

Near East Relief's Aid Campaign in
Occupied Constantinople (1918-1923):
Aid and Politics

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Abstract

“Near East Relief’s Aid Campaign in Occupied Constantinople (1918-1923): Aid and Politics”

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Professor Nadir Özbek, Thesis Advisor

This thesis examines Near East Relief’s aid campaign in occupied Constantinople (1918-1923) in the post-war Near East. Taking advantage of long standing theoretical debates on the politics of aid, this thesis approaches the concept of foreign aid as a compulsory marriage between humanitarianism and self-interest. In this respect, it challenges broadly accepted views that either canonize or curse Near East Relief and its aid campaign. To explain why they provided aid and did aid work as well as the social and political effects of the campaign, this study considers a series of issues related to Near East Relief, the United States Department of State, private donors, and aid recipients in the context of the politics of aid. To evaluate the aid campaign in the most accurate, detailed way, this study does not confine itself to explaining what actually happened in the field but also takes into account the formation of American aid policies towards the Near East.

34,000 words

Özet

“Yakın Doğu Yardım Kuruluşu’nun İşgal İstanbul’ndaki Yardım Kampanyası (1918-1923): Yardım ve Politika”

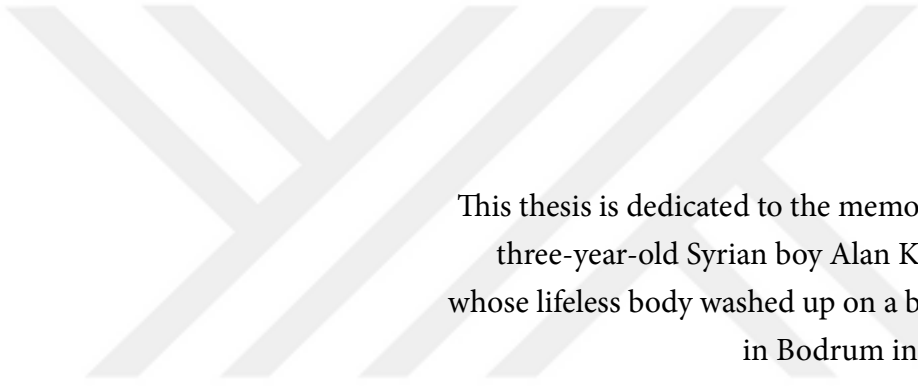
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Profesör Nadir Özbek, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez Yakın Doğu Yardım Kuruluşu’nun (Şark-ı Karib Muavenet Heyeti) savaş sonrası Yakın Doğu’daki yardım kampanyasını işgal İstanbul’unda (1918-1923) incelemektedir. Yardım politikaları üzerine uzun süredir devam eden teorik tartışmalardan yararlanan bu tez dış yardım kavramını hümaniteriyenizm ve çıkarıcılık arasında zoraki bir evlilik olarak ele almaktadır. Bu cihetle, Yakın Doğu Yardım Kuruluşu ve onun yardım kampanyasını yücelten veya lanetleyen geniş ölçüde kabul görmüş görüşlere meydan okumaktadır. Niçin yardım ettiler, yardım işe yaradı mı, kampanyanın sosyal ve siyasi sonuçları neler oldu gibi soruları cevaplamak amacıyla bu çalışma Yakın Doğu Yardım Kuruluşu, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Dışişleri Bakanlığı, bireysel bağışçılar ve yardım alan kimselere ilişkin bir dizi meseleyi yardım politikaları bağlamında ele almaktadır. Yardım kampanyasını detaylı ve en doğru şekilde değerlendirmek için bu çalışma kendisini yalnızca sahada ne olup bittiğini açıklamakla sınırlandırmayıp Yakın Doğu’ya yönelik Amerikan yardım politikalarının evrimini de göz önünde bulundurmaktadır.

34,000 kelime



This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
three-year-old Syrian boy Alan Kurdi,
whose lifeless body washed up on a beach
in Bodrum in 2015

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ARC	American Red Cross
HRC	Hellenic Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent
NEF	Near East Foundation
NER	Near East Relief
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association



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Introduction

With respect to foreign aid, however, many people seem to feel that it is a good thing, but they cannot call up convincing reasons why it is a good thing.¹

Today, we live in an age of global communication and witness every detail of wars and conflicts around the world from Syria to Nigeria. What has changed little over the decades is the involvement of humanitarian aid organizations following crises. The quantity of international humanitarian assistance reached \$27.3 billion in 2016.² Even if many people tend to take it for granted that aid is a “good” thing given such a vast transfer of resources, others question its essential existence.³ Questions like why aid is given, whether it

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- 1 Samuel P. Huntington, "Foreign Aid: For What and for Whom?" in *Development Today: A New Look at U.S. Relations with the Poor Countries*, ed. Robert E. Hunter and John E. Rielly (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 22.
 - 2 "Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017," (Development Initiatives), 28.
 - 3 "What precisely is aid? At its most general, aid consists of the transfer of all resources by donors to recipients, regardless of its purpose or of the status and need of the recipient, and thus could include assistance provided for political, military and strategic purposes, and that given to recipients who are neither poor nor needy... Yet even within this narrower context, there are many different terms deployed in the discussion of aid or foreign aid: 'development aid', 'development assistance', 'emergency aid', 'humanitarian aid', 'official aid', 'voluntary aid' and 'official development assistance.'" Roger C Riddell, "Does Foreign Aid Work?," in *Doing Good*

serves humanity or the interests of donor countries and aid agencies, whether it works, and how it affects aid recipients have been asked for not only humanitarian but also developmental aid programs by scholars and laymen. The \$13 billion Marshall Plan (1948-1952) and ensuing Soviet and later Chinese responses led to an increase in global attention to such questions and formed the basis for approaching foreign aid as a separate field of study.⁴

In this thesis I examine the case of Near East Relief's aid campaign in Allied-occupied Constantinople (1918-1923) in the scope of the politics of aid.⁵ Near East Relief was founded by protestant missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in 1915 to help Armenians.⁶ In late 1918 it began to transform into a professional aid agency, and in early 1919 it become independent of ABCFM. The organization had many notable members including Robert Lansing, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Henry Morgenthau.⁷ By the end of 1920, the total relief

or Doing Better: Development Policies in a Globalizing World (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 48.

- 4 "In any extensive consideration of foreign aid, one must deal with a wide-ranging series of questions – why? what? how? when? how much? to whom? how long? - as well as the operational issues of management structure, arrangements, terms and conditions, controls, and evaluation." Willard L. Thorp, *The Reality of Foreign Aid* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), xiii.
- 5 Because NER's documents and publications almost exclusively use the words "Constantinople" and "Near East" to describe the places, I prefer to use these throughout the thesis. For detailed information on the formation of the concepts "Middle East" and "Near East", see *Is There a Middle East?: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, ed. Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).
- 6 Soon after its formation, the committee first known as the Armenian Relief Committee combined with the Persian and Syrian relief committees which had also been established by ABCFM. It took the name the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR), and later American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE) until it adopted the name Near East Relief (NER) in 1919. I prefer to use its final title through the thesis to prevent any confusion with using changing names for the same organization. James L. Barton, *Story of near East Relief: An Interpretation (1915-1930)* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), vii, x, 5-6.
- 7 Thomas A. Bryson, "Woodrow Wilson, the Senate, Public Opinion, and the Armenian Mandate, 1919-20" (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 1965), 8.

operations of the organization considerably exceeded \$50 million.⁸ This is equivalent to the purchasing power of over \$600 million in 2018. The aid campaign in the occupied city was an important part of the campaign in the Near East. The organization professionally administered a large-scale transfer of resources to inhabitants in the occupied city. It ran a systematic, multi-faceted aid campaign that worked successfully as planned.

John White, in his book, *The Politics of Foreign Aid*, published in 1974, pointed out that it is difficult to trace aid as a field of study further back than the end of the Second World War, and he added that this view of the origin of aid is most commonly accepted by writers on aid.⁹ It has become the traditional view of the origin of aid. Obviously, this does not mean that there were no professional aid operations before the Second World War. However, the lack of interest in the politics of aid of the pre-war period negatively affects historians who study the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when they encounter issues related to foreign aid. Historians are then inclined to evaluate aid operations as either passive in scope of international politics or to approach from one of two opposing and extremely simplistic views: aid is given purely for humanitarian reasons or solely out of self interest.¹⁰

Studies directly dealing with NER and its aid operation are scarce. Dimitra M. Giannuli's study focuses on NER's aid campaign for Greek refugees, but confines itself to an inventory of what NER gave.¹¹ Jaffa L. Panken examines NER's fundraising campaign in the United States, but the study lacks any criticism of the aid program.¹² Keith D. Watenpaugh discusses NER within the

8 "From Mr. Vickrey's Report of Relief Operations," *The New Near East* 6, no. 2 (November 1920), 18.

9 John White, *The Politics of Foreign Aid* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd, 1974), 198.

10 Ibid., 12.; A. Maurits van der Veen, *Ideas, Interests and Foreign Aid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

11 Dimitra M. Giannuli, "American Philanthropy in the Near East: Relief to the Ottoman Greek Refugees, 1922-1923" (PhD diss., Kent State University, 1992).

12 Jaffa L. Panken, "'Lest They Perish': The Armenian Genocide and the Making of Modern Humanitarian Media in the Us, 1915-1925" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2014).

context of making of modern humanitarianism.¹³ The Rockefeller Archive Center's periodical *Research Reports Online* has encouraged studies in the history of philanthropy. Thanks to its contribution, five research reports on NER and the Near East Foundation (NEF) were prepared by researchers between the years 2009-2013.¹⁴ While these reports, which do not exceed eighty pages in total, provide a background for further research on NER and the NEF, they do not constitute a well-ordered study in the scope of the politics of aid. Among these researchers only, Davide Rodogno later published an article on NER. In his article, *Beyond Relief: A Sketch of the Near East Relief's Humanitarian Operations, 1918-1929*, Rodogno makes an important contribution by identifying the organization's policies.¹⁵ However, he does not trace how processes gave rise to these policies and does not examine the effects of these policies on aid recipients.

In addition to this, countless studies mention NER, albeit in passing, in the scope of international politics and relations. One group of studies approaches NER as an extension of the American Board.¹⁶ The organization has

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- 13 Keith D. Watenpugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).
- 14 Sarah Miglio, "America's Sacred Duty: Near East Relief and the Armenian Crisis, 1915-1930," (Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online, 2009); Shaloma Gauthier and Davide Rodogno, "The Near East Relief's Caucasus Branch Operation (1919-1920)," (Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online, 2011); Yehonathan Brodski, "The Near East Foundation Records at the Rockefeller Archive Center," (Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online, 2012); Michael Limberg, "'A Full Round of Life for All': Transforming Near East Relief into the Near East Foundation," (Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online, 2013); Rebecca Jinks, "Near East Relief and the Rescue of 'Absorbed' Armenian Women, 1915-21," (Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online, 2013).
- 15 Davide Rodogno, "Beyond Relief: A Sketch of the Near East Relief's Humanitarian Operations, 1918-1929," *Monde(s)* 2 (2014).
- 16 Suzanne Elizabeth Moranian, "The American Missionaries and the Armenian Question: 1915-1927" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1994); Sarah Miglio, "'Civilizing the World': Progressive Religion and Politics from Chicago to the Middle East, 1890-1925" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2012); Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1970); Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971).

also been evaluated related to some other themes. For instance, Justin McCarthy, in his book *The Turk in America: The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice*, evaluates NER with regard to its effects to prejudice.¹⁷

More importantly, the two extreme, opposing views mentioned above have had a strong influence over studies of NER. Both focus on the fact that Armenians received most of NER aid. These studies were formed around a disagreement which originates from their respective attitudes toward Armenian-Turkish relations. On one hand, many studies handle NER's aid program as a purely humanitarian endeavor to "rescue" Armenians. Keith Pomakoy, for example, approached the issue with American patriotism. For him, NER's aid campaign was part of American rescue operations in the face of humanitarian crises from the Cuban insurrection in 1897 to the Holocaust.¹⁸ Similarly, others canonize the aid campaign as a naïve endeavor led by a handful of American diplomats and missionaries for the sake of Armenians.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, publications by NER administrators approach the campaign as a humanitarian endeavor. However, one is worth mentioning. NER Chairman James L. Barton's hagiographic work, *Story of Near East Relief: An Interpretation (1915-1930)*, is an irreplaceable source because of the detailed information it contains.²⁰

On the other hand, Turkish academia has largely taken a skeptical if not cynical attitude towards the post-war aid campaign carried out by the NER. According to this view, what is called "aid" is "merely an instrument used by these institutions for their own selfish advantage," and its aim is "to dominate and control the countries in which aid made an appearance."²¹ This view is prevalent primarily because the politics of aid is not yet seen as a separate field

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

18 Keith Pomakoy, "Helping Humanity in the Real World: America and the Urge to Rescue, 1895-1945" (PhD diss., University at Albany, State University of New York, 2004).

19 Merrill D. Peterson, *"Starving Armenians": America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1930 and After* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004); Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).

20 Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*.

21 White, *Politics of Foreign Aid*, 12.

of study in Turkish academia. Accordingly, Turkish researchers have discussed aid and aid organizations in the scope of international politics and with nationalist sentiments. When it comes to NER, to a considerable extent it has been studied as a diplomatic institution or as a missionary institution, but not as an aid agency. For instance, Fatih Gencer's master's thesis on NER and its influence over the United States' Anatolian policy ignores NER as an aid agency and approaches it as an instrument in the hands of the United States to intervene in Turkish-Armenian relations to benefit the latter. "The activities [were] carried out with the appearance of being a relief organization."²² Safiye Kıranlar's valuation of NER in her doctoral dissertation *Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914-1923)* is another example of approaching aid as a tool to mask other unpleasant goals "in the name of aid to poor and needy people."²³ Metin Ayışığı approaches NER and a number of aid organizations as commercial delegations, but ignores the humanitarian aspect of aid.²⁴ Dilşen İnce Erdoğan's militant devotion to and glorification of the Ottoman Empire drive her to an unrealistic and chauvinistic viewpoint.²⁵

The main concern of this thesis is to evaluate NER's activities in the scope of the politics of aid by answering basic but complex questions vis-à-vis its aid campaign in occupied Constantinople. This is the most appropriate way to comprehend the vast resource transfer to the Near East made by NER in the face of extreme views that either canonize or curse the aid campaign, especially given that even "pro-Armenian" studies do not ask what were the effects of the aid on Armenians. I ask a series of questions in the scope of the politics of aid such as why the aid was given, who the recipients were and why they were chosen, how it affected its recipients, what really happened in the field, and what were the motivations of the aid agency.

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- 22 Fatih Gencer, "Amerikan Yakın Doğu Yardım Komitesi Ve Komitenin Abd'nin Anadolu Politikası Üzerindeki Etkileri (1915-1923)" (Master's thesis, Yüzüncü Yıl University, 2005), 97.
- 23 Safiye Kıranlar, "Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914-1923)" (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2005), 303.
- 24 Metin Ayışığı, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Sırasında Türkiye'ye Gelen Amerikan Heyetleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004), 5-6.
- 25 Dilşen İnce Erdoğan, "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) Near East Relief'e Amerikan Misyonerlerinin Anadolu'daki Faaliyetleri," [sic] *Belgi Dergisi* 2 (2017), 552-556.

To avoid the fallacy of approaches that embrace the donor as a single entity and aid recipients as passive, I treat the motives and choices of the aid organization, the State Department, and American citizens separately but interdependently. I also examine the critiques made by aid recipients to shed light on their attitudes in the face of the aid program. I approach foreign aid as a compulsory marriage between humanitarianism and self interest. It is not possible to uncouple these since the two concepts form what is called aid. An aid policy is mostly the outcome of the fluctuating balance between them. To realize how and why this balance changes is key to understanding NER's aid policies and its effects. I examine both sides of the balance as products of historical relations between the donor and the recipients and of various contemporaneous circumstances the organization encountered. Such an evaluation provides a new perspective on the vast scale of this transfer of resources from the United States to the Near East. Examining this in the scope of the politics of aid makes it possible to challenge the two extreme views which appeared on this case as "pro-Turk" and "pro-Armenian" approaches.

Although Constantinople was not the only place NER operated in the post-war Near East, its special features make it the most appropriate place for such an evaluation. It was a great city that suffered from post-war economic conditions that further worsened with increasing poverty because of a refugee inflow and the presence of occupying forces. Naturally, a city environment with various problems to be solved provides a better opportunity to examine various aid methods than the countryside. In addition, multinational and multi-religious populations of the city which suffered similar problems is helpful to question the choices of the organization. Because the Ottoman administration was weakened in the presence of occupation forces, there was no local authority able to regulate and supervise the activities of NER. Under these circumstances, NER had room to maneuver freely to construct and administer its own aid program. In the case of Constantinople, NER had a single, coherent strategy it called an "aid policy" by which it distinguished itself from the aid initiatives of Allied states.²⁶ Because the organization approached

26 White, *Politics of Foreign Aid*, 12.

humanitarian aid in conjunction with developmental aid in the field, it is possible to handle two important aspects of aid together.

Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, this thesis consists of three substantive chapters that respectively evaluate the evolution of American aid policies in the Near East, what actually happened in the field, and lastly, NER's aid policies.

Chapter 2 provides an evolutionary perspective tracing the early roots of American aid policies over a hundred-year-long period starting in the early nineteenth century. Throughout this period, the United States pursued an isolationist foreign policy; however, the lack of the official support did not prevent non-governmental initiatives from going to the Near East for various goals. In the early nineteenth century, missionaries of the American Board arrived in the region to evangelize to peoples of the Near East and the Philhellenes in order to support the Greek War of Independence. Even if the Philhellenes was directly interested in providing aid, the movement would not last long. To the contrary, the missionaries had a strong motivation to stay, and within decades, they unintentionally began to look like an aid agency. Rather than acting as an extension of the US Department of State, ABCFM was in the position of determining the position of United States foreign policy and American citizens with regard to the Near East. These missionaries were the ones who would found NER. An evaluation of the evolution of the American Board in scope of politics of aid explains the aid mechanism and historical relations inherited by NER. This chapter, then, examines the birth of NER and its transformation into a professional aid agency.

Chapter 3 highlights what happened in the field in the case of the aid campaign in Constantinople. It first explains the political, social, and economic conditions in the occupied city. Then it touches on the aid initiatives of the occupying powers, which is important to ascertain in what ways NER's aid campaign differed. Lastly, it evaluates what NER accomplished in the field. I divide its aid campaign into two interrelated parts: humanitarian aid, which includes immediate relief work and medical work, and the developmental aid, which includes industrial work and educational work. The question is whether the aid campaign worked systematically as planned by NER. This evaluation

provides a basis for criticizing NER's program and politics in scope of the politics of aid. It is also a small contribution to studies on Istanbul under Allied occupation.

Chapter 4 assesses NER's aid policies. After specifying who was the recipient of the aid campaign, I ask why NER chose to give aid to one recipient rather than another. To answer this question, I examine NER's decision-making process, considering not only the effects of historical, political, and cultural ties between the aid-giver and recipients but also approaching NER as an "ordinary" non-governmental aid agency. Because such aid agencies have limited financial power and manpower, they must use them in the most efficient ways. Accordingly, before and during an aid campaign even the fairest of aid providers – if such a thing exists - must prioritize who should receive most of the aid. However, it must also either take donors' motivations into consideration to facilitate fundraising or impose its own decisions on donors. Next, I examine contemporary critiques directed against the NER and its program. I handle these critiques as a control mechanism which balances the equilibrium between NER's humanitarianism and self interest in favor of the former. Lastly, I evaluate both the positive and negative effects of the aid program on its recipients as well as on the organization itself. While doing so, I reveal reasons behind the negative effects.

This thesis is primarily based on archival materials from the SALT Research Archive's "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" Collection. From this collection I used documents located under the headings of "Near East Relief" and "Annual Station Reports," including the American Board's meeting minutes.²⁷ The former contains various items including minutes of NER's meetings held in Constantinople and elsewhere, correspondence, instructions, pamphlets, and newspapers. NER's weekly newspaper *The Acorne* – the name of which was later changed to *Near East Relief* – was published in Constantinople for private circulation from June 7, 1919 to August 5, 1922. It provides considerable information on the organization's activities in the field. In addition to the items in this archive, I also benefitted

27 The collection is accessible online from the institute's website: <https://www.archives.saltresearch.org>.

from other newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets which were published by NER as well as from publications of the American Board including its early annual reports and those made for anniversaries. Together, these form the backbone of the thesis. Furthermore, a series of documents from the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi) play a supplementary role in this thesis.



American Aid Policies in the Near East (1820-1918)

The international humanitarian system evolved. It was never designed, and like most products of evolution, it has its anomalies, redundancies, inefficiencies, and components evolved for one task being adapted to another. [It] is not a logical construct. It is the result of many, often competing, processes. Some driven by self-interest or national interest, some by ideology, some by altruism, but all about adaptation...¹

To evaluate American aid politics in the post-Great War Near East, one must follow a hundred-year-long evolutionary process from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Throughout this period, the US Department of State pursued an isolationist foreign policy that kept it out of the conflicts of the Old World, and it largely confined its foreign interests and responsibilities to the Western Hemisphere in exchange for preventing European involvement in the politics of the New World.²

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- 1 Peter Walker and Daniel G. Maxwell, *Shaping the Humanitarian World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 1-2.
 - 2 Noninvolvement policy was officially adopted with the articulation of the Monroe Doctrine. See James Monroe, "Seventh Annual Message," (December 2, 1823),

American interests and concomitantly American foreign policy in the Near East began with concern for securing and promoting mercantile activity in the region. As soon as Americans achieved their independence, American merchants lost the commercial privileges they had enjoyed under British imperial rule. Since trade with Europeans was not at a desired level, the newly independent American nation vitally needed to find new markets to promote trade activity. The Mediterranean was one of the first places eyed by the Americans to achieve this. Without naval protection, American vessels were exposed to the incessant attacks of North African pirates. The foundation of a commission by the congress in 1784 to resolve uneasy relationship with the corsairs of the Barbary States (Morocco, Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli) indicates the beginning of American diplomacy in the Near East. Starting with negotiations among the parties, the process gave way to the building up of an American navy and naval warfare known as the Barbary Wars (1801-1815). Only after this development was the Mediterranean trade route secured for American trading vessels.³

The first American-Ottoman encounter also took place by overseas trade. Before July 4, 1776, the English colonies in North America have little contact with the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, the first American vessel to dock at an Ottoman wharf was possibly the *Grand Turk* which often loaded agricultural products and carpets into its hold in Smyrna in the 1790s.⁴ Smyrna was about to become an important entrepot for American commerce with the Near East. In the early nineteenth century, the US government made a great effort to enhance trade with the Ottoman Empire.⁵ Americans began to become familiarized with the Near East via commercial activity. This gave those with non-commercial aims a basis to come to the region.

<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-2-1823-seventh-annual-message-monroe-doctrine>.

3 Thomas A. Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East, 1784-1975: A Survey* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1977), 1-8.

4 Ibid., 17.; Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 35-36.

5 Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 9-18.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, two different types of non-governmental American ventures in the Near East appeared on both sides of the Aegean Sea. While secular philanthropist activity for the sake of the Greek War of Independence was initiated by American Philhellenes to the west of the Aegean, two missionaries from the ABCFM, Levi Parsons and Pliny Fisk, landed in Smyrna in 1820 to facilitate conversion to Protestantism in the Near East.⁶ These ventures were important with regard to the formation of American aid policies in the region.

Those who had long-term motivations to stay in the region played an important role in shaping American aid policies as well as in influencing US foreign policy. Even if the philhellenic movement was directly related to providing aid, its motivations were limited to the war period and it was not in the region to stay. Conversely, missionaries were not in the Near East for the purpose of aid, but they had a very strong motivation to stay there for a long time. They came to the Near East in order to prepare the required preconditions for the achievement of the Kingdom of God on earth.⁷

Although American missionaries had no intention to aid at the beginning, the American Board began to look like an aid organization as a consequence of methods developed and used as auxiliary means of evangelistic work. This process began with educational efforts that served the missionaries' evangelical purposes. Within a short period of time, education became a useful tool for the missionaries as it provided opportunities to contact locals and gain their sympathy. In that vein, American missionaries also worked in the medical field. They shared technical and technological information to increase their local followers' well-being. The missionaries established close relationships

6 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *First Ten Annual Reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: With Other Documents of the Board* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834), 230.

7 "They understood themselves as workers committed to this achievement that needed previous worldwide evangelization, the struggle for global Christian unity, and the restoration of Israel. The centrality of the Near Eastern world is self-evident in this whole vision. The most spectacular changes –the fall of Islam and the restoration of the Jews- had to take place there. From there, from a transformed, 'leavened,' and 'regenerated' Near East, Zion, and the global Kingdom had to be built up." Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 16.

with some local communities by resorting to these methods. When these communities faced natural or man-made disasters, the missionaries provided them humanitarian aid. Thus, the American Board unintentionally became experienced in the fields of humanitarian and developmental aid. In the post-Great War period, its heir, Near East Relief, used the American Board's methods in a systematic way and became specialized as a professional aid agency.

The relations established and developed by the missionaries with local communities were effective in NER's initial decision-making mechanisms. It must be noted that this does not necessarily imply a kind of determinism. This historical inheritance mattered in NER's decision-making processes which were mostly determined by wartime politics.

In short, to analyze American aid politics in the post-Great war period, one should first trace its roots and the beginning of its evolution, as these show the effects of religious motivations were aid is concerned, why and how developmental and humanitarian aid methods were developed and used, and the importance of historical ties between a donor and recipients.

§ 2.1 The Philhellenes and the Missioners

With regard to the roots of American aid politics, the early nineteenth century Ottoman Empire was the scene of two different endeavors made by the Philhellenes and the missionaries. Their motivations, methods, and organizational abilities on the ground and their relationship with the American administration were prominent determinants of their success and survival. Even if the philhellenic initiative directly sought to provide aid in the region, its success and life span were limited. It did not adapt to the Near East. The American Board, on the other hand, did not initially aim to give aid to people but evolved into an institution that provided humanitarian and developmental aid while strictly maintaining its *raison d'être*.

2.1.1 *The West Aegean: The Short-lived Attempt of the Philhellenes*

News of the Greek Uprising against the Ottoman Empire in 1821 created a stir in the United States and lit the fuse of the first sustained American venture in

overseas philanthropy.⁸ At the moment, there was no well-organized institution that could swiftly answer the call of Greeks. However, there were multifaceted – mostly moral - motivations in American society for sake of Greeks which gave a basis for an aid campaign. This first aid movement was the product of the private efforts of these elites and developed slowly and spontaneously throughout the decade. Devoid of official support as a consequence of the isolationist American foreign policy of the day, the Philhellenes resorted to private donations to provide military and humanitarian aid to the Greeks throughout the war. The aid campaign, which was a secular initiative, was limited to the timespan of the war and did not persist beyond the war as Protestant missionaries in Ottoman domains would do. However, it was an important experiment for aid politics as it showed that a secular, non-governmental aid initiative without state support could not persist in the long run.

Before the war broke out, a sympathy towards the Greeks already existed in the United States because of diaries, journals, and letters written by American travelers in the region that often referred to Greek antiquity. Of course when the uprising started, many Americans also saw it as “a war of the crescent against the cross.”⁹ Supporting the Greeks was also important by itself for the newly independent American nation because it seemed like the awakening and struggle of the descendants of antiquity for independence and democracy.

The interest of the American public brought a group of intellectuals who called themselves Philhellenes into existence. At first, the Philhellenes consisted of a few influential intellectuals such as Professor Everett from Harvard; Mathew Carey, a book publisher and philanthropist from Philadelphia; William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the New York Evening Post; and poets, James Gates Percival and Fitz-Green Halleck.¹⁰ In a short span, they gained the support of notable politicians such as former president James Madison, the present president James Monroe, and the John Q. Adams who would become the next president of the United States.¹¹

8 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 1.

9 Ibid., 2.

10 Merle Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad: A History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 22.

11 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 3.

Because no professional aid agency existed, the pro-Greeks had to take care of it themselves. In 1822, a few prominent citizens of Albany gathered and organized a meeting to form committees for the purpose of helping the Greek cause. Then new committees were separately organized in cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston by people who identified themselves as the Philhellenes. In the forthcoming days, Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia constituted new committees. By 1823, the Greek cause had begun to attract more people. Many influential journalists, merchants, bankers, clergymen, and scientists had joined the ranks of the Philhellenes in this year. They made great efforts to increase public support for the Greek cause. University students and factory workers raised money for the committees. The Philhellenes used benefit performances, special sermons and collections in churches, and silver collections at public debates to raise money.¹²

In the beginning, American aid was focused on funding military supplies for the Greeks.¹³ However, after the Egyptian intervention against the Greek insurgents on behalf of the Ottoman Empire in 1825, humanitarian crises deepened. Accordingly, in late 1826 and early 1827 a new movement for aid to Greece came into existence which was designed “not to supply the Greeks with arms and munitions, but with bread” given that conditions among the starving civilian population had become desperate.¹⁴

Despite the presence of pro-Greek sentiments in society, the Philhellenes did not manage to garner official support from congress. Throughout the aid campaign, politicians maintained a constant non-involvement policy to prevent damage to trade relations with the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ Secretary of State John Quincy Adams thought that providing official aid to those on one side of the conflict was not in line with American neutrality and its isolationist foreign policy with respect to the Old World. Similarly, in his annual address in 1822, President Monroe denied claims of official support for the Greeks though

12 Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 22-27; Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 5, 8; Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 9.

13 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 6.

14 Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 29.

15 Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 9.

he indicated his sympathy for their cause. According to Jefferson “Americans might sympathize in a private capacity but could not assent to official aid.”¹⁶

At the end of 1822, a philhellenic congressman, Henry Dwight, presented a resolution to the House of Representatives in order to garner official support for the Greek cause. Citing aid that France had given America during its war of independence, the Philhellenes “asked for [the] appropriation of two or three millions in provisions and whatever may be necessary to the Greeks, as an easy and honorable mode of acknowledging the aid, bounty, and obligation received from France in like circumstances.” However, in the face of the criticism of isolationists, Representative Henry Dwight moved to withdraw his resolution.¹⁷ Again, in 1827 – when humanitarian crises in Greece became an issue – the Philhellenes requested the allocation of money for the relief of victims from congress “to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, [and] to comfort the despairing.” However, the proposal was rejected by the majority in congress who thought that even non-military relief would make the United States party to the war.¹⁸

Without official support, the philhellenic endeavor was obliged to rely on private funds. A limited number of influential elites had to take care of themselves given the lack of an existing organization and their lack of experience. They provided aid to the Greeks throughout the war but did not intend to form an organized, centralized, permanent structure in the region.

This aid campaign run by a non-governmental initiative proved that aid could be used as an instrument to bypass traditional American foreign policy. In the end, the aid campaign was limited in time; the Philhellenes’ endeavor ended by the end of the war. A more consistent, systematic, centralized aid organization would be formed by American Protestant missionaries who did not initially intend to do so but rather sought to find converts.

16 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 4-5.

17 Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 23.

18 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 11.

2.1.2 *The East Aegean: The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*

2.1.2.1 The Formation of the Board

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

– Mark 16:15, KJV

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

– John 4:35, KJV

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was neither founded for the purpose of distributing aid nor answer to calls from crisis zones. Neither was it an organization directly formed by the government to intervene in the internal affairs of foreign countries. “The object of the Board is one the promulgation of Christianity among the heathen.” Accordingly, “the united efforts of all Christians, in all parts of the world, are demanded, and will be demanded for many years to come, *in this single branch of charity*”¹⁹ by the American Board in accordance with the aforementioned verses of the Bible.

An American Board member and historian who dedicated his research to the institution, William Strong, points out that ABCFM was one of the most important by-products of the Second Great Awakening.²⁰ In this religious

19 American Board, *First Ten Annual Reports*, 68.

20 “The period of religious revival which blessed New England as the eighteenth century turned into the nineteenth. The tides of religious life had reached a low ebb after the Revolutionary War and before the welcome change began. Infidelity was general and rampant. Educated men boasted of skepticism. The colleges were noisy with it. The reaction from the great awakening and its surge of emotions was complete. Then came quietly a gradual renewal of religious

atmosphere, a follower of the theology of Hopkins who was a deeply religious young man, Samuel John Mills, enrolled in Williams College in 1806, and within a short time he gathered his friends to carry out foreign missions.²¹ In 1808, Mills and his friends formed a society called “The Brethren” which would become influential at Williams College and later at Andover Seminary.²² With the intention of creating foreign missions, Mills and his fellow students presented a paper to the General Association of Massachusetts Proper in 1810. In the end, the General Association voted to form a Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, “for the purpose of devising ways and means, and adopting and prosecuting measures, for promoting the spread of the gospel in heathen lands.”²³ Board records show that meeting attendees adopted a constitution and named the board the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.²⁴

2.1.1.2.2 Aid as Auxiliary Means of Evangelization

The first ABCFM missionaries were sent to British India in 1812.²⁵ In the first decade after its foundation, the work of ABCFM focused on the Indian subcontinent and Native Americans in South and North America. In the process, the methods adopted by American Board missionaries gave way to the development of an aid mentality, first via providing education. In the beginning, in accordance with their purpose of promulgating Christianity, American Board missionaries focused their attention on the publication and distribution of scriptures in different languages. In order to translate scriptures into local languages and transmit their message to “heathens,” missionaries had to learn

desire.” William E. Strong, *The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, New York, Chicago: Pilgrim Press, 1910), 8.

21 Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 140.

22 Rufus Anderson, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1863), 39.

23 American Board, *First Ten Annual Reports*, 10.

24 *Ibid.*, 11.

25 Strong, *Story of the American Board*, 17.

the languages they encountered or else the locals learned English. In the fifth annual meeting of the ABCFM held in 1815 this issue was discussed and education efforts began: “During this time we should hope to be useful, by the instruction of schools composed either of European or half-cast children, or by teaching the English language to the natives themselves.”²⁶ This tactic gave missionaries an opportunity to come into contact with the people, “particularly the lower classes.”²⁷ Finding new converts put evangelical efforts on a more solid basis as one ABCFM missionary said: “What is the relation of the missionary to the native minister? The missionary passes on; the native minister abides to the end of time.”²⁸

The debate around the opening of schools shows the mentality and motivations of the American Board in its first years. Besides the promulgation of Christianity, a discourse of civilization attracted attention in the minutes of the American Board. There was a *mission civilisatrice* via education. However, there was no clear definition of civilization in the minds of missionaries. For example, American Indians needed not only to be Christianized but also civilized, while people under the rule of the Birman Empire (today’s Myanmar) were considered civilized according to criteria of the American Board, which also claimed that “the civilized world is in a state of awful convulsion and unparalleled distress.”²⁹

In early 1820, shortly before the beginning of the philhellenic aid campaign on the west side of the Aegean Sea, two ABCFM missionaries, Parsons and Fisk, landed in Smyrna. Having accumulated a decade of experience, the ABCFM sent them to “the land of ancient promise, and of present hope” – Palestine – which was planned to be the center of an endeavor to reach Muslims, Jews, and Christians who were “in a state of deplorable ignorance and degradation, destitute of the means of divine knowledge, and bewildered with vain imaginations and strong delusions.”³⁰

26 American Board, *First Ten Annual Reports*, 97.

27 Ibid.

28 Joseph K. Greene, "Our Native Co-Laborers " in *Services at the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of the American Mission at Constantinople* (c., 1906), 53.

29 American Board, *First Ten Annual Reports*, 25-28, 153.

30 Ibid., 230.

From the day the two missionaries set foot in the Near East until the beginning of the Great War, ABCFM missionaries would – or would try - to establish a relationship with almost all of the communities dwelling in the region from Jews to Maronites, Turks to Greeks. Moreover, they would create a network of religious, educational, medical, and industrial centers as auxiliary means of evangelization there.

In the 1820s and 1830s, ABCFM missionaries began to open elementary schools to teach Jewish, Armenian, Greek, and Arab children how to read and soon after that, a secondary school, Bebek Seminary, was opened in 1840 by Cyrus Hamlin.³¹ Hamlin's institution provided a modern curriculum that included courses such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, philosophy, history, geography, and the English language as well as Bible courses.³² Many of its graduates would become teachers, pastors, preachers, and tradesmen. These learned people such as a teacher in the first high school in Aintab or a pastor of the evangelical church of Adabazar would increase missionary endeavors in the Near East, and many others would become diffused throughout the Near East for different assignments.³³ The American Board's educational activities did not remain limited to primary and secondary education; missionaries opened colleges in many places such as Scutari, Smyrna, Marsovan, Aintab, Marash, Tarsus, and Harput.³⁴ More importantly, three independent colleges (Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, Robert College, and Constantinople Woman's College), whose graduates would be influential in the political, cultural, social, and economic transformation of the Near East, were established in the nineteenth century.³⁵

31 Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 20.

32 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 53.

33 Greene, "Our Native Co-Laborers " 55-58.

34 John A. DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 13.

35 "Although these colleges had close connections with the missionary movement, had some extent actually derived their impetus from missionaries, and were infused with Christian motivation, they could not, strictly speaking, be classified as missionary institutions. Robert College and Syrian Protestant College both had independent American charters and boards of trustees." *Ibid.*

As a natural consequence, the opening of missionary schools created demand for textbooks, and this was also fulfilled by the missionaries themselves. From the 1820s, the missionary press began to print schoolbooks in addition to religious texts.³⁶ The Board began to bring “progress and modernity” to the people of the Near East. As Bryson pointed out, publishing activity inspired cultural and later political nationalism among nations there even if the Board did not intend to do this.³⁷

One missionary-led school, Bebek Seminary, was also important with regard to beginning of industrial-technical efforts that would cause Hamlin to be known as “the most satanic man in the empire.”³⁸ As Grabill pointed “one of America's first technical assistance programs overseas” was led by Hamlin and his students through the introduction of a steam engine used to power a bakery's flour mill in order that it could provide bread for allied soldiers staying in Constantinople during the Crimean War in the 1850s. Hamlin also strove to make students self-sufficient, leading them some industrial work such as making shoes, clothes, ash pans, and sheet-iron stoves.³⁹ The successful enterprises of Hamlin generated a self-sufficiency principle for the operation of missionary institutions such as schools and orphanages.

When ABCFM missionaries arrived in the Near East they already knew that providing modern educational opportunities to people who had been deprived of them would open new channels to communicate with these people. After beginning work in the area, missionaries with medical training realized that medical work could be another channel to reach the “heathens”. “The importance, not simply as a means of alleviating human misery, but as a means of access to people, of enlightenment, and of physical and spiritual salvation, is of inconceivable importance.”⁴⁰ Moreover, such work would not provoke much reaction from local religious authorities who were scared of losing their

36 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 22.

37 Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 21-22.

38 Cyrus Hamlin, *Among the Turks* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1877), 58.

39 Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 22-23.

40 Charles C. Tracy, "Salient Points in Mission History," in *Services at the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of the American Mission at Constantinople* (s.n., 1906), 72.

co-religionists, as educational work usually did. The first medical activity by missionaries in the Near East was initiated by Dr. Asa Dodge in Beirut in 1833. Soon after, in 1835, the American Board appointed Dr. Asahel Grant to establish medical institutions in all its mission centers.⁴¹

2.1.2.3 Relations with the "Near Easterners"

Excess of missionaries not only depended on their own endeavors but also the attitudes of people whom they were trying to evangelize. In the early days of American missionary efforts in the Near East, missionaries realized that the conversion of Muslims was nearly impossible;⁴² the punishment for apostasy from Islam was death and there was an authority in the form of the state that could execute this sentence. Because of this, large-scale attempts to evangelize Muslims would lead to the downfall of missionary initiatives in the region. Missionaries thus headed towards non-Muslim communities. One of the first targets of missionaries in the 1820s was to work among the Jews and Greeks in Smyrna, but this was also not very fruitful as they did not show any interest.⁴³ One missionary author, William Strong, indicates his disappointment regarding seven years of failed work among the Jews of Thessalonica in this way: "These people were punctilious in their forms of religion while really worshipping gold."⁴⁴ Targeted communities were not passive; missionaries were frequently met with reactions. Ecclesiastical persecution and excommunication of apostates were common practices to defend co-religionists against evangelist endeavors. Excommunication entailed serious consequences for apostates such as "expulsions from family, stripes, imprisonments, loss of property, banishments etc."⁴⁵

41 Faruk Taşkın, "Kendi Kaynaklarında American Board'ın Türkiye'deki Sağlık Faaliyetleri (1833-1923)" (PhD diss., Mersin University, 2015), 28.

42 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 21.; Samuel Colcord Bartlett, *Sketches of the Missions of the American Board* (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1872), 71.; Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 21.

43 Bartlett, *Sketches*, 71.

44 Strong, *Story of the American Board*, 198.

45 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 50.

By trial and error, missionaries continued their work in the region, and eventually the missionary-philanthropic endeavors of the American Board were warmly welcomed, especially among Bulgarians and Armenians. These communities - especially the latter - were provided with missionary schools and hospitals and would occupy an important place that determines the American Board's activities and American foreign policy in the Near East. Robert College played a key role in the good relationship with Bulgarians. Between 1863 and 1903, almost half the graduates were Bulgarians.

When the Bulgarian Constituent Assembly met in 1879, former Robert College students who had knowledge of parliamentary procedure and Western government took important responsibilities. Later, many Bulgarian cabinet members, judges, diplomatic officials, and professional leaders were Robert College products. George Washburn, former teacher and adviser of these alumni, became known by many as the 'Father of Bulgaria.' The King of Bulgaria recognized the value of Robert College to his country by decorating Washburn and the president who succeeded him, Caleb F. Gates.⁴⁶

Within the first decade after the Bulgarian independence, the American Board's activities further expanded. The number of converts increased and led to the emergence of capable native religious leaders.⁴⁷

Until the 1880s, ABCFM regarded Armenians as only one of the communities targeted for evangelization. Evangelists had emerged successful to an extent among the Armenians, and the American Board even planned to withdraw from working among them in order to concentrate on other communities in the Near East. However, repeated crop failures in Central and Eastern Turkey in the 1880s prevented the Board from withdrawing and missionaries turned to another aspect of aid in the region: famine relief. The 1880s relief campaign was fruitful with regard to building a positive relationship with Armenians there.⁴⁸ A few years later, in the mid-1890s, the Hamidiye Regiments

46 Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 54.

47 Strong, *Story of the American Board*, 389-90.

48 *Ibid.*, 385-87.

consisting of Kurdish bandits formed by an order of Abdulhamit II (r.1876-1909) killed tens of thousands of Armenians. Merzifon College and a number of American properties in Harput and Marash were ravaged, and many Armenian-Americans in the Ottoman Empire were arrested.⁴⁹ In the face of crisis, ABCFM initiated another relief campaign and began to raise funds in the United States.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Armenians who had immigrated to the United States as well as American missionaries in the focused attention on the incidents via their writings and reports. This led to the formation a negative image of Turks with labels such as “unspeakable Turk” and “terrible Turk” among the US public.⁵¹ Everlasting missionary activity among Armenians in the face of new crises led to a sharp increase in public interest in Armenians and in the Near East in the United States.⁵²

In brief, religious motivations led to formation a systematic, long term aid effort in the Near East. Educational endeavors and their byproducts, printing and technical-industrial activities, medical efforts, and humanitarian aid were used as auxiliary means of evangelizing “heathens”. By means of these methods, the American Board established close relationships with Armenians and Bulgarians. When the twentieth century came, the Board had a powerful organization in the Near East:

By 1900 the American Board in European Turkey and Anatolia claimed 21 stations where their 162 missionaries were assisted by more than 900 native helpers. These servants of God must have indeed been busy, for they had more than 2700 boys and girls in their 36 boarding and high schools, nearly 15,000 more in the 398 primary schools, and 22 students in their four theological schools. The Board expended

49 Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Kökenleri* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2001), 310.; Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 42.

50 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 117-18.

51 Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan*, 304, 14.

52 Bryson, "Woodrow Wilson", 3.

nearly \$200,000 for these activities during the year ending August 31, 1900.⁵³

These numbers steadily increased on the eve of the Great War. In 1914, there were 174 missionaries, nine hospitals, and 426 schools with 25,000 students.⁵⁴ Near East Relief would be established upon this network and inherited its methods, skills, and relationships from the American Board.

§ 2.2 The Early Years of Near East Relief (1915-1918)

NER was actually the continuation of a volunteer committee established by American Board missionaries upon the ABCFM network in September 1915 in the face of a humanitarian crisis faced by Armenians since the beginning of spring 1915.⁵⁵ During the Great War, the neutrality of the United States meant it was the only power that could run a humanitarian aid campaign within the domain of the Ottoman Empire. In September 1915, the American Ambassador to Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, informed the State Department that “the destruction of the Armenian race in Turkey is rapidly progressing.” He made a request in his telegram for the formation of a committee to organize a relief campaign. The State Department transmitted this cable to the Foreign Secretary of the Board, James L. Barton, who immediately wrote to Cleveland H. Dodge to form a committee. As the result of a meeting held on September 16, 1915, in New York, they laid the foundations of the organization that would eventually be known as Near East Relief after two name changes.⁵⁶ Within a month, the committee succeeded in raising \$100,000 and sent the money to Ambassador Morgenthau who had formed a local committee to transmit funds to the needy in the country’s interior.⁵⁷

53 DeNovo, *American Interests*, 9.

54 Bryson, “Woodrow Wilson”, 3.

55 Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 3-20.

56 Ibid., vii, x, 4-6.

57 “The members were: the Ambassador; President Gates of Robert College, Chairman; Lewis Heck, of the American Embassy, Secretary; William W. Peet of the American Board, Treasurer; Mrs. George Huntington and Luther Fowle.” Ibid., 17.

ABCFM missionaries had formed close relations with Armenians and had spent money on and labored for them for decades. Now it was time for the missionaries to help to the Armenians. In accordance with this purpose, NER raised funds in the United States and distributed them for the survival of Armenian victims. Accordingly, it became a high-volume campaign. According to a NER pamphlet, by September 1918 the organization had collected approximately \$12 million for the immediate needs of Armenians.⁵⁸ The period from 1915 through the end of 1918 was a transitional one in which the aid campaign was mostly limited to immediate relief work, and the NER did not properly separate from the American Board.

In this period, it was not planned that NER would carry out a multi-faceted aid campaign in the Near East. However, the emergence of new conditions beget by the end of the war and the Allied victory brought more varied and complex issues to NER. After the war, it evolved into a professional aid agency that provided both humanitarian and developmental aid in the region. The war was over, but it left devastated lands and destitute peoples behind. Considering the great extent of the NER's field of operation in the post-War period⁵⁹ and the fact that immediate relief work costs large sums of money, the work obviously could not be sustained forever with the same means. A rehabilitation program was initially formulated by NER called "Not Charity but a Chance" designed to use immediate relief work in conjunction with developmental aid in order to make war sufferers self-sufficient:

They do not desire charity, they want a chance. Our call is for financial help to make it possible to satisfy hungry mouths and give these people bodies capable of the work they must do in rehabilitating their

58 "Has This Little Girl a Home in Your Heart? She Has No Other!" (New York: American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 1918), 1.

59 "During the calendar year of 1919 the Near East Relief conducted relief activities in the following areas of the Near East: Constantinople and adjoining territory in European Turkey, Anatolia, Armenia, Cilicia, Kurdistan, Syria, Palestine (for Armenian refugees only), Mesopotamia, Persia, Trans-Caucasia (Russia), including the Armenian Republic, Georgia and Azerbaidjan." SALT Research (SR), Near East Relief (NER), Identifier (id.) ABA132Co27005, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 5.

devastated land. Our commissions buy food and distribute it with infinite care. They buy plows, harrows, rakes, hoes and seeds to get these people back on their land again. Sewing machines, needles, thimbles, thread, cloth and garments of all descriptions are taken over to help the women to self-help. Cattle must be secured for them to stock their land, and household supplies, such as cooking utensils of the simplest character, must be provided to help these people to live.⁶⁰

However, military conflicts did not cease with the Armistice of Mudros and NER would do more than provide immediate relief. By the end of the war, the NER had assessed this possibility, too. When Allied fleet was approaching Constantinople in early November 1918, a special committee had already been organized by NER to conduct a survey to determine conditions in the Near East. Without waiting for the results of the survey, NER planned to send various specialists to the Near East including “experienced American workers, doctors, nurses, agricultural experts, sanitary engineers, orphanage workers, teachers, mechanics and other technically trained men and women.”⁶¹ Claiming responsibility for such an extended campaign led NER to perform a more complex rehabilitation campaign that would transform it into a multifaceted aid organization. In July 1919, an early sketch of an aid program was manifested by NER. “Refugees, orphans, women and girls rescued from Moslem homes, and the sick” were the priorities of the work. In addition to distributive food and clothing to these people, the issues of health, education, employment, and shelter were taken into consideration. The self-sufficiency principle was also an important part of the program. Orphans and “rescued” women were to be taught trades to become self-sufficient while at the same helped to find their relatives. And in rural regions, scientific methods of agriculture were to be taught to materialize this principle.⁶²

60 "Vartan's Appeal: 400,000 Children Starving in Bible Lands," (New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1918), 6.

61 "Relief Expedition to be Sent to Turkey," *News Bulletin* 2, no. 6 (November 1918), 1.

62 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co105001, "Policies Governing General Relief Operations of the A.C.R.N.E.," *The Acorne* 1, no. 5 (July 5, 1919), 1.

NER's work in Constantinople proves that it had transformed into a professional aid agency that provided both humanitarian and developmental aid. NER, which swiftly organized in Constantinople because of the fact that its organization was based upon the American Board's network, pioneered a multi-faceted aid campaign there. Within a year of April 1919, the membership of the organization in Constantinople expanded from a small group of seven to a large body consisting of 136 active members together with natives. In the same way, the number of families being assisted increased from thirty-eight to exactly 3,000 in April 1920 according to the bulletin of NER.⁶³ The organization executed a complex program in the occupied city. Mentioning one of their methods suitably shows the extent of the program. Medical work in the city included the opening and running of new clinics, supplying local hospitals with medications and equipment, appointing itinerant doctors, conducting medical inspections of refugee camps and orphanages, training native women in nursing, organizing preventive medicine lessons for mothers, and providing health services at home for the bedridden.⁶⁴

2.2.1 *Near East Relief: Can it be Treated as an Aid Agency?*

As explained above, NER had the characteristics of a professional humanitarian and developmental aid agency because of the methods to which it resorted. However, this is not sufficient to say that it possessed all the features that an aid agency should. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's (IFRC) *Fundamental Principles* which were adopted in 1965, are a guide as they are "the result of over a century of humanitarian experience, and are recognized in international humanitarian law."⁶⁵ The principles are humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and

63 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co222003, Mabelle C. Phillips, "Constantinople Case Committee," *The Acorne* 2, no. 22 (June 5, 1920), 3.

64 In the next chapter I examine NER's aid campaign in Constantinople in detail.

65 "The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: Ethics and Tools for Humanitarian Action," (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015), 6.

universality.⁶⁶ These are relative concepts and have been debated for decades with regard to aid politics.⁶⁷ However, denying them completely would be inappropriate as the global aid game has long been playing by these rules. Accepting these principles as given, the organization can be tested by these post-World War II standards which are still globally accepted. NER possessed most of the characteristics except ‘neutrality’. Needless to say NER’s work suited the principle of ‘voluntary service.’⁶⁸ This part of the chapter shows that NER in the post-war period possessed the principles defined as ‘independence’ and ‘humanity’. Whether true or not, the organization itself also asserted that its work was impartial.

Before analyzing what NER did in Constantinople in detail and asking the questions of how, for whom, and why, it should be evaluated whether NER was an independent aid agency or a passive tool in the hands of the American Board or the State Department. This would also enable a debate on the ‘humanity’ principle. I propose that NER had evolved into a separate entity from the American Board which had characteristics of an aid agency and was relatively independent of the State Department. The first step is to analyze the institution’s structure and its relation to politics.

Firstly, although NER took steps in the direction of transforming into a secular aid agency in post-war period, it was built upon the ABCFM network and naturally inherited the American Board’s motivations. Secondly, even if NER was a representative of American interests in the region, it was not a passive instrument; there was a mutual relationship between the State Department and NER regarding the shaping of foreign policy in the Near East. It was

66 Because the last two principles directly relate to the functioning of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, I exclude them. *Ibid.*, 5.

67 For instance, “the notion of independence seeks to support both impartiality and neutrality by ensuring that the humanitarian agency is able to make its own decisions free from undue coercion. Like neutrality, this is an increasingly difficult concept to put into practice. If an agency receives substantial funding from one government, is it still independent? If the majority of an agency’s staff are of one nationality, religion, or political persuasion, are they still independent?” Walker and Maxwell, *Shaping the Humanitarian World*, 3.

68 “Volunteer service is essential to the life of every philanthropic organization.” “A Message to Our Friends,” *The New Near East* 6, no. 7 (April 1921), 3.

an organization that blended religious and national motivations with humanitarian concerns.

Helping and providing assistance have been viewed by many cultures with skepticism and suspicion. Altruism has not always had a good press, and it is widely believed that handouts often come with strings attached. Such suspicion goes back at least to the time when the ancient Greeks won a famous military victory against the Trojans, who unwisely accepted the gift of a large horse which concealed Greek soldiers who infiltrated the city at night. The phrase 'Beware of Greeks even when they bear gifts' has become a synonym for suspicion.⁶⁹

The cynical view makes it difficult to study aid politics in history as well as in the present because it denies the possibility that humanitarianism can coexist together with selfish interests. I think looking for the definitions of 'universal good and evil' to debate on aid is more religious endeavor than a missionary's work. According to Davide Rodogno, "this ambiguous and highly contradictory-ism, i.e., humanitarianism, that scholars gladly but lazily tend to homogenize, should be more carefully historicized. NER's interpretation of humanitarianism was specific, and we must be wary of generalizations or of hastily assimilating it to other 'big' American organizations such as the American Red Cross."⁷⁰

Firstly, despite the fact that NER was established by ABCFM missionaries and maintained a close relationship and cooperated with the American Board, it acted or tried to act as a separate, secular aid organization. Melanie Tanielian, in her doctoral dissertation on relief efforts in wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon, draws attention to this evolution: "What will become clear is that American relief work, which was rooted in religious obligations and inspired by the nineteenth century domestic philanthropic enterprises, gradually developed into a strand of increasingly secular and professional

69 Roger C. Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

70 Rodogno, "Beyond Relief," 47.

international humanitarianism.”⁷¹ Similarly, Keith D. Watenpaugh points out that “...modern humanitarianism represents a significant shift away from the work of Protestant Christian missions and missionaries in the non-West.”⁷²

In the post-war period NER officially separated from the American Board. This decision allowed NER to assert that it helps people irrespective of their religion or nationality.⁷³ The minutes a NER meeting held in March 1919 indicated that the date of separation from the ABCFM was the first day of 1919. In the same meeting, to formalize the organization, it was submitted to organize administrative departments.⁷⁴ In April 1919, Dr. Peet, the president of the ABCFM, pointed out the necessity of separating the offices of NER from those of the American Board in Bible House. The new office would be in Pera.⁷⁵ In the following years, ABCFM and NER carried out their activities separately, at least in Constantinople. NER worked to provide for the material needs of destitute people in Constantinople, while the ABCFM took responsibility for “spiritual needs.” At one point, the student became the master. In July 1921, ABCFM officially handed over all of its relief activities in Constantinople to NER in an agreement signed by the organizations.⁷⁶ The Board focused on its *raison d'être*: “evangelism is fundamental,” “education is necessary,” and “literature is [the] handmaid of education and evangelism.”⁷⁷ Accordingly, a school for training American missionaries in the languages, history, and all aspects of life in the Near East was opened and run by the American Board in

71 Melanie Tanielian, “The War of Famine: Everyday Life in Wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon (1914-1918)” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 136.

72 Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones*, 16-17.

73 “The American public responded to the call of the Committee and as a result millions of dollars have been placed in the hands of our Committee for Relief in the Near East without distinction as to religion or nationality.” SR, NER, id. ABA132C0102007E01, “Rules and Regulations of the American Commission for Relief in the Near East,” *The Acorne*, 1, no. 2 (June 14, 1919), 8.; “Irrespective of religion and creed, it (NER) clothed the naked, fed the starving and provided shelter, care and practical schooling for more than a hundred and thirty thousand fatherless waifs left as wreckage from the Great War.” Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, vii.

74 SR, NER, id. ABA132C037004, “7th Meeting,” (March 27, 1919), 1.

75 SR, NER, id. ABA132C037009, “12th Meeting,” (April 8, 1919), 1.

76 SR, NER, id. ABA1092210207701, “Relation of A.B. Workers to N.E.R.,” (July 1, 1921), 1.

77 SR, Annual Station Reports of the ABCFM (AB), id. ABAASR0001012002 (July 8, 1921).

the occupied city.⁷⁸ But ABCFM was not involved in the issues which were in the scope of NER in Constantinople until Christian migration from Anatolia increased in early 1923.⁷⁹ From 1919 until this date, ABCFM's relations with refugees and orphans in the city were limited to evangelistic activities and privately distribution of scriptures.⁸⁰ However, where the material and spiritual needs overlapped, NER cooperated with ABCFM. For example, NER would channel brighter orphans to mission schools.⁸¹

Secondly, when it comes to NER's relationship with the state apparatus of the US and other American institutions, one of the most common view that "foreign aid cannot be considered apart from the larger perspectives of foreign policy; and foreign policy, in turn, cannot be understood apart from the demands of internal American politics."⁸² Obviously, there was close cooperation and a strong relationship between NER and the State Department; however, NER was more than an extension of the State Department and had powerful influence over the formation of American foreign policy in the region.

Actually, as a private aid agency founded on the network of the ABCFM that was recognized by the state via incorporation by the congress on August

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- 78 This school, called the Language School of the American Board provided both Greek, Turkish, Armenian language education and various lectures such as "Health and Disease in the Near East," "Turkish Literature and Ottoman Life," "Oriental Psychology," and "Outlines of Armenian Church History." SR, AB, id. ABAASR0001010001-5, Fred Field Goodsell "First Annual Report of the Constantinople Language School of the American Board: 1920-1921" (July 1, 1921), 1-5.
- 79 SR, AB, id. ABAASR0001058001-3, Dr. Frederick W. MacCallum, "A Brief Report of the Refugee Work by Missioners of the American Board in Constantinople: December 22nd-22 to March 22nd 23," (March 22, 1923), 1-3.
- 80 SR, AB, id. ABAASR0001015, "American Bible House at Constantinople to American Bible Society at New York City," (July 6, 1921), 1.; SR, AB, id. ABAASR0001054001-2, "Evangelistic Work in Constantinople Station: 1922-1923," (1923), 1-2.
- 81 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co105001, "Policies Governing General Relief Operations of the A.C.R.N.E.," *The Acorne* 1, no. 5 (July 5, 1919), 1.
- 82 Donald M. Fraser, "The Politics of Aid Legislation," in *Development Today: A New Look at U.S. Relations with the Poor Countries*, ed. Robert E. Hunter and John E. Rielly (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 239.

6, 1919,⁸³ the NER was provided with freedom to maneuver and set up its own aid politics in Constantinople and the Near East. Because no allied government existed in Near East, direct transfers of funds were not possible unlike in Europe,⁸⁴ the United States handed over its post-war aid operations there to an organization. The American Red Cross (ARC) officially existed in the region, but NER was the appropriate candidate.

The Red Cross found the machinery of relief already at work in the Near East—the missionaries, who know the people and speak their languages, and all official representatives of the United States had been organized by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief. Channels of distribution were well established. And the Red Cross asked the Committee to carry on all relief work in the Near East territory, in order that there be neither duplication nor lost motion.⁸⁵

As prominent American organizations in Constantinople, NER, the ARC, the ABCFM, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) cooperated and were supported by the US Navy. While some points of their activities overlapped, there was a task sharing among the organizations. While NER used Constantinople as a base for its aid operations there as well as the territories to the south and east of the city, the ARC pursued operations in the Balkans and Southern Russia by using the city's harbor facilities and accessibility to these regions.⁸⁶ As mentioned,

83 Rodogno, "Beyond Relief," 51.

84 "We rejoice that our own government is able to loan millions of dollars to Belgium, France, Serbia and other allied nations, with which the war orphans and destitute populations may be supported. But unfortunately there is at present no friendly and responsible government in the Near East to which our government can legitimately make loans for use in behalf of the millions of homeless destitutes in that region." Cleveland H. Dodge and Charles V. Vickrey, "Practicing Bible Precepts in Bible Lands: Handbook for Busy Pastors for Use in the Campaign for \$30,000,000 January 12th to 19th, 1919," (New York: American Committee for Relief in the Near East, 1919), 25.

85 "Has This Little Girl a Home in Your Heart?: She Has No Other!" 1.

86 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co216003-4, James A. Mills, "American Red Cross in the Near East," *The Acorne* 2, no. 16 (April 17 – 24, 1920), 3-4.

the ABCFM was focused on religious issues. While the YMCA adopted a position similar to the pre-1919 NER, the YWCA focused on working on behalf of women and orphan girls. But the role of these associations was subsidiary. The American High Commissioner in Constantinople, Rear Admiral L. Bristol, and the Navy under his command helped these organizations operate by furnishing them with medical supplies,⁸⁷ escorting their naval transportation,⁸⁸ delivering supplies, and transporting refugees.⁸⁹ As indicated in NER's newspaper, *The Acorne*, "perhaps at no time before have there been so many Americans in Constantinople. It is estimated that the combined personnel of the Red Cross, the Near East Committee, the Army and Navy, the Embassy, the faculties of two American colleges and the representatives of various commercial organizations make a total of nearly 300 Americans in the Turkish capital."⁹⁰ To enhance cooperation, representatives of American organizations gathered on several occasions. For example, in August 1920 NER organized a three-day conference at Robert College. Besides the entire body of NER in Constantinople and its representatives from several districts of Anatolia, spokesmen from the ARC, YWCA, YMCA, and the Board - all of whom told how their work related to that of the NER - were present at the conference. High Commissioner Admiral Bristol also gave a speech about the work of NER.⁹¹ Another conference was held in April the same year in New York for educational work in the Near East. Trustees of American colleges in the Near East and representatives of the aforementioned organizations except for the

87 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co104007Eo1 "Medical Supplies," *The Acorne* 1, no. 4 (June 26, 1919), 8.

88 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co235001, "Near East Conference: Saturday's Session," *The Acorne* 2, no. 35 (September 4, 1920), 1.

89 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co247001-3, "American Relief Work with the Russians Refugees in Constantinople," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 47 (November 27, 1920), 1-3.

90 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co216003-4, James A. Mills, "American Red Cross in the Near East," *The Acorne* 2, no. 16 (April, 17 and 24 1920), 3-4.

91 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co235001-4, "Near East Conference," *The Acorne* 2, no. 35 (September 4, 1920), 1-4.

ARC participated. As a result of this conference, several committees were formed to extend cooperation between these institutions.⁹²

NER's board of directors were in important positions in the Near East and were influential in Washington. Cleveland H. Dodge, who was a businessmen and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Robert College, and Charles R. Crane, who was also a businessman and the President of the Board of Trustees of the Constantinople College for Women, grabbed the most attention among many others as they were close friends of President Woodrow Wilson.⁹³ Ambassador Morgenthau was also close to Wilson and had served as financial chairman of Wilson's campaign in the presidential election of 1912.⁹⁴

However, having a good relationship and cooperating with the US government and military did not necessarily mean NER was a passive agent whose every step was predetermined or a diplomatic instrument directly used by the State Department. As Davide Rodogno asserts, "while NER was not an extension of American foreign policy, it did need US governmental assistance and cooperation to operate in foreign territories."⁹⁵ ABCFM and NER should be actually evaluated together as an overseas interest lobby, or as Thomas Bryson calls it a "missionary-relief lobby"⁹⁶ that had an impact on the determination of the foreign policy of the United States in the Near East. What empowered NER to determine foreign policy in the Near East besides its organizational capacity was its notable members with strong ties to President Woodrow Wilson. Charles R. Crane and Ambassador Henry Morgenthau had close relations with the president, but the strongest personal factor was the friendship of Cleveland H. Dodge.⁹⁷ The State Department considered the lobby's interests and recommendations both during and after the war.

92 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41009-A01, William W. Peet, "Committee of Cooperation on American Education in the Near East," (April 6, 1920), 1-2.

93 Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 6.

94 Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 65.

95 Rodogno, "Beyond Relief," 49.

96 Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 77.

97 "The Dodge-Wilson acquaintance (Dodge was the junior by two years) had begun in autumn 1875 and would end with Wilson's death in February 1924, nearly fifty years later. The New

One of the most striking examples in relation to the state-lobby relationship is that the United States took the interests of the lobby into account when undertaking war decisions vis-à-vis the Central Powers. In April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany - and then on Austria-Hungary in December upon Wilson exhortation of Congress on grounds that it was "an instrument of Germany."⁹⁸ When it came to Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, the Allies and certain Republicans wanted to fight and increased a hawkish pressure on the president.⁹⁹ During the war, the protection of missionary-relief interests was a primary object of US foreign policy in the Near East.¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, President Wilson and State Secretary Lansing omitted the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria from the declaration of war in order to pursue the existing policy. Of course, there was also a military consideration that participation in the war in the Near East would place extra strain on the army.¹⁰¹ Prominent figures of NER frequently met and corresponded with American statesmen to support their position. Lansing wrote the President, that in the case of a war, "relief would come to an end, our missionaries will be expelled or interned and the great missionary properties will be confiscated."¹⁰² Missionary diplomacy helped convince Wilson not change United States policy towards the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria.¹⁰³

In summary, NER became a professional aid agency as an unforeseen by-product of a hundred-year-long evolutionary process. Even before NER was founded, its ancestor, the American Board, began to look like an aid agency because of methods it had developed and used as auxiliary means of evangelization. When NER is tested by the globally approved *Fundamental Principles*, I assert that it possessed most of the characteristics to be considered an aid agency. It was an independent, humanitarian aid agency that sustained

York Times obituary for Dodge in 1926 suggested him to be the only early friend of President Wilson who remained his close friend to the end." Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 80.

98 DeNovo, *American Interests*, 108.

99 Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 96.

100 Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 59.

101 *Ibid.*, 63.

102 Lansing to Wilson, May 8, 1918, *Foreign Relations: Lansing Papers*, II, 124-126, quoted in Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 96.

103 *Ibid.*, 97.

voluntary service. In addition to this, whether true or not, the organization also crucially asserted its impartiality.



Occupied Constantinople and Foreign Aid (1918-1923)

Near East Relief had the most basic features of an aid agency. To debate its activities in the scope of the politics of aid rather than approaching it as a missionary organization or as a foreign policy tool provides the opportunity to understand what this resource transfer meant. Constantinople under Allied occupation is one of the most appropriate places to make an evaluation of NER's aid campaign.

The American aid campaign in Constantinople during the occupation period was the most systematic and successful in the city. It differed from the aid operations of the Allies in many respects. Unlike the Allied powers' state-led programs in the city which were determined by the various short-term agendas of their ministries of foreign affairs, the American aid campaign was mostly carried out by a non-governmental aid organization called Near East Relief, which emerged as a product of the American Board's century-long efforts in the Near East. Thus, American aid policies in the city and in the Near East were mostly based on this inheritance from the ABCFM, including its various motivations, relationships, and aid methods. NER was in such a position that the State Department took it into consideration whenever an important decision was taken concerning the Near East during the Great War and the post-war period.

Constantinople was a great city with a population of approximately a million people that did not experience an extensive military conflict.¹ But it was in the middle of a region full of conflicts that suffered from poverty, migration, and the occupation itself. A city facing such conditions provides the opportunity to investigate the politics of aid in a detailed way. It would neither be possible to examine together the multi-faceted aid methods - including humanitarian and developmental aid methods developed by the ABCFM as auxiliary means of its missionary endeavor and bequeathed to NER - in a substantially destroyed city in immediate need of food and clothing relief nor in a rural region in which the methods resorted to for aid work would have been limited.

Moreover, although the Ottoman administration formally existed through the occupation period, its authority was limited in the presence of the Allied High Commissioners. The US also had a military presence in the city like the other victorious states that helped fellow citizens in their various activities. This meant there was no able, local authority to supervise and regulate aid politics of an aid organization. Lacking the presence of an able state apparatus, the politics of aid were transparent and are easy to evaluate, especially in a multinational, multi-religious city where every community had more or less the same problems. Unlike regions where a single community suffered most from the war conditions and correspondingly most needed aid, conditions like those in Constantinople provide the best opportunity to evaluate whether aid reached destitute people irrespective of their identities and – if not - to find out why not, to ascertain who received most of the aid, and to discover motivations of the donor.

After explaining the political, social, and economic conditions in the occupied city, I explain what happened in the field with respect to foreign aid and how the NER's operations were distinct from the Allies' initiatives.

1 According to a census made by the Ottoman State during the war, the population of the city was 842,000 excluding soldiers. With the population inflow, it exceed one million. Vedat Eldem, *Harp Ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), 168.

§ 3.1 Occupied Constantinople

The Great War ended with the defeat of the Central Powers. The Armistice of Mudros was signed between the defeated Ottoman Empire and the victorious Allies on October 30, 1918. The conditions of the armistice were harsh for the Ottomans. Articles 7 and 24 of the armistice provided Allies an official opportunity to occupy whatever they wanted in the territories of the Ottoman Empire.² Shortly after signing the treaty, the Allies de facto occupied the capital of the empire on November 13, 1918.

Even if the Ottoman State was not officially abolished and the sultan was still in power, the administration of the city was in the hands of the Allies throughout the occupation. The Allies divided the city into three occupation zones: the Italians were responsible for Asian side of the city, the French forces took the Old City and its western suburbs, and the British were responsible for Pera, Galata, and Şişli on the European side.³ Before the end of the November, the three allied states formed High Commissions to govern the city. Thereafter, the Americans, Japanese, and Greeks also appointed high commissioners to have a voice in the governance of the city, but actual power remained in the hands of the British, French, and Italian High Commissioners throughout the occupation. This tripartite body operated in the city via nine commissions: the Police Commission, Sanitary Commission, Food Commission, Prison Commission, Censorship Bureau and Control of Telegrams, Inter-allied Requisition Commission, Passport Bureau, Naval and Military Commission, and Harbor Control.⁴ De facto occupation beginning on November 13, 1918, turned into de jure occupation when the Allies reoccupied the city on March 16, 1920,

2 Article 7: "The Allies to have the right to occupy any strategic points in the event of any situation arising which threatens the security of the Allies." Article 24: "In case of disorder in the six Armenian vilayets, the Allies reserve to themselves the right to occupy any part of them." Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Armistices of 1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), 85-87.

3 Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation, 1918-1923* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 60.

4 William Wheelock Peet, "Civic Administration," in *Constantinople to-Day; or, the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople; a Study in Oriental Social Life*, ed. Clarence Richard Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 112-18.

as part of an intimidation policy vis-à-vis the Turkish revolutionaries in Anatolia.⁵

Meanwhile, Turkish revolutionaries under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal were organizing to initiate an independence war against the invading forces and their proxies. The military and diplomatic successes of the movement centered in Ankara led to end of the Allied occupation in Anatolia and Constantinople as well as to the end of the Ottoman Empire. Constantinople was freed after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne which heralded the victory of Mustafa Kemal and the independence movement. However, until the allied evacuation and the arrival of Turkish troops in the city in October 1923, Constantinople not only suffered the presence of occupying powers but also severe economic conditions.

Actually, Constantinople, like the rest of the empire, had begun to suffer from poverty during the Great War itself. Before the war the Ottoman Empire imported important foodstuffs such as flour, wheat, rice, sugar, coffee, and tea from outside.⁶ As Korkut Boratav points out, transporting wheat from Central Anatolia, a large grain producing area, to Constantinople was 75 percent more expensive than importing wheat from New York. Thus, Constantinople's consumption was dependent on Europe and America.⁷ Most of the flour and wheat was imported from France, Russia, and Romania. Bulgaria and Italy followed. After the war began, all of these states except Bulgaria became enemies of the Ottoman Empire, and the imports were cut off.⁸ The situation gave way to a severe nutrition shortage for Constantinople's population. Under these circumstances, the ruling party, the Committee of Union and Progress, mobilized the transportation network to bring wheat from Central Anatolia. However, this wheat was put on the city market with speculative prices.⁹ Other foodstuffs such as sugar completely depended on imports as the empire had no sugar industry. Imports fell by half in 1914 and halted completely in 1915, so

5 Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 137-39.

6 Eldem, *Harp Ve Mütareke*, 7.

7 Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi: 1908-2007* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2015), 28.

8 Eldem, *Harp Ve Mütareke*, 8.

9 Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, 28-29.

sugar stocks were depleted. In 1916 it became possible to import sugar in small quantities after contact with Austro-Hungary was restored. Similarly, more than 90 percent of Bulgarian's livestock exports were directed towards Constantinople before the war. However, towards the end of the war these imports halted completely and prices rose by a factor of twenty in the city.¹⁰

Even if not a single enemy soldier stepped into Constantinople after the war, it would have taken time for the city's economy to recover. However, in a short span of time, more than a hundred thousand people including occupying forces, war veterans, and refugees of various nationalities arrived into the city. In addition, those who lost their lives in the war left behind needy widows and orphans in the city.

In the words of C. Claflin Davis, "all roads from Asia Minor, the Caucasus, Southern Russia as far as the Volga, and from all the Balkan States, lead to Constantinople."¹¹ In the post-war period, tens of thousands of war-worn refugees arrived in Constantinople from various places. While Turks fled from Thrace and Western Anatolia because of the Greek occupation and the state of war between the Turkish revolutionaries and Greek Army, most of the Greek and Armenian refugees fled to Constantinople before the advance of Turkish forces in the direction of Nicomedia and the southern shores of the Sea of Marmara. There were also many Armenians who came from Eastern Anatolia and Cilicia. However, the greatest wave of migration came from north of the Black Sea. The White Army had lost a desperate civil war against the Bolsheviks and tens of thousands of counter revolutionaries were evicted to Constantinople, the nearest safe haven, with the help of the Allies. They constituted the majority of the destitute refugees in the city. Davis, who considered the estimates of Turkish Red Crescent, American Red Cross, the Directorate-General for the Settlement of Emigrants and Tribes (which was affiliated with Ottoman Ministry of Interior), and NER, arrived at these approximate figures for the beginning of April 1921:

10 Eldem, *Harp Ve Mütareke*, 7-10.

11 C. Claflin Davis, "The Refugee Situation in Constantinople," in *Constantinople to-Day; or, the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople; a Study in Oriental Social Life*, ed. Clarence Richard Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 203.

◆ Armenians	3,200
◆ Greeks	5,000
◆ Russians	65,000
◆ Turks	27,500
◆ Scattering	1,000
◆ Total	101,955 ¹²

At the time of the signing of the Armistice, the economic situation of the Empire did not look good. A great decline in agricultural production left the country's population facing starvation as grain production, which was 6.6 million hectares before the war, fell to 3.5 million by the end of the war.¹³ Food consumption fell by 40 percent in comparison with the pre-war period, a situation that severely affected the urban poor.¹⁴ According to the index of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, the cost of living in Constantinople by October 1918 had risen by a factor of 15 compared to the pre-war period.¹⁵ In the first days of occupation, the city suffered from insufficient food provisions.¹⁶ As a temporary solution, the allowance of daily bread per person was lowered.¹⁷ In the truce period, in addition to low production, the Ottoman administration had lost control of Anatolia to Turkish revolutionaries and Greek invaders. While the Greek occupation of Izmir denied the treasury the revenues of one of the richest provinces,¹⁸ Ankara applied a customs duty for incoming and outgoing goods to Constantinople¹⁹ of until the de jure occupation of the city, at which time Ankara completely halted the transportation of goods to Constantinople.²⁰ Despite precautions taken against food shortages

12 Ibid., 205-07.

13 Eldem, *Harp Ve Mütareke*, 160.

14 Mehmet Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998), 40.

15 Eldem, *Harp Ve Mütareke*, 130-31.

16 Abdurrahman Bozkurt, "İtilaf Devletlerinin İstanbul'da İşgal Yönetimi" (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2009), 534.

17 Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında*, 40.

18 Criss, *Istanbul*, 36.

19 Eldem, *Harp Ve Mütareke*, 198.

20 Bozkurt, "İtilaf Devletlerinin İstanbul'da İşgal Yönetimi," 553.

in the city in the truce period, the financial difficulties of city residents due to profiteering and increasing prices could not be prevented. Coal shortage was another important problem as water distribution, electricity, trams, and ferry-boats depended on it. The shortage led to interruptions in the provision of these services and increases in the prices of water and gas.²¹

Housing was one of the most important problems in the occupied city. As soon as Allied soldiers arrived, they occupied many private and public buildings including hospitals, schools, barracks, inns, and factories.²² Throughout the occupation, more than 3,000 homes were devastated by fires, and these disasters contributed to the housing crisis.²³ The refugee flow into city further complicated the issue. The Ottoman administration especially strove to prevent Russian emigration, but it was not possible.²⁴ While a large percentage of Russian refugees were located in refugee camps outside the city that were supervised by the French and British High Commissions,²⁵ most refugees squatted in abandoned buildings or lived on the streets of the city.²⁶ The fact that the Allies prioritize the housing of Russians put other refugees in a difficult

21 Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında*, 28-42.

22 Ibid., 11-12.

23 Criss, *Istanbul*, 27.

24 “(Kırım)dan (İstanbul)a gelen (Cenubi Rusya) Hükümeti Reisi'nin Rus matbuatı mümessiline söyleyüb bugünkü gazetelerle neşr olunan beyanatına nazaran Kırım'ın tahliyesine ibtidar olunacağı anlaşılıyor. Bu hale nazaran yine muhacirinin İstanbul'a celb ü iskânları ihtimali mevcuttur. Evvelce Odesa havalisinin tahliyesi sebebiyle Dersaadet'e vuku bulan muhaceret Dersaadet halkının hayat ve maişetini hayli tazyik eylediği malum-ı sami-i fahimaneleridir. Halbuki o zamandan-beri mesken buhranı, maişet pahalılığı bir kat daha artmıştır. Bu yüzden zaten enva-i mahrumiyet ve muzayaka içinde bulunan payitaht halkının (Kırım)dan akacak seyl-i muhaceret ile büsbütün tahammülfersa bir hale giriftar olacakları muhakkaktır.” Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Bâb-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BEO), 4663/349715, lef 1-2, 16 Teşrin-i Sani 1336 (16 November 1920), 14 Teşrin-i Sani 1336 (November 14, 1920)

25 “...iaşe, mesken, ve vesait-i nakliye ücuratına icra idilen zamaim-ı fevkaladenin taht-ı tesirinde olarak ez cümle İzmir muhacirini ile harikzedegânın cami içlerinde veya yangın harabeleri dahilindeki mesakin enkazı arasında ikamete mecbur oldukları bir sırada mesken-i müteaddidenin Rus mültecilerine tahsisi muvafık olmadıktan başka...” BOA, BEO, 4663/349715, 4, 5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1336 (December 5, 1920)

26 Davis, "The Refugee Situation in Constantinople," 209-11.

situation, as the deputy mayor emphasized: “While Izmir immigrants and fire victims, who have suffered large increases in their subsistence, residence, and transportation costs since the time of the armistice, have been forced to live in mosques and in the ruins of burned-out buildings, it would not appropriate to allocate existing buildings to Russian refugees.”²⁷

Disorder in the city led to other serious problems. Overcrowded camps, buildings, and streets full of the homeless created a great danger of spreading epidemics and threatened urban health.²⁸ A report written by the Director General of Health for Borders (Hudud-ı Sıhhiye Müdür-i Umumisi) to the Ministry of Interior through attention to this danger. The director advised that the ministry negotiate with the Allied representatives to prevent refugee inflows, and even if this was not be possible, precautions needed to be taken to keep refugees out of crowded neighborhoods.²⁹ Besides urban health problems, there was a massive increase in crime. Greek and Turkish gangs committed ordinary and political crimes, notably murders and robberies.³⁰ The increasing popularity of gambling was also causing increasing poverty.³¹

§ 3.2 Allied Aid Operations

It is appropriate to treat British, French, Italian, and Greek aid operations in Constantinople under the same heading as they had many features in common. They had no non-governmental aid agencies in the occupied city that are worth considering, and their aid operations remained state-led ones typically run by Red Cross societies. Because the donor countries were at the same times occupying powers, their aid operations were strictly determined

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- 27 BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti Umur-ı Mahalliye-i Vilayat Müdüriyeti (DH.UMVM) 86/10, 1, 8 Mart 1336 (March 8, 1920)
- 28 For detailed information, see Abdullah Lüleci, “İşgal İstanbulu'nda Salgın Hastalıklar (1918-1922)” (Master's thesis, Sakarya University, 2009).
- 29 BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti İdare-i Umumiye (DH.İ.UM), 19-9/1-66, 1, 8 Teşrin-i sani 1335 (November 8, 1919)
- 30 Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında*, 184-221.
- 31 BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Asayiş Kalemi (DH.EUM.AYŞ), 53/13, 4, Mart 337 (March 1921)

according to short-term foreign political agendas. Also, none of the Allied states had an aid agency like NER with close relations with local communities and a historical motivation to sustain long term aid operations. None of the Allies had "a single and coherent strategy called an aid policy."³²

The aid operations of the Allies were unstable as they were determined by the changing decisions of these Allies' various ministries of foreign affairs. While most of their aid was given to non-Muslims in Constantinople at the beginning of the occupation, the successes of the independence movement in Anatolia changed the situation and the aid began to be directed toward Muslim refugees.³³ Similarly, the French, who had undertaken the care of Russian refugees in the city, suddenly withdrew from this operation.

French and Greek aid operations in the city also had private aims, unlike those of the British and Italians. The French were responsible for Russians in the city and also for preventing Bolshevik propaganda from spreading among them.³⁴ As seen in C. Clafin Davis' research, the French distinguished themselves for providing housing, food, clothing, and education to the Russians.³⁵ However, this work was suddenly halted on April 1, 1921.³⁶ The Greek case was an extreme example of the manipulation of aid for political purposes. Greek forces, which had invaded Eastern Thrace and Izmir and had tried to march towards Ankara, also had an eye on Constantinople. They even tried to invade Constantinople in 1922 after losing the Battle of Sakarya to the Turkish revolutionaries.³⁷ The invasion attempt was an alternative plan as Greece had moved to change the demographics in favor of the Greeks before 1922.³⁸ The Hellenic Red Cross (HRC) was used as a tool for a containment policy vis-à-vis Constantinople. The name HRC was associated with various military issues on the peripheries of the city such as in Pendik, Silivri, and Çatalca. High-

32 White, *Politics of Foreign Aid*, 12.

33 Kıranlar, "Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914-1923)," 328.

34 Criss, *Istanbul*, 81-88.

35 Davis, "The Refugee Situation in Constantinople," 209-23.

36 BOA, BEO, 4679/350858, 3, 12 Nisan 1337 (April 12, 1921)

37 Abdurrahman Bozkurt, "Yunanistan'ın İstanbul'u İşgal Planı (1922)," *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 18 (2014): 133-54.

38 Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında*, 150-51.

ranking Greek officers participated in a rally organized by HRC in Pendik which ended with the raid of the gendarmerie station and the disarmament of the gendarmes by local Greeks.³⁹ In Çatalca and Silivri, the HRC was used to cover the formation of armed gangs.⁴⁰

§ 3.3 Near East Relief's Aid Campaign in Constantinople

Before making a critique of NER's aid politics I evaluate its activities in Constantinople in detail as it is necessary to establish whether there was actually an aid campaign worth studying in terms of aid politics. With this purpose in mind, I avoid adjectives that indicate recipients' identities in this part as much as possible.

NER as a private aid agency worked for the sake of orphans, women, and refugees as well as on issues that interested the entire city - such as bread supply and the provision of cheap foodstuffs and clothing - by resorting to methods developed and used by the American Board as auxiliary means of evangelizing. NER helped many destitute people in the city by running a systematic and successful aid campaign.

If one sets aside whether it was fair, the NER's aid campaign had a certain system and it worked. Humanitarian aid focused on immediate relief work and medical work was the keystone of the organization as it provided for the most basic needs for the survival of destitute people in the city. However, in accordance with the post-war aid politics of the NER, there was a mutual interaction between its humanitarian and developmental aid programs. Humanitarian aid was planned as a prerequisite for developmental aid, which included industrial and educational work. In the short run, it was expected that aid recipients would become self-sufficient through receiving vocational training and working in NER industries thereby contributing to continuation of humanitarian aid efforts by providing cheaper products for distribution. In

39 BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 4/15, 1, 7 Recep 1337 (April 8, 1919); BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 4/95, 3, 12 Recep 1337 (April 13, 1919)

40 BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 45/28, 1-3, 16 Zilhicce 1338 (August 31, 1920)

NEAR EAST RELIEF'S AID CAMPAIGN IN CONSTANTINOPLE

the long run, thanks to the developmental aid program, there would be no need for humanitarian aid.

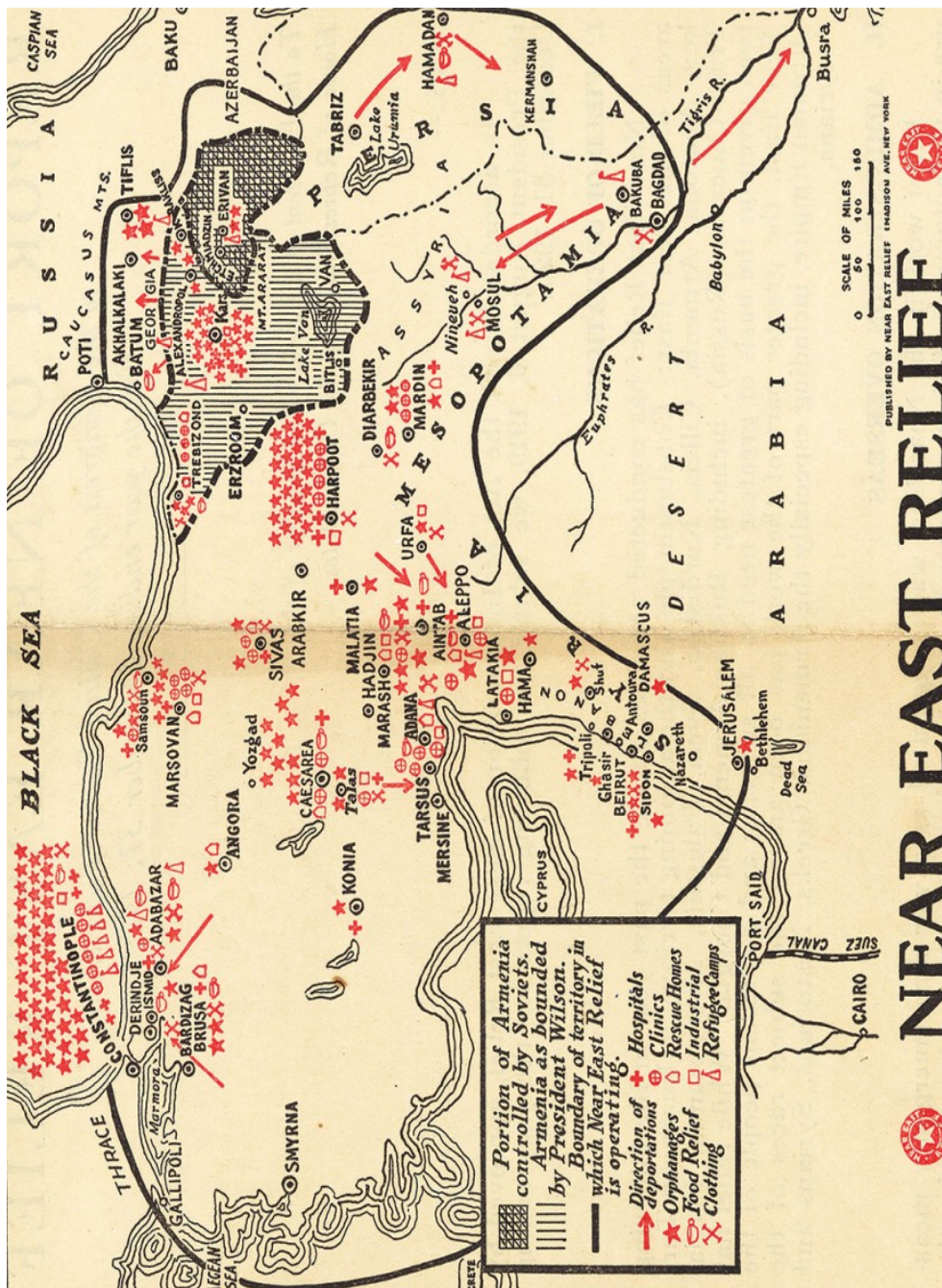


Figure 1 Map of Near East Relief activities in 1921.
<http://neareastmuseum.com>

The aid campaign was admired by respectable representatives of societies dwelling in Constantinople and supported by Mehmed VI (r.1918-1922). Armenian and Greek Patriarchs expressed their appreciation of senior NER workers by sending thank you letters, decorating them with crosses, and manuscripts.⁴¹ Likewise, Russian refugees expressed their thanks to the organization.⁴² Mehmed VI donated respectable amounts of grain to the organization to be used for relief purposes in Constantinople and elsewhere.⁴³ Regulations were made to ensure that NER did not pay customs duties to import foodstuffs from abroad to be distributed free of charge or sold at affordable prices. The issue of a customs exemption, which first became a current issue in May 1919, was approved by a decree issued in November of the same year, and the exemption was repeatedly extended by decree through the occupation period.⁴⁴ NER asked the Ottoman administration to construct retail spaces in order to supply the inhabitants of the city with imported goods was also approved. Instead of constructing new buildings, the Ottoman administration allocated buildings in various places of the city to NER, and it was reported that if the organization itself undertook the new construction, empty plots could be allocated, as well.⁴⁵

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- 41 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co309004, "Notes," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 9 (March 5, 1921), 4; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co313003, "A Testimonial of Appreciation from the Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 13 (April 2, 1921), 3; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co332001, "Miss Cushman Presented with the Gold Cross of Jerusalem," *Near East Relief* 3 no. 32-33 (August 13-20, 1921), 1; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co316001, "Testimonial of Appreciation from the Armenian Patriarchate," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 16 (April 23, 1921), 1.
- 42 "Near East Relief," in *The "Farewell" Almanac: 1920-1923*, ed. A. A. Bournakine, et al. (Constantinople: Imprimerie L. Babok & Fils, 1924), 38-39.
- 43 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co112001, *The Acorne* 1, no. 12 (August 23, 1919), 1; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co201001, "Interesting Movie of Work Accomplished by Near East Relief Sent to America," *The Acorne* 1, no. 1 (January 3, 1920), 1.
- 44 BOA, BEO, 4571/342813, 1, 5 Mayıs 1335 (May 5, 1919); BOA, Sadaret Divan Kalemi Mukavele-name (A.DVN.MKL) 68/50, 1-2, 23-24 Ramazan 1339 (May 31 - June 1, 1921); BOA, BEO, 4717/353759, 1-2, 1 Ağustos 1338 (August 1, 1922)
- 45 BAO, BEO, 4595/344599, 1-2,6 12 Teşrin-i Evvel 1335 (October 12, 1919)

3.3.1 *Humanitarian Aid*

3.3.1.1 Immediate Relief Work

One of the outstanding works in this area began with the formation of the Constantinople Case Committee which was responsible for identifying destitute families in the city. Mothers of children whose fathers had been killed in the war, of ill children, or of under seven years old had priority.⁴⁶ Thirty-eight families in the city were noted as having received relief when the work began in April 1919,⁴⁷ and the number of families reached by June.⁴⁸ The work was carried out with the help of subcommittees that worked in the various districts of the city. Chairmen of the subcommittees met weekly and informed the Chairman of the Case Committee about the work had been done. Two months later thirty-two subcommittees in twenty-three districts had reached 670 families.⁴⁹ By the end of the year, 1,018 families were receiving immediate relief, but this was not “sufficient to transform these families from war-worn, emaciated widows and children, into healthy and happy family groups.”⁵⁰ Meanwhile, in the face of the increasing financial burden of providing immediate relief, NER sought ways to expand its industrial work to acquire cheaper relief materials while at the same time making recipients and potential recipients self-sufficient in order to decrease the need for immediate relief. With the help of this industrial work, 7,000 loaves of bread as well as over 8,000 garments were distributed each week to more than 2,000 families by forty committees

46 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co246001, Mabelle C. Phillips “A Morning with the Constantinople Case Committee of the Near East Relief,” *Near East Relief* 2 no. 46 (November 20, 1920), 1.

47 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co222003-4, Mabelle C. Phillips “Constantinople Case Committee: Annual Report April 21, 1920,” *The Acorne* 2, no. 22 (June 5, 1920), 3-4.

48 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co104004, *The Acorne* 1, no. 4 (June 26, 1919), 4.

49 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co112005, “Constantinople Case Committee,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 12 (August 23, 1919), 5.

50 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co117003, “Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 17 (September 27, 1919), 3.

at the beginning of 1920.⁵¹ As a result of one year's work, the number of families reached 3,000 in April 1920⁵² and continued to rise.

An important part of immediate relief was reserved for orphanages in the city. The work of the Orphanage Committee began with a presentation of the needs of the orphanages in the city to a meeting of NER held in March 1919: "2,000 blankets, 25,000 yards⁵³ of cotton cloth, 4,000 yards of cloth suitings, 2,000 shoes, threads, needles, condensed milk, and flour."⁵⁴ There was also a committee called the Child Welfare Directorship formed to "unify and standardize and gradually improve the arrangements for housing, feeding and clothing the children in Near East institutions and those whom we reach while living in native institutions or homes, and for their education along all lines."⁵⁵ The first move of the NER was to distribute approximately 180 cases of milk, 30 sacks of flour, 375 blankets, 17,000 yards of cloth, and 10 sewing machines - free of charge or at a low price - to orphanages.⁵⁶ The work included distributing educational materials such as paper, pencils, and schoolbooks.⁵⁷ In addition to orphanages, NER also supported homes formed for beggar children in the city.⁵⁸ Actually, the scope of the work was varied and included provision of an engine to pump water to an orphanage on a hill,⁵⁹ allocating NER's own trucks to carry the wares of an orphanage that was moving to another

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- 51 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co204001 "A Few Facts,"; Mabelle C. Phillips "What is A 'Case,'" *The Acorne* 2, no. 4 (January 24, 1920), 1.
- 52 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co222003-4, Mabelle C. Phillips "Constantinople Case Committee: Annual Report April 21, 1920," *The Acorne* 2, no. 22 (June 5, 1920), 3-4.
- 53 1 yard = 0,9144 meter
- 54 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co37003, "6th Meeting," (March 3, 1919), 1.
- 55 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41032, "Memorandum Outlining the Position and Duties of Mr. Ernst W. Riggs," (September 28, 1920), 1.
- 56 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co37027- A01 (1919), 1-2.
- 57 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co37003, "6th Meeting," (March 3, 1919), 1
- 58 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co414002, "The Home for Beggar Children, Beshiktash," *Near East Relief* 4, no. 14 (April 8, 1922), 2.
- 59 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co418003, Glee Hastings "The Prinkipo Greek Orphanage," *Near East Relief* 4, no. 18 (May 7, 1922), 3.

building,⁶⁰ and helping reestablish a damaged orphanage.⁶¹ In addition, and perhaps most importantly, NER provided bread to orphanages on a regular basis as a part of its industrial work.

Even if the relief work for refugees was not as extensive and systematic as works done by the Case Committee or the Orphanage Committee - until White Russian émigrés arrived Constantinople - refugees and victims of fires in the city received aid. For these, NER ran its activities in cooperation with local philanthropic organizations⁶² and helped these groups when their conditions were bad to worst. Children also had priority and in some instances half-orphans were taken into the scope of the work of Case Committee.⁶³ Winters were a source of distress for those in the camps and on the streets. To keep people alive, NER often distributed blankets and garments to victims of fires and to refugee camps.⁶⁴ Sometimes the content of the giving was expanded. For example, in February 1921, the various needs of five refugee camp in the city were met by the organization.⁶⁵

The arrival of Russian émigrés to Constantinople was an exceptional circumstance for the American aid campaign in the occupied city. It led to American state intervention in the aid campaign and compelled NER to make an effort for Russian émigrés. During the Russian Civil War, like its allies, the United States supported counter revolutionary forces against the newly established socialist administration via the ARC and its navy. The ARC established

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- 60 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co246004, "News in Brief," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 46 (November 20, 1920), 4.
- 61 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co106002, "Constantinople," *The Acorne* 1, no. 6 (July 12, 1919), 2.
- 62 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co111001, "Constantinople," *The Acorne* 1, no. 11 (August 16, 1919), 1.
- 63 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co314003, Glee Hastings "Near East Relief Work in the Constantinople Refugee Camps (Extracts from February Report)," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 14 (April 9, 1921), 3.
- 64 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co37027A01 (1919); SR, NER, id. ABA132Co246002-3 "Constantinople Refugee Camps," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 46 (November 20, 1920), 2-3.
- 65 The following materials were distributed according to the report: "6000 kilos charcoal, 25 bales of old clothes, 50 bags shoes, 25 cases graham crackers, 25 cases soda crackers, 545 pairs children's stockings, 635 pairs socks, 255 sweaters, 12 cases soap, 50 cases milk, 15 cases malted milk, 38 miscellaneous garments." SR, NER, id. ABA132Co314003, Glee Hastings "Near East Relief Work in the Constantinople Refugee Camps (Extracts from February Report)," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 14 (April 9, 1921), 3.

warehouses in Salonica, Constanza, and Constantinople to run immediate relief activities in Southern Russia. In April 1920, when the demise of White Russians began to be obvious, Constantinople became the main base of the ARC.⁶⁶ From early 1919 to the end of 1920, the navy assisted its Allies for the transportation of the White Russians from cities such as Odessa, Novorossisk, and Crimea.⁶⁷

The US needed NER's assistance, and this required a compromise that was contrary to NER's long-term aid policies. Even if though not on the agenda of NER, it began to cooperate with the ARC with the evacuation of Russians, especially the evacuation of Odessa, in February 1920. At that time, thousands of Russian refugees were located on the Princes' Islands by the British, French and Americans. The island of Proti (Kınalıada) was assigned to the Americans as their base. Initially, 800 refugees, 250 of whom were sick or wounded, arrived on Proti.⁶⁸ NER appointed twenty American workers for this work. In a few days, NER and the ARC converted three empty buildings into hospitals, and a monastery was allocated as a shelter for immigrants, and relief work began on the island.⁶⁹ However, in April, 1920, *the Acorne* indicated that the ARC would soon take over the work entirely.⁷⁰ NER participated in this work unwillingly. Besides the experiment on Proti, NER's work was limited to distributing old clothing and shoes among the most needy Russian refugees in the city.⁷¹ The largest evacuation from the northern region of the Black Sea to Constantinople took place in November 1920. NER was unwilling to allocate financial and human resources for the Russians. As pointed out in the minutes of a meeting of NER in that month: "The chief American responsibility for

66 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co216003-4, James A. Mills, "American Red Cross in the Near East," *The Acorne* 2, no. 16 (April 17 and 24, 1920), 3-4.

67 "Spasiblo!" in *The "Farewell" Almanac: 1920-1923*, ed. A. A. Bournakine, et al. (Constantinople: Imprimerie L. Babok & Fils, 1924), 1.

68 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co207004, "News Notes," *The Acorne* 2, no. 7 (February 14, 1920), 4.

69 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co208001, "Americans and Russian Refugees," *The Acorne* 2, no. 8 (February 21, 1920), 1.

70 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co216003-4, James A. Mills, "American Red Cross in the Near East," *The Acorne* 2, no. 16 (April 17 and 24, 1920), 3-4.

71 "Near East Relief," 39.

handling this Russian relief lay with the American Red Cross, and not with the Near East Relief.⁷² Meanwhile, Admiral Bristol tried to organize an American relief effort for Russians in Constantinople under the umbrella of a united committee called the Disaster Relief Committee for Russian Refugees.⁷³ Representatives from the navy, the army and the Department of State met with representatives of the ARC, NER, ABCFM, YMCA, YWCA, Robert College, and Russian relief organizations in Constantinople for this purpose under the leadership of Bristol.⁷⁴ While the main responsible organization remains the ARC,⁷⁵ the other organizations willingly (such as the YMCA and YWCA)⁷⁶ or unwillingly (the American Board and NER) cooperated with it.

3.3.1.2 Medical Work

Medical work, which had been developed and used by the Board as a tool for evangelistic activity for decades, became an important element of the humanitarian part of NER's aid campaign. "When it was decided soon after the Armistice to send a relief expedition into Turkey, it was at once evident that a medical organization to care for the cases of starvation, illness and injury was as necessary as one providing for strictly physical needs; such as food, clothing and housing."⁷⁷ From the beginning of 1919, NER allocated an important part

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- 72 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41049-A01, George H. Huntington "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R. in the Committee Room at Headquarters," (November 29, 1920), 1-2.
- 73 "The American Red Cross," in *The "Farewell" Almanac: 1920-1923*, ed. A. A. Bournakine, et al. (Constantinople: Imprimerie L. Babok & Fils, 1924), 11.
- 74 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co247001-3, "American Relief Work with the Russians Refugees in Constantinople," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 47 (November 27, 1920), 1-3.
- 75 "... if 70% or at least 50% of the Russian emigrants have not perished, but continue to breathe, to work, to love, to live, - they owe it exclusively to the American Red Cross." Boris Vedoff, "So Near and yet So Far," in *The "Farewell" Almanac: 1920-1923*, ed. A. A. Bournakine, et al. (Constantinople: Imprimerie L. Babok & Fils, 1924), 4.
- 76 For detailed information about YMCA and YWCA's work among Russians in Constantinople, see Davis, "The Refugee Situation in Constantinople."
- 77 "The Medical Work of the near East Relief: A Review of Its Accomplishments in Asia Minor and the Caucasus During 1919-20," ed. L. Geo. Richards (New York, 1923), 5.

of its budget for medical activities in Constantinople.⁷⁸ Medical work mostly focused on urban health and orphanages in cooperation with the Case and Orphanage Committees.

Providing medical service could not be separated from the immediate relief work being undertaken by the Case Committee. Because hospital facilities were insufficient, “nursing care of the poor in their homes, including hygienic teaching, are of greatest importance.”⁷⁹ This was called district nursing.

It is the District Nurse who finds her way into the hut and hovel of the city where there is a sick one, first to bring to medical aid so sorely needed and then to teach the family the proper care of its patient. It is she who becomes the friend and advisor of the family, and she who teaches them a little of home sanitation and the simple rules of health.⁸⁰

In the second half of 1920, approximately 1,500 homes were visited by the nurses of NER every month. In these visits, information about preventive medicine was also given to many mothers.⁸¹ To keep this work moving along, NER felt the need to train native workers in both practical nursing and social service methods. There were some already trained native nurses, and they started a class to train others.⁸² In cooperation with NER, the YWCA also started to train native women as nurses.⁸³

78 Constantinople and its vicinity were in second with 13% after Aleppo with 18% according to the budget report. SR, NER, id. ABA132Co37002A14 “Tentative Budget and Distribution of Hospitals, Medical Workers, and Lay Workers,” (February 23, 1919), 1.

79 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co112005 “Constantinople Case Committee,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 12 (August 23, 1919), 5.

80 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co211001-2, Grace L. Reilly “District Nursing in Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 2, no. 11 (March 13, 1920), 1-2.

81 “Few eastern mothers know the first principles of hygiene. Babies are seldom nursed properly, often never bathed, wrapped tightly in swaddling clothes for days. Not only have the clinics treated sickness, but they have given special emphasis to instructive work with the mothers.” “Modern Health Service in Old Stamboul,” *The New Near East* 7, No. 9 (July 1922), 12-13.; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co245001, E. Graff “Medical Committee of Constantinople Unit,” *Near East Relief* 2, no. 45 (November 13, 1920), 1.

82 “Modern Health Service in Old Stamboul,” *The New Near East* 7, no. 9 (July 1922), 13.

83 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co211001-2, Grace L. Reilly “District Nursing in Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 2, no. 11 (March 13, 1920), 1-2.



Figure 2 Children in line for treatment at the Near East Relief eye clinic in Constantinople, 1922. <http://neareastmuseum.com>

Orphanages were also prioritized for medical work. Beside nursing activities, NER continually investigated the sanitary conditions of orphanages and the physical conditions of the children.⁸⁴ One serious problem in the orphanages was trachoma, an infectious eye disease that can cause blindness if not treated. NER initiated a two-months of examinations in twenty-nine orphanages. The report was published in July 1920. As a result of the examinations, 576 of 3376 children were diagnosed with the disease. The prevalence of the disease prompted NER to establish a hospital solely for the treatment of trachoma.⁸⁵ The hospital was opened in Boyacıköy in January 1921.⁸⁶ In addition, NER workers raised concerns about tuberculosis as it was also found to be prevalent among the children.⁸⁷ To cope with it, NER opened a hospital for tubercular

84 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co114002, "Constantinople," *The Acorne* 1, no. 14 (September 6, 1919), 2.

85 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co228003, Ida Wright Heizer "Tracoma," *The Acorne* 2, no. 28 (July 17, 1920), 3.

86 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co301001, "Object and the Work of the Near East Relief: Medical Work," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 1 (January 7, 1921), 1.

87 "Modern Health Service in Old Stamboul," *The New Near East* 7, no. 9 (July 1922), 13.

children in Yedikule on July 1, 1920.⁸⁸ Both hospitals were well-equipped given NER's explanation that "both hospitals are national in scope and not intended simply for Constantinople."⁸⁹ NER also had six child welfare centers where clinics were established for children.⁹⁰

3.3.2 *Developmental Aid*

3.3.2.1 Industrial Work

To maintain the immediate relief work in districts, orphanages, and elsewhere, NER depended on industrial work as it provided cheaper clothes for distribution while at the same time it decreased the number of needy by making a percentage of orphans and women self-sufficient. Finished products were also shipped to the US for sale⁹¹ and sold in shops in Constantinople that were opened and run by NER itself in order to finance its aid program. According to the third and fourth points of NER's policies governing general relief operations,

All orphanages should aim to teach every child a trade that can be practiced successfully in this country. This will also contribute materially in making the orphanages self-supporting. Trades like shoemaking, tailoring, tinsmithing, cabinet work, weaving, should be carried, where practicable, to the opening of shops where the manufactured products are sold.

88 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co244001, "Near East Hospital for Tubercular Children, Yedi Koule, Constantinople," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 44 (November 6, 1920), 1.

89 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co301001, "Object and the Work of the Near East Relief: Medical Work," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 1 (January 7, 1921), 1.

90 "The Near East Relief is carrying on child welfare centers in Constantinople at Ortakeuy, Psamatia, Stamboul, Scutari, Balat, and Haskeuy. At these centers clinics are held to which children of all nationalities may go for medical treatment and advice." SR, NER, id. ABA132Co317001, "Statistics Concerning Child Welfare Work in Constantinople," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 17 (April 30, 1921), 1.

91 "Constructive Work in Constantinople," *The New Near East* 7, no. 4 (February 1922), 6.

The women, also, should be given steady and lucrative employment. This can be done in part at least in connection with the orphanages.⁹²

NER had eight industrial branches mostly occupied with making garments, “as the saving reaches the greatest number of poor and brings into the supply committee garments for distribution among the destitute.” Seamstresses made various garments and were paid in cash and a daily ration of bread.⁹³ There were also women who worked doing piecework at home who try to earn their living by selling their work to NER.⁹⁴ Even though at a smaller scale, some refugees from camps were hired for this work.⁹⁵ From July 1919 if not before, the products began to reach orphans.⁹⁶ In August, 13,292 garments were made by the women employed in these branches. Exiles, deportees, and those who had lost husbands or parents had priority for employment.⁹⁷ Constantinople Girls College was responsible for investigating whether applicants met the criteria.⁹⁸ By the end of 1920, over 1,100 were working in NER’s industrial centers where production had become diversified.⁹⁹

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- 92 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co105001, “Policies Governing General Relief Operations of the A.C.R.N.E.,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 5 (July 5, 1919), 1.
- 93 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co108003, “Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 8 (July 26, 1919), 3; Most important one among the eight centers was ‘Stamboul Fabrica’ with sixteen room and forty-eight looms. SR, NER, id. ABA132Co117003 “Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 17 (September 27, 1919), 3.
- 94 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co211001, “Constantinople Unit ‘Huriet,’” *The Acorne* 2, no. 11 (March 13, 1920), 1.
- 95 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co117003 “Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 17 (September 27, 1919), 3; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co248001 “Industrial Work of Constantinople Unit Has Moved to Larger Quarters,” *Near East Relief* 2, no. 48 (December 4, 1920), 1.
- 96 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co106002 “Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 6 (July 12, 1919), 2.
- 97 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co117003 “Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 17 (September 27, 1919), 3.
- 98 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co108003, “Constantinople,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 8 (July 26, 1919), 3.
- 99 “There has been a great advance in the quality of the work and the weavers are producing silk and silk mixtures for draperies, curtains etc., table sets, heavy woolen carpeting for stair carpets, couch covers, floor runners, dress material etc.” “The lingerie department is producing articles of Brousa silk, and linen with the fine hand embroidery.” SR, NER, id.



Figure 3 Young refugee women working at the Near East Relief "Fabrica," February 1922. <http://neareastmuseum.com>

To make orphans self-sufficient was one important aim of the industrial work.¹⁰⁰ In August 1919, shoemaking and carpentry work initiated in orphanages.¹⁰¹ Beylerbeyi Orphanage was a successful example for the shoemaking industry. The shoes produced were sent to orphanages and hospitals.¹⁰² In November 1920, about thirty pairs of well-made shoes were produced each day by the 120 boys in Beylerbeyi.¹⁰³ Some orphans learned the trade in the orphanage and even opened their own shoemaking shop.¹⁰⁴ NER made Kuleli Orphanage an industrial center which more than a thousand boys occupied with trades such as carpentry, shoemaking, book binding, and tailoring.

ABA132Co248001 "Industrial Work of Constantinople Unit Has Moved to Larger Quarters," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 48 (December 4, 1920), 1.

100 "Constructive Work in Constantinople," *The New Near East* 7, no. 4 (February 1922), 6.

101 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co109004 "Constantinople," *The Acorne* 1, no. 9 (August 2, 1919), 4.

102 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co240003, Glee L. Hastings "Industrial Orphanage for Boys, Constantinople," *The Acorne* 2, no. 40 (October 9, 1920), 3.

103 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co246001-2, Glee L. Hastings "Constantinople Orphanage Notes for October," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 46 (November 20, 1920), 1-2.

104 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co409004 "Three Near East Relief Orphans Open Their Own Shop," *Near East Relief* 4, no. 9 (March 4, 1922), 4.

Meanwhile, NER planned to introduce tailoring, needlework, and the weaving of cloth and stockings in girls' orphanages.¹⁰⁵

As it concerned whole city, one of the most important parts of the industrial work was bread production and the import of grains. NER operated a bakery - which in mid-nineteenth century caused Cyrus Hamlin to be referred to as "the most satanic man in the empire" - to supply bread to destitutes in the city. At the beginning of 1920, more than 13,000 loaves were produced per day for orphans and needy families.¹⁰⁶ NER with the support of other Americans in the city were most intensely involved in importing cereals to supply both its own bakery as well as local merchants and bakers. Starting in March 1919, the price of bread fell 25 percent and cheaper bread could be provided to domestic charities.¹⁰⁷

NER opened relief stores in the different parts of the city to sell and distribute bread, cheap foodstuffs, and the materials which produced in NER's various industrial departments and orphanages. Relief stores in Topkapı, Pera, Aksaray, Mahmutpaşa, Rumelihisarı, and Üsküdar sold basic foodstuffs at 30-50 percent lower prices.¹⁰⁸ The quality and lower prices of the bread attracted people to these shops. "It [was] not unusual to see 1000 people in the bread line."¹⁰⁹ To attract attention to the non-food products, exhibitions were held, providing an opportunity for the industrial work to be more widely known in order to increase sales and support more workers. Thus, many destitute women appealing for work were employed in NER industries.¹¹⁰

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- 105 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co310001, Ernest Riggs "Industries in the Constantinople Armenian Orphanages," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 10 (March 12, 1921), 1.
- 106 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co201003, "Constantinople Bakery Increases Production," *The Acorne* 2, no. 1 (January 3, 1920), 3.
- 107 Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında*, 56-58.
- 108 Criss, *Istanbul*, 35.
- 109 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co128001, "Sales Jump at Constantinople's Relief Store," *The Acorne* 1, no. 28 (December 13, 1919), 1.
- 110 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co248001, "Industrial Work of Constantinople Unit Has Moved to Larger Quarters," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 48 (December 4, 1920), 1.

3.3.2.2 Educational Work

As mentioned, women were undertaking vocational training in nursing and needlework and orphans were asked to learn trades. NER's educational mentality was based on making aid recipients self-sufficient as soon as possible. In addition to this, NER organized summer schools for local orphanage teachers.¹¹¹ Besides the vocational training, NER also placed importance on recreational activities in the orphanages. There was a need for games, music, exercises, and drills to break the monotony of orphanage life. For this purpose and to improve the physical condition of the children, boy and girl scout troops were organized by NER with the help of the YMCA and YWCA.¹¹² The scouts were "making long tramps into the country each weekend, building camp fires, [and] cooking their meals in the open air"¹¹³ When possible, physical fitness directors were appointed to orphanages for athletic activities.¹¹⁴

To sum up, NER's aid campaign in Constantinople distinguished itself from the Allies' aid initiatives in various ways. The aid campaign worked as planned by the organization. In its campaign in the city, NER put humanitarian and developmental aid methods into practice that had been developed and used by the American Board and thus helped many people to survive. It is

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- 111 The subjects taught in summer schools were wide ranging: "Distinctive requirements of orphanage training, civics and patriotism, kindergarten and storytelling, hygiene, sanitation, and first aid, pedagogy, moral training, teaching and religion, sex morality, manual arts, domestic science. Beside these more general courses are specific courses in the methods of teaching the elementary branches such as arithmetic, geography, native languages, etc." SR, NER, id. ABA132Co330001, "Near East Relief Summer School for Orphanage Teachers, Constantinople," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 30-31 (July 30 – August 6, 1921), 1; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co321001, "Summer Course for Orphanage Teachers," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 21 (May 28, 1921), 1.
- 112 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co246003, "Girl Scout Work in Constantinople Orphanages," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 46 (November 20, 1920), 3; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co301001, "Object and the Work of the Near East Relief: Orphanage Work," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 1 (January 7, 1921), 1.
- 113 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co319002, "The Boy Scouts of the Orphanages," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 19 (May 14, 1921), 2.
- 114 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co246001, "Constantinople Orphanages Notes for October: Athletics," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 46 (November 30, 1920), 1; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co301004, "Y.W.C.A. Recreational Work for Girls' Orphanages," *Near East Relief* 3 no. 1 (January 7, 1921), 1.

obvious that it was a professional, successful campaign to be discussed in terms of the politics of aid.



Near East Relief's Aid Policies

Near East Relief ran a systematic and successful aid campaign in Constantinople that merged humanitarian and developmental aid methods. Obviously, such an aid campaign costs money and labor. This simple reality confronts us with a number of questions. The most basic but complex question asked in aid studies for decades, especially after the Second World War, is: why is the aid given? Why did NER transfer certain resources from the United States to the Near East? Why did American citizens donate to NER to transfer these certain resources to the region? Did the aid work? Did this transfer of resources serve its purposes? What were those purposes? Did they do something “good”? What is needed to handle these unending questions is “concrete analysis of the concrete situation.” As John White said, “aid giving is a complex activity, and it is probable that donors are trying to do many different things in different places. Only when we have analyzed what donors actually do will we be in a position to make a general evaluation of aid.”¹

To deal with these questions, one needs to first ascertain who the recipients were. It is indisputable that most of the aid was given to one community – that of the Armenians. In order to analyze this, one should not overlook NER’s assertion that it was an aid agency rather than embracing it as a diplomatic tool of the United States. NER’s choices and activities should be

1 White, *Politics of Foreign Aid*, 34.

analyzed in the scope of politics of aid. Otherwise, any valuation would miss crucial points for analyzing the outcomes of the aid program, especially when it comes to its effects on Armenians. The organization's choice to aid Armenians in the post-war period was its *own* choice, not that of someone else. Moreover, NER dictated its choice to the American public by means of a fundraising campaign at home. This campaign was financially efficient and successful thanks to its manipulative propaganda that either canonized or degraded certain communities in conformity with the organization's choices.

NER could venture to make such propaganda as it assumed it represented the winning party and believed that it would not confront any local authority in the field. However, newly emerged authorities in the post-war Near East such as the Turkish national movement centered in Ankara and Bolshevik Armenia were eager to supervise and regulate the activities of NER. These authorities played the role of a checks-and-balances mechanism in terms of NER's aid policies. However, the lack of such a mechanism in the greater part of the Near East led NER as an aid agency to suffer from a lack of accountability.

This lack caused the balance between humanitarianism and selfish interests to tip in favor of the latter. At the same time NER's aid was working in terms of keeping recipients alive, it also exploited those survivors for the organization's interests. More importantly, this imbalance led NER to be concerned about its future in the region. To continue its existence, NER tried to design a political and economic future of the Near East without considering what the inhabitants wanted and thought. NER's interpretation of humanitarianism was specific. It focused on Armenians, and since they received most of the aid, they more than any other community were exposed to both the positive and negative consequences of any changes in the balance.

An aid agency can be neither purely humanitarian nor purely self-interested. Because looking after an aid agency's own interests is vital for its budget and the continuity of its operations, it is not possible to remove this concern completely. However, when the balance is lost, both the recipients of aid and the aid agency itself suffer the consequences. However, it would not be appropriate to dismiss the aid so long as it continues to save lives. The experience of NER demonstrates that local control mechanisms that supervise aid

organizations and regulate their activities are essential to redress the balance in favor of humanitarianism.

§ 4.1 Recipients of the Aid Campaign

4.1.1 *Who Received the Aid?*

In the former chapter, I explained the work was done for orphans, women, and refugees but avoided to mentioning the identities of recipients who received aid except for the Russians, who were anyway an exception in NER's aid policies. Who were the recipients exactly? Did NER really helped people irrespective of religion or nationality as it asserted?

According to Davide Rodogno, "NER operations were consistently selective: while some emergency aid reached Ottoman Muslim populations, the majority of that aid was destined for Ottoman Christians, and for Armenians in particular."² As I explained in the previous chapter, Constantinople is a proper place to test an aid organization's assertion of impartiality as it was a multinational, multi-religious city in which everyone had more or less similar problems. It thus differed from other war-worn regions in which a specific community suffered from war conditions more than others. However, conditions in the city did not alter NER's approach. Its humanitarianism was far from impartial, as most of the aid was given to one community, the Armenians, in Constantinople.

At a meeting of the Constantinople Committee of NER in May 1920, various criticisms directed towards the organization were discussed. One of them concerned "unfair and unjust distribution of relief" as expressed in the meeting minutes. The committee responded to the criticism as follows:

The administrative Committee were unanimous in believing that the Armenians, as those who had suffered infinitely the most, should receive by far the largest amount of relief, and this is the actual fact. [...]

2 Rodogno, "Beyond Relief," 51.

Approximately not 10% of the relief given out within the Constantinople unit goes to Turks.³

Numerous examples show how far NER was from impartiality in its aid operation in Constantinople. For instance, the immediate relief work in Constantinople was mostly undertaken by the Constantinople Case Committee. Number of families who were assisted by NER shows the scale of the work. However, from the beginning, this work was prone to bias, as the Committee organized the city not only by districts but also by nationalities.⁴ Every family was investigated by a sub-committee of its own nationality. In the beginning, Armenian, Greek, Jewish, and Russian subcommittees were organized.⁵ By the close of July 1919, thirty-two committees in the twenty-three districts of the city were taking care of 670 families. Numbers given by NER shows who received aid: seventeen of these committees were Armenian, eleven were Greek, two Russian, one Jewish, and one Turkish.⁶

Similarly, the greater part of the women employed in the scope of its industrial work were Armenian. As explained in the organization's newspaper, *Near East Relief*, it was because "they formed the largest percentage of refugees in Constantinople until the recent arrival of the Russian refugee ships."⁷ However, according to C. Claflin Davis's study on the refugee situation in Constantinople, there was a problem with this explanation. In his study, Davis assessed the estimates of various organizations and institutions on refugee populations in the city. Neither Davis' estimate nor the figures provided by NER itself substantiated the assertion in *Near East Relief*.

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- 3 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41013A03-4 "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the Near East Relief at the Office of Colonel Coombs: Mr. Vickrey's Letter of April 1st, 1920, to Mr. G. Guelbenkian of New York," (May 10, 1920), 4-5.
- 4 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co101003 "Constantinople," *The Acorne* 1, no. 1 (June 7, 1919), 3.
- 5 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co104003-4 "Constantinople," *The Acorne* 1, no. 4 (June 26, 1919), 3-4.
- 6 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co112005 "Constantinople Case Committee," *The Acorne* 1, no. 12 (August 23, 1919), 5.
- 7 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co248001 "Industrial Work of Constantinople Unit Has Moved to Larger Quarters," *Near East Relief* 2, no. 48 (December 4, 1920), 1.

	NER's Estimation	Davis' Estimation ⁸
Armenians	3,000	3,200
Greeks	4,000	5,000
Russians	No estimate	65,000
Turks	7,700	27,500
Scattering	915	1,000
Total	15,615	101,955

NER's approach to these refugee populations was also far from impartiality. NER even prioritize those Armenians who were among the White Russian refugees.⁹ Interestingly, in this case, NER abandoned the prioritization of children and women in its aid operation and instead supplied Russian Armenian men with military uniforms.¹⁰

Even if the organization helped children of all nationalities, Christians and especially Armenians had priority in this part of the aid work. One statistic shows that in one month, 1,904 children were examined in NER's child welfare centers in the city. Only 111 were Turks, while the rest of children were non-Muslims, mostly Armenians.¹¹ Similarly, most of the orphanages being aided were Armenian orphanages indicated in various issues of the organization's newspapers and its meeting minutes.

Moreover, most local relief organizations with which NER had close connections, were Armenian, such as Armenian National Relief and the Armenian Red Cross. Relations with these organizations mattered as they were a

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- 8 Davis, "The Refugee Situation in Constantinople," 205-07. Although there were nearly four months between the assertion of *Near East Relief* and the prediction of Davis, there was no noticeable change in the refugee population in the city except for the Russians.
- 9 It should be recalled that White Russian was a political identification. While the majority were Russian, there were peoples from different communities among these refugees including Ukrainians, Greeks, Tatars, Circassians, Turkmens, Kalmuks, Georgians, and Armenians. See Bülent Bakar, *Esir Şehrin Misafirleri: Beyaz Ruslar* (İstanbul: Tarihçi Kitabevi, 2012), xi.
- 10 SR, NER, id. ABA132C0314003, Glee L. Hastings "Near East Relief Work in the Constantinople Refugee Camps: Russian Armenian Soldiers," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 14 (April 9, 1921), 3.
- 11 SR, NER, id. ABA132C0317001 "Statistics Concerning Child Welfare Work in Constantinople," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 17 (April 30, 1921), 1.

separate item of business in almost all the meetings of NER.¹² The organization provided financial support to the Armenian Red Cross.¹³ Similarly, NER invited representatives of various communities residing in Constantinople to their meetings to cooperate for relief work. However, representatives in these meetings mostly represented non-Muslim communities.¹⁴

4.1.2 *Why A Specific Community Received Most of the Aid?*

The next question is why it happened this way. Why did NER choose to help Armenians in Constantinople more so than others who suffered similar difficulties? As their financial resources and personnel are limited, non-governmental aid organizations always need to make choices.¹⁵ They choose who receives their help, for how long, and to what extent. According to Willard L. Thorp a donor's choices are determined by historical, political, and cultural

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- 12 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41013A02 "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the Near East Relief at the Office of Colonel Coombs: Relations with the Armenian National Relief," (May 10, 1920), 3; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41014A02 "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R. in the Office of Colonel Coombs: Report of Armenian National Relief" (May 17, 1920), 3; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41015A01 "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R. in the Office of Colonel Coombs: Armenian National Relief," (May 24, 1920), 2.
- 13 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41059A02 "Revised Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R.: Aid to the Armenian Red Cross," (December 6, 1920), 3; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41069 "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R: Aid to the Armenian Red Cross," (December 13, 1920), 1; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41070A03, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R: Appropriation for Armenian Red Cross," (December 20, 1920), 4.
- 14 In these meetings, only the representatives of Armenian, Greek, Jew, and Roman Catholic communities were present. SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41002 "Executive Committee of Advisory Board of the American Commission for Relief in the Near East," (April 14, 1919), 1; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41003 "Executive Committee of Advisory Board of the American Commission for Relief in the Near East," (May 2, 1919), 1.
- 15 Liesbet Heyse, *Choosing the Lesser Evil: Understanding Decision Making in Humanitarian Aid Ngos* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 1.

ties.¹⁶ This was partly true as the American Board had established NER in 1915 to help Armenians. In the post-war period, this choice did not actually change¹⁷ as can be seen in the example of Constantinople. However, what was new at the end of 1918 is that there were innumerable children, women, and victims of war waiting for a helping hand in every part of the world affected by the war. Why, then, would American citizens choose to help Armenians?

At the end of 1918, when the Great War was over and American grandmothers were trying to decide to which war victims on the other side of the world they should donate the five dollars in their purses, NER was separated from the American Board and asserted that it was a professional aid agency that aided all war victims irrespective of religion or nationality. The organization gave all the answers that American society wanted to hear. NER's fundraising campaign at home is the answer to the question why a specific community received most of the aid. With this successful propaganda, NER could dictate its own choices to the American public.

Linda Polman, a vocal critic of humanitarian aid, asserts that non-governmental aid organizations create "donor darlings" to sway public opinion.¹⁸

In some countries - the donor darlings - the aid comes in buckets, while others - the donor orphans - have to make do with the odd snippet. Or with nothing, because donors, like aid organizations, are free to ignore a crisis. Doing nothing is, in fact, more the rule than the exception. "Aid is a lottery," said Jan Egeland. "You have twenty-five equally desperate communities taking part in this lottery for attention every week. Twenty-four lose and one wins."

16 Thorp, *The Reality of Foreign Aid*, 128.

17 "Dr. Teitlebaum presented to the Commission the question of the aid to the various institutions and societies of Constantinople. After general discussion, it was voted that the Commission should give no aid to charitable institutions or societies as such; because the funds and supplies in its hands were limited strictly to sufferers in the Near East from persecution and massacre, or who have been reduced to poverty by reason of the war" SR, NER, id. ABA132Co37006 "9th Meeting," (April 1, 1919), 1

18 Linda Polman, *The Crisis Caravan: What's Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?*, trans. Liz Waters (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 63-94.

In the lottery to win favor with donors and aid organizations, victims have to find a way to distinguish themselves from rival victims.¹⁹

NER acted like today's non-governmental aid organizations by creating its own "donor darling" in order to manipulate American public opinion. In this case, the winner of the lottery was predetermined by the aid organization. To fundraise more efficiently, NER initiated a misleading and exaggerated propaganda campaign at home in which all conceivable, positive sentiments that would impress American citizens were attributed to Armenians.

NER, as the prominent American aid agency in the Near East, tried to address the whole of the American public. Although NER had a close relationship with Armenians, the great majority of them were still Gregorian, not Protestant. Thus, NER left evangelism aside and used religious motivations as a source of moral responsibility to raise extra funds. Gauthier and Rodogno also draw attention to the fact that "the programs and objectives of the NER were not dissimilar from the objectives of other secular organizations, both American and European."²⁰

Humanitarianism and impartiality designated two sides of the same coin as Peter Walker asserted "[the humanitarian system] was never designed, and like most products of evolution, it has its anomalies, redundancies, inefficiencies, and components evolved for one task being adapted to another."²¹ NER's propaganda at home provided large amounts of funds and motivated the organization to carry its work forward. It created an over-idealized Armenian figure that was further promoted by the formation of a counterpart image, the evil Turk. According to Robert L. Daniel, "while such publicity helped to raise money, it did not contribute to an understanding of the problems of area... [And] it failed to point out that many of the Armenians had lived in a theater of war or that Moslem Turks were also suffering."²²

19 Ibid., 157-59.

20 Gauthier and Rodogno, "The Near East Relief's Caucasus Branch Operation (1919-1920)."

21 Walker and Maxwell, *Shaping the Humanitarian World*, 2.

22 Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 160.; "The enlargement of the 'terrible Turk' image was to have unfortunate repercussions in American foreign policy for more than a decade. It is not surprising that the Turkish people were somewhat unfairly stigmatized, while the Armenians were over-idealized." DeNovo, *American Interests*, 104.

As an independent aid agency, NER ran a systematic and successful aid campaign in Constantinople but its claim of impartiality was not valid. Actually, what made NER powerful was its manipulative propaganda at home, which was far from impartial. The main motivation of the donor were the discourses formed around the propaganda campaign more so than actual relationships with local communities. As John White says, “the actions of donors are determined primarily by the historical situation in which they happen to find themselves”²³ The historical situation that the donors encountered was determined by NER’s fundraising propaganda which included religious, orientalist, progressive, and patriotic discourses. The essence of the propaganda is summarized by a statement in the organization’s magazine, *New Near East*: “The Armenians are the representatives of one of the oldest civilized Christian races, and, beyond all doubt, one of the most pacific, one of the most industrious, and one of the most intelligent races of the world.”²⁴

4.1.2.1 The Religious Discourse

*He gave Himself for Mankind
Millions of Armenians have given themselves for Him
What will You give for Them?*²⁵

Religious discourse and philanthropy were intertwined in NER’s fundraising propaganda. As mentioned above, NER prioritized religious motivations in the post-war period but not for evangelistic purposes. As James L. Barton, the chairman of NER, explained that this was “practical Christianity without sectarianism, and without ecclesiastical form”²⁶ Even brochures addressed to pastors in America did not mention evangelism but rather focused on philanthropy: “Will you not make this cause a part of your program? Do not wait for the Near East Relief to knock at your door; invite it to come. It is merely the servant of the Church. It is your instrument in a great life-saving work.”²⁷

23 White, *Politics of Foreign Aid*, 34.

24 “Armenian Characteristics,” *The New Near East* 6, no. 12 (October 1921), 7.

25 *The New Near East* 6, no. 6 (March 1921), back cover.

26 Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, ix.

27 *A Million Lives Saved: Handbook for Pastors*, (New York: Near East Relief, 1923), 3.

In order to emphasize the idea that Armenians were one of the most precious Christian communities and were worth aiding, NER frequently highlighted that Armenians were the “oldest” Christians in its pamphlets and booklets.²⁸ They had been an insistent outpost of Christianity “from very early times.”²⁹

It is a comprehensive Christian work. It is Christian in the sense that it keeps people alive. It follows largely the command of Jesus to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked. It saves those who would perish because of their Christian faith. It carries the burden of national salvage sacrificially. It toils unceasingly to preserve ancient and historic Christian races.³⁰

Briefly stated, NER's religious discourse pointed out that it is good to help war victims, even better if they are Christians, and much better to lend a helping hand to Christians who had had a specific role in religious history.

4.1.2.2 The Orientalist Discourse

NER fundraising propaganda had a strong orientalist characteristic. The organization attributed a set of positive and negative criteria to the local communities which were anthropomorphized as men and women. As it showed who was “civilized”, these criteria were one of the best ways to persuade American society of who was worthy of aid. Additionally, the anthropomorphizing provided an opportunity to creating striking stories that would fascinate those who read the magazines and pamphlets published by the organization.

NER saw Christianity as synonymous with being civilized. According to Barton, Armenia had had a civilizing influence on the region for centuries until it was conquered by Ottoman armies in 1514.³¹ In this way, NER often engaged in orientalist discourses formed around the dichotomy of a civilized

28 "Speakers' Handbook of American Committee for Relief in the Near East," (New York: The Headquarters of the Committee, c. 1918-9), 31. Also see Miglio, "America's Sacred Duty."

29 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27o11, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 11.

30 *A Million Lives Saved: Handbook for Pastors*, 28.

31 Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 23.

woman figure - symbolizing Christians and especially Armenians – and a barbarian man signifying Turks, Kurds, and Muslims.³² NER devoted space to striking anecdotes in its publications to portray this dichotomy.

One of the teachers, a gentle, refined Armenian girl, speaking English well and knowing music, a young woman attractive by the standards of any land, was forcibly married to the Beg of a neighboring Kurdish village - a filthy, lousy, white-bearded Kurd, old enough to be her grandfather. He is the half-civilized under-chief of a nomad tribe and a murderer, and efforts to rescue the unhappy girl have so far failed.³³

NER introduced itself as “the savior of Christian women and children in Muslim harems.”³⁴ Armenian women “to be rescued” were symbolized with traits such as sensitiveness, gentleness, and refinement.³⁵ To make Americans and NER a real “savior”, the opposite image needed to be uncompromising and bloodthirsty rather than open to bribes or greedy. To promote this image, the historical and religious roots of Turks were frequently referred to.

There are good reasons, for instance, why the Ottoman Turk has loved war and conquest. He has never been afraid to shed blood. The old Tatar habit of rough and ready rule made conquest the life of a nation. “A Turkish tribe could maintain a political organization and a compact

32 Gauthier and Rodogno also draw attention to this aspect of NER’s orientalism in their reports on NER’s operation in Caucasus: “NER was not immune to Orientalist stereotypes, which had been proliferated in Europe and in North America since the mid-nineteenth century. It shared the same paternalist/imperialist disposition towards local populations both Christian and non-Christian. NER relief workers often interpreted their mission as the rescue of ‘progressive’ Armenians from ‘barbarian’ and ‘degenerate’ Turks.” Gauthier and Rodogno, “The Near East Relief’s Caucasus Branch Operation (1919-1920),” 5.

33 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27009, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 9.

34 “Our general object is to provide relief for war sufferers. The four classes first to demand consideration are refugees, orphans, women and girls rescued from Moslem homes, and the sick.” SR, NER, id. ABA132Co105001, “Policies Governing General Relief Operations of the A.C.R.N.E,” *The Acorne* 1, no. 5 (July 5, 1919), 1.; SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27006 *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 6.; “Speakers’ Handbook,” 34.

35 *Ibid.*, 31.

grouping only by war; without benefits from pillage and tributes, it would be obliged to dissolve and to disperse by clans, whose factions would group themselves anew, and form another nation about the strongest man.” The Tatar is the ‘rough rider’ of Asiatic history, strong in the virtues of life in the open, where to live means to fight.³⁶

Islam made them fatalists and the Sultan adopted the role for defender of the faith. The rulers showed no mercy to their subjects, the officers no clemency to their soldiers. “The law of the Desert” and the spirit of retaliation held sway... Fanaticism was always just below the surface of Turkish life, easily accessible as a political tool when they needed by the controlling government.³⁷

When it comes to Kurds, Barton described them as “a disturbing element wherever they lived... [They] were another element of uncertainty and disturbance.”³⁸

This opposite image was supplemented by the traits ascribed to Muslim women. In a study on the situation of widows in Constantinople prepared and publicized during the truce period, Mabelle C. Phillips described the living conditions of widows from various communities in the city. But Phillips had difficulty understanding the situation of Turkish women because “she [Turkish widow] cannot realize it herself... the economic situation of the Turkish widow is almost impossible to realize.”³⁹ She empowered her assertion by putting the Armenian woman figure up against the Turkish one: “even in a study such as this, based on statistics and not for the purpose of propaganda, one must record the great heroism of these Armenian women who have suffered

36 Fred Field Goodsell, "Historical Setting," in *Constantinople to-Day; or, the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople; a Study in Oriental Social Life*, ed. Clarence Richard Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 54-55.

37 Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 29.

38 *Ibid.*, 27.

39 Mabelle C. Phillips, "Widowhood: A Study of Dependency Due to War," in *Constantinople to-Day; or, the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople; a Study in Oriental Social Life*, ed. Clarence Richard Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 295.

everything, including death of their loved ones, exile, and dishonor, who have no definite hope for themselves or for their country.”⁴⁰

4.1.2.3 The Discourse of Progress

In history of the United States, progressivism refers to a reform movement that emerged at the end of nineteenth century and prevailed until the early 1920s. This alleged progressive movement had millions of followers across the United States including prominent political figures such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Although there were differences among progressives, they had a consensus. They believed that major changes in late nineteenth century affected American society negatively: The growth of cities had led to social ills such as drunkenness, prostitution, misery, and poverty. But one did not see these effects in the countryside.⁴¹ In 1898, the United States acquired Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and progressives saw this as a chance to promote the progressive agenda around the world.⁴² In its fundraising campaign, NER cast a role for the Armenians that conformed to American progressivism. As civilized, faithful Christians, Armenians were the only potential force with regard to progress in the Near East. They could progress without facing the alleged negative effects that the Americans had encountered. At the end of the war, NER asked a question of American society:

America avowedly entered the war to fight for national and international democracy and the rights of little nations, in a war has been won on the battlefield, but Victory comes to-day not with the irresponsible gaiety of the childhood of the race, but with the grave responsibility of maturity, eyes of purpose and hands of construction to build a better world. There is not an individual among us who does not share this

40 Ibid., 303.

41 Walter Nugent, *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-5.

42 Molly Cochran and Cornelia Navari, "Introduction," in *Progressivism and Us Foreign Policy between the World Wars*, ed. Molly Cochran and Cornelia Navari (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 3.

responsibility and this purpose. The question with the rank and file of Americans is simply - where to begin?⁴³

Above all else, the future of the region depended on the creation of a stable, strong, just government in the region that could ensure the future peace of the world, as well.⁴⁴ NER considered Armenians to be the appropriate candidate for this mission both materially and intellectually.

The Armenian people represent the most industrious, intelligent and generally progressive element in Western Asia. They have been educated by American colleges and schools and have appropriated the excellent teaching given them. The Armenians are, moreover, not only the most industrious cultivators but the best handicraftsmen in the countries where they dwell, superior in intelligence and diligence to the Moslem population.⁴⁵

Among all those who dwell in western Asia they (the Armenians) stand first, with a capacity for intellectual and moral progress, as well as with a natural tenacity of will and purpose beyond that of all their neighbors – not merely of Turks, Tartars, Kurds, and Persians, but also of Russians. They are a strong race, not only with vigorous nerves and sinews, physically active and energetic, but also of conspicuous brain power.⁴⁶

This approach is evident in the various publications of NER. Armenians were the only people in the world who could make every sacrifice for their education.⁴⁷ They were “people of great industry and intelligence as well as aptitude for business and successful in trade.”⁴⁸

Obviously, these answers reflected American progressivist thinking. All these features made Armenians the only candidate for progress in the region.

43 "Speakers' Handbook," 3.

44 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27011, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 11.

45 "Statement by Viscount Bryce," *The New Near East* 7, no. II (December 1921), 5.

46 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27008, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 8.

47 "Armenia's Educational Ideals and Efforts," *The New Near East* 6, no. 1 (October 1920), 7.

48 "Speakers' Handbook," 31.

In this way, by referring to a common idea of the day, NER assured American citizens that their donations would not be wasted but would work.

4.1.2.4 The Patriotic Discourse - or “Responsibility for Our Fellow Men”

*We were hungry and ye gave us food,
We were thirsty and ye gave us drink,
We were naked and ye clothed us.*⁴⁹

As it can be seen in the discourses above, NER’s propaganda at home introduced Armenians as representative of all desirable values in the minds of ordinary American citizens. Then the NER asserted that helping Armenians, or as described in an NER pamphlet, “one of the finest races in the world”⁵⁰ was a patriotic duty. The patriotic discourse became an indispensable complement to the other discourses. In this way, NER addressed the whole of American society.

James L. Barton, the chairman of NER, emphasized the ‘national’ aspect of NER at the beginning of his hagiographic account of the organization.

The volunteer relief committee was, from the beginning, a National organization of the United States, manned by our people and incorporated by a special act of the Congress in 1919 as the Near East Relief. It was national because it received its support from all our people and was endorsed by Congress and all our Presidents throughout its history; and, in its widely extended work of life and child saving, it represented the true spirit of our country.⁵¹

Barton attributed value to NER as a representative of American responsibilities. There were many examples of this responsibility in NER’s propaganda.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Armenians would have disappeared as a nation had it not been for the splendid help given them by

49 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co301004, “A Banner from Balat,” *Near East Relief* 3, no. 1 (January 7, 1920), 4.

50 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27008, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 8.

51 Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, vii.

the Near East Relief and the American Food Administration. The best that sympathetic Americans can do is to continue and enlarge the present admirable work of the Near East Relief.⁵²

NER claimed that the survival of the Armenians depended on the outcome of the fundraising campaign: "There is just one hope for these people - America! They are depending on America for food and clothes, hospitals for their sick; and for their children shelter and the education that will make of them the leaders of a future free and peaceful country."⁵³ According to the fundraising propaganda, supporting NER's efforts for the sake of Armenians meant being a member of a 'great nation' for ordinary American citizens. John A. DeNovo pointed out that relief for victims of war in the Near East became a national crusade.⁵⁴ This mirrored "responsibility for our fellow men" discourse frequently emphasized in the United States foreign aid programs after World War II.⁵⁵

52 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27010, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 10.

53 "Our Junior Contributors," *The New Near East* 6, no. 12 (October 1921), 2.

54 DeNovo, *American Interests*, 103.

55 Raymond F. Mikesell, *The Economics of Foreign Aid* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968), 5-6.

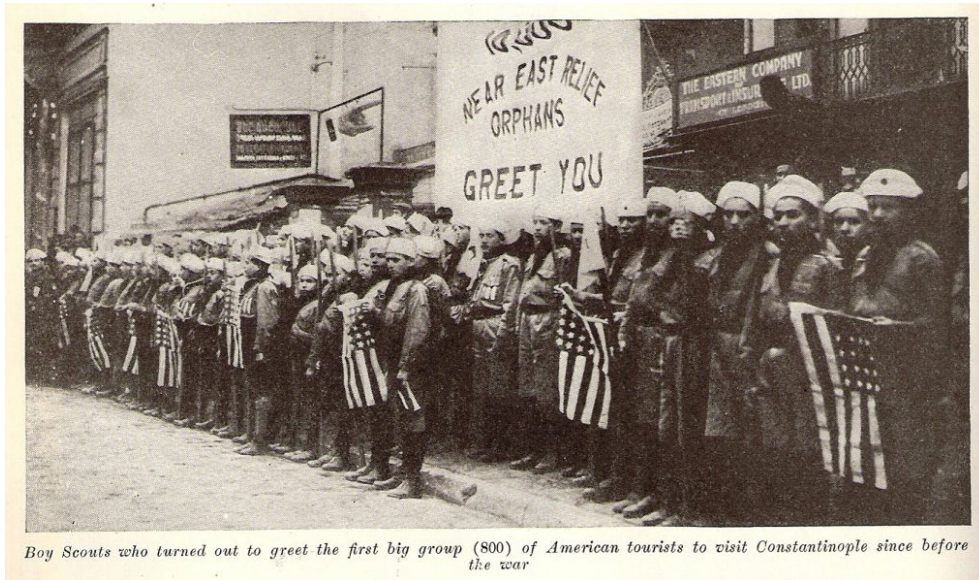


Figure 4 Orphans greet American tourists arriving in Constantinople for the first time since before World War I, 1922. <http://neareastmuseum.com>

NER described the United States as “the defender of liberty and the big brother to little peoples.” The US had already provided these little peoples “their greatest uplift—their colleges, their chief encouragement to progress, and generous help through their crises.”⁵⁶ Obviously, NER administrators were paternalistic and saw themselves as culturally superior.⁵⁷ They believed that development and modernization could be achieved only with the help of the a savior: the Americans. Armenians had rich underground resources that “must be developed and the survivors of the massacres must be taught how to do it and efficiently helped.”⁵⁸ They were capable under proper protectorate of developing these resources.⁵⁹ This aspect of the propaganda also influenced of the post-war foreign policy of the State Department for a time.

A spirit of alliance was also emphasized to further empower American “responsibility.” Armenians were described as brave fighters that had fought

56 "Has This Little Girl a Home in Your Heart?: She Has No Other!" 3.

57 Gauthier and Rodogno, "The Near East Relief's Caucasus Branch Operation (1919-1920)," 7.

58 "Relief Expedition to be Sent to Turkey," *News Bulletin* 2, no. 6 (November 1918), 1-2.

59 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27o11, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 11.

on the same side as the Allies. As described in a pamphlet of the organization, “the Armenians were our valiant allies during the war. They sacrificed an even greater proportion of their people to our common cause than did France.”⁶⁰ Lastly, NER did not fail to mention tax-deductions⁶¹ if all the potential motivations above were not enough to make donation.

§ 4.2 Aid and its Contemporary Critiques

NER could run its fundraising campaign in such a manipulative way because they believe that they encountered no local authority to question its work in the region. Its work in the field developed in the same direction its fundraising campaign. NER administrators believed that they were representatives of the winning party and acting freely without answering to any local power seemed to them like a vested right. NER’s fundraising propaganda gave the organization access to vast resources to distribute, but it also raised doubts among local communities among an important percentage of population in the Near East, and among the American public. While the organization solved some vital, short-term problems, it contributed to the formation of a long-term historical mistrust between peoples.

As explained in the previous chapter, NER had a positive relationship with the sultan, but actual power in the occupied city was in the hands of the Allied High Commissioners. NER enjoyed the presence of Allied occupying powers not only in Constantinople but in many parts of the Near East. NER did not regard the Ottoman administration as an aid recipient. The organization had direct relations with various communities and regard them as various aid recipient units. The lack of an able local authority to undertake a regulatory or supervisory role in regard to the distribution of aid left NER free to shape its own aid operation. Primarily, this situation moved NER further away from the

60 Ibid.

61 “Would a man reduce the amounts of his income tax with profit to himself and others? If so let him make a contribution to the Near East Relief. Under the United States Income Tax Law, contributions to Near East Relief constitute a proper reduction to a limited amount, not in excess of 15 per cent of the taxpayer’s assessment of income.” SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41329A01 “N.E.R. and the Income Tax,” *Team Work* 1, no. 3 (February 27, 1922), 2.

principle of impartiality. But more importantly, given that there is a balance between self interest and humanitarianism in the functioning of an aid agency, the lack of a control mechanism in the form of a local authority resulted tips the scale toward self interest in the case of NER. This part of chapter tests the organization's attitudes in the presence of supervisory and regulatory authorities by reviewing contemporary critiques of them. Wherever the organization encountered an actual authority, it had to take their opinions and requests into consideration. Local interventions kept the organization out of politics and helped balance the equilibrium between self interest and humanitarianism.

With the emergence of the national resistance movement in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal starting in mid-1919 and the formation of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) on December 2, 1920, NER encountered actual powers eager to regulate and supervise the organization's activities. Both of these powers had suspicions about the NER.

Only three days after the proclamation of the Armenian SSR, a meeting was held among representatives of the Armenian SSR and, the Russian SFSR, and the NER about whether the organization would continue its work there. The soviet representatives asked NER to abide by their laws and warned its representative of the consequences should it cooperate with counter-revolutionaries:

We propose that you continue your work under us and we will see that nothing happens to you.... Every obstacle you put forward will be considered sabotage. If we find that you are secretly putting forward obstacles to our work, that will you get into trouble. No one will interfere with you if you do not start counter-revolutionarism or connection with the Dashnaks.... But if anyone does anything counter-revolutionary, of course, we are sending them to the other world.⁶²

NER's representative received the message: "We are glad to know where we stand – to have this clear statement of the case."⁶³

62 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41057-A05 "Minutes of Meeting between Representative of Near East Relief and Representative of Russian Soviet Federative Republic and Armenian Soviet Federative Republic, at Alexandropol, Armenia, Hotel Astoria," (December 5, 1920), 1-6.

63 Ibid.

Ankara's attitude towards NER was similar to that of the Bolsheviks. NER perceived the Turkish national movement as a threat to their work: "In the meantime we must await developments from the Greek advance into the interior. It was generally recognized that if the Nationalist forces were well defeated by the Greeks the situation for Americans and natives would improve decidedly."⁶⁴ At the end of 1920, Ankara appointed commissioners to supervise NER's work, which, as expressed in a telegram sent from an NER administrator in Constantinople to headquarters in New York, was "done solely with the idea to prevent us from engaging in politics or dissemination of political propaganda."⁶⁵ Ankara-appointed commissioners kept a close watch on the organization. For example, NER worker Harry Riggs and his wife were expelled from Harpoot because of their intimate relations with Kurds and Armenians. He was accused to encouraging Kurds to resist, as stated in NER's meeting minutes.⁶⁶

In addition to efforts to keep the institution out of politics, Ankara also criticized NER's aid program itself. An article published by a monthly religious magazine controlled by the national movement in Ankara criticized NER's assertion of impartiality and accused them of being the same old missionaries who broke the brotherhood among Ottoman subjects.

At the end of the war did not these organizations come here only for the help of the Armenians and Greeks? Was not this aim said and published by many papers of our own country? Had ever a Mohammedan an equal help and relief by this organization even now a days when they pretend to be impartial? [...] As we all look at all of the branches we can say with absolute surely that it is impossible to find an equality in their distribution of relief. It is a fact that the chain of wars made

64 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41020 "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the Near East Relief in the Office of Colonel Coombs: Situation in Interior," (June 28, 1920), 1.

65 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41123A24-5, Telegram sent by Colonel Coombs in Constantinople to NER Headquarter at New York (January 3, 1920), 1-2.

66 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41069-A01 "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R.: Personnel," (December 13, 1920), 1-2.

more destructions and consequently caused more misery among the Turks more often than the others, and still only the others are getting helps from a humanitarian commission that came to distribute help without any distinctions. [...] Are they not the same old missionaries that really planted the seeds of this distinction and separation? Were we not almost like brethren before any missionaries came in this country?⁶⁷

At the end of 1920, the situation in Anatolia and the Caucasus was critical for NER. Barton was afraid of being expelled from these areas altogether.⁶⁸ NER realized that “a clear cut policy, both in relationship to the Bolshevik Government and Turkish Government is absolutely necessary for the prestige of America and the future usefulness of the Near East Relief.”⁶⁹ However, in the beginning of 1921, NER’s operations were strictly restricted in Anatolia and the Caucasus.⁷⁰

In addition to reactions of Turkish revolutionaries and the Armenian Bolsheviks, the Ottoman administration in Constantinople, with its limited authority, sometimes tried to intervene with the NER when it saw an anomaly in the organization’s activities. The Ottoman administration had excused NER from paying custom duties for the importing of foodstuffs from abroad to be used for relief work and had allocated buildings to it be used as retail spaces to provide the goods to the residents of the city, though not for a profit making purpose. When aid workers deviated from this object and tried to generate profit from these goods, the Ottomans brought them to account.⁷¹

67 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41044 (November 10, 1920), 1.

68 “The whole situation looks to us extremely precarious. I fear if Mustapha begins to order Americans out of the country he may not stop until every last one is out. [...] In the Russian Caucasus the situation has become so critical that we feel entirely powerless to do anything.” SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41075-A01, Letter sent by James L. Barton in Boston to William S. Dodd in Constantinople (December 27, 1920), 1-2.

69 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41079-A01, Letter sent by H. C. Jaquith in Tiflis to E. A. Yarrow in Kars (December 28, 1920), 1-2.

70 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41144-A01, Unsigned letter to Mrs. Blanche Wilson Stead in Kermanshah (January 13, 1921), 1-2.

71 BOA, BEO, 4571/342813, 2, 23 Nisan 1335 (April, 23 1919)

In brief, the presence of actual local authorities made it possible to regulate and supervise the organization's activities. Even if NER administrators and workers were not happy with this interference, such a control mechanism - wherever it existed - actually helped the organization to maintain the characteristics of an aid agency. However, there were no such authority in large parts of the Near East including Constantinople.

§ 4.3 Social and Political Effects of the Aid

Up to now, I have explained who the aid recipients were, why they were chosen, and critiques directed at NER, which acted as a control mechanism. At this point, one can say that foreign aid was a necessary evil. Notwithstanding all of its problems including a lack of impartiality, it helped at least some people to survive. From a purely humanitarian point of view, it can be said that half a loaf of bread is better than none. This was the case of the aid campaign in Constantinople which eased suffering of many destitute people such as unfortunate orphans and destitute refugees even if most were from just one community. Given this, I will examine how NER's aid program affected its aid recipients, especially Armenians, beyond keeping them alive. Obviously, to answer this question, one should examine the organization's motivations and goals. I assert that the lack of a checks-and-balances mechanism in the form of a powerful local authority to inspect and supervise the activities of the organization caused the NER to become a law unto itself, as could happen to any aid agency in similar conditions. This situation affected both the aid recipients and the organization itself in a negative way.

In crisis zones, aid workers tend to sincerely believe that they are doing good as they apparently help destitute people. It is usually hard to find an able local authority in crisis zones, as the name itself implies. Accordingly, aid organizations can act freely within their scope of operations as they need not give an account of their own activities to a local authority. This can create various problems for aid recipients and aid organizations as it brings the goal of humanitarianism into question. The recent history of foreign aid operations is full of tragicomic stories. Linda Polman, in her critique of humanitarianism, strikingly shows the potential results of the lack of oversight:

In Kosovo in 1999, dozens of foreign aid organizations handed out food, clothing, and pharmaceuticals to every Kosovar they came upon in the street, without waiting to be asked. Cambodian refugees were sent a shipment of food so old that the director of a zoo in San Francisco had declared it unfit for the animals, and a New Zealand manufacturer offered Kenyan children a shipment of canned dog food. “The children are hungry, but not that hungry,” a spokesman for the Kenyan government said, declining the gift.... On arrival [the aid workers] rent a car, stick a decal on it to identify their organization, and they’re in business. The only documents they need are tourist visas - and even those aren’t required in countries where the central government is weak or has ceased to exist.⁷²

When American missionaries arrived in the Near East, they had a strong motive to stay in the region. In line with their evangelistic aims, they used various methods to gain people’s sympathy and trust. In the process, the Board evolved to look like an aid agency because of the methods to which it resorted. NER was the product of this evolution. At the end of the Great War, NER appeared to be consistent with most of what would become the globally-accepted principles for aid agencies in the post-World War II period. However, this incarnation as a professional aid agency was not the peak of its evolution. Actually, NER continued to adapt to new conditions. The lack of a checks-and-balances mechanism in the field tipped the balance of self interest and humanitarianism in favor of former as the organization was not obliged to account for its activities. In this process, the organization evolved into a big business that needed to be maintained. This created concern within the organization for its future. As a consequence of manipulative fundraising propaganda at home, NER burned its bridges with some communities in the Near East for the sake of others. Accordingly, the future of the organization in the Near East became dependent on where the borders would fall after the conflicts ended. In order to secure its own existence, NER tried to design the future of the Near East.

72 Polman, *The Crisis Caravan*, 52-53.

Even before the aid work in the post-war period began, the organization controlled vast sums of money donated by American citizens and was responsible for spending these resources. Given its post-war fundraising propaganda at home, the organization grew further. In the field, NER's industrial work, which was planned with the intent of providing continuity and growth for the aid program, transformed the organization with a profit-based company which relied on the exploitation of cheap labor force. Correspondingly, the line separating the aid organization from a company began to become obscure. Even if NER administrators and workers in the field continued to heartily believe that they were doing good, they were actually acting like employees striving to protect the economic and politics interests of the company with which they were affiliated. I call this issue the over-professionalization of aid work. Even if it can be positive in terms of budget management and the administration of the work, it harmed aid recipients and brought the organization's humanitarianism into question.

NER's aid campaign in Constantinople shows that over-professionalization caused ethical problems and impaired the organization's assertion of humanitarianism. NER's aid campaign in the city was based on interrelated humanitarian and developmental aid. The continuity and growth of its humanitarian aid was dependent on the industrial work. Many people earned their livelihoods through this work, and they were also manufacturing the products to be distributed to orphanages, hospitals, and refugee camps. To make the industrial work more efficient, NER opened shops where the products were sold. The system worked well and as planned. However, at the same time, NER began to look like a tyrannical corporation enjoying the exploited labor power of thousands of destitute women, orphans, and refugees in the city. In March 1921, the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the organization accepted that children thirteen years of age and over in the orphanages who received aid from NER should spend one half to all of their time doing some form of manual labor.⁷³ At this point, the voluntary basis of the relation between donor and recipient disappeared, and compulsory work

73 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co310001, Ernest Riggs "Industries in the Constantinople Armenian Orphanages," *Near East Relief* 3, no. 10 (March 12, 1921), 1.

transformed the orphanages into child labor camps. Admiral Bristol, in a report prepared on NER, said that “the Near East Relief here in Constantinople is run more like a business organization than any relief organization I have ever come in contact with” after pointing out that he had been closely associated with NER’s work for almost two years.⁷⁴ Given the broad operational area of the organization,⁷⁵ the extent of exploitation in the Near East can be understood. Even though the aid kept the recipients alive, those who received the most were exploited more than others.

Over-professionalization led NER administrators to look at budget management from the perspective of a profit-oriented company manager. One of the most important activities in the scope of NER’s industrial work was bread production and distribution, in fact worth taking into consideration with respect to the provisioning of the city. One can again see the bias in NER’s humanitarianism in this work. “Bread is supplied free to the Armenians and Greeks, at half cost to the Turks.”⁷⁶ However, over-professionalization further harmed the humanitarian face of the organization and made it unmerciful in some respects. In Constantinople, NER supplied bread to orphanages free of charge or at a low price. This was praiseworthy work on behalf of orphans irrespective of religion or nationality. But when the organization was not paid for a long time, it could be cruel and leave the children starving. A letter which to the Minister of Internal Affairs from the General Directorate of Orphanages related a tragic example that clarifies the potential, unfortunate outcomes of this mentality:

74 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41046-Ao1, Report on NER sent by Mark L. Bristol to the Force Commander (November 22, 1920), 1-2.

75 “During the calendar year of 1919 the Near East Relief conducted relief activities in the following areas of the Near East: Constantinople and adjoining territory in European Turkey, Anatolia, Armenia, Cilicia, Kurdistan, Syria, Palestine (for Armenian refugees only), Mesopotamia, Persia, Trans-Caucasia (Russia), including the Armenian Republic, Georgia and Azerbaidjan.” SR, NER, id. ABA132Co27005, *Handbook: Near East Relief* (October 1920), 5.

76 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co41033Ao2 “Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Constantinople Administrative Committee of the N.E.R. in the Office of Colonel Coombs: Bakery and Bread at Constantinople,” (October 4, 1920), 3.

Because Near East Relief did not collect our debt, which amounts to 1,856,088 piasters, they informed us that from tomorrow forward they will not be delivering bread to the orphanage. Now, 3500 orphans do not even have bread from tomorrow forward. In repeated appeals, I informed the Ministry of Finance about the tragic situation that is about to occur. Nobody paid attention to my remarks.... From now on the catastrophe has come true. Children whom we cannot feed well and whom we occasionally cause to die because of malnutrition will no doubt die within three days if we do not supply them with bread. If those officers of finance, who in order not to understand our need think that they are fulfilling their duty... and acting most highhandedly, feel any grief about the poor 3500 children, I shall express it to whole world: It is a lie! There is nothing to do! I am able to work, to get by, and to sacrifice with my coworkers, and I am doing so. However, obviously I do not have the supernatural power to create bread for 3500 children... May I be so bold as to ask your help to find a solution to this situation. Submitted for necessary action.⁷⁷

77 “Amerika Şark-ı Karib Muavenet Heyeti bir milyon sekiz yüz elli altı bin seksen sekiz guraşa baliğ olan borcumuzu tesviye edemediği için yarından itibaren Darü'l-Eytam'a ekmeke vermeyeceğini bildirmiştir. Şu halde yarından itibaren üç bin beş yüz yetimin ekmeği dahi yoktur. Şimdiye kadar müteaddit müracatlarla karibü'l-vuku olan bu vaziyetin bütün fec'a'ini maliye nezaretine arz etmişdim. Sözüme havale'l sem'-i itibar eden olmadı ve her defasından bin türlü lakırdıyla işi geçiştirmek en büyük muvaffakiyet addedildi. Bugün artık felaket tahakkuk eylemiştir. Zaten besleyemediğimiz ve zaman zaman gıdasızlıktan öldürdüğümüz çocuklara bu suretle ekmeke de veremediğimiz takdirde üç güne kadar cümlesini mezara tevdi edeceğimiz şüphesizdir. İhtiyacı anlamamak gah hiddetle, gah hışımla, gah kurnazlıkla ekseriya keyf ile hareket edilerek vazifelerini ifa ettikleri zannında bulunan maliye zememderan-I umuru üç bin beşyüz biçarenin üzerinde bir tesir duyarlarsa tek başıma bütün dünyaya yalan diye ben bağıracağım. Yapacak hiç bir şey kalmadı. Çalışmak, idare etmek, arkadaşlarımla beraber kendimi feda etmek elimden gelir ve bunu yapıyorum. Fakat üç bin beş yüz kişiye gıda yaratmak için kudsi bir kuvvete malik olmadığım muhakkaktır. Hakikatı bütün üryanlığıyla hakipa-yı samilerine arz ederim. Ve hissetmeyenlerle mehatır olarak insaflardan istimdada şitab ediyorum. Bu gün işte bir çare bulunmamasını son derece bir ızdırıp içinde istirhama mücaseret eyledim. Ol babda emr ü ferman hazret-i menlehül emrindir.” BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-16/1-54, 2, 1 Mart 1338 (March 1, 1921)

In fact, NER's aid campaign was appreciated and supported by Mehmed VI. In a meeting of the organization it was said that "it is interesting to note the very low price at which we are able to administer relief in the form of grain furnished us by the Turkish government."⁷⁸

Obviously, the over-professionalization of NER originating from the lack of a control mechanism exposed aid recipients to adverse outcomes. However, it not only harmed aid recipients but the organization itself as it created concern over its existence in the future. Because the organization over-idealized Armenians while condemning certain other communities, its existence in the region became dependent on certain scenarios with respect to state formation in the Near East. In the post-war period, in order to sustain its existence, NER fell directly into the political debate on the future of the Near East and tried to design a future economic order for the region without the consent of local communities.

Participation in to the Great War shook the foundations of the traditional American isolationist policy. In January 1918, President Wilson declared US aims for peace in the Fourteen Points, the twelfth of which provided the right of self-determination for minorities under Ottoman rule. A year later, in the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson tried to impose the twelfth point, but the Allies insistently refused to renounce their imperialistic aims. A mandate system was the compromise between imperial annexation and Wilsonian self-determination.⁷⁹ Although Allied powers occupied certain regions in the Near East, none was eager to take the Armenian mandate.⁸⁰ Especially the United Kingdom was eager to give the Armenian mandate to the United States as it would serve as a buffer against Soviet Russia and release the British from the financial burden.⁸¹ Until the idea of mandates was rejected by the US senate on June 1,

78 SR, NER, id. ABA132Co117003 "Constantinople," *The Acorne* 1, no. 17 (September 27, 1919), 3.

79 Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 65.

80 Bryson, "Woodrow Wilson," 2.

81 Suat Akgül, "Paris Konferansından Sevr'e Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması Meselesi," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 8, no. 23 (March 1992): 383.

1920, a controversy about the form of the mandate arose both within and outside the United States.⁸²

As soon as the debate over mandates began, NER was one of the most articulate pressure groups favoring the idea.⁸³ In the beginning, in harmony with the fundraising campaign, James L. Barton, the chairman of NER, favored the mandate of Armenia. Meanwhile, there were other suggestions over the form of the mandate. An autonomous Armenia under a federated Ottoman Empire could be better option for the United States.⁸⁴ For example, Dr. Caleb Frank Gates, president of Robert College (1903-1932), asserted that "it will be of little profit to establish an Armenia, more than half of whose people will be Turks, if alongside of this new State there remains a Turkey of the old type.... To save the Armenians and Greeks you must save the Turks also." Similarly, Admiral Bristol thought that pro-Armenian and pro-Greek propaganda in the United States could cause "a new Balkan mess," The United States should accept a mandate over the whole of the region.⁸⁵ Both the King-Crane and Harbord Commissions recommended that a separate Armenian mandate was not appropriate in terms of economic, military, and strategic considerations.⁸⁶

According to Keith D. Watenpugh "with the advent of the war itself, humanitarian thought embraced Wilsonian notions of self-determination for Armenians as a basis for addressing that suffering, and the creation of an Armenian national home became a central feature of humanitarian advocacy."⁸⁷ However, contrary to what was said in the fundraising campaign, NER also decided to defend a single mandate over the region; a free Armenia was no longer the priority. Chairman Barton began to support the idea that a federated Ottoman Empire under US rule would prevent the balkanization of the Empire. The mandate would cover Georgia, Armenia, Syria - including

82 Robert L. Daniel, "The Armenian Question and American-Turkish Relations, 1914-1927," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46, no. 2 (1959): 264.

83 Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations*, 70-71.

84 Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 102.

85 *Ibid.*, 174.

86 DeNovo, *American Interests*, 124.

87 Watenpugh, *Bread from Stones*, 88-89.

Lebanon and Mesopotamia -, a Jewish area around Jerusalem, Turkish Anatolia, and a Greek enclave around Smyrna. Constantinople would be administered by an international commission. To this end, a NER-appointed committee prepared a detailed report feeling with all aspects of life in the Near East including politics, the economy, religion, health, and education. The report proposed that the US assume a supervisory role in the region by using similar procedures to those established for the Philippines and Puerto Rico.⁸⁸

It was not plausible that NER administrators and workers would not have individual ideas about the future of the Near East and form of the mandate. However, the fact that the institution prepared reports on the issue and tried to influence American foreign policy shows that the debate on the mandate was not limited to the individual level for NER administrators. A single mandate over the region could not only widen the United States' sphere of influence, but also NER's. In this way, the organization could maintain its existence not only among the Armenians but also throughout the Near East more broadly.

NER also tried to design a future economic order for Armenia to sustain its existence there, especially after the mandate offer was rejected by the senate on July 1, 1920. Although the organization planned industrial work within the scope of its developmental aid as a complement to and requirement for the continuity and growth of its humanitarian work, the aid program also had long-term aims related to the rehabilitation of the region's economy. From the beginning, these long-term aims were described as a part of the rehabilitation program that aimed to make people self-sufficient. In this way, NER would be able to end its expensive humanitarian aid program as soon as possible. However, in conjunction with NER's rising interest in the political future of the Near East, the organization began to see developmental aid as a means of its own survival there. To this end, NER began to take a close interest in designing a future economic order for the Near East or at least for Armenia, even though its borders were not yet clear. The problem again was that there was no local authority to debate the development program, meaning that there was no consent from Armenians regarding their own future.

88 Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy*, 123-25.

The organization's industrial and educational work, both of which were in scope of the developmental aid program, were strictly interrelated in a similar manner to the interrelation between its humanitarian and developmental aid programs.

The Near East Relief has been encouraging the commercial reconstruction of Armenia along with its program of feeding and clothing the refugees, by conducting industrial schools in the various orphanages where the refugees are taught a trade which will help them to earn a livelihood. Shoe-repairing, tailoring, carpentry, rug-making, textile weaving, and road-building are some of the things which are taught.⁸⁹

However, putting this approach into practice, which was key to long-term development, meant implementing American progressivism in region. This was because NER's developmental aid was predicated on practical education and artisanship. As critics asserted even before the Great War, American progressivism was not progressive in a general historical sense, quite the opposite.⁹⁰ As Sarah Miglio asserts that "NER's program to modernize the Armenians was essentially a project to 'Americanize' them, and a modernized, Americanized people would transform the Holy Land in the process."⁹¹

Obviously, at that time, the revival of commerce and agriculture were prerequisites for the implementation of any economic program. At the end of 1920, NER was propagandizing at home in this line: "Armenia is beginning to show some spark of life commercially without waiting for her political future to be determined."⁹²

If peace can but come permanently to the Near East, a thing which is the dream of every Armenian and the high hope of every Near East Relief worker, then that turbulent country may see a future of

89 "Textile Notes from the Near East," *The New Near East* 6, no. 1 (October 1920), 27.

90 Charles M Hollingsworth, "The So-Called Progressive Movement: Its Real Nature, Causes and Significance," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 43, no. 1 (September 1912): 33.

91 Miglio, "America's Sacred Duty," 12.

92 "Textile Notes from the Near East," *The New Near East* 6, no. 1 (October 1920), 27.

agricultural development such as it has never known before.... This land is to be cultivated by the boys in Near East orphanages. Their work beginning as soon as they reach a proper age for it... In modern methods lies the promise of the Near East of the future.⁹³

The educational work that had been designed together with NER's plan for the future of the region: that the children of Armenia "shall have such an education is of prime importance if the Armenia of tomorrow is to hold its place in the world at all."⁹⁴ Until the Bolshevik revolution in Armenia, NER strove to form a modern educational system on the basis of its experience in orphanages.⁹⁵

NER's program resembles American developmental aid programs in the post-World War II period when economic development had become the prime rationale for American aid programs.⁹⁶ However, in that period there was an intellectual aid critiques based on nationalist, socialist, and anti-Western currents that generally accepted the view that the effects of aid were negative.⁹⁷ But in the early 1920s, the greater part of the Near East was deprived of a stable state apparatus, and peoples were susceptible to such social engineering. NER exploited the gap in authority to further its own interests.

By 1924, NER's dream of designing the region ended as stable governments were put in place or were forming in the organization's areas of operation including Turkey, Greece, Armenia, Bulgaria, and Syria. Because the conflicts had ended, the American public opinion lost interest in the Near East, weakening NER's budget.⁹⁸ NER adapted to the new conditions and maintain its existence. Today, the organization, the name of which was changed in 1930

93 "Hope and the First Furrow," *The New Near East* 7, no. 2 (December 1921), 7.

94 "America Educating One Hundred Thousand Children in Armenia," *The New Near East* 6, no. 1 (October 1920), 9

95 "While There is Life," *The New Near East* 6, no. 2 (November 1920), 20.

96 In Samuel Huntington's words: "Indeed, 'aid' and 'development' came to be so closely linked as to be almost interchangeable." Huntington, "Foreign Aid" 24.

97 *Ibid.*, 41.

98 Limberg, "A Full Round of Life for All: Transforming Near East Relief into the Near East Foundation," 9.

to Near East Foundation, is still working as an aid agency especially in Africa and the Levant.⁹⁹ However, its importance never reached what it was in the period between the years 1915-1923. But its experiences inspired the formation of another influential American aid program in 1961: the Peace Corps.¹⁰⁰

In the end, what makes NER worth discussing in scope of the politics of aid was its systematic and successful aid programs. Paradoxically, the success of the program depended on its weaknesses from its beginning. The manipulative fundraising campaign at home provided NER with vast sums but damaged the organization's relationships with some other communities in the region. The lack of a control mechanism gave the organization room to maneuver but it made NER prioritize its own interests more than humanitarian principles. These symptoms led to the illnesses of over-professionalism and increasing attention on politics. Despite the fact that NER helped its aid recipients stay alive, it also harmed them.

99 See the organization's website: <http://www.neareast.org/>

100 Pauline Madow, "Origins and Objectives: Editor's Introduction," in *The Peace Corps* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1964), 10. For further information see the organization's website: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/>

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the vast resource transfer led by an American non-governmental aid agency - Near East Relief - to the Near East in relation to its aid campaign in the occupied Constantinople (1918-1923) within the context of the politics of aid. The basic questions on aid that are increasingly asked since the end of Second World War were a guide for this study. In this way, this thesis avoided both confining itself to simply making an inventory what the organization gave and approaching the subject as a passive or insignificant reflection of the international politics of the era. Rather, it approached the questions on aid with historical context to evaluate this resource transfer.

Chapter 3 highlighted what actually happened in the field. After explaining political, social, and economic conditions in the occupied city, it examined the aid initiatives of the Allies as well as NER's aid campaign there. NER distinguished itself from the unstable, diplomatically shaped Allied aid initiatives by operating a systematic aid campaign as had been planned by its administration. It helped thousands of residents and refugees survive.

In order to understand how NER professionally ran such a campaign, what were the effects of the campaign apart from keeping a number of people alive, and why the organization provided aid in the first place, one must consider both the historical and contemporary backgrounds formed the organization and its aid policies. Chapter 2 evaluated the formation of American aid

policies from its beginning in the nineteenth century to 1918 in order to provide a historical background. NER was the heir of the missionary organization ABCFM. It inherited not only a network of relations but also humanitarian and developmental aid methods developed and used by ABCFM as an auxiliary means of evangelization. In the face of the humanitarian crisis in 1915, NER was the only option to help Armenians. When the Great War ended, only NER had operational power and experience as well as a critical claim to be an independent, impartial, and voluntary aid agency that could administer an aid operation in the Near East.

Chapter 4 evaluated NER's aid policies by explaining how the organization decided who would receive aid, contemporary critiques of NER and its campaign, and political and social effects of the aid. It focused on NER's decision-making processes while taking the historical inheritance of the organization into consideration, contemporaneous international politics, and various circumstances in the field. Every decision that NER made changed the balance between humanitarianism and self-interest.

In order to acquire more financial resources to use in the field, NER carried out a manipulative fundraising campaign at home that exalted certain societies, mostly that of Armenian, while demonizing others. Having more resources made it possible to deliver more humanitarian aid, but it had two important negative effects vis-à-vis the balance of its humanitarianism. First, because aid work became a big business to be sustained, it led to over-professionalization of the aid agency. As a consequence, a number of ethical problems arose, including the exploitation of aid recipients (mostly those who had received most of the aid). This situation created concern over NER for its existence in the future. Second, the fundraising campaign came at the cost of deteriorating the NER's relations with Turks and Muslim communities. Thus, the organization's concern for future its own existence became dependent on the political future of Armenians. In this way, NER made a number of moves to influence the foreign policy of the United States and to design the economic future of a potential Armenia, but without the consent of Armenians.

However, the existence of these problems did not mean that NER was "an evil" organization "in essence." Actually, most of these problems originated from the lack of accountability in crisis zones. Wherever there was an able,

local regulatory and supervisory authority that could supervise the organization, a better situation appeared. For example, contemporary critiques of NER made by representatives of the Turkish national movement and the Armenian SSR were a cure for the illness of over-professionalization and helped redress the abovementioned balance in favor of humanitarianism.



Appendix A: Near East Relief (Weekly Newspaper)

AGA13260313001

Near East Relief

Edited by the Near East Relief for Private Circulation

Vol. III. No. 13

25 Rue Taxim, Pera, Constantinople.

April 2, 1921

THE FUTURE OF OUR ORPHANAGE WORK

We have now in our orphanages thousands of children whom the kind hearted American citizen has saved from starvation. For the saving and preservation of these lives there is need first of all of food, then of shelter, then of clothes and finally medical care in case of sickness. These were the elemental needs which were presented so graphically by the Near East Relief and which called out such a generous response in charity from the sympathetic people in America. The cry of the hungry child in rags, of the sick child without

is not a comfortable thought that they must be kept on existing in artificial environment for an indefinite period. And that generous American citizen will not continue to put his hand in his pocket to hand out money for food and clothes for a dependent who is always dependent. He wants to see the ship moored somewhere and these erstwhile starvation cases put ashore to take care of themselves.

To put it in another way, at the beginning we were most concerned with the taking on of orphans, and now we are most concerned in safely putting these same orphans off. First our chief business was to gather them into an artificial shelter, but now it is to replace them in a natural environ-



Lunch in the Near East Trachoma Orphanage where children with contagious eye diseases are treated.

shelter from the cold, went home to the heart of our American citizen and opened up his pocket book. This friendly American did not ask what was to become of the child later; it was hungry and he fed it, it was sick and he sent some one to minister to it. The appeal was strong and the response spontaneous.

Many children whom we cannot reach at present are still in need, and the present fighting may bring back desperate conditions, but for the children of our orphanages we have checked the flood tide of starvation, so to speak, and we have taken on board a lot of children, saved from the flood. The next question is where we are going to put them off. It

ment. We must continue to feed and clothe the children but there must be more than that—there must be a preparation for economic independence and moral safety.

The preparation for moral safety is not less a binding duty upon us than the preparation for economic independence. The great catastrophes which have come upon this region of the world during the past six years were not due to flood or drought, they are all traceable to the moral degeneracy of individuals. If the people who are to form the new generation are no better than their forebears, we will have signally failed in relief. Ideals of justice, of love, of service and sacrifice must be instilled into the minds and social

Appendix B: The New Near East (Monthly Magazine)

The NEW NEAR EAST
Published by the NEAR EAST RELIEF DECEMBER 1921 151 Fifth Avenue
NEW YORK, N.Y.

Christmas Day in Armenia



FORGOTTEN!

Digitized by Google Original from CORNELL UNIVERSITY


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Appendix C: Pamphlets

Vartan's Appeal




400,000
children starving
in Bible Lands

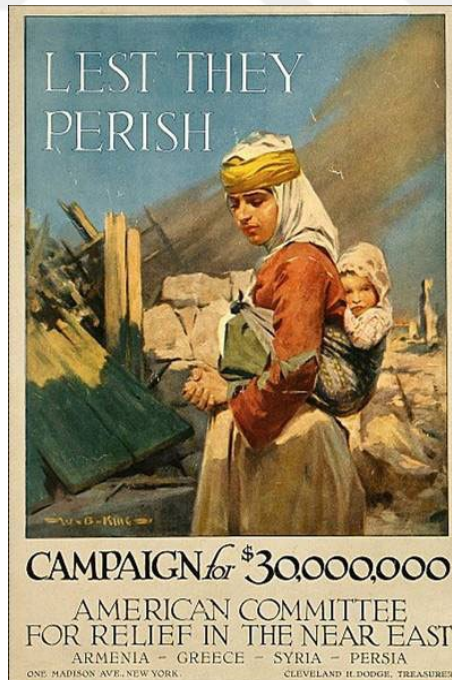
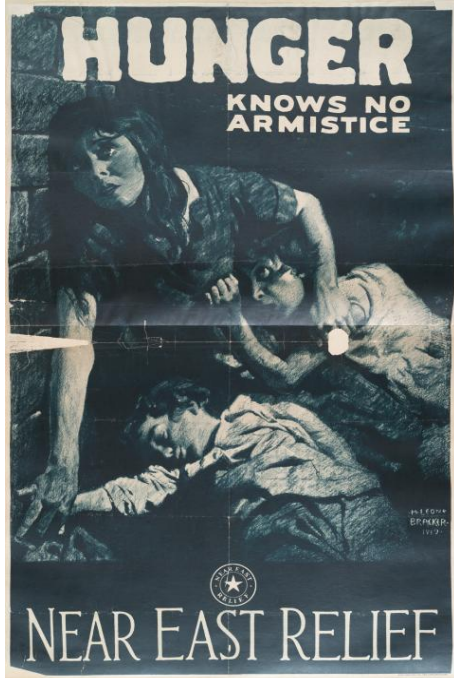


**Practicing Bible Precepts
in Bible Lands**

HANDBOOK FOR BUSY PASTORS
CAMPAIGN FOR \$30,000,000
January 12th to 19th, 1919



Appendix D: Fundraising Posters



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