing. Even as meat consumption rose, Americans were particularly sensitive to restrictions of that food group. A pork shortage in early 1945 led the Food Administration to transfer wheat earmarked for Europe to the nation’s hog farmers.

As it seemed the US government would not take decisive action to increase food aid to Europe, LaGuardia mounted a press campaign to convince Americans to consume less. In a press conference, he begged, “We are trying to do an impossible task without the necessary tools, and you can help us get some of those needed tools.” LaGuardia’s pleas did little to slow American consumption, but Truman did express his willingness to address the problem with action. He formed the Famine Emergency Committee to immediately study how the US could contribute more to the UNRRA food effort. Primary strategies included collecting food for donation, selling coupons to cover other foodstuffs, and a public relations campaign aimed at reducing food waste, particularly wheat, fats, and oils. The programs that emerged from those recommendations were small, but notable as examples of American generosity that did not actually change consumption. For example, LaGuardia highlighted a program run by Philadelphia housewives that allowed grocery shoppers to make direct contributions to UNRRA at their super markets. UNRRA could then request specific canned goods from the retailer, primarily meats, beans and fish, and receive those items directly. The direct donation of canned goods by shoppers had resulted in

significant logistical problems for UNRRA because of the high cost of transporting canned goods. Between water weight and low caloric contribution, canned vegetables were not ideal. Programs like the one in Philadelphia allowed UNRRA to have some control over donations.³⁹

While he had little patience for meetings with the Central Committee, LaGuardia spent much of his time securing supplies for UNRRA. In some cases, he successfully cut through red tape and applied his personal touch to situations that seemed intractable. In other cases, his tendency to make decisions quickly with little counsel backfired. On the positive side, LaGuardia met with twenty-five American alcohol producers on May 7, 1946. The group had already agreed to reduce its alcohol production to save grain for food, as breweries would only operate five days a month and distillers only three. At the meeting, the United Distillers pledges to donate a million pounds of wheat, to which LaGuardia responds, “I damned near dropped dead when he kicked in, because we get so much big talk and so many offers, this was on the level...”⁴⁰ Lester Jacobi of Schenley Distillers says that theoretically, fifty million pounds of grain is available, but it is inedible. When he offers the equivalent in cash, LaGuardia rejects the offer because “people can't eat cash.”⁴¹ Essentially, the offer of money was moot if there was no grain available to buy. The distillers agreed to form regional committees to collect all edible types of grain for UNRRA.

³⁹ “Address to the National Press Club,” 10 May 1946, LaGuardia Papers.
On the negative side, LaGuardia tended to eschew official protocols and hierarchies, an inclination that upset Deputy General of Director for the Bureau of Supply David Weintraub. Weintraub had worked for the War Production Board in the United States before joining UNRRA's Bureau of Supply. In an interview in 1947, he recalled that LaGuardia had overstepped his bounds by agreeing to buy liver paste directly from a retailer. In most cases, UNRRA procured goods but preferred that nations pay for the goods directly.42 Weintraub asserts to LaGuardia that they are an intermediary, and further objected to the seller himself: “It took two weeks to unravel that liver paste deal, from some shyster that had been trying to sell it to me for months.”43 Clearly, LaGuardia's direct style could impede progress as much as it could help it.

LaGuardia's involvement with food became considerably more significant toward the end of his tenure in late 1946. Despite his criticisms of UNRRA as a whole, he had a deep sense of commitment to its humanitarian cause and that mission was threatened heading into the winter of 1946-47. In the fall of 1946, LaGuardia mounted a major public relations campaign to lobby Congress to continue UNRRA's funding without restrictions based on the political affiliations of receiving nations. His concern about the future of aid extended beyond the impending winter as he became the most vocal advocate for the Food and

42 UNRRA's policy was to allow nations to pay for as much as they could afford to while UNRRA would help to subsidize transportation and procurement costs. UNRRA did buy some goods directly for donation to the most cash-strapped nations, but Lehman and the Central Committee argued that too many donated goods would stimulate inflation.

43 Interview with David Weintraub, 26 Sept 1947, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.
Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) World Food Board (WFB). Proposed by the FAO’s first director general John Boyd Orr, the WFB would attempt to overcome the problem of surpluses by stockpiling to stabilize world food prices and create a reserve to distribute in times of need. While the Department of Agriculture supported the plan, the State Department advocated for free trade and reversed itself several times on its policy. According to Jane Plimpton, the failure of the State Department to support the plan led LaGuardia to believe that no clear directive existed and that “the misty quality of the U.S. plans for promoting its unilateral relief schemes may have made LaGuardia realize that the UNRRA supply program would not in fact be succeeded by any effective supply program.” LaGuardia’s passionate support of the WFB did little to change the stance of the State Department.

LaGuardia took his concerns directly to the United Nations. Speaking in front of the General Assembly, LaGuardia called for the United Nations to take over for UNRRA when its program ended:

> It is now November and all the more reason for expeditious and final constructive action. Thirty days make a big difference. A boundary line or a political issue may well wait thirty days, but a gap in the continuity of providing food may be disastrous and surely would disrupt such stabilization as UNRRA has succeeded in bringing to the suffering countries.\(^\text{45}\)

LaGuardia’s appeals did little to change the downward trajectory of the proposals for the WFB. The United States, along with the United Kingdom,

\(^\text{44}\) Interview with Jane Plimpton, 20 March 1947, Office of the Historian, UNRRA, United Nations Archives.

Canada, and the Netherlands, soon succeeded in ending the possibility that the WFB would become a reality. Orr, disenchanted by the failure of the United States to lead, later said that it had learned nothing from its decision not to join the League of Nations as it had again “reneged on ‘its own great plan’, this time of ensuring freedom from want.”

The American reluctance to support the WFB stemmed from an increasing desire to take a more unilateralist approach toward food aid, and humanitarian aid in general. For his part, LaGuardia criticized this shift relentlessly. He also acted when he thought that political considerations trumped relief. In 1946, he had campaigned against a provision that would end UNRRA funding to support Communist nations. When asked about providing relief to Communists or Communist nations, LaGuardia invariably pointed to the UNRRA charter that promised humanitarian aid to any victim of Nazi aggression. There were no political strings attached to UNRRA aid, and LaGuardia objected fiercely to any being added after the fact. In many press conferences, he uttered some version of the phrase, “communists need to eat, too.” LaGuardia argued in favor of humanitarian over political concerns. Regarding the Soviets in particular, he said,

I get along with the Russians and they get along with me just well as most people get along with them and they get along with most people [he mentions they have sent wheat to France, Poland and Czechoslovakia, and are trying to get fertilizer]... I don’t know how much food they have. As I told you, Ukraine and Byelorussia are very hard hit. They do contribute their share, as an invaded country. I think that answers the question.

48 “Address to the National Press Club,” 10 May 1946, LaGuardia Archives.
For LaGuardia, political affiliations were irrelevant, and only need should determine whether a nation received relief. He also points out that even nations invaded by the Nazis and receiving relief in one form may also contribute to UNRRA in another form.

In addition to his consistently strong stand in favor of supplying food relief to Communists, LaGuardia deflected frequent attacks on UNRRA's distribution practices. In the American press, criticism of UNRRA's distribution of relief to Communists often went hand in hand with stories of widespread mishandling of supplies and black market activity. LaGuardia responded that UNRRA did as much as it could to prevent relief supplies from falling into the wrong hands, but there was only so much that could be done. UNRRA studied each country and its needs in conjunction with the government, then allocated resources based on estimates. The US Department of Agriculture often acted as procurement and purchasing agent due to its power within the marketplace and logistical knowledge. UNRRA delivered food and supplies to the government who sold them at market prices. Proceeds went into a separate fund after deducting the cost of distribution and the cost of the country missions. That fund was then used for agricultural or industrial rehabilitation such as the construction of roads, railroads and energy infrastructure or equipment for health and welfare. Country missions oversaw that entire process. LaGuardia contended that any black market activity occurs after the government has already distributed the food or other materials, and preventing that type of activity is nearly impossible. For example, a mother may trade her clothes for food. UNRAA may have provided
those clothes, but the mother has the privilege to then trade them for something her family needs immediately. LaGuardia often dismissed allegations of black market activity in this way, by acknowledging that it may happen in some circumstances but was the byproduct of the complicated postwar context.

Clearly, LaGuardia faced doubts about his fitness to lead UNRRA from the beginning, and challenges to the internationalist approach that the organization represented. His direct approach and lack of diplomatic skill alienated members of the Central Committee and his subordinates. The former mayor did not help matters by making public statements criticizing UNRRA. However, recognizing that as imperfect as it may be, UNRRA was the best hope for large-scale relief, LaGuardia began a tireless fight to secure supplies and funding for the remainder of 1946. The battle for funding would play out as UNRRA began operations in the Ukraine and Byelorussia. UNRRA's presence aligned with its internationalist mission, but its continued adherence to its principle to provide relief regardless of politics was highly unpopular with its American funders.

“From All Parts of the United States”: UNRRA in the Ukraine and Byelorussia

From their inception, the missions to the Ukraine and Byelorussia operated under the complicated political circumstances between East and West after the war. Despite the fact that UNRRA was supposed to be a neutral international humanitarian organization, the reality of the postwar world made that status difficult to maintain. The Soviets had long rejected the idea of an

49 “Address to National Press Club,” 10 May 1946, LaGuardia Archives.
international humanitarian relief agency in favor of one wholly committed to
international security. Beginning in 1941, the British and American governments
had begun to plan for a potential postwar humanitarian crisis. The perceived
failures in the aftermath of World War I motivated the Allies to consider how to
stem the political, economic, and public health disasters that the mass
displacement of peoples would cause once they regained territory held by the
Axis. The Soviets refused to participate in earlier efforts such as the Inter-
Governmental Committee on Post-War Requirements because they believed
these efforts to be too limited and too Anglo-centric. Instead, they called for an
international organization in which all nations would be represented.50
American representatives to the conference to establish UNRRA in November
1943 agreed, suggesting that its staff be international civil servants rather than
representatives of a given country. Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, the
lead American diplomat to UNRRA in its early years, wrote in his autobiography
that the Soviet Union sought to prevent any outside interference into its internal
affairs and maintain its ability to thwart any international action that would be
counterproductive to its own agenda.51 The Soviets eventually acquiesced despite
their initial skepticism that impartiality among staffers was even possible once
the UNRRA charter included provisions that would allow the state receiving relief
to exercise considerable control over activities in its territory.52

50 Grace Fox, “The Origins of UNRRA,” Political Science Quarterly 65, 4 (December
51 Acheson, Present at the Creation, 69.
52 Acheson, Present at the Creation, 583.
However, the Soviet attitude toward relief had shifted by 1945. Whether opportunistic or merely desperate, the Soviets applied to UNRRA for $700 million in relief for the Ukraine and Byelorussia in July 1945. This large sum would require an increase in funding to UNRRA authorized by the US Congress that controlled approximately eighty percent of its finances. Acheson, who had been managing the tenuous reputation of UNRRA in Congress, resisted, as he feared granting such a huge amount of money would jeopardize all Congressional support for UNRRA. Acheson eventually relented, acknowledging that there was no way that the request itself could be denied based on the UNRRA charter’s provision that any country that had suffered Axis occupation could apply for relief. Austria and Italy had been granted relief, and the denial of the Soviet request could provoke a dangerous division between the Allies.53

The negotiations over the missions reflected the Soviet desire to secure relief while maintaining as much control as possible over every aspect of UNRRA activities in the country. Total funding was reduced to $250 million, $189 million for the Ukraine and $81 million for Byelorussia. UNRRA sought to use the agreements made with Poland and Yugoslavia as models in the negotiations, but the Soviets demanded fairly extensive revisions that would minimize UNRRA administrative and logistical operations. Among the notable provisions within the agreement, the Soviets required UNRRA to ensure that it would release all of the agreed upon funds by July 1, 1946. Soviet officials would take possession of all goods in North America and then distribute or sell them as they saw fit while

UNRRA would be required to pay for all transportation costs.\textsuperscript{54} When the local population could afford to buy goods, proceeds were to be used for rebuilding schools, hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the invalid. The mission staffs would be limited to five to ten people who needed to gain the approval of the Soviet government. Lehman, who remained director general during the negotiations for the missions, demanded that UNRRA have oversight for distribution and confidential communication with mission chiefs despite Soviet resistance.\textsuperscript{55} Lehman believed that UNRAA must maintain its institutional integrity.

The negotiations completed in December 1945 and the missions would begin their work in the spring of 1946. Because of UNRRA’s already tainted reputation as a haven for Communists and incompetents, the screening process for staff became quite complicated. Mission Chief Scandrett lamented that the staff of both missions would be overwhelmingly American, even though they comprised only about a sixth of UNRRA personnel overall. Concerns about spying and political leanings had significantly decreased the pool of applicants to include

\textsuperscript{54} At the time of the negotiations in late 1945, UNRRA expected to get all of its relief supplies for the Soviet republics from the United States and Canada. By 1946, that proportion had shifted to about eighty percent but remained quite high for the duration of the missions.

\textsuperscript{55} “Memorandum from Oscar Schachter to Director General, Mr. Davidson, Mr. Weintraub, Subject: Proposed Agreements with Ukrainian and Byelorussian Republics” 9 November 1945, UNRRA Marshall MacDuffie Papers, Box 1, Folder 49-29, Lehman Collection, Columbia University; “Memorandum from Paul White to T. I. Vasilenko, Re: UNRRA Information,” 2 October 1946, Box 1, Folder 49-30, MacDuffie Papers.
primarily Americans because it was easier to verify their backgrounds and get personal recommendations about them in a short period of time.\textsuperscript{56} Scandrett felt it was necessary to choose staff without political aims. He would not consider anyone who he suspected of having anti-Russian views because their commitment to the cause of the mission would be compromised. He regarded those with an admiration for the Soviet Union as potentially more disruptive than those who harbored negative views. “[Russophiles’] exaggerated admiration of a fictitious new ideological concept was apt to be short lived after their arrival into their ‘imaginary utopia’ and the disillusionment usually metamorphozized [sic] them abruptly into bitter critics ‘who had been sold a phony bill of goods.’”\textsuperscript{57} Scandrett felt that this change in heart could potentially make a staffer more anti-Russian than someone who had arrived with moderately negative views. The careful screening of staff members resulted in limited turnover relative to other UNRRA endeavors.

Once the missions arrived in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, it became immediately clear that the people needed UNRRA relief desperately. The shocking scale of the destruction made a strong impression on the mission chiefs that the delivery of relief was essential to reconstruction. Scandrett commented, “We knew that we would find terrific ruins. What we have seen, however, far exceeds anything we formerly pictured for ourselves. I must say that the picture

\textsuperscript{56} “UNRRA Mission to Byelorussia – Summary,” Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A.
\textsuperscript{57} UNRRA Mission to Byelorussia – Summary,” Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A, 4.
of Nazi destruction as presented to the world is greatly understated.” Scandrett would later commit himself to publicizing the extent of the need once he had fully grasped the scope of the damage.

The geographical location of the two republics made them the epicenter of destruction in the Soviet Union. According to official Soviet estimates, the Ukraine had suffered half of the total war damage in the entire USSR. The combination of Soviet scorched-earth tactics and German destruction had leveled areas that had once been the most industrialized in the country. In cities, half to three quarters of the housing was destroyed. Less than ten percent of railroads remained intact. Large collective farms that had been mechanized lay fallow for want of farm machinery that the Germans had removed. The acute need for medical supplies had rendered many hospitals ineffective centers of care that were ripe for disease transmission; in Kremenchug, the hospital had no soap for several weeks despite overcrowded conditions and multiple daily births.

The devastation in Byelorussia was no less horrific. Of a prewar population of ten million, two million civilians had been killed. Deaths in the Vitebsk-Oblast region numbered 350,000, more than the total number of American servicemen killed. The German military had enacted a far-reaching

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58 Okov, T. “UNRRA in Byelorussia,” USSR Information Bulletin, 24 July 1946, Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A.
60 European Regional Office, “UNRRA in Byelorussia and the Ukraine,” UNRRA at Work 9, June 1946, Scandrett Papers, Box 3, Vol. 20-B.
62 Scandrett often made this comparison when giving interviews to the American press to convey the scale of human loss in Byelorussia. Interestingly, while he
extermination policy because of widespread and effective partisan activities that resulted in a high number of civilian deaths. The Jewish population of the Ukraine was almost entirely eliminated except those who joined the partisan movement. German destruction extended to cultural and social institutions. In Minsk, the Germans had carried off 105 million volumes from the libraries, destroyed eighty percent of the school buildings, and even looted the opera house of its scenery and costumes. They removed nearly all hospital equipment and medicines remained in short supply even after the war. In fact, UNRRA official Ruth Waller of the Byelorussia mission perished after contracting meningitis while rescuing a drowning child, but she would have most likely survived had antibiotics been available. UNRRA funded the construction of a penicillin plant partly in her memory.

Perhaps the most pressing need in both republics was food. The disruptions of war had drastically reduced the ability of Ukrainians and Byelorussians to feed themselves. Food aid arrived canned and powdered primarily from the United States, but the republic governments were eager to reestablish indigenous farming and prioritized seeds as highly as food itself. Before their departure, both Scandrett and MacDuffie worked with the UNRRA Bureau of Supply to speed the delivery of seeds in time for planting in the spring of 1946. With the exception of potatoes, all of the vegetables grown in

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Byelorussia that year came from UNRRA seeds.⁶⁵ Both republics were able to revive food production by 1947 with UNRRA assistance.

Sources of protein also remained scarce and took considerably more time to increase. In 1946, the availability of meats, fats and oils was less than 20% of what it had been before the war.⁶⁶ Less than a third of all cattle remained after the war. The destruction of heavy farm equipment led to the use of this remnant as draft animals, further reducing the milk supply. The average consumption of meat did not exceed one pound per person per month in urban areas.⁶⁷ UNRRA attempted to meet the need for proteins with dried fish and milk rations but those items were only available to children, mothers and hospital patients. The supply never met the need and the use of vitamin supplements became part of the effort.⁶⁸

The level of destruction and the people's urgent needs in the Ukraine and Byelorussia affected the mission staff in the weeks after their arrival. They found inspiration in the desire of the people to rebuild despite the horrific experience of the war. Asked after he returned what his greatest impression of the Byelorussian people was, Scandrett replied:

Very precisely: the morale. The morale of the people. It is very high indeed. Do you know what was the first thing they built in Polotsk when reconstruction began immediately after liberation? A monument to the fallen heroes who took part in the city's

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⁶⁷ ERO, “UNRRA in Byelorussia and the Ukraine.”
liberation... This is proof of the mood of the people. This is what I call good, high morale.\(^{69}\)

The spirit of the people cemented the commitment of Scandrett to do what he could to alleviate their continued suffering. Unlike the experiences of UNRRA in Greece and Italy, where officials found that the utter destruction coupled with a defeated population made their work depressingly overwhelming, these missions found inspiration in the work ethic and fortitude in the face of adversity.\(^{70}\) While anti-German and anti-fascist sentiments were understandably high, many average Byelorussians and Ukrainians expressed their desire to rebuild and live in peace. Nearly every person had lost an immediate family member, but UNRRA officials reported an overwhelming sense that people wanted to move on and pick up the pieces of their lives.

For their part, the Ukrainian and Byelorussian people expressed their gratitude to UNRRA in towns and villages across both republics, but often had the impression that it was an American organization. The mission staffs spent considerable time traveling across the countries to understand the needs of the people and had ample opportunities to speak with them candidly. Because the vast majority of supplies, particularly food, came from the United States during the early days of the mission and the staffs were comprised almost entirely of Americans, local people identified UNRRA as an American rather than an international organization. Scandrett worked tirelessly to correct this

\(^{69}\) ERO, “UNRRA in Byelorussia and Ukraine.” Scandrett’s extensive interview in this piece make clear his positive impression of the Byelorussian people and his resultant desire to publicize their needs.

\(^{70}\) For a discussion of these differences, see Hitchcock, The Bitter Road to Freedom.
misunderstanding, but had limited success because the face of UNRRA in the Ukraine and Byelorussia was an American one.\textsuperscript{71} His account of visits to orphanages in Minsk illustrates this point:

> We inspected the clothes, bedding, kitchens, and larders and observed that a large percentage of the food was UNRRA food: fruit juices, canned meat and fish, canned milk, sugar, rice, cereals and in the homes for smaller children, prepared baby food in small cans, all with American labels. The blankets and sheets on the beds were clean, and had been received either through the Lend-Lease or the American Red Cross, and much of the clothing had also come from the Red Cross. We observed labels on the clothing from Red Cross chapters of all parts of the United States: Sacramento, Pittsburg [sic], Kenosha, Wisconsin, etc.; and in all homes we visited the children raised shouts of “Americansky” and were very friendly.\textsuperscript{72}

Clearly, the impression that UNRRA was an American organization was one based on the reality that the United States was providing the bulk of personnel and supplies in the republics, particularly in the early months of the mission. The awareness of the people of the generosity of the US and their expressions of gratitude to the mission staffs only further impressed upon those individuals that they were working for a righteous cause.

The UNRAA staffs also had frequent opportunities to inspect the distribution methods of UNRRA goods by local officials. It became evident that there was little chance that goods would be misappropriated because the need was so great everywhere and the black market was virtually nonexistant. Scandrett became convinced over a period of months that relief efforts were not hampered by local corruption. While UNRRA officials in Western Europe complained often about black market activity by both the local populations and

\textsuperscript{71} “Richard B. Scandrett - Press Conference, 5 September 1946.”
\textsuperscript{72} Scandrett, “Memorandum, 29 May 1946,” 3.
its less honorable staff undermined relief efforts and UNRRA’s reputation, the missions in the Soviet Union found no evidence of that.\textsuperscript{73}

Convinced of the need, the missions faced enormous logistical challenges to ensure the delivery of relief. In contrast to the inefficiencies of other UNRRA missions that brought the organization considerable criticism in the international press, the Ukrainian and Byelorussian missions are examples of successful relief endeavors characterized by minimal waste and black market activity. In contrast to the highly centralized norms within the Soviet state, the distribution of UNRRA aid was a local affair. The cordial and often informal relationships between UNRRA and local officials account for much of this success. While Acheson had found Soviet philosophy toward international relief to be a stumbling block in the negotiations that founded UNRRA, officials in the republics saw the dire situation on the ground and worked tirelessly with UNRRA to secure relief with little regard for larger political issues. Both MacDuffie and Scandrett were highly complimentary of local officials and agreed that they were a major contributor to the success of the missions.\textsuperscript{74} MacDuffie praised the “pleasant personality, sense of tact, and goodnaturedness” of Vladimir Khomyek, the Chief of the Department of Supplies in the Ukraine, and asserted that he was critical in maintaining friendly relations between the government and the mission.\textsuperscript{75}

Positive relations with the Byelorussian government began even before the mission arrived. Leonid Kaminsky, the UNRRA council member from

\textsuperscript{73} Woodbridge, \textit{Vol. 2}, 255. Based on Scandrett’s observations, Woodbridge attributes the lack of a black market on the Soviet security apparatus.

\textsuperscript{74} “Relations with the Government,” MacDuffie Papers, Box 1, Folder 49-31, 28.

\textsuperscript{75} “Relations with the Government,” MacDuffie Papers, Box 1, Folder 49-31, 28.
Byelorussia, became concerned that seeds would not arrive in time for spring planting season as mysterious visa issues delayed the departure of the missions. Scandrett intervened to secure the timely arrival of more than half the allotment for 1946, an act that endeared the mission chief to Kaminsky and served to lay the groundwork for a strong working relationship.\(^{76}\) The mission entertained Byelorussian officials at their headquarters, while the officials in turn hosted lavish dinners for the UNRRA staff. The informal, congenial nature of these gatherings fostered warm personal relationships that transcended the business side of their mutual work. According to Scandrett, this mutual fondness was quite a departure from standard diplomatic practice in Moscow, where embassy personnel were almost completely isolated.\(^{77}\)

Scandrett grew to admire Konstantin Lastovsky, the Chief of the Department of Supplies for Byelorussia. Lastovsky was exceedingly hard-working and genuinely cooperative despite the enormous task he was assigned. In both the Ukraine and Byelorussia, the heads of the supply departments were the primary, and often only, liaison between the government and UNRRA. While this centralization of control had obvious advantages, the sheer magnitude of the workload often caused bottleneck delays that frustrated the UNRRA staff.\(^{78}\) However, Lastovsky’s tireless work endeared him to the mission chief, particularly when Scandrett learned after working with him daily for several

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months that he had suffered the shooting death of his wife and only child by the Germans. Lastovsky orchestrated a number of the social occasions that solidified the personal relationships between UNRRA staff members and Byelorussian officials. However, Scandrett noted that he often had to intervene in drinking contests between Lastovsky and Deputy Mission Chief Theodore Waller, commenting, “nothing delights a Russian more than to drink his guest under the table.” 79 In his recollections, Scandrett conveys his concerns about the raucous behavior stimulated by these jovial gatherings, but stops short of stepping in to stop them. He may have concluded that friendly relations with government officials were worth maintaining even given the clear contradiction in relief workers enjoying lavish meals while those in the countryside starved.

In the Ukraine, Marshall MacDuffie forged an enduring friendship with an official who would later become well known around the world: Nikita Khruschev, then premier and head of the Communist Party in the Ukraine. William Taubman and others have documented Khruschev’s efforts to secure food relief for the Ukraine from the central Soviet government, but he also took a personal interest in the activities of UNRRA. 80 Between March and June 1946, the Soviet leader had near daily contact with MacDuffie at private conferences and official dinners. His curiosity about Americans and American culture served as the starting point for many conversations with the UNRRA staff. MacDuffie noted his how his informal

manner was quite unusual for a Soviet official and helped to maintain lines of communication:

During our first meeting in Khruschev’s office, I said something about ‘needling’ the U.N.R.R.A. to keep Ukrainian supplies coming. The interpreter translated it as something like ‘steeskeevat,’ and Khruschev laughed almost as if he could see the needle going in. This was unusual. Soviet officials are generally on the formal, if not stuffy, side. But Khruschev’s combination of toughmindedness, humor, and casualness reminded me more than anything of a New York political boss. From then on we got along easily.81

Like Scandrett in Byelorussia, MacDuffie found common ground with his Soviet counterpart through socializing that made the work side of their relationship more successful. The bond that MacDuffie formed with Khruschev during his short time in the Ukraine served to facilitate his later work. In 1953, MacDuffie asked Khruschev if he could return to the Ukraine to see how it has changed. Still Ukrainian premier at that point, Khruschev personally approved the visa and allowed MacDuffie to travel to remote areas where Westerners had not gone in years. MacDuffie then wrote The Red Carpet, a book about his experience aimed at familiarizing an American audience with the current Ukraine. In the late 1950s, MacDuffie began to work on behalf of Ukrainian families in the United States trying to secure exit visas for members left behind. As of 1962, MacDuffie had used his personal connections with Khruschev to reunite nineteen families.82

Both Scandrett and MacDuffie came away from their experience as mission chiefs with a strong sense that the Byelorussian and Ukrainian peoples needed the help of the international community, but that that need was not

communicated properly to the American public through the press. Scandrett made a concerted effort to speak with the press frequently during his tenure and in the months afterward. He wanted to share what he had learned about the devastation in Byelorussia to encourage a sympathetic response from the American public both toward UNRRA’s efforts worldwide and in the Soviet Union specifically: “It is up to us [the Mission] to remind them of the millions of Soviet soldiers who gave their lives for all of us. I can think of no other assignment I would undertake with such enthusiasm as that of helping the people of Byelorussia who have done so much and sacrificed so much for our common victory.” The American public was to recognize not only the suffering of the Byelorussians, but also the commonality between the two peoples in the face of an increasingly tense geopolitical situation.

For his part, MacDuffie did not give the extensive number of interviews and press conferences that Scandrett did. However, he was extremely vocal in protesting the publication of a book by John Fischer, a former staffer, about the Soviet Union. A former journalist who had studied Russia at a number of institutions including Oxford, Fischer had served under MacDuffie in the Ukraine for two months. Upon his return to the United States, Fischer wrote a series of articles in Harper’s and provided various interviews that cast a negative light on the Soviets. MacDuffie and Paul White, the deputy mission chief who succeeded

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83 In addition to his press conference of September 1946 that garnered coverage in major newspapers such as the New York Times and the London Times, Scandrett gave interviews to publications including Survey Graphic and USSR Information Bulletin.
84 “UNRRA in Byelorussia,” 7.
him in July 1946, called Fisher’s assessments exaggerated and inaccurate, 
chastising Fischer in the press and to his publisher for using his position as an 
official of an international organization for personal gain.85

The controversy became even more heated when MacDuffie discovered 
that Fischer planned to write a book called The Scared Men in the Kremlin, later 
retitled Why They Behave Like Russians. MacDuffie fired off an extensive and 
highly critical letter to Cass Canfield of Harper & Brothers (with a copy to Fischer 
himself), the publishing house planning to release the book in 1947. He presented 
a number of reasons why Fischer’s book should not be published in its current 
form. Fischer spent only two months and two days in the Ukraine, much of that 
time at his desk in Kiev. The central argument of the book rests on conjectures 
about the mindset of top Soviet officials, but MacDuffie claims that Fischer only 
met one such person during his tenure. Most importantly, MacDuffie found the 
fact that Fischer would profit from his experience as an official of an international 
organization to be highly inappropriate. Even worse, his characterization of his 
host country and its people was generally negative.86

Fischer responded to MacDuffie’s extensive critique by saying that he 
came to his conclusions after a long study of Russia that began as early as 1933. 

According to Fischer, his time in UNRRA only provided illustrative examples of

85 John Fischer, “The Scared Men in the Kremlin,” Harper’s Magazine, 1 August 
1946, 193.1155, 97; “No Rest for the Weary Russians,” Harper’s Magazine, 1 
September 1946, 193.1156, 241; “Russia’s Ruling Class,” Harper’s Magazine, 1 
October 1946, 193.1157, 349. Fischer began his association with Harper’s 
beginning in 1944, and served as editor-in-chief from 1953-1968.
86 “Letter from Marshall MacDuffie to Cass Canfield, 10 January 1947,” Scandrett 
Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A. Copies of this correspondence are also included in 
the MacDuffie Papers.
what he already thought. Their differences in opinion about the Soviet regime seem to be irreconcilable. Fischer disputed MacDuffie’s assertions that he spent much of his time at his desk and that he only met one top official. Finally, Fischer says that the book is his work alone and should bear no reflection on UNRRA or its Ukrainian mission.87

MacDuffie took his critique public, as detailed in coverage by the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* among others.88 The press coverage may have gotten MacDuffie’s point across that he did not agree with Fischer’s assessments, but it also provided extra publicity for a book now labeled as controversial and therefore potentially interesting. Fischer’s book was published in 1947 under its new title and after extensive revisions, but MacDuffie still refused to rescind his opposition. Its selection by the Book of the Month Club, a group with a membership of about a half million in the 1940s, was a final bitter blow to MacDuffie.89 The squabble between MacDuffie and Fischer is a further illustration of how relief becomes politicized, as a relief worker from an organization promoting itself as internationalist would return to his home country to write a book criticizing the nation which he served.

Aside from the Fischer controversy, the Soviet missions projected a unified front to the American press that emphasized the need of the people for

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87 “Letter from John Fischer to Cass Canfield, 22 January 1947.” Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A.
UNRRA aid and the importance of putting aside politics to distribute relief.

However, the perception of press censorship in the Soviet Union nearly jeopardized much of the American funding for UNRRA. In May of 1946, eight foreign correspondents arrived in Byelorussia from Moscow on the invitation of Premier Panteleimon Ponomarenko to review UNRRA activities in the republic. The distinguished guests included Drew Middleton of the New York Times, Farnsworth Fowls of CBS, and the Soviet correspondents from the Associated Press, Reuters, London Times and the BBC. Following their requests, foreign minister Kuzma Kisilev arranged for them to see factories, collective farms, children’s homes, retail stores and religious sites. According to Scandrett, the correspondents said, “they had not had such an opportunity to talk with such complete freedom and lack of restrictions, and do as they wanted in seeing things, at any time since they had been in Russia.”

Despite the openness and hospitality that the correspondents reported to Scandrett, reports began to circulate in the American press that the journalists were denied access to observe UNRRA activities in the Soviet Union. The origin of these reports is unclear, but seems to be the result of a misinterpretation of standard censorship practice in the Soviet Union and the seizure of that misunderstanding for political purposes. Members of Congress soon pointed to these early inaccurate reports to threaten to cut funding for the Soviet missions, as Scandrett explains:

Stories appeared in the American press, from time to time, indicating that foreign correspondents were not permitted to

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90 Scandrett, “Memorandum, 26 May 1946.”
observe and report on UNRRA distribution. These stories resulted in Congressional objections, centering on Russian ‘censorship’. It was, of course, true that all news stories emanating in Russia had to be passed on by the Russian censors. The correspondents uniformly agreed that their stories about UNRRA distribution were not changed or deleted by the censors.91

As Scandrett noted, normal practice for the press in the Soviet Union at that time was to have all reports checked and potentially censored by the government. In the case of the reports on UNRRA activities, the foreign correspondents confirmed that in this case their stories had not been censored.

The censorship of foreign correspondents soon became the cause célèbre of Congressmen Everett Dirksen (R-IL) and Clarence Brown (R-OH) who proposed an amendment to the UNRRA appropriations bill to cut funding to countries who practiced censorship of the observation of its activities, a measure clearly aimed at the Soviet Union. According to Dirksen:

When you stop to think that $250,000,000 of UNRRA’s money is ear-marked for spending in these Soviet republics, and remember that the United States contributed more than seventy per cent of UNRRA’s funds, it seems only fair that we insist upon Russia letting us know how our money is being spent. If we should let this huge appropriation go through without serving notice that we expect Russia to cooperate, it would be nothing less than ‘appeasement.’ There’s been enough of that.92

Dirksen and Brown represented a hard-line position on the Soviet Union that had little basis in the reality of standard censorship practices and threatened to disrupt the shipment of much needed aid to the people of the Soviet Union.

General Director LaGuardia sprung into action, immediately condemning the politicization of aid in the press. He fired off cables to the mission headquarters in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, asking if “correspondents are free to come and go anywhere anytime [sic] to observe UNRRAs operations and are they free to send out messages uncensored I want an unequivocal answer Subject under discussion in Congress cable at once please.” Scandrett and Deputy Mission Chief for the Ukraine Robert Livingstone replied that no, correspondents were not allowed to move freely about the country, but that no Soviet citizen could either. Scandrett relayed the example of the recent foreign correspondents visit to illustrate that despite the restrictions of the totalitarian Soviet regime, uncensored reports of UNRRA activities could in fact get out.

So incensed by the possibility that humanitarian relief could be threatened in this highly political way, MacDuffie announced his resignation in protest on June 28, 1946. Deeply disturbed by the controversy and seeking to make a statement, MacDuffie wrote to LaGuardia, “If this bill is enacted, it will be an abuse of the purposes of relief for the suffering…” Replying that he was confident there would be no curtailment of the Soviet missions in the end, LaGuardia cabled back, “I am here fighting for everything you say… There will be no broken promises but I am going to fight it through and stay on the firing line.”

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93 Personal cable from LaGuardia to Scandrett, 26 June 1946, Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-B.
94 “Letter from MacDuffie to LaGuardia, 29 June 1946,” MacDuffie Papers, Box 1, Folder 49-31.
line right up to that time.”

LaGuardia was obligated to accept MacDuffie’s resignation and agreed with his reasoning, but he implied in another section of the cable that he would have preferred the mission chief to remain and fight on rather than quitting in protest.

LaGuardia did, in fact, continue to fight in his characteristically dramatic way. As Dirksen and Brown dug in their heels, insisting that the amendment remain part of the bill as it passed from the Committee on Appropriations to a vote on the House floor, LaGuardia called a press conference. Then he threatened his own resignation, speaking in blunt language that the need for relief must trump political considerations:

Let’s get down to the business of feeding communists. UNRRA food is eaten by communists, it just so happens that there are many more communists than others in some countries. UNRRA’s purpose is to feed hungry people. If this does not include communists, then UNRRA’s charter will have to be changed. Its whole purpose will have to be changed. UNRRA doesn’t ask about politics or religion to the people it feeds.

Speaking as the representative of an international organization, LaGuardia makes the case that these restrictions are unreasonable and unfair based on the earlier commitments made by the United States to UNRRA with the full knowledge that relief would be assigned based on need, not political leanings. Asked if he still plans to visit Europe to observe UNRRA, LaGuardia said, “If these restrictive

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95 “Letter from LaGuardia to MacDuffie, 29 June 1946,” Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A.
96 “Press Conference – Fiorello LaGuardia, 3 July 1946,” Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A.
97 Any nation could qualify for relief based on its occupation by the Axis powers regardless of its political system.
amendments are passed I’m not going. I won’t be able to look every hungry child in the face and say Americans aren’t interested in you.”

This controversy reached the highest levels of American government when President Harry Truman made a public request to the Soviets to remove generally established rules of censorship with respect to dispatches on UNRRA. Although the Soviets demurred, it had become clear that they had not in any way restricted information flow regarding relief distribution. Intervention from the State Department soon helped to quiet the controversy. Writing to Senator Kenneth McKellar, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Assistant Secretary of State William L. Clayton wrote, “This whole issue, of course, has far wider significance than its effect on UNRRA programs. I feel sure that adoption of the amendment would seriously complicate all our relations with the Soviet Union and would, without achieving any tangible benefit for us, make far more difficult negotiations on many other issues.” Once the State Department took the stand that the passage of the bill could irreparably damage relations with the Soviet Union, Congress abandoned the censorship rider and eventually passed the UNRRA appropriations bill in November 1946.

As illustrated by the funding fight, the deterioration of Soviet-American relations would complicate future endeavors for international cooperation despite the continued efforts of former UNRRA staff. After their Soviet sojourn, UNRRA officials sought employment with the United Nations and the Marshall

98 “Press Conference – Fiorello LaGuardia, 3 July 1946,” Scandrett Papers, Box 1, Volume 20-A.
Plan but faced rejection by American-led assistance programs because their former affiliation made their patriotism suspect despite the benefits their experience could bring.\textsuperscript{100} Scandrett harbored few illusions about the reality of the ideological clash between East and West, but believed that the dialogue had taken an unproductive turn, saying, “many of the people who shout the loudest are expressing emotions, not thoughts.”\textsuperscript{101} For his part, MacDuffie founded the National Committee for an Effective Congress, a group that advocated against increased military spending and McCarthyism. However, these efforts could not stem the rising tide of anti-Communist sentiment in the West.

With all of its faults and failures, UNRRA did succeed in providing more than four billion dollars in aid across Europe and Asia, with $250 million of that total provided to the Soviet Union. Its record must be measured in context with the enormous logistical and political challenges of the time. The missions to Byelorussia and the Ukraine were limited in time and scope, but they do illustrate that cooperation in pursuit of a larger humanitarian goal was possible even in the early days of the Cold War. UNRRA represented cooperation between East and West, but that reputation as a true international organization partly explains its demise. Eager to encourage European economic development in its own image, the United States soon shifted its financial support to American-led efforts, most notably the Marshall Plan. Just as the Soviet missions nearly fell victim to larger geopolitical tensions, UNRRA and its legacy have been overlooked unjustly.

\textsuperscript{100} Harder, 366.
\textsuperscript{101} “Letter from Scandrett to George Rublee, 17 January 1949,” Scandrett Papers, Volume 20-A.
because of the time and context in which they developed. UNRRA's central commitment to relief without political strings could not survive the new realities in international affairs.
Conclusion

Ira Hirschmann acted as LaGuardia's representative on two missions to Asia and Europe. He witnessed firsthand the destruction of war, the struggles of refugees, and the work of UNRRA to alleviate those conditions. In 1948, he published a memoir of his experiences that praised UNRRA and warned of the dangers of the intense rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. It cast UNRRA’s brand of internationalism as a victim of this rivalry, and criticized American unilateralism:

We have turned away from the path of peace, from Big Three Unity; we have spurned collective security; we have determined on unilateral action and have by-passed the United Nations. We have been courting every reactionary and Fascist element either in or out of government in Argentina and other South American countries, in Spain, Iran, Turkey, Greece and China, to mention a few. We are supporting civil wars throughout the world.¹

Hirschmann lamented the end of internationalism and the rise of American interventionism around the world. In evoking the Big Three, Hirschmann remembered Franklin Roosevelt’s vision for postwar cooperation, and the shadow his death cast on that dream. Presciently, he warned of the ways in which unilateralism will conflict with ideology and morality in the Cold War.

¹ Hirschmann, *The Embers Still Burn*, 265.
Perhaps, Hirschmann was too idealistic in his understanding of the motivations of the United States. Jessica Reinisch’s “reluctant internationalists” in Europe could be recast as Americans recognizing the need for cooperation between nations to stabilize the international system, but hesitant to really relinquish leadership to become one of many. Indeed, Mark Mazower has questioned whether the internationalism of which Hirschmann writes ever really existed. He questions whether the 1940s were really a high point for internationalism, noting the unacknowledged reality of the time that the United Nations was a “direct continuation” of the League. Further, he states, “Indeed by giving more power to a directorate of Great Powers and less to the assembled membership, the new organization represented more of a return to nineteenth-century practice than an advance to a new kind of global collective diplomacy.”

In many ways, Mazower’s assessment applies to UNRRA’s history as well. The United States had arrived as a Great Power, and wanted to control relief in its own vision. UNRRA could never be the vessel through which that relief would flow because it was an internationalist organization. It may be an empire by invitation, but the United States would still control the vision and values it promoted. Internationalism suggests a kind of cultural relativism that would accept the Communist world on par with the democratic West.

UNRRA’s work in Europe was internationalist. Its mission reflected a liberal impulse to promote peace and prosperity in the postwar world. However, its commitment to helping all victims of Nazi aggression—whether they be

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democratic, communist, or anything in between—made UNRRA a flawed vessel for reconstruction in the American view. The United States would lead reconstruction efforts, not an international organization in which it had limited control. American objectives could be achieved through the unilateral Marshall Plan or through action in the United Nations, a body controlled by the Great Powers.

American support for UNRRA waned as concerns about its personnel emerged. The leadership of UNRRA proved crucial to its reputation, and failures of leadership could not overcome some notable triumphs. Director General Lehman struggled to meet the expectations of the rhetoric that surrounded UNRRA (and that he himself had perpetuated) as the war came to an end. Materials, shipping routes, and personnel were in desperately short supply, and UNRRA failed to deliver time and time again. Many early hires at both top and bottom level positions proved unfit for their posts, thus labeling UNRRA as rife with incompetency. The end of the war in Europe in May 1945 released thousands of military personnel who would bring their expertise to UNRRA’s ranks, but the organization was already saddled with a poor reputation.

The stories of UNRRA’s missions in Greece, Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia illustrate the importance of leadership and the ways in which relief became politicized. In Greece and Italy, severe political and economic stability destroyed the public health system, leaving both populations malnourished and susceptible to the spread of contagious disease. UNRRA’s public health programs in both countries, coupled with its direct control over
distribution of relief supplies, made the outcome in these missions a successful one. Like Spurgeon Keeny in Italy, Charles Drury in Poland and Mikhail Sergeiich in Yugoslavia worked honorably to uphold UNRRA’s duty to provide relief without regard to politics. However, the distribution of aid through local channels that were controlled by communist groups provided evidence that American dollars were supporting communism. Direct relief in the Ukraine and Byelorussia proved to be even more controversial, as the press and Congress debated whether the United States should provide aid to the Soviet Republics. Mission chiefs Richard Scandrett and Marshall MacDuffie, along with Director General LaGuardia, advocated strongly that UNRRA fulfill its mission to provide relief to the victims of Nazism who continued to suffer in the aftermath of war. However righteous that position may be, the leaders of UNRRA could not overcome the broader geopolitical change that had shifted the American position away from a willingness to concede considerable control to an international humanitarian organization.

The abandonment of UNRRA opened the door for the United States to contribute funding to agencies in which it had more control. Will Clayton, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, along with Acheson, advocated a more bilateral approach to relief, whereby individual agreements would be negotiated between countries needing aid and those willing to provide it. The United States should avoid the inefficiencies of an international organization, and assert direct control. According to Clayton, “we must avoid another UNRRA. We must run the
show.” General Jackson believed that American realignment stemmed largely from the influence of Clayton, who would play a major role in shaping the Marshall Plan. Truman, Acheson, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agreed that hunger and shortages would push populations to the left, and the United States must stem the crisis to prevent the spread of Communism. The security of the United States trumped internationalist visions of broader cooperation to address a humanitarian crisis. Acheson expressed the American position in a radio address in December 1946:

In this manner, nations receiving free relief must prove their need for it and they can be held to a much closer and fairer accountability if the use of food and other free supplies. Those in power... will not be allowed to feed their political supporters and starve their political opponents. The people of the United States and the Congress of the United States have made up their minds that the relief problems of the near future are not of a character which would warrant grants of enormous sums of money from the United States Treasury under conditions which would leave little or no effective control by the grantor of these funds.

Thus, UNRRA became another victim of the post-war ideological alignment.

Acheson asserted that the United States can no longer afford to provide relief if it has no control over its distribution.

The American withdrawal from UNRRA was a final blow to the organization. LaGuardia resigned in December 1946, and General Lowell Rooks

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3 Reinisch, “Auntie UNRRA at the Crossroads,” 89.
5 Leffler, Soul of Mankind, 59-61.
6 “Address by the Honorable Dean Acheson, Acting Secretary of State, over the National Network of the National Broadcasting Company, Sunday December 9, 1946, at 4:30 P.M., E.S.T.,” Robert G. A. Jackson UNRRA Papers, File 41, Lehman Collections.
took over the leadership of UNRRA to essentially oversee its dismantlement. The United States would now contribute funding to agencies in which it had more control, or in the case of the Marshall Plan, to have complete control. When it ended in 1947, UNRRA's work of relief and rehabilitation was hardly over. Europe continued to rebuild and refugees remained in displaced persons camps. UNRRA's responsibilities shifted to other agencies including the International Refugee Organization (IRO), the Food and Agriculture Administration (FAO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). UNRRA officials would go on to serve in those agencies and the United Nations. General Jackson was an assistant to Trygvie Lie and became a top consultant on aid to developing countries. Alfred Katzin worked in the office of the Secretary General of the United Nations. Harold Caustin worked as an economist in the United Nations Development Program. Perhaps part of UNRRA's positive legacy is the training of these leaders who would go on to make their mark in the United Nations.

UNRAA was an early casualty of the Cold War. The United States chose to allow it to be disbanded in favor of unilateral relief. The commitment to humanitarianism as a state function remained, but it would be on American terms. The United States would still use humanitarianism as a form of soft power, but it would take the form of the Marshall Plan. Even after the end of UNRRA, relief would remain political. When used as diplomacy, humanitarianism is a projection of soft power. Power has a political end, thus no humanitarian action is truly altruistic. Humanitarian action must also align with national interests. The
abandonment of UNRRA by the United States indicates that politics and humanitarianism are inextricably intertwined.
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