

PUBLIC RELATIONS OF
THE COMMISSION
FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

DOCUMENTS

By

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Commission for Relief in Belgium

with the collaboration of

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IN TWO VOLUMES
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PREFACE

An official of the British Foreign Office once described the Commission for Relief in Belgium as a piratical state organized for benevolence. This description, however extravagant in certain particulars, has the virtue of suggesting the attributes of an organization without precedent in international relations. It is a fact that the Commission performed functions and enjoyed prerogatives which usually appertain to state rather than to private institutions. It had, for example, its own flag; it made contracts and informal treaties with belligerent governments; its ships were granted privileges accorded to no other flag; its representatives in regions of military occupation enjoyed powers and immunities of great significance. The Commission itself was neutral as between the opposing lines, but in the pursuit of its duties it waged frequent controversy with both belligerents, and it received aid and essential co-operation from both. Its contacts, however, were by no means

restricted to the European scene of war; they extended westward to North and South America, southward to the tip of Africa, and eastward to India and Australasia.

By virtue of these privileges, duties, and connections, the C.R.B. was in one sense an international public body under the patronage of diplomatic officers of the neutral states of the United States, Spain, and the Netherlands. Actually it was a private organization, without incorporation or well-defined legal status, to which the governments engaged in war on the western front entrusted responsibilities which no government or public body could discharge. The chairman of the Commission, Herbert Hoover, and those associated with him in its direction, were private citizens of the United States; they looked first to their countrymen for moral and material support; they received the valued counsel and co-operation of American diplomatic representatives in belligerent states; and the American people generally looked upon the C.R.B. as an American enterprise. The American Government, however, was in no sense responsible for the acts of the Commission, nor were the Spanish and Dutch Governments, nor the Governments of Belgium and France, of Great Britain and the British Dominions, whose citizens participated in varying degrees in the Commission's work.

Inversely the Commission was not exclusively accountable to any single government or state, but in a different measure to many of them. To the Western Allies it was accountable for the fulfillment of German guarantees respecting relief and for the protection and equitable use of imported and native supplies; to the Germans, for the exclusive employment for the benefit of Belgian and French civilians of its many special privileges. To the people of Belgium and Northern France, whom the fortunes of war had deprived of the protection of their Governments, the Commission was a volunteer champion striving with all its power and with the indispensable collaboration of the Belgian Comité National and the Comité Français to succor and defend them. To the Belgian, French, British, and later the United States Governments which furnished subventions for relief, and to the millions of individuals of all corners of the world who contributed money, goods, or services, the Commission was answerable for the honest and efficient use of the resources placed at its disposal--resources which in money and goods alone amounted to nearly a billion dollars, a sum about equivalent to the net debt of the United States in the years prior to the war.

This brief statement of responsibilities by no means covers the entire field of the Commission's obligations, but it indicates the complexity and variety of its public relations. Because of this complexity and because the primary purpose of this book is to present materials for the history of the C.R.B. and of Belgian and French relief, it has seemed advisable to arrange the documents in groups representing important phases of the undertaking rather than in straight chronological order. This arrangement makes cross references numerous and repetition inevitable, since certain events affected several phases of the Commission's activities and many

documents deal with more than one subject; but it has the advantage of permitting the documents to stand by themselves with a minimum of editorial comment. Moreover such comment as is made is not interpretative but supplementary and explanatory.

It would be very difficult to determine which of the Commission's many-sided activities was the most important. This has not been attempted, and the order in which the chapters are placed has no special significance. In general, however, the chapters of Volume I deal with activities which were begun in the early days of relief and carried on until the end of the war, while those of Volume II concern activities of later origin and briefer duration. Exceptions to this general statement are in the first volume, chapter I, "The Origin of the C.R.B.," which covers a period of only a few weeks, and in the second volume, chapter XV, "The Mobilization of Public Support," and chapter XVI, "The Care of the Destitute," which concern phases of the Commission's work important throughout its entire history. These two subjects, however, fall only partially within the scope of this work since they relate in a considerable measure to administrative matters. For this reason they are less fully presented than other aspects of relief of no greater importance. Chapter XIV, "Intergovernment Settlement of Relief Subsidies," deals with events subsequent to the Commission's liquidation, and the documents quoted are not from the C.R.B. archives but are extracts of international treaties and agreements regarding intergovernment debts. These agreements regulate, among larger items, the settlements of subsidies administered by the C.R.B., and the C.R.B., in the person of its chairman, participated in the settlements which involved United States loans. The final chapter, "German Guarantees and Declarations," is, so to speak, a recapitulation of the more important German pronouncements relating to relief.

It has not been possible, in the selection of these documents, to confine them strictly to the subject of public relations. Many of the papers relate in greater or less degree to problems of administration; but these incidental references do not, in any sense, cover the administrative and operative side of the Commission's activities. Because these matters are so important and because of the many references to them, a brief summary of the administrative structure of the C.R.B. has been added as an appendix to Volume II. Another appendix consists of a chronological list of the documents.

The editors desire to acknowledge their great indebtedness to the Directors and staff of the Hoover War Library in whose custody the archives of the Commission have been placed; to Miss Agnes W. Schultze, who has reorganized these archives and has given invaluable aid in searching for and verification of documents; to Mr. Perrin C. Galpin, Secretary of the C.R.B. Educational Foundation, who has been kind enough to read the entire proof and has made many valuable suggestions; to Messrs. Tracy B. Kittredge, Joseph C. Green, William A. Percy, and many other C.R.B. members who do not appear as authors of any of the documents here presented but whose studies of the Commission's work have been of great service;

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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF THE C. R. B.

At seven o'clock on the evening of the 2d August 1914 Herr von Below handed to M. Davignon, the Belgian Foreign Minister, the German ultimatum. This momentous document, drafted by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff a week before and carried to Brussels on the 29th July by a special messenger, declared that if Belgium observed a benevolent neutrality, making no opposition to the passing of German troops across her territory, her sovereign rights and independence would be guaranteed and she would be compensated for all damages suffered. If she resisted, she would be treated as an enemy. She had twelve hours to reply. There were no differences of opinion in the Belgian Cabinet which met at nine to consider the ultimatum. The Cabinet's answer delivered at seven the next morning declared that an acceptance of the German proposals would "sacrifice the honor of the nation and at the same time betray its duty toward Europe." Belgium was determined "to repel by all the means in its power every attack upon its rights." The expected German reply came early the following day (4th August). At Six A.M. von Below announced that Germany would act "by force of arms" and two hours later German cavalry crossed the frontier. By the evening of the 4th the heads of six German columns of all arms, the advance guard of a host of over half a million men, were two or three miles beyond the frontier. The occupation of Belgium had begun.

The heroic resistance of the garrison of Liège, the gallant conduct and skillful handling of the Belgian field army gained four priceless days for the French and British forces and compelled the Germans to use before Antwerp troops designated for the seizure of the channel ports and sorely needed later at the Marne. But Belgium was engulfed in the onrushing "gray-green tide." By the end of August all of Belgium except the region about Antwerp and a narrow strip of territory in East and West Flanders had been overrun by the invader. In the middle of October the Belgian troops retired from Antwerp and took up a position along the Nieuport-Dixmude-Ypres line which the Germans never penetrated. The Belgian Government, which previously had withdrawn from Brussels to Antwerp, established its headquarters at Havre where it remained until the liberation of Belgium four years later.

As the German armies swept across Belgium, devastation and panic filled the roads with refugees and threw the nation's highly organized economic life into tangled disorder. Communications between communes were broken, business activities were suspended, and ripe grain stood unharvested in the fields. Isolated communities began to feel the lack of the most elementary necessities, and larger towns were taxed to provide food and shelter for the homeless. To meet this situation the communal authorities, under special powers granted by royal decree, requisitioned food stocks, and volunteer committees were formed to house and feed refugees and give aid to the destitute. These efforts ameliorated much suffering, but

they were necessarily temporary expedients maintained with increasing difficulty as local resources disappeared.

1. Preliminaries of Organization. September 1914

Among these volunteer committees the Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation of Brussels was notable for the standing and influence of its members, and for the energy and resourcefulness with which it acted in the emergency. A meeting on the 1st September 1914, under the chairmanship of M. Emile Francqui, was a preliminary step in the organization of the Comité Central under the presidency of M. Solvay and under the patronage of the Ministers of the United States and of Spain, Mr. Brand Whitlock and the Marquis de Villalobar.⁽¹⁾ This committee promoted and coordinated the measures of relief in Brussels and its suburbs, but for the time being did not extend its activities into other parts of the country. By the latter part of September the Comité Central of Brussels and the volunteer committees in Liège, Charleroi, and Namur realized that famine was but a few weeks off. The normal food deficit of the country was greatly increased by requisition and destruction, and the volunteer committees had, therefore, to find ways of providing food not only for the destitute, but for the entire population of the towns. Since there was no hope of getting the needed supplies from German sources, the committees sent emissaries abroad to make known the desperate state of affairs in Belgium, to buy provisions, and to arrange for their shipment into the occupied territories. The representative of the Comité Central, Mr. Millard K. Shaler, an American engineer residing in Brussels, reached London on the 26th September after various adventures, including arrest by Germans at Liège and imprisonment for two days as a spy, despite his possession of a *Passierschein* furnished by the German authorities in Brussels. Shaler found that he could buy supplies, but when he attempted through the Belgian Legation to get an official permit to ship 2,500 tons of wheat, rice, beans, etc., to Brussels, he encountered difficulties. The British authorities feared that despite the written guarantee of the German command against requisition, these commodities might directly or indirectly benefit the army of occupation. Shaler described the situation to an American friend, Mr. Edgar Rickard, by whom he was taken to Mr. Herbert Hoover, who, with Rickard and Messrs. John Beaver White, Clarence Graff, Colonel Millard Hunsiker, and other Americans, was directing the American Relief Committee in London under the patronage of Ambassador Walter Hines Page. This Committee had about completed the repatriation of 100,000 Americans stranded in Europe at the outbreak of the war, and the members were themselves expecting to return home as soon as their services were no longer required in the repatriation of their fellow-citizens. Hoover was immediately impressed by the seriousness of the Belgian situation. He suggested that perhaps official objections could be met if these foodstuffs were consigned to the American Minister in Brussels and distributed under his guardianship. Hoover then took Shaler to Ambassador Page

who promptly agreed to use his good offices with the British Government in negotiation along this line.

On the 1st October Mr. Hugh Gibson, Secretary of the American Legation in Brussels, reached London joining Shaler in pressing his case through Belgian and American diplomatic channels;(2) five days later the British Government consented to the exportation on condition that the supplies be shipped by the American Ambassador in London to the American Minister in Brussels. On the same day Ambassador Page in consultation with Hoover drafted a message to the Department of State asking for authority to undertake the protection of the relief supplies required by the British Government as a condition of its export permit. During the two anxious weeks that passed before the Ambassador received this authorization from Washington,(3) the complexities and magnitude of the relief problem became disturbingly apparent. Hoover had expected that the completion of the negotiation for export permits would be the end of his connection with the enterprise; it was, on the contrary, the beginning. The arrangement with the British imposed on the overworked Ambassador new responsibilities which grew from day to day, and he promptly called on Hoover to arrange for the first shipments and to act for him in other matters pertaining to relief. Representatives of the Belgian cities of Charleroi and Liège had, in the meantime, come to London seeking aid, and on application to the British Government were referred to Ambassador Page and by him in turn to Hoover.

The course of events already described, the mounting evidence of the desperate straits of the Belgian people, and the clear indication of the need of neutral intervention persuaded members of the American Relief Committee to give their services in the interests of Belgian relief. Hoover suggested that efforts being made in America for refugees be directed to relief in Belgium, and at a conference on the 12th October it was agreed that an American Committee should be formed under diplomatic patronage to centralize American efforts and to carry out the conditions imposed by the belligerents on the relief work. Immediately this decision was taken, Hoover sent out an appeal to America through the press on the 13th,(4) and sent a message to Minister Whitlock requesting him to reinforce his appeal by a direct statement of the situation to President Wilson.

Minister Whitlock's appeal to President Wilson(5) came through the American Embassy on the 16th October. Two days later M. Francqui and Baron Lambert of the Brussels Comité Central, accompanied by Gibson, who had meantime returned to Brussels, reached London, and engaged in a series of conferences with Page and Hoover at the American Embassy. In the course of these conferences Hoover prepared a memorandum for Ambassador Page(6) suggesting a method of procedure and a form of organization, and proposing that relief should be undertaken not for Brussels alone but for the whole of the occupied territory. He recommended the erection of an organization under American leadership with Belgian participation in order to protect the Belgians from interference and to

secure the co-ordination of the efforts of the Belgians themselves. This memorandum proved with experience of actual administration to be the real "constitution" of the organization. He also proposed that the local assurance given by the German authorities to Whitlock on the 17th September should be extended to the whole population of Belgium,(7) and that direct guarantees should be obtained from the German and British Governments, since the work of the Commission could not rest upon the assurance of military officers. In line with these recommendations the Commission for Relief in Belgium was organized formally at a meeting on the 22d October.(8) Upon the return of Francqui and Lambert to Brussels, the Comité Central (early in November) constituted itself the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, making the necessary changes in its organization to conform to its new character and responsibilities.

2. The Diplomatic Background. September-October 1914:

DOCUMENT NO. 1

Letter,
GOVERNOR-GENERAL VON DER GOLTZ TO MINISTER WHITLOCK,
agreeing that his Government will not requisition supplies destined for the civil population

BRUSSELS, 17 September 1914

To the Minister of the United States of America
Mr. Brand Whitlock, Brussels

In reply to the communication which Your Excellency in behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium addressed to the Head of the Imperial Administration, I have the honor to confirm to you:

1. That the Imperial Government agrees not to levy any impost for the needs of the German Army, nor to requisition the shipments of wheat and flour destined for the alimentation of the Belgian civil population.
2. That, if contraband of war should be found in a shipment, the entire shipment would be confiscated to the profit of the Imperial Government.
3. That the civil administration of the Imperial Government reserves to itself alone the right of decision as to the distribution of the wheat and flour in the different portions of the occupied territory, according to local needs, and to supervise this distribution.

I should be glad to receive new communications from Your Excellency on this subject.

THE IMPERIAL GOVERNOR-GENERAL
(Signed) VON DER GOLTZ, *Field Marshal*

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 2

Memorandum,
HUGH GIBSON TO THE BELGIAN MINISTER IN LONDON,
asking the Minister to intervene to secure export permits for relief supplies to
Belgium

LONDON, 1 October 1914

With a view to preventing a shortage of provisions in Belgium and consequent suffering of the civil population, a committee has been organized in Brussels under the name of Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation, under the patronage of the Spanish and American Ministers. The Committee is composed of prominent Belgians and has raised considerable funds to buy foodstuffs.

The German military authorities have given assurances in writing that any food supplies purchased by the committee will not be requisitioned for the troops, but will be reserved for the feeding of the civil population. The original letters on the subject from General von Lüttwitz are attached hereto, as well as a form to be signed by the General and fastened to each car transporting the provisions, stating their character and their exemption from requisition.

Mr. Millard K. Shaler, an American citizen, has volunteered to come to England to purchase supplies and ship them to Brussels. The supplies have been purchased and all that is now required is a permit from the British Government allowing the exportation of these food supplies and the sacks containing them from England to the Continent.

The food supply in Brussels is getting very low. There is practically no more flour nor salt and there is great scarcity of other supplies. It is to be hoped that the permit for exporting the supplies purchased by the Brussels Committee will be granted immediately in order that Mr. Shaler may get them to Brussels without delay. It is felt in Belgium that anything approaching a famine will lead to grave disorders the consequences of which cannot now be foreseen.

Mr. Shaler is well known to the Legation at Brussels and is vouched for in every respect.

DOCUMENT NO. 3

Telegram,
GIBSON TO AMERICAN CONSUL GENERAL AT ANTWERP,
requesting the Belgian Foreign Minister to instruct his representative in London to support the relief enterprise

LONDON, 1 October 1914

AMERICAN CONSUL GENERAL, ANTWERP

Gibson, Secretary of Legation, sends you following message. Quote. Millard K. Shaler sent here by Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation to buy food supplies for the civil population of Brussels. Supplies are bought and will be shipped as soon as permit can be secured from British Government to export them via Holland. Written assurances have been given by German military authorities that these supplies will not be requisitioned for the military forces, but will be used exclusively for the civil population. Please see the Minister for Foreign Affairs and ask that instructions be sent Belgian Minister here to take matter up immediately with British Foreign Office. Food supplies in Brussels are practically exhausted and immediate action is imperative. End quote. Please telegraph reply.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

DOCUMENT NO. 4

Telegram,
AMBASSADOR PAGE TO SECRETARY BRYAN,
asking authorization to ship relief supplies to the American Minister in Belgium in accordance with the conditions imposed by the British Government on the export of relief purchases

LONDON, 6 October 1914

SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

783. A Belgian Committee has been formed at Brussels under the patronage of the American and Spanish Ministers there for the purpose of importing foodstuffs for the poor of Brussels who I am informed are faced with famine. The German

authorities in occupation have consented and the Belgian Minister here informs me that under instructions from his Government he has obtained permission of the British authorities for the export of supplies, on condition that they be despatched by this Embassy and consigned to our Legation at Brussels. If you authorize me to take this step I believe it would be well to obtain a definite assurance from the German Government of their approval of this humanitarian project, the execution of which is in charge of an American citizen Millard King Shaler, who is now in London purchasing supplies and is strongly vouched for by Mr. Whitlock.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

DOCUMENT NO. 5

Extract from letter,
EDGAR RICKARD TO HERBERT HOOVER,
describing the activities of the American Relief Committee in the summer of 1914 and relating the manner in which this committee became interested in the Belgian problem

LONDON, 10 May 1916

.... To give a few more particulars: the American Relief Committee, under the financial patronage of the American Government, the sponsorship of the American Ambassadors, and the chairmanship of yourself, was instituted at the outbreak of the war to undertake, in the first instance, the relief of American refugees in Europe. This service was practically completed by the end of September 1914. At this time Mr. Millard Shaler came to London representing the Comité Central of Brussels. He made application to the British Government, through the Belgian Minister, for permission to ship some foodstuffs to the city of Brussels. He had little success until upon my introduction of him to you and from you to Ambassador Page the idea was advanced by you of shipment under the guardianship of the American officials. As a result of Mr. Page's intervention the British Foreign Office replied to the request of the Belgian Minister on the 6th October that authorization could only be given if the American Ambassador would undertake to ship the goods to the American Minister in Brussels, to be distributed by Americans under his responsibility. At the same time representatives of other committees in Belgium⁽⁹⁾ came to London seeking foodstuffs and the representatives of the Belgian Refugees' Committee appealed to the American Relief Committee and to the American people for help. In consequence of all these points of impact, the American Ambassador called upon you as chairman of the American Relief Committee to organize the whole business on his behalf. As a result it was agreed among the principal representatives of the American Relief Committee that the Committee should take up the Belgian problem, and at our

suggestion the American Ambassador on October 6th cabled to Washington asking the Government's approval of intervention on behalf of the Committee in Belgian matters and suggesting that the assent of the German Government should be obtained direct, as we had no confidence in local military guarantees. On October 21st this approval was received from the American Government after they had consulted and had assurances from the German Government in Berlin, through Ambassador Gerard.

Meantime, in the confidence that this assent would be obtained, you formulated an appeal to the American people recommending that they should devote their interest in Belgian refugees and in other Belgian funds to the exclusive support of the Belgian Relief Committee for use in the occupied area. This appeal was sent out with the approval of the American Ambassador on October 13th and you instituted proposals for co-operating with several other Belgian committees. As a reinforcement to your appeal you asked Mr. Whitlock to send a message, and on October 16th an appeal came through Mr. Page's hands from Mr. Brand Whitlock, addressed to the President of the United States, and at the same time advice came from Brussels that a delegation of prominent Belgians representing the Brussels Comité Central were coming to London to further Mr. Shaler's efforts on behalf of that city. Messrs. Francqui and Lambert arrived in London on October 18th and a meeting was brought about at the American Ambassador's of the parties interested; and as a result of the conference extending over two days, it was determined that relief would have to be undertaken of the whole occupied area and not of Brussels alone and that in order to effect this it was desirable to create in Belgium a general organization embodying the whole Belgian community and to maintain it as a separate entity of the neutral commission. There were many important reasons for this decision, and the subsequent ability of the relief organization to withstand shocks has been largely due to this separation.

DOCUMENT NO. 6

Statement ,(10)
TO THE AMERICAN PRESS,
urging immediate action for the rescue the Belgian people

LONDON, 13 October 1914

Three weeks ago I left Brussels with a credit of \$100,000 for the purpose of purchasing foodstuffs for needy Brussels. The situation was then serious. It has since then grown positively desperate. Immediately after my arrival in London I arranged for the purchase and transport of provisions, but I am still awaiting authorization to make shipments.

The British Government will permit exportation to Holland, and the Dutch Government in turn has promised to permit exportation to Brussels, but we are held up by lack of authorization from Washington to make shipments in the name of the American Ambassador here to the American Minister at Brussels, this being required by the British Government, which desires a guarantee that the food will not be diverted to German military uses.

I hold a written guarantee from the German General commanding at Brussels that no seizure will be made, but that the food will be devoted entirely to the civil population of Brussels.

Nearly a week ago the Embassy here presented the matter to the State Department, which thus far has been unable to furnish a definite answer about permitting shipments to be made through American channels.

It has been reported that Washington awaits an answer from Germany, to whom the matter was referred.

Either the State Department should take action on its own initiative or should insist on Germany giving a speedy, definite answer. It is no exaggeration to say that thousands of lives actually depend on immediate action. I have personally received and have seen reports received by others that the situation in Brussels regarding food is positively dangerous.

It is not only a matter of feeding a certain number of hungry people running into scores of thousands, but it is also a question of keeping the population from consequences which usually accompany starvation, for it is quite possible that the hunger-mad people will commit some overt act which will cause the German authorities to take severe action.

Since the German occupation it has been the constant endeavor of the civil officials and also of Minister Whitlock to keep the populace quiet. Thus far they have been successful, but if the food supply ceases it is probable that wise counsels will be unavailing.

Fully 200,000 persons were receiving rations three weeks ago; the number is far greater now. Normally Brussels uses 300 tons of cereals daily. Importations have now virtually ceased and the stocks are practically used up.

I have authority to ship fifteen hundred tons, but there is no way of getting the food there until the diplomatic red tape is cut.

The American Government should, from reasons of pure humanity, insist that Germany take favorable action, or make shipments through American diplomats, whether Germany agrees or not. I am certain that Germany will agree if pressed, for

the local military commanders have already guaranteed the immunity of the food from seizure.

DOCUMENT NO. 7

Letter,
VON DER GOLTZ TO COMITÉ CENTRAL,
stating the German approval of their undertaking and guaranteeing the relief supplies from requisition

BRUSSELS, 16 October 1914

In answer to your courteous letter of today I have the honor to reply with all respect that I welcome with lively satisfaction the undertaking of the Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation and do not hesitate formally and distinctly to give assurances that foodstuffs of all kinds imported by the Committee under Your Excellency's patronage for the provisioning of the civil populace of Belgium shall be kept exclusively for the use of the Belgian populace; that these foodstuffs shall hereafter be exempt from requisition by the military authorities; and, finally, that they shall remain entirely at the disposal of the Committee.

(Signed) BARON VON DER GOLTZ
Field Marshal

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 8

Telegram,
WHITLOCK TO BRYAN,
explaining the relief organization and requesting official approval

AMERICAN LEGATION, BRUSSELS,
16 October 1914

TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

As I have already reported to the Department, a committee of notable citizens of Brussels was appointed several weeks ago under the patronage of the Spanish Minister and myself to give food to the poor of this city. This work, which had the approval of the Belgian Government and of the German military authorities, has been carried on with excellent results. But now a grave situation confronts the land. In normal times Belgium produces only one-sixth of the foodstuffs she consumes. Within two weeks there will be no more food in Belgium. Winter is coming on and

there are thousands who are without home and without hope; therefore it is necessary to extend this relief work to the whole of Belgium. My Spanish colleague and I have been requested by the local Belgian authorities and by the German military authorities to permit the organization, under our patronage, of a committee that will undertake to revictual all of Belgium, and we have secured from the German military authorities formal official assurance that all foodstuffs shipped into Belgium in the care of the committee and intended for the feeding of the impoverished civil population will be respected by the soldiery and not made the object of military requisition. It is now necessary to obtain permission from the English Government that foodstuffs may be shipped into Belgium. In view of this fact Gibson goes to London tomorrow with messages from the Spanish Minister and me to the respective ambassadors of our countries to lay the subject before them. Baron Lambert and M. Francqui, representing the Belgian Relief Committee, will accompany him to acquaint the Belgian Minister in London with the situation and ask him to present the matter to the British Government. Our hope is that the Belgian Minister can arrange, and if there be no impropriety in their so doing, that the American and Spanish Ambassadors may assist him in arranging for the passage of the provisions which the Committee is ready to buy.

I trust the Department will approve this course and further it by instructions to London. It is not money but food that is needed. If some appropriate means can be found to call the attention of our generous people at home to the plight of the poor in Belgium, I am sure that they will send succor and relief for the winter that is drawing near. It seems to me to be a work of mercy that will touch the hearts of those who are brought to understand it and give our people in America an opportunity to serve nobly in a high cause.

WHITLOCK

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DOCUMENT NO. 9

Telegram,
WHITLOCK TO PRESIDENT WILSON, urging American support of Belgian relief

AMERICAN LEGATION, BRUSSELS
16 October 1914

To American Ambassador, Berlin
Please forward to Washington

THE PRESIDENT, WASHINGTON

In two weeks the civil population of Belgium, already in misery, will face starvation. In view of this fact, and at the request of the Relief Committee, I venture to call your attention to my telegram to the Department dated 16 October in the conviction that your great heart will find some way by which America may help to provide food for these hungry ones in the dark days of the terrible winter that is coming on.

WHITLOCK, *American Minister*

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DOCUMENT NO. 10

"Note Verbale,"
GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMBASSADOR GERARD, stating the
German Government's approval of Belgian relief

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
16 October 1914

To the Ambassador of the United States of America, Berlin

In reply to your verbal note of the ninth of October, F.O. No. 759, the Foreign Office has the honor to inform you that the furnishing of foodstuffs for the poor of Belgium has the approval of the German Government.

[Translation]

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DOCUMENT NO. 11

Telegram,
LANSING TO PAGE FOR WHITLOCK, giving official approval to their actions
in connection with relief of Belgium

WASHINGTON, 20 October 1914

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

359. Twentieth. For American Minister, Brussels, as Number 40. Twentieth. Your telegram October sixteenth, ten A.M., transmitted via London, regarding relief of Belgium. Department approves your action and has given instructions to the Ambassador at London to render you and your Spanish colleague every assistance.

LANSING
Acting Secretary of State

[Telegram received 21st October 1914]

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DOCUMENT NO. 12

Letter,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO PAGE, confirming that British Government are not stopping food supplies going to Rotterdam for civil population of Belgium

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
20 October 1914

My DEAR MR. PAGE:

Since our conversation this afternoon Sir Edward Grey has written to Baron Lambert telling him that we are not stopping any food supplies going to Rotterdam--from neutral countries in neutral ships---which we are satisfied are not for the use of the German Government or Army, and that we shall not therefore interfere with the food supplies for the civil population of Belgium unless we have reason to suppose that the assurance given by Marshal von der Goltz to the American and Spanish Ministers is not being carried out.

Baron Lambert thought that Rotterdam would be the most convenient port.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) A. NICOLSON

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3. Progress in Relief Organization. October-November 1914

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DOCUMENT NO. 13

Memorandum,
HOOVER TO PAGE, analyzing the problem of Belgian relief

LONDON, 20 October 1914

FOR AMBASSADOR PAGE

1.---It appears from our discussions that the problem in Belgium falls under the following heads:

(A) That the whole population of Belgium is normally dependent on imports for from 75 per cent to 80 per cent of its breadstuffs and for large proportions of other commodities, while the destruction and requisition of the last harvest by the army has rendered the situation even more acute.

(B) A considerable proportion of the population have resources with which to pay for their food, if some economic rehabilitation can be effected.

(C) That through the entire stagnation of industry, the stoppage of communications and the moratorium, there has been an enormous augmentation in unemployment, which, together with the displacement of the people, has produced unparalleled destitution, with the result that a large section of the population is unable to procure food and clothing without charitable help, even if such food exists in the country.

2.---The present position of attempts to ameliorate this situation is as follows:

(A) There have sprung up in Belgium a number of committees in various centers, engaged in local relief work, each one acting independently and in competition, mostly intent on solution of local cases, regardless of the whole problem.

(B) Some of these committees, including the Brussels Committee, have obtained undertakings from the German military authorities that they will not requisition food supplies imported for the service of these committees.

(C) Of the various committees which have sent representatives to England, the Brussels Committee has secured a permit to export 2,500 tons of foodstuffs from England.

(D) There are in the United States, the British Empire, and in various parts of the world a number of committees which have sprung up, interested in Belgian relief.

3.---The organization and solution of this problem necessitates:

(A) The expansion of undertakings by the military authorities not to requisition foodstuffs imported for any portion of Belgium and further to cease the requisition of native foodstuffs.

(B) The permit of the English authorities, conditional on importing foodstuffs in neutral ships from neutral ports, needs extension, so as to include the use of English ships.

(C) In order to provide for the proper distribution of foodstuffs and relief there must be a consolidation of organization in Belgium on national lines with sub-

committees in the provinces and communes, under strong centralized control. The Brussels Committee embraces the strongest financial and administrative element in the country, and had already on the 15th inst. considered the question of expansion to the leadership in the creation of this national organization. To assist in the extension of an organization, and to provide an element of cohesion, additional American membership to that of Messrs. Heineman, Hulse, and Gibson must be recruited at once.

(D) In order to provide for the purchase and shipment of foodstuffs abroad, for the mobilization of charity throughout the world, and for the guardianship of the supplies in Belgium and the supply of American members to Belgian committees, an American Committee will be set up under the patronage of the American Ambassadors and Ministers, with a head office in London and branches in New York, Rotterdam, and elsewhere, as may become necessary.

(E) These two organizations, to co-operate intimately in the solution of the financial and charitable and administrative problems, should interlock by membership and support. Furthermore, it is impossible to handle the situation except with the strongest centralization and effective monopoly, and therefore the two organizations will refuse to recognize any element except themselves alone.

4.---It is absolutely necessary, in order to solve the financial situation outside of charity, to obtain from the belligerent governments permits for exchange transactions in and out of Belgium, and that in the first instance the organization should obtain possession of Belgian bank balances abroad, making counter-payments to the Belgian owners, from the sale of foodstuffs in Belgium, thus avoiding the actual transfer of money over the frontier. Furthermore, the organizations will require a large amount of working capital with which to buy foodstuff and put it in transit, and therefore an endeavor should be made to effect a loan in England, guaranteed by the Belgian banks, for this purpose.

In the matter of the care of the destitute, we have in hand £100,000 contributed by the Belgian Relief Fund at Le Havre, and have an assurance of a contribution of £100,000 from the British Government. These sums, however, will be wholly inadequate, and as the flow of public charity, no matter how great, will be irregular and of uncertain quantity, it is absolutely necessary to secure positive subventions from the Allied Governments in some form or other.

5.---The English Government has already given Mr. Shaler permission to purchase and export a small amount of foodstuffs to the city of Brussels. As this permission was for a very small quantity, it would be insufficient for the entire situation until we could get imports from overseas, and therefore we must seek further permits for emergency purposes.

6.---The present small permits for Brussels, granted by the British Government, stipulate that the food shall be shipped through the American Ambassador in London to the American Minister in Brussels. Such an arrangement is impracticable for the provision of the entire country, and it is therefore necessary to seek an arrangement with the Allied Governments whereby this guarantee can be carried out by the American Committee and its delegates in various centers in substitution of the Minister.

7.---It appears that there was a great deal of antagonism on the Part of the Allies to the introduction of foodstuffs into Belgium, as in their view it was the duty of the occupying army to feed the civil Population. On the other hand, it was certain that the occupying army would do nothing of the kind and that in order to maintain open a gateway into Belgium and at the same time protect the native food supply from further absorption by the occupying army, it would be necessary to create the widest possible feeling, both in the belligerent and in neutral countries, as to the rights of the Belgian population in this unparalleled case of an entire country, under practical siege, which was dependent normally upon importation for its food supply, that, therefore, one of the first duties of the American organization would be to create such public opinion as widely as possible, through the Press.

8.---As it is yet uncertain what absolute minimum monthly importation of food supplies would maintain the population alive, this matter must be investigated and reported upon at once.

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 14

Telegram,
HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, describing the proposed organization and asking
Whitlock's views

LONDON, 20 October 1914

AMERICAN LEGATION, BRUSSELS

As result of conference here between myself representing Americans in Brussels, Messrs. Baron Lambert and Francqui representing Comité together with Mr. Page we suggest that a purely American relief committee for Belgium be set up comprising Mr. Whitlock and Mr. Page and leading Americans in Brussels and London which committee would undertake systematic work of facilitating import of supplies under American Government Protection and especially to undertake proper and systematic expenditure of funds for Belgian relief now being raised in

America. Such committee being properly recognized by the various governments concerned would put matters on permanent systematic neutral basis. Would be glad if Mr. Whitlock would communicate his views to Mr. Page.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 15

Memorandum

Minutes of a meeting held at No. 1 London Wall Buildings, London, when the C.R.B. was organized

LONDON, 22 October 1914

PRESENT:

Messrs. H. C. Hoover
Millard Hunsiker
John B. White
Clarence Graff
Edgar Rickard
Hugh S. Gibson
Millard Shaler
Captain J. F. Lucey

Mr. Hoover stated that the American Ambassador has asked him to set up an organization to carry into execution the engagements undertaken by the American Ambassadors in London and Brussels with regard to the importation of foodstuffs and relief generally for Belgium.

It was resolved:

1. That this body should constitute itself: "The American Commission for Relief in Belgium."
2. That the American Ambassadors in England, Belgium, and Holland should be Honorary Chairmen.
3. That Herbert Hoover should be Chairman.
4. That Daniel Heineman should be Vice-Chairman.
5. That Clarence Graff should be Treasurer.

6. That Millard Shaler and W. Hulse should be Honorary Secretaries.
7. That Mr. John B. White should take charge of the purchase and transportation of foodstuffs in England, Mr. Edgar Rickard should take charge of publicity, and Captain Lucey take charge of the Rotterdam office.
8. It was resolved that the members of the Committee should comprise the American Consuls in Rotterdam, Ghent, Brussels, Liège, Ostend, and London, and that offices should be opened in each of these Consulates for the Commission.
9. The Chairman reported that arrangements had been made for complete co-operation with the Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation Belge; that Messrs. Heineman and Hulse were already members of this Committee, and that it was the purpose of the American Commission to purchase and forward food supplies under their guardianship to the various branches of the Belgian Committee, and that the Belgian Committee has already placed at its disposal £120,000, and that foodstuffs had been purchased and charters entered into for its transport to Rotterdam.
10. A telegram was drafted to Mr. Thomas J. Ryan of New York and ordered to be dispatched.
11. The Chairman was requested to formulate a letter to the American Ambassador as to the organization of the Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 16

Statement, [\(11\)](#)

HOOVER TO THE AMERICAN PRESS, describing the organization of the C.R.B., its co-operation with the Belgian committee, and the immediate need of emergency relief

LONDON, 22 October 1914

At a meeting at the American Embassy today of all who are concerned in Belgian relief, including Emile Francqui and Baron Lambert of the Belgian committee, [\(12\)](#) the organization of the American commission was completed. In addition to Ambassador Page and the American Ambassadors at Brussels and The Hague the Spanish Ambassadors at Brussels and London joined the commission as honorary chairmen.

The commission consists of Herbert C. Hoover, who was head of the American refugees' committee in London, chairman; Daniel Heineman of Brussels, vice-chairman; Mr. Graff of the American relief committee, treasurer; Millard K. Shaler, who came to London as representative of Minister Brand Whitlock, and Mr. Hulse

of Brussels, secretaries. J. B. White is to have charge of the purchase and exportation of foodstuffs. Captain Lucey will have charge of the Rotterdam office.

Other members of the committee are Messrs. Hunsiker [of London] and Gibson of the American Legation at Brussels, Mr. Rickard, and the American Consuls at London, Antwerp, Brussels, Ostend, Liège, and Ghent. The commission will have an office in each of these cities, as it is intended to assist in provisioning all Belgium. It will co-operate fully with the Belgian committee.

Food to the value of \$250,000 already has been bought in the name of Ambassador Page and Minister Whitlock, and arrangements have been made to begin its distribution to the local Belgian branches on October 26. The commission has received considerable sums in addition to the various Belgian funds.

Operations in the market today revealed that owing to Great Britain's demands the food stocks here may not be depleted. Because of the restrictions on the exportation of food it is extremely difficult to find even emergency provisions here, and supplies from America are even more imperatively needed than was originally expected. The difficulties become more embarrassing in view of the insistent requests received by the commission today for the expeditious despatch of the supplies already obtained.

The supplies available at the relief stations in Brussels Monday were believed to be sufficient to last until Saturday, and these were available only because a certain quantity of wheat was received from Antwerp. That source is now exhausted. The commission learns that the food supply at Charleroi is exhausted and that the people are subsisting entirely on potato soup.

A representative of the relief committee at Liège arrived here today to make representations of the urgency there in consequence of the non-arrival of supplies. It is obvious that with the scarcity of foodstuffs in Holland it is impossible to get supplies on that side for more than emergency service. A stream of supplies must be started from America if the Belgians are to be saved from famine.

The commission emphasizes that it is essential that supplies be sent by neutral ships, arrangements having been made with Great Britain that such shipments will not be interfered with in entering the ports designated by the commission. Germany has given ample assurance to the American Legation at Brussels that the importation and distribution of food to the civilians in Belgium will not be interrupted.

[Fig. 1. Letter, 25 February 1916, Ambassador Page to Hoover.](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 17

Telegram,
WHITLOCK TO PAGE, approving the organization and suggesting the inclusion of the Spanish Minister at Brussels in the membership

BRUSSELS, 25 October 1914

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

October twenty-fifth. I am quite in accord with the proposal contained in Mr. Hoover's telegram October twentieth to organize an American relief committee to supply food to the civil population in Belgium. The name of the Spanish Minister here however should not be omitted from the organization. He has worked earnestly and efficiently and because of our friendship it would be embarrassing to me if he were to be made to suffer in his feelings by anything that might be interpreted as a slight. Thank you all for your cordial sympathetic and intelligent assistance.

WHITLOCK, *American Minister*

DOCUMENT NO. 18

Letter,
PAGE TO WALTER RUNCIMAN, introducing Hoover as acting under his direction in relief matters

LONDON, 26 October 1914

The Rt. Hon. Walter Runciman, M.P.
Board of Trade

DEAR MR. RUNCIMAN:

In a conversation I had today with Sir E. Grey regarding relief supplies for Belgium he consented to my communicating with you direct on the subject. I accordingly venture to do so and ask permission to introduce to you Mr. H. C. Hoover of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, who is acting under my direction.

I understand that Mr. Hoover has today made application to the Board of Trade for permits for the exportation of supplies to Belgium* and I should be greatly obliged if their issue could be expedited.

Believe me, dear Mr. Runciman,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) WALTER HINES PAGE

*Only the £30,000 worth that you kindly consent shall be allowed to go.

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DOCUMENT NO. 19

Telegram,

PAGE TO SECRETARY OF STATE, on formation of the Commission and advising that American committees should confer with Hoover

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON

26 October 1914

THE SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

The Commission of Belgian Relief working under diplomatic guidance of Spanish Ambassador here and myself has written assurance of the German military commander of Belgian territory held by the Germans that food sent them by this Commission will not be confiscated. So far as I know this assurance has not been given to any one else who may send food. No food can be exported from England or Holland, but the Netherlands Government has given this Commission permission to distribute food landed at Rotterdam through our agents to people in Belgian territory. Since food cannot be bought on this side the world, American committees should not send money but should confer with Hoover, Chairman of this Commission, care of this Embassy, regarding what kind of food to send and how to ship it. Commission has agents in every neighborhood in Belgium. It has in fact taken charge of practically all grocery stores. Money sent will be of no use. Food sent except through Commission may never reach Belgium or be confiscated.

PAGE

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DOCUMENT NO. 20

Letter,

HOOVER TO THE DIPLOMATIC PATRONS OF THE C.R.B., reporting on the progress made during the first week of the C.R.B.'s existence

LONDON, 3 November 1914

To Their Excellencies:

THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR IN LONDON
THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN LONDON
THE AMERICAN MINISTER, BRUSSELS
THE SPANISH MINISTER, BRUSSELS
THE AMERICAN MINISTER, THE HAGUE

Honorary Chairmen, The Commission for Relief in Belgium

Your Excellencies:

This Commission, appointed by your good selves has on the 31st ultimo, completed its first week of organized effort and we therefore take this occasion to report to you the results so far attained and to set out the pressing necessities in this work.

We have now been, as you are aware, advised by our members in Belgium, who are co-operating with the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, which has branches all over the country, that to all intents and purposes the food supply of Belgium is exhausted and that the problem now confronting us is of wider import than was originally expected, as it now amounts to the provisioning of the whole nation, rich as well as poor. They estimate that the absolute minimum of foodstuffs which will be required as from the 1st of November is 80,000 tons of cereals per month together with some amount of bacon or lard, this being calculated upon the provision of a ration per them of 10 oz. per capitum, or considerably less than one-half of a soldier's ration. This, as we informed you, is in contrast to the normal imports and products of Belgium of something over 250,000 tons of cereals per month.

We are also informed that the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation have, in co-operation with the various local authorities in Belgium, arranged to take possession of all private stores of foodstuffs in excess of three months' requirements in the hands of any one individual. There are probably not many of such stores, however, but the Comité wishes to be in a position to equitably distribute whatever there may be over the entire population.

We are able to furnish your good selves with a large amount of data as to the position of various communities in Belgium some of whose foodstuffs have already been exhausted for some days. We are however assuming that there will be secured a certain amount of supplementary food from these sources which will assist in getting over the temporary emergency until the provisioning efforts as a whole can be put on a more definite footing than at present, and the problem is so large that we are compelled in any event to risk this. We are therefore assuming that if we can deliver 40,000 tons during the month of November the situation could probably be kept going and violence can probably be prevented. We are convinced, however,

that we must be prepared to deliver 80,000 tons monthly from the 1st December and that this will have to be maintained until the next harvest. The cost of this supply will be somewhere about £800,000 to £1,000,000 per month and while a great number of people in Belgium are believed to be able to pay for the food delivered we have yet to devise some method by which a country devoid of credit documents can translate some form of obligation into the purchase of goods. In any event it is not likely that more than one-half of the total sum involved can be paid in this form, even if we can find a method.

The positive food which we now have in sight under various arrangements which we have made is as follows:

Origin	Ships	Tons	Anticipated Arrival in Belgium	Approximate Cost to This Commission Delivered in Belgium
Bought in London	"Koblentz" "Iris" "Jan Blocks"	4,200	Nov. 3-7th	£50,000
Bought in London	Not yet secured	4,500	Nov. 12th	53,000
Rockefeller Foundation gift	"Massapequa"	4,000	Nov. 20th	4,000
Bought in New York	"Terschelling"	4,000	Nov. 24th	55,000
Novia Scotia gift	"Tremorvah"	2,100	Nov. 18th	2,000
Joint purchase with DeForest Committee	Unknown	4,000	Nov. 25th	35,000
Totals for November		22,800		£199,000
San Francisco ship		4,000	Dec. 25th	£ 10,000
Chicago ship		4,000	Dec. 15th	10,000

<i>Northwestern Miller ship</i>		4,000	Dec. 30th	10,000
Probable for December		12,000		£30,000
Possible Australian meat ships		?		

The total funds which we have available are as follows:

In hand

Contribution from the Comité National	£ 20,000
Contribution through His Excellency Count de Lalaing	100,000
	£120,000

Promised

Subsidy from British Government	100,000
Total	£220,000

You will see therefore that we have more than consumed our entire resources in the provision of the above and yet we show a deficiency of 17,200 tons for November delivery and 68,000 tons for December delivery. It has now become necessary and positively critical for us to have some sort of definite financial backing.

It appears to us that this emergency of provisioning a whole nation is of such an order that we cannot depend upon the efforts of private philanthropy for its positive solution and that the brunt of this must fall upon the three Governments which are so critically involved in this situation, viz.: Belgium, England, and France. Whilst every possible device to secure private philanthropy will be used by this Commission and no doubt will result, there still remains the fact that such a supply is not dependable and that if the situation is to be handled properly and systematically we have got to have a substratum of government subvention. It is useless to tell us that when we have expended some allotment of money that we can apply for more because if this problem is to be handled we have got to make

arrangements now for future supplies for three or more months and we cannot depend on the "gifts of the gods" to meet such eventualities. For transportation purposes we must charter ships extending over months and we must be assured of eventual money to make up by purchase in the best markets of the world deliveries to supplement such deficiencies as may arise amongst our voluntary offerings, and furthermore in the securing of such voluntary offerings if we had behind us a solid substratum of income we could stimulate this quarter to very much greater advantage.

As you are aware we have forwarded an appeal to the American people by His Majesty King Albert. We have followed this with strong statements as to the position from ourselves. We have asked the Belgian Government to place at our disposal the money secured for Belgian Relief in the United States, and in order to organize the various efforts being made in America we have asked the governors of each of the large agricultural states to appoint a commission to collect and receive food in each of these territories. It would most materially assist this collection of food if we could say to these good people throughout the United States that this Commission will at its own cost undertake the entire transport of foodstuffs which may be secured. The value of cereal foodstuffs taken in bulk delivered into Belgium is between £10 and £12 per ton, of which something like £2 per ton may be taken as transport costs. Therefore, practically £5 of food will be secured for every pound of expenditure made in this manner. If it can be arranged that we have guaranteed subvention of this kind from the three Governments concerned assuring us a minimum of £400,000 per month we are confident that we can handle the situation, or by means of the differences on gifts of goods and the recovery on resale we should be able to make up the margin. This may be a tight squeeze but on the other hand it might be found that during the first flow of philanthropy we might not require the whole of this sum but as you will be well aware, it is almost impossible to keep such a flow stimulated for a period of eight months.

Yours faithfully

For the Commission

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER, Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 21

Statement, [\(13\)](#)

F. D. ACLAND IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, explaining the attitude of the British Government toward Belgian relief

HOUSE OF COMMONS, 18 November 1914

Earl of Ronaldshay asked the Prime Minister whether the British Government has given its consent to large shipments of flour and food being sent to Belgium by an American Committee; whether some of these foodstuffs are being shipped from the Port of London; and whether, seeing that Belgium is in German occupation and requisitions of food and money are constantly levied upon the inhabitants, he will say what steps are being taken to secure that these shipments shall not benefit the enemy?

Mr. Acland:(14) On the 16th October Marshal von der Goltz gave to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels a written guarantee that foodstuffs imported into Belgium by the Relief Committee acting under their joint patronage for the maintenance of the civil population would not be requisitioned by the military, but would remain at the sole disposal of the committee. In consideration of this guarantee, and at the request of the United States, Spanish, and Belgian Governments, His Majesty's Government have undertaken not to interfere with shipments of foodstuffs from neutral countries in neutral bottoms consigned to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels, or to the United States Consul at Rotterdam. I understand from the United States Ambassador that consignments shipped to the United States Consul at Rotterdam will be warehoused at that port and will be forwarded as need arises to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels. His Majesty's Government have made a Grant of £100,000 to the Belgian Government for the purchase of foodstuffs towards the cost of these supplies. This undertaking does not apply to general shipments of foodstuffs from this country. Any application for permission to export foodstuffs to Belgium from the United Kingdom is, therefore, considered by the Board of Trade in each individual case in the same way and on the same principles as are held to govern other applications for permission to export articles the export of which is restricted or prohibited. Permits have, I believe, been given in certain cases to export foodstuffs to Belgium, consigned to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels. Where a permit is so granted, the foodstuffs exported are, of course, protected by the guarantees which I have mentioned. I believe a great part of these food supplies are purchased by money subscribed in the United States to relieve distress of Belgians, and the greatest care is taken that it should go to that and to no other object.

DOCUMENT NO. 22

Note,
GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO GERARD, giving official approval to the C.R.B., and guaranteeing freedom from seizure to non-neutral vessels carrying supplies of the C.R.B. to Dutch ports

GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
23 November 1914

TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Foreign Office has the honor to inform the Embassy of the United States of America in answer to the verbal note of November 14, F.O. 1105, that the Imperial Government is in complete sympathy with the meritorious efforts of the American Commission in Belgium to provide the population of that country with foodstuffs. The imperial Government therefore---until further notice and with reservation of any recall which may become necessary at any time---gladly consents that the transportation of the said foodstuffs to Dutch harbors take place also in other than neutral vessels, and will grant in this case also the same guarantee for the disposition of the foodstuffs, according to agreement, as if the transportation had been made in neutral vessels. In order to obviate seizure by German war vessels at sea, it is advisable that such non-neutral vessels be provided with a certificate of a competent American authority, in which it is stated that the vessel carries foodstuffs which are to be brought through the agency of the American Commission for Relief with the consent of the German Government by way of Dutch harbors into Belgium for the supplying of the population there; and it is furthermore advisable that the non-neutral vessels also carry with them a pass from the Imperial German Ambassador in Washington to be issued on the basis of the aforesaid certificate.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 23

Extract from

"Rapport du Comité Exécutif pour le mois de Novembre 1914," pp. 3-4, Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation

.... On the receipt of this letter([15](#)) it was decided to send to London a delegation composed of Baron Lambert and Mr. Francqui. These gentlemen, accompanied by Mr. Gibson, Secretary of the United States Legation, were requested to lay before the British Government the desperate situation in which the country was as regards reserves of foodstuffs.

The object of this mission was principally to obtain the consent of the British Government, in view of the guarantees of the German Government, to authorize the importation into Belgium of all the products coming from neutral countries destined to the Belgian civil population. The English Government kindly gave the necessary authority on condition that the products which should be imported with the above mentioned object should be conveyed to the Belgian frontier under the protection of the representatives of Spain and the United States in London and The Hague and that from the frontier to the distribution warehouses in Belgium, the

transport of these products should be made under the protection of the Ministers of Spain and the United States of America in Brussels.

Under these conditions there was no further obstacle to the formation of the Committee.

In consequence Baron Lambert and Mr. Francqui immediately consulted Mr. Page, United States Ambassador in London, on the measures to be taken to assure the feeding of Belgium.

The conclusion was quickly arrived at that the Comité National, in order to be in a position to accomplish its task, should be seconded by an organization abroad which, working under the patronage of the representatives of Spain and the United States in London, Berlin, Brussels, and The Hague, should purchase the food and assure its transport to the centers of distribution in Belgium.

This organization should also undertake a propaganda campaign to bring foreign nations to the aid of the Belgian population by means of gifts.

There existed in London at that time a committee under the presidency of Mr. Herbert Hoover which, at the commencement of the war, had been constituted at the instance of the United States Government to facilitate the repatriation of all the American subjects in Europe.

This committee, which had just accomplished its task, was about to dissolve. Ambassador Page, considering that it could render service to the new undertaking which had been projected, put Mr. Francqui in touch with Mr. Hoover, proposing to the latter to maintain the assembly which he had formed and to make it act for the revictualment of Belgium.

Mr. Hoover was good enough to accept this proposition. In the course of several interviews which they had together, Messrs. Hoover and Francqui laid the foundation of the new organization of which details will be found later on.

Baron Lambert and Mr. Francqui having achieved their mission returned to Brussels and reported to the Comité Central the result of their efforts.

The Comité Central immediately decided that nothing further prevented their assuming the task of aiding and feeding the country and constituted itself the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The organization abandoned in consequence the direct administration of the organization created for the Brussels District and decided to consider in the future the said District of Brussels as one of the branches of the Comité National.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER II

THE ORGANIZATION OF RELIEF ADMINISTRATION

The administrative machinery of relief necessarily changed in a variety of details to meet new conditions as the war passed from one phase to another. But in spite of these changes of detail Mr. Hoover's original conception that penetration of the blockade and the Occupation Zones could be accomplished only through the intervention of Americans with authorizations and guarantees from both belligerent groups and under the patronage of powerful neutral governments, remained a fundamental of relief organization through the whole course of the work in Belgium and France. As a result the Commission came to be regarded as a kind of informal state with its own international agreements, its special privileges and immunities from the belligerents, its own flag, and so forth. At the same time the Commission bore the responsibility of constantly giving evidence of the essential purpose of its work and unbroken fidelity to that purpose.

The establishment of this international standing and prestige of the Commission was one of the most important problems of relief. Another was finance, which included the mobilization of public charity, the institution of exchange operations, and the procurement of government subsidies. A third was the provision of supplies and the organization of their oversea transportation from all corners of the globe. This involved the establishment of a network of purchasing organizations embracing all the food-exporting regions of the world, and the acquisition and management of a fleet of cargo ships. A fourth problem was the determination of the needs of the population from time to time, the formulation of a program based on those needs, and the securing of the approval of these programs from the belligerents. All of these functions were performed by the Americans constituting the active personnel of the Commission. A fifth problem concerned the distribution of commodities in Belgium and Northern France. This was accomplished by numerous Belgian committees centralized in accordance with Mr. Hoover's request, in the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation for Belgium, and French committees headed by the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France. The Belgian and French organizations acted independently of each other but each acted jointly with the Commission which was directly represented by American members throughout the occupied territories, Thus, whereas the Commission was solely responsible to the belligerent governments for all external relief activities, i.e., charity, finance, purchase, and transportation, the responsibility of distribution in Belgium was shared with the Comité National, and in Northern France(16) with the

Comité Français, the members occupying the same central offices and co-operating fully.

The complex situation in Belgian and French territories under German rule combined with the conditions imposed by the Allies made the work of the administration of the Commission extremely difficult. Absolute neutrality in word and act, vigilance and firmness in guarding the interests of the population, and tact in official relationships were essential to the success of the enterprise. The documents which follow indicate the character of the major emergencies affecting the form of organization in Belgium.

1. First Measures. November 1914

As soon as the preliminary diplomatic guarantees had been secured, the newly formed Commission for Relief in Belgium began to build its oversea organization. On the 25th October 1914 Hoover sent Captain J. F. Lucey and M. K. Shaler to Rotterdam to arrange for the transshipment into Belgium of two cargoes then loading in the Thames. Lucey, after making, with the co-operation of Dr. van Dyke, the American Minister, the necessary arrangements with the Dutch Government,⁽¹⁷⁾ energetically attacked the difficult matter of establishing an efficient system for the movement of supplies. Shaler crossed the frontier into Belgium where the struggles to organize the scattered local committees into a unified body were complicated by the general confusion, lack of communication, and German restrictions on civilian activities. The representatives of the first Belgian committee, M. van den Branden, Mr. W. Hulse, and later M. Hymans, whom the Germans had allowed to cross the Dutch frontier, could give Lucey neither definite information regarding the internal relief organization nor specific recommendations as to where to direct the first food shipments. Information from other sources was abundant but conflicting. Appeals, rumors, orders, suggestions came in showers from local committees, refugees, American consuls in Belgian cities, from the American Legation in Brussels and the Comité Central. Lucey's reports to Hoover, of which Document 24 is a sample, reflect the confusion of these first days and the impatience of an energetic executive entangled in official red tape and a maze of doubtful information. The first food shipment went promptly across the frontier, but serious difficulties beset the line of communication until the Comité National was completely organized and the C.R.B. had set up its own machinery in Belgium.

DOCUMENT NO. 24

Letter,
LUCEY TO HOOVER, describing confused situation in Belgium as reported by local officials, refugees, and others

ROTTERDAM, 29 October 1914

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Chairman American Commission for Relief in Belgium
London

DEAR SIR:

GENERAL REPORT No. 4

Replying to your telegram of this morning, requesting that we advise you character and weekly amount of food supplies, we may say that we shall be unable to do this for a few days. We are sending Mr. Hymans of the Belgian Committee from here to get this information. We have details from Liège and vicinity, as per enclosed copy of statement made by the two deputies of Liège. We are also going to obtain for you all the details as to the number of relief stations and the people. As near as we can ascertain there are approximately four millions of people to be fed. Provisions must be provided whether the people have money or not. For instance, the deputies representing Liège have Frs. 500,000, but are unable to purchase any supplies without permission of the Dutch authorities, and this Government has commandeered all of the flour and wheat in the country, and you can only purchase direct from the Government.

As advised you by wire, we are going to see the Prime Minister this afternoon and arrange to purchase 5,000 tons of flour, agreeing to replace this by shipment from America. We consider the statement of the deputies of Liège sufficiently urgent to send it on to you by telegram, and we are enclosing you confirmation of same herewith. We are keeping the original on file here, and shall be glad to forward same to you if you wish it.

We further attach translation of article appearing in the Dutch press. We thought it would be better to have a statement of this character, as it would immediately bring to us all people who had food supplies for sale as well as transportation facilities.

At the same time we enclose copy of letter received from the Belgian Vice Consul, who made a special call on behalf of Liège, subsequently introducing two deputies from the district. Enclosed also please find copy of memorandum dictated by the writer from Mr. Hymans and Mr. Branden.

We have asked all these gentlemen to give some more complete details and we have only obtained from them this written statement to protect our-selves.

We are convinced, as stated in our telegram, that we have all underestimated the desperate condition of the Belgian people. For instance, Namur had a population of 40,000 people, and we are authorized by two of the gentlemen from the Belgian

committee to state that there are only ten houses left. They advise that these people must have clothes and bedding as well as food. This office will gladly undertake to deliver all these supplies to the Belgian people.

The great and urgent necessity is for flour. If we could get about 25,000 tons of flour, we could relieve the immediate necessities. All of these gentlemen advise me that there is a great danger of revolution, particularly in the vicinity of Liège. The people are so hungry and so desperate that the sight of every German incites them, and in their desperate frame of mind, seeing their children and families without food or clothes, they are liable to attack the German soldiers at any moment, which would mean another terrible and useless sacrifice of the Belgian people. The American Commission and the American people can avoid this, and I would urge you to resort to any measures to relieve these districts. Could you not obtain a fast cruiser from the American Government to deliver the first cargo of flour?

We are calling upon the Dutch Minister this afternoon, and if we obtain results we will wire you again this afternoon. We believe that if you could wire that flour is en route, the writer could go into the districts of Liège, Charleroi, Namur, and Dinant, or any member of our Commission could do so, accompanied by the Belgian officials, and satisfy the people and restrain them from resorting to any violence until we can deliver the flour.

We are afraid there will be keen disappointment in Brussels upon return of Mr. Hymans, as he came here anticipating that the 10,000 tons of food supplies would be here, Mr. Francqui having made this report to the Comité at Brussels, and they in turn have distributed this information to the various districts. We again repeat: the necessity of the Belgian people is very great; they are in a desperate frame of mind, and if we are to accomplish anything we must act, and act at once.

If there is any statement which you wish to publish in the Dutch press, please forward same and we will have it attended to.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) J. F. LUCEY
The American Commission for Relief in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 25

Letter,
FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, describing food, financial, and other difficulties in
Belgium

BRUSSELS, 26 October 1914

MY DEAR HOOVER:

On returning here I found the situation much more grave than at my departure. Liège, Namur, Charleroi are absolutely without flour. At Brussels we can scarcely finish the week, and we shall be under the necessity of distributing only 100 grams of flour per inhabitant.

All this shows you the gravity of the situation and the urgency there is, consequently, that there should be sent to Rotterdam as much foodstuffs as possible.

As agreed between us, Mr. van den Branden, delegate of the American committee in Brussels, is leaving today for Rotterdam. This gentleman speaks English very well and he will go to Holland to place himself at the disposal of Captain Lucey. Mr. Hulse, an American engineer whom you know, is leaving at the same time as Mr. van den Branden to install the latter at Rotterdam and inform us in Brussels as to all things necessary as regards the organization of our revictualing work.

At the time of their departure I wired you as follows:

Whitlock entirely in accord regarding your telegram. He is cabling to Washington to centralize all funds and to confide them to you through U.S. Embassy, London. Monthly needs Belgian population, minimum 60,000 grains, 15,000 maize, 3,000 tons rice and dried peas. Have still flour for four days.

Telegraph at once to Hulse care Consulate of U.S. at Rotterdam:

First, if 10,000 tons purchased London during my stay are or will be sent.

Second, what other quantities of foodstuffs you have purchased and when you hope they will arrive in Rotterdam.

Third, say if you have ordered grain in America; if not, do so at once.

Believe it would be good for Page inform English Government that working capital of hundred thousand pounds altogether insufficient. It would be good not to mention to Foreign Office the hundred thousand pounds that I received from Belgian Minister, and that I transferred to you. Tell also Carton de Wiart make new effort with Government to obtain help in money in same proportions as English Government. Send immediately Lucey to organize general depot at Rotterdam with Hulse. Good wishes.

This telegram is, I believe, very clear in itself. As I told you at the opening of this letter we have in the country only a few thousand sacks of wheat. After that there is nothing, either in the country or in the warehouses. It is therefore necessary that our

population should be completely revictualled from the exterior if we do not wish to die of hunger.

In normal times there are in Belgium nearly 8,000,000 people to feed. Therefore, in mentioning 60,000 tons of wheat as being indispensable for the country you will see that I estimate less than 300 grams of wheat per inhabitant and per diem, which gives a little less than 200 grams of flour per person. This quantity is evidently insufficient, but account must be taken of the 15,000 tons of maize which I have also asked for. With this maize we will make flour which we will mix with the wheaten flour, which will thus bring up the daily ration per person to nearly 300 grams.

In my telegram I asked you several questions relative to all the orders which you have placed, whether in London or America.

As regards the orders in London, I of course only refer to the 10,000 tons which you ordered during my stay in London. It is for us of the highest importance that we should know if Mr. Page and yourself have succeeded in persuading Sir Edward Grey that it is indispensable to allow you to dispatch these supplies at once.

As regards American orders, I thought it well to ask you if you had placed these orders. It is, in fact, necessary to have three or four weeks before we can hope to receive the first consignments, and, by reason of the precarious situation in which we are placed, no time should be lost.

Another question which it is also important to settle at once is that of money. The purchase abroad of 60,000 tons of wheat, 15,000 tons of maize, and 3,000 tons of rice and dried peas, will necessitate the immobilization of £800,000 to £1,000,000. This supply for one month will always be maintained in our warehouses or in transit, and its value, i.e., £800,000 to £1,000,000, will, in fact, be a revolving fund which is indispensable for the proper operating of our relief organization.

Now, we have in all and for all the £100,000 which the British Government has placed at the disposal of our Ambassador, as well as the £100,000 which I obtained from the Belgian Government and which I had transferred to your credit. There is therefore lacking £600,000 to £800,000.

It was after having made this little calculation that I thought well of notifying you by cable that it would be a good thing to tell the British Government that the £100,000 which they gave us were absolutely insufficient.

I also asked you in my telegram to speak of all this to Mr. Carton de Wiart, who, I believe, knows the French Ambassador in London, in order that he should remind the latter of the promise which he had made to Baron Lambert, to cause his

government to intervene in this question of revictualing the Belgian populations, who have been already so much tried.

There is, lastly, another point which we have not succeeded in solving here. It is as to how we are going to transfer to London, in order to enable you to make new purchases, the money which we shall receive here against part of the supplies which we import into Belgium, thanks to yourselves.

The German Government forbids us---all banks and individuals---to export the smallest coin into no matter what country with which they are at war.

On the other hand, by reason of the complete stoppage of business, it is impossible to buy exchange here, either on Holland or America, or on any other neutral country.

We shall perhaps find in the banks assets of £500,000 to £600,000 in America, in Holland, in Spain, and in Italy, but that will hardly enable us to live more than several weeks.

For my part, I do not see any possibility of solving this problem except by effecting a loan in London, it being understood that we should deposit with the Banque Nationale de Belgique at Brussels all the money which we may receive here in payment for supplies imported.

I am notifying the Belgian Government of this special situation by a letter of which you will find copy attached.

If you wish to write me, do so by the intermediary of Captain Lucey or of the American Consulate at Rotterdam, who will then send your mail by one or other of the men who bring the correspondence of the Minister of the United States here.

You might leave your letters open, in order that Mr. Hulse or any other of your compatriots at Rotterdam may acquaint themselves with their contents and thus arrive at a knowledge of our *desiderata*.

On the other hand, I believe that you will do well to communicate what I write you to Mr. Carton de Wiart, who is, as you know, the brother of our Minister of Justice, and who can---I do not doubt---second your efforts by intervening with the Belgian Government.

By all that I have written you will see that the mission which your good heart has caused you to accept is very complicated. I was able, during my short stay in London, to see how high were your sentiments of humanity and for this reason it is with the greatest confidence that I face with yourself the very difficult task which we have undertaken.

On returning to Brussels, I found a letter from my son who, after many difficulties, succeeded in reaching one of my friends in Holland, with whom he is today staying. Thanks a thousand times, my dear Hoover, for all that you have done in helping me to find him again.

Your very grateful

(Signed) E. FRANQUI

[Translation]

Immediately after the conferences in London with Hoover on the 18th and 19th October Francqui had returned to Brussels to expand the organization of the Brussels Comité Central to embrace all of Belgium. The scheme of organization covered the whole country by means of committees and subcommittees. Belgium was divided into ten areas more or less corresponding to the provincial divisions and eleven provincial committees were established, an extra committee having jurisdiction over the city of Brussels apart from the province of Brabant in which this city is situated. Under each provincial committee were grouped regional committees and, finally, under these, communal committees. The provincial committees had considerable autonomy, but on each was a representative of the Comité National whose headquarters were in Brussels.

DOCUMENT NO. 26

Letter,
HOOVER TO FRANQUI, outlining the relation of the C.R.B. Rotterdam office to the offices in London and Brussels, the methods of accounting, and the relief campaign inaugurated in America

LONDON, 14 November 1914

Emile Francqui, Esq., Brussels

MY DEAR FRANQUI:

It seems desirable that we should get a little more system in the relations of this office and the Rotterdam office with the head committee in Brussels.

It is our feeling that it is entirely impossible to conduct the Rotterdam office from Brussels as communications are so slow between these two points whereas we are in hourly communication, in other words, that the Rotterdam office should be a

branch of the London Commission. We are consigning all food to this Rotterdam office, and we desire to have in the Rotterdam office an accountant, experienced in English accounts, if possible selected by your committee. We propose that the books should be subject to monthly audit by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company. We also need at the Rotterdam office a representative of the Brussels committee who should be a substantial business man, who will remain there at all times and put himself generally at the disposal of the head of this office, whom we should select. I should suggest that all cheques on the Rotterdam accounts should be signed jointly by the accountant and the head of our organization at Rotterdam. This Rotterdam office is practically a warehousing and forwarding business, and it is their duty to forward foodstuffs sent to them to any portion of Belgium that is designated to them. This allocation as to where foodstuffs have to be sent must absolutely rest with you in Brussels; but we would suggest to you that as the stuff is consigned to the American Minister at the various points in Belgium it would serve as a matter of protection as well as one of system, if when these allocation orders are made out Mr. Whitlock should be asked to put his "O.K." on them, as obviously the shipments cannot go forward except in his name. This approval signed on these allocation orders would be the final court of appeal so far as our Rotterdam office is concerned, that when they have complied with these allocation orders their duty has been done. I do not know whether this will be placing an unnecessarily large amount of detail on Mr. Whitlock, but I feel that in view of the political situation and the clearness with which this will define matters so far as our end of the business is concerned it is a labor which he will be willing to undertake.

It will be the endeavor of the Rotterdam office to send information to Brussels as to the materials which they have in hand and what they expect to receive at given dates, and, so far as we can anticipate it, something as to the character of the contents of the cargoes, in order that these allocations may be made out and the arrangements for the delivery and transportation into Belgium can be greatly expedited if the Rotterdam office has the allocations in hand in anticipation of the arrival of the foodstuffs.

We realize the great difficulties you must have to contend with in communications between various points of the provinces and Brussels, and we have the feeling that if a corps of our Americans can be recruited (in which we are now actively engaged) so that some of these gentlemen may be established as guardians at different centers, these communications will thereby be facilitated, as they can possibly move more freely through the country than your own countrymen.

We are receiving people here from Belgium pressing us to do special services for special towns, and the Rotterdam office is simply flooded with them. It is therefore necessary that all of the communes should be advised that all allocations of the foodstuffs which we handle will be made only on orders signed as above (if you agree that this is the proper system). Large consignments will now be arriving with

considerable frequency, and the earlier some such system as this can be devised the better.

In engaging Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company to take charge of the accounts of this office we have instructed them to consider that this is a cargo business and that every shipment of material into Rotterdam shall be accompanied from here by a statement as to the cost thus far, and the Rotterdam office will add their charges and redistribute it in cutting up the cargoes so that their consignments will show the final cost. There has been some delay in getting this done as you cannot appreciate the pressure under which we have been working here. The difficulty primarily arises over the question of gift food, and I propose that we should determine the value of this food at as near the market price as we can, and that we enter on our books the purchase of this food for that sum and as a contra in our books we will enter the sum as a gift to this Commission from the donors of the food. By this system all foodstuffs arriving in Belgium will be given a cash value comparable to the market price and our books will show large subscriptions from various societies and organizations. I may mention that while the above seems simple it is by no means so. For instance, yesterday at three o'clock we received advice that a gift steamer from Nova Scotia had left Dover at 10 o'clock in the morning for Rotterdam; the bill of lading and the contents of the vessel were in London and we had not known until that morning that we should succeed in getting the ship diverted direct to Rotterdam. Therefore the Rotterdam office at the present moment is totally ignorant as to either the contents or the value of the cargo. Furthermore this cargo is made up of some 400 items of different kinds of things, having all been presented, and it is with the greatest difficulty that we shall be able to assess them at all. However, in developing a business which is going to run into a million pounds a month it is going to require some patience on the part of everybody.

I wish to add one word more as to the letter I wrote the other day on the subject of the purpose to which we have set aside the £600,000. It will greatly further our efforts and back up our campaign if you gentlemen will also take the strong attitude that this money has been provided only for transportation purposes, and with this in view it is an imminent necessity that we begin to receive at once some of the £1,000,000 subvention from the Belgian Government. The offer on our part to some score of associations to pay transportation on foodstuffs they would provide has stimulated the presentation of food in the most gratifying manner and is the strongest card which we have yet played.

The following résumé of the position in America may interest you:

We have carried on, with the assistance of practically the whole of the American press, an enormous propaganda on the subject of the Belgian people. We have cabled to all associations of whom we could hear, stimulating them as to position.

We have cabled to the governors of every state asking them to see that such an association was set up in their territory and we have so far the following results:

The Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco, at the instance of my wife, who happened to be there, have collected money with which they have purchased actual foodstuffs to the amount of 5,000 tons and have chartered the ship "Camino" which sails November 30th for Rotterdam.

The Seattle Chamber of Commerce are in progress with the provision of a cargo, and as friends of ours were raising a fund in the state of Idaho we have asked these people to combine to ensure a large ship full.

In the state of Oregon we have a good friend at work but at present can report no definite results.

In the state of Kansas, ex-Governor Stubbs has inaugurated an active campaign for the collection of foodstuffs and is organizing an efficient committee for taking the matter in hand.

In the state of Iowa Mr. Chamberlain is organizing a complete cargo of maize, which is the chief product of that state.

In the state of Minnesota Mr. Edgar, the editor of a trade journal called the *Northwestern Miller*, has got the millers in the northern part of the Mississippi Valley all hard at work, and he assures us that he will secure at least 9,000 tons of flour and is making the first shipment from Philadelphia about the end of November.

The Philadelphia Belgian Relief Committee in co-operation with the *Ladies Home Journal* (for which paper we obtained an autograph letter from the Queen of the Belgians to further the appeal) have already despatched on the 11th November to us the S.S. "Thelma" carrying 2,900 tons of cereals.

The Rockefeller Foundation has despatched the S.S. "Massapequa" carrying 4,000 tons on November 4th, and we have bought a cargo of 4,000 tons which is being shipped on the S.S. "Terschelling" which sailed from New York on the 11th November.

The people of Nova Scotia have already landed in Rotterdam the steamer "Tremorvah" carrying about 2,100 tons of foodstuffs and a lot of clothes. They have now despatched the S.S. "Bankadra" which sailed from Halifax on the 13th instant with 3,000 tons.

The people of Ottawa, Canada, are despatching approximately 4,000 tons at an early date.

The New York Relief Committee are presumably despatching a cargo at an early date, and we have organizations getting on definitely in Spain, Italy, British Columbia, North Carolina, Maine, and Virginia.

We have opened an office in New York and have advised the American public generally that our New York office will undertake the free transportation of foodstuffs into Belgium.

We are taking some steamers on time charter for regular trips across the Atlantic, and we are expecting to supplement the irregular supplies of gift food by purchases to keep these steamers employed.

We have organized a Women's Division of the American Commission in New York and have the co-operation of all of the women's clubs and societies in the United States, and tomorrow they are issuing an appeal to all of these club members to get on pushing food into the hands of the local organizations.

In our London office we are conducting three commissions: i.e., the American Commission, the Spanish Commission, and the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation; and we expect to have the Italian Commission launched next week. We combine representatives of all of these commissions into the general organization which we style simply "The Commission for Relief in Belgium," which is dealing with all of the minor points of international complexity.

We have secured the assistance of the two largest shipping firms in England, and they have agreed to handle the whole of our shipping problems for absolutely no cost whatever for commissions or agency charges or anything of that nature, and they have placed one of their most expert men in our office and at our elbow. In like manner we have secured the voluntary services of one of the largest food firms dealing on the Baltic, who are giving us their services on exactly the same terms. We have thought it much better that we should not only take the expert advice and the responsible management of such agencies as this but also it affords some measure of protection to us which might not exist if we endeavored by our own individual effort to arrange such matters as charters and food purchases. These gentlemen have taken the greatest possible interest in the work which we are endeavoring to do and are giving us the most extraordinary services. As an indication of such services you will realize that under the terms of the London Shipping, Food, and Insurance Exchanges these people cannot operate without charging commissions, but they are in this case making subscriptions to our funds of amounts equivalent to such commissions.

In order to save time and trouble I am sending a copy of this letter to Minister van Dyke and to Minister Whitlock and also to Captain Lucey.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

2. The C.R.B. in Belgium. November 1914---January 1915

The Commission was represented at the start in Belgium by Mr. Hugh Gibson, Secretary of the American Legation, by Mr. Daniel Heineman, Mr. Millard K. Shaler, and Mr. W. Hulse, American engineers. These gentlemen initiated the Commission's work and collaborated with the directors of the Belgian organization. In order to see for himself the exact conditions in Belgium and to hasten the organization of the Brussels office, Mr. Hoover decided, at the end of November, 1914, to visit Belgium. While in Brussels he went thoroughly into the problems of administration and wrote the following memorandum as a basis of further action.

DOCUMENT NO. 27

General scheme of the organization of the C.R.B. in Belgium as devised in December 1914

BRUSSELS, December 1914

1. The Central Office will be located in Brussels, under the active management of the Belgian members of this committee.
2. As the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation will control its work through ten subcommittees or Comités Provinciaux, each covering a province of Belgium (one province, Brabant, is subdivided for two committees) having its own president and working organization, the C.R.B. proposes to station an authorized delegate in each province (two in Brabant) and at the point where the principal office of the Comité Provincial with its president is located. The Comité National will also station a delegate or two delegates, as case may require, at the same office in the province, who will represent the central organization at Brussels.
3. The delegate of the C.R.B., the delegate of the Comité National, and the President of the Comité Provincial will form the three principals for the affairs of the relief work in the province (see table 1).
4. The business of the delegate of the C.R.B. is to attend to the reception of all merchandise shipped by the C.R.B. into his district, to control same, and to transfer same to the Comité Provincial under the conditions and in the manner to be specified.

5. As it has been clearly stipulated that the grain or other merchandise introduced into Belgium by the C.R.B. is under the responsibility of their Excellencies the Ministers of Spain and of the United States, who, with their colleagues, form the principal factors of the C.R.B., it is essential that the merchandise remain the property of the C.R.B. until the same be distributed to the communes.

6. In consequence of this, the C.R.B. sells none of its merchandise until it be handed over to the communes, and retains full and complete power to dispose of same until the merchandise be placed in the hands of the communes.

As it is, however, impossible for the C.R.B. to create for all of Belgium a sufficiently large organization for handling in all its details the work of storage, milling, short-distance shipments, delivery to communes, etc., all of which is necessary before the merchandise can finally be delivered to the communes, it is proposed that the organization of the Comité Provincial should carry out this work, and that the merchandise be transferred to them (not the ownership or control) for so doing on their order of disposition.

Payment to the C.R.B. must also be guaranteed for its full value by the Comité National before the merchandise can be released to the Comité Provincial by the delegate of the C.R.B. To accomplish such guarantee, the Comité Provincial (with each order for release and disposition addressed to the delegate of the C.R.B.) must place in the hands of the delegate of the Comité National the full value in cash or equivalent of the merchandise specified on the order. The delegate of the Comité National thereupon notifies the delegate of the C.R.B. that the guarantees have been acquitted by signing the order of disposition of the Comité Provincial.

The signature of the delegate of the Comité National (not Provincial) on such an order is understood to be an assurance of payment to the C.R.B. when the merchandise shall have been safely turned over to the communes.

The final payment must then be effected against a receipt signed by the C.R.B.

The signature of the delegate of the Comité National is also a notice that the latter are satisfied with the arrangements for milling, storage, or distribution called for by the Comité Provincial.

All expenses for transportation, milling, storage, insurance, personnel, etc., are to be borne by the Comité Provincial.

The latter Comité will also provide, at their expense, the necessary storehouses.

It is understood that, in spite of the fact that the merchandise has been entrusted for handling to the Provincial Committee, it is still the property of the C.R.B., and the

delegate of the C.R.B. is still responsible for its safety until the same is delivered to the communes.

For this reason, it is expressly required that all orders for disposition by the Comité Provincial for milling, transportation, storage, or delivery for distribution, shall be countersigned by the delegate of the C.R.B., and that all of such orders shall expressly state that the material is the property of the C.R.B., and that no order is valid without such signature.

The Comités Provinciaux designate the mills within their provinces where the grinding is to be done; but in some provinces, such as Limbourg and Luxembourg, there are no adequate milling facilities, and flour will have to be delivered there (not grain), utilizing other mills and special means of transport. This milling and transportation will be arranged for by the Central Office of the C.R.B. in conjunction with the Central Office of the Comité National at Brussels; the delegate of the C.R.B. and the delegate of the Comité National and the Provincial President work exactly as described above (omitting milling) for the province in question.

Any transportation matters regarding arrangements with German authorities should be immediately referred to Brussels.

In spite of the fact that the Comité Provincial executes the work, the delegate of the C.R.B. must have complete records as to materials received, delivered to mills, condition of stocks, and distribution to communes, and report weekly thereon as well as upon condition of received merchandise, the difficulties of working, and the effectiveness of the Comité National.

The German authorities have guaranteed that all merchandise introduced by the C.R.B. and distributed by the Comité National for the civil population of Belgium shall not be seized by the German military. To facilitate same, placards have been signed by the German authorities prohibiting the seizure of merchandise identified by these placards. Such placards will be provided by the Brussels office of the C.R.B., and it shall be the duty of the delegate of the C.R.B. to see that all storehouses, mills, or merchandise in transit are properly protected by such placards, taking always receipts for them, keeping trace of them, and seeing same are used honestly and without misrepresentation. In this particular matter, viz. the issuing and using of placards, the delegates of the Comité National and the presidents of the Comités Provinciaux will be held equally responsible, but no placard may be issued without the consent of the delegate of the C.R.B.

Proper military passes for the delegates of the C.R.B. will be provided at the Central Office, Brussels.

The specific authority of the C.R.B. delegate who is responsible only to the C.R.B. is therefore:

1. Absolute charge of merchandise from time of its receipt from Rotterdam until its distribution to the communes. Shall guard and protect same from seizure by use of placards provided, and shall visé all orders of the Comité Provincial for its disposal to mills, distribution, storage, or communes until the time when the same shall have been distributed to the communes.
2. Shall be responsible for the placards.
3. Shall sign all bills of lading or waybills in the name of the ministers for release of the merchandise.
4. Shall carefully check up arrived merchandise so as to assure himself that all merchandise shipped has come to hand. In case of shortage, a claim should be immediately deposited with the shipping officials with whom he has had to deal, and a copy of this claim sent immediately to the C.R.B. in Brussels.
5. Shall, with the delegate of the Comité National, control the general operation of the work of the Comité Provincial, and shall intervene at any step, even to the extent of prohibiting merchandise to be moved, if at any time the responsibilities of the ministers are not being properly guarded.
6. It is explained that storehouses and storekeepers are to be provided for the C.R.B. by the Central Committee for merchandise which cannot be taken over immediately by it, but merchandise stored in these storehouses is solely under the guard and supervision of the delegate of the C.R.B.
7. The delegate of the C.R.B. must, on the receipt of merchandise, inform immediately the C.R.B. in Brussels of: (i) The quantity and description of merchandise received, with information as to whether it arrived in good condition or not. (ii) Whether claims were made against shippers for shortages, bad condition of merchandise, etc. (iii) The disposal of merchandise arrived, as to whether it was taken over immediately by the Central Committee or whether it was placed in the storehouse under the control of the C.R.B.; this information must be given with all details, especially:
 - (a) quantities delivered;
 - (b) to whom delivered;
 - (c) name of office of Central Committee which has given order for deliveries;
 - (d) dates of delivery;
 - (e) quantities taken into stock;
 - (f) total quantities in stock at moment.Communications with Brussels will be assured by means of a special messenger, who will pass periodically with automobile to take up and deliver letters.

8. All merchandise received must be registered in his stock account as received, whether it goes directly into his storehouse or not. Supposing that a consignment arrives to be turned over, on the order of the Central Committee delegate, directly to the mills without passing through the storehouse, this consignment must be *supposed* to have entered into the storehouse and to have been distributed to the mills. In other words, the books of the delegate of the C.R.B. must show all goods received, and at the same time all distribution of goods to the mills or communes. It is necessary, in making this inscription in the books, to make note of the numbers, date, quantities, and persons signing the orders of distribution.

9. In case of merchandise being shipped to the delegates of the C.R.B. to be later transferred to another, the first-named delegate must handle the merchandise just as if it had been consigned for his section, inscribing it as received and as shipped farther to another section. Any bills of lading or railway receipts which may be necessary must be made out and sent forward in the same way as shown in the instructions entitled "Bills of Lading" or "Railway Consignments," as the case may be. For example:

Suppose that 20,000 sacks of grain be forwarded to Louvain to be ground into flour, with the intention of sending the flour forward to Arlon, the delegate of the Louvain section must see to it that the Louvain mills receive the grain, grind it into flour, and reship it to Arlon. He must, furthermore, receive on his books the grain into stock, issue it on his books to the mills from his stock, and make note of all expenses incurred.

When the grain has been ground into flour, he must check up all the bills of the mills as to quantities, the understanding being that for 100 parts of grain received the mills should deliver 90 parts of flour. He has nothing to do with the payment of these bills; these latter should be sent to the C.R.B. in Brussels, with his signature on each bill, showing that he has found it to be correct, if such is the case.

In case of dispute, he should attempt to come to an understanding with the mill; should he not succeed, he must refer the settlement to the C.R.B., Brussels.

The approved bills sent to Brussels will be settled by Brussels. He should then attend to the shipping of the flour to its final destination (Arlon), and should forward to the C.R.B., Brussels, the railway receipts, or, if need be, the copy of the bills of lading.

He must notify the C.R.B. in Brussels in time, so that the latter may arrange with the authorities for the necessary freight accommodation.

10. The delegates of the C.R.B. should read up carefully the whole of the organization as set forth in the present, so as to fully understand the principles on which the note is based.

[Fig. 2. Note, 22 October 1914, Francqui to Hoover](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 28

Letter,

FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, Stating the need of a C.R.B. office in Brussels and of 20 to 25 American delegates, and discussing finances, Rockefeller Foundation visit, etc.

BRUSSELS, 8 December 1914

DEAR HOOVER:

I duly received the copy of the two letters which you sent from Flushing to the Brussels office of the C.R.B.

When the Plan you conceived will be carried out, I think that the organization of your offices and ours will be complete. As a matter of fact I am more and more convinced that as soon as the Brussels office of the C.R.B. has from 20 to 25 Americans at its disposal, so as to be able to send two to each province, everything will go on without a hitch.

I was glad to hear that you were able to negotiate with the Dutch Government and to obtain from them 10,000 tons of wheat. That will remove our great anxiety with regard to the provisioning of our country from the 5th to the 25th December, after which date you hope to receive regular supplies from abroad.

With reference to the financial question, I hope you have been able to persuade the Minister Berryer to place at your disposal £500,000 monthly for the purpose of renewing your floating capital. As soon as we are informed of the payments made you by the Belgian Government, we shall not fail, as agreed, to remit the countervalue in Belgian money to the Credit Communal which will distribute same to the various communes of the country. In this manner we shall obtain two results: first of all we shall be able to procure the funds necessary for future purchases, and in the second place to satisfy the needs of the poor people.

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday I visited the country to the east of Antwerp, Brussels, Mons, accompanied by the members of the Rockefeller Foundation. These gentlemen were much impressed by what they saw and asked to be allowed to examine certain stricken districts more closely. For this purpose Mr. Rose will go to stay at Malines, Mr. Bicknell to Louvain, and Mr. James to Liège.

I think that the representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation will remain another eight days in the country, and will then return to England, where you will have an opportunity of seeing them. Then they will tell you, better than they were able to tell me, the impression made on them by their visit, and what they intend continuing to do.

I was indeed sorry not to be able to see you again before your hurried departure. I regret it all the more as I should have liked to tell you once more how very much I appreciate your endeavors and those of your fellow-countrymen to help us. All the Belgians should be eternally grateful to you.

Yours

(Signed) E. FRANQUI

[Translation]

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At the end of December 1914, Hoover was again in Brussels, where with his Belgian and American associates he threshed out the new administrative difficulties that had arisen. The result was a clarification of the complementary functions of the Comité National and the Commission and a reinforcement of the latter's Belgian organization.⁽¹⁸⁾ Troublesome problems of administrative co-ordination arose as the burdens and obligations of the relief organization increased, but there was no fundamental change in the relationship of the co-operating bodies in Belgium until 1917, when the United States declared war and the Americans in Belgium were recalled.

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DOCUMENT NO. 29

Letter,
WHITLOCK TO HOOVER, referring to the success of the reorganization, and the gratitude of the Belgian people as demonstrated on New Year's Day

BRUSSELS, 13 January 1915

MY DEAR HOOVER:

I cannot resist the impulse to write and thank you first for the splendid work you did during your last visit here, the results of which have ever since been so marked in our work. It has all gone on smoothly and I have to thank you for the hours of quiet and days of peace that have resulted from your labors. May the gods reward you.

And then I wish to thank you for sending Captain Lucey here. He is a remarkable man. He directs the whole organization now with the ease that a corporal manoeuvres his squad, though the comparison is not at all favorable to him since he is a sort of Field Marshal. I have grown to have not only an unbounded admiration but a sincere affection for him. He is pure gold all the way through, and the day God made him, He must have been in a good mood and had plenty of material at hand.

I am sorry you were not here on that New Year's Day for something very beautiful occurred. Spontaneously, quietly, all day long, a stream of Belgians poured into the Legation leaving cards and signing names in a little book that Baron Lambert provided. Over three thousand in all, to express their thanks for what America has done, all sorts and conditions of men, from noblemen whose cards bore high titles, down to the poorest woman from the slums, who had carefully written her name on a bit of pasteboard, the edges of which still showed the traces of the scissors. It was very touching, very moving, and I want you to know of it, for you have done so much more than any of us to help them.

Nobody need tell me any more that self-interest is the great power that moves men, or that there is no gratitude in the world. Surely in this wonderful work, this best of human qualities has brilliantly shone forth.

Will you make my compliments to Mrs. Hoover and believe me, Your ever devoted friend

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

DOCUMENT NO. 30

Letter,
A. N. CONNETT TO AMERICAN DELEGATES IN BELGIUM, instructing them
as to their functions in the distribution of relief supplies

BRUSSELS, 5 February 1915

To the Provincial Delegates in Belgium

GENTLEMEN:

In order to clear up certain points, the following instructions, prepared by the undersigned, have been submitted to the Comité Exécutif of the Comité National, and approved by it, as well as by our Minister, Brand Whitlock.

1. It has been proved that the abandonment of the use of the American flag has had disadvantageous results for the operations of the C.R.B. In consequence the flag may henceforth be fixed on all warehouses containing supplies imported by the C.R.B. The automobiles belonging to the C.R.B., or hired by it, can carry the flag on the condition of its removal when the machine no longer is in the service of the C.R.B. Thus, for example, when in the service of the Comité National, or on a pleasure trip, or on any other use not related to the work of the C.R.B., the American flag may not be used.

2. The local delegates should make sure that the supplies are distributed equally in the whole of their province. For this reason, these delegates should be authorized to make investigations of the methods adopted by the provincial, regional, or communal committees. When difficulties are encountered from the point of view of the distribution, or when abuses are proved, the delegate in question is requested to examine the facts, in agreement with the provincial committee, and to order, in accord with that committee, the measures to be taken to overcome the said difficulties or remedy the abuses. In case an agreement cannot be reached, the provincial delegate should refer the matter to the Central Office at Brussels, which, with the Comité National, will decide in the last analysis. The delegates should do everything to avoid such an appeal, but they cannot in any case accept deviations from our general principle that the distribution is for all without favor to anyone, whether in the distribution of food or of secours. The competent delegate is invited and should assist at the meetings of the provincial delegates.

3. The delegates are earnestly requested not to uselessly increase the difficult and often ungrateful task of those who are charged with the distribution. If it should happen that the explanations they ask, in consequence of the right which permits them to control certain operations, are not furnished, it would seem that within the limits of their powers it would be easy for the delegates to demonstrate that this control constitutes an absolute obligation for them, by virtue of the conventions concluded between the interested Powers, who have granted the authorization for the importation of food. In addition, a moral obligation rests upon us from the fact that a part of the resources is derived from gifts; consequently we are in a measure the empowered representatives of the donors. When the time comes for a definite settlement of accounts, the C.R.B. will be held responsible by the generous donors for every kilo of food and for every dollar distributed.

4. The delegates are requested not to affix their signature either on proclamations or on posters; such publications should come from the official committee and should be signed by the head of that committee. However, a full agreement between the delegate and the committee should precede any publication of documents relating to all matters such as those referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3, within the jurisdiction of the competent delegates.

In conclusion, the delegates should easily see from the present instructions that their rôle is that of an adviser and not of an administrator. They can and ought to protest against every measure contrary to the arrangements made by the C.R.B. They have full powers of investigation of the methods adopted and the means chosen to apply them.

I am convinced that it is unnecessary to add that, while they should fulfil their functions with all firmness, they ought also to show themselves tolerant and courteous in their attitude toward our collaborators who are occupied in an arduous task.

Truly yours

A. N. CONNETT
Director, Brussels Office

P.S.---The Comité National has forwarded to its delegates, for their governance, a translation of the present letter.

3. The C.R.B. and the German General Government. February-March 1915

In the first four months of relief work the Germans had been extremely liberal in granting passes and allowing general freedom of movement of Americans. As the work of the Commission grew in volume and importance the attitude of the Governor-General became less accommodating. The change was due in part to the fear that this neutral body was becoming too powerful in territory where, theoretically at least, German rule was absolute, and in part to disapproval of the enthusiasm with which the Belgian people greeted the Americans wherever they went on their tours of inspection. Whatever the cause, the German tendency to deny the Americans reasonable freedom of movement raised a serious issue, for without that freedom, the Commission could not discharge its responsibility of guaranteeing the proper distribution of relief.

Though the Imperial German Foreign Office, in December 1914, had given Ambassador Gerard the assurance that all passports required by the representatives of the Commission in Belgium would be issued, the passport authorities in Belgium, early in 1915, were very clearly violating the spirit of this understanding. The delays, which sometimes ran to weeks, had the effect of greatly curtailing the effectiveness of the American service. The Germans were no more moved by knowledge of this than by the complaints of the Commission's representatives.

When he was in Berlin in early February 1915 (19) Hoover made special representation to the Imperial Government and received assurance that all necessary passports would be granted immediately upon application made by the Commission and endorsed by the American Minister. Notwithstanding this, upon his return through Brussels about the 10th February, Hoover found the attitude of the General Government more disquieting than ever.

DOCUMENT NO. 31

Letter,

HOOVER TO GOVERNOR-GENERAL VON BISSING, (20) urging the necessity of greater freedom of movement for C.R.B. delegates in order to forestall military suspicion and opposition to the relief

BRUSSELS, 12 February 1915

*To His Excellency, Baron von Bissing
Governor-General in Belgium, Brussels*

EXCELLENCY:

In the representations which I made to Your Excellency last evening with regard to giving a larger measure of freedom of movement to the men engaged in the work of alimentation and more expedition and liberality in the issuing of passes, and Your Excellency's reply which I took to mean that Your Excellency felt that our people have already too much freedom of movement, I am afraid that I did not lay sufficient emphasis on the important phase of this work and the gravity of the situation which arises.

If Your Excellency will recollect when this work was initiated the English Government strongly objected to the introduction of foodstuffs into Belgium from neutral states, on the ground that it was relieving the Germans from the duty of themselves feeding the Belgians, as the Germans would themselves have to deplete their own stores of foodstuffs to prevent the Belgians from starving; that, therefore, this service was a great military advantage to the Germans and a great military disadvantage to the English.

It was only on the strongest pressure that the American Ambassador in London and the American Minister in Brussels were able to secure the assent of the English Government to their proposal, and it was only on condition that these gentlemen, with the approval of the American Government, guarantee the undertaking of the German Government that these foodstuffs should reach the civil population only; moreover, the English Government finally consented on the stipulation that such

machinery be set up in the shape of an organization as would satisfactorily demonstrate that these guarantees would be carried out.

It was for this primary reason that "The Commission for Relief in Belgium" was founded and that a number of American volunteers were recruited to undertake the work. It was stipulated that in order to carry out the work without any question of doubt as to the ultimate destination of the foodstuffs, this transportation and delivery should be under the members of this Commission.

It was also found that in order to secure the equitable distribution of the food throughout Belgium the members of the Commission had to take certain administrative duties but in any event the primary *raison d'être* lies in the guarantees which were given the English Government.

Time and again misrepresentations have been made to the English Government by ill-willed persons (and even in America) as to the attitude of the German officials in Belgium and it has only been by the explanation of the detailed supervision of our members and the completeness of our records, which show the destination of every sack of wheat which comes into Belgium, that we were able to keep open the road of these foodstuffs through the British fleet, and Your Excellency can scarcely realize the slenderness of the thread of sentiment which enables us to keep this stream of foodstuffs flowing into Belgium.

The constant assurances of the American Minister in Brussels based upon personal assurances of the various delegates and their accords, have been necessary and thus far sufficient to allay the various movements antagonistic to the continuation of this work.

We have now been engaged upon this work for nearly four months; there have been issued at one time or another a good many passes to the people engaged in this work, and I do not think that Your Excellency could point to a single instance where these passes when issued to bona fide representatives have been misused or that a single criticism can be made as to the scrupulous care with which all our relations have been carried out.

In order to obtain the character of men whose devotion to humanitarian efforts is such that they can be depended upon from every point of view we have had to operate the whole of this work with volunteers because we could not secure for a monetary payment men of the character of those now engaged in this labor. I therefore put it up to Your Excellency that this body of men are worthy of the fullest confidence and that they are gentlemen who would scorn the imputation of espionage or other improper conduct on their part. Dependent as we are on volunteers there is necessarily more recruiting and departure of new men than would be necessary in a commercial organization.

Inasmuch as the whole body of men engaged upon the arduous labor of handling 90,000,000 kilos of foodstuffs per month are volunteers, it is hopeless for me to induce these men to remain or to secure new men if they are to be made subject to the whims of every local "Kommandantur"; and on the other hand we cannot take the responsibility of the necessary assurances to the American public who subscribe so generously, and to other interested governments, unless we have men of this character and unless we are able to carry on our daily work of supervision, inspection, and accounts with the necessary freedom of movement.

Although I feel deeply the responsibility, I am compelled to assure Your Excellency that unless we can establish a basis of confidential and friendly relations and trust from the German authorities, we shall be compelled to withdraw and the flow of the stream of foodstuffs into Belgium from outside countries must necessarily cease.

We feel that while our service is personally beneficial to the Belgian civil population it is nevertheless of the utmost importance to the Germans from every point of view.

I do not wish to ask for anything which cannot be properly given under the circumstances, but it does seem to me that it would be possible and entirely reasonable to detail some member of the German pass bureau, who could devote himself to our necessities, and who should have instructions to treat our applications on a very liberal and expeditious basis; that passes should be issued to certain members of our inspection staff to move throughout the occupation zone, to others to move freely through the special provinces where they are assigned and to go to and from Brussels; and to others, transportation service to move freely over the Holland frontier. In the manner which I described last night by which the American Minister should himself approve every application for passes, we should have given further assurances to Your Excellency of the character of the men whom we have associated with us.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the expression of my high consideration.

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 32

Letter,
VON BISSING TO HEINEMAN (FOR HOOVER), stating the regulations and limitations laid down for the American delegates

BRUSSELS, 20 February 1915

DEAR MR. HEINEMAN:

I am sorry that I am unable to reply directly to Mr. Hoover's letter of February 13, as he is now in London.

I therefore address my answer to you with the request that you inform Mr. Hoover of its contents.

In the first place I desire to emphasize that I also share your opinion that, in view of the great importance and difficulty of the undertaking originated by you, there is need of a "firm basis of confidence, of friendly and confidential co-operation between the German authorities and yourself."

This confidence I am conscious of having fully shown you hitherto in every respect, and I gladly take the opportunity to assure you that in the future also I shall gladly support you, in your beneficent and humanitarian endeavors. I shall do this as far as possible and especially as far as it accords with the principle, which I consider irrefutable, that I shall continue to hold in my own hands the control in all branches of the administration of the country entrusted to me.

After having now heard the report of the gentlemen entrusted by me to confer with you and to learn your wishes, I submit to you herewith the decisions which I have reached:

In accordance with the fact mutually agreed to in yesterday's conferences, that in all respects the organization of the undertaking had, from the beginning and now has, as its object the establishment of a storehouse in each province under the control of the American Commission with the Belgian Comité National as the distributing agency within the provinces (seven governments besides Ghent), I desire:

1. That henceforth there shall be no alteration in this fundamental arrangement.

2. I desire further:

a) That the number of gentlemen in the active service of both Commissions (Belgian and American) be restricted as much as possible.

b) That the frequent changes in the personnel, which cannot be of advantage to the undertaking in view of its importance and difficulty, be discontinued as far as feasible.

c) That only in quite special exceptional cases "donors" be admitted.

All these are requests which you yourself, I was glad to note, admit and whose fulfilment you had distinctly in mind as in harmony with our own wishes.

3. Strict adherence must be kept to the agreement that the gentlemen traveling to Holland shall pass the frontier exclusively at Putte, and also that they communicate their presence (in accordance with already established custom, as you declared) to the German authorities (governors, chiefs of the districts, local commanders) .

4. I have noted in accord with your information, that the necessary pneumatic tires and benzine are provided by yourself.

5. I have furthermore noted that at the present time for the Commission for Relief there are:

a) About 30 to 35 gentlemen in the provinces who travel thence to Brussels.

b) About 4 gentlemen stationed in Brussels who desire to make inspection trips to all provinces (for which latter G.G. passes would be required).

c) About 5 or 6 gentlemen traveling between Holland and Belgium, and that this number (totalling about 45), will be reduced to a total of about 25 after April 15.

And that for the Comité National

d) About 4 Belgian gentlemen wish to travel on inspection trips to the whole territory of the General Government, for whom also 4 G.G. passes would be required.

e) And about 10 gentlemen from Brussels for inspection trips to individual provinces.

f) For the gentlemen stationed in the provinces engaged in distributing supplies passes will be assigned by the governors, as explained to you.

Taking as a basis the foregoing numbers stated by you, I will consent to the following:

(1) That in accordance with your wishes the American Minister Mr. Whitlock shall propose for passes those gentlemen desired by him for whose trustworthiness he thereby assumes the responsibility.

That the official or officer ordered from here to the office of the Commission shall hand over these proposals to Section II d. of the General Government.

And that this section permit the issuance of the desired passes by the Passzentrale.

(2) I shall furthermore give the assurance that there shall be no bodily searching of the gentlemen journeying to and from Holland unless in well-founded cases of suspicion such a searching shall be ordered by the General Government itself.

(3) For yourself and Mr. Connett I shall when requested each time, deliver G.G. passes for railway journeys to Ghent, and for the four gentlemen of your Commission stationed in Brussels, as well as the four members of the Executive Committee of the Belgian Comité, similar passes for their inspection trips from Brussels to the provinces.

(4) Your wishes regarding passes for additional passengers will be met as far as possible.

With deep consideration, I am very truly yours

(Signed) FREIHERR VON BISSING
Generaloberst

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 33

Letter,
HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, telling of the rumors in England of misuse of relief supplies by Germans, the insistence of the British Government on C.R.B. responsibility for distribution, and the need of more delegates

LONDON, 6 March 1915

His Excellency Brand Whitlock Brussels

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

I have had a severe drilling this week from the English Government with regard to our whole organization in Belgium. As you can imagine from the international disputes which have been going on with regard to provisioning the civil population, as distinguished from the military population, it seems to have occurred to the English Government to have an investigation as to whether or no we were carrying out our guarantees, and they seem to have made some considerable inquiry in Belgium. The constant lying reports which appear in the English press with regard to our foodstuffs being taken by the Germans or devoted to their requisitions in the operation zone, seem to have combined to put in their minds a great deal of suspicion. In the first instance they wanted to know how many people we had in Belgium superintending this distribution and pointed out that under the later

agreement this Commission was, itself, entirely responsible for the distribution and they were not prepared to accept the Comité National or any other organization than this as the responsible controllers. I told them we had about fifty Americans at work, and they were not satisfied that this was an adequate number to control so large a concern. They also pointed out to me that they had made inquiries with regard to Messrs. Heineman and Hulse, who occupy prominent positions in our Belgian organization, and that, while they were prepared to accept our assurance that these gentlemen were Americans and entirely neutral and desirous only of serving the Belgians, nevertheless they had been many years employed by and associated with prominent German concerns and they were not prepared to consent to their having the direction of the distribution in Belgium. I assured them that the direction was in the hands of Mr. Connett, as to whose standing I produced credentials. I assured them that we kept accurate accounts and statistics by which we can show the destination of all of these foodstuffs, and they have asked for particulars in the form of a monthly report. Altogether, I view with a great deal of alarm the situation from the English point of view, as the military party here is gaining ascendancy daily and we cannot afford to allow any lapse in our administration and responsibility upon which they can hang complaints. I am assured that if the knowledge came to them that our staff had been limited to twenty-five members they would at once say that this is absolutely inadequate and they are not satisfied that we are physically able to execute our guarantees. Knowing as I do, the ability and devotion of Messrs. Heineman and Hulse I have obviously made as strong a case as I am capable of. Nevertheless, I am afraid that, in order to serve the Belgian people to the best end, it may be necessary for these gentlemen to show some self-denial in the prominence of their positions.

We, of course, worry on from day to day as best we can, but I think you should be advised of this rather acute situation and I am positive that the return home of a considerable number of our staff without their places being filled, will precipitate the situation, which may be positively disastrous.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 34

Telegram,
HOOVER TO GERARD, concerning the extension of relief to Northern France, the need of more American delegates, and advising the Ambassador to approach the German Government for necessary permission

LONDON, 9 March 1915

Relief Commission, Rotterdam

Please send following telegram to Mr. Gerard, Berlin:

Am able to secure subscription considerable sums of money from charitable institutions for feeding French people south of Belgian frontier. In order, however, to secure this money it is necessary for me to create a special department Commission for Relief in Belgium in co-operation with National Committee in Brussels in order that foodstuffs and funds may be handled and accounted for properly. It is also necessary that we should have undertaking from German Government that these foodstuffs will not be interfered with in any manner and that we shall be allowed to place in this territory at least five American members of Commission and shall have right to move about in full superintendence of the work of distribution. I am not allowed to proceed with shipments until I have these guarantees in hand, and as the matter is one of urgent humanitarian interest I trust that you will again lend us your kindly services and that the German Government will meet us in a liberal and prompt manner. We have been notified by Governor-General, Brussels, to reduce our staff in Belgium to twenty-five members by early April and that passes to these gentlemen will only be issued under great restrictions and apparently through the intermediary of Mr. Heineman. We are entirely discouraged by this attitude of local authorities. Do not believe that it can be in line with intention German Government toward us and trust you will take it up with them. Fundamental fact is that in order for us to give proper executive control to distribution of this foodstuff, to properly account to its donors, and above all to give credibility to our assurances to the Allied Governments as to their guarantees, it is absolutely necessary for us to have the right to at least fifty people, to put any such number of staff into Belgium as may be reasonable to meet our own emergencies. Their passes must be issued directly on certificate of Mr. Whitlock and on liberal basis of movement. After four months the Germans cannot point to one single instance of lack of extreme care on the part of this Commission in maintaining an absolutely neutral and honest attitude toward them. The men who have volunteered for this humanitarian service are not engaged in espionage or similar transactions.

Wish you would take the first opportunity of communicating text of this telegram by messenger to Connett, Whitlock.

HOOVER

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DOCUMENT NO. 35

Letter,

HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, referring to von Bissing's annoyance over preceding

telegram and stressing the delicate situation in England caused by the Governor-General's restrictions on C.R.B. delegates

LONDON, 18 March 1915

His Excellency Brand Whitlock Brussels

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

On receipt of his Excellency General von Bissing's letter requesting us to reduce our staff of supervisors in Belgium considerably, I telegraphed openly to Ambassador Gerard in Berlin, asking him if he would interest himself in obtaining an amelioration of this condition.

I understand now that this action of mine has created some feeling, either with His Excellency or with His Excellency's staff, that I was endeavoring to go over their heads in this matter.

You will of course recollect that any important phase in this work must be communicated to all the American Ambassadors concerned, as they have the grave responsibility of the guarantees.

This, however, is aside from the point, which is that upon the Government here having obtained knowledge of this limitation, I had a perfect storm about my ears, on the question as to whether or not we are in a position to execute the necessary guarantees which this Government insists on as a condition for allowing these foodstuffs into Belgium, and this matter has been called to Ambassador Page's attention. It is probably impossible for me to make clear to you and the gentlemen in Brussels by what a delicate balance this whole business continues, in view of the complete conviction of the English military authorities that the whole of this effort is to their disadvantage and is profoundly to the advantage of the Germans. My action of telegraphing to Mr. Gerard in this matter thus was to satisfy them here that we were doing everything possible to allay the storm that they had created, and I trust that in doing so I sufficiently satisfied the authorities here, so that we may have again escaped being closed down upon from this end. As you are fully aware, it is our one desire to so conduct this business that it shall have the absolute confidence of both sides, and seeing the very natural antagonism which exists between them, it becomes a mighty difficult job. Our German friends do not always realize how easy it is to plunge us into difficulties with the English---and vice versa.

In addition to such difficulties as to the above, you may appreciate something of what is going on here when I tell you that we are at present £1,400,000 in debt, and the failure to so far reach any basis of finance with the German authorities which can be carried out is itself sufficiently worrying. Not that I object to taking this

personal liability on myself, but if I cannot meet it, it simply means that the food supply in Belgium will cease.

I trust that if His Excellency the Governor has been offended with regard to my action, you will interest yourself in giving to him the above explanation and will perhaps endeavor to impress upon him the almost indescribable difficulties which we encounter in this work.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER II, continued

4. The German Authorities and Relief Control. June-July 1915

The controversy over the freedom of action of the Commission's representatives proved to be the first phase in a much more vital conflict affecting the whole matter of control of relief. The rapid expansion of the relief organization in scope and importance, which the occupation authorities had not anticipated, convinced them that German interests and position in Belgium required a limitation of and greater official participation in relief measures. General von Bissing, thereupon, issued instructions which, in effect, would place the distribution of relief through the C.N. under German control. This policy, Hoover, the Belgians, the patron ministers, and finally the British Government energetically opposed, for it threatened the very foundation of relief since it undermined the position of the Commission as the guarantor for the equitable and exclusive use of relief supplies for Belgian Civilians.

DOCUMENT NO. 36

Letter,
VON BISSING TO WHITLOCK, objecting to extension of activities of C.N.,
particularly the help given to the unemployed

BRUSSELS, 26 June 1915

*To His Excellency, Mr. Brand Whitlock
Minister of the United States of America in Brussels*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have the honor to bring to your knowledge some measures which I have believed it my duty to take concerning the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The protection and favors which I have never ceased to grant to this institution are proof of the interest I bear this Comité and its benevolent activity in favor of the Belgian population.

It has nevertheless become clear that the sphere of the Comité's activity has assumed an extension which had not been foreseen at the time of its creation. Consequently I have considered it necessary that the activity of the Comité be clearly delimited and that the mutual relations of the administration under my orders and of the sub-organizations of the Comité be regulated in such a way as to avoid the friction which necessarily was hindering the labors of the said Comité.

For this reason and also that a deeper knowledge of the method of working of the Comité may permit the authorities of the country to facilitate the Comité's work while at the same time preventing transgressions of the eventual powers of the sub-organization, I have issued instructions to the governors under my orders, the substance of which I have the honor to communicate hereinafter to Your Excellency:

The authorities in the provinces shall have as their duty to keep themselves informed of the activity of the numerous sub-organizations of the Comité National in their district. The presidents of the Civil Administration of the provinces shall endeavor to maintain a permanent contact with the directors of the committees in their chief towns. This contact would be established in the most useful way if the presidents were present at the regular meetings of these committees, as has moreover been the case for some months in the province of Hainaut. It is desirable that the German civil commissioners attached to the district commanders act in similar manner vis-à-vis the regional committees of their districts.

The censorship of the correspondence of the committees shall henceforth be exercised by the civil authorities (German civil presidents and commissioners) instead of and in lieu of the military authorities who have exercised it hitherto.

The committees will not be allowed to give instructions direct to the communes; they will not be permitted to make inquiries, to send interrogatory lists or circulars to the communes, nor have the latter make out any lists or statistics without first having consulted the president or the German civil commissioner. The committees may not make any rules or regulations with the communes in their favour. All measures of this kind must be proposed to the competent president or commissioner.

Since every restraint upon personal liberty or liberty of commerce is forbidden, it is necessary that no verbal or written threat pronounced or executed, against any person or any commune be permitted, whether to stop the supply of food, or to exact for this food a higher price, or to refuse relief.

As a general rule the committees should be forbidden to make use of any pressure of whatsoever sort to force communes or individuals to obey instructions. All measures to be taken against these latter should be proposed by the committee to competent authorities, who shall give to such measures whatever sequence they shall judge wise.

The monthly statements of the forecasts of receipts and expenditures established by the provincial committees must be communicated to the presidents of the German Civil Administration. The latter will thus be enabled to remain constantly informed regarding the movement of the funds of these committees.

In addition to the general rules enumerated above I have also given the following instructions for a certain number of individual cases:

Concerning the relief to be granted to those out of work the presidents shall take care that the latter do not hinder the resumption of work by the laboring population. Moreover relief cannot be given to workmen who refuse remunerative labor.

Since I myself have instituted estimates of the damages caused by the war, no inquiry of the Comité on this subject, as well as on the subject of the requisitions of the German troops, can be authorized.

Since the Comité has obtained from the communes the grant of police powers to its inspectors vis-à-vis the millers, bakers, etc., and since the communes have subscribed to the obligation to have the sanctions exacted by the inspectors carried out, all measures of this kind must be revoked since the administration under my orders is alone qualified to exact these measures. The supervisors of the Comité or of the Commission for Relief in Belgium have the right to make inquiries and statements regarding the abuses committed by the millers, bakers, etc., but their right is limited to making these statements. They are allowed to communicate these afterwards to the competent authorities with request to give to the statements such sequence as these may require.

No measures of coercion exercised vis-à-vis the communes or individuals for the obtaining of funds destined to constitute a floating capital or for any other use can be authorized.

The presidents of the Civil Administration shall come to an understanding with the directors of the committees in order to reduce as much as possible the price of food products.

Every tendency on the part of the Comité to monopolize the distribution of relief in Belgium must be forbidden.

The Principle must be maintained that all other organizations of benevolence, above all the Belgian Red Cross, have the right to perform their functions adjacent to and independent of the Comité.

I have no doubt that these measures taken by myself are in conformity with the intentions of Your Excellency. I have all the less reason to doubt this, because I have always had at heart to respect scrupulously the arrangements concluded with the government represented by Your Excellency, regarding the alimentation of the Belgian population. Your Excellency will have taken into cognizance the fact that all the measures outlined have as sole purpose the maintenance of rights which belong to the occupant of the country in conformity to international conventions.

I flatter myself with the hope that Your Excellency will share my conviction that the line of conduct thus traced for my administration will serve to guarantee a common and useful work, founded on mutual confidence, for the welfare of the Belgian population.

I beg Your Excellency to be so kind as to communicate the preceding to the Comité National, and I take this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my high esteem.

(Signed) FREIHERR VON BISSING
Generaloberst

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 37

Letter,
HOOVER TO PAGE, regarding the issue raised by the Germans: the paying of railway men to maintain a state of strike and attempts to use the C.R.B. as channel of payment to support workers refusing employment to embarrassment of the Germans

LONDON, 5 July 1915

His Excellency, The Hon. Walter Page, American Ambassador, London

DEAR MR. PAGE:

There are two or three matters revolving around this Commission at the present moment which fill us with the greatest anxiety, and I therefore wish to formulate and lay them before you for your advice and consideration.

1. Upon my arrival in Belgium on the 9th June I learned that an investigation by the German military authorities was in progress as regards the Comité National and, in effect, into our own organization in Belgium. This investigation appears to have arisen over a device for relief which had been adopted by the Comité National some few weeks previously, by which they undertook to make payments to unemployed workmen on the lines of some old Belgian law on the subject. The German military authorities gained a suspicion that these payments were of political import in producing strike conditions against public and other services in the country. My own impression of them is that this method of relief was socially wrongly founded as it was in effect giving money as a right to the unemployed rather than giving actual food as an emergency support pending employment. It appeared that the particular relief scheme had not met the approval of the whole Comité National but had been more or less imposed by the members of the socialistic and syndicalist tendencies as representing their section of the community. The Commission for Relief had but little difficulty in showing that they had no connection with this affair in any of its political phases. The ground of German suspicions, however, appears to revolve on certain facts which you will recollect I have laid before you from time to time, in that the Belgian military authorities had smuggled monies into Belgium with which to pay railway workmen and others to maintain a state of strike, and that this form of relief given by the Comité National more or less effected the same result.

You will also recollect that a great deal of pressure was placed upon us from time to time from December until April, often when we were hard up for money, to induce us to accept large remittances to be made to Belgium through our exchange department, these remittances to be for distribution to these railway employees; and you will recollect that not only did we refuse to have any association with this scheme or accept money for such purposes, but also that we vigorously protested against the whole act, both as to smuggling the money in, or any other feature of it, as being one which would sooner or later precipitate upon the Belgian people rigorous military action. In any case, these events have called the whole future of the Comité National into question, and as the result of this investigation a letter has been addressed to the Comité National by General von Bissing, copy of which I enclose. We are fearful that this letter may be followed by stipulations which will bring us into direct conflict with the undertakings given by the Allied Governments. The general limitations placed by these Governments on imports have the following intrinsic effects:

a) This Commission, as an institution, guarantees that foodstuffs imported shall reach the civil population only.

b) The limitations placed upon the amount of imported foodstuffs are based on a ration of 250 grams of flour per them per capita and certain other sundry commodities in supplement thereto.

It appears to us that a consequential obligation in this matter is to see that this foodstuff is distributed equitably over the entire Population and in general, that there shall be no interference by the German military authorities with the distribution of the food. It also appears to us that, as a humanitarian body, we should insist that rich and poor should be treated alike, and the constraintment of our finance is a further limitation placed on the amount of foodstuffs available. It is therefore necessary to enforce some kind of restriction on consumption as the above imports amount to only about one-third of the normal consumption. Hitherto we have done this entirely by indirection, in the limitation of the amount of the food in a given commune and the stipulation with bakers and other distributing agencies that this maximum shall be tendered to each person whom they are authorized to serve. Our only power of enforcement has been to cut off the supply to any given distributing agency which did not faithfully carry out these arrangements. You will see that General von Bissing's letter cuts straight across these arrangements.

2. The German military authorities in Northern France and Belgium have shown considerable evidence of wanting to use the food supply which we furnish to the people as a weapon to force them into labor on behalf of the German army. You will recollect that it is a fundamental to the agreement with the Allied Governments, that the food shall be distributed without interference. Moreover, it appears to us that this action on their part is a violation of the Hague Convention and is, in effect, using us, a neutral body, for unneutral purposes. We can only retort by cutting off the food supply or food supplies to large sections; but this, in turn, puts us up as censors and regulators of the acts of the German Army, and in any event it is the innocent population who suffer. Such a positive act on their part has taken place at Roubaix, and Mr. Crosby has suspended the whole shipment to the province, a little in the hope that the military authorities will be brought to a recognition of the fact that we cannot be used in this manner. In view of the event at Roubaix, we have addressed the enclosed letter to the French Embassy, asking them for their instructions, and it also appears to us that the letter of General von Bissing which I refer to above, has running through it a desire on the part of the German military authorities, by interference with the food distribution, to direct it as a weapon to compel the population to labor. If this labor were entirely of non-military value it would be an admirable social improvement. I enclose herewith a memorandum which I have handed to the Foreign Office, as the result of conferences with them, on the general question of imports and exports from Belgium, as bearing on the stimulation of non-contraband industry.

3. The whole nature of the acts set out above fills our minds with some forbodings. These things have not yet come to a positive and final issue. If they cannot be

straightened out by negotiation within ourselves, it appears to me that the greatest catastrophe which could happen may ensue, i.e., that this work may break down on points of minor issue between the belligerent Powers; and if such an event becomes imminent I should be glad if you could consider whether it would be feasible, in view of the importance of this work, that the whole of the Ambassadors who comprise our Honorary Chairmen should have a meeting in Holland, at which attendance could be had from both the German and English Governments, with a view to placing the work of this Commission on a definite and feasible basis.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 38

Letter,
GREY TO PAGE, objecting to German efforts to control relief and restating the British Government's conditions under which relief is to be permitted

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
17 July 1915

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I am much obliged for Your Excellency's letter of the 13th instant, enclosing a copy of General von Bissing's letter of June 26th to the patrons of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation at Brussels, together with a copy of Mr. Whitlock's reply thereto.

Since this correspondence took place, Your Excellency has been good enough to transmit a copy of my letter of July 7th to Mr. Whitlock, who will therefore now be fully acquainted with the views of His Majesty's Government, and will be in a position to explain that spirit of non-interference in which His Majesty's Government intend to act, and in which they intend to insist that the German authorities shall also act, towards the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National in all matters which fall within the functions of those bodies. It is on this spirit, and not on the strict belligerent rights of either government, that the whole work of relief is based, and the introduction into these discussions of any such claims of right cannot but be fatal to the continuance of that work. It will be clear to Your Excellency and to Mr. Whitlock how far General Bissing's letter is in accord with this spirit.

I do not intend to enter into a discussion of the various technical points of administration raised by General von Bissing. It is enough to say that the decision on these points must be governed, in general, by the spirit I have mentioned, and that the decision on each particular point must be in accord with the various definite conditions which I have laid down in correspondence with Your Excellency and with the Commission from time to time since the work of the Commission began. These definite conditions represent the absolute minimum on which His Majesty's Government can allow that work to continue. In order that there may be no misunderstanding as to the nature of these stipulations I here recapitulate them, and I must ask that the Commission and the Comité National shall enter into no discussions regarding the limits or methods of their work except upon the basis of these fundamental undertakings:

1. The Commission guarantees that the foodstuffs imported shall be consumed solely by the Belgian civil population.
2. No foodstuffs shall be imported which will, in effect, replace any foodstuffs requisitioned or purchased in Belgium by the German authorities.
3. Such commodities as may be acquired by the Commission for shipment into Belgium are to be consigned to the Commission for Relief in Belgium at their warehouses in Belgium and shall remain in the sole charge, and under complete control, of the Commission or its agents until issued to the Sub-committees of the Comité National in Belgium. These Sub-committees shall in their turn enter into sole charge and control of these commodities.
4. The only commodities imported into Belgium by the Commission shall be wheat and wheat flour, peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize for human consumption. Medical supplies destined and used solely for the civil population may also be imported as in the past, under the same guarantees.
5. The quantity of wheat and wheat flour imported shall not exceed sixty thousand metric tons per month and shall after the present harvest be reduced to such a monthly amount as will supplement the yield of the harvest during the period of its distribution.
6. The quantities of the commodities to be imported other than wheat and wheat flour shall be fixed from time to time in agreement with His Majesty's Government.
7. The whole yield of the present harvest of breadstuffs in Belgium shall be acquired by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, and shall be held, controlled, and distributed by them alone, precisely in the same manner and under the same guarantees as the imported foodstuffs.

8. It is the duty of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to satisfy itself that all foodstuffs imported or acquired as above shall be distributed by itself and the Comité National with justice and equality over the entire civil population, and there shall be no interference of any kind whatever by the German authorities either in the sale of these foodstuffs or in their free distribution in the way of relief to those whom the Commission and the Comité National shall consider deserving of such relief.

9. The Commission for Relief in Belgium shall be maintained in its organisation and functions so long as these imports continue and shall remain under the patronage of Your Excellency and the Spanish Ambassador. The actual executive work of the Commission shall continue to be presided over by a responsible Chairman and Directors, and these officials together with all the members of the Commission shall be of neutral nationality and their selection shall in each case be approved either by Your Excellency or by the Spanish Ambassador as Patrons, or by both. The Commission shall maintain in Belgium a sufficient staff and have sufficient freedom of movement to enable them at all times to satisfy themselves that all the above conditions are maintained.

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 39

Letter,

WHITLOCK TO PAGE, reporting German agreement to the British conditions and referring to difficulties connected with negotiations concerning the new harvest

BRUSSELS, 19 July 1915

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

My colleague, the Spanish Minister, and I have had two long conversations with Baron von der Lancken in reference to the note of His Britannic Majesty's Government which you sent to me the other day, in which are set forth the conditions under which the British Government will consent to the continuance of the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National in feeding the civil population in Belgium.

I am pleased to be able to inform you that we are now able to say that the German authorities accept the principles laid down in the note, and that the work of the Commission will therefore go on under the conditions set forth. This declaration was formally and officially made at the conclusion this afternoon of our second long conference and will be produced in writing immediately and signed by the

Governor-General. Upon the receipt of the note, which will be in a day or so, I shall promptly forward it to you; but I wish to apprise you promptly of this fortunate conclusion of our negotiations in order that there may be no misunderstanding or possible interruption of the work of ravitaillement.

It would be difficult to give you an idea of all the difficulties of the hard job, and of the amount of trouble we have had during the last month with all these new negotiations over the new harvest.

I am ninety-five years older than I was, and I wish I were on an uninhabited island up in the Georgian Bay!

I am, my dear colleague,

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

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DOCUMENT NO. 40

Letter,

BARON VON DER LANCKEN([21](#)) TO WHITLOCK, giving formal undertaking of the Germans to agree to British conditions

BRUSSELS, 29 July 1915

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have had the honor of receiving the letter which Your Excellency was pleased to transmit to me under date of July 16, 1915([22](#)) concerning the revictualing of Belgium by the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

I was happy to learn that, as a result of the measures which Your Excellency, as well as His Excellency the Minister of Spain had been so kind as to undertake, the British Government has pledged itself to facilitate until the harvest of 1916 the importation into Belgium of the products necessary for the feeding of the Belgian civil population within the conditions upon the principle of which I have already had the pleasure of placing myself in accord with Your Excellency.

I have already had the occasion to make known to Your Excellency that the Governor-General has declared himself agreed in principle that the work of revictualing of Belgium continue exactly, for the benefit of the population of that country, under the conditions which were formulated through the agreements

entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

As to the details of these agreements I am glad to be able to inform Your Excellency that the Governor-General admits the following principles, which, I am sure, are the same as those admitted by Your Excellency, to wit:

That the feeding and support of the Belgian civil population must continue to be separated from the feeding and support of the German Army, and that the decisions made in this sense by the Governor-General in accord with the protecting ministers [MM. les Protecteurs] shall be carried out in all respects.

That the Belgian population alone shall derive benefit from the aid which is distributed by the Comité National.

That the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall be able to enjoy all liberty of action necessary for them to be in a position to fulfil the mission which has devolved upon them through the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

That the Governor-General shall never make use of the Comité National to force the Belgian population to employ itself in the service of the German Army contrary to the stipulations of the Hague conventions.

That the Comité National shall be the intermediary in the purchase of the harvest of grains in the territory placed under the orders of the Governor-General in Belgium, and that the distribution of these grains shall be done through the care of the said Comité in the same manner as the distributions of the imported goods; that likewise the Comité shall continue to distribute help in kind to the needy under the conditions determined by the previous agreements made between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

I have taken note of the communication of Your Excellency that the British Government will facilitate, in addition to the importation of grains, the importation likewise of peas, bacon, beans, rice, lard, and maize for human consumption, as long as the importation of these articles does not represent the replacing of other articles requisitioned by order of the Governor-General.

I have likewise taken note that Your Excellency will cause to be communicated to the British Government the modifications which might be brought by the Governor-General to the ensemble of the regulations decided upon by the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

In conformity with the request which Your Excellency is pleased to make of me in his letter, I have the honor, in the name of the Governor-General, to confirm to Your Excellency the assurances and guarantees previously given and which are specified in the preceding stipulations.

I have communicated to the Governor-General the assurance which Your Excellency was pleased to give me, that the work patronized by Your Excellency shall continue to exercise its beneficent action under the conditions of strict neutrality justifying the aid and the protection which the Governor-General and the authorities placed under his orders have not ceased to bring to this institution since its creation.

The Governor-General is happy to state that the renewed assurance to this effect which Your Excellency has been pleased to give, constitutes for him a guarantee that the humanitarian purpose of this work can be pursued without injury to the rights which accrue to the occupant of the country, and to the interests of which he has charge.

I embrace this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my deep consideration.

(Signed) LANCKEN

[Translation]

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5. Adjustment of Functions of C.R.B. and C.N. July 1915

From its inception in October 1914 to July 1915 the Commission had encountered and overcome a series of forbidding diplomatic, financial, and physical obstacles, had imported 650,000 tons of provisions costing \$44,000,000, and a nation of over 9,000,000 had been saved from famine. At the end of these eight months the Commission's stocks afloat and contracted for assured for a few months at least a steady flow of the stream of supplies.

Though the contributions to relief had fallen away considerably after the first months' generosity, Hoover had secured, after arduous negotiations, a basic income for the undertaking from Allied Government sources.⁽²³⁾ The Germans, moreover, were not only living up to their original guarantees as to non-interference with imported supplies, but had agreed, after more negotiations, to the principle that native crops would be reserved for the civil population.⁽²⁴⁾ The activities of the Commission were known all over the world and officially and unofficially it was the recognized channel of relief in the occupied territories. Its numerous Committees engaged in the collection of gifts were in every country, and its

administrative agencies were established in the principal ports of North and South America and in India and Australasia. The C.R.B. flag on the high seas was a well-known and respected emblem. Within Belgium the distribution of relief as has been described was controlled by the Commission with the directors in Brussels and delegates throughout the provinces, and by the Comité National with its machinery extending down to the smallest commune embracing a membership of some 40,000 individuals. American intervention had contributed decisively in breaking through the difficulties that blocked the enterprise in the beginning; now this path appeared hopefully straight and clear.

DOCUMENT NO. 41

Procès-Verbal

of a meeting in Brussels between representatives of the C.R.B. and the C.N., 20 July 1915, setting forth the functions of the two organizations

BRUSSELS, 20 July 1915

It was proposed by the Commission for Relief in Belgium that it was desirable to consider if the time had now arrived when the retirement of the Commission from the relief work in Belgium should be considered. The points advanced by the Commission for consideration in discussion of this proposal are as follows:

1. While initially, owing to the disorganization and restriction of movement and meeting, the Comité National in its components of provincial and communal committees required the assistance of the members of the Commission in building up and carrying on its organization, the now improved situation and the more liberal attitude of the military authorities in these particulars no longer, for this reason, require our active participation in executive work.
2. The Belgian people have so far recuperated from the total financial disorganization that they are now able, through their own resources and through the resources placed at their disposal by the Belgian Government at Le Havre, together with a charitable income from abroad, not only to finance the ravitaillement, but also in a general way to undertake the care of the destitute, and that therefore, at some early date, no further appeals for the charity of the world in their support is necessary, or if necessary, they could be made by the C.N.
3. The demonstration, by eight months' experience, that the Germans scrupulously perform their undertakings with regard to non-interference in the distribution and consumption of the imported foodstuffs, renders the sponsorship of a neutral body less important, and it is felt by the Commission, in view of this experience, that the Allied Governments should be approached to now accept the assurances of their

own allies, the Belgians, and that the whole line of guarantees can quite properly be transferred from the commission for Relief in Belgium to the Comité National.

4. The joint organizations having carried through the negotiations by which the native foodstuff production in Belgium is conserved to the civil population in the occupation zone, and a reasonable arrangement in prospect for the Etappen, the rôle performed by the Commission for Relief in Belgium in conserving native food supplies has become less important.

In Summary.---The sole object of the Americans in their whole work in Belgium has been embraced in one expression: "To help the Belgians." The Belgian people obviously require no help from any other nationality the moment they are in position to obtain free play to their abilities and resources, and it appears to the members of the Commission that the general political situation has now ameliorated to a point where there is free play obtainable, at least to such an extent as is required for the purposes of this work. Therefore, the political, financial, and administrative necessity of American administrative help having now been nearly consummated, it appears to the members of the Commission that we should prepare the necessary steps for retirement from the situation. This retirement necessarily must take place gradually, and it is the view of the Commission that it could be consummated by the middle of October, thus marking the complete year of service.

II

The Comité National stated it could not agree to the above views, and that it was impossible that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should retire for the following reasons:

1. The Belgians had no certainty of freedom of movement or meeting, either internally or across frontiers, which would enable them to carry on the large trading operations involved in the ravitaillement.

2. The Commission for Relief in Belgium, being an independent and neutral body, founded on merely humanitarian principles, has acted and must continue to act as the guardian of the Belgian people; the presence of its members in Belgium, if for no other reason, gives confidence of protection and continuity of the food supply to the entire people, and tends to maintain order; its American complexion, and the support which it holds among humanitarian people the world over, is in itself a guarantee that the stream of foodstuffs will not be interfered with by either of the belligerents.

3. The Comité National does not conceive that the fresh and difficult problems which constantly arise will require less moral and diplomatic support than hitherto.

4. The disorganization of Belgium, while somewhat ameliorated, is still such as to make absolutely necessary the presence of a controlling body in the administration of the ravitaillement and aid to the destitute, because this function gives a cohesive character to the national, provincial, and communal committees which would break down if American aid were withdrawn.

5. The present financial resources of the two committees are precarious, and may at any time again require the energetic intervention of the Americans, either in banking arrangements or in charity.

6. In summary, the Comité National is certain that it could not go on without (1) the political and moral support of the Commission; (2) that the executive work could not continue without the co-operation of the Commission; and (3) that the finance, purchase, and transport operations are impossible at the present time by Belgians alone.

Therefore, the Comité National not only protests at the idea of withdrawal, but specifically requests the Commission to continue its activities without idea of cessation.

III

On the above grounds it is decided that the ravitaillement and care of the destitute in Belgium shall continue as a joint undertaking of the Comité National and the Commission for Relief. In order that the future administrative relations of each may be more clearly defined, it is agreed:

1. For administrative purposes the functions of both institutions are continued in the following three departments:

a) The Provisioning Department, for the ravitaillement of the entire population.

b) The Benevolent Department, for the care of the destitute.

c) The Exchange Department, for facilitating financial operations.

2. *Provisioning Department.*---The chief executives of the C.N. and C.R.B. will from time to time determine in consultation

a) The nature and quantities of foodstuffs to be purchased abroad.

b) The prices at which they are to be sold by the C.R.B. to the C.N. and by them to the subcommittees and the public.

c) The regional distribution of these foodstuffs in Belgium, together with the bread questions of rations and milling percentage, etc. These goods will be delivered by

the C.R.B. to the regional warehouses, and the executive responsibility of the C.R.B. ceases upon delivery of the foodstuffs to the regional warehouses (the mills being considered regional warehouses for this purpose); the whole of the distribution after that point being undertaken by the C.N. and its component committees.

3. *Benevolent Department* (Secours ordinaire).---In the care of the destitute, it is agreed that the gifts entrusted by the benevolent world for the benefit of the destitute in Belgium shall be, together with the profits of the C.R.B. on its Provisioning Department, remitted to the C.N. through the Exchange Department of the C.R.B. in the form of a monthly subvention, of such amount as may be determined by the executive heads of the two bodies from time to time. These moneys and gifts shall be distributed as subventions from the C.N. to the provincial committees and other benevolent organizations, and they shall be allocated as a supplement to the other resources of the various subcommittees in proportion to the actual necessities of these bodies. It is understood that all these gifts are to be used by local organizations for the provision of "relief in kind." In order that the C.R.B. may properly account to the donors of these funds for the use of their gifts, the C.N. undertakes to furnish monthly a statement, audited by the accountant of the C.R.B., of the whole of the uses these gifts have been applied to.

All gift food received by the C.R.B. shall be sold to the Provisioning Department of the C.R.B. at its replacement value, and the moneys added to the cash subscriptions received by the C.R.B. and included in the above remittances.

4. *Exchange Department*---The C.R.B. Exchange Department will handle the moneys remitted from abroad to the C.N. These remittances are to be divided into the following classes:

a) Commercial Exchange; being payments to be made by the C.N. to private individuals in Belgium against similar sums of money paid to the C.R.B. abroad.

b) Benevolent funds, as above described (*Secours ordinaire*).

c) Remittances from the Belgian Government at Le Havre to the C.N. (*Secours extraordinaire*). In respect of these remittances, it is distinctly understood that the C.R.B. takes no responsibility whatever, the C.N. undertaking to account to the Belgian Government for the distribution of these funds.

5. It is also understood that no money is to be knowingly remitted by the C.R.B., nor to be knowingly distributed by the C.N., that is disapproved by either of the belligerent Powers, and that the C.R.B. has no responsibility of any kind in connection with remittances for *Secours extraordinaire*.

6. In order to facilitate co-operation in the above matters, it is agreed that the following interlocking of officials of the two bodies shall continue:

a) The Director and other members of the Commission as at present shall continue to act as members of the executive committee of the C.N.

b) The provincial delegates of the C.R.B. shall sit as members of all the committees, provincial and local, in their respective Provinces.

c) The representatives of the C.N. shall have the same relation to the C.R.B. in Rotterdam, London, and New York.

7. The accounts between the organizations will be adjusted as nearly as may be possible each month, the C.N. and C.R.B. furnishing audited statements as to their internal position as often as is practicable.

DOCUMENT NO. 42

Memorandum

on internal organization and duties of *C.R.B.* in Belgium (not including Northern France)

BRUSSELS, July 1915

(1) The personnel in Belgium consists of:

Director Chief Inspector
Shipping Manager Provincial Delegates Advisory Members
Secretariat

(2) The ravitaillement and the care of the destitute is a joint undertaking of the C.N. and the C.R.B. The division of functions is difficult to define, but so far as the C.R.B. is concerned, the one dominating idea is simply to help the Belgians. A memorandum settled with the C.N. on this subject is attached (No. 1), also a review of the conditions imposed by the Allied Governments (No. 2).

(3) The work of the C.R.B. is based upon intimate co-operation among its members, but in a general way the Director has necessarily the final decision in and co-ordination of matters affecting the C.R.B. internally in Belgium, and with its general staff co-operates with the C.R.B. abroad and with the heads of the C.N. in Brussels.

(4) The work of delegates falls in three main phases:

- a) General service
- b) The guarantees
- c) Transportation and statistics

(5) The general duties of the provincial delegates are most difficult to define, and it is considered that for our purposes we should define a minimum of absolute duties, and that any further activity should only be undertaken at the request from time to time of the provincial committee and subcommittees themselves. It may be stated in general that this minimum is intended to entirely exclude, as soon as possible, executive and office functions. Furthermore it is our desire that there shall be no dictation to the provincial committees and no dictation to subcommittees or individuals, unless requested to do so by the superior committees themselves. We are here to help, not to order.

The prime and most important function of the delegates is to maintain representation in the provinces of the guardian neutral body, and to exemplify its ideals in constantly rendering aid and moral support to the people in their difficulties of ravitaillement and care of the destitute. Particularly it is to be assumed that the whole of the committee structure engaged in this work is now developed to a stage where it will function itself except for occasional difficulties. It is the desire of the directors to strongly impress delegates with the fact that they consider the time has come when the delegates should not occupy themselves with any executive functions and a minimum of office routine, but to direct themselves to help at the points of difficulty and to discover the points of abuse of our ideals and undertakings. It is our desire that the delegates should move frequently and freely over their entire areas in constant consultation with all committees involved in this work giving them such aid and advice as may seem appropriate, but under no circumstance to give direction unless requested by a superior committee to give orders. In case that injustice, incompetence, or abuses are found to be in operation, it is desired that each of such incidents may be taken up as a special case in itself, and the facts made known to the committee members most nearly concerned. If remedy is not made, the matter should be reported to the provincial committee, and if no appropriate action is taken in that quarter, then the matter should be reported to the head office of the Commission in Brussels, where it will be dealt with by the Director. It does not appear to us that the Commission is from now on concerned in enforcing any draconian scheme of rationing the population, as long as there is no real privation and no injustice. The most valued function of the Commission, for which it will stand out in the memory of the Belgian people, is the relief to the destitute. That is, together with the political phases mentioned, the prime *raison d'être* of the Commission; but in this department, as well as in the ravitaillement, we believe that the attitude of the delegates shall be entirely of the order of inspection and advice and not of executive action. The directors believe that with the abandonment of executive work, the delegates will have more time at their disposal in which to visit the various branches of the general organization to study their results. In order to maintain the intimate relations of the provincial delegates

with the provincial committees they will sit as members of all the committees in their provinces, but it is definitely understood on both sides that they have no responsibility for any action; that their position is purely advisory. The relation of the delegates to the local German authorities shall be purely one of a friendly intermediary.

(6) The guarantees are of two sorts, the guarantees against military interference and the guarantees of justice in distribution. The first matter is a purely passive function, requiring no action by the delegates, unless the entire event of contravention occurs, in which case the matter should be investigated and the facts reported to the Director in Brussels for direction as to the policy to be pursued. The second phase embraces the fact that the military shall not interfere with any persons receiving food, and any incident must be treated in the same way. Beyond this, it also embraces the broad question of justice in distribution which is elaborated above, but our conception is that this can be expressed so that there shall be no Privation.

(7) The Commission has the duty, under the conditions imposed by the Powers, of retaining possession of the foodstuffs until their final delivery in regional warehouses, for which purposes mills are considered as regional warehouses. Such foodstuffs will be consigned from Rotterdam to the C.R.B. The bills of lading must necessarily be handled by the delegates and endorsed over to the proper committees, and when receipts for the bills of lading are received by the delegates and sent to Brussels, their interest in the matter entirely ceases. In order to intelligently guide the purchasing and transportation department of the Commission, it is fundamental that certain statistical information should be secured by the delegates and placed in the hands of the Brussels office. This information relates to the consumption, stocks, and requirements, the more detailed discussion of which is unnecessary here.

6. The Vermittlungsstelle. November-December 1915

Toward the end of the year 1915 the Commission encountered new and serious difficulties with the German officials in Belgium. It had been the policy of the authorities to entrust the supervision of all matters relating to the relief work to the Civil Administration of the German General Government in Belgium. The diplomatic negotiations passed, however, through the hands of the Political Department of the General Government, headed by Baron von der Lancken. For some time a rivalry between these two departments had been developing as to which should have the privilege of surveillance of the activities of the Commission and the Comité National. One product of this rivalry was the attempt of the Civil Administration to control relief operations by forcing a reorganization of the Comité National in June 1915. This resulted in a threat by the British Government

to revise its policy with respect to relief unless the Germans gave new and specific assurances that they would not interfere with distribution.(25) The Governor-General, thereupon, had placed the control of relief operations largely in the hands of the Political Department. As the object of the attentions of these competing departments the Commission suffered. Matters came to a head in the fall of 1915 when the Political Department made the espionage charges described in Document 43. At this particular moment Hoover was discussing with the German General Staff a project for the relief in Poland,(26) in which the High Command was much interested. Hoover immediately declared to the military authorities that extension of the Commission's activities was out of the question since the civil officials appeared unwilling to co-operate in the relief already in hand. The pressure which the High Command applied to the Governor-General in Brussels had prompt results. The espionage charges, which were unfounded, were withdrawn, and, what was most important for the relief organizations, a new department, the Vermittlungsstelle, was created to regularize relations between the Commission and the German authorities.

DOCUMENT NO. 43

Memorandum,
GIBSON ON CONFERENCE WITH VON DER LANCKEN, covering German demands for removal of three American delegates on suspicion of espionage

BRUSSELS, 30 November 1915

This morning Baron von der Lancken requested me to call upon him and immediately brought up the cases of the three men described in my memorandum of November 8th and stated that he desired to add to that list one more name, that of Mr. Poland,(27) to whom he objected as having written offensive letters (*lettres grossières*) to the Political Department. He showed me a letter from Mr. Poland, a copy of which is appended hereto. After reading the letter I stated that it had long been the custom of the Commission to deal on matters of loading, imports in Belgium, and general business with Doctor Rieth of the Politische Abteilung and that as a business letter the one in question contained nothing of an objectionable character, that the impatience shown in it was quite comprehensible owing to the interference to which the Commission had been subjected in the question of lighters and tugs entirely imperiling the work with which the letter dealt.

Baron von der Lancken began to take up the general question of removing the four men, but I interrupted him, stating that it seemed quite useless to consider the question at the present time as it was only one minor incident in matters of graver importance. I said that the conditions under which the Belgians were being fed had been steadily growing worse for some months, that the members of the

Commission had been subjected to all sorts of affronts and outrages and the entire work threatened in many directions, and that far from receiving that sympathetic co-operation and adherence to the spirit of the work to which we were entitled, the German authorities in the occupied territory in Belgium seemed to be placing endless obstacles in our way. I stated that this was not true in the north of France, where the military authorities evidently understood the vital importance of the work and where we had received co-operation and understanding support. Going back a little I told Baron von der Lancken that Mr. Hoover had, while in America, informed the government officials of the character of the difficulties under which the Commission was working and that it was agreed that at any time he and his colleagues felt that their dignity and self-respect as Americans could no longer tolerate the treatment accorded them and they withdrew from the work, they would be supported in such action; that Mr. Hoover upon his return to England and learning of recent developments laid the situation before British officials and had endeavored to arrange that in the event of necessary withdrawal the work could be taken over by other neutrals and that the British Government had emphatically declined to entertain such an idea. I impressed upon Baron von der Lancken that the British Government had permitted the shipping of food into Belgium only because of the pressure of public opinion and in order to avoid giving the Germans an opportunity to say that the British were starving their allies. I pointed out to him very frankly that if the Commission were to withdraw and justify its withdrawal by a statement that it could not tolerate the treatment accorded it by the German authorities and the conditions under which the work was done, the British Government would not of course fail to seize the opportunity to stop the work by saying that under such conditions no other neutral body could hope to succeed and at the same time placing the German Government in an unfavorable light before the world. I stated to Baron von der Lancken that we had put up with extremely bad treatment and many serious outrages for many months, but that the time had come when we could no longer ask any American gentleman engaged in the work to submit to the sort of treatment they had had in the past; that Mr. Hoover and his colleagues were now seriously considering the withdrawal of the Commission and the stopping of the work; that the American people would not for one moment stand that men engaged in a work which in effect represented the American people should lower the dignity of their country by acceptance of such treatment.

Baron von der Lancken then exclaimed somewhat impatiently that it was all right so far as Germany was concerned; that she had plenty of food now coming from the Balkans and that the Belgians would not starve; that they would be given a ration of black bread and that if they did not like it and caused any riots, they would be shot down. (*Nous leur donnerons du pain noir à manger, s'ils n'aiment pas cela et précipitent des bagarres, nous tirerons dessus, tout bonnement.*)

I said I was glad that he had informed me that we were no longer needed but I was sorry that he had not told me so before, inasmuch as we were continuing the work

only because we thought it was needed by the German Government as well as by other belligerents.

Baron von der Lancken's remarks, however, were apparently only a slight outburst of temper and he attempted to soften his remarks by saying very agreeable things about the work of the Commission. I told Baron von der Lancken that he must not think that the Commission was trying to avoid continuing the work, but that on the contrary it would be very happy if a satisfactory solution could be found under which the men engaged in the work of the Commission could be given treatment as gentlemen and proper facilities granted for carrying on the work.

I stated that I failed to see why a reasonable amount of time and attention by a high official should not be warranted by the Commission's work; that the President and the Secretary of State of the United States found it possible to give their personal attention to the matter, that the King of Spain was himself deeply interested in it, and that Mr. Hoover found no difficulty in securing the undivided attention of the British Prime Minister and of his colleagues in the Cabinet whenever the work of the Commission prompted him to do so. I intimated that it would be a very good thing if some one official with real authority could be delegated to deal with the work of the Commission. I concluded by saying that Mr. Hoover and his colleagues were very unhappy and discouraged about the whole matter, that they had come into the work full of enthusiasm and had made considerable sacrifices in order to devote themselves to the work, that it would of course be a keen disappointment to feel that they had so far failed through no fault of their own as to be obliged to abandon the work.

I added that I wished him to consider this conversation as quite informal and unofficial; that strictly speaking I should not have communicated with him upon the subject until plans had been more definitely formulated covering all the matters of first importance and could be formally presented to him by the Spanish Minister, the Dutch Chargé d'Affaires, and myself. I said, however, that I considered it only honest to tell him frankly what the situation was, rather than quibble on the minor matter about which he had wished to consult me; that he now understood how we felt and I hoped that he would understand that the Commission was very much in earnest and that a way might be found to solve the difficulties.

Baron von der Lancken apparently realized the seriousness of the situation and said that he would be very glad to talk it over with us further at the first opportunity, thanked me for my frankness in telling him of the matter so freely, and took leave of me in an unusually friendly manner.

(Signed) GIBSON

DOCUMENT NO. 44

Memorandum,

ON CONFERENCE VERNON KELLOGG, CASPAR WHITNEY, AND HOOVER WITH VON KESSLER, WENGENSKY, AND UHL OF GENERAL STAFF, regarding unsatisfactory treatment of Commission by German administration in Belgium (by Kellogg)

BRUSSELS, 2 December, 1915

Mr. Hoover stated he was glad to have the opportunity to go exhaustively into the whole situation; that the relations of the Commission with the Staff in the north of France had always been so cordial and the Staff engagements so justly and liberally carried out, the Staff attitude so open and frank, that he felt he could be frank even to brutality. That the situation in Belgium was becoming intolerable and that the ravitaillement of Northern France must collapse with that of Belgium. He sketched briefly the history of the Commission and its relations to the General Government, laying stress on the fact that while Governor von Bissing's attitude was correct, if not cordial, he was surrounded by an absolute pack of bureaucratic underlings whose sole desire and mission seemed to be to seize anything in Belgium and dress it up in some form designed to attract the Governor's attention to themselves and their energies. That it was patent that the utmost jealousy existed among these departments, and that we were the shuttlecock with which they beat each other over the head, hoping the Governor would notice their valiant conduct. He sketched the relations, first when the C.R.B. and the C.N. were under the Civil Department: how their control had been seized by the Political Department last June from the Civil Department, on the impeachment of the committee's bad political activities; how this was but an incident in the war between von Sandt and von der Lancken, and how von der Lancken had been put to it ever since to justify his representations to the Governor of that time. That we had been subjected to intolerable destructive inquisition, no remote helpfulness in attitude, and how gradually this was degenerating into violation of the spirit of the agreements.

He sketched the attempts to manipulate the relief, in violation of the undertakings about forcing labor through control of relief, and pointed out that the Commission would not go on one minute if it were to become an implement to force the population, against its will and consent to work for the Germany Army. That to use the control of men's food to force the civilian population to disloyalty to its government was a thing we would not stand for on humane grounds, to say nothing of the international undertakings upon which we were founded.

He took up the Poland incident as an example of bureaucratic tyranny and incompetence and gave them a sketch of this transaction and the notorious letter involved. They read the letter, and Kessler remarked that its contents were innocent and justified and that it was in text and character far different from that represented

to him by the authorities. Hoover pointed out that if experienced men such as Poland were to be jerked out of the country on the breath of an arrogant clerk, in this manner, we would have to chuck the job at once. Hoover went into the incident of the three men and the failure to get any reasons for the attitude about them. He pointed out the hopelessness of obtaining men of character and honor if they were to be treated in this way. He stated that the heads of the business had a right to know what the charges were. Von Kessler said that he had heard several items, one of which was that information was conveyed verbally by these men to Young at Rotterdam as to the September offensive and through this route to the Allied Governments; that Young had proposed to introduce two spies into Belgium with Commission passes but had been stopped by protest of his American colleagues. He said he was unaware of the details but that in our position spread over the whole rear, the Staff were greatly disturbed by these reports. He said they had the utmost confidence in Hoover, Kellogg, Whitney, and most of the men, but that such matters as this transcended every food question.

Hoover agreed and stated at once that the matter must be gone into to the very bottom; that they would find him more Catholic than the Pope on the slightest breath of justifiable suspicion; that from his point of view he required no such evidence as was needed in law courts but the ground for reasonable suspicion would be sufficient; he expressed his absolute horror at the idea that ----- would jeopardize the lives of 9,000,000 people by such conduct, for it must genuinely reflect on the neutral character of the Commission. He expressed his absolute disbelief that there was a word of truth in it and stated he believed that it was a tittle-tattle produced by von der Lancken in accord with his general attitude. He suggested that any capable German officer be given the dossier and that this officer and Hoover should jointly hold an inquiry to establish, not guilt, but reasonable suspicion.

Von Kessler also said there was some complaint about a Major Winchell that Mr. Young had applied for a pass for, and gave the impression that they believed that he was an Allied agent. Mr. Hoover explained the circumstances of his belonging to the Salvation Army, etc., and that he had made the foolish inquiry whether he might be the head of their intelligence service, which joke had poor results. He stated he believed it could be proved to be absolute nonsense. As an example, neither Green nor van Schaick had arrived from America until after the date of the great offensive. Von Kessler agreed that more data should be given.

On the main issues von Kessler stated that he and his superiors had taken the matter up energetically with General von Bissing and recommended him to create a special department to look after the C.R.B. and C.N. and that it had been done, and that he had brought Captain Uhl from the Staff to take charge of our relations to this department. We all expressed pleasure at this arrangement, learning incidentally that Captain Uhl had been chosen because he was a good American resident of Santa Barbara, California. Von Kessler said that Wengersky would

remain in Brussels for a fortnight to get the new bureau running. Mr. Hoover mentioned that Captain Merton had turned up, saying he was going to be associated with us; that we liked him and hoped it would be so. Von Kessler said it would be arranged as we wished.

Hoover then elaborated on the indivisibility of the C.R.B. and the C.N. in all departments, the fears and suspicions on all sides as to proposals made by the General Government, and the disastrous results that would follow to food and tranquillity, and hoped the new department would meet these matters in an intelligent manner. This, von Kessler and Uhl assured us would be the case. The discussion went on to the relief of Poland, which the General Staff wished the Commission to undertake.

DOCUMENT NO. 45

Memorandum,
OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN HOOVER AND VON DER LANCKEN. Von der Lancken announces that the Governor-General has decided to set up the Vermittlungsstelle

BRUSSELS, 4 December 1915

Von der Lancken said he was glad to tell me that the Governor had decided to set up a new committee, comprising representatives from each---the Political, Finance, and Civil Departments, together with an officer from the General Staff, which would take over all questions relating to the C.R.B. and C.N. That Blum would represent the first, Pochee the second, ----- the third, and Uhl the fourth. Captain Merton would be censor and general intermediary. He stated he had sent for Poland and that incident was now out of the way happily and that all the broad, general, and detailed questions which had arisen lately could go over to the new Commission which should be established in ten days or so.

We then talked peace, the relief of Poland, etc., for about an hour.

7. Inspection and Control. January-February 1916

In Great Britain and elsewhere there was considerable opposition to Belgian relief on the ground that it was advantageous to the Germans, since it relieved them of the responsibility of supplying food to the regions they had invaded. Those who were of this mind were naturally quick to seize upon any evidence that seemed to show that the Germans were profiting directly from relief. For this as well as for

more obvious reasons the relief organization made the most strenuous efforts to prevent even relatively unimportant and infrequent leakages. But to prevent isolated sale by uninformed or unscrupulous individuals to German agents was a difficult matter. Exaggerated reports of small leakages and British threats to stop all imports into Belgium made drastic action necessary. The service of relief inspection was overhauled and a new General Department of Inspection and Control in which the Commission played a greater part than formerly was created.(28)

Another difficulty arose at about this time from the diversion of Belgian livestock to Germany, and by German meat buying in the occupied territory. For a time the British stopped entirely the C.R.B.'s imports of bacon and lard and threatened further restrictions unless the exports of all foodstuffs from Belgium ended. Hoover's negotiations with the German officials on this whole question finally produced guarantees acceptable to the British.

DOCUMENT NO. 46

Letter,

PERCY TO HOOVER, reporting leakage of relief supplies from Belgium into Germany, restricting C.R.B. imports and demanding reimbursement by Germans of supplies equivalent to those exported, and intimating that the whole relief activity might be stopped if leakages continued

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

21 January 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

A most unsatisfactory position has arisen with regard to your importations of rice into Belgium. In recent conferences with me you have estimated the monthly amounts which you wish to import at 5,000 tons. In September, October, and November last, however, you shipped from Rotterdam much larger amounts---namely, 13,064, 9,361 and 11,735 tons, respectively, the greater part of which was destined for Belgium. You informed me that these were advance shipments, and that you intended to stop further imports in subsequent months.

As I told you some time ago we were much disturbed by exports of rice from Belgium to Germany via Holland in October and November last. We now discover that this is due to the sale by the Relief Committees in Belgium of portions of the stocks with which you had provided them and to the purchase of these stocks by the Germans.

As you know, I have frequently warned you against any accumulations of stocks in Belgium for fear of some such incident. I need not emphasise the serious nature of what has occurred, undermining as it must, our whole confidence in the watertightness of your system.

I must therefore ask you for a statement of the full amounts of rice thus sold by the Committees, and we shall expect to hear within a month that the Germans have handed over an equivalent amount of rice to the Comité National from German stocks. Until this happens, you must import no more rice into Belgium, and if it does not happen within a month we shall reconsider, not only the question of rice imports but the question of your imports as a whole, since it will then be evident that we cannot rely either upon the efficiency of your organisation in Belgium nor upon the respect of the Germans for their own pledges.

For the moment, your importations of rice into France may continue, but only on the absolute condition that you accumulate no stocks there whatever, and if we do not receive satisfaction within a month, this also will be reconsidered.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 47

Telegrams,
FRANCQUI TO HOOVER and W. B. POLAND TO HOOVER, stating that reports of leakages were greatly exaggerated

BRUSSELS, 30 January 1916

FOR HOOVER, LONDON:

"Received your letter No. 35. It was our agents who pointed out to us six weeks ago the disappearance, and since then the investigation has been in progress. It proved that your information is much exaggerated. Our subcommittees in general are not acquainted with these abuses, resulting from German private company who did this business in ignorance with Belgian dealers, who on their part purchased from consumers. General Government has been informed. They are making concurrent investigations with ourselves and have explained to us that all mistakes by Germans will be done away with. We are energetically acting in the same manner towards Belgian guilty parties. In any case you can now be sure that the information obtained by us proves that this matter does not reach proportions as indicated by you. I am writing."

FRANCQUI

[Translation]

Am requested by Smith(29) to inform you the irregularities have been very much exaggerated; information from Mr. Francqui today confirmed. Final report will probably not be ready before a week."

POLAND

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DOCUMENT NO. 48

Letter,

HOOVER TO PERCY, reporting the investigation of leakage of food into Germany and showing that only small quantities of relief supplies were involved

LONDON, 8 February 1916

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

EXPORT FROM BELGIUM OF OUR IMPORTS

This matter has now been under rigorous investigation in Belgium and I send you some of the data.

(1) The bills of lading of the 18,000 odd tons of goods shipped from Antwerp after the 1st September have been inspected and the only items of a character at all related to our imports were: rice, 855 tons; beans, 14 tons; corn flour, 10 tons. Of this total quantity, it appears that a considerable amount was gathered from old stocks, and there is constantly some small rivulet of these supplies across the frontier from Holland.

Judging by the instances which our people have been able to trace down, it appears a good deal less than one-half could have come from our imported material; thus approximately 400 tons have leaked away from a total of 1,200,000 tons imported.

(2) We find that some of the local committees, finding the fabulous price at which they could sell rice, have done so entirely in innocence of heart and have invested the money in potatoes, thus getting larger value for their destitute with the same funds. They have all been soundly lectured on this subject, and further the entire inspection staff in Belgium is being changed from the joint control of the Comité National and the C.R.B. to the sole control of the C.R.B.

Furthermore, it appears that all this stuff was gathered up by one German firm, newly established in Belgium for the export of commodities which are not in question, such as wine. The German authorities, in order to show fair play, are putting this firm out of action so far as dealing in any commodity which we may import is concerned.

I think you may take it that these measures will settle the business once and for all and that the strenuous tone of your note calling attention to this matter has done a world of good; still, I do not feel that in the midst of our other difficulties and complexities the matter merits further pursuit.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 49

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, referring to reports that Germans were taking food imported by the C.R.B. into Ghent

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
11 March 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

A report has reached us that the Germans are taking half of the food imported by the Commission into the district of Ghent. It is said that they are giving this food to their soldiers and are also sending it in part to Breslau. I should be glad if you would make an inquiry into this question because, although I know that this kind of story is a common one in Belgium, this particular account comes to us from an unusually trustworthy source, and it refers to the military zone in Belgium where I have always felt some doubt whether your control is sufficient to secure the safe disposal of your imports.

As you may shortly be going to Belgium there are one or two other points of a similar nature which I should like you to inquire into.

In the first place, I have statistics of shipments from Belgium to Germany via Holland for the two months November 28th to January 27th. These shipments contain the following items:

On one boat 150 tons of rice and 150 tons of coffee.

On two other boats an aggregate of 1,700 tons of coffee, rice and beans.

On another boat 400 tons of coffee, rice, beans, and flour.

On another 450 tons of coffee, rice, beans, and oil nuts.

Two further boats carried 1,200 tons of rice and beans, and 300 tons of rice, respectively.

These figures suggest a grave suspicion not only that shipments of Belgian native stocks, such as coffee and oil nuts, are being exported freely, which of course we knew before, but also that the leakage of your rice from Belgium, of which we have had evidence, is combined with a corresponding leakage of beans.

Finally, we have had a report that one particular mill owner in Brussels, by name Vuylsteke, is using the oil extracted in milling your grain for sale for the Germans for munitions purposes, and we are told that Vuylsteke is working in close touch with the Germans.

You will, of course, regard all this information as strictly confidential so far as it might betray the source from which it came.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

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DOCUMENT NO. 50

Letter,

HOOYER TO PERCY, reporting a new investigation of leakage and the reorganization of the Bureau of Inspection and Control to prevent further trouble of this character

LONDON, 5 April 1916

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

LEAKAGES OF IMPORTED FOODSTUFFS

Together with my American colleagues in Belgium, I have now completed a renewed inquiry into this matter all over that country. As I recently informed you, we early in March entirely reorganized the Bureau of Inspection and Control, by which it was brought entirely under American direction and considerably expanded. We have set up a complete bureau in each province, with an American

head solely devoted to it, and in addition have now instituted an independent national service for the whole of the country, entirely separate from the Provincial Bureaux. In addition to the former inspectors, some of whom we have changed, we have reinforced the staff by recruits from former colonial, school, and railway and police services. A considerable number of these men are engaged in checking the accounts of the communal committees and in the comparison of the issue against food cards with the receipts into the communal magazines. Another section is devoted to tracing the origin of every parcel of overseas foodstuffs which we can discover in private hands. In this latter matter we have arranged with the 60 district Procureurs de Roi to co-operate in prosecutions, which they are doing vigorously. I enclose herewith specimen copies of the material presented by this Bureau to the weekly meetings of the Commission members in Brussels, at two or three different meetings, in order that you may get some idea of its activities.

From our experience of these bureaux, two conclusions are quite positive:

1. That the leakages from our imported foodstuffs are and have been extraordinarily small, and, in any event, the bulk of these leakages arises from Belgian causes as distinguished from German causes. For instance, we have found no gray flour of our peculiar composition (82 per cent milled wheat with 5 to 10 per cent maize) in private hands. We have, however, discovered some white flour of Belgian origin, which comes from the milling by peasants of hidden wheat and by the sifting out by bakers of a certain percentage of white flour from our supplies. The high price of white flour to wealthy Belgian customers is a powerful stimulation to small traffic in this direction and is impossible wholly to control.

Again, the brewers in Belgium, who are now desperate for brewing materials, have been from time to time buying maize from farmers out of the supplies which were issued to them for fodder purposes prior to the time when we stopped such issues.

2. There is a very much larger amount of smuggling from Holland in overseas materials than had previously been believed. From sources which are reliable I shall be able to present to you in the course of a few days some evidence as to quantities. They are very considerable, and at certain points the German authorities required the smugglers to sell to them at low prices from 30 to 50 per cent of their imports, the smugglers being allowed to sell the remainder of their imports to Belgians at any prices they could obtain.

The enormous gap between prices in Holland and prices in Belgium has created a vacuum, the suction into which it is impossible for the Dutch Government wholly to control. The traffic is not one of moral turpitude, since it has the justification of "feeding the Belgians" and since it is more or less simply the maintenance of the custom of trade across the frontier. In consequence, there is no moral feeling or public opinion against this traffic in Holland. I am convinced that the Dutch authorities make every possible effort to stop this traffic, but 300 kilometers of

artificial border in an agricultural country with such intense populations on both sides, all intent on the traffic, makes any tight dam absolutely impossible. It just happens that the overseas imports are the foodstuffs of the most concentrated form, such as rice, beans, bacon, and lard, and, in consequence, these are favored articles of traffic. It is our impression, however, that the majority of the bacon, lard, and beans are Dutch, originating near the frontier. As an indication of the profit to be made in this traffic, the price of lard in Brussels is from Frs. 13 to Frs. 15 per kilo against Frs. 3 in Holland, or a profit on smuggling of £250 per ton. As one indication of the amount of smuggling, at our instance, 35 prosecutions were started in the Province of Limbourg against persons who had foodstuffs in their possession of the overseas type, and in 30 of these cases the owners were able to establish their Dutch origin.

On the 15th of March the Germans put in force a complete prohibition on all food exports from Belgium, and they appear to be enforcing it at all points vigorously, even to the taking from soldiers returning to Germany on leave the small amounts of butter or other articles which they carry with them. Furthermore at our request the German firm who exported foodstuffs from Antwerp has been suppressed from doing business in Belgium. The German authorities informed me that an inquiry into the operations of this firm indicated that they had purchased less than 50 tons of material which could have arisen from our imports, the balance of their exports being Dutch stuff smuggled over the frontier. This corroborates our own conclusions from tracing our own communal leakages. This particular organization maintained agencies along the frontier for the purpose of purchasing from smugglers, and they were able to aggregate considerable quantities for export to Germany.

For reasons which I will set out in another communication, the ration being issued by the communal committees is far below the necessities of the population and in such small quantities that the resale by individuals is improbable in the extreme, as people in this condition do not surrender their whole basis of subsistence. There is public knowledge as to exactly what the ration consists of, so that every person entitled will demand his full quota from the communal committees. The communes, owing to deficiency in overseas transport, have been undersupplied and in consequence the difficulties with their dependents have been very great and there has thus been sufficient pressure to guarantee that they make no disposals otherwise than in the proper manner.

I can only reiterate that there has been no leakage in our imports worth mentioning and with the measures now taken it seems to me absolutely impossible, and in fact, our men are generally complaining that the new bureau is discovering nothing but creating enormous labor to no purpose. We will, however, maintain it as an additional safeguard to the situation, although I may mention it has caused great difficulties in Belgium and we have had serious resignations from the Belgian committees as the result of feeling created.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 51

Service Note,
describing functions of C.R.B. and C.N. Department of Inspection and Control

BRUSSELS, 23 February 1916

The C.R.B. is required to certify that the goods imported by it are distributed to the civil population of Belgium and the North of France, and that the general terms of the undertakings of the German and British authorities are carried out.

For its part, the Comité National must take care that the distribution of food to the population is made in accordance with its instructions, which are inspired by the fundamental rules on which the imports of foodstuffs by the C.R.B. are based.

Finally, the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National must both be assured that the foodstuffs imported are equitably distributed among the whole civil population. With this end in view, both Commissions must insist upon the strict observance of the resolutions agreed upon by common consent.

In order to accomplish its mission, the C.R.B. has established throughout the country a numerous staff. In every province, it has responsible representatives empowered to see that the obligations imposed upon it are rigorously observed.

These representatives are to be sufficiently informed of the conditions governing the mission of the C.R.B., so as to enable them to certify that they have been regularly carried out. They must see that any irregularities are rectified, and call the attention of the Central Office of the C.R.B. in Brussels, through its Inspection and Control Department, to any violation of the terms of the guarantees.

In order to avoid irregularities in the distribution of foodstuffs, the Comité National has instituted for its part a Controlling Service in every province. The Provincial Controlling Services, each consisting of a Controller in Chief, Head of the Service, and his Assistants, exercise a general supervision over the Local Committees in the District of the province assigned to them.

In addition to and supplementing the Provincial Controlling Services, the Comité National has inaugurated an independent General Inspection Service. This Service

superintends every Controlling Service in the province, to make sure that the rules and instructions of the C.N. are fully observed.

The result of the present organization is that the C.R.B. and the C.N. centralize in Brussels, each for its part, the control of the whole country: the C.R.B. through its Director, and the C.N. by means of its Executive Committee.

The Heads of the C.R.B. and of the Comité National, being now convinced that the purpose aimed at by their Controlling Services is identical, resolve to render this control more effective and more active, by amalgamating the organizations created by them, in order to bring about a more complete co-operation between the two Services.

For this purpose, the Controlling Services of the C.R.B. and of the C.N. in every province will be placed under the direction of the President of the Provincial Committee, or one of his Delegates, and of a Representative of the C.R.B.

Every failure on the part of the Provincial Committee to take action as outlined by the American Representative of the C.R.B. and the Chief Provincial Controller of the C.N. must be reported to Brussels, where a decision will be taken by the Executive Heads of the C.R.B. and the C.N.

The full responsibility for the general conduct of affairs as well as responsibility for the continuance of irregularities will continue to rest with the Provincial Committee.

The Central Inspection Services in Brussels, both of the C.R.B. and of the C.N, will also be united. This Central Service will be under the direction of the Executive Committee of the C.N. or its Delegate, and of the Director of the C.R.B. or his American Representative delegated for this purpose. These two Delegates will bear the title of Chief of the General Inspection and Control Department. (Each for his respective organism.)

The organization and procedure of this Central Service are subject to regulations drawn up for this purpose. Every modification of these regulations must be taken with the common consent of the Heads of the C.N. and the C.R.B.

DOCUMENT NO. 52

Statement of organization
of the Department of Inspection and Control by the Comité National and the
Commission for Relief in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 23 February 1916

With the assistance of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the Executive Committee of the Comité National, which assures, by its central administration situated in Brussels, the direction of the food supplies of the whole country, acts in the provinces through the medium of the Provincial Committees established in the principal towns of the nine provinces and in Greater Brussels. In their turn, the Provincial Committees, who assume the provincial direction of the food supplies, act through the medium of District Committees, and these latter by Communal Committees established in every locality of the country.

The goods are sent in accordance with the instructions of the Comité National, to the Provincial Committees, who distribute them to the District Committees. These latter distribute them to all the localities under their control.

The Communal Committees receive the goods and deliver them to the consumers. It is therefore the Committees established in the communes who alone are in touch with the consumers.

The provisions are distributed between the Provincial Committees, the District Committees, and finally the Local Committees, in accordance with the requirements of the province, the district, or the commune, respectively.

With regard to the distribution direct to the consumers this is done by allowance, i.e., each person can only obtain a single ration of provisions, either a daily ration, as is the case with bread, or once a fortnight or once a month when it is a question of other provisions, such as bacon, lard, maize, beans, peas, rice, etc.

These distributions must be made in accordance with the instructions of the Comité National, instructions inspired by fundamental rules upon which the importation of foodstuffs into Belgium are based, and by resolutions decided upon, in conjunction with the Commission for Relief in Belgium, for guaranteeing the satisfactory working of the Food Supplies.

In order to assure the smooth working of an undertaking of this importance, it was necessary to appeal to the good will of all those who offered their services to the Comité National. The organization, which everyone, moreover, considered as temporary, could not be perfect. The situation continuing, it became necessary to complete these means by a service controlling the operations of the Local Committees, which, as aforesaid, distributed the food to the consumers. From the beginning of 1915, on the advice of the Comité National, the Provincial Committees organized for their respective provinces a Superintendence Service similar to that in force by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

In the course of the year, the Comité National sent an expert accountant to visit the Provincial Committees in order to make himself acquainted with the working of these Committees and establish uniformity in the keeping of their books.

When, about the month of October 1915, the Comité National were advised of certain little irregularities in the distribution of the provisions, new instructions with regard to the control of the Local Committees were given, and it was decided to establish in Brussels a General Superintendence Service for the whole country.

This General Service, the headquarters of which are in Brussels, superintends all the Provincial and Local Committees for the purpose of assuring the execution of the rules and instructions of the Comité National.

We give, as an annex, the organic rules of the General Superintendence Service.

The Service is divided into two Departments, the "Administrative Survey Department" and the "Investigation Department." At the head of each Department is a General Superintendent, whose duty it is to direct the service and the large staff of surveyors attached to it.

The mission of the Administrative Survey Department, as the name implies, is to survey and see that the Provincial and Local Committees are well managed, to satisfy themselves that the instructions of the Comité National are duly carried out, and notably to discover any irregularities which may have been committed in the transactions of Local Committees, more especially with regard to the delivery of goods from their stores and the distribution of them to the inhabitants.

It is the duty of surveyors also, when necessary, to put the Local Committees and managers of stores *au courant* with the instructions of the Comité National, at the same time explaining to them the duties attached to the functions they fulfil.

The Administrative Superintendents send a report of their surveys to the Comité National. In order that their work may be carried out with method and regularity, and that any question, which might be of interest to the Comité National, is not overlooked, they make use, in their tours of inspection, of a list of questions drawn up by the Comité National. Their work, when making their tours of inspection, consists principally of gleaning information on all points raised by the list of questions, and to reply to any questions put to them in accordance with the information gathered on the spot.

In case of need, the surveyors present a supplementary report of their surveys when they consider it necessary to draw the attention of the Committee to a special question.

The list of questions and the reports of the surveyors are examined by the General Superintendent, who informs the different Departments of the Comité National, "Assistance," "Foodstuffs," or "Secretary's Office," of the matters which specially concern them.

Each of these departments deals with the matters affecting them and gives the necessary instructions to the Provincial Committees with a view to remedy the irregularities noted.

Should serious matters come to light which necessitate the application of repressive justice they are deferred to the Belgian Courts. From that moment they are out of the hands of the Comité National.

Judiciary decisions will be posted up in all premises occupied by the Comité National and by Provincial and Local Committees.

If the facts ascertained lead to the conclusion that illicit acts have been committed by certain persons attached to the Committees or otherwise, but that insufficient proof exists to justify the immediate intervention of the Courts, then the rôle of the Investigation Department comes into play.

The Investigation Department is directed by a special General Superintendent, assisted in Brussels and in the provinces by a large staff of agents whose services we have been able to secure, and who are specially qualified to follow up such inquiries. This Department is in constant communication with the Public Prosecutor.

The agents make inquiries, shadow suspected persons, and look after the transport of the goods. The Public Prosecutor, whenever he deems it necessary, orders the seizure of all foodstuffs the origin of which appears suspicious. The effect of these seizures is considerable, for even in cases where no legal proceedings are taken they have a salutary influence upon crimes and other equivocal intermediaries. They upset their calculations and cause them to lose money.

These seizures will inevitably have the result of driving away persons acting in good faith in the interests of agents who have organized the drainage of foodstuffs from Belgium.

When the Comité National took the first steps for organizing this service, they instructed the Provincial Committees to model their organizations of control in accordance with the General Superintendence Service adopted in Brussels, and to add to their administrative control an Investigation Department, with the co-operation of special agents in touch with the Public Prosecutor.

The Provincial Committees have also given instructions to the Local Committees of the larger communes in the country to organize the control of the operations of their stores, their administrative control and their investigations, in such a manner as to guarantee the regular working of these operations, and to survey their business generally, especially from the point of view of the traffic in foodstuffs coming from the stores of the Comité National.

For the purpose of completing this organization of control and investigation, a representative from the Commission for Relief in Belgium will be attached to the General Superintendence Department in Brussels. In like manner, in each province, the representative or representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium will collaborate with the Provincial Superintendence.

The collaboration of the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium is indispensable, the more so as the essential mission of the Representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, especially in the provinces, is to see that the provisions imported are employed exclusively for the alimentation of the civil population in Belgium.

We give also, as an annex, No. 3, an order to be posted up in all the premises and stores belonging to the Committees.

This regulation résumés very clearly in a few words the principles of revictualing in Belgium, and the essential duties of the Committees and the inhabitants

But Committees are forbidden to anticipate general sanctions, such, for instance, as the refusal to deliver provisions to those who take advantage of the situation and resell the food. It has, therefore, so far only been a question of judiciary sanctions. And even then, in order to put in movement the judicial apparatus, it has been necessary to make each head of the family who received provisions sign a declaration by which he binds himself to conform to the rule of the Comité National, and not to resell the goods which he receives. Acting upon the advice of jurisconsults attached to the Committees, and in accord with the Public Prosecutor in Brussels, we have had inscribed on the householders' cards the text of this declaration, by virtue of which each holder of a card, i.e., all persons who are supplied, undertake themselves to consume, in their own households, the provisions which they receive. As a result of this declaration, the sale of goods coming from the stores of the Comité National constitutes an infraction of the engagement subscribed to by the holder of the card, and may give rise to legal Proceedings.

The permanent and active control of the Local Committees, as they are organized, will no doubt have the result of assuring a suitable allowance for the population, and will prevent the Local Committees from selling foodstuffs to dealers. On the other hand, the judiciary investigations and the legal proceedings, taken against indelicate consumers and suspicious intermediaries, the seizure of goods, and the eventual condemnations which will follow, will have the effect, as far as it is possible, of stamping out the dubious traffic which has been going on in connection with our stores.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER II, continued

8. Responsibilities and Duties Of the Commission Redefined. February-December 1916

Not long after the establishment of the Department of Inspection and Control it became apparent to members of the Commission that the part they had been forced to play under the new arrangement did not have the full approval of some of the officials of the Belgian organization. Document 53 and those that follow show what happened when Hoover suggested the possibility of turning over to the Belgians the responsibility that had been borne by the Americans.

DOCUMENT NO. 53

Letter,

HOOVER TO PAGE, Suggesting that the time may have arrived for turning over to the C.N. all the functions of the C.R.B.

LONDON, 24 February 1916

DEAR MR. AMBASSADOR:

I have recently had several conferences with my American associates in regard to the general situation of Belgian relief work, and we have together reached the conclusion that the time has arrived when the Allied Governments should consider whether it is not possible for them to transfer to a Belgian organization the guarantees and responsibilities which we have thus far carried and enable us to withdraw from the work without thereby entailing any hardship or suffering upon the Belgian civil population; the presence of the leading spirits in the Comité National in London seems to offer an appropriate moment for raising the question.

As you will remember, the Commission for Relief in Belgium was initiated in your office on October 4th, 1914, to meet a very critical emergency and supply food to the Belgian civil population. At that time the country was in a terribly disorganized and demoralized condition. The occupied territory was entirely deprived of the ordinary facilities for transportation, communication and travel, and the Belgians could not hope to effect an adequate organization for themselves. It was, therefore, essential that some neutral agency, possessed of liberty of movement and freedom from the severe measures imposed upon a conquered people should undertake the initial work and bring order out of the reigning chaos.

Thanks to the devoted services of a large corps of American volunteers and to our diplomatic representatives, we were able to build up an organization which has

grown steadily in efficiency, and have been able to meet the conditions imposed by the Allied Governments and carry out the guarantees which we have assumed from time to time.

Conditions of life in Belgium have materially improved since the beginning of our work, and the Belgians themselves now enjoy a larger liberty of movement than at any time since the war began, and as their freedom of movement has increased they have taken a larger share in the work and in the relations with the German authorities. When the work began, it was, of course, utterly out of the question to expect the Belgians to create and perfect the necessary organization; now that it has been perfected---so far as seems possible under the abnormal conditions which exist---there would seem to be no inherent reason to prevent the Belgians from assuming entire control of the work and carrying it on. This would enable the members of the Commission to bring their activities to a close, with the assurance that the Belgian people, in whom they take so friendly an interest, would not suffer by the cessation of their labors, and it would at the same time leave us free, individually and collectively, to turn our efforts in other directions where there is need for our activities and such abilities as we may possess.

I know that it is unnecessary for me to tell you that neither I nor my associates would for one moment consider the step I have proposed were it to involve the cessation of the work which has gone on so far. We have considered for some time, however, that the original and imperative need for our continued efforts no longer exists, and in August last I proposed to the Comité National an arrangement by which they could take over the entire work. Yielding to their urgent request at that time I consented to continue, but it now seems to me that an occasion has arisen when we may again broach the subject without fear of endangering the relief of the Belgian people.

I attach hereto, for your information, copy of the memorandum which was drawn up at the time by the Comité National.

The work of the Commission has consisted of two parts: (1) The purchase, shipment, and distribution of food under conditions that ensure the carrying out of the guarantees given by the several belligerent governments. (2) The financial management of the work.

Our original appeal for help made throughout the world was met by the most generous response, but it soon became evident that the task was far too great for private philanthropy alone; it was necessary to secure financial aid on so large a scale that nothing less than the most generous governmental assistance could provide for our work. Subsequently, several governments granted subsidies, and financial arrangements were made which have met our requirements and which must continue to meet all requirements for the work so long as it may be necessary.

The carrying out of the guarantees and the necessary negotiations with the several governments regarding the food distribution can, I conceive, be done by the Belgians. While the relief of the occupied French territory does not primarily concern the Belgians, no doubt this work could also be included under the Comité National.

As for the financial responsibility, I can at any moment make an accounting to every government that has contributed to the funds of the Commission and make such disposal of remaining funds as each government may desire. I shall make the same disposal of funds contributed by private organizations.

It may interest you to know that we have received from all sources over £20,000,000 up to date.

Since the name of the "Commission for Relief in Belgium" is bound up with the financial responsibility which my associates and I have assumed, we should expect to dissolve the Commission upon our withdrawal and should also expect that the work in future be carried on by the Comité National; in other words, the affairs of the Commission for Relief in Belgium will be completely liquidated and it will cease to exist.

I would, therefore, be grateful if you would present this matter to the interested governments and ascertain whether they would be prepared to transfer the guarantees and responsibilities to the Comité National in such a manner as to ensure the continued feeding of and relief of the Belgian civil population, so that my associates and I may conscientiously withdraw from the great work in which we have been privileged to play a part during the past sixteen months.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 54

Letter,
FRANCQUI TO PAGE, asserting the absolute dependence of relief on the continuance of the C.R.B.

LONDON, 26 February 1916

*To His Excellency the Honorable Walter Hines Page American Ambassador,
London*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

Mr. Hoover presented to me yesterday evening a copy of the letter which he addressed to Your Excellency on the 24th inst. In this communication Mr. Hoover expresses the wish to dissolve the Commission for Relief in Belgium, for which he suggested substituting the Comité National of Belgium.

Your Excellency, who has, for the last eighteen months, given your kind support to the humanitarian work undertaken by the Commission for Relief in Belgium, knows better than anyone with what disinterestedness, what devotion, your compatriots have come to the aid of the Belgian population. You know also that without the active leadership of Mr. Hoover it would have been absolutely impossible for us to continue the provisioning and assistance of the Belgians; also you will not be astonished when I insist, not only in my own personal name, but also in the name of my colleagues and in that of all my fellow-countrymen, that Your Excellency should use your kind influence on Mr. Hoover that he should abandon the idea set out in his letter of the 24th inst.

The harmony which has never ceased to exist between the C.R.B. and the organization that I direct in Belgium is today too intimate to allow of any blow being struck at either without the risk of destroying the whole organization of both. Also I feel obliged to inform Your Excellency that it would be impossible for me to continue for one moment without the co-operation of Mr. Hoover to carry on the work which he and I have assumed.

I also wish to inform Your Excellency that the sole object for which the C.R.B. and the Comité National were created was for the provisioning and *secours* of the Belgian population, and I would add that Mr. Hoover and I have always seen that the organizations over which we preside have not exceeded their privileges and have abstained entirely and scrupulously from any action of political significance of any kind.

In the name of the Belgian population I repeat to Your Excellency all the grateful feelings for the inestimable services you have been kind enough to render.

I beg to remain, etc., etc., etc.

(Signed) E. FRANCOIS

[Translation]

Letter,(30)

GREY to VILLALOBAR, declining to accept certain German proposals and asserting that Hoover is the only person directly and personally responsible to the British Government for the whole relief work both inside and outside of Belgium

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

28 February 1916

MY DEAR MINISTER:

I have the honour to enclose in the form of a memorandum, my reply to the propositions emanating from the German authorities in Belgium, which you, together with Baron Lambert and Monsieur Francqui, were good enough to present to me on February 24th.

I am anxious that you should realise the gratitude and appreciation with which His Majesty's Government regard the services which you, in concert with your United States and Netherlands colleagues, have rendered to the population in Belgium in protecting and furthering the work of relief. Your action in coming to London at, I fear, great inconvenience to yourself, in order to represent the needs of this work, is in accordance with all I have learnt of your interest and energy in this matter.

I regret, therefore, the more sincerely that I should be obliged to demur absolutely to so many points in the arrangement which you have striven so hard to obtain. These are, however, matters of principle, on which it is impossible for His Majesty's Government to accept any compromise. Compromise would indeed be incompatible with their duty alike to their own and to the Belgian people, and I can only trust that you, representing in your official capacity a great neutral nation, as you represent in your private capacity a work of charity in which the British people feel so keen an interest, will be able to secure action on the part of the German authorities more in accordance with the rights of nations and the duties of humanity than those conditionally promised in Baron von der Lancken's letter of February 16th.

I am transmitting a copy of this letter to the United States and Spanish Ambassadors and the Netherlands Minister at this capital, to whom, with yourself and your colleagues at Brussels, His Majesty's Government look as intermediaries in this work, as well as to the Belgian Minister, who is so nearly interested, and to Mr. Hoover, with whom I am obliged to deal in close co-operation in all such matters, he being, in his capacity as head of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the only person directly and personally responsible for the manner in which the whole work, both inside and outside Belgium, is carried on. If I may express one further hope, it is that all parties concerned in this matter, realising the impossibility of holding personally responsible either the diplomatic representatives of neutral Powers or the citizens of a noble and unhappy country under foreign domination,

will take into full account the heavy burden of responsibility resting on this great neutral Commission and will in every possible way lighten that burden by making its responsibility as easy to discharge as possible.

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 56

Letter,

GREY TO PAGE, declaring the C.R.B. to be the only organization capable of assuming responsibility for relief activities both inside and outside of Belgium and that the C.R.B. must continue its functions or the relief cease

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
13 March 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I have carefully considered your letter of February 25th enclosing a letter from Mr. Hoover, regarding the possibility of the retirement of the American Commission from the direction of the relief work in Belgium.

I quite appreciate the desire of the Commission to divest themselves of the burden entailed by this work, which they have borne for so long, but I must state clearly that His Majesty's Government can only allow the work of relief to continue if the entire responsibility for it both inside and outside Belgium is borne by neutrals who, having complete freedom to come and go, and having no official position limiting their personal liability, can in fact be held responsible for the carrying out of the various conditions upon which His Majesty's Government have insisted. The American Commission is the only organisation which fulfils these requirements, and His Majesty's Government therefore feel obliged to insist that either the whole work should cease or the American Commission shall continue to direct it as heretofore.

I shall be glad if you will convey these observations to Mr. Hoover, and ask him to reconsider his views in the light of these contributions.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 57

Letter,

GREY TO PAGE, giving assurance of continued co-operation between the British Government and the Commission

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

16 May 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

In your private note of March 23d last you were good enough to send me a copy of a letter from Mr. Hoover stating that the Commission for Relief in Belgium would be willing to continue their work of relieving the civil population of Belgium. In the last paragraph of his letter Mr. Hoover observes that it is hopeless to carry on this work without the daily co-operation of various departments and agencies of His Majesty's Government, and he says that, in agreeing to continue, it is on the clear understanding that this co-operation shall continue also.

I think that the Commission may perhaps desire to receive some assurance from His Majesty's Government on this point, and I therefore beg that you will be so good as to make it clear to Mr. Hoover and those associated with him in this great humanitarian work that it is the desire and intention of His Majesty's Government that various public departments connected with the work should co-operate with the Commission in the closest possible way.

I am happy to be able to say that the Commission continue to enjoy the complete confidence of His Majesty's Government, and I should like to add my own personal tribute to the admirable organisation which they have evolved, and to the tireless energy of all its members, who are so devotedly carrying out their difficult task.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

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DOCUMENT NO. 58

Letter,

PERCY TO HOOVER, reviewing the origin of Belgian relief and the C.R.B. reiterating the sole responsibility of the C.R.B., and by implication declining to accept reorganization proposals originating in Belgium

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

15 July 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have received your letter of June 30th, and have submitted it to my superiors for consideration. Leaving for separate treatment the various points raised in the first part of your letter, I am now directed to make to you the following observations on the question of the Organisation of the relief work in Belgium itself. (The Relief work in Northern France has been the subject of a separate memorandum.)

In view of Monsieur Francqui's memorandum, it is desirable to set out again clearly the conditions and expectations of His Majesty's Government. You will remember that when the first application was received from various Belgians for permits to import foodstuffs into Belgium in the months of September and October 1914, His Majesty's Government laid it down as an absolute rule that no such imports could be countenanced or permitted unless the foodstuffs were imported as the property, and distributed under the direction and control, of neutrals. Thereupon the services of the American Ambassador were enlisted, and His Majesty's Government, on the recommendation of Dr. Page, recognised the "American Relief Committee" and its successor the "Commission for Relief in Belgium" as suitable to undertake this sole responsibility. His Majesty's Government have continued to give undivided support to your organisation since that time. The various Belgian committees subsequently developed into the Comité National and its branches and this organisation with its members has shown admirable devotion and powers of organisation in developing the work. Unfortunately, all these gentlemen and their organisation are subject to the control of the enemies of the Allies, and, in spite of the high confidence which they enjoy, it is therefore utterly impossible for His Majesty's Government to reply upon them to bear the responsibilities for the conduct of the relief work in Belgium which you, not they, have assumed toward us. But His Majesty's Government have relied and do rely upon them, as Allies of this country possessing the same interests as this country, to give every help to the Commission for Relief in Belgium in its task, so far as the German authorities will allow them to do so, and it is obvious that upon them must rest the detailed labour of distribution. It seems scarcely necessary to repeat to you the various stipulations to this effect in the notes addressed from time to time by His Majesty's Government to the American and Spanish Ambassadors; but in this connection you should bear in mind particularly the notes addressed by Sir Edward Grey to the American Ambassador on June 17th, 1915, to the Marquis de Villalobar on February 28th, 1915, and to the American Ambassador on March 13th, 1916. In these notes it is repeatedly set out that the whole foundation and condition upon which these imports are to continue is that the undivided responsibility for the importation and distribution of the foodstuffs and money should rest solely upon the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the members of which, as neutrals, have freedom to come and go, and, having no official position limiting their personal liability, can in effect be held responsible for carrying out the various conditions upon which His Majesty's Government have been obliged to insist.

Having regard to these duties which His Majesty's Government consider are imposed on the Commission for Relief in Belgium, there would seem to be in Belgium a lack of real appreciation of the conditions which have been laid down by His Majesty's Government and of the constant vigilance which is necessary to carry them out. It may therefore be worth while to review these conditions, with the suggestion that this communication should be forwarded not only to the Comité National but to each of the provincial and other subsidiary committees for their information and guidance.

a) The Commission for Relief in Belgium should transport into Belgium the quantities and classes of foodstuffs fixed by the Allied Governments, and these foodstuffs must remain the property of the Commission for Relief in Belgium until they are delivered by the Communal Committees to the final consumer---that is, all foodstuffs in warehouses, whether provincial, regional, or communal, shall remain the property of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and all such warehouses shall be administered under their authority and control---as in no other manner can His Majesty's Government conceive that there can be adequate protection for the large stocks of food accumulated in Belgium.

b) The Commission for Relief in Belgium must maintain in Belgium an entirely independent organisation, with its own directors and managers responsible directly to its Chairman in London, and with a sufficient staff to ensure adequate representation throughout Belgium. This is the independent duty of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, although His Majesty's Government have no doubt as to the loyal co-operation of the Comité National in matters of detailed distribution.

c) The Commission for Relief in Belgium with the assistance of the Comité National must see to it that the guarantees entered into by the German authorities are strictly adhered to in all their aspects.

d) As His Majesty's Government indirectly, and many British subjects directly, contribute large sums to the support of the work, they must insist that it is the duty of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to satisfy itself independently that all the foodstuffs imported and acquired are distributed with justice and equality over the entire civil population, and that at all times, inside as well as outside Belgium, proper expenditure is made of these moneys and of all sums realised from the sale of foodstuffs in Belgium. "Ravitaillement" and "secours" are interdependent parts of the same operation. Your responsibilities extend to both, because the German guarantees extend to both, and there can and must be no separation between the two.

e) Apart from these entirely independent functions it would appear to His Majesty's Government that the Belgian in Belgium should be glad to have the co-operation of the Americans in all phases of the relief work. A memorandum of agreement

between the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, dated July 20th, 1915, submitted to His Majesty's Government, appeared to provide a basis of amicable understanding between the two organisations, that is, in general, that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should maintain an independent organisation in Belgium responsible to its Chairman, that members of the American organisation should be active members of the Executive Committees of the Comité National, that representatives of the staff of the Commission for Relief in Belgium should be actual members of the executive provincial committees, that all questions of broad internal policy were to be settled between the two organisations, and that the accountants of the Commission for Relief in Belgium should audit the accounts of the Comité National.

Since this memorandum of agreement was adopted it appears that two additions have been made to the scheme of joint organisation in order to guarantee the proper efficient working of the entire organisation: (1) The establishment of Bureaux Statistiques in order to supply from time to time data with regard to the food distributed; and (2) The establishment of a Department of Inspection and Control under the joint direction of representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National.

His Majesty's Government must request that any opposition arising as to the executions of the functions of these two Bureaux be promptly reported by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Generally they must insist that the infractions of guarantees which come to the knowledge of the Commission for Relief in Belgium or the Comité National should either at once be taken up directly with the local German authorities or, if no remedy be found, that they shall be reported at regular intervals to the American and Spanish Ministers in Brussels who have so long acted as trustees for the guarantees, so as to afford them a proper basis for intervention with the German authorities on the working of the guarantees and to enable them to give their assurances to His Majesty's Government. While there are undoubted advantages in centralising these complaints of infractions through the Chairman of the Comité National to the Ministers or through the chairmen of the provincial committees to the local German authorities, it is essential that the American Director of the Commission or his representatives should be in agreement as regards all such presentations, so that the Commission for Relief in Belgium can independently assure His Majesty's Government that such infractions have been duly taken up and remedy found.

In conclusion we wish to make it entirely clear that this insistence on your independent duties of administration and control is no reflection upon the efficiency or good will of the Belgian organisation, in which the Allied Governments have entire confidence. The sole object of His Majesty's Government, which can only be secured in the manner above outlined, is to maintain the

distinctively neutral character of this work, which alone enables neutral opinion to be enlisted wholeheartedly and energetically in its support, and to relieve the Belgians themselves of responsibilities which, in their present circumstances, could only compromise such liberty of action as they still enjoy and endanger their safety.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 59

Letter,
GREY TO PAGE, setting forth a precise definition of the C.R.B. in relief of
Belgium

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
20 October 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I have carefully considered Your Excellency's request, made, I understand, on behalf of Mr. Whitlock, for a precise definition of the responsibilities of the Commission for Relief in Belgium with regard to the distribution of foodstuffs and monies arising therefrom in the occupied areas of Belgium and Northern France. Although these responsibilities have been set out from time to time during the last two years in communications addressed to Your Excellency and to the Commission, I will endeavor to review the matter for Mr. Whitlock's guidance in the light not only of the original engagements but also of experience gained during these two years of operation. I will on this occasion confine myself to the questions arising in the occupied portions of Belgium leaving for separate treatment the arrangements with regard to the occupied portions of Northern France.

(2) Your Excellency will remember that when the first applications were received from various Belgians for permits to import foodstuffs into Belgium in the months of September and October, 1914, His Majesty's Government laid it down as an absolute rule that no such imports could be introduced or permitted unless the foodstuffs were imported and properly distributed by and under the direction and control of neutrals, and for many reasons Americans were marked out as the neutrals best able to undertake the task in a manner satisfactory both to His Majesty's Government and the Belgian Government. The services of Your Excellency were enlisted, and through the good offices of the United States Government, the approval of the German Government in Berlin was secured for the importation and distribution of foodstuffs under the conditions laid down.

(3) His Majesty's Government, upon the recommendation of Your Excellency, at that time recognised the American Relief Committee under Mr. Hoover, and later on, its successor, the Commission for Relief in Belgium, as suitable to undertake this responsibility. It was agreed that the Commission should act under the patronage and protection of Your Excellency in London and of the United States Minister in Brussels, and shortly afterwards the Spanish Ambassador in London and the Spanish Minister in Brussels, the United States Ambassadors in Berlin and in Paris, the United States Minister at The Hague, and the Netherlands Minister at Le Havre were induced to extend their patronage and protection to the Commission. His Majesty's Government were informed by the Belgian representatives that they would co-operate fully and loyally with the Commission for Relief in Belgium and would assist them in the distribution of foodstuffs and relief. At a later stage, we were informed that for this purpose the various Belgian Committees had been grouped into a unified organisation known as the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, and His Majesty's Government assumed that the organisation thus formed was to be regarded simply as a distribution agency of the Commission for Relief. I wish at this point to state, generally and distinctly, that His Majesty's Government see no reason to alter their original attitude that the whole foundation and condition upon which the imports can continue is that the undivided responsibility for the importation of foodstuffs, the control over their distribution, and the allocation of the monies arising therefrom shall be vested solely in the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

(4) I will endeavor to set out in even more detail the reasons why His Majesty's Government find it necessary to insist on this relationship and responsibility, but I wish first to make it quite clear that this insistence is in no sense a reflection upon the Belgian gentlemen so nobly engaged in the relief of their countrymen. His Majesty's Government fully appreciate the devotion and ability which the personnel of the Comité National has shewn under circumstances of the most extraordinary difficulty. They are convinced that the structure of the Communal, Regional, Provincial, Special, and National Committees is essential to the detailed distribution of the relief. Unfortunately all these gentlemen and their organisation and property are subject to the control of enemies of the Allies and, despite the high confidence they enjoy, it is not only impossible for His Majesty's Government to rely upon them to bear the responsibilities assumed towards the Allies by the Commission for Relief, but also contrary to the interests of their Belgian fellow-countrymen that they should attempt to do so. His Majesty's Government have relied and do rely upon them to appreciate the anomalous situation and peculiar necessities of the time. Having, as they are known to have, the best interests of their countrymen at heart, they will assuredly be willing to renounce for the time being those independent functions to which their abilities and nationality would otherwise entitle them, and devote their energies to the loyal assistance of the neutral Commission in its onerous task.

(5) It seems obvious that only a neutral organisation under the powerful protection which the Commission for Relief in Belgium enjoys, could have been or can be in a position to make agreements of a binding character with belligerent governments and officials, and to secure the fulfilment of those agreements. Such agreements made either with the approval of the Patron Ministers or by them on behalf of the Commission must be supported, not only by the influence of the neutral governments involved, but also by public opinion in belligerent as well as neutral countries. Such agreements, if made on behalf of a Belgian committee under present political conditions, would have no such support, either from neutral governments or public opinion, and His Majesty's Government cannot therefore accept any substitution of the Comité National for the Commission for Relief in Belgium in such agreements.

(6) His Majesty's Government do not conceive that the vast quantities of money and foodstuffs required can be protected in overseas transport and internal distribution unless they are the absolute property and under the absolute control and administration of such a body of neutrals; and the responsibility of this body must extend to the maintenance of a distributing organisation of such character as shall in itself minimise the possibility of leakage.

(7) Again, the neutral membership of the Commission, in Belgium, gives it a freedom of movement and action, an independence from political and personal pressure, and consequently an ability on the part of its members to control and direct administration, which no Belgian could today assume in the occupied territory. And it is only through a daily participation in and control over the administration by such neutrals that the Patron Ministers will be able to give the assurances to the various Governments involved as to the daily compliance of the various parties with the undertakings on which the work of relief is founded.

(8) Beyond this, again, it is a fact inherent in any military government imposed on territories occupied by force of arms, that there can be no expectation of rigid justice and fidelity in the distribution of relief, whether of food or money, unless the administration of the whole work is participated in at every point and absolutely controlled by an independent neutral body such as the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

(9) The Commission for Relief in Belgium has submitted to His Majesty's Government from time to time, for their approval, various memoranda settled by them with the Comité National as to their mutual relations, to which we have been compelled to take some exceptions. With regard to our views generally upon these arrangements, I think it is desirable to lay down the following principles to which all such arrangements must conform:

a) The Commission must maintain in Belgium an entirely independent organisation, composed of responsible and capable Directors and Managers,

responsible directly to the Chairman of the Commission and numerous enough to secure the adequate representation of the Commission and the execution of its duties throughout Belgium. Whilst in a general way the Comité National and its component sub-committees must of necessity bear the labour of the detailed distribution, both it and its component committees must act as the agent of and on behalf of the Commission. The cooperation of the Comité National with the Commission in this particular would seem to have been obtained by the arrangements entered into, by which all matters of general policy should be settled in conference between the two organisations, while joint consideration in matters of administration should be secured by the Commission maintaining several neutral members upon the Executive Committees of the Comité National and upon the Executives of the Provincial and Special Committees. It obviously follows that all administrative decisions must be made by these Executive Committees and that the views of the Commission's representatives thereon must be given the weight which their great responsibilities demand.

b) The Commission for Relief in Belgium must itself purchase the foodstuffs and transport them into Belgium within the quantities fixed by the Allied Governments, and these foodstuffs must remain the absolute property of the Commission until they are delivered by the Communal Committees, to the final consumer, i.e., all foodstuffs in warehouses, whether Provincial, Regional, or Communal, must remain the property of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and all such warehouses, in and out of Belgium, are to be designated as the property of the Commission and to be administered under its name and authority by its own officers or by the Comité National as its administrative agents, for in no other manner do His Majesty's Government believe that adequate protection can be secured for the large stocks of food accumulated in Belgium. Moreover, as large quantities of foodstuffs are sold in Belgium and the monies realised therefrom are applied to the department of "Secours," His Majesty's Government require that the responsibility of the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall, in the same manner and for similar reasons, extend to the handling of these monies no less than to the distribution of food, the various branches of the Comité National acting in this matter also as agents of the Commission in its name and with its full knowledge and consent.

c) Apart from these arrangements for the administration and protection of foodstuffs and money, His Majesty's Government must insist on the general and independent responsibility of the Commission to see that such form of organisation and distribution shall be maintained as will secure that all foodstuffs and relief shall be distributed and administered with justice and equity and shall reach their destination with the minimum possible risk of leakage. As a necessary condition of the continuance of imports, the Commission either directly or through its Patron Ministers, must be able to certify that the agreements and undertakings made on all sides, providing for the non-interference of all authorities with the collection and distribution of foodstuffs and monies arising therefrom, are carried out in good

faith, and obviously the Belgian committees will share and co-operate in the enforcement of these guarantees to the fullest extent of their power.

d) In the accomplishment of these objects, His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the Bureau of Inspection and Control, which must independently satisfy itself that the whole relief organisation is functioning properly in all the particulars above set out. This bureau must be maintained, either solely under the control of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, or, preferably, jointly in co-operation with the Comité National. And furthermore, the Commission must continue, both in and out of Belgium, the Bureau of Audit, under independent Accountants, who shall from time to time audit the essential accounts of the whole relief organisation; also a Bureau of Statistics, which shall be in a position to supply to the Protecting Ministers adequate data as to the food collection, transport, and distribution.

(10) It would appear to His Majesty's Government that there can be nothing in these stipulations with which the Belgians in Belgium should be unwilling to comply. As already emphasised, they represent no reflection upon the efficiency and good will of the Belgian Committees or their membership. The sole object of His Majesty's Government is to maintain intact the distinctively neutral character of this work which alone enables neutral effort abroad to be enlisted energetically and whole-heartedly in its support. This can clearly only be secured in the manner outlined above. Beyond this, it appears to His Majesty's Government that the assumption by the Belgian committees of separate responsibilities towards any of the authorities or any independent action on their part. could only compromise and endanger their members, and I must again repeat that on no other conditions than those laid down above can His Majesty's Government permit food importations into Belgium.

(11) I shall be glad if Your Excellency will communicate the above to the principal members of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and, through your colleagues in Brussels, to the principal members of the Belgian Committees in Belgium, and I shall be glad to receive your assurance that the above principles are fully understood and that the whole organisation is conducted upon these lines.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) GREY OF FALLODON

Letter,

HOOVER TO PERCY, replying to the latter's observation on the violation of German guarantees and his inquiry concerning the working of the Bureau of Inspection and Control

LONDON, 30 June 1916

*Lord Eustace Percy,
The Foreign Office, London*

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

I beg to acknowledge your various letters of the 28th and 29th of June. I will, of course, take up in Belgium the many matters which you raise. I do think, however, that I should set out at some length some factors in the position in relation also to your verbal inquiries.

I. In sending you copies of the weekly statement of investigations I was actuated by a desire to place before you the whole internal working of the organization, fully and frankly, hoping to convince you that the inspection and control were carried out rigorously and that consequential irregularities were fully pursued. As I pointed out at that time, I did so with fear that the great number of incidents which these documents displayed would give you a wholly distorted view as to the situation in Belgium. If you will bear in mind the many committees and daily transactions in the country and the fineness of the comb which we draw through it, I think you will agree with me that the matters raised can quite well be left to their normal solution. The great number of incidents related may be divided into three categories:

a) A large part of the incidents refer to irregularities in distribution amongst the civil population, which is purely a matter of internal organization, and, while it concerns us as an organization, it does not come into the range of the guarantees.

b) You will note the entire absence of incident in relation to seizure of imported foodstuffs by the Germans.

c) Practically the whole of the incidents of violation revolve around the interpretation of the provisions in the guarantees as to individual purchases and to export of excess early vegetables, with the exception of the fats question, which is under negotiation.

In practically all these incidents at least colorable right may be claimed by the German authorities and we have taken the view that if we put up complaints, while it will be impossible for us to get the return of the actual commodity involved, the steady presentation of a stream of complaints keeps down violation. There is no doubt in our mind as to the desire of the central authorities in Brussels to see the

guarantees carried out properly, and it seems to us that it will be sufficient to keep them up to the mark if we report to them all the incidents which occur in the country through the laxity of local administration.

The matters of which you complain will be gone into still further to the best of our ability; but you will, I think, recognize that there is a limit to what can be done and that we are certainly protecting 99.9 per cent of the total native food supply of the country at the present moment.

II. In the matter of further information as to the constitution and method of handling the Bureau of Inspection and Control and the pursuit of irregularities to the German authorities, I beg to say the following is the situation:

The Bureau of Inspection and Control was set up early last winter in response to your demands for more rigorous control by the Americans. It was constituted as a joint measure between the C.R.B. and the C.N. to be presided over by an American representing the C.R.B. and a Belgian representing the C.N., both acting under the respective directors. The gentlemen chosen were Messrs. van Gend and Green. Subsidiary bureaus were to be established in each province to be presided over jointly by an American representative of the C.R.B. and a Belgian representative of the C.N. The provincial bureaus were to maintain their own staffs of inspectors and to investigate in great detail the whole of the operations of the communal committees. The Central Bureau of Inspection and Control also has its own independent inspectors in conjunction with the provincial inspectors, who investigate any complaints coming up to the central organization, the idea being that the Central Inspection Bureau overriding the whole, would keep the provincial bureaus stimulated up to efficiency. In working out the details of installation of this organization, a considerable amount of difficulty has been encountered, as one or two of the provincial committees resented it as in some manner a reflection upon their administration; and both Mr. Francqui and Mr. Poland have experienced a great deal of personal difficulty in obtaining its acceptance and loyal support. To the best of my belief the provincial committee of Brabant, which you mentioned, is the only one which has not fallen entirely into line. You will recognize that any organization of this type which is made up of volunteers of all kinds of personalities requires a great deal of care and patience, and the Relief direction in Brussels has succeeded in overcoming all opposition of this character, except, possibly, in the cases you allude to. I do not think we are warranted in cutting off the entire food supply to this province at present, but no doubt if they do not promptly and loyally co-operate at an early date we could, if you insist, do so.

With regard to your inquiries as to whether this bureau covers the question of forced labor, I beg to say that the inspection and control in general embraces both ravitaillement and secours, and under the latter the labor question arises. The Belgian people very naturally consider that in all departments where they are expending money remitted by their own Government, the Americans have no

voice. Therefore, Mr. Green's departmental activities have been restricted to the ravitaillement questions; in fact the secours side of the inspection and control is conducted in an entirely separate office. The phases arising out of the Caisse de Prêts, which you mention, are on the secours side and therefore are not within our present province.

Given that irregularities vis-à-vis the guarantees are discovered and investigated, they are, together with the data thereon, referred to Mr. Francqui, who draws up a weekly note in summary, which he presents to the ministers to be presented to the German authorities. Latterly the provincial presidents have been instructed, after consultation with the American representatives, to take up the irregularities arising in the province, in the first instance with the local German Governor, with a view to effecting a quicker solution so that the central establishment shall only need to deal with such issues as cannot locally be settled.

III. As to the Étape, the situation here is very difficult. As you can imagine, in the midst of a fighting army the Germans are not willing to have persons of any nationality circulating freely through the country for fear that they should be the bearers of communications. We took up with the German General Staff on my last visit the question of establishing another American station in this area, and I am in hopes that this can be brought to a speedy fruition. Most of the complaints to which you refer took place in the southwestern section of the Étape, our people having a much freer movement in the half to the north and east.

IV. As to the question about how far the C.R.B. is maintaining an independent control in Belgium, I beg to enclose herewith copy of a memorandum prepared by Mr. Francqui. The Belgian people having built up, under most terrible difficulties, a strong institution in the shape of the Comité National, they have a natural desire that it should be steadily and systematically held to the forefront as a rallying point of Belgian sentiment and solidarity, and that its brilliance should not be diminished by a parallel and too prominent a foreign institution. The most extreme form of such development would be the total elimination of the Americans from Belgium, which I do not believe is at all intended. The question as to how far it is necessary for us to maintain an independent organization under independent direction revolves, so far as you are concerned, largely around the question of guarantees. Certain other questions enter into it but lie outside the international phases. At the early stages of the organization in Belgium the Americans performed certain functions outside relief which do not at the present moment loom so large. But as the C.N. has grown in influence and strength within the country and as life has settled down to more or less routine and settled relations with the Germans, this function is not so important as it was at one time.

V. The whole desire of the Americans is simply to serve the Belgians and above all to carry on this service on an amiable footing whereby no possible friction can result, and I am anxious to agree with Mr. Francqui in the desirability, from the

standpoint above expressed, of entirely subordinating the C.R.B. organization in Belgium to the C.N. and to do so with your full approval. Always bear in mind that this is not a business of personal *amour propre*; that we do not care an atom what position we occupy in the scheme so long as the Belgian people are fed .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 61

Letter,

PAGE TO WHITLOCK, stating the Ambassador's opinion respecting relations of the C.R.B. and C.N. and protesting against interference with the C.R.B.'s discharge of its responsibilities

LONDON, 23 October 1916

*His Excellency, The Honorable Brand Whitlock
American Minister, Brussels*

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

I send you herewith further copies of the Foreign Office note sent you with my dispatch of the 21st instant with regard to the relations of the Commission for Relief and the Belgian committees. I feel that some observations on my part may be of interest to you in the difficult negotiations which may be necessary to straighten out this situation.

We all recognize here the extreme difficulty of the situation which you have to defend in Belgium. There would seem to be a great demand for labor on your part vis-à-vis the authorities without the necessity of troubling the local committees. And I am sure that their lack of perspective does not make matters any easier for you.

Several things are apparent to me with regard to the relief in general: it is unpopular with a large public opinion in the Allied countries on military grounds, and continues its existence against these currents, first, because of the constant assurance that it is an organism of independent neutrals under the patronage of American officials in Europe; second, that any termination of the relief brought about by the action of the Allied Governments would create a storm of adverse public opinion abroad. It is a very delicate thread on which to hang such an organism, and it has only been by the strenuous daily and hourly activity of the

Relief Commission itself that these adverse currents are stemmed and the support of public opinion maintained.

In view of the reports which filter out of Belgium daily as to the rigorous subjection of the Belgians to German authority, if it were suggested that the Americans were not the forefront and control of the relief in Belgium itself, the whole thing would break down. The general conception of the relief work is based on the arrangement stipulated at the initial stage by the British Government. This conception has been maintained since the beginning, and any action taken by the Belgians which tends to controvert this will, if it ever gets known, be the death knell of the entire relief.

For eight or nine months the British Government has been filled with anxiety as to whether this was the actual state of the organization, and reports coming out of Belgium through various channels have disclosed to the British Government an attitude of determined independence and assumption of domination by the Belgian committees and the subjection of the Americans. This would have reached a crisis long since but for the activities of Mr. Hoover. In his anxiety, however, to maintain good relations with all his associates he has always minimized these actions as not vitally affecting the main objects of the relief. The action of the Belgian committees in replacing the name of the Commission for Relief in Belgium by that of the Comité National on distributing stations in Belgium, and the tendency of the Comité National to set itself up in agreements with the German authorities as the responsible agency of the work with occasional references to the C.R.B. as an importing body, and its reports which scarcely acknowledge the existence of the C.R.B. or give it studied omission, are all indicative of a set policy. What they may have in their minds I cannot understand. In any event, the protection of the relief abroad and support by our own Government at Washington in holding the German Government to their undertakings, is wholly impossible upon such a basis, entirely aside from the English view of the matter. The Comité National is not the pivot on which the relief revolves in Belgium. If the time ever arrives when we have to appeal to our Government to support the relief organization in Belgium from German interference we shall make a poor showing if the German Government should claim that their relations are acknowledged to be with the Comité National, a Belgian organization subject entirely to German domination.

I do not see why the co-operation and participation of the American gentlemen in the work should be offensive to the *amour propre* of the Belgians, or why they should hesitate fully and loyally to recognize and welcome such participation.

In view of the fact that the initial support of the American Government in this matter is due to you and that you have remained in Belgium all this time at so great a sacrifice of your own comfort, it seems unfair that you should be called upon to straighten out such a situation as this; and especially that, when all is said and done, this American effort should be represented as a minor contribution.

As to the Americans who are engaged in this work, if they decline from personal reasons to continue the administration they are now carrying on, I for one will feel compelled to advise our Government that if they cannot succeed no group of Americans can ever hope to do so. In this I am confident you will agree with me.

I am informed that a year ago Mr. Hoover found it was utterly impossible to carry on his personal interests and give the time and energy required to this work, and that he has severed all his professional connections, thus stripping himself entirely of his professional income and position. This represents a greater financial sacrifice than has been given by anyone else of any nationality. If, in addition to the great anxieties over outside matters which grow in difficulty every day, he is to be confronted with anxieties from lack of cooperation and deliberate interference in Belgium, it seems to me that it is too much to ask him, or any other American, to go on. It is asking too much of you and me; we cannot be put in a false position by countenancing the growth in Belgium of an organization different from that prescribed by the agreements with the Allied Governments.

I am, my dear colleague,

Very sincerely

(Signed) WALTER HINES PAGE

DOCUMENT NO. 62

Letter,

LORD ROBERT CECIL TO PAGE, stating that the British Government could not sanction any increase in imports to Belgium or even guarantee continuance of present imports if the Bureau of Inspection and Control were altered

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

20 October 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

With reference to my long letter to you of today, I must explain confidentially to you the vital importance attached by us to the Bureau of Inspection and Control in Belgium. It is not too much to say that it is on our knowledge of the detailed working of this Bureau that our whole confidence in the efficiency of the organisation in Belgium is based.

Without this knowledge I should feel wholly unable to recommend to His Majesty's Government any increase in the importations of the Commission or in the subsidies granted to it by the Allied Governments, and any doubt as to its smooth working

places me in the gravest position at this moment when increased funds and increased importations are being asked for. I could not in these circumstances even guarantee the continuance of present importations, since my confidence in the absence of leakages of foodstuffs to the Germans would be wholly destroyed.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(FOR VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON)

(Signed) ROBERT CECIL

DOCUMENT NO. 63

Memorandum of agreement,
C.R.B. AND THE C.N., approved by the British and Belgian Governments,
defining the principles and objectives of the co-operative activities of the two
organizations

LONDON, 30 December 1916

The Commission for Relief in Belgium ("the Commission") and the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation ("the Comité National") have deemed it advisable to review their respective objectives and the principles of their close and friendly co-operation, and they have, in entire agreement, drafted the present memorandum for that purpose. The arrangements as to the relief of Northern France, being the subject of a separate memorandum with the French Government, are not here considered. and these arrangements are solely matters for settlement between the Commission and the French Government.

1. The Commission was founded in October 1914, on the recommendation of American citizens interested in Belgium, by the American and Spanish Ambassadors and Ministers, with their patronage, and the approval of their respective Governments and of the Allied, Belgian and German Governments, to undertake as neutrals the importation and distribution of food supplies and relief to the civil population of the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France.
2. Under the patronage of the Spanish and American Ministers in Brussels, the Comité Central was founded in Belgium in August 1914, by a number of important Belgian citizens residing in the occupied territory, with the sole view of bringing relief to the Belgian civil population, and in October 1914, this body was transformed into the "Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation."

The Commission and the Comité National resolved, in October 1914, to unite their activities, with a view to assuring more efficiency in the carrying out of their common objectives.

3. (a) The Commission is directly responsible to its patron ambassadors and ministers, and is entirely independent of control or participation of any of the belligerent governments, and of any organization of belligerent subjects, and employs belligerent subjects only at its own appointment.

The Commission maintains its principal offices in England, with branches in America, Holland, Argentina, France, Belgium, Northern France, and elsewhere, as necessity requires. The Chairman is appointed with the approval of the patron ministers, and the personnel of the Commission is appointed by and responsible to the Chairman.

b) The Commission, either through itself or through its patron ministers, has entered into a large number of undertakings with the Allied, Belgian, and German Governments, fixing the conditions under which it operates, and providing for authorization, protection, transport, and distribution of supplies imported into occupied territory, the protection and distribution of indigenous food supplies, and the protection of the operations of relief generally.

The Commission is thus entrusted with the protection of the relief work and with the protection of all the funds and foodstuffs appertaining thereto, and is responsible to the Allied and Belgian Governments for the observance by the Germans of all the guarantees which have been given with respect to both imported and indigenous foodstuffs, as well as to other matters covered by the guarantees affecting the welfare of the population in the occupied territory.

In execution of its responsibilities, the Commission furnishes to its patron ministers regular reports upon any failure of the undertakings with regard to the protection of imported and indigenous foodstuffs and the organization and operation of the relief generally, in order that the patron ministers may be in position to advise the various governments as to the maintenance of the integrity of the guarantees and the undertakings of the Commission.

c) The Commission has the sole administration of all relief activities exterior to the occupied territory, including the mobilization of finance, food supplies, charity, and the protection and transport of foodstuffs.

d) The Commission is responsible to its patrons, to the neutral governments who give it moral and substantial support, and to the Allied and Belgian Governments, not only for the integrity and neutrality of its operations, but also, in conjunction with the Comité National in the occupied territory, for protecting and insuring the distribution of food supplies, and a priority in the application of food supplies and

moneys arising from the sale thereof, to the adequate support of the destitute, and it is recognized by all parties that this function is the sole objective for which the Commission was founded, and is the only stimulus upon which it can continue.

e) The Commission has been, and is, financially supported, not only by public charity from the British Empire, the United States, and elsewhere, and also from Belgians abroad, but, as the necessities have grown beyond the resources of public charity, it has been predominantly supported by subsidies from the Belgian Government. The Commission receives the constant and sympathetic assistance of the Allied and Belgian Governments in the provision and transport of food supplies.

The Commission furnishes to its patron ministers full accounts, audited by an approved firm of public accountants, of the whole of its financial operations, and detailed statistical data as to the cost, transport, and distribution of foodstuffs and benevolence, and the Commission undertakes to furnish copies of these reports regularly to the Allied and Belgian Governments, and its financial responsibilities cease with the tendering of such audited accounts.

f) The Commission is generally responsible for conveying to the Allied and Belgian Governments, from time to time, the actual needs of the occupied territory as to the import of foodstuffs, and to determine, in co-operation with the Comité National, the needs of the population; and the Commission undertakes to carry out to the best of its ability the restrictions placed upon it by the British Government as to character, quantity, and methods of distribution and transport of commodities imported.

4. (a) In the course of its operations the Commission has entered into various arrangements with the Comité National, engaged in detailed distribution, with a view of the discharge of its responsibilities outlined above, and for the furtherance of these objectives the following general principles of relationship between the Commission and the Comité National are here set out as outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6.

b) The Commission maintains an independent organization in Belgium, and, through its Director and his assistants, maintains an intimate co-operation with the Comité National in Brussels, and, by its representatives in the provinces, the same relations to the executives of the provincial committees, and the members of the Commission attend the meetings of the Comité National and participate in their deliberations.

c) The Comité National maintains, through the system of subcommittees, the detailed administrations of the distribution of commodities and relief funds in Belgium. The Comité National has established for that object central offices in Brussels, with branches subordinate to the Comité exécutif in every provincial head

town (Comités provinciaux) as well as in every district head town and in every commune (Comités cantonaux et Comités communaux). The Comité National has also organized, in addition to the local branches, a number of special committees with specific objects. The Comité National is managed by a Comité exécutif, whose president is appointed by the Comité National. The staff of the central offices in Brussels is appointed by the President of the Comité exécutif, and is responsible to him. In the provinces the staff is appointed by the president of the provincial, cantonal, and communal committees.

d) The Comité National has been and is financially supported (i) By remittances of the Commission, as outlined in paragraph 6; (ii) By charitable contributions collected among the population in Belgium itself.

5. The general relation between the Commission and the Comité National is one of joint co-operation and collaboration in the general policy and general direction and control of the distribution of commodities and benevolence.

While in general the guardianship of the relief is naturally vested in the Commission, the detailed administration (except transport) is naturally vested in the Comité National, and the general policy is vested jointly in the two Committees, in which each shall have an equal voice, the one appropriate to its larger experience in Belgian life and the actual needs of the population, and the other appropriate to its independence and to its obligations, as set out above, and to its functions in co-ordinating the relief measures inside Belgium to the measures necessitated by physical and political circumstances outside Belgium.

It follows that, from this relationship, no decision as to changes in methods or policy or financial organization shall be made without the mutual agreement of both the Commission and the Comité National, and that any decision taken shall be given prompt and efficient execution, and any abuses discovered shall be promptly remedied by the executives of the Commission and the Comité National.

6. (a) The whole of the foodstuffs imported for Belgium shall be charged by the Commission to the Comité National, and shall be sold by the Comité National to the civilian population. The receipts from such sales shall be distributed by the Comité National for benevolent support of the destitute:

(i) As outlined in paragraph 6 (e) (i and ii);

(ii) Such purposes as set out in 6 (e) (iii) ; and for

(iii) Payments on account of commercial exchange; and the Comité National shall liquidate the debts against them from the Commission through the acceptance by the Commission of the detailed accounts of the Belgian Committee of Expenditure upon the items i, ii, and iii set out above, these accounts to be subject to audit by

the Commission's accountants. All foodstuffs (any moneys so far as expenditures on items i and ii, is concerned) are the properties of the Commission, the Comité National acting as the legal agents for the Commission in such transactions. As evidence of such ownership and joint administration, all working places of the relief organization in Belgium, and all documents relating thereto, shall bear the mention "Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation," "Commission for Relief in Belgium," and all ration cards, etc., shall be issued with the same mention.

b) For administrative purposes in Belgium the Commission and the Comité National will act through the channel of the existing divisions designated hereafter. In each of these divisions all information in the hands of both committees is open to both; (i) Transport; (ii) Ravitaillement; (iii) Secours; (iv) Inspection and Control; (v) Commercial Exchange; (vi) Accounts and Statistics.

c) Transport---The transport throughout Belgium is managed by the Commission, with the assistance of the Comité National, and commodities are delivered to the local branches of the Comité National, in such proportions as may be determined by the chief executive of the Comité National and of the Commission.

d) Ravitaillement---The chief executive of the Comité National and the Commission in Brussels will, from time to time, determine in consultation:

(i) The nature and quantities of commodities to be imported.

(ii) The provincial distribution of these commodities.

(iii) The methods of milling and rationing, the amount of the rations, and the control of distribution generally.

(iv) Remedies for defects and abuses in detailed distribution organization.

(v) The prices at which imports are transferred by the Commission to the Comité National, by the Comité National to the provincial committees, by the provincial committees to the cantonal and communal committees, and by the latter sold to the public.

(vi) The measures to be taken as to the control of native food supplies and the general policy to be pursued in connection therewith, the Commission and the Comité National being represented in the Wheat Central, and interesting themselves in securing Belgian or neutral participation in the other centrals controlling the various commodities set up by the German authorities.

On their part the presidents of the provincial committees and the representatives of the Commission in the provinces will from time to time determine in consultation:

(1) The regional distribution of the commodities put at the disposal of their provinces.

(2) The measures to be taken as to the control of native food supplies in their provinces.

(3) Remedies for defects and abuses in detailed distribution organization in their provinces.

e) Secours.---Inasmuch as public charity is now entirely inadequate for the support of the destitute, it is the wish of the Allied and Belgian Governments that their support should constitute a first call upon all funds and foodstuffs at the disposal of the Commission and the Comité National, and it is agreed that all foodstuffs or moneys received from the sale of foodstuffs shall be divided into:

(i) Funds or foodstuffs to be applied to the support of the destitute, which shall include the relief measures given at present under Secours *Ordinaire* and the *Fund Chomage, Soupes Scolaires*, etc., etc., and such other purely benevolent expenditure as may be determined from time to time as necessary. The chief executives of the Commission and the Comité National shall mutually determine periodically the amount to be set aside for these purposes monthly. They shall also determine monthly the division of this general appropriation between the various branches and subcommittees devoted to benevolent support of the destitute, and the accounts of the Comité National and the Commission are to be adjusted from this point of view. All the organisms subsidized under this heading shall be at all times open to the full investigations of the Commission, and any recommendations made by the Commission shall be mutually considered and determined by the chief executives of the Commission and the Comité National.

(ii) Public charity collected by the Commission shall, as needed, be transferred to the Comité National, whose chief executives, in consultation with the chief executives of the Commission, shall pay such sums out to the various charitable committees in Belgium in such amounts as may be mutually determined from time to time.

(iii) The Commission has no responsibility with regard to the distribution of the remainder of the funds available after the satisfaction of the necessities of the destitute. The Commission will, however, upon receipt of statements of such disbursements under paragraph 6, transmit them in their accounts to the Allied and Belgian Governments.

f) Inspection.---The Central Bureau of Inspection shall be maintained and managed jointly by representatives from the Commission and the Comité National. The existing branch bureau shall be likewise maintained in each of the provinces, managed by joint representatives of the Commission and the provincial committee.

The purpose of these bureaus shall be:

(i) To investigate and report on all infractions of the guarantees. The reports of this division shall be handled jointly by the chief executives of the Commission and the Belgian Committee, and protests presented to the German authorities either by their own representatives or through the protecting ministers.

(ii) The investigation and report on the resales of imported foodstuffs or illicit transactions in native foodstuffs. The abuses so determined shall be at once taken up by the representatives of the Comité National or of the provincial committees on the inspection, and suppressed, either directly or in co-operation with the judicial authorities in the country, and the central and local bureaus shall be kept advised of these actions.

(iii) The inspection of the administrative operations of the various subcommittees throughout the country. The reports as to abuses in these matters shall be handed to the chief executives of the Comité National for action.

All questions arising under any of these heads shall form the subject of regular reports from the Commission to the patron ministers under paragraph 3 (b).

g) Commercial Exchange.---The Allied Governments have granted to the Commission the right to accept payments abroad from private individuals and firms for transmission into Belgium and payment out of the receipts from the sale of foodstuffs. The Comité National will make such payments for the account of the Commission, as outlined in paragraph 6.

h) Accounts and Statistics.---The Comité National is to furnish to the Commission monthly statements of all its accounts, to be audited by the accountants of the Commission, and the Commission and the Comité National are to maintain departments of statistics, and the Commission is to report regularly to the patron ministers the details of food and clothing distribution over the whole country and the distribution of funds for the support of the destitute.

SIGNED(31)

the.....day of December, one thousand nine hundred and sixteen.

.....
Chairman, Comité Exécutif, Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation

.....
Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium

7. The British and Belgian Governments give their complete approval to the principles of joint and friendly co-operation expounded in the present

memorandum, and they express their satisfaction with the Commission's and the Comité National's conduct of the relief during the period of over two years during which they have devoted themselves to the service of the Belgian people. The Belgian Government and people welcome all these activities of both the Commission and the Comité National for the protection and security of their people.

Should irreconcilable differences arise between the Commission and the Comité National, no executive action shall be taken on either side until the Allied and Belgian Governments and the patron ministers shall have determined the matter and so advised both committees.

The discussion culminating in the precise statement given above finally determined the position of the Commission. A month later, however, the United States broke off relations with Germany and on the 6th April 1917 America was in the war. These great events made it necessary to replace the Americans in Belgium with nationals of neutral states. Three and a half years' experience had established the technique of relief, and as far as relief distribution was concerned, the succeeding months brought to light no new experience within the invaded territories. A Spanish-Dutch committee was organized to protect the distribution of relief(32) but outside of Belgium the Commission's organization and functions remained unchanged. A C.R.B. office in Brussels under a Belgian director(33) continued to provide contact between the internal and external organizations. When, in the autumn of 1918, the Germans evacuated Belgium, the Commission returned its American delegates to the liberated regions, where they were occupied in assisting the Belgians with their enormous burden of reconstruction.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER III

PROGRAM OF IMPORTATIONS

The relief of Belgium was not a matter of pouring into that country a stream of supplies for a large number of people suddenly destitute, as is the case when a region is devastated by flood or earthquake; it was a problem of provisioning a whole nation (and part of another), highly industrialized, densely populated, and suddenly cut off from those external markets in which it sold its products and from which it drew its raw materials and eighty per cent of the cereals it normally consumed. It was not merely the poor and the victims of military devastation, who

had to be fed. Refugees and workers deprived of their employment by the sudden war were naturally the first to feel the effects of Belgium's commercial isolation; but in a short time well-to-do and poor alike faced the common threat of famine.

During August and the first week of September the battle line swept across Belgium and into France, halted at the Marne on the 10th September, surged back to the Aisne, and then solidified in a double line of entrenchments from Nieuport on the Channel to the Swiss border. North and east of this line German forces occupied and ruled 20,000 square miles of Belgian and French territory with a population of over 9,000,000. The local food supplies of these regions, under normal conditions seriously insufficient, were reduced by military activities. The invasion came at harvest time; crops were destroyed, food was confiscated, and grain left unharvested in the fields in the confusion and panic of the first weeks of war. First the great industrial centers like Brussels, Charleroi, Mons, then progressively the smaller towns felt the bottom of the barrel of their food reserves, until by October it was clear that the entire country, except the relatively unimportant agricultural districts, would within a few weeks be starving.

The task of the relief organizations that intervened at this desperate moment was at first, by emergency shipments, to avert the disaster immediately threatening, and subsequently to organize a program of food imports, and eventually of clothing, which added to the local products would preserve the people of Belgium and Northern France in health. The accomplishment of this task involved more than estimating the normal consumption, deducting the local production, and sending out orders in the food markets of the world to make up the deficit. As will be shown later the local produce also had to be taken under control and rationed in order that injustice should not ensue in the face of insufficient supplies. Obstacles of all sorts intervened. There was no possibility of providing for normal consumption, and to maintain even the minimum of subsistence involved the directors of the C.R.B. in an incessant battle that lasted through four arduous years and that always seemed on the point of being lost. The first engagement in this struggle to maintain a program was over the matter of finance of which there was practically none at the beginning of the operations.⁽³⁴⁾ Then came restrictions of the Allied Governments on the quantity and character of C.R.B. imports,⁽³⁵⁾ and finally the shortage of food in accessible markets and the shortage of shipping resulting from submarine activities and other causes.⁽³⁶⁾ Each of these engagements, though constituting but one in the series that made up the general battle to maintain a program, was of such importance that had it been lost the feeding of Belgium would have failed.

Because the program of importations was so involved with other issues the following documents do not constitute a connected narrative; they do, however, show the problem to be solved, the changes in that problem as the result of internal and external events, and the progress made in solving it.⁽³⁷⁾

1. The First Year. November 1914-October 1915

DOCUMENT NO. 64

Telegram,(38)

FRANCQUI TO HOOVER giving preliminary estimate of necessary monthly importations for Belgium

BRUSSELS, 26 October 1914

HOOVER, LONDON

Monthly needs Belgian population, minimum 60,000 tons wheat, 15,000 tons maize, 3,000 tons rice and dried peas.

FRANCQUI

The above estimate (which Hoover had asked Francqui to prepare) of a minimum monthly importation of 78,000 tons of cereals constituted the first paper program which the Commission attempted to realize after the first emergency supplies were rushed into Belgium. The need of a definite program in place of the inevitably haphazard methods of the first days of relief was obvious, but the obstacles to the realization of that program were enormous. First there was the matter of finance. This is treated in detail in a later chapter;(39) here it is sufficient to note that the resources in sight consisted of £100,000 provided by the British Government the hope (eventually realized) of a loan from Belgian bankers of £600,000 which Francqui and his associates were attempting to arrange; and charitable contributions (extent unknown) which appeals to the world might produce. The response to these appeals was generous but quite inadequate to meet the program. Supplementary purchases had to be made, and funds for this purpose and to pay transportation charges on gift supplies had to be found. All monies in hand were quickly used up and Hoover assumed personal liabilities for large sums to meet this emergency. Needless to say, because of these difficulties and the reluctance of the British Government in view of Great Britain's food position to permit the Commission to buy supplies in England or cargoes en route there, the importations during November and December 1914 were far below the program. A timely cargo of miscellaneous foodstuffs from Nova Scotia, a group of cargoes financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, a small but invaluable loan of flour from the Dutch Government and a similar loan of Canadian wheat received from the British

Government brought the total of food delivered by the Commission at Rotterdam by the end of December to 79,000 tons valued at \$4,500,000.(40)

DOCUMENT NO. 65

Memorandum,(41)

BY SIR EDWARD GREY, relative to C.R.B. export permits, purchases, etc., with comments by W. Runciman, President of the Board of Trade

LONDON, 25 October 1914

The American Ambassador informs me today that the American, Spanish, and Belgian Committee, assuming that a permit to let food supplies go to Belgium would allow them to export food from here, and knowing that the need is great, have already purchased £30,000 of foodstuffs and chartered a Dutch ship to convey them to Rotterdam. They now find that the export from this country is prohibited.

(We can agree to this. License must be issued at once. W.R.[42])

They would be quite willing to replace these foodstuffs by others, imported subsequently.

(Note this. W.R.)

There are cargoes of wheat now on the Atlantic, on their way to British merchants. Would the Committee be permitted to buy any of these cargoes and divert them to Rotterdam, without their being brought here at all?

(We deprecate this. W.R.)

There are cargoes of rice from India to Great Britain destined for the United States. Might the Committee buy some of these which are now on their way, and send them to Rotterdam instead of to the United States?

(Those cargoes actually consigned to U.S.A. can go to Rotterdam. We should be given the names. W.R.)

There is no large amount of food to be bought in Holland.

The Ambassador asks whether, when food is imported subsequently from the United States for the Belgian population, the food may be *stored in warehouses* here?

(We would certainly not object. W.R.)

The Committee would propose to send it only in small quantities to Belgium; so that, should the Germans, in spite of the assurance of the German Commander, confiscate any of this food, they would be able to detain the bulk of it here at any time.

The American organisations and some wealthy men are anxious to send food to Belgium, and have already sent £12,000 here to be used for this purpose. The American Ambassador will tell them not to send money in future, but to despatch food direct from the United States.

(Much better. W.R.)

He asks whether it could not be sent in British ships from the United States, as well as in neutral ships?

I have told him that with the Germans at Ostend, I doubt whether we would insure British ships on the way to Rotterdam; a British ship might be captured by the Germans.

(She could not come within our Insurance cover, but if she were covered separately at New York or at Lloyds against War Risk, British ships would no doubt be obtainable. W.R.)

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DOCUMENT NO. 66

Letter,
FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, stating increase in imports required to meet the growing needs of the Belgian population

BRUSSELS, 2 March 1915

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have had occasion on various opportunities to impart to the Commission for Relief in Belgium the increasing need of our people. The monthly consignments are hardly sufficient to satisfy the demands of our Provincial Committees.

I therefore allow myself to suggest that you should make new efforts with a view to increasing the tonnage of the imports, following the indications below:

1) Wheat and flour. The consignments should continue in the existing proportions, which are a strict minimum (60,000 tons a month).

2) Lard and bacon. It is necessary to buy about 1,000 tons a month (500 tons bacon and 500 lard). Under the circumstances the National Committee does not keep to the limit of a price of 1.90 frs. to 2.00 fixed previously, but it asks that you should buy under the best conditions.

3) Rice. Besides the usual arrivals, it would be desirable to receive a large boatload of this product at the end of May and again at the end of June.

4) Peas and beans. It will be necessary to continue the imports in the existing proportions.

5) Maize. If it is possible, it would be desirable to purchase more maize before the next harvest, and above all white maize which will give white flour; if this is not possible, to take some measures to import a sufficiently large quantity of this product, until the beginning of the next harvest.

6) Potatoes. The National Committee will take as much as you can send until the beginning of the next harvest, say the end of July.

Failing fresh potatoes, the Committee asks you to buy dried potatoes and potato flour. I confirm this request; but I should be glad to know what are the prices of these products. The Provincial Committees praise the qualities of dried potatoes to me, but as the quantity put at their disposal came from gifts, I have no idea of their price.

7) Salt and dried fish. I requested the Rotterdam office to buy salt and smoked fish, and as a trial to make a special consignment for Hainaut. If this first experiment is a success, the National Committee will want other large quantities of these products. One could perhaps buy it, instead of in Holland, in Norway or Sweden, or Scotland. I wish to draw your attention particularly to this kind of food, which is one of the most nutritive of common foods.

8) Meats. The Provincial Committees insist on receiving meat at reasonable prices. Failing a proper means of transportation, the importation of frozen meat is impossible unless your London Office could charter a special boat as far as Brussels, a boat which would at the same time serve Antwerp. But, even in this case, the rest of the country could not be supplied with frozen meat. In any case, I think it necessary to ask you to order some American salt meat. They mention particularly meat in casks, as being possible to deliver at very low prices. It should be understood, however, that I place no limit for the present, either on the kind of meat or the quantity ordered, so long as the prices are advantageous. It would be best to buy, as is best for the interests of the Provincial Committees, such salted meats as you would judge would suit our people best.

I know, dear Mr. Hoover, that you will consider this question with the same activity and untiring devotion, which you have proved to us so often; and thanking you once more, I beg to remain.

&c &c &c

(Signed) E. FRANCOU

[Translation]

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This request for an increased program of importation including supplies of new categories such as fats, meats, potatoes, et cetera put a new strain on the financial resources of the Commission, to which in April was added the additional requirement of from 15,000 to 18,000 tons for the 2,000,000 people in occupied French territories.⁽⁴³⁾ At the same time the contributions in kind, which had provided for nearly one-fourth of the imports, could no longer be depended upon to provide for this proportion of the needs. Fortunately the negotiations for government subsidies were successfully concluded in February. But even before he was certain of success in these negotiations, Hoover had increased the Commission's purchases in anticipation of the new requirements. The Commission was able, therefore, to deliver 110,000 tons of supplies at Rotterdam in April and to maintain during May and June monthly deliveries of 100,000 tons and thus provide for the French territories without reducing the deliveries to Belgium.

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DOCUMENT NO. 67

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B. REPRESENTATIVE IN PARIS, stating monthly food requirements of population in Northern France

LONDON, 15 March 1915

**GIFFORD PINCHOT
AMERICAN EMBASSY, PARIS**

Studies of our people indicate we could handle two million French people on supply of thirteen thousand tons wheat, twelve hundred tons beans, five hundred tons bacon, twelve hundred tons rice per month. This implies smaller ration than Belgium and could be managed on subsidy of three hundred thousand pounds per month. We can probably procure enough supplies here in addition to what we have now available; therefore what we want is this money, and in view of critical condition cereal market we should have the money placed at our disposal at once so

as to be able to procure and pay for three months' supply and thereafter three hundred thousand pounds per month in order to provide for the third month forward, this system to continue until we have provided for month of July, that is, March, April, May, June, July, five months, making total one and half million pounds. We have during last two months and in continuance of our work during March depleted our Belgian supplies by an amount equal to three hundred thousand pounds, which I therefore include in above budget, this sum in respect of March.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 68

Memorandum,(44)

By HOOVER, setting out program of imports to the harvest

BRUSSELS, 21 June 1915

It has been decided by the C.N. and the C.R.B. that, in order to substantially provision the civil population with the minimum of absolute necessities, and to properly regulate the shipments of imported foodstuffs into Belgium, the following course shall be pursued until it shall be altered by general agreement:

1. That in future, the import of foodstuffs into Belgium shall be confined to the following commodities:

Wheat or flour
Rice
Peas and beans
Lard
Bacon
Maize

2. In the matter of flour it is considered that the consumption until harvest is about 50,000 tons per month or about 55,000 tons of wheat.

The stocks of flour (or wheat in terms of 90 per cent flour) are, on the 1st of June:

In Belgium	65,000 tons	
Transit and Rotterdam	161,000 tons	
	226,000	

	tons	
Reserved for France	49,000 tons	(3 1/2 months)
	177,000 tons	(3 1/2 months)

It is considered that, as the harvest will be available in September, an additional purchase of 12,000 tons will be sufficient until October 1st.

That in the matter of the ratio of wheat to flour, the cities of Antwerp and Brussels shall be provided with white flour, until the whole of the present purchases are exhausted, and unless three months' notice is given to the contrary, the Commission will then proceed to supply Brussels and Antwerp with wheat.

3. In the matter of rice, it is agreed that the apparent consumption is at the rate of about 2,500 tons per month, but that it is likely to increase and therefore a supply of 5,000 tons per month is contemplated. The stocks on June 1st are apparently as follows:

In Belgium	6,000 tons	
In transit and Rotterdam	30,000 tons	
	36,000 tons	
Reserved for France	7,500 tons	(5 months)
	28,500 tons	(5 1/2 months' supply, or sufficient until the end of October.)

4. In the matter of peas and beans, it is agreed that the consumption in Belgium is under 4,000 tons per month. It is found that the stocks as at June 1st are as follows:

In Belgium	17,000 tons	
In transit and Rotterdam	7,000 tons	

	24,000 tons	
Reserved for France	7,000 tons	(5 months)
	17,000 tons	(probably sufficient until January 1st.)

It is considered there is likely to be little demand in Belgium owing to the local production, and therefore no further engagements should be made.

5. In the matter of bacon, it is decided that in the future this commodity should be purchased for its meat value (i.e. lean sides), and therefore the best average quality is wanted.

It is considered that the Belgian consumption is 1,500 tons per month.

The stocks at June 1st are roughly estimated as follows:

Belgium	1,600 tons	
Transit and Rotterdam	7,000 tons	
	8,600 tons	
Reserved for France	3,000 tons	(3 months)
Belgium balance	5,600 tons	(4 mos., less 400 tons)

It is noted that of the purchases already made, a considerable portion are fat backs, but no more of these are to be purchased. It is observed that hereafter all prices should be taken at net weights.

6. In the matter of lard, it is believed that it is unwise to purchase substitutes, and that only pure lard in tins of various sizes should be purchased.

It is considered that the consumption in Belgium is about 750 tons per month. The stocks at June 1st are estimated about as follows:

In Belgium	1,000	
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	tons	
In transit and Rotterdam	3,000 tons	
	4,000 tons	
Reserved for France	1,500 tons	(3 months)
	2,500 tons	(3 1/2 months)

It is observed that hereafter all transactions should take place in *net weights*.

7. In the matter of maize, it is considered that the present purchases will last until September 1st; that 20,000 tons should be averaged for September; the whole subject to be taken up later.

8. As it is absolutely necessary that the stocks of imported foodstuffs in Belgium should not exceed a 30 days' supply, it is imperative that there shall be a competent stock-taking of all the warehouses at the end of every month, and that these results should be in the hands of the Brussels office by the fifth day of the succeeding month. Rotterdam can then be advised as to the amount of the different commodities which should be consigned to the different provinces or shipping destinations in order to supply the consumption during the month and to leave the warehouses at the end of the month supplied with approximately one month's supplies.

9. In order that the C.R.B. may purchase supplies in the primary markets and thus avoid the overpayment of emergency purchases, it is absolutely fundamental that any change in the theoretical program should be advised three months in advance.

10. It is decided to reorganize the statistical department by adding an American delegate, who can travel about and collect the necessary statistics and present them in form to control the supplies and shipments, and to furnish the C.R.B. in London with the data they require.

11. It is considered essential that permanent warehouse space should be taken in Rotterdam, where at least one month's full supplies for Belgium and France can be carried in permanent reserve.

12. It is decided that the C.R.B. shall readjust its prices to the C.N. every two months, beginning July 1st.

It is the general intention that the C.R.B. should make approximately 10 per cent profit on all commodities for the benefit of the destitute, but in the matter of wheat, the price must be adjusted in consultation with the C.N. It is also intended that minimum profits should be made on wheat and bacon and larger profits on peas, beans, and especially rice and maize. The profits earned from the sales to the well-to-do people form a tax for the benefit of the poor, and should, if possible, be maintained at about 2,500,000 francs per month in order that the soup kitchens may be properly supported.

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With the end of October 1915 the Commission had completed its first year. It had delivered in Rotterdam 980,000 tons(45) of relief supplies valued at \$69,000,000, and though there had been some undernourishment the people in Belgium and Northern France had escaped the famine which had cast its shadow over them twelve months before. Bread grains and cereals formed 90 per cent of the importations into Belgium, yet the Commission had found it necessary to supply some fats so that importations in combination with the local produce would result in a balanced ration for the 9,000,000 people. In Northern France the Commission found it immediately necessary to broaden its category of importations due to the dearth of many articles. At a later date the same necessity arose for Belgium.

[Fig. 3. Certificate, 2 November 1914, Whitlock and Villalobar, confirming Belgium's requirements](#)

Gifts in kind to the generous total of 93,000 tons and a value of over \$9,000,000 formed part of the Commission's importations. Full gift cargoes of wheat and flour had been transported, and these with the gifts of maize, rice, peas, and beans entered readily into the machinery of rationing set up by the Commission. Of greater difficulty in handling were the 12,000 tons of miscellaneous groceries donated during the first year. The call for gift clothing had resulted in some 2,000 tons and this had been renovated and distributed to the destitute. As had been anticipated the monthly donations in kind had fallen off considerably by the end of the first year.

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2. The Second Year. November 1915-October 1916

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DOCUMENT NO. 69

Table,
showing program of monthly imports for winter 1915-1916

MONTHLY PROGRAM OF IMPORTATIONS, BELGIUM AND
NORTHERN FRANCE, WINTER 1915-1916

(*Metric tons*)

	Belgium	Northern France	Total
Wheat	60,000	16,000	76,000
Maize	20,000	2,200	22,200
Rice	5,000	4,400	9,400
Beans and peas	4,000	1,650	5,650
Bacon and lard	4,800	3,850	8,650
Sugar	....	1,320	1,320
Coffee	....	1,100	1,100
Milk	....	1,650	1,650
Soap	....	1,100	1,100
Sundries	11000	1,650	2,650
Totals	94,800	34,920	129,720

The adoption of the program above for the winter of 1915-1916 followed a series of events which marked the transition of Belgian relief from its original, temporary character to a more permanent basis. In June 1915 Hoover had secured from the German authorities guarantees, acceptable to the Commission and the British Foreign Office, which reserved the Belgian harvest of that year for the civil population.⁽⁴⁶⁾ At about the same time the British Government reviewed the whole question of Belgian relief and made very definite stipulations concerning the Commission's activities.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Of particular interest here was the limitation of the Commission's Belgian imports to wheat and wheat flour (which could not exceed 60,000 tons of equivalent wheat per month before the harvest and was to be reduced to a minimum supplement of native supplies after the harvest), peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize (for human consumption only). The quantities of these commodities other than wheat to be imported were fixed from time to time in agreement with the Foreign Office. These restrictions determined the "permitted program" which the Commission might not exceed.

DOCUMENT NO. 70

Letter,

PERCY TO HOOVER, stating restrictions placed on C.R.B. imports as result of alleged violations of agreement by the Germans

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

16 December 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

As a result of our conversation this afternoon, I think it well to put on paper the present situation.

At present your staple articles of importation into Belgium are wheat, rice, bacon, lard, beans, and maize. Besides these, we have authorized you at various times to import certain articles which you class as "produits divers," i.e., soap, coffee, sugar, oleomargarine materials (to be used solely in a factory to be controlled by you), butter, fish, preserved meat, salt, groceries, cheese, dried fruit and vegetables, yeast materials, and cocoa. In regard to certain of these articles I understand that you have not availed yourself of our authorisation at all; in regard to others very little. Finally, you have been authorised to import certain purely charitable relief supplies, i.e., medical supplies and clothing for the destitute.

In view of action by the Germans which appears *prima facie* to infringe their undertakings, and in view of grave doubts which have arisen as to whether certain of these imports do not in effect constitute a replacement of articles bought or otherwise taken by the Germans, it is necessary to restrict your activities for the moment.

You have already been asked, and have undertaken, to ship no further consignments of meat, bacon, lard, or other pork products from Rotterdam either to Belgium or France until further notice. I must now ask you also to stop all shipments from Rotterdam to Belgium of soap, coffee, sugar, oleomargarine materials, butter, salt, groceries, cheese, dried fruit and vegetables, and yeast materials. The only shipments which you may still make to Belgium from Rotterdam will therefore be wheat, rice, beans, maize, fish, and cocoa, and medical supplies and clothing for relief purposes.

Your programme of importations into Northern France has been somewhat different, namely: wheat, rice, beans and peas, bacon, lard, sugar, salt, coffee, soap, and condensed milk. Besides this you have been importing certain quantities of salted meat. As the conditions in Northern France are somewhat different, I do not want to ask you at the moment to cut off any importations into France from Rotterdam, except the meat, bacon, lard, and all pork products as already arranged,

and also soap. The only importations you will make into France for the moment will therefore be wheat, rice, beans and peas, sugar, salt, coffee, and condensed milk.

I am not sure at the moment whether you have been importing any condensed milk into Belgium, but if so this may continue if necessary to supply destitute children.

I shall be glad to hear from you that you are prepared to give an assurance to the above effect.

I do not want to close this letter without saying, what you already know, that these restrictions on your activities arise out of the exigencies of the situation and imply no loss of confidence in you or the other members of the Commission.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

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DOCUMENT NO. 71

Letter and memorandum,
HOOVER TO PERCY, reviewing the whole question of C.R.B. imports into
Belgium and Northern France

LONDON, 21 December 1915

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

MY DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

With respect to your letter requesting that I should review the whole question of imports, I believe it is desirable that I should do so in two separate memoranda, one as to Northern France and the other as to Belgium, as these are economically and administratively entirely separate problems.

As to all these lists or any part it must not be imagined that we will succeed in importing precisely these monthly quantities. These amounts are consumption and we must carry stocks both in Belgium and Rotterdam.

Yours faithfully

HERBERT C. HOOVER, Chairman

MEMORANDUM

I. BELGIUM

The following shows approximately the imports desired by our friends in Belgium:

Wheat.---The available native wheat supply, which is under our control, affords us about 13,500 tons of wheat per month. It is therefore necessary for us to import about 54,000 tons per month, in order to give a 250 gram flour ration to the population. Owing to the lateness of the harvest all over the world, our stocks in Belgium have run down until we have, aside from stuff in transit, today only an average of two days' supply in our warehouses in Belgium, and it is therefore necessary for us to build up some stocks in the country, which implies larger importations in the immediate future, with, of course, a slackening off towards the end.

Lard.---In order to enable us to give a ration of 33 grams (1 oz.) per diem, it will be necessary to import 7,000 tons of lard per month into Belgium.

Bacon.---In order to give a ration of 16 1/2 grams (1/2 oz.) of bacon per diem to Belgium, it will be necessary to import 3,500 tons per month.

Maize.---Maize is used partly for human food, in the form of a porridge product called cerealine, designed for children, while the refuse and the rest of the maize is used for fodder. The amount which we have set for ourselves for this purpose is 20,000 tons per month. This represents half the normal importation into Belgium and is used largely for poultry purposes and the feeding of municipal livestock.

Rice.---We have, during recent months, been importing about 5,000 tons of rice per month for Belgian account. It is issued as a ration but is participated in only by the more indigent portion of the population and it has not covered the whole of the people as a ration of 60 grams of rice per them would require a larger quantity than this.

Beans, peas, and lentils.---Our requirements are about 4,000 tons a month. The demand varies with the season. During the summer we do not require the whole of our imports. These are in stock and are now coming into use again and we shall need to resume imports on this scale at an early date.

Condensed milk.---We shall need to be prepared to import during the winter, perhaps 1,000 tons of condensed milk per month for Belgian account. It is used chiefly for the support of the children and is made an eminent necessity by the natural shortage of fresh fodder during the winter.

Medical supplies.---We import an irregular amount of these materials.

Clothing for the destitute.---We are begging and buying considerable amounts of cloth, boots, shoes, old clothes, and every sort of wearing apparel, and are giving it away to the absolutely destitute only.

Petrol and tires and spares---We are entirely dependent upon imports for the running of our automobiles and we simply cannot do our work without these supplies. We have had a permit for 5,000 litres a week of petrol, which is an undersupply.

Yeast materials.---We used to import a certain amount of barley, rye, and malt radicles for yeast making. This amounts to probably 1,000 tons of stuff per month.

"PRODUITS DIVERS"

As you understand, a considerable portion of bacon and lard is paid for under the heading of this account, and the following are approximately the desires and needs of the Belgian people for various articles which have hitherto been embraced in this list:

Preserved and frozen meat.---The various Belgian communities are clamoring for the importation of beef products, and this amounts to, presumably, a total of 1,000 or 1,500 tons per month of each material.

Cocoa.---This item probably amounts to 1,000 tons of cocoa or cocoa beans per month for the manufacture of chocolate.

Coffee.---The Belgians are anxious to secure the importation of at least 2,000 tons of coffee per month, the depletion of stocks in Belgium making this imperative.

Sugar.---There appears to be available about 5,000 tons of sugar per month to the Belgian population from native production, against a normal consumption of about 10,000 tons a month. Many quarters of the country are already short of sugar and the Belgians are anxious to import at least 2,000 tons a month.

Soap.---The exhaustion of oil materials in Belgium makes the local manufacture of soap inadequate and the Belgians are anxious to import at least 1,000 tons of soap per month for their account.

Oleomargarine materials.---We have prepared a factory for handling imported components for Oleomargarine, and something like 1,000 tons per month are wanted to stem the butter famine.

Butter.---The Belgians wish us to import butter, in what amount we cannot estimate, probably not exceeding 500 tons per month.

Preserved fish.---The Belgians wish us to make arrangements to import dried herrings, tinned salmon, and other forms of fish. I do not know how much this would run into and amount to, but I suppose, say, 300 or 400 tons.

Dried fruit and vegetables.---Under this item is the ordinary form of dried fruit-raisins, prunes, apples, etc.

Comestible oils.---This item is for salad oil and is made up of either pure olive oil or with peanut and cottonseed substitutes, and the Belgian requirements seem to run into 400 tons a month, as a minimum.

Linseed cake.---The Belgians desire to have linseed cake imported for fodder purposes and we had a formal permit for 10,000 tons.

Sugar refuse.---The Belgians desire this also for fodder purposes and we had a practically unlimited right to import this from Holland.

Salt and groceries generally.---You will recollect that under the "Produits Divers" arrangement we had the right to import various articles comprised under these heads, including tea.

Potatoes.---There are apparently ample potatoes in Belgium, but they cannot be obtained from the peasants in view of expected famine prices. If we could import 10,000 tons per month for a while we would smash the market.

Cheese.---The Belgians wish to import up to 2,000 tons per month from Holland.

II. NORTHERN FRANCE

After the intimate study of the situation by all the district committees and the American members of the Commission, the following program of food supplies has been drawn up to cover the next four months. It is agreed that this is the absolute minimum supply with which health can be preserved in the population and in itself depends on a certain amount of additions of local supplies, which are day by day growing less:

Commodity	Ration (grams per day)	Total tons per month for whole population (2,200,000)	cost per kilo (frs.)	Total cost (frs.)
<i>Imports</i>				
Flour	200	16,000 a	.33	5,280,000
Lard	33	2,200	1.70	3,740,000

Bacon	25	1,650	2.00	3,300,000
Rice	66	4,400	.375	1,650,000
Condensed milk	25	1,650	1.25	2,062,500
Beans and lentils	25	1,650	.55	907,500
Sugar	20	1,320	.625	825,000
Coffee	16.5	1,100	1.325	1,457,500
Salt	20	1,320	.035	112,200
Soap	16.5	1,100	.625	687,500
Potatoes	200	13,200	.15	1,980,000
Cerealine	16.5	2,200 b	.30	660,000
Salad, cottonseed, and peanut oil	5.	330	1.15	379,500
Carbide		500	1.875	937,500
Total imports.	668.5	48,620		23,979,200
<i>Domestic Supplies c.</i>				
Flour	100			
Potatoes	200			
Domestic ration	300			
Total ration	968.5			

a. Wheat **b.** Maize **c.** By agreement with the Germans.

The almost total exhaustion of many food supplies except vegetables and a little meat in circulation, obtainable by the wealthy, makes it practically necessary to make a balanced ration, and I submit that the above ration is not as good as that of a prisoner in the English gaols, and that if it were submitted to any dietary expert he would state that it is hopeless to withdraw any part of the ration,

In addition to the above the population of this territory is asking for preserved meat, vinegar, and other sundries; and with regard to the above table I should like to make the following comments:

Potatoes.---You will notice that. we have introduced here the importation of potatoes. This is a little involved. At the present moment the Belgian peasant is holding up his potatoes and refusing to bring them out, in anticipation of famine prices. Last year we obtained a permit from the government to import potatoes into Belgium under similar circumstances, and by the introduction of 17,000 tons of potatoes we broke the market from 35 centimes a kilo down to 12 centimes, and held it there. There is a superabundance of potatoes in Ireland going to waste today and I have no anticipation that we should need to import continuously for Northern France if we could once demonstrate to the Belgian public that potatoes could flow into the country.

Cerealine.---Cerealine is a sort of porridge product which we make ourselves in Belgium out of imported maize. It is chiefly designed for the use of the children.

Carbide.---In the country outside the larger cities which are lighted by electricity, there is absolutely no illuminant, and people are going to bed at five o'clock in the afternoon. There are in circulation all over the country small miners' acetylene lamps, and it seems to us there could be no objection to importing carbide, as there is an ample supply of this material for all German purposes flowing into Germany from Scandinavia, or supplies of German production. We have managed to buy locally some carbide of Norwegian origin, but there is an insufficient supply.

III. TOTALS

IMPORTS FOR BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

(Metric tons per month)

Commodity	Northern France	Belgium	Total
Wheat (or flour)	16,000	54,000	70,000
Lard	2,200	7,000	9,200
Bacon	1,650	3,500	5,150
Rice	4,400	5,000	9,400
Condensed milk	1,650	1,000	2,650
Beans and peas	1,650	4,000	5,650
Maize	2,200	20,000	22,200
Sugar	1,320	2,000	3,320

Coffee	1,100	2,000	3,100
Salt	(1,320)	.....	.....
Soap	1,100	1,000	2,100
Potatoes	13,200	10,000	23,200
Salad oils	330	400	730
Carbide	500	.....	500
Preserved meat	1,000	1,500	2,500
Preserved fish	300	400	700
Cocoa	.....	1,000	1,000
Oleomargarine materials	.....	1,000	1,000
Butter	.....	500	500
Dried fruit	(say) 1	100	101
Linseed cake	.....	10,000	10,000
Sugar refuse	.....	?	?
Groceries	.....	?	?
Cheese	.....	2,000	2,000
Yeast materials	.....	?	?
Medical supplies	?	?	?
Clothing for destitute	.....	?	?
Petrol, tires, and spares	.....	?	?

DOCUMENT NO. 72

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, concerning holding up bacon and lard cargoes and the return of empty tins in which condensed milk was shipped to Belgium

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

28 December 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am sorry to involve you in so many difficulties, but I have two points on which I must trouble you.

First, as to the "Livingstonia." I find that some of our people don't want her cargo to go on from Rotterdam till the final consideration of the whole question this week. The Admiralty have consequently held her up in the Downs, and I have said that, if she is released, I will see that the Commission does not ship her cargo from Rotterdam until this decision is reached. As I hope for a decision not later than Friday, this should make practically no difference. Will you see to it?

As a matter of fact this cargo, with what you had in stock at Rotterdam and with the remainder of the "Levenpool" cargo and the 1,450 tons of bacon and lard you have bought here, will amount to considerable more than the 6,900 tons a month which is now our temporary basis.

Second, as to the condensed milk. Our people are firm on the point about the return of the empty tins. The danger does not arise from the amount of metal in the tins but from the tins themselves. Germany is very short of tins, so much so that she is sending out empty tins to be refilled with preserved meat, etc., in neutral countries, and is collecting empties high and low.

Now I quite see that this means a considerable amount of new organisation on your part, but the re-collection of these tins should present no huge difficulties in itself. Each commune can collect them fairly easily from the consumer each time the latter applies for a new ration, and all the way up the chain from the communes back to Rotterdam you must have a large number of lighters and lorries returning empty which could be used to carry these empties. An arrangement with the N.O.T.(48) would be necessary in order to secure that all the empties brought out should fall again under their control, and we are instructing Sir A. Johnstone to consult with the N.O.T. and Mr. Young on this point in connection with the milk he now wants authorisation to export from Holland. As some compensation for the trouble all this will entail on you, I submit that you might get something from the resale of these empties in Holland or here.

Will you think over this and let me have your views?

Meanwhile, can you take steps to have the Commission in Belgium and France keep a careful eye on the Germans and stop them at once if they try to collect tins from house to house as they are doing in Germany itself?

Yours sincerely

EUSTACE PERCY

The three preceding documents and the six following illustrate the bearing of another important factor in the determination of the C.R.B. programs---the arbitrary restrictions placed from time to time by the British Government on the import program. These restrictions were the result, first, of the development of British blockade policy, which grew steadily in importance after the spring of 1915;(49) and, secondly, of the continuous pressure of a powerful opinion in the British Government which held that the Germans should have been compelled to bear the burden of Belgian relief and that the bearing of this burden by the Allies gave a military advantage to Germany. British authorities, therefore, watched the administration of relief with ceaseless vigilance. Reports that some of the Belgians were selling cattle and pigs to Germans led to an order from the Foreign Office on the 13th December 1915 suspending the Commission's imports of bacon and lard. The Commission's efforts to maintain the necessary program precipitated a long series of conferences and a voluminous correspondence. Hoover's detailed explanation of the methods of relief administration and his emphatic statement of the needs of the Belgian people before a subcommittee of the War Trade Advisory Committee(50) on the 23d December 1915 secured a temporary relaxation of the restrictions on fat imports. But on the 31st December the whole relief operation was threatened because of reported exports of Belgian foodstuffs to Germany.(51)

DOCUMENT NO. 73

Letter,

GREY TO PAGE, describing German violations of agreements and indicating the intention of the British Government to halt relief unless certain stipulations were accepted by the German authorities

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
31 December 1915

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

On various occasions I have felt obliged to address lengthy communications to you as patron, in your unofficial capacity, of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, A very critical situation has now arisen regarding the affairs of that Commission, and I must therefore put before you briefly the views of His Majesty's Government.

On December 31st, 1914, the German Government assured the United States Ambassador at Berlin in writing that they would thenceforward prohibit the requisitioning of "food or forage of any kind whatsoever which would require to be replaced by importations by the American Committee for Belgian Relief."

This undertaking has no doubt in large measure been observed in the letter; it has never been observed in the spirit, and even the letter has frequently been violated. I need give only one instance of direct infringement. Between November 1914 and July 1915, inclusive, the Commission distributed in Belgium six thousand six hundred and seventy-five tons, seven hundred and thirteen kilos of bacon and lard. Yet the German authorities have requisitioned tallow in Belgium and between June 1st and July 10th four thousand and seventy tons of fats and oils were shipped from Belgium to Germany.

It is not, however, of such direct infringements that I desire to speak now. The Germans have interpreted their solemn undertaking of December 31st as covering only such articles as were actually specifically named in the Commission's list of imports, and they have drained Belgium of all subsidiary articles which serve to diminish the consumption of staple foods. They have done more. They have made no attempt to conserve native supplies even of those staple foods which appear on the Commission's list of imports and, where they have not requisitioned those native stocks, they have freely purchased them when thrown on the market, and have exported them from Belgium, either to Germany or to the army in Flanders. Owing largely to lack of fodder the stock of pigs in Belgium appears to have diminished by some sixty per cent, and a large part of this diminution must be attributed to purchases by the German Army. In the same way, cattle are being bought up on a large scale, and are being sent south to the army. The resources of agriculture are diminished by the export of phosphates and guano. Only recently large quantities of Belgian sugar have been exported to Germany.

I am aware that the German authorities will adduce the comprehensive list of articles the export of which from Belgium is prohibited, as evidence that this account is inaccurate. But there is no reasonable doubt that exceptions are freely made to these prohibitions, in the case of exports to Germany, and it is also certain that they do not apply at all in practice to exports for the use of the German Army in France and Flanders.

These are merely instances. I will not pause to go over article by article the resources of the occupied territory which have been steadily depleted, nor need I refer to the wholesale requisitions of goods of all kinds which took place at Antwerp after the fall of that city. I only desire to make clear the consistent German policy during the last twelve months.

Needless to say, this policy has applied even more to industrial raw materials and manufactured articles than to foodstuffs. The German Government is reported to

have recently made itself responsible for the statement that the economic condition of Belgium is nearly normal. I am astounded at this statement in view of facts which have become notorious. The textiles trades have either been deprived of all raw materials outright or have seen their finished products requisitioned in detail as they are completed. And what is true of the textile trades is true also of other Belgian industries.

Moreover, Germany has invented a method of facilitating this process. She has exacted and still exacts a levy of forty million francs (40,000,000) a month from Belgium in the form of a special note issue. This levy provides abundant cheap currency with which Belgian products may be purchased, and the country is thus drained of its resources in exchange for worthless paper of German invention.

The result of this process has been clearly seen in the last few months. The Commission, which had expected to be able to reduce its activities after the harvest, has increased them. It has made a series of new requests for import permits in respect of various fresh articles of food, and it has largely increased its importations of bacon and lard. It is planning to import large quantities of clothing for the destitute. This gradual expansion cannot continue, and within the last few days, as Your Excellency is aware, His Majesty's Government have felt themselves obliged to suspend temporarily the importation of various articles into Belgium by the Commission. The time has therefore arrived when the whole work must be placed on a more clearly defined basis.

Your Excellency will recollect that His Majesty's Government undertook to continue to issue permits for the Commission's imports of wheat into Belgium on condition that the Germans reserved the native harvest of wheat and rye strictly for the civil population. You will also recollect that His Majesty's Government expressed their inability to give any similar undertaking in regard to any other articles of import, and that the whole arrangement was made subject to one fixed stipulation that "no foodstuffs shall be imported which will, in effect, replace any foodstuffs requisitioned or purchased in Belgium by the German authorities." I must now inform Your Excellency that His Majesty's Government can no longer tolerate the present position.

They are therefore about to lay down a programme of imports for the Commission which will be regarded as final. However long the German occupation of Belgium may continue, this programme will in no circumstances be expanded. Further, His Majesty's Government must make the following stipulations, which appear to be the minimum necessary to safeguard the livelihood of the Belgian people:

1. The export of all foodstuffs and substances fit for use as food, whatsoever, including livestock and fodder of all kinds, and also all fertilizers, seeds, and agricultural stock of every sort, shall be absolutely prohibited from the territory administered by the Governor-General. of Belgium to any destination whatever,

with the one exception that the Commission for Relief in Belgium may be allowed to export to Northern France, for distribution there by them, foodstuffs of which there is a clear surplus over and above the present or future needs of Belgium.

2. The export of all articles of clothing and of all raw material for their manufacture shall be prohibited except to neutral countries, and then only after full provision has been made for the present and future needs of the civil population, including the destitute.

3. None of the articles above mentioned shall on any account be used by the German Army of occupation in Belgium.

4. These prohibitions shall be rigorously maintained without exception of any kind.

5. The Commission shall be allowed to exercise any control over the stocks mentioned in the preceding paragraphs which may be necessary in order to conserve them for the future, or make them available for the present needs of the population.

If these steps are not taken His Majesty's Government will hold themselves entitled to reconsider their whole attitude towards the Commission, since its work will have become, through no fault of its own, a method of replacement instead of one of relief, and an encouragement to the Germans to deplete the resources of the country. In that case I shall have no choice but to publish the documents showing the conditions which have obliged His Majesty's Government to change their views.

Sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

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DOCUMENT NO. 74

Letter,

PERCY TO HOOVER, concerning pasturage of German cattle in Belgium and new restrictions on C.R.B. imports of fodder

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
25 January 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Our attention has been drawn to a notice in the *Cologne Gazette* of December 14th last stating, with reference to a communication made by the German Government

to the Budget Committee, that in the spring of 1915 eighty thousand head of cattle were sent into Belgium to be pastured there and that similar action will be taken in the spring of 1916.

As you are aware, the German Authorities have requisitioned the crop of oats and hay in Belgium. If there is sufficient pasturage in Belgium to support eighty thousand head of German cattle, any lack of meat in Belgium must be clearly due to the action of the German Government and, in the presence of this fact, His Majesty's Government must hold the German Government responsible for the supply of meat to the population of Belgium.

Moreover, the Commission for Relief in Belgium is now allowed to import no fodder except maize to an amount of twenty thousand tons a month. As part of the resources of Belgium are apparently to be devoted to the maintenance of German livestock, a proceeding equivalent to the export of fodder which we have demanded shall cease, His Majesty's Government will be obliged to reconsider the permission given for the importation of this amount, and we must therefore ask you to import no more maize for fodder purposes until the situation is cleared up.

There is no objection to the importation of maize for human consumption being continued.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 75

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, setting forth restrictions on C.R.B. imports of soap to Northern France to prevent its use by Germans for military purposes

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
2 February 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

SOAP FOR NORTHERN FRANCE

Without prejudice to the list we shall finally and permanently fix, the Board of Trade will probably now instruct the International Commission to allow the export by you of your 1,000 tons a month for Northern France. But as this authorisation depends absolutely on the soap being of the *hard* variety not containing ingredients fit for military purposes (the kind you now are buying here, I think), we want it to

be understood for the present that you will buy all your soap in this country in order that we may be able to say at any time that we know that the soap is of the right kind.

I feel all these various small stipulations must give an undesirable impression of lack of confidence in you, but I beg you to believe that this is not at all the case and that it is merely a question of our being able to vouch for things of our own knowledge and not on hearsay.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 76

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, giving program authorized after reductions insisted on by British authorities

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
23 February 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am directed to transmit to you the enclosed programme of supplies for Belgium and Northern France, to which it has been decided that your imports should for the present be reduced.

This programme has been submitted to the French and Belgian Governments for their observations with an explanatory statement of the grounds on which it is based.

I am directed to ask you to confine your imports within these limits till further notice, and in the case of all articles on the list you will of course only import when and as you are convinced that there is real need of them owing to exhaustion of native supplies.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

PROGRAMME OF MONTHLY IMPORTS BY THE COMMISSION
FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

I. BELGIUM

1. For the whole population:

54,000 tons of wheat
250 tons of yeast materials.

2. For the destitute:

2,400 tons bacon and lard
3,000 tons peas and beans
8,000 tons maize meal
500 tons condensed milk.
Clothing and clothing materials.
Medical supplies (not including rubber goods).

3. For the Commission's staff:

20,000 litres of petrol
1,000 litres of lubricating oil
100 kilos of mineral transmission grease and motor-car accessories.

II. NORTHERN FRANCE

16,000 tons of flour
1,600 tons of bacon and lard
1,000 tons of soap (hard)
2,200 tons of rice
1,650 tons of condensed milk
1,650 tons of beans and lentils
1,320 tons of sugar
1,100 tons of coffee
1,320 tons of salt
2,200 tons of cerealine (maize)

.

DOCUMENT NO. 77

Memorandum, (52)

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO VILLALOBAR, stating objections to German reply (53) to British demands regarding exports from Belgium

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
28 February 1916

The demands made by His Majesty's Government in their note of December 31st are here taken seriatim, with comments upon the replies made by the German authorities.

1. His Majesty's Government demanded that "the export of all foodstuffs and substances fit for use as food whatsoever, including livestock and fodder of all kinds, and also all fertilisers, seeds, and agricultural stock of every sort, shall be absolutely prohibited from the territory administered by the Governor-General of Belgium to any destination whatever, with the one exception that the Commission for Relief in Belgium may be allowed to export to Northern France, for distribution there by them, foodstuffs of which there is a clear surplus over and above the present or future needs of Belgium."

In reply the German authorities agree, but without any mention of "agricultural stock" in general, and subject to three reservations:

a) That certain Belgian produce, of which there is a sufficiency in the country, and which Belgium normally exports, such as chicory, shall be exempted. His Majesty's Government recognise that there is some ground for this exemption, but they do not understand it in present circumstances in view of the German decrees of August 13th, September 16th, and October 23d ordering the seizure of all chicory roots and placing them under the control of the "*Zentral-Einkaufsgesellschaft für Belgien*"; and in view of the notorious efforts made by the German authorities to buy up chicory, vegetables, and fruit for German use. The German authorities in fact place an export tax on chicory and only allow its export to Holland "on proof of corresponding imports from Holland provided the condition of the German market allows it." If Belgium is so rich in such vegetables, it is clearly out of the question that His Majesty's Government should continue to allow large quantities of beans and peas to be imported into Belgium while native produce is being exported. The utmost concession which His Majesty's Government can make in this respect is that the export of such produce shall be allowed *to neutral countries after* the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National have had full opportunity to purchase all that is needed for the destitute.

b) That the German authorities shall still be free to take native foodstuffs by purchase for the use of the occupying army. It appears from this stipulation that the German authorities now openly and avowedly repudiate the guarantees given by the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at Berlin to the United States Ambassador on December 8th and December 31st, 1914, and General von Bissing's decree of January 21st, 1915, against requisitioning of foodstuffs and fodder. The promise of purchase in forced paper currency makes not the slightest difference to the fact of requisition. His Majesty's Government absolutely refuse to accept this proposal or to acquiesce in this attempt to make the Hague Conventions a charter of spoliation.

c) That certain stocks, said to be the property of the German Government, shall be exempted and shall be immediately exported from Belgium. As the 3,000 head of cattle mentioned in the list of these stores are the only things stated to be of German origin, it is to be presumed that the remaining items are of Belgium origin. They thus furnish further evidence of the violation of the German guarantees against requisitions referred to above. The 27,400 tons of fodder mentioned are doubtless the product of the last Belgian harvest. His Majesty's Government raise no objection to the export of the 3,000 head of cattle, if these are in fact of German origin, but if any of the other articles are exported, the Commission's imports will immediately be reduced by an equivalent amount.

The use of Belgian pasture for German cattle is absolutely inadmissible. When coupled with the wholesale requisitioning of the Belgian fodder crop, it represents an inhuman policy which, if continued, His Majesty's Government must publish for the information of the neutral world.

2. His Majesty's Government demanded that "the export of all articles of clothing and of all raw material for their manufacture shall be prohibited except to neutral countries, and then only after full provision has been made for the present and future needs of the civil population including the destitute."

The German reply is confined to a guarantee of clothing or clothing materials imported by the Relief Commission. The German authorities can hardly have misunderstood the clear demand of His Majesty's Government for a guarantee of domestic textiles precisely similar to that demanded in the case of foodstuffs, fodder, etc. His Majesty's Government insist on that guarantee.

3. His Majesty's Government demanded that "none of the articles above mentioned shall on any account be used by the German army of occupation in Belgium."

The direct refusal of this demand has already been dealt with above. Consent on the part of the German authorities is a condition *sine qua non* of the continuance of the work.

4. His Majesty's Government demanded that "these prohibitions shall be rigorously maintained without exception of any kind."

It may perhaps be assumed that consent to this is implicit in the German reply, within the limits of that reply.

5. His Majesty's Government demanded that "the Commission shall be allowed to exercise any control over the stocks mentioned in the preceding paragraphs which may be necessary in order to conserve them for the future, or make them available for the present needs of the population."

This is answered by a vague expression of willingness to concede the "control materially necessary." The object of the control demanded, so far as present necessities are concerned, is to make immediately available to the civil population and especially to the destitute such native products as pork and potatoes. His Majesty's Government attach no importance to words in this matter, but they cannot allow importations of such articles so long as the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium are unable, for whatever reason, to obtain existing native supplies.

The German reply contains a list showing the increase of livestock in Belgium. Annexed to the present memorandum is another list showing a strange decrease in the number of animals slaughtered in Belgium, in all cases except cows. His Majesty's Government do not recognize such figures as signs of prosperity nor can they accept the German figures, but it is clear that, if, as shown on the German list, the pigs in Belgium have increased by fifty-six per cent, there can be no valid reason for the present high price of pork in Belgium and no need for importations of bacon and lard by the Relief Commission, since Belgium does not in ordinary times of peace, when her stock of pigs is apparently less than in war time, import any considerable quantity of such articles. His Majesty's Government therefore propose entirely to stop such importations unless within a fortnight the Commission can show reason for their continuance.

Finally, the German reply is made conditional on undertakings from His Majesty's Government to leave the Commission complete freedom of importations and not to requisition ships chartered by them. If this condition were accepted, the German authorities would be free with impunity to turn every American out of Belgium and to impose all sorts of restrictions upon the grant of relief, such as are foreshadowed in one of the letters attached to the German reply.

His Majesty's Government must therefore absolutely refuse to give any undertakings whatever beyond those already given, and they will certainly retain the right to requisition at any time any ship flying the British flag.

It is unnecessary to draw attention to the extremely serious situation created by the German reply, nor to the urgency of securing a frank assent to the reasonable demands of His Majesty's Government in view of the extent of the infractions of previous undertakings revealed in that reply. It may be well to add that His Majesty's Government are in no way impressed by the anxiety displayed by the German authorities to ensure adequate importations by the Commission for Relief in Belgium in the interests of the Belgian population, nor will they be deterred by such expressions of solicitude from still further reducing the importations of the Commission below the new figures they have just been obliged to fix, if the German authorities delay any longer the conclusion of a proper arrangement.

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DOCUMENT NO. 78

Letter,

HOOVER TO MINISTER HYMANS, describing the effect on the Belgian ration of the new British restrictions

LONDON, 2 March 1916

His Excellency Paul Hymans Belgian Minister, London

DEAR MR. HYMANS:

With respect to your enquiry as to the effective difference between the imports into Belgium as set out in the recent Foreign Office note and our previous quantities, we may give you the following notes.

The principal difference lies in the restriction of fodder and fat imports, with a view to pressure on the Germans. The question of human food is inextricably entangled with that of food for animals in its results as to local supplies of meat, milk, butter, etc., and it appears to us that the Foreign Office note is based on the assumption that the present negotiations with the Germans for the effective protection of the cattle will not succeed. If they did succeed there would surely be no reason for putting restrictions on the import of any foodstuffs into Belgium so long as they are actually and advantageously consumed by the civil population.

If we are to assume that the negotiations mentioned above will not succeed, the question becomes a matter of state policy as to the restrictions on certain commodities, in order to force an immediate consumption by the civil population of the whole of the animals, and you will agree with us that this is not a matter of dietetics.

There is another important change in the basis of relief implied in the Foreign Office note. It is now proposed that the relief be divided into two parts:

1. A supply of bread to the whole population.
2. The limitation of all other commodities imported to the sole consumption of the 3,250,000 wholly or partially destitute people. This question is one of a somewhat more involved character than might appear on the surface and we do not think anything can be gained by going into it. We will do the best we can with this basis.

We give you below a table showing the comparative distribution to the 3,250,000 under the program now proposed and that which we have had, in a general way, in use previously. We term one the "new ration" and the other the "old ration."

COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION

	NEW RATION		OLD RATION	
	Total (<i>tons per month</i>)	Per diem (<i>grams</i>)	Total (<i>tons per month</i>)	Per diem (<i>grams</i>)
Flour	29,250	300	29,250	300
Maize	4,000*	40	8,000	80
Rice	nil	nil	5,000	50
Peas and beans	3,000	30	4,000	40
Bacon and lard	2,400	8 16	1,665 3,350	16.6 33.5

*The yield for human consumption.

The new ration [also includes] 500 tons of condensed milk [for children exclusively].

We have had the dietetics of these two so-called rations worked out, with the following results:

COMPARATIVE VALUES

	New ration	Old ration
Total grams per diem	394	520
Total protein	49.1	59.2
Total fats	39.5	56.5
Total carbohydrates	256.1	328
Total calorific value	1,552	1,865

All experts differ on these points, but we are advised that the nominal minimum necessary to keep a population in health should be 2,500 calories. The difference between this and the amounts given above, i.e., 1,552 in one case and 1,865 in the

other, must be made up from native foodstuffs, such as potatoes and vegetables. The whole question, therefore, degenerates into one simply of judgment as to what and how much the poorer classes in Belgium can obtain in supplement to the ration. As neither of these rations is sufficient without some such supplement, our judgment is that the larger ration is nearer the minimum which the people can possibly supplement with native supplies.

There is another general point in the whole of this thing and that is that there seems to be some misconception about forcing the consumption of native meat. If the whole imports of bacon and lard were suppressed tomorrow very few of the 3,250,000 lower strata of society would ever consume any of the native animals, as these products are out of their reach and in consequence nearly the whole of these people would be denuded of fats.

Altogether, between the conflicting positions it seems to us that it is simply a matter of good judgment, prudence, and more or less compromise. If we were asked to compromise between these various situations we should make the following suggestions: i.e., on the hypothesis that cattle and export negotiations with the Germans will be unsuccessful:

a) That we group the whole of the cereals, wheat, maize, peas, beans, and rice, and place the total imports of cereals at 70,000 tons per month, exclusively for human consumption (except the milling by-products), leaving it to our judgment as to what proportion of each cereal we shall from time to time send in. This would be an increase of about 5,000 tons per month on the cereals permitted by the recent note, so as to include rice, which has been eliminated.

b) We would suggest an increase of the bacon and lard by 1,600 tons per month. This would permit a ration of 40 grams of fats per diem, instead of 24 grams as provided in the new ration and 50 grams in the old.

If the negotiations with the Germans to protect the whole of the meat and cattle in Belgium are successful, there can be no reasonable objection to our importing fodder, bacon, lard, etc., on the old basis.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

Belgium was as dependent on foreign sources for clothing as for food. The early appeals of the Commission for gifts of used clothing brought a generous response, and very considerable quantities were shipped into Belgium during the first months of relief. By January 1916 textiles and leather had practically disappeared in the

occupied regions. The Commission purchased new textile materials, which with some accumulated stocks of used clothing were in Rotterdam and just about to be forwarded into Belgium, when on the 14th March the British Government forbade all textile imports for the reasons given in Document 79. Hoover did not accept this decision as irrevocable and continued to work for permission to forward the clothing supplies which the Belgians needed so badly. He won a considerable concession on the 14th June 1916, when the British consented to the import of the stocks accumulated in Rotterdam and elsewhere on condition that the C.R.B. establish complete control of manufacture and distribution of clothing and with the understanding that there be no further imports until the Germans reversed their policy of requisition of Belgian textiles.⁽⁵⁴⁾ In spite of this latter condition, the Commission succeeded in persuading the British authorities to permit additional clothing supplies in the later months of 1916.⁽⁵⁵⁾

DOCUMENT NO. 79

Letter,

PERCY TO HOOVER, directing discontinuance of C.R.B. imports of clothing and textiles into Belgium as result of German seizure of Belgian wool

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
14 March 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

There has just been brought to our notice a decree issued by the German Government in Belgium commanding the seizure of all raw or manufactured wool. All the stocks of these articles must be declared to the German authorities by the 15th of February under heavy penalties, and the whole must be sold to the German purchasing association at Brussels (*Kriegswollbedarf-Aktiengesellschaft*).

This decree coming some time after our demand that the export of textiles from Belgium should be prohibited, and synchronizing with General von Bissing's reply to our demands recently presented by the Marquis Villalobar, which totally disregards this particular condition, creates the very gravest situation, and we have no choice but to take appropriate measures at once. We must therefore ask you to stop absolutely, until the revocation of the decree, all imports by you of clothing materials into Belgium.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the United States Ambassador, the Spanish Ambassador, and the Belgian and Netherlands Ministers.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

While the matter of clothing imports was still in suspense the Commission by strenuous efforts secured an acutely needed increase in the "permitted imports." This increase the British granted after the Germans had been brought to agree to stop the shipment of animals, produce and fodder from Belgium to Germany and after Hoover had shown the Foreign Office the disastrous effects on the Belgian civilians of the recent import restrictions.

DOCUMENT NO. 80

Letter,
HOOVER TO PERCY, describing Belgian food situation and recommending increase of permitted imports

LONDON, 5 April 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

BELGIAN PROGRAM OF IMPORTS

I wish to put before you the result of my investigations into the food position in Belgium as the result of my recent inspection. I may say that I had the advantage of discussions with the whole of our forty American district and staff managers, as well as with the Belgian committees and authorities. As a result we earnestly recommend the following changes in the permitted imports:

	Menu of Feb. 23d (tons per mo.)	Menu to destitute (grams per diem)	Increases recommended* (tons per mo.)
Whole population, wheat	54,000	300 (Flour)	nil

Impoverished (3,250,000)			
Bacon and lard	2,400	22	1,600
Peas and beans	3,000	30	nil
Maize	8,000	50	nil
Rice	nil	....	5,000
Condensed milk (for children)	500	....	....
Yeast materials	250	....	1,000
	68,150	....	7,600
Total			75,750

*Impoverished 5,000,000.

We strongly recommend that all cereals be made interchangeable as we simply cannot arrange precise shipments, and specific limitation on individual cereals has the effect of frequently decreasing the ration. The reasons for asking for these increases are two in number:

1. The enormous effective increase in impoverishment due to the extraordinary rise in prices in native foodstuffs during the last three months.
2. The diminution in local supplies of potatoes, etc., and the necessity for supplying a wider social area with substitutes.

The commodities other than flour are issued from our magazines upon *cartes de ménage* (specimen of which is attached), this being issued by the local committees to those members of the communities either destitute or of limited means. The number of *cartes de ménage* had gradually increased during January and February and in your order to thoroughly revise the whole position and reduce consumers to a number comparable with those included in your order of February 23d, the old cards were called in and a new set issued, but despite all restrictions on the issue the total of these new cards outstanding is a little over 5,000,000. This means that the ration calculated above for the 3,250,000 is being spread over 5,000,000 and the increases proposed above are mostly to carry out mathematically the increased social range necessary to cover, with the exception of rice, which had to be

eliminated from the previous program and which has now become absolutely critical owing to shortage in potatoes.

The legal maximum has been taken off meat prices in order to induce more meat to come into the market. As a result the price of meat has risen to Fr. 2.90 per kilo on hoof or equal to approximately Fr. 8 per kilo dressed. Also the prices of lard and bacon have risen in Brussels to from Fr. 12 to Fr. 15 per kilo in the shops and are not always obtainable (our price in the sale of rations being Frs. 2.20).

The partial requisition of fodder crops and the suppression of our fodder imports have led the peasants to feed potatoes to the cattle, partly in order to preserve them alive for cultivating the fields and partly to fatten for the market. A vicious circle has thus been set up, which has rendered what would have been an adequate supply of potatoes wholly deficient. Many towns, particularly the industrial centers, are now out of potatoes or only receive intermittent amounts when forced out of the peasants by requisition of the German authorities, for the peasants, in fright for their cattle feed, are withholding them from the market. In any event, it appears certain that the intermittent supplies will become totally exhausted after May 1st in larger cities. Some have been shipped from Holland, but I am informed that the surplus there is probably exhausted.

The actual number of people on the Secours lists receiving assistance to purchase their rations is not increasing perceptibly, but the long continued stagnation and extravagant rises in prices of native food supplies is at last hitting the middle class very hard and they are becoming more and more dependent upon cheaper priced imports in order to make ends meet. We simply cannot decrease the numbers of our issued *cartes de ménage* and the result of spreading the original ration, which was of a very limited nature, over so large a number and area would make acute suffering, especially in industrial centers. The town of Charleroi organized a deputation of 100 people to go to Brussels and present their position. Their petition was refused, but nevertheless the statement they made was of the most pathetic order and they are corroborated by our own investigations.

In the matter of the importation of yeast materials, I would call your attention to the fact that it takes about 2,000 tons of yeast per month to bake the Belgian and French bread, and to make this would require about 3,000 tons per month of materials. We are getting some yeast from Holland, and have some local supplies of barley, which have been set aside by the proper committee for this purpose. We can get along now if we can import about 1,000 tons of stuff for this purpose, and experience shows that we can use maize to some extent in this work, so that we should like to choose our own cereals according to our abilities to secure supplies.

As regards potatoes, there is, I am informed, a large abundance in Ireland. We might arrange to import some into Belgium and Northern France. The normal consumption of potatoes for Belgium and Northern France would be over 100,000

tons per month, and even if we could get but a small part of this distributed, in the acute condition of the situation it would help to stem the outbreak of scurvy or other diseases until such time as other green vegetables come in at the latter part of June.

I am not raising the question of fodder imports, as it appears to us too late to do any good and shipping to handle such imports seems almost unobtainable. The people do need feed for their chickens for the next two or three months. We are organizing an arrangement whereby the fodder received from milling maize and wheat will be distributed through the communal committees only to such peasants as supply in return actual milk to the communal authorities, so as to endeavor to bring down the necessity to import condensed milk for the children; and if we had some fodder we might introduce an egg control of the same nature. I do not, however, think we need trouble with this latter matter at the present moment.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 81

Letter,
HOOVER TO PERCY, describing food restrictions in Northern France and recommending increase in permitted imports

LONDON, 5 April 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

NORTHERN FRANCE PROGRAM OF IMPORTS

I have been to Northern France to investigate present conditions. There have been three causes in operation militating against our revictualment of this region.

1. Reduction of permitted quantities, as per your direction of February 23d.
2. Failure of native food supplies.
3. Shortage of overseas transport.

The following table indicates our position and recommendations:

Commodity	Menu of Feb. 23d		Increase desired		
	Tons per month	Approximate grams per diem	Tons per month	Grams per diem	Total tons per month
Flour	16,000	250	3,300	50	19,300
Bacon and lard	1,600	25	1,600	25	3,200
Rice	2,200	33	2,200	33	4,400
Beans and lentils	1,650	25	.....	...	1,650
Maize	2,200	33	.....	...	2,200
Sugar	1,320	20	.....	...	1,320
Condensed milk for children	1,620	...	.....	...	1,620
Soap	1,000	...	.....	...	1,000
Coffee	1,100	...	.....	...	1,100
Salt	1,000	...	.....	...	1,000
Totals	29,690	386	7,100	108	36,790
Add local flour	.....	10	.....	...	.....
Total grams	.....	486	...	.....

Calorific value, per diem, old menu 1,650

Calorific value of increase desired 450

Total calorific value 2,100

We strongly recommend that all cereals should be made interchangeable, including wheat, as well as those of secondary importance since this gives us vital flexibility in issuing rations.

During the month, we were unable from lack of transport to deliver the full amount of flour, the actual ration imported being 200 grams. The sugar was restricted to a

10-gram ration and the condensed milk, owing to inability to purchase, to under 1,000 tons total. We had in stock at Rotterdam and could have delivered more bacon and lard and subsidiary cereals, but of course could not do so under the restrictions.

You will recollect that the quantities specified in the order of February 23d meant a very serious reduction from the previous program, a reduction which had, of course, to be expressed in reduced rations to the people. The occasion which now obliges us to ask for increases is not only due to the effect of these reductions but also to the practical exhaustion of meat, potatoes, and other local supplementary articles. It is insisted to us that the population simply cannot be maintained in health on less than an average of 2,400 calories for the total population. Our proposals, as above, increase the imports to 2,100 calories, leaving something to be made up by such local supplies as we may be able to assemble.

With the assistance of Messrs. Poland, Whitney, Wellington, and Richardson of our staff, I undertook an examination of the condition of the people in the cities of Lille, Valenciennes, and Roubaix, and the surrounding territory and districts, which comprise within an area of 1,235 square miles a present population of 1,260,000 civilians. We inspected the public markets, abbatoirs, provision shops, and meat shops, held conferences with the communal and municipal authorities of the larger cities, and moved freely over the district generally. Messrs. Wellington and Richardson are permanently located in the district, Mr. Whitney having general charge and spending a large part of his time there.

Meat.---We found the meat shops all closed and there had been no fresh meat on sale nor any distributed in the district either through shops or markets for 10 days, with three exceptions:

- a) The shops that have recently and openly sold dog meat, now closed by the authorities.
- b) A little Dutch meat, which reached Roubaix. Only two sides were exposed for sale in the whole town, the vender demanding an average of Fr. 12 per kilo, bones and all---about 5 shillings per pound.
- c) Some meat that had been obtained by special exertions for the soup kitchens.

As showing the scarcity under this heading I may say that during 12 days of 16, in one commune, there had been no meat or grease base whatever to the soup. We are doing our utmost to get a small amount of meat from Belgium and Holland for the soup kitchens, but the utmost we can hope for is only equal to 10 grams of meat per day per capita and as to this we are almost in despair.

Incidentally, two of our party endeavored to obtain dinner in Lille, and after visiting four restaurants which had no meat, they found one where the proprietor was able to offer a single chicken at Fr. 16.

Potatoes---The potatoes throughout the region are absolutely exhausted. One hundred kilos were offered in the Valenciennes market and sold for Fr. 85 (£34 per ton, as against £4 normal). The German authorities originally supplied 200 grams per capita per diem, but as the exhaustion of the supplying districts extended farther and farther afield, in both Belgium and Northern France, these shipments became first intermittent and finally negligible. We tried to get some potatoes from Holland, but failed. The food value of the small quantity of potatoes desired is of course of less importance than its value in preventing the spread of scurvy.

In every case among the numerous provision shops visited the shelves were absolutely bare. There were a few surviving articles de luxe displayed but they were obviously of no food importance. The total number of food animals seen in our whole journey was four cattle and fourteen chickens. The population receives no milk and butter supplies, and a package of Dutch margarine sold recently in Lille for Fr. 16 per kilo. We saw no vegetables in the markets apart from a little celery and a good deal of dandelion leaves.

It is obvious that the population are dependent upon our imported ration, and it is clear that the March basis will not support life. The mortality statistics for the city of Lille for the past four months show an increase from 20 in December to 42 the first 25 days of March. Sickness has increased far beyond what the figures for mortality so far indicate and will be reflected in the more serious mortality statistics of later months.

In Roubaix riots broke out in one of the poorer communes upon the announcement of the reduction in the ration, and I am informed by the German authorities that they removed 2,000 men from the town to work for them in order to preserve tranquillity. They stated that these men have been sent to other districts to work on the roads.

There are no consequential leakages in the distribution. The goods all go to the communal magazines under seal and the mayors themselves report their arrivals and quantities to the American district managers and they, in turn, to our central organization. Every household has a *carte de ménage* issued by the committees, and this card entitles the holder to purchase or gift of the ration. The ration is posted publicly everywhere. As the population must starve or get the ration, they get it. Moreover, as it is less than life can endure upon, they do not part with it. The people are free to complain to the American district managers, and the Americans are in constant motion visiting the people. An indication of the tenacity with which the people cling to their pittance lies in the disparity in price of free lard (when

obtainable), which is Fr. 15 per kilo, against our lard ration, where sold, at Fr. 2.20 per kilo.

In conclusion.---I feel my entire inability to draw for you an adequate picture of the unutterable depression and despair of these people. We are the only link to their kindred and their allies, and we are thus the only mouthpiece by which they may express to you their prayer for more help. My colleagues and myself feel that when the result of our representations last month was a reduction in their food instead of an increase as pleaded for, we have today to recognize that we have but proved our incapacity as their advocates.

The Allies have not fought this war, nor do they intend to fight it, on the basis of abandonment of solicitude for the helpless; yet we, who for over a year have been ceaselessly endeavoring to alleviate this mass of misery, are now forced to appear as an instrument of torture, since daily we must refuse the pleadings of a people whose sufferings will yet be told in terms reflecting neglect for which we are now daily blamed.

Yours faithfully

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 82

Letter,
SIR EYRE A. CROWE TO HOOVER, giving consent of the Foreign Office to imports recommended by Hoover

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,
11 April 1916

Herbert Hoover, Esq. Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

SIR:

With reference to the letter addressed by you to Lord Eustace Percy on the 5th instant, pointing out the scarcity of certain foodstuffs in Northern France as a result of the recent reduction in the ration, I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to state that His Majesty's Government have decided, in view of the considerations urged in your letter, to agree to the increases for which you ask, namely three thousand three hundred tons of flour, one thousand six hundred tons of bacon and lard, and two thousand two hundred tons of rice per month.

His Majesty's Government further agree that all cereals shall be made interchangeable, including wheat.

His Majesty's Government must however insist that the German authorities should furnish the two hundred grammes of potatoes per capita per them as originally promised.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Signed) EYRE A. CROWE

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DOCUMENT NO. 83

Letter,

VON DER LANCKEN TO WHITLOCK, stating that he will take measures to forbid the export from the General Government (Belgium) of all foodstuffs (including animals), produce, and fodder

BRUSSELS, 14 April 1916

*To His Excellency Mr. Brand Whitlock,
Minister of the United States of America*

DEAR SIR:

I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that I have submitted to the Governor-General the note which His Excellency the Minister of Spain was so kind as to send me under date of April 7th, 1916, in the name of Your Excellency and of the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands, as well as in his own, concerning the ravitaillement of Belgium by the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The Governor-General has instructed me to convey to Your Excellency his gratitude for the constant solicitude which you have never ceased to show during the past 20 months, for the humanitarian labors of which you kindly accepted the patronage in conjunction with His Excellency the Minister of Spain and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands. The Governor-General is persuaded that the entire Belgian population share these sentiments.

The Governor-General has noted with much pleasure that the steps taken by His Excellency the Minister of Spain in the name of Your Excellency and of the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands, as well as in his own, have been successful in persuading the English Government not to stop the ravitaillement of the civil

population in Belgium. His Excellency has shown himself all the more completely satisfied with this result in view of the fact that the new demands recently formulated by the English Government, which constituted a serious menace to the continuation of this ravitaillement, were based on erroneous information to the effect that the authorities in the territory administered by the Governor-General had not respected the promises made by His Excellency to the neutral Powers. Your Excellency is in a position to know that this assertion is untrue, and to confute it easily. In fact, the Governor-General remembers with satisfaction that Your Excellency, as well as your honored colleagues, have recognized on numerous occasions, last of all in your note of January 23d, 1916, the correct attitude observed by the authorities under his orders in the execution of the agreements entered into by him.

In view of the fact that the Governor-General recently even showed his readiness, in despite of certain German interests, to renounce the right, incontestably his by the terms of the Convention of The Hague, to provision the army of occupation with Belgian supplies, Your Excellency will infer the interest which the Governor-General feels in the well-being of the population of the country which he governs.

As a result of the negotiations of last February, and contrary to the information received by the English Government, the Governor-General has already issued, under date of March 1st, a regulation forbidding the exportation of foodstuffs and fodder. In accordance with the general import of the assurances last given the Government which Your Excellency represents, the Governor-General will resume and complete the measures already taken in this direction by new instructions *forbidding the exportation from the territory of the General Government of foodstuffs (including animals), produce, and fodder, serving for human alimentation and animals. He will forbid, moreover, the exportation from said territory of seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural supplies.* This prohibition will apply only to products of Belgian origin, it being especially understood that products of German origin which are now in the magazines of the military government, may be exported. Aside from the authorizations which may be accorded the Commission for Relief in Belgium for exportation, from the territory of the Governor-General to the north of France, of food, animals, and fodder, of which there may be a supply more than sufficient for consumption, there will be no exception to the above prohibition; the reservation agreed to by His Excellency the Minister of Spain with the English Government being, however, made in this case for quantities of certain products of the Belgian soil which are more than sufficient for the needs of the population of the occupied territory of Belgium.

The Governor-General will give also to the Military Commissariat of the General Government, to ensure the success of the enterprise (*pour les effects conséquents*), instructions no longer to requisition, or buy freely, in the occupied territory of Belgium, for the needs of the army of occupation, any of the products mentioned above. As Your Excellency has certainly been convinced in the course

of the recent negotiations, the Governor-General attaches greatest importance to the creation of a definite and clearly understood situation. It is therefore with great satisfaction that I have inferred, from the note which His Excellency the Minister of Spain was so kind as to send me, that Your Excellency, in the capacity of representative of your Government, will not consider occasional purchases of these products made individually by persons belonging to the army as contrary to the engagements entered into by the Governor-General, provided that these purchases are not at all systematic (*aucunement systématique*), and are not made for the account of the Military Commissariat.

Having thus extended the scope of the obligations entered into by him previously toward the three neutral Powers, for the territory, which he governs, the Governor-General is persuaded that, on its side, the Government which Your Excellency represents will assume toward him the guarantee that the British Government will henceforward definitively renounce the practice of interfering by requisition of ships, or in any other manner, with the ravitaillement of the civil population in Belgium. I hope that Your Excellency will secure from your Government authorization to confirm the justice of this position.

Your Excellency is in a position to know that the stipulations of this agreement, and of all those previously concluded with the Government which Your Excellency represents, are conscientiously observed by the authorities and the troops under the orders of His Excellency. The Governor-General is always ready to aid Your Excellency in every possible way in the accomplishment of this task. He ventures to express the hope that Your Excellency will kindly make known in the neutral and belligerent countries the evidence which you already have, and which you may later secure, in this connection, in order to refute the interested insinuations which are constantly appearing in these countries, and which can only result in harm to the enterprise of which you have kindly assumed patronage. In his anxiety to keep this enterprise free from all unjustifiable interference from the Powers at war with Germany, and in his desire to avoid all dealings with the latter, the Governor-General will continue to apply to Your Excellency in all questions connected therewith.

The Governor-General has noted with satisfaction that Your Excellency will see to it that the work of Secours and Alimentation placed under his patronage be kept strictly within the limits traced for its activity. This will permit the Governor-General to give, as in the past, all his aid and all his protection to the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium under the patronage of Your Excellency, in order to permit the members of these two organizations to continue the work which they have been doing up to the present with such devotion in their humanitarian and charitable enterprise, destined to lighten for the population of Belgium the weight of the sufferings occasioned by the war.

I take this occasion to renew the assurance of my profound respect.

(Signed) LANCKEN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 84

Letter,

SIR M. DE BUNSEN TO AMBASSADOR PAGE, enclosing memorandum by the Foreign Office regarding German agreement on prohibition of exports from Belgium and an increase in C.R.B. imports

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

6 May 1916

His Excellency, the Hon. Walter H. Page, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of a communication which Your Excellency was good enough to address to me on the 26th ultimo, enclosing a copy of a note addressed to the United States Minister at Brussels by Baron von der Lancken on behalf of the Governor-General in Belgium replying to the proposals that have been advanced by His Majesty's Government in regard to the prohibition of export of foodstuffs from Belgium and other matters.

I now have the honour to transmit to Your Excellency herewith a memorandum embodying the views of His Majesty's Government in regard to Baron von der Lancken's communication, and I should be grateful if Your Excellency would be good enough to cause a copy of this document to be communicated to the neutral Ministers at Brussels who are acting as patrons of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration,

Your Excellency's most obedient, humble Servant

(for the Secretary of State)

(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

MEMORANDUM

His Majesty's Government note with satisfaction that the Governor-General in Belgium undertakes to prohibit the export from territory within his jurisdiction of

all foodstuffs and feeding stuffs, including seeds, fertilisers, and agricultural stock of all kinds, the only exceptions being (1) that the export of stocks of the above commodities of German origin may be allowed, (2) that the Commission for Relief in Belgium will be permitted to export to Northern France such food, cattle, and fodder as constitute an excess over the internal consumption in Belgium, and (3) that certain native Belgian products of which there is an admitted surplus may, on the basis of the letter addressed to the Marquis of Villalobar on March 21st last, be exported from Belgium.

As regards any surplus of commodities other than those specified under head (3) above, which may arise owing to the measures promised by the Governor-General, His Majesty's Government note that Baron von der Lancken's communication contains no reference as to their disposal other than that they may be utilised, in so far as they are required, for export to Northern France. His Majesty's Government had, however, stipulated that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should be allowed to exercise any control over such stocks which may be necessary in order to conserve them for the future or to make them available for the present needs of the population. It will therefore be necessary, in the interests of all parties concerned, to set up some form of control over the native produce of the forthcoming season similar to that arranged in 1914 in regard to breadstuffs, such control to include all the livestock and dairy produce in the country; the bodies entrusted with this control will be in the best position to determine what commodities are in excess of the needs of the population.

His Majesty's Government are further glad to note the Governor-General's declaration that he will give orders to the quartermaster's department that none of the Belgian produce mentioned in the second paragraph may be either requisitioned or purchased for the use of the occupying army. In return for this assurance His Majesty's Government now agree to raise no objection to the incidental purchase by individual soldiers of Belgian native produce, provided that such individual purchases are not in any way systematic and do not, in fact, come in any way within the purview or control of the quartermaster's department or any other military authority.

Baron von der Lancken's communication contains a passage in which the hope is expressed that the United States Government will give the Governor-General a guarantee that henceforward the British Government will finally abstain from impeding, either by means of the requisitioning of ships or in any other manner, the revictualing of the civil population of Belgium. His Majesty's Government must in the first instance emphatically deny that they have ever taken any measures for impeding the revictualing of the Belgian population within the limits to which they have agreed; they have always been desirous of co-operating in the most open and cordial manner with the Commission for Relief in Belgium, in whose operations they repose complete reliance, and though they have been obliged at certain times to requisition British ships which the Belgian Relief Commission desired to employ

this has been done to meet the urgent necessities of the moment and to ease some temporary shortage of freight, for the existence of which they cannot be held responsible. As has already been pointed out in the memorandum communicated to the Marquis de Villalobar on February 28th last, His Majesty's Government regret that they cannot relinquish their sovereign right to requisition at any time any ship flying the British flag. Subject to this reservation, the Commission may count on continuing to receive in the future as they have received in the past, the loyal co-operation and assistance of His Majesty's Government in the great humanitarian work which they have undertaken, and it is hoped that the consideration which may have inspired the requirement of the German authorities in regard to requisitioning, will be favourably affected by the negotiations at present in progress for the use by the Relief Commission of German interned vessels.

The Belgian Minister at this Court and the Commission for Relief have recently pressed upon me extensive proposals for the increase in the present rations. After a careful examination of these proposals and acting on the assumption that the undertakings given by the Governor-General in Belgium will rapidly be carried into effect, His Majesty's Government have decided to increase the rations in the sense desired by the Commission. It will of course be understood that the continuance of the rations on the higher scale must be dependent on the exercise of a control over native Belgian produce on the lines indicated above.

DOCUMENT NO. 85

Letter,
DE BUNSEN TO HOOVER, giving British consent to increase in C.R.B. imports

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,
10 May 1916

H. C. Hoover, Esq.

SIR:

With reference to your letter of the 5th ultimo putting forward various proposals for an increase in the present Belgian ration, I am directed by Secretary Sir Edward Grey to state that, after full consideration of the matter, His Majesty's Government have agreed to the revised programme as suggested by you, viz:

Four thousand tons of bacon and lard per month (instead of 2,400 tons), 5,000 tons of rice (for which there was no previous allowance), and 1,000 tons of yeast materials per month (instead of 250 tons).

No objection will be raised to making all cereals interchangeable, provided the actual imports of maize are not allowed to exceed 8,000 tons per month and provided it is clearly intimated to this Office on each occasion when it is proposed to substitute one cereal for another. The rice will of course be cleaned rice.

As regards your proposal to import potatoes from Ireland, Lord Robert Cecil would be glad to be informed in the first instance what is the maximum quantity which the Commission would propose to ship per month, so that enquiry may be made in the proper quarter whether the amounts can be spared from this country.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant

(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

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This authorization to increase imports represents the successful termination of difficult negotiations with the Germans on the one hand and the British on the other, with the continuation of relief to the Belgians in the balance. These negotiations illustrate the part which the C.R.B. played as the neutral representative of Belgian interests which were repeatedly threatened in the struggle of the British to maintain and the Germans to break down the blockade.

The permission given to consider cereals interchangeable was of great practical importance, since it was difficult and sometimes impossible to purchase monthly specified quantities of maize, beans and peas, and rice, as these commodities came into the market at various seasons and there were times when at least one of them was quite unobtainable.

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DOCUMENT NO. 86

Letter,
GREY TO PAGE, concerning German seizure of textiles; permission to C.R.B. to import clothing in hand, but interdiction of all future imports of textiles

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,
14 June 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

On December 31st last I had the honour of communicating to you certain demands which His Majesty's Government felt obliged to make on the German Government in connection with the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Among other things, I then demanded the prohibition of the export of all clothing and clothing materials from Belgium, and at the end of my note I said that, unless the German authorities would consent to what I regarded as the reasonable demands of the Allies, I should be obliged to publish the correspondence regarding the Commission's work.

On March 14th I was obliged to inform you that owing to the seizures of textile materials carried out by the Germans in Belgium I could no longer allow the importation of clothing and clothing materials by the Relief Commission into Belgium, and I expressed my astonishment that these seizures had been put into force at the very moment when the demands of the Allies were before the German Government.

Since that time the German Government have acceded to the demands made in my note of December 31st, so far as foodstuffs, fodder, fertilisers, and agricultural stock are concerned, but they have refused to yield in any way to the demand regarding clothing materials. If it were not that special considerations arise in regard to stocks of clothing already collected by the Commission, I should have been obliged to make permanent the embargo on these stocks, but I cannot forget that they are the product of appeals for contributions of this kind made by the Relief Commission in the United States last Autumn, and His Majesty's Government are most reluctant to defeat the charitable endeavours of the American public who answered these appeals. I have therefore informed the Commission that His Majesty's Government raise no objection to the importation into Belgium of certain stocks of clothing already in their possession at Rotterdam, in England, and in the United States, to be distributed under the strict system of control guaranteed by the Commission, but, in view of the German seizures above mentioned, no further authorisation of this kind can be given and, from now until the end of the war, the Allied Governments must impose an absolute prohibition on the importation into Belgium by the Relief Commission of clothing or clothing materials of any kind unless and until the German Government reverse their recent policy and restore to the people of Belgium the stocks of such materials which they have taken from them.

In accordance with the statement made in my note of December 31st I am taking steps to publish the present communication immediately for the information of all those interested in the condition of Belgium.

Believe me,

My dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 87

Letter,

HOOVER TO PERCY, reviewing the situation in Belgium and Northern France in respect to clothing and boots

LONDON, 28 September 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

CLOTHING SITUATION

It seems to me desirable to review the probable clothing situation, assuming that we are to go on with this business until next summer.

Belgium.---We have a considerable stock of clothing goods and ready-made clothing in Belgium at the present moment, as a result of the sudden introduction of the shipments which have been so long held up. It is our belief that if we could import secondhand clothing to supplement this supply we should be able to eke out our textiles for Belgium for the next eight or ten months. Secondhand clothing is an advantage in that it gives more work for the *ouvriers*, which are distributed around over the country, than would piece goods; and in any event, by working the two up together we could extend the situation to much greater effect. Therefore we need to have the ban on Belgium removed to the extent that we might import secondhand clothing.

The question of shoes for women and children is one of the most distressing situations we have to meet at the present time, more especially for children under 6 to 7 years of age, for whom the use of sabots is, on medical grounds, almost prohibited. In Brussels alone, a canvass of the schools to determine the number of shoes which are absolutely required showed something like 80,000 pairs needed against something under 15,000 pairs available in our present supplies for distribution. Our idea is, if you agree, that we should purchase and import a certain amount of ready-made shoes for women and children, that we should endeavor to secure secondhand shoes and that we should import a certain amount of leather for their repair, as the various *ouvriers* each has a shoe-repair shop and can pass out a great deal in this way.

Northern France.---There is no prohibition of the import of either clothing materials or shoes for women and children here, and we are anxious to purchase a further supply of textiles to be made up in Northern France. We laid this matter before you some time ago, and, as I understand, the only point at issue is whether or not we should be allowed to purchase the materials in and export them from this country.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 88

Letter, POLAND TO PERCY, concerning the import of discarded military boots for farm laborers in Northern France

LONDON, 12 October 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

MILITARY BOOTS FOR NORTHERN FRANCE

I beg to hand you herewith copy of a letter sent to Mr. Chevrillon concerning secondhand boots. These are discarded military boots which are being collected and worked over in order to make them suitable for the peasantry. I am sending you a pair in a separate package, to show just the character of the worked-over product. They are considered entirely unsuitable for soldier wear, but would supply a very great need for farm laborers, etc., in Northern France. We should like to know whether this worked-over stock would be considered by the Foreign Office as proper to send into Northern France, even in view of the interdiction in regard to shipments of military boots.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 89

Letter,
PERCY TO POLAND, reporting opposition of military authorities to C.R.B.
import of boots which might be used by Germans

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
21 October 1916

DEAR MR. POLAND:

With reference to your letter of October 12th about military boots for Northern France, I return the samples to you herewith. I am afraid the decision of our military experts is that both these boots would be very useful to the Germans and that they should not be allowed to go anywhere within reach of the Germans. You should bear in mind that the present condition of German soldiers' boots makes it very unsafe to assume that nothing that is not a distinctively military boot will be of service to them. We believe at least one of the samples would be a positive godsend to many German regiments.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 90

Letter,
PERCY TO POLAND, giving British consent to C.R.B. importations of men's
boots and blankets

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
26 December 1916

DEAR MR. POLAND:

1. With reference to previous correspondence regarding fifty-six thousand pairs of men's boots which you now have at Rotterdam and which you desire to send into Northern France, and further with reference to your letter of November 18th regarding one hundred thousand woolen blankets for Northern France, I am directed to inform you that at the express request of the French Government we are now prepared to allow the importation of these articles.

2. Both boots and blankets should if possible be stamped or branded or otherwise labelled in some indelible way, and every precaution should be taken and every possible guarantee exacted from the Germans so as to ensure that none of these articles are used for any other purposes than for the destitute civilian population for

whom they are intended. You should also take all possible measures to see that these importations do not in fact constitute replacement of goods now in Northern France which might be taken by the occupying authorities for their own use.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

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In spite of the troubles which hampered the fulfilment of the program in 1916, the Commission had during its second year placed in Rotterdam 1,300,000 tons of supplies, valued at \$116,000,000. Monthly imports varied as a result of the restrictions of the British authorities. Thus in March 1916 only 64,000 tons were imported, as against a monthly average for the year of 106,000 tons.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Gifts in kind, as had been anticipated, had fallen to 13,249 tons. This was in part due to the Commission's policy, in the face of new conditions, of emphasizing the need of financial assistance rather than of gifts in kind. Appeals for used clothing were an exception to this policy.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER III, continued

3. The Third Year. November 1916-October 1917

The two documents which follow describe the situation which confronted the Commission at the commencement of its third year. Hoover's detailed report on conditions in Belgium showed the extent and effect of the decrease in the production of native products and demonstrated the need of increased imports. The British Government's prompt approval of Hoover's program was the auspicious beginning of what proved to be the most difficult year of the Commission's life.

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DOCUMENT NO. 91

Letters,
HOOVER TO VILLALOBAR AND TO WHITLOCK, stating the critical situation facing Belgium in winter of 1916-1917

BRUSSELS, 15 September 1916

*His Excellency Marquis de Villalobar,
Spanish Minister, Brussels*

*His Excellency Brand Whitlock,
American Minister, Brussels*

MY DEAR MARQUIS:
DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

As the result of a general inquiry by the C.R.B. representatives as to the native food outlook, we are convinced:

a) The potato crop which last year proved insufficient for the population will next year be much worse, as the crop is 30 per cent below that of last year.

b) The breadstuff crops are fully 20 per cent under last year.

c) It is now proved that Belgian cattle which normally lived largely upon cereal fodders cannot be fattened on green feed. The cattle have therefore, owing to absence of fodder imports, failed to take on consequential weight during the summer. The meat supply will be much less than heretofore, and as there is no systematic distribution except through the soup, it will in any event benefit but a small class of the better-to-do.

d) The lack of any general system of distribution allows the indigenous fats to fall in the main into the hands of the well-to-do.

e) The industrial classes already show greatly decreased vitality, increased tuberculosis, and other bad signs.

In consequence of all this, the imports of food must during the winter rise to much larger quantities than anything we have hitherto contemplated, and this in the face of the highest prices the world has ever known.

Yours very truly

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

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DOCUMENT NO. 92

Letter and memorandum,
HOOVER TO PERCY, describing the situation in Belgium and the increased program desired by the C.R.B.

LONDON, 7 October 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

Please find enclosed herewith a report on the whole Belgian situation which expresses all our desires and hopes and, as near as we can arrive at them, the reasons therefor. It has been written with a view to giving a complete picture of the whole situation to those who are not so familiar with the ravitaillement as you are yourself.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

REPORT ON THE FOOD POSITION IN BELGIUM WITH
RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

I

The present population in Belgium is estimated (from bread issues) at 7,500,000, divided into two political areas:

The "Occupation Zone," population 5,800,000 The "Etappen," population 1,700,000

The monthly imports at present permitted to the whole area are:

Item	Tons
Wheat	54,000
Maize	8,000
Peas and beans	3,000
Bacon and lard	4,000
Rice	5,000
Cocoa	350
Condensed milk	500

The whole of the native breadstuffs are in control of the Relief Organization and are combined with the native wheat, and a rigid bread ration is issued to the entire population. The other imports are issued upon a ration (*carte de ménage*) to a more limited number of people who are presumed unable to secure native supplies or in any event only partial supply. In addition the Relief Organization supplements the diet of more destitute members of the *carte de ménage* class by public feeding through soup for adults, by canteens for infant children, and by serving a meal each day in the schools. Approximately 6,000,000 people have a *carte de ménage* and 2,820,000 receive supplementary help through public kitchens.

II

In the consideration of a revised import program for the coming year, three outstanding new factors must be given weight:

- a) As shown by Dr. Lucas' investigation, the industrial and minor commercial adults and the children over five years of age have been steadily underfed during the past year, and while their vitality has not been lowered to the breaking point, they cannot face another year on such a margin.
- b) The new potato crop is 30 per cent to 40 per cent short of last year. The available local breadstuff harvest in the Occupation Zone is diminished by about 25 per cent, although this is compensated for by the larger German guarantees in the Etappen. The local meat supplies are again most seriously reduced, and the local fat supplies are also much diminished.
- c) The considerable filtration of Dutch fish, cheese, etc., has almost ceased by virtue of the German prohibitions.

III

The coming year's outlook for native food supplies may be roughly summarized as follows:

Potatoes.---Owing to the shortage of the potato crop in the Occupation Zone it seems unlikely that there will be more than 350 grams per them per capita available for general distribution. The harvest in the Etappen is larger than this, and the German authorities have undertaken to guarantee 400 grams per them to the population, the surplus going over to Northern France.

Breadstuffs.---The cereal crop in the Occupation Zone last year, after deducting seed and the amounts allowed to producers for their own support (about 72,000 tons), gave an actual net available tonnage to the Relief Organization of approximately 230,000 tons. The net surplus from this year's harvest is estimated at

170,000 tons or, as the distribution is at the rate of 1/15 per month, equal to about 11,000 tons per month.

The harvest in the Etappen is probably 60,000 tons, and the Germans are guaranteeing approximately 12,400 tons per month, or a total of 148,000 tons, part of which must come from Northern France. There are thus roughly 30,000 tons of native wheat per month available on all counts.

Meat.---The following table shows the animals killed in the principal abattoirs for three periods:

ANIMALS KILLED IN THE PRINCIPAL ABATTOIRS

	From 1st Jan. to 31st July 1914	From 1st Jan. to 31st July 1915	From 1st to 29th Feb. 1916
Cows	42,364	50,876	41,164
Oxen	24,955	15,025	18,447
Heifers	13,686	10,742	14,989
Bullocks	17,465	11,020	9,988
Calves	98,926	69,765	51,230
Sheep	96,500	25,770	35,876
Pigs	216,087	110,792	64,767
Horses	6,429	4,066	2,554
Goats	2,452	757	11515
Total	518,864	298,813	240,530
Average kilos per month	8,083,000	5,003,000	4,000,000

The following table also shows the comparative killings in the two principal abattoirs for a more recent period compared to the last above:

MORE RECENT KILLINGS

	From 1st Jan. to 31st	From 1st Aug.	From 1st Mar. to

	July 1916 (7 months)	1915 to 28th Feb. 1916 (7 months)	31st Aug. 1916 (6 months)
<i>Brussels</i>			
Cows	10,784	8,750	7,708
Oxen	4,694	6,485	2,680
Heifers	.....	.....	.....
Bulls	2,107	2,039	1,182
Calves	15,152	12,597	7,748
Sheep	4,007	4,440	1,370
Pigs	14,410	7,650	4,440
Horses	1,273	710	490
Goats	.....	170	310
Total	52,427	42,841	25,928
<i>Cureghem</i>			
Cows	11,443	9,963	7,058
Oxen	4,701	5,755	2,010
Heifers	.....	.....	.....
Bulls	2,108	1,723	1,487
Calves	17,117	13,526	6,946
Sheep	9,168	13,987	3,932
Pigs	25,552	12,544	12,715
Horses	645	279	192
Goats and lambs	.....	.....	.....
Total	70,734	57,777	34,340

From these data and our other investigations we are convinced that the total meat killed does not now exceed 3,500 tons per month for the whole of Belgium, and on an even distribution this would be less than 17 grams per capita, per diem, but as the price of meat has risen to from Frs. 8 to 12 per kilo and there is no physical possibility of an even distribution, it simply means that the producers and well-to-

do classes get the whole of this meat, less the amount which we buy at these high prices for the soup kitchens (for which we need about 800 tons per month).

Fats.---Fat supplies, outside those contained in the above meat, have now been reduced to a very low ebb. As shown above, there is a steady diminution in the number of animals; but of equal importance is the fact that Belgian animals are largely dependent upon cereal fodder, which has been for months non-existent. The meat, fat, and butter and milk producing capacity per head is therefore greatly reduced. The totals collected by the German Fat Central, which requires the total tallow from all abattoirs, average less than 50 tons per month. If we assume the outside figure of 500,000 milk cattle still left (against 1,000,000 before the war), the theoretical dairy fats available in butter and cheese are now less than 1,000 tons per month. Despite the legal price of 6 francs, the real price of butter is now from 9 to 12 francs, and in consequence this supply of fats also is available principally to the producers and the well-to-do. Some further theoretical fats may be estimated for the skimmed milk, but it reaches the industrial and urban population mainly through the Relief Organization and then to the children only.

Sugar---The sugar available at present is 4,000 tons per month. It is issued by the Sugar Central to the retail trade at a price of Frs. 1 to 2 per kilo, so that the lower social strata do not see much of it.

Other native supplies---There is no doubt an appreciable amount of vegetables and poultry products in Belgium, but these are, again, largely consumed by the producers and well-to-do. The number of producers of these products is, however, very considerable owing to the wide distribution of small holdings.

IV

That there is effective shortage of present supplies can be adduced from combining the above native supplies with the present imports:

Native	Tons monthly
Meat	3,500
Fats	1,000
Potatoes	759000
Sugar	4,000
Wheat and rye	30,000
Imports	
Wheat	54,000

Maize	8,000
Peas and beans	39000
Bacon and lard	4,000
Rice	5,000
Cocoa	350
Condensed milk	500

The following table shows:

A. The dietetic results of these totals

B. The minimum dietetic requirements of the population after giving weight to partial unemployment and reduction to "man-power"

C. The deficiency

	A	B	C
	(Grams per diem)	(Grams per diem)	(Grams per diem)
Protein	46	70	24
Fats	42	50	8
Carbohydrates	328	410	82
Total calories	1,737	2,400	663

No doubt the poultry and the sundry vegetables would add something to this total, but the amount would not be very important. If we adopt Professor Thompson's views of the proportion of these articles in the United Kingdom dietary and apply them to Belgian conditions it would amount to less than 150 calories per them per capita. This deficiency of the available food supplies, as brought out by the above figures, represents a monthly shortage in:

	Tons
Protein	5,400
Fats	1,800
Carbohydrates	18,450

for which deficiency some combination of bacon, lard, preserved fish, peas, beans, and wheat needs to be found.

V

While the above is an interesting proof of the deficiency in total supplies, the actual problem is far different. There is no equitable distribution of the native food supplies except the breadstuffs and, in a rough way, the potatoes. The other native supplies are absorbed in the main, as stated above, by the agricultural producers and the well-to-do population, who live more or less up to normal, consuming probably more than 3,000 calories; and therefore the workers and minor commercial classes are dependent, except for breadstuff and potatoes, mainly upon imports. The Relief Organization attempts to meet this situation by issuing *cartes de ménage* to a limited social range, but the pressure upon the communal committees during the past year has resulted in the increase of these cards from about 3,500,000 to about 6,000,000.

The *carte de ménage* class no doubt to some extent overlaps with the producers and the well-to-do, and no doubt many *carte de ménage* holders, especially among small landowners, do obtain some native supplies. It is impossible to follow every household every day and see that no overlap occurs. The ration secured by this *carte de ménage* class from present imports plus native potatoes and breadstuffs works out at the following ration over 6,000,000 people:

Commodity	Grams per capita per diem				
	Ration	Protein	Fats	Carbo-hydrates	Calories
Bread	400	31.6	4.4	200	992
Potatoes	350	3.5	4.5	66.5	294
Bacon and lard	22	.8	19.5	.....	185
Maize products	27	1.2	.3	22.4	98
Peas and beans	22	5.2	.4	12.7	78
Rice	28	.2	.1	21.8	100
Total	849	42.5	29.2	323.4	1,747
Adopted minimum standard	...	70.	50.	410.	2,400

(as above)					
Giving a shortage of	...	40%	42%	21%	27%

Thus, this class, representing the great majority of the people, where no other native supplies are available, are obviously fully 25 per cent under minimum standards of feeding.

VI

We must assume that some portion of the *carte de ménage* holders are able to obtain some additional native food supplies, and, rather than increase the general *carte de ménage* distribution, our idea is to approach the problem by way of supplemental feeding to that section of the population which is the most necessitous and the least likely to secure any such native supplement. This we propose to do by increasing the bread ration to certain classes and by expanding the food supplies through the soup kitchens. If the basic ration of flour to the whole population be held as at present at 300 grams of flour (400 grams of bread), an addition of 50 grams of flour to workers would greatly alleviate pressure in this direction. This ration will imply a total wheat import during next year of about 58,000 to 59,000 tons per month.

We estimate the number of people on the communal soup kitchens at 1,700,000, the number of children fed by canteens at 120,000, and the children who will participate in the public school feeding at 1,000,000, or approximately 2,820,000 whose *carte de ménage* ration must be further supplemented by expanding the operation of these relief organs.

In order in this manner to bring up the food value of these classes, which are the ones most necessary to reach, to an effective amount, we propose that the soup kitchens should be supplied with the following supplementary commodities:

Commodity	Grams per diem	Tons per month
Native meat	10	846
Imported bacon and lard	20	1,686
Cheese	6	507
Preserved fish	10	846
	46	3,885

Assuming the adults upon these soup kitchens receive the extra 50 grams of flour, the total ration to this section of the population would be:

Grams per capita per diem	Protein	Fats	Carbohydrates	Calories
940	54	52	358	2,145

This is still too low, but the large proportion of children will tend to liberate some proportion in favor of the adults.

In addition to the above we propose to import, for the children, 500 tons of condensed milk and 350 tons of cocoa.

The above provision of 10 grams of meat per capita for the soup kitchens is an absolute necessity and so far as possible will be obtained locally. It will be necessary, however, especially in the Etappen, to import some meat, and a provision should be made for the importation of at least 500 tons per month of preserved meat from abroad or fresh meat from Holland if it should become critically necessary.

Furthermore, the outbreak of skin diseases renders the importation of some soap absolutely necessary. Coffee is now wholly exhausted in Belgium and the people are using roasted cereals---which would answer if a small amount of real coffee could be mixed therein.

VII

The net result of this change on the imports is indicated by the following table:

Commodities	Metric tons per month				
	Present permitted importation	Additional	Total	Cost per ton £ sterling	Approximate cost per month £ sterling
Bacon and lard	4,000	1,686	5,686	75	426,450
Peas and beans	3,000	.....	3,000	27	81,000
Cheese	.....	500	500	110	55,000

Cocoa	350	.....	350	95	33,250
Coffee	.....	1,100	1,100	60	66,000
Fish, preserved	.....	850	850	40	34,000
Maize	8,000	.....	8,000	11	88,000
Meat	.....	500	500	55	27,500
Milk, condensed	500	500	1,000	50	50,000
Rice	5,000	.....	5,000	17	85,000
Soap	.....	1,000	1,000	31	31,000
Wheat	54 000	5 000	59,000	18	1,062,000
Yeast materials	::	1,000	1,000	30	30,000
Totals	75,850	11,136	86,986		2,069,200

It may be observed that the above additions do not provide all the apparent deficiencies in supplies as shown in IV but still leave a wide margin to be furnished by poultry and sundry vegetables.

VIII

Of the above total estimated cost of £2,069,200 approximately £330,000 is due to the increase in imports proposed. The cost of the whole program has been materially affected by the great rise in prices during the past five months, this rise representing roughly about £400,000. Out of the total of £2,069,200 the Commission hopes to be able to obtain about £150,000 per month from charity and commercial exchange, and therefore the need from subsidies represents about £1,900,000, or an increase of about £900,000 over the present subsidies.

DOCUMENT NO. 93

Letter and memorandum,
PERCY TO HOOVER, recapitulating increases in C.R.B. imports authorized by
the British government

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
11 November 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

1. With reference to Sir E. Crowe's letter to you of October 26th in regard to the increase in the Belgian ration, I now transmit to you herewith a complete revised table of all your rations in order to put the situation on a clear basis.

2. There seems to have been a slight mistake in Sir E. Crowe's letter to you of the 26th in regard to soap. You asked for one thousand tons of soap for Belgium and by a clerical error we authorised one thousand one hundred tons. In the annexed table I have corrected this error.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

MEMORANDUM

RELIEF RATIONS FOR BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

<i>Belgium</i>	Metric Tons
Wheat	59,000
Maize	8,000
Rice	5,000
Peas and beans	3,000
Meat	500
Fish	850
Bacon and lard	5,686
Cheese	500
Condensed milk	1,000
Cocoa	350
Coffee	1,100
Yeast materials	1,000
Soap	1,000

Clothing and clothing materials Medical supplies (not including rubber goods)

*For the
Commission's
staff*

Petrol	20,000 liters
Lubricating oil	1,000 liters
Mineral transmission grease	100 kilos
Motor car accessories	

Metric Tons

*Northern
France*

Flour	19,300b
Cerealine (maize)	2,200
Rice	4,400
Peas and beans	1,650
Meat	1,800
Fish	500
Bacon and lard	3,200
Cheese	720
Butter	360
Condensed milk	1,650
Cocoa	350
Coffee	1,100
Sugar	1,320
Soap	1,000

Plus 650 liters per month for Consulate. Equivalent to 23,500 tons of wheat.

At the end of 1916 the position of the Commission was stronger than at any previous time. Administrative machinery inside and outside of Belgium was running smoothly; the prestige of the Commission was greater than ever; and relations with the belligerents were on a generally satisfactory basis. But this clear sky had its cloud, which with the passing months of 1916 had grown ominously larger. This cloud was the shortage of shipping. Losses from submarines and mines, the steadily increasing demands of the Allies, the growing reluctance of neutrals to permit the use of their ships in the dangerous waters of the North Sea and the Channel contributed to this condition, which reached its crisis on 1st February 1917 when the Germans began their unrestricted U-boat campaign.

Two months after the Germans embarked on this desperate policy the United States became a belligerent, necessitating the withdrawal of Americans from Belgium and the assumption of their functions by Dutch and Spanish nationals.(57) An immediate effect of the German declaration was the closing of the North Sea and the waters around the British Isles and the Atlantic coast of France to C.R.B. ships and the withdrawal of neutral ships from the service of the Commission. The struggle to secure ships enough to maintain a flow of food into the occupied regions is revealed in chapter V; here it is sufficient to note that, under these conditions, the promising program authorized in November 1916 was completely upset. During February 1917 a few cargoes reached Rotterdam;(58) in March only two oversea vessels arrived. A few more ships got through the U-boat blockade in April and May, and these were supplemented by an emergency loan of 20,000 tons of wheat from the Dutch Government. During these four months, however, the Commission was able by the most energetic action to import a total of only 116,000 tons against its minimum ration program of 107,000 tons each month.

In the midst of these larger issues the Commission's program was further jeopardized by German military seizures of Belgian food supplies, particularly of cattle. The only possible answer to this violation of guarantees was the suspension of import of those products which were being seized. As soon, however, as the German General Government in Brussels undertook to prevent further violation of its agreements, the program was restored.

DOCUMENT NO. 94

Letter,
HOOVER TO BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE, stating the revised program of the Commission and requesting the Government to take their share of responsibility for the necessary downward revision

LONDON, 16 April 1917

A. Parker, Esq.
Foreign Office, London

DEAR MR. PARKER:

In discussion with Lord Robert Cecil today, I informed him of what has been evident from the Inspection and Control reports for some time, viz., the increasing abstraction of cattle from Belgium, which has now reached enormous dimensions. Lord Robert considered it essential that a telegram should be dispatched which would reach the Marquis de Villalobar, and asked me to draft up the ideas which he expressed, which I do and attach same herewith.

I take this occasion to mention the whole of the revised program of the Relief Commission, in which I consider it advisable that His Majesty's Government should take the responsibility of authorization. We will give immediate orders to Rotterdam to cease the shipments of fats and meat into Belgium and it appears to us that a simplification of the entire matter, in view of the reduced quantities of cereals now proposed, can be accomplished by our undertaking to ship not more than 50,000 tons per month of cereals into Belgium, making no discrimination between the various articles of peas, beans, maize, wheat, rice, barley, or any other cereal which we can obtain. They all have approximately the same food value and with the reduced quantity which this involves there can be no further need of precise and elaborate shipments of each different commodity.

With regard to the North of France relief, we propose that it should amount to 17,000 tons of cereals per month and 5,500 tons of fats, meats, and condensed milk. In addition to the above articles we may be able to secure the shipment of up to 200 tons of cocoa to Belgium and 400 tons to the North of France, and in addition to this we would propose to retain the former permits to ship fish, but the supplies are very irregular and are not likely to be extensive. Our old permits provide for certain amounts of soap and sugar for the North of France, which former permits we would not exceed; but I do not propose that in present circumstances we will be able to approach the former imports. Altogether the above program represents between one-third and one-half reduction in the total quantities hitherto shipped by the Commission.

As I mentioned above, I think it would be advisable for the Government to take their share of the responsibility of the revision of this program to present necessities.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

The draft is only an idea!([59](#))

DOCUMENT NO. 95

Letter,
POLAND TO PAGE, stating restrictions placed on C.R.B. by British Government
and alleged German violations of agreement on basis of which restrictions were
made

LONDON, 14 May 1917

His Excellency the Hon. W. H. Page, London

MY DEAR MR. PAGE:

For your information I send you herewith some correspondence concerning the shipment of foodstuffs into Belgium. At the present time the following situation exists:

1. No bacon, lard, meat, or milk is allowed to be shipped by the Commission from overseas into Belgium, and this has not been done since April 18th.
2. We now have orders from the Foreign Office, as per copies attached, to stop all shipments of bacon, lard, meat, milk, butter, cheese, and similar animal products into Belgium and I am requested to telegraph these restrictive orders to our Rotterdam office.

Up to the present time as large an amount of these products as possible, of Dutch origin, has been forwarded into Belgium, consistent with sending the proper proportion to the North of France.

The reasons for the restriction of shipments into Belgium are based upon two conditions:

- a) The violations by the Germans of their undertakings to reserve to the civil population native foods, and particularly the meat supply of the country. No doubt large quantities of meat were shipped from Belgium into Germany. You will see from the attached copy of a communication from His Excellency Señor Merry del Val that the Marquis Villalobar reports that Baron von der Lancken has given a definite undertaking that these violations will be stopped. This is the most important condition upon which were based the restrictions.
- b) The consideration has been advanced that there is in Belgium sufficient meat and fats to supply the civil population without depending upon imports from the outside, and that these stocks ought to be reduced, in order that they might never be available as a source of supply to the Germans.

Whatever the theoretical position in this respect may be, the emphatic statements of desperate need of bacon and lard by the people of Belgium seems to me to make it plain that our duty is to send in to these suffering people a fair supply of bacon and lard from overseas, let us say 3,000 tons per month, and a fair proportion of what Dutch products can be obtained.

I have become convinced myself that the available stock of meat in Belgium is much less than we have supposed, and it must always be remembered that none of the agreements in regard to the original Étapes, including a population of 1,700,000 persons, protected the native food supply, the Étapes being on the same basis exactly as the territories of the North of France. For these reasons I am taking the liberty of withholding action in regard to notifying Belgium of the Foreign Office order until after you have had an opportunity of presenting the case to Lord Robert Cecil this afternoon.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 96

Letter,
AMBASSADOR MERRY DEL VAL TO POLAND, announcing satisfactory steps taken by the German Government to prevent export of Belgian cattle

LONDON, 10 May 1917

W. B. Poland, Esq.
Director, The Commission for Relief in Belgium

SIR:

EXPORTATION OF CATTLE FROM BELGIUM

With reference to our former correspondence on this subject and in the last instance to my letter of May 2d, I have the pleasure to inform you that according to a telegram received through Madrid from the Spanish Minister in Brussels the measures taken by the German Government to prevent fraudulent acts and abuses by part of the invading Army in violation of guarantees appear to be efficient. Baron Lancken is reported as having given proofs in this sense and is preparing an official communication which Marquis Villalobar holds to be satisfactory.

Our Minister in Brussels lays much stress upon the extreme misery entailed upon the Belgians by the want of fats and fatty foodstuffs, and urges that their importation into Belgium may once more be allowed.

I remain,

Yours faithfully

(Signed) A. MERRY DEL VAL

DOCUMENT NO. 97

Memorandum

of meeting between AKERS DOUGLAS of the Foreign Office, HIGGINSON of the Blockade Ministry, and POLAND of the C.R.B., slating decisions relative to imports by C.R.B. of Dutch products

LONDON, 14 May 1917

After discussion it was decided:

Sugar.---For the moment no Dutch sugar is to be shipped from Holland into Belgium under the auspices of the Relief Commission. The question of action in the future is subject to further discussion. It is also suggested that it may be desirable for the Commission to purchase Dutch sugar if possible and send into Northern France, instead of importing from overseas.

Potatoes.---It was decided that no more either food or seed potatoes should be sent from Belgium into France until such time as the full quota to Great Britain has been delivered to the British authorities, thus making it possible for Holland to export potatoes into Germany. When this point has been reached, potatoes, either food or seed, may be sent in either to Belgium or France.

Meat.---It was decided, until further notice, that no beef or mutton of Dutch origin may be sent into Belgium until such time as the full British quota has been delivered to Great Britain, whereafter, as soon as meat could be sent into Germany, shipments from Dutch sources may be resumed to Belgium.

NOTE: There are no restrictions on shipments into Belgium of Dutch produce consisting of milk, butter, cheese, rabbits, poultry, eggs, and all vegetables other than potatoes.

NOTE: Shipments to France are not in discussion, as in accordance with letter from Sir Eyre Crowe dated May 7th, it was stated that supplies to Northern France were not affected.

Milk.---It was suggested that Dutch milk might be sent in wooden carriers, provided it was sweetened milk; that it was understood by the Commission that under agreement with the British Minister at The Hague, N.O.T. supplies might be sent in under C.R.B. auspices.

It was suggested by Mr. Poland that possibly glass jars might be furnished from Belgium as carriers for Dutch milk provided tin could not be obtained.

Barbed Veal.---This is not prohibited from export, not being classified as beef above and therefore may be sent in.

The records of the Commission's imports during the third year of its activity ending with October 1917 show the disastrous effect of the unrestricted U-boat campaign on the relief of Belgium and Northern France. During the twelve months only 725,000 tons reached Rotterdam, (60) which was less than the total of the first year of operations and only about 50 per cent of requirements. It is interesting to note, however, that though the import tonnage for 1917 was only about 55 per cent of that for 1916 the costs, as a result of increase in freight rates and prices, were practically the same---\$115,000,000.

4. The Fourth Year. November 1917-October 1918

In drafting its program of imports for the fourth year the Commission followed the same method as in preceding years, when American representatives were still in the occupied territories. In the execution of the program, however, new conditions prevailed. Whereas, before 1917 it was the Allied blockade, after 1917 it was the German U-boat campaign which chiefly affected the realization of the program. During the last year of the war, therefore, the Commission's negotiations respecting its import program dealt primarily with questions of shipping and purchase. The documents relating to these matters appear in the two immediately following chapters.

Memorandum,
POLAND TO BELGIAN, FRENCH, AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS, on food
requirements of the Commission

LONDON, 20 October 1917

I. FOOD REQUIREMENTS

A short time ago I made a trip to Holland for the purpose of holding a consultation as to the general situation of the relief, with the chief of the Comité National, the secretary of the Comité Français, the protecting ministers in Belgium, the chairmen of the Spanish-Dutch Comité de Protection, and our own very reliable representative in Belgium. I was also, somewhat to my surprise, called upon by representatives of the German Government in Belgium who had been sent out to talk over present conditions with us, from whom a good deal of valuable information was obtained.

The whole range of the relief work was thoroughly discussed with these gentlemen, attention being given to the native resources of the country, the manner in which the German undertakings were being carried out, the possibilities of increasing the importations of Holland native products, etc., and particularly to the requirements for the coming winter.

As a result of the changed conditions in Belgium and France, the decrease in native products available and changes in the overseas food situation, it is necessary to adjust the minimum monthly ration (the new table for November 1st, 1917, is attached) and based upon it, to redetermine our required monthly imports. The statement for November 1917, is shown under 9.

1. Owing to a lesser area being planted and the considerably decreased unit production resulting from lack of fertilizers, improper cultivation, etc., the native crops in Belgium and France, as in most of Europe, are steadily decreasing. The German officers maintained that last year they were only able to fulfil their guarantee of 180 grams of native flour for France and the Belgian Étapes by importing flour from Germany. I am unable to say whether this was a sincere statement. There is no doubt that some flour furnished to Northern France did come from German mills, but the wheat may have come from France. However this may be, our investigations make it seem probable that the Germans are correct in their statements that the native crop of Flanders and Northern France this year will provide the civil population with not more than 100 grams of flour milled at 90 to 97 per capita per day. This amount, effective from September 1st, the Germans have officially undertaken to supply to the Belgian and French Étapes.

This issue of 100 grams of flour per capita per day replaces the 180 grams provided last year, upon which our previous ration sheet was based. It will now be necessary

to make up the deficiency to the people of these territories by the importation of extra wheat.

We are providing in our program for Northern France this year, as last, a total per capita ration, including the native product of 280 grams of flour per day. To this would be added a small extra allowance for the people of the congested industrial districts such as Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Valenciennes, etc., and a small amount to be used as torrealine and for the making of the child biscuit ration.

In Belgium we are endeavoring to provide, as heretofore, a ration of about 250 grams per capita per day for the whole population as a basis, to which are added extra amounts for child feeding, soups for the destitute, extra rations for heavy workers, etc. The agricultural community, on about 300 grams per day, retain their own supplies. The Belgian Étape is on the same basis as Northern France.

Owing to the decrease of native bread grains in France and Belgium and the corresponding increase in exotic imports, the total amount of wheat required on this absolutely minimum basis, as appears on the attached ration sheet, is 68,000 tons per month.

2. After bread grains the next most important food item is native fats, comprised of bacon, lard, butter, tallow, margarine, cheese, etc. In France there are practically no native cattle, the milk-butter products of the few remaining animals being almost completely commandeered by the German armies. The conditions in Flanders now closely approach those in France although not quite so severe.

In Belgium, owing to the lack of fodder, animal fat products in the form of milk, butter, cheese, etc., and tallow, have greatly decreased. It is quite possible that later experience will prove that we have been using too high a figure in our estimate of native products of this kind. The local prices have gone to such figures that even were it physically possible to obtain the supplies, the local cash resources of the Comité National would be inadequate to carry out the purchases. The British Foreign Office is well informed of the strong efforts we made at their request to reduce the bacon, lard, and meat imports into Belgium and force the consumption of native stocks. The result was simply to deprive the population of these essential fats and to drive great numbers of workmen into the arms of the Germans. We have slightly increased the amount of bacon and lard to be allowed to Belgium from 4,500 to 5,000 tons per month, but this still is less than the December 1916 program of 5,670 tons. A slight reduction at the same time is made in the imports for Northern France on account of the somewhat decreased population due to deportation, etc. We are not sure that this quantity will prove adequate, but the world shortage seems so serious that with the help of the native Dutch supplies we must at least make the effort to have the people maintain themselves upon it.

3. Poor as the native crop of potatoes was last year, the prospects are that, due to lack of fertilization, proper cultivation, and decreased acreage, it will be 25 per cent poorer this year. We have, however, succeeded in getting the Germans to relieve their pernicious restrictions upon inter-regional traffic, which caused great wastage of crops last year. With careful distribution it now seems justifiable to count on 190 grams of potatoes per capita per day for Northern France and Flanders and about the same for Belgium. The Germans have guaranteed to reserve to the civil population of France and Flanders the entire native crop, which they estimate will produce 200 grams per day. The inhabitants of the regions, however, are not so optimistic.

4. In the attached ration table we show considerable amounts of food imported from Holland. This supply is uncertain. It is necessary to have permits for import from the German, the Dutch, and the British Governments. Everything that can be shipped from Holland reduces the potential German food supply, obviates a certain amount of overseas shipping, and reinforces a far too meager program; as emphasized in a footnote, if at any time the Holland importations are cut down, the overseas imports must be correspondingly increased. As little restriction as possible should be put upon Dutch imports into Belgium and France.

5. Certain imports from the United Kingdom are counted upon. These cover peas, beans, and rice, which are practically impossible to obtain in the United States and are absolutely necessary items of supply for the invaded territories. The people have suffered greatly during the last six months because of the interruption of these supplies. Were we not able to obtain them in the United Kingdom we should have to import from Burma and Saigon, thereby reducing the capacity of our limited overseas tonnage.

6. Smoked herrings are an important food item. Early in the year we made arrangements to import Norwegian herrings, but at the request of the British Government, the Fisheries Department took over this for us and have arranged to supply between 15,000 and 20,000 barrels smoked herrings per month, which should produce from 1,000 to 1,500 tons net of fish.

7. Taking into account the most generous estimate of the native resources which we believe possible, it will be seen that this minimum monthly ration provides for Belgium 2,000 calories per capita per day and for France 2,141 calories per day. The slight difference is based on the fact that, aside from wheat and potatoes, there are no longer considerable native supplies to be obtained in France, while in Belgium there is still a fairly well-to-do agricultural population, which, as is always the case with agricultural classes, may be counted on to take care of its own most pressing needs before supplying others.

8. The provisions of this November 1st ration sheet represent the irreducible minimum food which must be served out to the people of France and Belgium

without interruption month by month to prevent actual starvation and the breaking down of the physical and moral standards of the people. It is founded on the assumption that considerable stocks of native products will be available within the country. If, later on, the vegetable and other local supplies are reduced or the Holland imports are curtailed, or the bean and fish supplies, for instance, from the United Kingdom become unavailable, immediate steps will have to be taken to replace these foods from overseas. It must be distinctly understood that there is no elasticity whatever in this ration; it must be supplied every month without question of failure.

9. As all the reserves in Belgium, France, and Rotterdam have been wiped out, it is essential that these be built up as rapidly as possible, so that there may be some provision against shipping and other irregularities. This monthly ration must therefore be increased by 20 per cent as shown on the attached table, to represent the imports into Rotterdam.

For the months of November, December, and January, supplies have been purchased or contracted for to an extent which justified us in being confident of ability to fill completely the food requirements from overseas of this program of imports.

10. The Governments of England and France are hereby asked, in the event at any time in the future of our inability to obtain the necessary supplies from our own organization, to guarantee monthly to the Relief, from their own resources, the full cargo required by this schedule.

PROGRAM OF MONTHLY IMPORTS INTO ROTTERDAM, IN METRIC TONS, TO PROVIDE MINIMUM RATION FOR BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE, WITH 20 PER CENT ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE ON PRINCIPAL ITEMS FOR BUILDING UP A RESERVE (November 1917)

(Effective November 1917)

Source	Commodity	For Belgium	For Northern France	Total	Total by sources
New York.	Wheat	64,200	17,400	81,600	
	1/3 C.R.B. Bacon,				
	2/3 Lard	6,000	3,360	9,360	
	Milk (condensed				

	sweet)	600	1,440	2,040	
	Sugar (white)	.....	1,440	1,440	
	Meat	.....	1,200	1,200	
	Cocoa	300	300	600	
	Barley or rye	750	.....	750	96,990
Argentina	Maize	6,600	2,400	9,060	9,060
United Kingdom	Beans (and peas)	4,320	1,200	5,520	
	Rice	6,600	2,400	91000	
	Fish (herrings S.&P.)	850	500	1,350	
	Coffee	500	500	1,000	
	Soap	500	800	1,300	
	Malt culms	250	.....	250	18,420
	Totals	91,470	32,940	124,470	124,470

NOTE.---Principal items above will be reduced by 17 per cent per month as soon as reserves have been built up in Belgium, France, and Rotterdam.

During the summer of 1917 the Allies were nearer defeat than at any time during the four years of conflict. On land there were disasters in nearly every theater of war, which though not decisive in a military sense reacted heavily on the morale of the war-weary people of the Entente countries. Actually the Allies were nearer defeat on the sea than on the land, though this was not widely realized by the general public. It was this struggle of the Allies to maintain their sea communications that affected particularly the work of the C.R.B.

The decreasing tonnage led the Allies to concentrate their shipping in the Atlantic. America thus became practically the sole food market, but 1917 was an extremely short crop year in America. The Commission thus had to compete for both tonnage and supplies with desperately worried officials of the Allied states who were hard pressed to provide military materials for their troops and food and other necessary supplies for the people. Everywhere there was a tightening of food control and a stringent regulation of shipping. Hoover, then United States Food Administrator

and still active Chairman of the C.R.B., succeeded in getting some tonnage which neutral owners were holding in port. Poland, the Commission's European Director, after an arduous campaign, prevailed upon the newly organized Supreme War Council to grant, in December 1917, priority to the C.R.B in both food and ships for the supply of the civilian population of Belgium and Northern France.(61) On the basis of this decision the Supreme War Council authorized the Commission to lay down a minimum monthly program of 80,000 tons for Belgium and 30,000 tons for Northern France at a cost of \$22,000,000 per month, of which about one-half was European expenditures chiefly for freights.

In spite of this decision it was some time before the Commission was able to make any headway in the realization of this program. This delay was due partly to the shipping situation and partly to differences between the American and British Governments over the financing of the European expenditures.(62) In January 1918 this financial matter was adjusted, but from that time on the Commission's program was subject to review by the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement.(63) In May 1918 the Commission's shipping difficulties were greatly relieved by an arrangement whereby the Allied Maritime Transport Council and the United States Shipping Board each agreed to make up 50 per cent of the C.R.B.'s tonnage shortage. From July 1918 onward this arrangement worked in a highly satisfactory fashion, and for the first time since November 1916 the Commission was more nearly able to realize its program of deliveries. Though the Commission was able to deliver an average of only 60,000 tons per month during the first half of the fourth year, the second six months saw an average of 100,000 tons placed in Rotterdam.(64) The total for the year ending with October 1918 was 1,091,000 tons, costing approximately \$245,000,000.

Though there was a serious shortage of clothing in the occupied territories, the need of clothing was not comparable to the need of food, and hence the Commission never undertook a program of clothing deliveries on the scale of its food program. As has been noted, however, during the first year large quantities of gift clothing were distributed; and in the second year, in addition to smaller amounts of used clothing, the Commission purchased and delivered 800,000 pairs of boots. In 1917 the people were badly shod and in rags, and there was a compelling demand for blankets. After a careful analysis of requirements made early in January 1917, the Commission took steps to procure the materials for the manufacture of clothing in the workshops of the organization in the occupied territories. The list of requirements embraced every item necessary for the manufacture of men's, women's, and children's apparel, the major item being 16,000,000 yards of woolen cloth, the total cost being estimated at \$10,000,000. The difficulties of relief in 1917 prevented the realization of the clothing program during this year. During 1918, however, though it was obviously impossible to meet the full program, about 50 per cent of the huge requisition was fulfilled. With the summer of 1918 the Commission made a new appeal for used clothing both in the United States and in

England, with the result that some 12,000 tons were collected and distributed during the fall of 1918 and in 1919.(65)

In addition to the obvious requirements of food and clothing the Commission was from time to time required to supply innumerable items necessary for the life of a nation. For example, it was necessary to keep the flour mills running, and the Commission therefore made important importations of machine parts, belting, and filter cloth.

DOCUMENT NO. 99

Table,

Minimum monthly rations for Belgium and Northern France showing permitted monthly importations to Belgium and Northern France of 111,200 tons.

5. Importations during German Evacuation.. October-November 1918

As soon as the third and last of the great German drives of the summer of 1918 was definitely checked at the second Battle of the Marne in the middle of July, the Allies launched their decisive counter-offensive which in the course of a few months pushed the last German divisions out of Northern France and Belgium. In September the line of battle, which for four years had marked the western limit of relief, began to swing toward the east. Behind the retiring German line the inhabitants were moved back and refugees from French and Belgian Flanders flocked into the large towns in the rear with disturbing effects on the highly organized system of relief distribution.

The course of military events, which appeared to be leading to a complete change in the status of all territories where relief had been delivered, raised important questions of the policy to be adopted by the Commission in the evacuated regions. One fundamental question concerned whether the French and Belgian Governments for good and sufficient political reasons wished to take over the responsibility for the relief of the evacuated territories or desired the Commission to continue its activities with such modifications as the changing situation demanded. As appears in the following documents, the French and Belgian authorities relied on the Commission to continue its service until the two Governments were better prepared to take over this work themselves.

DOCUMENT NO. 100

Memorandum,
by W. B. POLAND, regarding conduct of ravitaillement during evacuation

PARIS, 5 October 1918

THE RAVITAILLEMENT OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF NORTHERN FRANCE AND BELGIUM IN THE EVENT OF THEIR WHOLE OR PARTIAL EVACUATION BY THE GERMANS

The country now being taken care of by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France may be divided into three regions:

I. The military étape of Northern France directly under German military command---population 1,700,000; value of imported food to total consumption, about 85 per cent. The food for the northern sector---Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Valenciennes---is brought in by lighter from Rotterdam via Ghent and Antwerp, and is distributed by water via the Lys, Escaut, and Dendre Canals, practically to points of consumption. For the southern and eastern sector the food is brought in principally by lighter from Rotterdam via the river Meuse through the towns of Liège to Namur and Charleroi, from which cities shipments are distributed by rail and finally by lorry to the communes.

II. The military étape of Flanders (Belgium) directly under German military command---population 1,800,000; value of imported food to total consumption, 75 per cent. This is the territory west of Antwerp and the Dendre Canal, and south of the East and West line through Mons, to the Sambre Canal. The supplies for this sector are brought in partly by lighter from Rotterdam, via Antwerp and the Dendre Canal, but principally by the Terneuzen Canal to Ghent. They are distributed by the Lys and by the Rulers, Ostend, and Bruges Canals. The final distribution is often done by wagons and motor trucks.

III. The territory of the General Government of Belgium. This is under the so-called civil administration of the Governor-General with headquarters at Brussels: it includes all Belgium except the small unoccupied portion, the étape of Flanders, and militarized tracts near the French frontier---population 5,500,000.

Supplies are brought in from Rotterdam by water, 8/10 via Antwerp and 2/10 via the Meuse to Liège, Namur, and Charleroi. From Antwerp they are distributed via the Dendre and the main canal system to Brussels, Louvain, Hasselt, Ath, and Mons; from these canal points the distribution is carried on first by vicinal railways where possible, and then by wagons or motor trucks: this territory is now furnished from imports 65 per cent to 70 per cent of the total food value consumed.

The approximate tonnage of food now being imported *monthly* according to the approved program to make up the minimum living ration for these three divisions is:

I. 31,000	}	
metric tons		
II. 23,500	}(A) =	
metric tons	117,500	
	tons	
III. 63,000	}	
metric tons		

In the case of the total evacuation of the occupied territories by the Germans, accompanied as it seems almost certain to be by the complete destruction or removal of all native reserves of grain, potatoes, sugar, etc., I estimate the minimum amount of food which must be imported *monthly* to keep the people from rapid physical deterioration to be as follows:

I. 35,000	}	
metric tons		
II. 30,000	}(B) =	
metric tons	156,000	
	tons	
III. 91,000	}	
metric tons		

Increased imports required, 38,500 tons

Partial evacuation would reduce proportionally the necessary increases in (B) over (A).

While almost anything may happen when withdrawals take place, there seem to be three situations which are useful to consider:

First.---Where the Germans are gradually forced back (by combat) mile by mile. In this case probably all but about 25 per cent of the civil population will be evacuated into the still occupied territories, and the country will be completely devastated, all food reserves being moved back, destroyed, or shipped to Germany. Undoubtedly the armies would have to supply the food to the civil population remaining until the civil administration of France and Belgium could reorganize their own ravitaillement back of the lines. It would be wise in the opinion of the writer, for the civil administrations at once, in accord with the military authorities, to organize reserves at convenient points back of the present line. Such action has indeed

already been taken by representatives of the Chambers of Commerce of Lille, St. Quentin, and Valenciennes.

Second.---Where the Germans make a strategic withdrawal to the line, Antwerp, Brussels, Mons, Avesnes, Mézières, Sedan, Verdun [?]. In this case about three-quarters of the civil population of Flanders and the industrial cities of Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and Valenciennes, say, about 1,500,000, might remain to be fed by the civil administrations (or by the Commission for Relief if so desired) by food brought in from Rotterdam via the Terneuzen Canal. The Commission for Relief will try to obtain permission from the Germans to feed such populations from its protected imports even though they are sent into [German] enemy territory.

The population in the remaining territory of present occupied France southeast from St. Quentin, would have to be fed by the Allied Armies: the number here would probably not exceed 100,000 to 150,000 persons.

The remaining territory of Belgium, with a total population of some 7,000,000, including the évacués from France and Flanders, could still be fed by the C.R.B.

Third.---Where the Germans are forced to make a strategic withdrawal to the Meuse---the line, Liège, Namur, Mézières, Verdun, etc. In this case the C.R.B. could feed all unoccupied Belgium and Northern France city group, say, 7,800,000 people, in the same manner as at present, but importing supplies without safe-conducts; or the respective civil administrations of France and Belgium could take over the work.

The remaining population of the liberated tract southeast of St. Quentin would have to be fed by the armies as above.

The population in the still occupied Belgian provinces of Namur and Luxembourg, say, 650,000 persons, could probably be fed by the Commission by shipments from Holland over the German railways, as is now done in feeding the Longwy region and the Vosges.

Should the conditions work out as above outlined, the Commission for Relief will endeavor to obtain German permission to feed the civil population of the released territories in part at least by supplies from Rotterdam which have been brought in under German safe-conduct. If this is not possible, we are prepared, if it is desired, without safe-conducts, to bring our ships to Havre, to the Channel ports, or the Scheldt, and so continue the ravitaillement either by rail or water.

However the work of relief may be carried on, there must be no failure on the part of the Governments to realize that there will be a sharp increase in the amount of food required to keep these people alive just as soon as any considerable area or population is released.

On the basis of the present ration, of 2,000 calories per capita per day, this might amount to a maximum of 40,000 tons of food per month, requiring 45,000 tons D.W. of ships. It must also be borne in mind, however, that no free people except under military domination, will submit to the present inadequate daily ration, and that these poor people who have suffered untold privation for four years will immediately demand 3,000 or 3,500 calories to put them on the same basis as the rest of France and the people of England. This would mean an increase of 45 per cent over the 156,000 tons of food shown above (B) or a total of 226,000 tons of food, requiring D.W. ship capacity of 254,000 tons monthly.

DOCUMENT NO. 101

Letter,
COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE DE RAVITAILLEMENT TO C.R.B.,
indicating Belgian dependence on the latter during evacuation

LONDON, 7 October 1918

DEAR MR. SHALER:

I have spoken to Major Theunis with reference to our conversation this morning.

Major Theunis entirely agrees that the most practical method of feeding the population in the evacuated portion of Belgium would be through your organisation. He is accordingly cabling to Havre to make this proposal and to ask if he may be authorised to discuss the matter with the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Major Theunis thinks, however, that if this proposal were to be agreed upon between the Belgian Government and your Commission a certain period might elapse between the date at which food supplies might be actually available for distribution in the districts in which they may be required and the date at which such supplies might become necessary.

I therefore propose to approach the British War Office authorities with a view to seeing whether they could arrange for such supplies that may be necessary during the period above mentioned.

Yours very truly

(Signed) E. WYLD BORE SMITH

DOCUMENT NO. 102

Telegram,
POLAND TO HOOVER, describing plans he has made and attitude he has taken
regarding feeding during evacuation and after

LONDON, 14 October 1918

HOOVER, WASHINGTON

Please advise New York. Have just returned from France after having conferences with French Belgian Governments and Red Cross regarding ravitaillement of released territories. Advised Governments that our attitude is, while willing assist in every possible way, we should relinquish all ravitaillement soon as French Belgian administrations able to handle. Governments, however, desire us continue for present wherever possible assist in feeding released regions, finally relinquishing to Governments several months hence when they are better organized. Have requested Belgian French Governments to consult and determine exact course they wish followed to meet emergency, strongly recommending at least 50,000 tons balanced ration be accumulated at Channel ports or strategical points behind lines to meet sudden demands sure to come. Has been suggested Commission deliver such emergency supplies at Channel ports, which I have agreed to provided Governments make necessary arrangements for the additional ships and food required and it is understood our responsibilities end there. Distribution being undertaken by French Belgian authorities this food would not be imported under German safe-conducts. This tentative arrangement to be temporary and Flanders and French cities to be again fed via Ghent when possible. Brown under date of 11th advises: "Von der Lancken informed Francqui on 9th that he expected Germans would leave Brussels within 15 days proposing turn over civil administration evacuated Belgium temporarily to Comité National. Also no breaches guarantees up to the present. Evacuation difficulties of Lille and West Flanders have caused some stoppage of lighters which are now being concentrated at Antwerp, Brussels, Louvain, and Mons. Shipments forward being made as necessary. On October 5th Labbé reported four weeks' stocks of bread grains in Lille, and other principal stocks largely in same proportion. Situation apparently well in hand. All possible steps being taken to meet or anticipate rapidly changing conditions." In case of partial evacuation of France and Flanders we have advised Rotterdam that every effort be made to continue to feed liberated people via Terneuzen Canal and Ghent. Endeavoring to arrange with German authorities that distribution from our supplies imported under safe-conducts be made to civil population under neutral supervision outside as at present inside. our Rotterdam office has been instructed to feed French or Belgian refugees arriving in Holland, estimated at perhaps one-quarter million. These are now approaching Dutch frontier. In case peaceful evacuation by Germans this movement into Holland can probably be stopped. We have authorized our representatives in Brussels and

Rotterdam to make out of Relief supplies or funds in Belgium or Holland whatever expenditures may be urgently required for providing coal, clothing, shelter, food for refugees wherever they may be. If the evacuation is forced by combat we believe that the food reserves will be practically eliminated in the released territories and that few persons will remain, certainly not over 25 per cent, and that the évacués into still occupied territory or Holland, numbering several millions, will be dependent entirely upon imports. This will require increased monthly imports for them of about one-third to replace lost native ration, or if France and Flanders entirely evacuated and devastated would require 10,000 tons additional imports food per month. Situation changing rapidly and we will keep you advised of developments. Necessary to foresee that when civil population now receiving 2,000 calories is released from enemy domination they will demand same food supply as people of France and England, namely 3,000 calories, which would require an increase in food imports of 55,000 to 65,000 tons monthly. In conference with management Red Cross France stated we expected they would handle local charitable emergency requirements released territories. This seems provided for in Belgium but the position as to civil relief in France by Red Cross not entirely defined owing to overwhelming demands of military situation. I have been asked to consult with Red Cross management as to conduct of charitable work in released territories and have said C.R.B. always glad to furnish advice but without any official connection. Detailed reports by letter. Am having report from Doctor Leach of ravitaillement conditions during last year, et cetera, in released territories St. Mihiel, St. Quentin, Cambrai, and Roulers.

POLAND

Relief Commission

The Commission's supply arteries from its base at Rotterdam were the three canal lines: through Terneuzen to Ghent; direct to Antwerp; and eastward through Holland to Liège. No matter what form the German retreat took, these communications were bound to be cut at least temporarily. To meet the immediate emergency in the south and west the Commission arranged with the British War Office to concentrate 20,000,000 rations in Dunkirk. The first general line of German withdrawal ran through Antwerp, Brussels Mons to Verdun, freeing most of Northern France and all of Western Belgium. The main supply route through Antwerp to Brussels was cut, but the Commission immediately established communications through the Sluis-Breskens Canal to Bruges for the areas evacuated by the Germans. The Belgian territory still occupied was accessible from Rotterdam by canal to Liège and though there was great confusion in the country behind the German lines, food continued to reach the needy people from the Commission's Rotterdam base. From this source also food was furnished to the Dutch authorities to care for the Belgian refugees from the shifting zones of operation. When the German forces reached the line Liège-Namur-Revin to

Verdun, the main route to Brussels through Antwerp was again open; and with the signing of the Armistice the Commission was employing all available routes, and plans for opening up the port of Dunkirk for a base for Northern France, and the port of Antwerp for Belgium, were in hand.

DOCUMENT NO. 103

Letter,
BRITISH TREASURY TO COMMISSION, regarding financial responsibility for 20,000,000 rations from War Office stocks for emergency feeding during Allied advance

TREASURY CHAMBERS, LONDON
14 October 1918

SIR:

I am directed by the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury to transmit herewith for your information a copy of a report which They have received from the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement in regard to the immediate provision which it may be necessary to make for the relief of the civilian population in Flanders in the event of the evacuation by the enemy of any considerable portion of the territory hitherto in their occupation.

My Lords are conveying to the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement Their approval of the course proposed, involving the augmentation of War Office stocks in Flanders by 20,000,000 rations, which necessitates the supply of the various quantities stated in the report.

The distribution of these rations will be undertaken, wherever possible, by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Their Lordships understand that, as a result of semi-official discussion with Mr. Keynes, you are prepared to recommend to the United States Treasury the continuance for the present of the existing arrangements for financing the operations of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium and the reimbursement to Their Lordships out of the dollar balances of that Commission of the cost of the American supplies, namely, flour, preserved meats, condensed milk, lard, and sugar, up to the amounts stated.

They will be glad to receive confirmation of these arrangements in due course and to learn that the United States Treasury are prepared to continue them for such period as may be necessary on the condition to which Their Lordships attach importance that the work of relief is undertaken as far as possible by the Commission for the Relief in Belgium and that that Commission shall confine its

operations, generally speaking, to the performance of the same functions as hitherto and shall concern itself with Relief rather than Reconstruction.

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(Signed) JOHN BRADBURY

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DOCUMENT NO. 104

Telegram,
HOOVER TO POLAND, on feeding during German evacuation

WASHINGTON, 15 October 1918

POLAND
COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, LONDON

My views strongly that we should divert no ships from Rotterdam unless situation entirely alters. If by any chance Germans should leave civilian supplies alone, population can tide over intermediate period; but if not emergency feeding must be done by armies or in any event for French population from French national stocks in France. If necessary to introduce supplies for Belgium through Channel ports British Government have ample stocks of prepared flour, etc., to cover the emergency, and supplies should be drawn from that source. American Treasury has given assurance that payment for first 20,000,000 rations approximating \$5,000,000 furnished by British can be paid from American funds but only as an emergency issue and not in any way to be considered as precedent. As soon as German wave has gone back we can introduce supplies first through Terneuzen then through Antwerp from Rotterdam. Whole safety of population depends upon our maintaining Rotterdam as a base and building up stocks at that port from here and by restricting shipments into occupied Belgium during doubtful period. I do not believe Germans will violate safe-conduct even if supplies sent inside Allied lines after evacuation, but if they do we can have all ships diverted south and convoyed to Rotterdam. Port milling and rail capacity from Channel ports inland is hopeless except for emergency supplies from England as above. As to refugees suggest you get Pershing furlough 10 or 12 best C.R.B. men to assist Brown in Holland at once and we of course authorize any necessary expenditure food or money. We will release Simpson for immediate duty. As to continuing relief, it seems to us that we stop automatically in Northern France at evacuation, but as to Belgium we can work it out as a situation develops. My own idea is as quickly as civil government restored in a month or so to begin handing empty boats at New York to Belgian Government for their disposal thus gradually decreasing shipments for C.R.B. account to nothing. Hope you will make no undertakings without my approval.

HOOVER

6. Rehabilitation. November 1918-August 1919

Since May 1917 no Americans had been in Belgium, but after the Armistice, at the Commission's request, many of its former members were released from the army for relief service. During the German occupation an important duty of the American and later of the Spanish and Dutch delegates had been to see to it that all German guarantees were observed. This function had of course disappeared with the German retirement and the American delegates were engaged merely in assisting in the distribution of relief. In Belgium the Comité National quickly recovered from the effects of the retreat so that the Commission's activities were confined largely to routine matters of supply handled in its reconstituted Brussels office. The liberated territory in Northern France presented a different case. Four years of military operations had worked havoc and desolation in town and village. Conditions were aggravated by the return of thousands of anxious refugees, who after their long absence now insisted on camping out by the piles of rocks and rubbish where their homes had once stood. They brought nothing with them and found nothing, and refused to leave though the winter months were approaching. In this region of devastation the Commission found work to do and quickly set up an organization in the field. Here the relief not only consisted of providing food and clothing but included the building of temporary shelters and the supplying of household goods of all sorts. A unit of the American Navy detailed to assist the Commission rendered great service and great quantities of surplus American military stores turned over to the Commission at minimum cost were utilized in this work.

DOCUMENT NO. 105

Letter,
FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON, TO POLAND, stating that French Government would be glad to have the Commission continue its task in liberated regions

LONDON, 25 October 1918

DEAR MR. POLAND:

I am authorized by Monsieur Pichon to declare to you that the Government of the Republic agrees to reserve solely to the civil populations of the liberated territories, the provisions imported by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern

France for those populations; these provisions will be distributed by the committees of the C.R.B.

The French Government will be glad to have the Commission for Relief continue its task in the French liberated territories until such time as normal life may be renewed in those regions.

It is of course understood that the French Government will complete the rations imported by the C.R.B.

Please accept, dear Mr. Poland, the expression of my most devoted sentiments.

(Signed) A. DE FLEURIAU

[Translation]

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DOCUMENT NO. 106

Telegram,
HOOVER TO POLAND, on German safe-conducts and increase of program of importations

WASHINGTON, 29 October 1918

FOR POLAND, LONDON

In view of the fact that so large a proportion of our tonnage is non-war zone tonnage, I have come to your view of pressing Germans for continued safe-conducts. We are making every arrangement increasing food and clothing shipments program at once. Will be glad have Committee's report conditions Flanders early date.

HOOVER

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DOCUMENT NO. 107

Letter,
POLAND TO FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON, outlining steps taken to care for liberated French territories

LONDON, 2 November 1918

Monsieur A. de Fleuriau, London

DEAR M. DE FLEURIAU:

I acknowledge with much appreciation your letter of October 25th, advising me that you are authorized by M. Pichon to state to us, that the French Government will be glad to have the Commission for Relief continue its task in the French liberated territories until such time as normal life may be renewed in those regions.

The Commission place their services at the disposal of the French Government so far as they may be desired.

Following the indications of your letter, I have with the approval of our Chairman, arranged for the immediate dispatch of 14,000 tons of balanced rations to Dunkirk. This is sufficient to supply 600,000 persons for one month with a ration of 2,567 calories per capita per day. Such shipments probably will not be available for distribution inside of one month.

I hope to arrive in Paris about November 13th and at that time to meet representatives of the French Government, to determine such adjustments as may be necessary to meet the wishes of the French Government, in view of the new conditions arising through the release of the occupied territories.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 108

Letter,
POLAND TO BELGIAN GOVERNMENT, Outlining proposed method of caring
for liberated Belgian territory

LONDON, 4 November 1918

*His Excellency Monsieur Cooreman,
Ministre de Reconstitution Nationale, Havre*

MY DEAR MONSIEUR COOREMAN:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of a letter from you, undated, handed to me by Mr. Gregoir on 1st November, the questions in which I will endeavor to answer in their order.

First period.---I have been officially advised by the Deputy Director of Supplies of the British War Office, that the 20,000,000 rations requested of the British military authorities have been arranged for and are either being taken over by the Belgian Intendance at Calais, or are in order there to be turned over. I gather from the report of the Belgian Minister of War, delivered to me through the Chevalier Carton de Wiart, that the British military authorities, together with the Belgian Intendance, are carrying out this preliminary ravitaillement. I have no advice from the French military authorities as to action in Belgium, and infer that it is understood the food will be supplied entirely by the British, except in cases of immediate emergency back of their line.

Second period.---It is my understanding that the Belgian Government has 19,000,000 rations in Paris and 1,000,000 in Calais, and that an effort will be made to get these forward at once to carry on the feeding in the released territories subsequent to the expenditure of the 20,000,000 British rations. I am sure you will recognize the imperative necessity of expediting in every possible way the forwarding of these supplies to the distributing points in the Belgian territory. It has occurred to me that as the greatest difficulty in moving these supplies will be from lack of equipment, your very able Minister of Transportation might think it wise to offer to the French Government for this purpose Belgian locomotives and trucks which are, I believe, in part stored in the vicinity of Havre. The Commission will supplement these supplies by bringing in through all channels available whatever stocks we have in Rotterdam which have not arrived under German safe-conducts, or which we may succeed in importing from Great Britain. These stocks at present amount to about 6,000 or 7,000 tons and are being slowly increased. I also hope to be able to obtain in a reasonably short time additional Dutch supplies, in the first instance largely fresh fish and some vegetables.

Third period.---Supplementing this I have ordered from the United States 35,000 tons of balanced ration, to be forwarded under convoy directly from the United States to Flushing. Such supplies may begin to arrive by the 25th of November, but should not be counted on before December 1st. These supplies may be diverted to any port on arrival at a British Channel port and could therefore be sent to Dunkirk if that seems desirable at the time.

I have received notice that United States Treasury funds may be used equally for the purpose of supplies for the evacuated territories as well as for the occupied territories.

No doubt it will be for the best interests of the ravitaillement of the released territories that all these operations be combined, one supplementing the other. I shall hope to have the pleasure of meeting yourself and Director Brown on Thursday the 7th November, to arrange all the details to your satisfaction.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 109

Telegram,
HOOVER TO POLAND, stating policy of Commission as to continuance of
operations

WASHINGTON, 3 November 1918

FOR POLAND, LONDON

Any arrangements made must be absolutely for day-to-day purposes. The whole question of continued relief through C.R.B. or otherwise must be negotiated by our Government between governments involved themselves.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 110

Letter and memorandum,
HOOVER TO PRESIDENT WILSON, on further assistance to Belgium and
Northern France

WASHINGTON, 21 October 1918

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The task of the Belgian Relief Commission---the preservation of the life of 10,000,000 occupied Belgians and French over these four years---is now rapidly drawing to conclusion, and questions as to what further assistance should be extended to these people and as to what organization should be set up are pressing, as the governments in Europe are taking steps on the matter.

I enclose herewith a short memorandum on a) The relief during occupation. b) The relief required for rehabilitation.

The released French population can be best cared for by their own Government through France, and I do not therefore consider that we need concern ourselves therewith.

The Belgian people, while more fortunate than the Serbians and Poles in that they are all alive, come out of occupation undernourished, underhoused, underclothed, industrial plants ruined, without raw material, and without resources in shipping and money to find a remedy.

There is immediate need for 550,000 tons of shipping, of which 350,000 are now in use by the Relief Commission. The Allied Governmental aid needs to be at once increased from about \$15,000,000 per month at present being given (of which our Government furnishes \$9,000,000) to about \$30,000,000 per month. With these resources over twelve to eighteen months I believe the people could be made self-supporting.

Assuming this must be accomplished, the problem of organization at once arises. Certain Belgians are anxious that the Relief Commission should liquidate and be handed over to the restored Belgian Government, who should undertake all further relief with loans from the Allied Governments; others wish the Commission to continue to perform such functions as may be assigned by the Belgian Government; others are anxious that the Commission should undertake the great problem of economic restoration, acting as hitherto, in cooperation with Belgian unofficial organizations and drawing its support from our own and Allied Governments and public charity. The British Government is opening discussion with our Government on the question.

From a purely Belgian point of view the direct operation by their Government is a mixed argument of sturdy independence and of natural *amour propre* and, to some extent, of individual political ambitions; the second proposition of a continuance controlled by the Belgian Government is an argument of utilization of the organization until it can be dispensed with at will; the third is an argument which I believe should be further discussed, as it has both moral and economic bearings for the American people. I need hardly mention that the selfish view of myself and my colleagues would be entirely with the first proposition. We would like to have relief from this especially poignant anxiety that has now extended over four years.

With the present misery and economic difficulties facing Europe there can be little hope of Belgian recuperation without the major help coming from the United States. The American people, under your guidance, through its citizens and with the help of its officials, took the lead in internal protection and sustenance of this population four years ago. This imposes no obligation, but offers an opportunity for further service---the completion of which would confer moral values to our country not to be underestimated.

Intangible as these values are, they cannot be gained by our people unless they are won through some bond of definite American organization participating in the labor and its consummation.

While it can be said that the Belgians are an efficient administrative people, it is my impression that security and effectiveness in the application of these funds, without religious, political, or racial bias, could be much more effectively secured by American participation in organization and administration.

There will be a large outpouring of charity towards the Belgian people, which could be stimulated, but in the expenditure of which, unless there is some single channel, there will be enormous waste and corruption, and reactions will set in to the disadvantage of both Belgian and American people.

If the matter were undertaken by the Belgian Government alone, they would naturally have to take their position with the other needy Allied Governments under the various Allied controls; whereas, if a distinctly American organization, maintained by the American Government, were to be installed for this service, such an organization could easily secure the same tenderness in obtaining priorities and supplies, and complete independence of action from other Allied control that it now possesses.

As these controls are dominated by the other needy governments I feel that the Belgians will get off much worse in shipping and in supplies than if they are particularly under our wing. If American participation in organization of rehabilitation is to be maintained it would seem logical to continue it through the Relief Commission whose organization is in action and simply requires larger resources, and the use of these media would avoid discussion of any new instrumentality with the Allied Governments. It would represent the rounding out of an enterprise of our people toward another in which we could have lasting pride.

One of the objectives in peace conferences must be the repayment, in addition to other damages, to Belgium of the whole of the sums that have been spent by the Relief Commission, together with such further moneys as are spent on rehabilitation. It would appear to me that it would be a pointed and positive lesson to the world for all future time if it could be made a peace condition that the expenditures of the Relief Commission both in the past and in the future are made repayable by the Germans, directly to the Relief Commission, and that this Commission should refund the sums advanced by the various governments.

I should be glad to have your views in the matter, and if you consider the Commission should be continued to this new purpose and that it will have the support of the Government, it is desirable that its relations to Belgian and other governments should be properly defined.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
THE RELIEF OF BELGIUM

STAGE I. THE RELIEF DURING OCCUPATION

The 7,500,000 Belgians and 2,500,000 French, overrun by the Germans, were, prior to the war, dependent upon imports for about 70 per cent of their food. The Germans refused assistance, seized even the existing stocks of food, and, by paralyzing all industry, rendered 4,000,000 of the people destitute. The preservation of the population depended upon the intervention of instrumentality independent of the then-belligerents, who could open and maintain a door through blockade and occupying armies; could protect the population from further despoliation of food; could summon large finance; could find transport, organization, and charity.

The "Commission for Relief in Belgium" was founded by Americans under your approval and under American direction almost exactly four years ago and has been continuously protected by the United States Government and its Ambassadors abroad throughout this period. During the whole time the Commission has operated in a sort of semi-governmental capacity making its own agreements with various governments, including the enemy. After its success and necessity were demonstrated through charity, it was able to secure unique financial support from the English, French, and Belgian Governments and from the American Government after our entrance into the war. It has also had the strong diplomatic support of the Dutch and Spanish Governments, who, upon our entry into the war, undertook the protection of the Belgian and French distribution committees. In this latter period the whole of our organization, both inside and outside of Belgium, has continued as before, without American personnel in occupied territory, but, I regret to say, without the same observance of agreements by the Germans.

The Commission has built up a large organization in purchase of foodstuffs; the solicitation of charity; the operation of seventy trans-Atlantic steamers, 500 canal boats and tugs, 200 central warehouses; a complete rationing system, public feeding and clothing for the destitute; the provision of housing, of loans, and even currency; the local agriculture has been stimulated and protected; the principal native foodstuffs have been requisitioned and administered; all with an intricate system of accounts with checks and balances that have freed it from any suspicion of misconduct.

The direction exterior to Belgium has been entirely by American volunteers, some two hundred in number, and in Belgium the administration has been built up through the creation of a multitude of joint committees of Belgians, French, and Americans, the total personnel amounting to over 100,000 people, themselves nearly all volunteers.

The Commission has received the following approximate sums the governmental subsidies being acknowledged by the Belgian Government at Havre as obligations

upon them in respect to Belgium, the French Government taking the same obligation in respect to its relieved population:

From public charity	\$ 32,000,000
From British Government	120,000,000
From French Government	220,000,000
From American Government	200,000,000
Total	\$572,000,000

The total expenditure on "overhead" has been less than three-eighths of one per cent. There have been, in the four years, delivered or en route to Belgium and Northern France, the following supplies:

Breadstuffs	119,100,000 bushels
Pork products	543,900,000 pounds
Meat	73,000,000 pounds
Rice	715,900,000 pounds
Beans and peas	283,500,000 pounds
Dairy products	113,300,000 pounds
Preserved fish	63,200,000 pounds
Cocoa and coffee	93,200,000 pounds
Sugar	98,100,000 pounds
Soap	51,000,000 pounds
Vegetables	350,000,000

	pounds
Sundries	65,000,000
	pounds
Clothing	21,000,000
	garments

In addition to the foregoing, some \$350,000,000 of native produce has been financed internally in Belgium and Northern France by the Relief Organization. The population has been upon a drastic régime. We have done all that finance, shipping, and administration could accomplish. There has been no starvation; there has been undernourishment. Much food has been lost by submarines, and some native food taken by the Germans despite agreements and a stream of protests to the contrary.

It may not be amiss to mention that the population, suddenly and utterly crushed by the horrors of invasion, betrayed of their independence, treated with terrible harshness by the German Army, faced with starvation, had lost all courage, morale, and hope. Through the assurance of physical supplies, but more through the summons to organize to their own salvation, they regained courage, their national spirit revived, and they have maintained a vivid and damaging opposition to the Germans throughout these long four years. This healing of a nation's soul has been accomplished by the devotion of the Belgian and French men and women who have made and carried on for four years the relief in a spirit of care and tenderness to their countrymen and have made the whole effort a possibility. The terrible cruelty of the Germans has been almost unbearable to even witness by our immune staff; it would have been greater but for the resolute courage and obstruction of the population.

With the rapid redemption of Belgium and Northern France the primary task of the Commission is nearing completion. The people have been preserved. The population is undiminished in numbers.

The proof of necessity of the Commission lies in the parallel loss of 25 per cent to 50 per cent of the populations of Serbia and Poland, countries of larger proportionate agricultural resources but of no relief.

The Commission could soon with propriety and dignity liquidate its organization.

STAGE II. ASSISTANCE TOWARD REHABILITATION

We must now consider the plight of these people and their necessities over the next two years if they are to be restored to a self-supporting basis. The French population represents but 7 per cent of the entire country and can well be absorbed

into their own national problems. The Belgians are without help but from foreigners. They must have continued large assistance.

1. Immediately upon evacuation the population will require enlarged food imports, as the industrial class is too weak to return and continue in hard physical labor upon the present basis of feeding. The cattle had already been reduced from 1,800,000 to 600,000 before the retreat began and a greater destruction has probably now taken place. The child life of the nation will depend upon much enlarged shipments of special food and upon help to purchase milk cattle from Holland. The work animals are largely gone and more must be recruited from Holland and elsewhere if agriculture is to be continued.

2. The house destruction amounts to some 50,000 homes, and aid will need to be extended in gradual rehabilitation.

3. The country must at once have large textile imports. The original stocks were pillaged by the Germans. There has been no production, and except for meager relief supplies they have had no imports in four years.

4. There has been the most heart-breaking destruction of factories by the Germans in an effort to destroy all Belgian industry or delay its recuperation. Large numbers of shop tools, spinning devices, et cetera, must be imported at once, and aid must be given to manufacturers to enable them to get upon their feet.

5. For some partially surviving factories they must at once have raw materials not only for their own supply but to contribute their labor to Allied ends. This more particularly applies to cotton, wool, leather, copper, iron, et cetera.

6. The railway destruction has been large, and but little hope can be entertained that this primary necessity to existence can be re-established without immediate help in rails and rolling stock. No doubt much will be done by the military authorities in this direction in re-establishment of communications, but help will need to be given for provision of transport for the civilian population.

Altogether, if these people are to be saved and a start made at rehabilitation they must have:

a) Overseas---chiefly American---imports of at least 250,000 tons per month, involving the use of 550,000 tons of shipping,

b) Subsidies of at least \$30,000,000 per month from the United States and Allied Governments with which to pay for and transport materials. They must have large charitable support in aid of the destitute-the 4,000,000 people now on the soup lines cannot find employment over months. This charity must be organized through a

single channel, otherwise well-meaning efforts will create waste, corruption, and chaos.

c) Energetic organization in procurement of resources and supplies for the purposes enumerated above and for their transport and proper distribution. The internal distribution set up by the Relief organization is based upon the principle of the sale of goods brought into Belgium to all those who could pay, using the receipts from these local sales to employ or to support the destitute. This principle could be maintained in any continuation of relief, for its vigorous enforcement tends not only to minimize pauperism but gives the foundation for internal economic life.

DOCUMENT NO. 111

Letter,
PRESIDENT WILSON TO HOOVER, authorizing continuation and enlargement
of Commission

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON

7 November 1918

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

The probable early evacuation of Belgium brings us face to face with the problem of this distressed people, not only in regard to continued food relief, but also with regard to the many questions of economic rehabilitation. The initial task of preserving the bare lives of the people during German occupation, undertaken four years ago under your direction, is now nearing completion. I believe that the American people will willingly accept a large share of the burden of assisting in the now all-important work of reconstruction and rehabilitation, pending repayment by Germany for the injury done.

In order that such assistance should be exerted in the most liberal, efficient, and comprehensive manner, I feel that it should be organized under a single agency, which may co-ordinate the whole effort of the American people and Government, in the furnishing of supplies, machinery, finance, exchange, shipping, trade relations, and philanthropic aid. I also feel that such an agency, in addition to being the sole vehicle of supplies, should also have some proper participation in the expenditure and distribution of assistance. Such unity of administration would give much greater assurance of proper assistance and should be effective in preventing profiteering.

The large experience of the Belgian Relief Commission, the character of its organization without profit, its established use of shipping, and the sympathetic

bond which it now forms with the Belgian people point to its continuation and enlargement as the natural agency for this purpose. I should therefore be glad if you and your colleagues of the Commission would undertake this extended work.

I understand that it is also the wish and purpose of the English and French people to participate in carrying this burden. It would seem to me desirable to inquire if these Governments would not therefore continue and enlarge their present support to the Commission to these ends, so that we may have a comprehensive and efficient agency for dealing with the entire problem on behalf of all.

It is of course of primary importance that our assistance in this expenditure and organization shall be built upon co-operation with the Belgian Government and the use of such internal agencies and methods as may be agreed upon with them, to whom our whole solicitude is directed.

It is also of first importance that the expenditure of all the philanthropic aid of the American people toward Belgium, of whatever character, should be conducted by or under the control of the Commission, if duplication and waste are to be avoided.

With a view to the advancement of these ideas, I have addressed a note to the various departments of our Government, indicating my wish that all matters relating to these problems should be undertaken under your guidance and that they should give to you every cooperation.

I wish you to proceed at once with the undertaking so far as it relates to the United States, and I should be glad if you would, through the proper agencies, take up a discussion of these matters with the Belgian Government and with the English and French Governments as to their relationship and participation.

Cordially and sincerely yours

(Signed) WOODROW WILSON

Some weeks before hostilities actually ceased Hoover formulated tentative plans for the provision of foodstuffs for those parts of Europe where the exhaustion of supplies and political disturbances threw the shadow of famine over millions of people. He first contemplated an expansion of the Commission to administer this general European relief, but later modified this plan by organizing the American Relief Administration to handle the general relief and preserved the identity and functions of the Commission for the service in Belgium and Northern France.

Under this general European relief plan Hoover's preparation had been such that with the signing of the Armistice, fleets of laden food ships sailed from American ports. Europe was in chaos; the blockade was still on; no specific unloading ports

could be named; and thus these relief vessels were despatched with directions to call at Falmouth or at Gibraltar for orders. On the 17th November Hoover himself sailed for Europe and a few weeks later was appointed Director General of Relief for the United States and the Allies.

Though all of Europe was appealing for food, Hoover first saw that the people of Belgium and Northern France were fully supplied. The seven months November 1918 to May 1919 saw 1,074,948 tons of relief supplies valued at \$261,000,000 poured into these formerly occupied areas.⁽⁶⁶⁾ As elsewhere in Europe, the Great War left in Belgium its record in the number of waifs and undernourished children; and it was the Commission's endeavor to establish on a permanent basis the work of child welfare which had been its particular care during the occupation.⁽⁶⁷⁾

By May 1919 the Governments of Belgium and France had sufficiently recovered to begin to take over the responsibility of provisioning their people, and accordingly the Commission gradually withdrew. By August 1919 the last shipment had been made and all American personnel in the field released.

DOCUMENT NO. 112

Letter,
HOOVER TO PRESIDENT WILSON, outlining proposed plan of extension of relief organization

WASHINGTON, 12 November 1918

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Please find enclosed herewith a memorandum agreed this morning between Mr. Baker, Mr. Hurley, and myself.

I should be glad to know if it meets with your approval. Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

MEMORANDUM OF ARRANGEMENTS WITH REGARD TO PROVISIONING THE POPULATIONS WHICH ARE NOW OR HAVE BEEN UNDER THE DOMINATION OF THE CENTRAL EMPIRES

1. Mr. Hoover, as United States Food Administrator, will proceed at once to Europe to determine what action is required from the United States and what extensions of the Food Administration organization or otherwise are necessary in order to carry out the work of the participation of the United States Government in this matter, and to take such steps as are necessary in temporary relief.

2. In order to expedite the movement of foodstuffs towards Europe, the War Department, will undertake to purchase in the usual co-ordination through the Food Administration during the next twenty days, 120,000 tons of flour and from 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 pounds of pork products. These foodstuffs to be shipped by the diversion of Army tonnage at the earliest possible moment that the Shipping Board arranges and to be consigned to French ports for reconsignment or storage.

3. This foodstuff and any other suitable surplus supplies of the Quartermaster in Europe to be made available for distribution at Mr. Hoover's direction, it being understood that if it proves infeasible to reship or redirect the steamers to the territories lately held by the Central Empires, Mr. Hoover will make arrangements for the resale of the foodstuffs to the Allied Governments or, alternatively, to the Belgian Relief.

4. In order to facilitate administration in Washington, Mr. Hoover will set up a preliminary committee to assist the Food Administration, comprising

Mr. Theodore Whitmarsh, of the Food Administration, who will act as chairman in Mr. Hoover's absence.

Mr. F. S. Snyder, of the Meat Division of the Food Administration.

Mr. Julius H. Barnes, of the Cereal Division of the Food Administration.

General R. E. Wood, Quartermaster General, representing the War Department.

Mr. John Beaver White, representing the War Trade Board.

Mr. Prentiss N. Gray, representing the Shipping Board.

These gentlemen to take in hand the general directions of these operations through the various Government agencies concerned.

5. The War Department is to purchase, inspect, pay for, load, and ship these foodstuffs in the usual manner of transmission of Quartermaster's supplies, and upon transfer from the Quartermaster's Department in Europe they are to be paid for by the buyer.

6. The American representatives in Europe are to be at once instructed by cable that the whole of the matter of the American food supplies and the establishment of a more permanent organization are to be settled by Mr. Hoover on his arrival in Europe, and that the United States will take no participation in any arrangements made pending that time.

Approved: WOODROW WILSON

DOCUMENT NO. 113

Telegram,
POLAND TO WASHINGTON OFFICE, stating enlarged program for winter months

LONDON, 27 November 1918

FOR BELGIAN RELIEF, WASHINGTON

Poland in conference Paris with Hoover Taylor Cotton instructs us cable you as follows effective immediately: Continue to ship monthly metric tons

To Dunkirk for Northern France:	Metric tons
Rice	4,600
Peas and beans	4,600
Maize flour	3,100
Bacon and lard	4,000
Meat and ham	1,500
Milk	1,500
Sugar	1,500
Coffee	1,200
Cocoa	360
Soap	1,200
	23,560
To Rotterdam for Belgium:	
Wheat	87,000
Barley	2,000
Bacon and lard	15,000
Meat and ham	3,000
Rice	7,000
Beans and peas	5,000
Maize	30,000
Milk	3,000

Soap	2,000
Cocoa	300
Coffee	1,000
Vegetable oil	500
Linseed	1,000
	156,800
Grand total	180,360 metric tons monthly

GAY, RELIEF COMMISSION

[DOCUMENT NO. 114](#)

Telegram,
HOOVER TO FOOD ADMINISTRATION, stating necessity of continuing relief
in Northern France into the new year

PARIS, 28 December 1918

RICKARD, FOOD ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON

You can issue the following to the press: The C.R.B. had hoped to surrender the Relief of North France to the French Government immediately upon German retreat. It has been found, however, impossible for the French Government to undertake the food supply of this area for some months to come, and upon the urgent request of the Government the C.R.B. has decided to continue.

After, four years paralysis of wholesale and retail business, with the destruction of the principal towns and shops, these trades have disappeared and the people are today dependent upon a ration issued directly to them just as before the German evacuation.

Until transport and trade can be rehabilitated, the present system must go on for the French distribution is done by the trades. These arrangements necessitate some reorganization of the Relief and its entire separation from Belgium.

Twenty of the members of the C.R.B. who joined the American Army as officers have been released by General Pershing to undertake this work.

Transportation connection is maintained with the region through Dunkirk and through one Belgian canal still operating, supplemented by motor trucks originally installed by the armies and now being gradually taken over by the C.R.B.

The population in this area at the moment of the retreat was about one and a half millions, there also being about 300,000 refugees in Belgium who are returning, and some 500,000 refugees in France, all of whom are anxious to return to their native soil.

The destruction of some twenty principal towns and literally hundreds of villages renders the return of these refugees a stupendous problem. Every effort is being made to restrain them from going back until some systematic prior provision of shelter can be made. They, however, evade all official urging and the roads are a continuous procession of these pitiable bodies. Thousands of them reach their villages to find every vestige of shelter destroyed and finally wander into the villages farther back from the acute battle area, which are already overcrowded to a heart-breaking degree.

In order to remedy this situation to some extent, the Relief Commission has secured 150 volunteers from the American Navy and is taking over a large amount of secondhand barrack material from the Navy and the Army, and these barracks are in course of erection adjacent to the destroyed villages under the superintendence of naval volunteers.

A large amount of boots and shoes and warm clothing have been taken over from the Quartermaster's supplies, and are being distributed to the people. The French Government is endeavoring to obtain some cattle from Switzerland and horses from the various armies, which, together with the meager supply of agricultural implements, may enable the population to get in some portion of next year's crop in those areas that are not too badly destroyed by battle.

The entire industrial life of the region has been destroyed by the Germans. There is scarcely a single factory that can be operated without a very large portion of new equipment. The coal mines are totally destroyed, and the network of railways in this region rendered almost hopeless of reconstruction for many months. The German method of destruction was to bend every single rail by exploding a hand-grenade under it, rendering it useless for all time. The Grand Canal du Nord, which connects this section of France with the Belgian canal system and is the natural entreport for goods from Antwerp or Rotterdam, was itself practically the fighting line for months and is so badly destroyed that it will take fully a year for its complete reconstruction.

The relief is based upon the allowance of food to the value of about 35 cents per day to the destitute, those having any resources or employment being required to

pay. The problem of destitution is not yet known but appears to be fully 60 per cent of the people.

The French Government is supplying some food from France to the Relief Commission and the imports required from the United States amount to about 30,000,000 pounds per month.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 115

Letter,
HOOVER TO VILGRAIN, advising the termination of shipments into Northern France

PARIS, 8 April 1919

MR. VILGRAIN,
Sous Secrétaire d'Etat du Ravitaillement,
Ministère du Ravitaillement, Paris

MY DEAR VILGRAIN:

The relief of Northern France is now coming to its logical conclusion. Your Ministry has now so energetically spread its own organization over the invaded regions that the necessity for the foodstuffs imported through the C.R.B. is steadily diminishing. We have taken stock of the various food supplies and clothing in the hands of the local relief committees and find that with the transfer of certain stocks which we have in reserve at Antwerp, the people will require no further C.R.B. overseas shipments in order to complete the provisioning until the 1st of July. Therefore, I have instructed the C.R.B. to hand over stocks in Antwerp to the French committee and, so far as ravitaillement is concerned, to cease all connection therewith on the 1st of May.

In order that the directors of the C.R.B. may give evidence to the French people of their devotion, Mr. Poland and my other colleagues have decided that we will carry on in the occupied regions the child clinics and the special feeding of the 30,000 debilitated children until such time as they are in normal condition. This is, of course, undertaken from funds provided by the directors of the C.R.B. and does not involve French Government intervention.

We are also arranging for the completion of the distribution of some thousands of tons of gift clothing which we have imported in the north of France. The 300 barracks which have been initiated by the C.R.B. and carried on behalf of the

Ministry of the Liberated Regions, with the assistance of the American Navy, will be completed early in May, so that after that date our sole connection with the North will be the care of the 30,000 debilitated children.

I wish to express again on my own and on behalf of Mr. Poland and all my colleagues the sentiments of respect which we have derived from the four years of co-operation with the French Government and the admiration for the ability, courage, and fortitude of the two millions of French people of the occupied population whose food supply was entrusted to our administration now over four and one-half years ago.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 116

Letter,

HOOVER TO FRANQUI, outlining the method by which the vessels in Relief service would be turned over to agents of the Belgian Government and shipments by the Commission would cease.

PARIS, 26 March 1919

*M. Emile Francqui, President
Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brussels*

MY DEAR FRANQUI:

Apropos of the discussions we have had, I think we are in agreement that the time has arrived when we should undertake a further step in the demobilization of the C.R.B. and the Comité National. This becomes also of importance in that it would seem to me desirable from the point of view of transportation of Belgian imports that the C.R.B. fleet should be placed in control of the Belgian authorities or Belgian merchants in such a manner as to allow its mobility in handling other imported goods and exports, both of which are now practically impossible through the C.R.B. alone.

In order to carry this out, I understand that it is agreed that the Belgian Government will take over the outstanding charters of all steamers which arrive in New York after April 30th, or, alternatively, will make their own agency arrangements for so doing, and that at the same time the Belgian Government will make such agency arrangements in the United States, in conjunction with the Belgian High Commissioner there, as may be necessary for the loading on these steamers of such

foodstuffs as the Belgian Government may wish to purchase. Thus, the C.R.B. will withdraw from all food purchase and shipping with regard to steamers which may arrive after the thirtieth day of April.

It is desirable, I think, from the point of view of the American Treasury and the Belgian Government, that the C.R.B. should remain active for a certain further period which we may determine from time to time, in assistance to the Belgian Government in Treasury and other arrangements in the United States, as in fact, at the present moment the C.R.B. has an official relation with the American Treasury which very materially facilitates Belgian operations. This relationship would not entail the direct handling of funds by the C.R.B. after the above date, except for the liquidation of outstanding accounts, but will probably entail the certification by the C.R.B. of the sums of money involved in advances to the Belgian Government for the purchase of food.

There is one particular in this connection that I wish made emphatic: In any arrangements that the Belgian Government may set up to carry on this work, there must be no feeling on their part that they are under any obligation whatever to do business with men formerly associated with the C.R.B. Some of these men may be useful from their previous experience with Belgium, but I do not for one moment countenance any man trading on his association to obtain business ends.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

7. Summary of Commission's Importations. 1914-1919

ANNUAL IMPORTS AND COSTS⁽⁶⁸⁾ November 1914-August 1919

	Metric tons	Cost
First Year	983,808	\$ 68,924,221.33
Second Year	1,300,322	116,055,602.14
Third Year	724,175	115,297,779.88
Fourth Year	1,091,178	244,781,218.88
Fifth Year	1,074,948	261,150,491.22
	5,174,431	\$806,209,313.45

Warehousing, Insurance of Stocks, etc		1,481,627.68
		\$807,690,941.13

SUMMARY OF COMMODITIES IMPORTED(69)
November 1914-August 1919

Commodity	Metric tons
Bread grains and flour	3,351,295
Maize, rice, beans and peas	995,620
Bacon, lard and meat	415,766
Milk	81,677
Sugar	51,244
Soap	39,140
Sundry foods	175,615
Clothing	23,769
Miscellaneous	40,305
Total	5,174,431

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER IV

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

The consent of the belligerent governments and the pertinent diplomatic guarantees, the establishment of relief organizations inside and outside the occupied territories, the determination of imports required---all constituted essential preliminaries to the relief of Belgium and Northern France. But they produced no food. Food costs money to buy and transport, and as some nine million people had to be fed, a great deal of money had to be found. Each succeeding year more money

was required as the need of imports grew and the cost of commodities and transport mounted to more and more forbidding levels.

The original undertaking was conceived as a charitable operation based on donations in kind and money throughout the world plus such slender resources as could be gathered through the balances of Belgian banks abroad. Within a very short time, however, Hoover recognized that the task was greater than such a precarious income would support.(70) He began, therefore, to press for government support from both the German and the Entente Governments, basing his demands upon their responsibility on the one side for the occupation and on the other for the blockade. This campaign for government support, begun in November 1914, he pushed continuously thereafter, first in one direction, then in another and frequently in several at once until after the United States entered the war and the question of Allied finance became less acute. In the meantime various plans were developed by which some resources were obtained.

Exchange operations which resulted in actual relief were carried out to a limited extent by the C.R.B. At its various offices abroad the Commission received sums of money to be remitted to Belgium. These sums were, in effect, invested in food which was sold on ration cards to persons in Belgium who could afford to buy and the war paper currency thus received was made over to the persons designated by the remitter.(71) The worldwide campaign for gifts was continued, but resources at no time from any direction were sufficient to provide for the whole of necessities.

Even after the British and French Governments agreed to furnish subsidies, the inadequacy of finance was an ever-present trouble, for the Commission had to compete for funds as for supplies and ships with departments of war administrations whose demands, surpassing the most extravagant forecasts, devoured the resources which the national treasuries found it increasingly difficult to provide. In spite of temporary failures and tense hours when the spectre of insolvency hovered darkly over the whole enterprise, the funds were secured and the flow of food into the occupied territories did not fail. The negotiations that prevented failure were, as the documents show, of a peculiarly strenuous and informal character. The circuitous methods of diplomacy were dropped. Hoover, as an unofficial but none the less real representative of nine million French and Belgians, labored directly and personally with the highest officials of the belligerent powers, and he did not stop laboring until he had secured the vital funds.

How important these loans or subsidies were is apparent when it is realized that they constituted over 78 per cent of the total of almost \$900,000,000 mobilized by the Commission. Gifts were large(72)---unprecedented in the history of philanthropy---and they were extremely important contributions to the success of the enterprise, not only for the charitable aid to the destitute which they made

possible but also for the wide public support of the work which these gifts indicated.

The amounts of subsidies which are the subject of this chapter are shown in the table on the following page.

The sums referred to here and in the following documents as "subsidies" were advanced by the British, French, and after April 1917 by the United States Treasuries to the C.R.B. as loans to Belgium and to France. In after-war settlements the Commission accounted(73) for the stewardship of these funds to Belgium and France. It was, of course, neither concerned with the question of reparation to these countries for the occupation years nor officially involved in inter-government debt settlements which included these loans for relief. It is interesting to know, however, that through these debt settlements a considerable percentage of these loans was, in effect, canceled. The principal agreements are included in a later chapter(74) but may be briefly summarized here.

**GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES
ADVANCES TO THE C.R.B. AS LOANS TO BELGIUM AND FRANCE**

Origin	For Belgian Account	For French Account	Total	Per cent
U.S. Treasury	\$259,632,260.44	\$127,000,000.00	\$386,632,260.44	55.1
British Treasury.	94,181,410.78 a	14,863,917.95	109,045,328.73	15.6
French Treasury	94,181,410.78a	110,681,443.43	204,862,854.21	29.3
Totals	\$447,995,082.00	\$252,545,361.38	\$700,540,443.38	100.0
	63.9%	36.1%	100%	

a. The distribution between the British and French Treasuries of these subsidies for Belgian account is unofficial and subject to adjustment between these two treasuries.

Belgium was relieved of its pre-Armistice war debt to Great Britain, France, and the United States by the Treaty of Versailles.(75) French and British advances to the C.R.B. for Belgian relief were thus imposed on Germany as well as the pre-Armistice portion (about 60 per cent) of the United States Treasury subsidies for the same purpose. In its direct settlement with Belgium the United States agreed to

funding terms of the full Belgian debt which conceded an amount(76) greater than the United States Treasury advances to the C.R.B. for Belgian relief.

The sums advanced to the C.R.B. as loans to France are insignificant compared to her total borrowings from Great Britain and the United States during the war period. The French-British and French-American debt settlement(77) agreements were signed in 1926, but at this date---1928---neither has been ratified by the French Chamber of Deputies.

1. Early Negotiations for Government Support. November 1914-January 1915

Hoover's proposals that the British Government grant a monthly subsidy for relief and permit the Commission to engage in exchange operations met with a far from encouraging reception. The opinion, already mentioned, that the relief of Belgium was an indirect benefit to Germany carried much weight at this time, and the Government was unwilling to sanction new measures which would make this indirect aid more extensive. To overcome this opinion the Commission had to get new guarantees from the Germans, while Hoover continued energetically to press the case with British officials.

DOCUMENT NO. 117

Note

on meeting between SIR EDWARD GREY AND HOOVER, at which Hoover presented the needs of Belgium and applied for British Government subsidy

LONDON, 5 November 1914

Hoover presented the needs of the Belgian civil population and handed Sir Edward Grey the memorandum attached. Sir Edward undertook to discuss the application with his colleagues but stated that the continued requisition of native food by the Germans made it very difficult for the British to take a favorable view of themselves contributing money, as this was in effect supplying food to the German Army.

Hoover undertook to make representations to the German Government in this matter and Sir Edward stated that success on this line would certainly greatly influence his views. He informed us that the Government had in any event granted us £100,000, which would be paid through the Belgian Minister.

MEMORANDUM

In the latter part of October a committee was created in Brussels called the National Relief Committee, composed of leading residents and local officials, with a view to dealing with the whole of the famine conditions which faced the Belgian people. These gentlemen appealed to the American and Spanish Ambassadors and Ministers for protection for the foodstuffs secured by them. This matter was negotiated by the representatives of these Governments in London, Brussels, The Hague, and Washington, and an undertaking was arrived at whereby the foodstuffs imported under these Ambassadors and Ministers should be free from molestation. In order to provide a body who could carry into execution the very considerable labor involved in securing and handling this food various representatives of the Spanish and American Governments have created a Commission, of which I have the honor to be Chairman. We have in turn established offices in London, Rotterdam, and at necessary points throughout Belgium, where warehouses under our protection are being established and the foodstuffs which come to our hands are placed in these warehouses under our protection, and are dealt out to the National Committee and its branches for detailed distribution.

We have felt that our work fell under three heads:

The first was the protection of these foodstuffs in Belgium.

The second, the purchase and transportation of foodstuffs with such subventions as we receive from the Central Committee⁽⁷⁸⁾ and other sources, and,

Thirdly, the stimulation of philanthropic effort.

The situation appeared to us so critical that we have devoted all the energy we are capable of to securing some immediate relief, and although we have had our organization in existence scarcely ten days, we have nevertheless delivered some 4,500 tons of food into Belgium, we have some 10,000 tons which will be delivered within another ten days, and we have something like 25,000 tons in sight in various quarters of the world.

One of our first problems was, however, to determine as accurately as possible the volume of the problem with which we had to deal. An inquiry was undertaken by the members of this Commission with the assistance of the National Committee, its local branches, and the Belgian local officials, and I have with me a statement prepared by Mr. Francqui, working head of the Belgian National Committee. This statement shows that the problem does not consist merely of supplying food to the more unfortunate and unemployed members of the community, but resolves itself into the provisioning of the entire nation of some 6 million to 7 million people. Food must be furnished to the rich as well as to the poor. There are some meat and vegetable provisions still in Belgium, but there is practical exhaustion of cereals, and these gentlemen estimate that the absolute monthly minimum on which this population can be kept alive is 80,000 tons of cereals.⁽⁷⁹⁾ That this is no

exaggeration is evidenced by the fact that the normal production and net imports of cereals into Belgium are between 275,000 and 300,000 tons per month, and the calculation of 80,000 tons is based on a ration of approximately 10 ounces per capita per diem.

Desirous that there should be no error in our statements as to the minimum requirements of this people, we asked the American Minister in Brussels himself to check the data upon which these estimates are based, and I have here a statement from him and the Spanish Minister, corroborating the estimate which has been given to us. I have also a large amount of data as to the actual pressing position, estimates as to the future necessities, from various authorities throughout Belgium, the details of which I will not go into.

This minimum of monthly requirement of 80,000 tons will involve an expenditure of between £800,000 and £1,000,000 per month, and this expenditure will be necessary over the next eight months at least. A substantial proportion of this food will be resold by the Central Committee and its branches, but we have yet to solve the problem of how the credit documents which may be secured can be converted into cash. We are hopeful that we shall be able to recover from 30 per cent to 50 per cent in a form which we can monthly liquidate and revolve into further purchases.

This problem therefore becomes so large as to be far beyond solution by charitable and philanthropic effort. It is one of those problems which can only be solved by a substantial substratum of government guarantee, and this substratum must at least amount to from £400,000 to £500,000 a month. We have inaugurated and carried on in neutral countries a vigorous publicity on behalf of the Commission, with a view to stimulating as far as possible the sympathies and help of the good people of America, Australia, Spain, Canada, and elsewhere. We have had the most gratifying response, and I do not think we exaggerate if we say that we have in prospect at present twenty cargoes of foodstuffs. You will realize, however, that in the present financial situation throughout the world the collection of money for these purposes is extremely difficult, and when I inform you that the Belgian National Relief Committee in the United States has been unable out of its resources to give us an appropriation of £30,000, you may be able to appreciate how limited are resources of this character. On the other hand, the generous people, especially of the Western United States and Canada, and other countries are prepared to subscribe generously actual foodstuffs from their own stores, and, in order to take advantage of this, our immediate problem is to find the resources to transport these foodstuffs to the Belgian people. Roughly, £1 spent in transportation will bring £4 to £5 worth of foodstuffs into Belgium, and if we could say to all of these people that this Commission has been placed in position to undertake and pay for this transportation cost, I am sure that we would doubly stimulate their contributions. I should like in fact to be able to telegraph at once tonight to twenty centers in the United States and Canada which are at work on this problem that we have the

finance put at our disposal whereby we can undertake this entire transportation. I would like to suggest that despite the great strain the English people are under, this service of transport is one which the English people might seriously consider. The provision for us of a subvention of say £150,000 a month would enable us to undertake this work with assurance and would help to fill in such gaps as are bound to occur in the necessarily irregular flow of charity.

As in all philanthropic efforts the first flow no doubt will be large, but we have to face a fact that as months go by, a larger and larger proportion of this problem will fall upon the actual purchase of food, and if we are to provide for these people with a constant and regular flow, it is necessary for us to be assured that we will have financial strength with which to carry the business on systematically. We should be placed in a position at once to charter ships for periods of months and to take commitments entirely beyond those which we can take out of occasional and irregular cash subventions.

Aside from a subvention of £150,000 a month from the English Government we have a feeling that in all of the circumstances the French people owe something to the civil population of Belgium and that they should also meet us with a similar contribution. We have promised to us a liberal contribution from the Rockefeller Foundation, and this would go much farther if we could relieve that institution of the load of transportation.

Aside from material assistance there are other matters in which the British Government could greatly facilitate this work. The first of these is that if some instructions could be given to the British Consular Agents and to the Admiralty to recognize the beneficent and neutral character of our shipping operations, cargoes consigned to us from any port in the world would be facilitated in their transportation. It would also simplify all such efforts towards Belgium if this Commission should be recognized by the English Government as the only body properly founded for this work, and we would undertake to handle all such cargoes. Further than this, we have already found difficulty in our endeavors to charter neutral bottoms as such shipping is now at a considerable premium and there is no large volume of it. If we could use British bottoms to bring this food to some British port for retransport (if necessary to the Continent) and if we could have the advantage of the British Government's liberal insurance against war risk, our problem would be further facilitated.[\(80\)](#)

The active members of this Commission are composed altogether of energetic and business people, and they are prepared to devote their time and pay their own expenses in this work.

The work of the Commission will be carried on at comparatively small expenditure and we have already received from our own sources such funds and have made such provisions that no organization expenditure will fall upon any contribution

which is made to us. Every penny which we receive will be devoted to one purpose of securing foodstuffs and their transportation and absolute delivery into the hands of the community in Belgium.

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 118

Letter,

HOOVER TO GREY, pointing out the inadequacy of available relief finances and suggesting a subsidy from the Allied Governments

LONDON, 25 November 1914

SIR:

With regard to the petition which we had the honor to make to you on the 5th of November for financial assistance from the British Government toward this work of the Commission, I trust you will forgive me if I revert to the subject.

Although at that time I felt we were all deeply impressed with the necessities of the civil population of Belgium, every event which has happened since has gone to reinforce the fact that the gravity of the situation was even deeper than was then outlined by us. We have made some progress in the direction of the obtaining of funds, but they are wholly and absolutely inadequate to our requirements. We have a fund secured to us by guarantees by certain members of the Belgian Committee and private gentlemen in Brussels to the extent of £600,000, from which we are able to undertake the free transportation of gift food from any part of the world. The advertisement of this fund has brought to us most satisfactory returns by way of assurances of the collection of food from agencies which we have established, more particularly in Canada and in the United States. The flow of charity is nevertheless at best most irregular and unreliable, whereas the necessities of the population of Belgium are a fixed daily volume, and we are therefore compelled to purchase considerable quantities of food supplies to supplement the gifts which are made to us.

We have had a number of conferences with the representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation (who have come to Europe at the inspiration of the American Ambassador to seriously consider the application of the reserves of that Foundation at least in part to our problem), and the suggestion has been made by these commissioners to the Foundation that a subvention of £100,000 per month from the Foundation might be made conditional upon our securing on this side subventions

amounting to £200,000 per month, that Institution considering that this minimum sum must be provided by way of guaranteed income.

Some effort is being made by the Belgian Government but it is largely directed to the provision of working-capital with which we may purchase foodstuffs for resale in Belgium, which is, in effect, serving only that portion of the population who are yet possessed of reserves.

All of us who have spent many years in England realize the heavy load which the English people have to carry and, confident as we are of the eventual outcome, our feeling is that advances made by the British Government would be undoubtedly recovered in the final clean-up.

Mr. Frederick Palmer, whom we look upon as the most statesmanlike of the American newspaper correspondents, recently visited Germany and at our request endeavored to formulate some opinion as to the attitude of the Germans to the question of the feeding of the Belgians, and I send you herewith a copy of the statement which he has handed to us.

I have the honor to be, etc.

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 119

Letter,
HOOVER TO PAGE, concerning discussions with the Belgian Government relative to advances which the C.R.B. would disburse to pensioners of the Government within Belgium in local currency, thus effecting exchange through the C.R.B.

LONDON, 25 November 1914

DEAR MR. PAGE:

In furtherance of the plan which I am endeavoring to develop to furnish backbone to this Relief, I have today had a meeting with Mr. Van de Vyvere, Minister of Finance in the Belgian Government, and he informs me that there are certain payments which the Belgian Government would like to make in Belgium, being as follows:

Civil Service	Frs. 3,000,000
Pensions	per month

Old Age Pensions	Frs. 1,500,000 per month
Separation Allowances to soldiers and military pensions	Frs. 6,000,000 per month
	Frs. 10,500,000 per month

He thinks that if we could arrange to pay these pensions with the money which we collect for the sale of food in Belgium, the Belgian Government could furnish us with a like sum in English money at this end. This would, so far as our work is concerned, be equivalent to a subsidy of something over £400,000 a month. In other words, this is another way of effecting exchange out of Belgium. I am proposing to take this matter up for discussion with Mr. Whitlock, with a view to getting the approval of the German military authorities in Belgium to these payments, as I cannot see why there should be any military objection to its being done. Furthermore, in advancement of my original idea that the communes should give us some obligation for the foodstuffs furnished to them and that they should in turn resell these foodstuffs to the population, I gather from him that there may be a possibility that the Belgian Government would agree to take up these communal obligations here in London and then we could convert them into cash. All of this is another way of accomplishing what I have thought of effecting by way of a relief bank, and is much more facile, as we thus have a market for our obligations without asking public help.

The matter which troubles the Belgian Minister, however, is whether or not the Germans would not take advantage of this situation to make more demands for cash upon the population, which would in fact be equal to impressing our food. In other words, if we furnished a million francs worth of food to a Belgian commune, and accepted their obligations for it, and they in turn sold a portion of this food to the people and used the money to carry on their communal government, the Belgians are afraid that the commune might be assessed a cash requisition.

Although subject to your opinion, I propose to first take this up in Brussels with the German authorities through Mr. Whitlock, it seems to me that it is a matter of such vital importance that if we can arrive at a working arrangement in Brussels, possibly our Government in Washington might confirm it with the German Government, in order that the Belgian and English Governments might feel sufficiently assured in this matter. It is my impression that we should come nearer getting the help of Washington if we had made a preliminary agreement. In any event, I would be glad to have your advice.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER,
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 120

Telegram,
HOOVER TO GERARD, suggesting the possibility of German Government contributions to the financing of Belgian relief

ROTTERDAM, 27 November 1914

JAMES GERARD
AMERICAN AMBASSADOR
BERLIN

The sympathetic attitude of the German Government toward the efforts of the American people to provision the civil population of Belgium leads me to again transgress your attention to the desirability of the German Government entering into this wide humanitarian movement by a direct contribution to our fund. The minimum required amounts to fully twenty million marks per month, and any criticism leveled at the Germans for lack of sympathy to the poor of Belgium would be immediately silenced if they made a contribution of five million marks per month; furthermore, the English and French Governments would be forced to act likewise in order to support their contentions. While the American people are responding wonderfully and generously to our appeal, the flow of charity can never supply the demand and such support can from the nature of things be only temporary.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 121

Letter,
HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, concerning guarantees from the German authorities with respect to funds to be turned over to the C.R.B. by the Belgian Government

LONDON, 1 December 1914

His Excellency Brand Whitlock Brussels

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

From the numerous conversations which I have had with the Belgian Ministers in relation to the provision of funds for the Comité de Secours, I think I have in mind about the kind of an assurance which they will require from Mr. Page in order to induce them to hand over the money, and I feel that if you could address Mr. Page in somewhat the following terms, but couched in your own diplomatic language, this would meet the case:

"I have discussed the whole question of the advances from the Belgian Government to the Comité de Secours through the medium of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which moneys are to be advanced by the Comité de Secours to the communal authorities in Belgium.

"The German authorities inform me that they have not the slightest objection to the plan, that it receives their complete support, and that its general and detailed execution will meet with no interference with them.

"While it would be possible for me to confirm this in writing with the Germans such a procedure would not serve the slightest use and you may take it that they are only too anxious for us to succeed in our task, and any assurance which it is necessary for you to give to the British or Belgian Government in this matter can be given by you either in your own name or in mine with the utmost confidence."

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 122

Letter,

WHITLOCK TO PAGE, giving assurances of the German Government's approval of the use of Belgian Government funds as proposed by the C.R.B.

BRUSSELS, 1 December 1914

The Hon. Walter Hines Page
American Ambassador, London

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

I have discussed with the German military authorities here the question of the status of the funds which the Belgian Government proposes to place at the disposition of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to enable the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation to advance to the communes the moneys with which to buy food.

I am glad to be able to inform you that the German authorities have given me their assurance that they have not the slightest objection to the arrangement, that it has their entire support, that they will respect it in every particular, and that in its execution it will meet with no interference whatever from them.

I can, of course, have this assurance formally confirmed in writing if you desire, though my own notion is that that would be purely a work of supererogation. The German authorities are as anxious as anyone that we succeed in our undertaking and the documents can be easily procured if you desire them. I am entirely satisfied, however, that all is in order that all will go well.

Any assurances that you find it necessary to give to the Belgian or to the British Government may be given in all confidence either in your name or in mine.

I am, my dear Colleague,

With ever kind regards,

Your devoted

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

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DOCUMENT NO. 123

Letter,
HOOVER TO PERCY, describing the problem of financing relief, suggesting the possibility of an exchange operation and indicating the necessity of large and regular subsidies

LONDON, 6 January 1915

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD PERCY:

I am sending you herewith this week's report of the Commission. Reduced to concrete figures this document means that we have a food supply engaged, either by gift or by purchase, sufficient to carry us until the middle of April, and we are in round numbers about £1,000,000 short of being able to pay for such portions of this material as we have to buy. In a general way, it costs us about £1,200,000 a month to provide the minimum which we are endeavoring to reach, and of this about £600,000 is sold to that portion of the population which can raise the money to pay for food. About £400,000 is a dead loss, through the support of the free canteens.

The latter sum has got to be secured from the charity of the world; and in this matter a subsidy of £100,000 monthly from the Rockefeller Foundation and such fortuitous amounts in gift food or money as come our way is all we have to rely upon.

As to the provisioning of the more well-to-do part of the population, this is in reality an exchange problem. We import the food into Belgium and we sell it. We get the money in Belgian National Bank notes, which gravitate into our bank account in Brussels. The difficulty of getting it out is threefold. In the first place if we exported this money in actual bank notes we should denude the country of the small amount of circulating medium which has been left; secondly, if we had the Belgian National Bank notes in London they would not be realizable in gold; and, thirdly, the Germans will not allow us to bring them out. Therefore we are driven to find some employment for effecting exchange. There are certain Belgian bank balances and their credits scattered over the world which we could possibly arrange to have turned over to us, we in turn paying these institutions in Brussels out of the moneys which we have to our credit there from food sales. I do not know how far this liberty of action would save our situation, but I fear that it would not be anything like complete.

I cannot see from an English Government point of view that there should be any objection to our doing exchange business where we can obtain it, because we are not introducing gold into Belgium nor abstracting gold from England any more than is abstracted in the normal purchase of foodstuffs from abroad. The people to whom we would make payments in Belgium would be entirely Belgians or Belgian institutions. Aside from this method, however, which is fortuitous, it appears to us that we have got to have some support implemented by governments. If we could make payments in Brussels on account of the Belgians, to support the communal governments or other organs of the Belgian Government, and if the Belgian Government in turn could borrow money from the Allies and hand it to us, this would completely solve the question and the amount involved would be £300,000 a month, less direct exchange for private individuals that we might be able to do.

For your information generally I enclose you a copy of a letter which I have from the American Ambassador in Berlin, which is of interest on certain points. I also enclose copy of a memorandum which I prepared on the purely military point of view of this problem of provisioning the civil population of Belgium. The German end of this has been submitted to the German Military Authorities and I understand from them that it embraces their complete views in the matter.

I also attach herewith a little pamphlet we have gotten out, which explains our organization. I would add to the data in this pamphlet that in conducting the canteens for the destitute in Belgium, the communes make a return to our organization, showing the amount of their expenditure in this work, and upon the auditing of these statements, the communes are given a benevolence amounting to

two-thirds of such expenditure, and where necessary they are given a loan amounting to the remaining one-third, the object of this discrimination being to force economy on the communal authorities. The total of these benevolences and loans amounts to the cost of maintaining the canteens, upon which there were last week about 1,400,000 people.

I shall be delighted to supply you with any other information that I can give you.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 124

Letter,
VAN DE VYVERE TO HOOVER, confirming an advance by the Belgian Government to the C.R.B. for relief purposes

FOLKESTONE, 9 January 1915

Mr. Hoover
Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Following the conversation that I had the pleasure of having with you yesterday evening it is understood that toward the end of each month you will have sent to me the list of the engagements which the C.R.B. estimate they will have to make for the following month and that as soon as the agreement is established of the figure of the engagements, I will have opened for you a corresponding credit in English or American gold. By this means you will always be covered and you will no longer have to take any personal engagement.

This examination of the situation for the month of January has been made by M. Carton de Wiart and myself as a check on M. Sengier, and it is understood that I will put for this period a sum of £1,000,000 at your disposition, on my return to Havre.

The second question about which you spoke to me concerns the case of losses incurred, notably in the case where, on account of a drop in the prices of products in Belgium, the Comité National might not be in a position to realize at their cost-prices importations, made by means of the advances of the Belgian State. It is formally understood that the Commission for Relief in Belgium as well as the Comité National are only, for the sums which the State advances to them, attorneys

of the State, and have therefore no responsibilities beyond the execution of their commission.

Consequently a loss of this nature like all similar losses, will be supported by the Belgian State.

I have this morning sent copy of this letter to Mr. Francqui, President of the Executive Committee.

I take advantage of this opportunity to tell you again in the name of the Belgian Government how much we appreciate your efforts, as efficacious as disinterested, to assist the unhappy population of Belgium, and how much we are grateful to you.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) A. VAN DE VYVERE
Financial Minister to the King of the Belgians

[Translation]

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This appropriation of £1,000,000 was the second advance of this amount which had resulted from Hoover's negotiations with the Belgian Government begun in November. The first million had been turned over in the middle of December. This Government was a refugee at Havre, beyond the frontiers of its country, cut off from its normal sources of income, and dependent on loans from the British and French Treasuries for its future expenditures. It had obligations, however, within Belgium in the form of pensions and salaries of Belgian State employees which it greatly desired to meet. The German Governor-General in Belgium had agreed that these payments should be made through the medium of the Commission. The Belgian Government, from balances brought out upon the retreat, or from charitable funds coming to it directly, or possibly from Allied loans, thereupon made initial payments to the Commission. The relief organization in turn undertook to liquidate Belgian Government obligations in Belgium to like sums from the money received from the sale of its imported provisions. The exiled Belgian Government was in no position to guarantee the continuation of these advances from its own resources. Hoover, therefore, continued vigorously to press the British Government---which was the banker of the Allies---to formally authorize exchange operations and to furnish an adequate and regular subsidy in order that the Commission could maintain the necessary program of importations.
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Memorandum,

by HOOVER, of a conversation with SIR EDWARD GREY, concerning the guarantee which the C.R.B. must secure from the German authorities as condition of financial support from the British Government

LONDON, 13 January 1915

I had a meeting today with Sir Edward Grey at which he informed me semi-humorously that we need not hope for financial support from the British Government. I presume this was apropos of a certain amount of agitation being carried on by the Commission in this direction. He then stated that seriously so long as the Germans continued to levy indemnities(81) on the Belgian people the British Government could not be expected to contribute to this work. I represented to Sir Edward that the British people had entered upon the greatest war of history for the sole purpose of maintaining the Belgian people; that it appeared to me that after this war had been fought at the enormous loss of human life and property which was in progress, it would be a cynical ending if the civil population of Belgium had become extinct in the process; that it was of little use to fight the war and find that only an empty husk remained; that if the food supplies of this Commission were to cease for a week the decimation of this population would be begun and it would be completed within ninety days.

I informed him that at our last interview he had spoken strongly as to the British inability to help us because of the food levies by the Germans, and that in consequence I had made representations to Mr. Gerard. In these representations I had informed Mr. Gerard that the food levies greatly disturbed the British Government, who felt that we were simply supplying deficiencies created by the Germans, and that I felt the continued permission of the English to carry on our work was seriously jeopardized by these levies. As a consequence of these representations Mr. Gerard had ultimately been able to secure from the German Government an undertaking that no more food would be impressed in Belgium. I informed Sir Edward further that I had felt that when we succeeded in this matter we would be entitled to support from the British Government and was disappointed that further stipulations were now raised, and that I thought it would be fair to me to know if we could expect financial support from the Government if we could succeed in these further representations. Sir Edward said that he considered, without committing his colleagues, that we should be entitled to such support.

To make the matter clear, I then put it to him that I should put it up to Mr. Gerard to see if he could, by the same friendly course as previously, succeed in effecting their desire in this matter and that such acquiescence on the part of the Germans would be contingent upon direct financial support by the British Government of this Commission. To this he agreed.

I then raised the question of remittances into Belgium and explained the system by which we became possessed of large sums of money from the sale of foodstuffs and the necessity of our being able to exchange all this money in order to continue our work. He expressed approval of giving us permission in this matter, subject to the restrictions that such moneys as we obtained in England against payments in Belgium were to be used solely for the purchase of foodstuffs and that such payments in Belgium were to be made to Belgians only.

I then raised the question of transportation(82) as it concerned the Commission's being allowed to use interned German ships for our transportation purposes, and agreed to furnish him with a memorandum on this subject, copy of which is attached and I gathered that he took a favorable view of these proposals. He promised to let me know at an early date what the attitude of the British Government would be.

DOCUMENT NO. 126

Letter,
HOOVER TO GREY, Concerning the use of German shipping for relief purposes
and the operation of exchange on Brussels

LONDON, 13 January 1915

DEAR SIR EDWARD:

The two questions which I raised with you today were Shipping and Exchange on Brussels.

SHIPPING(83)

Owing to the difficulty of obtaining shipping and the exorbitant prices which we have to pay for transport of food from the Atlantic seaboard, it occurred to us that it might be possible, in view of the special nature of the work of this Commission, that we could make use of some of the interned German ships. With that view as a preliminary, while recently on the Continent, I opened negotiations with certain German shipping firms to find out whether we could obtain these ships on reasonable terms, and having found that this was possible, I then took the matter up with a Dutch shipping firm and with the Dutch Government, to determine if such ships could be taken over by the Dutch shipping firm in question on terms to be arranged between them and the Germans, in such a manner as to bring them under Dutch registry and enable them to fly the Dutch flag, we in turn to charter the ships from this Dutch firm. I am now advised that this portion of the transaction is also feasible, both from a shipping and Dutch Government point of view. The remaining

question, therefore, is the assent of the Allied Governments to these ships putting to sea under these conditions. At the present time, we are asked 9/6d per quarter for the transport of wheat from New York to Rotterdam. We should obviously only make use of these interned ships if we could get them at not more than the rate in normal times, or say about 3/6d per quarter. The actual saving on the tonnage which we have to transport would amount to over £80,000. If the British Government could see their way to countenance this transaction, we should be glad to submit to any reasonable conditions. These I presume would take the form of stipulations that the ships should be used solely for the conveyance of food for the purpose of this Commission, and as a safeguard, I might suggest that if a supercargo appointed by the British Government could travel at all times with each ship, it would facilitate confidence in such assurance. This Commission would of course undertake to report immediately they had ceased to use any given ship. I cannot but think that the substitution of these ships for British ships would tend to ameliorate the present difficulties of conveying food to the United Kingdom, for at the present moment we have under charter between 40 and 50 British ships. Our entire traffic could probably be carried on by the regular ply of about 20 normal tramp steamers of the ordinary cargo type.

EXCHANGE ON BRUSSELS

As I explained this morning, on the provisioning side of our work we sell, under restrictions, a certain proportion of foodstuffs which we import into Belgium, and we have a final residue of money accumulating at our Brussels office. The continued revolution of our working capital, which has been supplied by the Belgian bankers, and therefore the continuance of this side of our work, depends to a considerable extent on our ability to convert the moneys which we get in Brussels into pounds and dollars. With this end in view, I took up the question of the balances held by various Belgian banks in London and New York, and I could secure the payment to me of a considerable amount of such money as against the payment, on the other hand, of local currency in Brussels. This transaction does not amount to the importation of actual new money into Belgium, and is not in effect trading with the enemy, because such payments would be made under proper safeguards to Belgians only. As a matter of working machinery I would propose to operate the exchange through the Banque Belge pour l'Étranger in London and the Société Générale in Brussels, both of which are purely Belgian institutions. We have done a certain amount of exchange in a small way to individuals in Belgium, as an actual matter of relief, i.e., we have accepted moderate sums of money here and made similar payments to Belgians in Belgium who were in distress, thus enabling such people to buy food from us and keep our circuit revolving.

The question of this exchange has an humanitarian aspect outside of the work of this Commission, in that some of the Belgian banks, having exported their balances prior to the occupation, are now in the position of no longer being able to pay out to their depositors in Belgium, thus inflicting a new order of hardship on these people.

By taking advantage of this system, which I propose to set up, these people would be relieved. We should of course be glad to agree that any moneys coming into our hands in this manner would be used for the purchase of foodstuffs on this side, and that any payments which we make on the other side should be made to Belgians only.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 127

Telegram,
HOOVER TO GERARD, stating that British support of relief was conditioned upon the cessation of indemnities on Belgium by the German authorities

LONDON, 13 January 1915

GERARD, BERLIN

Had a conference today with Sir Edward Grey on the question of the British Government and the financial support of the work of this Commission. Sir Edward said that so long as the Germans continued to levy indemnities on the Belgians in their present exhausted state, the British Government could not give any financial assistance to this Commission whatever, but that if the Germans would undertake that no such indemnities should be levied the British Government would consider themselves under the obligation of supporting the Commission largely. Inasmuch as the indemnities levied in Belgium at the present time cannot be yielding any very considerable actual payments, it occurs to me that possibly your recent success in securing amelioration of the food levies might be extended to money also and might even be coupled with the stipulation that the British should support the Commission.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 128

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a telephone conversation with SIR GILBERT PARKER, concerning the postponement of publication of conditions upon which British financial support of the Commission was contingent

LONDON, 20 January 1915

Learned from Sir Gilbert Parker by phone that British Government intended publishing Sir Edward Grey's offer.⁽⁸⁴⁾ I subsequently saw Lord Percy and represented to him that this course would defeat any hope of negotiations with the German Government. If the British Government's object in making the offer was to gain political capital it was their own business and I would take no further interest. If they were genuinely anxious to secure the alleviation of the Belgians and also to help the Commission, it must be suppressed. He agreed and said he would speak to Sir Edward.

Subsequently saw Sir Gilbert Parker and Sir Claude Schuster and they rather unwillingly agreed.

DOCUMENT NO. 129

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a meeting with LLOYD GEORGE, British Chancellor of the Exchequer, SIR JOHN SIMON, Attorney General, and others, concerning the necessity of the continuation of Belgian relief, and of exchange transactions; and Lloyd George's conversion to this point of view

LONDON, 21 January 1915

I, today, had a meeting with Mr. Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, at which there were present Lord Emmott, representing the Committee on Trading with the Enemy, Lord Eustace Percy, representing the Foreign Office, and later on the Attorney General, Sir John Simon, and a representative from his department.

The occasion of the meeting was the discussion of the question of the exchange of money with Belgium, and I stated that we were importing foodstuffs at the rate of from £1,250,000 to £1,300,000 per month. That to reduce this discussion to simple terms, we might state that the whole of this foodstuff was sold and that the monies therefrom came into the possession of our Brussels office in the shape of Belgian National Bank notes, which were practically the only circulating medium in the country; and that, on the other hand, we had to support about 1,400,000 destitute people, for which purpose we made allocations of cash to the communes with which to conduct the public canteens. That in terms of values these allocations would necessarily amount to from £500,000 to £600,000 per month, thus leaving from £700,000 to £800,000 per month of accumulated monies in our hands; and that if we were to succeed in this enterprise of feeding the Belgian people it was necessary for us to bring this money out of Belgium in order to reinvest it in food; that Belgian National Bank notes were of no value out of Belgium, and that

therefore we had hit upon the plan of accepting cash in London or New York from Belgian individuals or institutions and making the corresponding payments from our Brussels office to their order; that this scheme did not imply the transfer of any actual gold or silver into Belgium.

Mr. Lloyd George stated that he had put his veto upon the project, because he felt that, indirect as the matter was, it was certainly assisting the enemy, and that this assistance would take place in several ways. In the first instance, we were giving the Belgians more food resources with which to stand requisitions in food by the Germans; that we were giving them more resources generally with which to stand monetary levies; and that beyond all this, in relieving the Germans from the necessity of feeding the civil population we were directly prolonging the war, which was bound to be one of wholly economic character and that economic pressure was the principal method by which the Allies would ultimately win. He expressed the belief that the Germans would, in the last resort, provision the people of Belgium; that our action was akin to the provisioning the civil population of a besieged city and thus prolonging the resistance of the garrison; that he was wholly opposed to our operations, benevolent and humane as they were; and that therefore he could not see his way to grant our request.

I pointed out that, first, as to the requisitioning of food, the Germans had given an undertaking that after the first of January no such requisitions would be made, and I read out to him the undertaking which had been given to the American Minister in Berlin and informed him that we were satisfied from the many agents that we had in Belgium that the Germans were carrying this out with the utmost scrupulousness. I furthermore informed him that the Germans had impressed none of our actual food. Also, I stated that I did not believe that the feeding of the civil population increased the resources which they had available for money levies; that we were introducing no new money into Belgium, but were simply giving circulation to the money already existing, and that there was no danger of the Germans taking the money which we collected for foodstuffs because that money was in the possession of the American Minister.

On the second point, as to whether the Germans would ultimately provision the civil population, I told him that I was satisfied that they would not do so; that when we undertook this labor we undertook it with the greatest reluctance and our first move was to satisfy ourselves that this population would starve unless America intervened and converted the hitherto negative quality of neutrality into one of positive neutrality; that as proof that the Germans would not provision the civil population I thought it was desirable that he should understand the German views on this question, and I recited to him the confirmation by the German military of the current statement in Germany that there was no clause in the Hague Convention obliging the Germans to provision the civil population of Belgium; on the contrary, it incidentally provided that the civil population should support the military. I told him further, that the Germans contended that the Belgians were a people of great

resources, that these resources would become valuable at once on a partial recovery of industry, that this recovery of industry could take place instantly they were given a port through which they could trade with the neutral world, that in taking the port of Antwerp and opening it to neutral ships they had given the Belgian civil population a means of provisioning themselves, but that this outlet had been blocked by the British Navy and the British must therefore bear the responsibility. Further, that the Belgian population, by continuing its hostility and its passive resistance was assisting the Allies by compelling the Germans to operate the public services, rendering trade useless to them, also the arsenals, and requiring from them a considerable army of occupation; and that as the Allies do all this they must take the responsibility of these people starving. Furthermore, the Germans contend that while they have ample food supplies to carry their own people through the struggle, they have not sufficient to carry on their backs the 10,000,000 people in Belgium and France inside their lines; and that as they are struggling for national existence they must feed their own people and attend to their own military exigencies first. I pointed out that I did not offer these arguments as my own but to illustrate the fixity of mind by which the German people justify their action in refusing to feed the Belgians, and asked him if he could conceive for one moment that with this mental attitude of conviction on their part that they were right and the Allies were wrong, they would be likely to feed the Belgians. I pointed out that starvation had actually occurred in Belgium; that some, although perhaps little, riot had occurred, but sufficient to indicate the fixity of the Germans in their intention. I further pointed out the position of the French people in the Meuse Valley, who had not had our assistance and were dying of starvation although under German occupation; and I expressed the conviction that the Germans would never feed the civil population.

He denounced the whole of this as a monstrous attitude; to which I replied that, be that as it might, one matter stood out in my mind and that was that the English people had undertaken this war for the avowed purpose of protecting the existence of small nations, of vindicating the guaranteed neutrality by which small nations might exist, for the avowed purpose of guaranteeing to the world the continuance of democracy as against autocracy in government; and that it would be an empty victory if one of the most democratic of the world's races should be extinguished in the process and ultimate victory should be marked by an empty husk. I said that the English people were great enough to disregard the doubtful military value of advantages in favor of assurances that these people should survive, and I felt the obligation went even further than mere acquiescence in our work and extended to an opportunity to the English to add to their laurels by showing magnanimity toward these people, a magnanimity which would outlast all the bitterness of this war. Mr. Lloyd George stated to his colleagues abruptly: "I am convinced. You have my permission. I would be obliged if you gentlemen would settle the details of the machinery necessary to carry it out." Then turning to me he said that I would forgive him for running away, but that he felt the world would yet be indebted to

the American people for the most magnanimous action which neutrality had yet given way to.

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 130

An agreement,
between HOOVER and the BRITISH TREASURY, relative to exchange operations
on Brussels

LONDON, 21 January 1915

The Commission for Relief in Belgium understands that the British Government is prepared to grant permission to British banks to honor drafts drawn upon them in favor of the Commission by Belgian banks or firms having credits with them, provided that the Commission gives certain undertakings as to the use of such money.

I therefore hereby undertake, on behalf of the Commission for Relief in Belgium:

1. That the full amount of any such drafts will be expended by the Commission solely for the purchase of foodstuffs; and
2. That any money paid out of the funds of the Commission in Belgium against such drafts will be paid only to Belgian banks, firms, or persons in Belgium; and
3. That the Commission will furnish the Secretary of the Treasury and the Foreign Office a weekly list showing the origin of such sums and the names of the persons to whom payment is to be made in Belgium.

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

With this definite sanction of the plan of exchange on the 21st January, the Commission at once set up a commercial exchange department, and though this source of income was not as productive as first expected,⁽⁸⁵⁾ the relief organization secured the use of considerable sums at a time when funds were very short. This favorable decision indicated a more sympathetic attitude of the British Government toward the relief work; but the Commission's major problem of securing an adequate and regular subvention from the Allies remained unsolved.

2. Hoover's Negotiations in Berlin. February 1915

DOCUMENT NO. 131

Note,

by HOOVER, and telegram, HOOVER TO BRYAN, describing the financial difficulties of relief and urging that pressure be brought to bear on the German Ambassador in America to urge his Government to adopt a reasonable attitude

LONDON, 26 January 1915

On the 26th January I went to Folkestone, intending to go to Berlin to present the proposals of Sir Edward Grey to the German Government, but on consideration at Folkestone returned, as I knew it would be valuable to secure the assistance of the German Ambassador in Washington and to make some press announcement which would create public feeling in the United States. I therefore returned on the 27th January and despatched the following telegram through the Embassy to Mr. Bryan:

"BRYAN, Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

"Potatoes and meat, upon which Belgians have been partially dependent up to present, are now being rapidly exhausted, and the cost of foodstuffs required to keep this population alive must increase shortly from six million to ten million per month. Furthermore, within thirty days three million French people north of German lines will be in similar position to Belgium.

"Another fifteen million dollars will have absolutely exhausted the whole banking and other resources which we can possibly look forward to, leaving a period of three to four months before next harvest entirely hopeless, unless support can be obtained from the belligerent governments. I believe the Allied Governments, despite their view that they have no responsibility and that it is a military disadvantage that these people should be fed from neutral sources and that the duty lies on the Germans, could be brought to make substantial contributions to our problem, provided the Germans would cease to wring monetary indemnities from these people, and would extend their undertaking as to requisitioning foodstuffs so as to cover all food supplies. To have this population thus fed must be, even on military grounds, a vast advantage to the Germans, which far outweighs the value of the money which they now secure from their present methods; and from a humane point of view, if this situation is driven to its logical extreme, the moral responsibility for the decimation of this population must be laid at the German door. I am arriving in Berlin February first for the purpose of making representations to the German Government that if they would agree to stop all requisitions of every character, and would do so conditionally upon the Allies

giving adequate financial support to this Commission, I have reason to believe I can carry out the Allies' end of the contract, and I need support from Germans in America. I therefore appeal to you, not in your official capacity, but as a leading American in position to discuss this question in influential way with Bernstorff and Dernburg and for pure reasons of humanity. The Germans cannot afford to have these issues tried in the court of American public opinion, and they can well afford, not only from a point of view of military advantage but also of American public opinion, and above all of humanity, to have this question settled on the above lines. I believe the Allied Governments have every confidence in the integrity and ability of this Commission to carry out the work, and great as the sacrifice may be on our part, we should find ample compensation in the carrying on of this task in the prestige which it would win for our country and its ideals."

"HOOVER"

DOCUMENT NO. 132

Statement,
by HOOVER, prepared for the press, describing the precarious situation of Belgian relief

LONDON, 30 January 1915

The problem of feeding the starving population of Belgium has grown beyond the resources of public charity, according to a statement of Herbert Hoover, made as the result of a special session of the Commission for Relief in Belgium held today to consider the critical situation arising out of a series of special investigations just completed.

Mr. Hoover said: "The Commission takes the gloomiest possible view of the ultimate future. The problem is rapidly growing beyond the reach of private philanthropy. With the help that the Commission hopes from America during the next two months, and the financial arrangements which have been completed for loans and exchange we can maintain supplies at the rate of six million dollars per month to the end of March. Before that time, however, three new forces will intervene, which make the whole situation materially worse. The first of these is the rapid exhaustion of the limited vegetable and meat supplies in Belgium, which will involve a constant increase in the amount of food shipped into the country; the second, that the three million of French people inside the German line will be reduced to the condition of the Belgians in another thirty days and our problem will not be seven but ten million people to feed; the third is that while a considerable portion of the Belgian people have hitherto been able to pay for their food, the stoppage of the industrial clock and the drain of indemnities is now driving them in

larger and larger proportions to the wall. If all these people are to be kept alive someone has got to furnish, some way or somehow, from twelve to fifteen million dollars' worth of food every month, from April until August, when the new harvest will carry on for a little while.

Up to now we have delivered about twelve million dollars' worth of food into Belgium, and as stated above, we have in sight about another twelve million dollars. Thus we and our friends have provided by one means and another, something like twenty-four million dollars' worth of food for these people. We have now reached a point where, so far as we can see, the problem will become hopeless of solution unless the belligerent powers can come to some agreement with regard to this imprisoned population.

It is desirable that the American people should understand why both sides in this gigantic struggle have refused to accept the responsibility for the feeding of these people; for our first impulse, on being asked to undertake this work, was to refuse the task on the ground that the feeding of these people must fall on one belligerent or the other and that no call should be made on our own people. If we denude the statements of both belligerents of arguments based on initial responsibility, the following are the views generally expressed to us as the *de facto* situation:

We are informed from the German side that there is not only no provision in the Hague Convention obliging an occupying army to feed the civil population, but that, on the contrary, there is a provision that the civil population can be called upon to support the occupying army. More broadly than this, however, the Germans state that the people of Belgium have always imported their food supplies and that this population still possesses resources; and that could a gate be opened through their double wall of steel by which they could import foodstuffs and raw material and export their industrial products and thus restart credit, they could provision themselves. That in taking the harbor of Antwerp and in throwing it open to neutral trade the Germans have acquitted themselves of the responsibility, because nothing prevents the normal flow of trade except the Allied Navy. The Germans state, furthermore, that the Belgians by their continued hostility require a considerable force in occupation and, by refusal to operate public services, necessitate more soldiers to carry on these services, and that the Allies benefit therefrom and are therefore morally obliged to at least open the gate of trade to this population. They state further that while the German food supplies, with great economy, are sufficient to carry this war to successful fruition, if they have to take upon their backs an additional ten million people their stores would be seriously jeopardized, and that it is the duty of the Germans to feed their own people first; that as this war is a war to maintain German national integrity they do not propose to jeopardize the issues in such a manner.

The English and French affirm that they cannot allow free trade with Antwerp, for there can be no assurance that the enemy will not be supplied thereby; moreover, in

the traditions of international law it is the duty of the occupying army to provision the civil population and the importation of foodstuffs into Belgium and Northern France would relieve the Germans of their moral and legal responsibilities. Broader than this, however, although the civil population alone be supplied with foodstuffs, the Germans are relieved of the drain which would otherwise have fallen upon their own stores. That in general the situation is akin to that of a siege where the succor of the population relieves the moral and physical strain on the garrison; that the ending of this war will be by economic pressure and any relaxation of this pressure assists the enemy.

We were convinced at the beginning that the fixity of opinion on both sides as to the righteousness of their respective attitudes was such that the Belgians would starve before responsibility could be settled, for the logical consummation of these views could only mean the decimation of these ten million people. During the three months that we have been at work we have listened daily to these arguments and it is certain that were it not for the stream of food poured in by this Commission this decimation would have already begun. From the beginning all belligerents acquiesced in our feeding these people, for both felt an impasse which could not otherwise be bridged. As time has gone on, the Germans have, on their side, demonstrated their desire to help by the aid they have given us in the scrupulous adherence to our undertaking that these food supplies should reach only the civil population, and in the undertaking to cease requisition of food which we must replace; and the Allies have facilitated the passage of our ships and in innumerable helpful ways eased the working of our machinery.

We have by degrees built up a confidence on both sides as to our absolute neutrality both in word and deed and as to our national capacity to carry on this work; and in consequence there is gradually growing a feeling on both sides that there possibly lies in this Commission a *via media* through which an agreement might be found for a further step. This view grows in strength as the possibility of the world's greatest tragedy looms larger and larger; but if accommodation is found it must be found quickly. We cannot wait until the end of March before we begin to charter ships and collect the food; it must be done at once if the flow is not to be interrupted.

On the English and French side there are many who say that their people should be prepared to abandon the military advantages and give way on contentions of moral and legal issue and come to the support of these people through this Commission; but they add with vigor that they cannot be expected to go so far so long as the Germans continue draining the resources of these wretched people by way of monetary levies and the continued requisition of foodstuff outside the list agreed with this Commission.

On the German side we are told that the German people have not themselves food supplies to spare, and we believe it is true. We are told that they cannot take food

from their already short supplies, to feed an additional ten millions of people belonging to their antagonists. They say, however, that these people must be fed and that no action of the Germans should stand in the way of the work of this Commission; and that, although it may mean the giving up of the undoubted right of the occupying army to secure supplies either in money or in kind, the German people are great enough and humane enough to forego all these military advantages rather than that even the shadow of the responsibility for such a debacle should be cast at their door. Here is, then, a possible ground on which, on one side, the English and French should give us financial support to feed their allies and the French their own blood, and the Germans should cease to reduce, through levies and requisitions, the abilities of these imprisoned people to help themselves. If we cannot get an agreement of this sort we must struggle on as best we can with the support of the charitable world, to whom our country has given such a magnificent lead. We will feed as many people as we can. We will skimp a nation---we will even gamble with starvation---but stretch the food supplies as we may, we must say positively that it is impossible for us to save more than a modicum of this population unless the belligerent powers can be induced to come to an arrangement. If all fails, the neutral world and future generations will lay the responsibility for the decimation of these people at the proper door, and no mixture of military reason and diplomatic excuse will cloud the issue.

The magnificent generosity of the American people, which has proved neutrality no mere barren negation, will have been wasted unless each of these belligerent peoples comes to its rightful share in saving from starvation these millions of men, innocent women, and children.

We have stated our case bluntly and frankly. Our only court of appeal is American public opinion, and it is for America to say whether a crime shall be committed which will bring this generation down in infamy to posterity.

DOCUMENT NO. 133

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation in Berlin with DR. WICKLIFFE ROSE, of the Rockefeller Foundation, and AMBASSADOR GERARD, On 1-2 February 1915, regarding the German attitude in the matter of requisitions and indemnities in Belgium

BERLIN, 3 February 1915

I arrived in Berlin Monday evening at about 7:30 and found Dr. Rose(86) on entering the Adlon Hotel. After dinner I discussed the situation with Dr. Rose and

he told me that it was probable we could secure the German Government adherence to our work which we wanted.

On Tuesday morning I called on Mr. Gerard and explained to him our difficulty with the Allies on German requisitions and indemnities on Belgium and the necessity of coming to some settlement with the Germans in the matter. He told me that the undertaking which he had received from the Under-Secretary of State, Zimmermann, contained the reservation, of which we were aware, that the Germans would not requisition food which it was necessary for us to replace. Mr. Gerard explained to me that at the time this arrangement was settled verbally no such reservation was made, in consequence of which he telegraphed me the full German acquiescence; but that two weeks later on, having it confirmed by letter from Herr Zimmermann, he found this reservation introduced.

He was accompanied on his original visit to the Foreign office by the Netherlands and Spanish Ministers, and upon receiving the note containing the reservation, he had communicated with these two Ambassadors and they both expressed the utmost astonishment at the change which had been introduced as not having been in accordance with the verbal settlement and of course vitiating a large portion of the value of the undertaking. (The levies of all descriptions of food except bread particularly in the operation zone have confirmed the military view of this agreement, and the general outbreak of such requisition looks as if they were intending to denude the country before the question of replacement arises. The statements of various commandants---made to the local burgomasters in making such requisitions---to the effect that the Americans would feed the people as soon as the food is gone, are an indication of general knowledge of the reservation in the agreement.) Mr. Gerard expressed himself in the strongest terms in regard to the matter and stated that he felt it was a disgrace that the American public should be imposed upon to furnish food under such circumstances, and that he felt strongly that we should withdraw from the field entirely unless these wretched people were to be better protected from the military. He expressed his confidence and kind feeling toward the German civil officials, but stated that before an order could reach execution, it was obviously within the power of a hundred despots in times such as these.

DOCUMENT NO. 134

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with ZIMMERMANN, 2 February 1915, with a memorandum and covering letter dated 4 February 1915, sent by Hoover, describing the problems confronting the C.R.B. in the continuation of Belgian relief

BERLIN, 5 February 1915

On Tuesday the 2d of February, Mr. Gerard took myself, Mr. Heineman, Mr. Hulse, and Mr. Gibson to call on Mr. Zimmermann, the Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs. I presented to him the position in which the Commission found itself and the absolute necessity for assistance in working out its problems for the German Government. I reviewed the work which we had done, the circumstances under which we had begun operations, the volume of the work which we are now handling, and the necessity of government co-operation. I proposed to him the abandonment of the contribution from Belgium to be coupled with a subsidy in gold from the English and French Governments to this Commission. Herr Zimmermann took a great interest in the whole position, and the conversation lasted over one hour. He finally expressed himself as in favor of our proposals and stated that he would assist us to the best of his ability, but remarked that men of peace have but little influence in these times. He asked to have a complete memorandum sent to him, which I agreed to prepare.

BERLIN, 4 February 1915

DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

In compliance with the wish you expressed on the second instant, when I had the honor of presenting to you my colleagues of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, I take pleasure in sending you herewith three memoranda setting forth certain matters in which the Commission is deeply concerned.

These documents are as follows:

- I. A note setting out the bases of reorganized relations which the Commission for Relief in Belgium is desirous of effecting with the Imperial German Government.
- II. A memorandum upon the problems and position confronting the Commission for Relief in Belgium if it is to continue provisioning the civil population.
- III. For your information a copy of a memorandum furnished by the British Foreign Office embodying the Commission's understanding of the attitude of the belligerent governments toward the provisioning of Belgians.

My colleagues of the Commission will, I need hardly say, greatly appreciate any efforts you may find it possible to make to secure early and kindly consideration for the matters set forth in these documents.

Very sincerely yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

NOTE ON THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT

1. The Commission for Relief in Belgium is a purely neutral body created by the American Ambassadors and Ministers in Brussels, Berlin, and London, the Spanish Ambassador in London, and the Spanish Minister in Brussels, to give effect to the various undertakings entered into with the German and English Governments, providing for the import of foodstuffs to the civil population in Belgium. These foodstuffs are distributed by the Commission in conjunction with the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, a portion of the foodstuffs being sold to those who can afford to pay and a portion distributed free under proper restriction to the destitute.

There are at present over 1,400,000 destitute being supported by the Commission through the communes, and the entire population of 6,500,000 are dependent upon the Commission for breadstuffs, peas, beans, and bacon. Up to date there have been in the main sufficient local supplies of potatoes and meat, but these are now failing. The imports of the Commission have been as follows:

November about 20,100,000 kilos costing	4,500,000 marks
December about 51,200,000 kilos costing	13,800,000 marks
January about 89,000,000 kilos costing	25,700,000 marks
Total	44,000,000 marks

2. The monies collected in Belgium for that portion of the foodstuffs which are sold cannot be turned into gold. This money is used locally to buy potatoes, meat, etc., for the destitute, and the remainder is given to the communal authorities to enable them to pay communal salaries, school teachers, etc. The monies that are thus collected do not, therefore, assist the real problem of the Commission, that is, the finding of gold with which to purchase foodstuffs in the neutral countries.

3. The foodstuffs have hitherto been secured by gift (principally from America) and by advance from the Belgian Government, and from the Belgian banks out of the balances which they have abroad. The philanthropic sources are totally inadequate to meet this problem, and owing to the attitude recently taken by the English government, the purely financial side of the operations is about to break down.

4. If the civil population of Belgium are to be kept from starvation, and therefore if order is to be preserved in the country, the amount of imports of food must not only be maintained, but must probably be increased. While the Commission has a

residue of resources to carry on the work for a short time, unless these imports are to be interrupted, it is imperative that further arrangements shall be made for finance. It requires over two months between the charter of ships and the purchase of food abroad before the food can be delivered into Belgium, and therefore, it is imperative to take immediate action if the flow of food is not to be stopped.

5. The stoppage of the industrial clock and the consequent cessation of exports from Belgium, and the continuous monetary levies by the occupying army, and the rapidly approaching exhaustion of the local supply of potatoes and meat has placed the whole problem entirely beyond the financial capacity of the Commission, unless some basis of accommodation with the belligerent governments can be provided for adequately furnishing assistance. The supplies sent into Belgium must quickly increase and if the French(87) population within the German lines are to be supported, they must be supplied with foodstuffs of great value.

6. It must be obvious that the continuous feeding of this population is of the greatest military importance to the Germans, for a starving population on the lines of communication would be the greatest menace. The humanitarian tradition and history of the German people are, however, sufficient warrant for the complete assumption that the decimation of this imprisoned and besieged people would be most repugnant to them, and that if no other reason existed, the Germans would not, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, consent to the starvation of these people.

7. The exercise of the undoubted rights of the occupying army to provisions from the civil population was largely abandoned by the German Government early in January, when the impending exhaustion of foodstuffs became so evident. The reports, however, of isolated cases of the requisitioning of cattle, pigs, potatoes, etc., by the army since agreement was entered into, have greatly damaged the Commission's effort to raise funds, as there has been a great outcry raised that the statement by the Commission that such requisitions had ceased was untrue; and the effect is to seriously curtail the efforts of philanthropic supporters of the Commission in neutral countries. The Commission, therefore, earnestly desires that the directions as to requisitioning foodstuffs of any kind in Belgium should be made broad enough and specific enough to cover all possible eventualities as set out in the proposed memorandum of agreement.

8. Of much wider importance, however, than the above is the fact that without governmental aid from some source the efforts of the Commission must by degrees fall far behind the necessities of these people. The Commission, therefore, considered every source of supply possible and decided that under the present military situation the Germans could not be expected to furnish food supplies from their own stores. The Commission, therefore, approached the English, French, and Belgian Allies and asked for finance on the ground that this civil population was of their own blood and that the primary duty devolved upon them.

The Belgian Government made an undertaking to support the Commission financially, but beyond a small amount this undertaking was in turn dependent on the support which the Belgian Government should receive from the English and French Governments. These latter Governments have now positively refused to help on the ground that they would not provide public money for food purchases because this would amount to assisting their enemy by relaxing the economic strain which he would otherwise be under to support the Belgians himself. While these Governments do not object to other parties or neutrals supplying food, they were not themselves prepared to assume an additional burden in assisting. After repeated representations and a statement of what the Commission deemed to be the German point of view, the English Government informed the Commission that, while prepared to alter their view to some extent, they would not do so because of the continued levy of money contributions and food requisitions upon the Belgians. The English Government takes the attitude that it would be absurd for them to furnish gold from their own coffers for foodstuffs to be imported into Belgium while the Germans were requisitioning similar food, and or contributions of money from the Belgians, as the import of food to the Belgians is in itself a benefit to the Germans, and if the English are to give way to the extent of finding the gold necessary, then the Germans should likewise meet the situation half way. The Commission replied to this by asking of the English and Allied Governments if they would be prepared to finance the Commission in case the Germans would be willing to meet half way by abandonment of requisitions of food and the money contributions on Belgium. To this the Commission was informed that these Governments would give financial support to the Commission in such an event, but not otherwise.

9. The Commission, in its deep desire to serve these wretched people, therefore respectfully submits to the German Government that its efforts must greatly diminish and ultimately fail altogether unless the Commission can receive such undertakings from the German Government. And the Commission suggests that if the German Government will abandon the collection of the monetary contributions on Belgium and the requisitioning of foodstuffs, then the Commission is in a position to impose upon the English Government the duty of finding the gold necessary to buy these foodstuffs, and the Commission has received assurances from the English and French Governments that such gold will be forthcoming.

10. The Commission has no other desire than to ameliorate the condition of this helpless people, and feels that in applying to the German Government for co-operation in the prevention of the collapse of its work, it will receive consideration commensurate with the broad grasp which the German people have demonstrated that they take of the problem growing out of this titanic struggle. The Commission is convinced that unless this plan is carried out, the German Government will have a starving population of 6,500,000 people on its hands within a few weeks.

[Fig. 4a. Hoover notes](#)

[Fig. 4b. Hoover notes, con't](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 135

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with DR. KARL HELFFERICH, Imperial Finance
Minister, 4 February 1915, concerning the indemnities and the financial proposals
of the Minister

BERLIN, 6 February 1915

At 6 o'clock I had a meeting, accompanied by Mr. Heineman, with the Finance Minister, Mr. Helfferich. Mr. Heineman having seen him previously, he was well informed as to our proposals. He stated at once, however, that the proposed abandonment of the contribution from Belgium was wholly and absolutely impossible. He stated that Herr Zimmermann could not have understood what we meant. He stated that some other way would have to be found to assist the Commission, and suggested that we go to Brussels and place our requirements before the Local Government, and that he would ask them to assist us in every way possible. I told him that this was a matter which concerned the Imperial Government itself, that the questions of feeding seven millions in Belgium, three millions in France, and ten millions in Poland(88) were all wrapped up in one question, and that was the question as to the control of imported foodstuffs through neutral committees, and that I presumed these committees would have to be, from the nature of things, American, and that it was due to anybody who undertook such a labor that his requests should receive attention from the highest.

I explained the voluntary character of our effort, the philanthropic origin of our funds, the additions which we had had to these funds from Belgian sources, and the absolute vital importance to the German Government from a military point of view that we should continue our action, and stated that unless we could be properly recognized by the Government and helped in our work by them, it would ultimately dwindle down to a service totally inadequate to the millions of people.

The Minister then made a series of suggestions as to other methods. He proposed that the contribution on Belgium should be increased and that we should be handed the increased contribution. To this I replied that this would be nothing but paper and that we must have gold. He then suggested that we might have bills drawn by the people from whom we purchased foodstuffs, and have these bills accepted by the Belgian banks, and that through the friends of the German Government in New York they could arrange to have these bills discounted and even renewed. He explained to me that Mr. Warburg,(89) the head of the banking firm of Warburg and Company of Hamburg, was a brother of Mr. Warburg of Messrs. Kuhn, Loeb

and Company of New York, head of the American Government National Reserve Board, and that the National Reserve Board was anxious to set up a large business in bills, diverting especially South American bills from the London to the New York market, and that Mr. Warburg in New York would be in a position to induce the various banks to discount these bills, and he stated that no doubt they would be renewed from time to time until the war was over.

I explained to him that there were two weaknesses in his proposal: The first was that I saw no reason why any Belgian bank should accept these bills, as we had no money to pay any Belgian bank; that although we sold a portion of the foodstuffs the money which we received was dissipated in caring for the destitute and in paying communal officials; and that I could see no more reason why a Belgian bank should accept such bills than any other bank in the world; the other difficulty was that the amount of such bills would run into ten millions of dollars per month and that it would go on for nine months at least. We had some argument on the question and he stuck to his point tenaciously and said we should see Mr. Warburg, with whom we had already discussed the matter. He again repeated that the idea of abandoning the contribution from Belgium was wholly impossible for three reasons: (1) The technical arrangements under which the contributions had been set up requiring the abandonment of the rights of local generals, and other interdepartmental arrangements which could not be broken down; (2) it would be equivalent to the German Government paying for the food of the Belgians; and (3) the English Government could say that it compelled the Germans to do it.

I replied that this was not my view; that the possession of the contribution placed in the hands of the Germans a club which they could use to force the English and French to pay out two million pounds per month in gold to feed the Belgians; and that all it meant to the Germans was the abandonment of forty million francs worth of doubtful paper. He suggested that we might expand the contribution, the Société Générale to discount the provincial bonds as in the old case, and to print similar currency against them, and that the Imperial Government might entertain some method of guaranteeing their exchange value and interesting their friends, Messrs. Warburg and the German agents in New York, to raise money against such guaranteed exchange.

I pointed out that sooner or later this would mean the export of gold from Germany, that in any case it means the inflation of the Société Générale currency to a disastrous point. I informed him that in any event his method was one which required the Americans to loan the money, the Belgians to repay the loan, the Germans hanging on to their indemnity from Belgium; that if I went back to England and replied to question of the English Government that the Germans had refused to relax the pressure on Belgium, the English must at once give publicity to their offer, and that I did not think any American banker would care to loan money to the Belgians under such circumstances.

We parted in order to see Mr. Warburg at the Adlon Hotel.

DOCUMENT NO. 136

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with MAX M. WARBURG, the German banker, 4
February 1915, concerning methods of financing Belgian relief

BERLIN, 6 February 1915

At 7:30 I had a meeting with Mr. Warburg, accompanied by Mr. Heineman, at the Adlon. He informed us generally of the position as he understood it from the Minister of Finance, and we discussed the matter at some length. He agreed with us that there was no banking operation in it unless we secured a similar amount of money to the accepted bills and deposited this money somewhere. He also agreed that the amount of money involved was very much larger than he had been led to believe. He informed me of the success he had had with discounting the bills for the cotton shipments from the United States to Germany and that he believed through Kuhn, Loeb and Company in New York and the influence which they maintain he could secure the discount of a considerable amount of grain bills for our purpose, but that as there was a break in our financial chain due to the fact that we distributed all the money, it was therefore obvious that this could not be done. We discussed the project of increasing the Société Générale's currency issue placed on an increased contribution, and in response to a remark of mine that if I were the manager of the Société Générale I would commit suicide before I would create a paper currency of what would apparently amount to nine hundred million francs secured on the assets of that bank and of the so-called provincial guarantees, Mr. Warburg remarked that he would have committed suicide some time ago if he had been the manager of the Société Générale. Mr. Warburg was very affable and sympathized with the humanitarian aspects of this matter, offering his services in any way which we would command. We asked him to see the Finance Minister and explain that the projects which he laid down were infeasible and that the short straight method was to adopt our proposal. He promised to see the Minister that evening. We reviewed the humanitarian aspects and the effect it would have on good-will toward Germany, with which he apparently acquiesced.

DOCUMENT NO. 137

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with HERR BALLIN, [\(90\)](#) 5 February 1915,

concerning the attitude of the German Government toward the financial proposals of the C.R.B.

BERLIN, 6 February 1915

At 10:30, accompanied by Mr. Heineman, I called on Herr Ballin at the Esplanade Hotel and spent about an hour and a half with him. I explained that I had originally made the appointment with him some two or three weeks ago with a view to discussing the transfer to our service of some of the Hamburg-American freight ships,(91) but that while the negotiation for government permission was going well, things had constantly taken a change and a great difficulty had arisen before us which had prevented any further progress in the shipping matter.

I then sketched to him briefly our history and present position, and how necessary it was that we should find some point of accommodation between the belligerent governments; that we did not expect then to make such a thing as a treaty directly concerning the Belgians, but we felt that we must get some positive concession from each side to the Commission if the Belgian people were not to starve. I restated to him the argument in the matter from the German point of view, humanitarian as well as military, and then reviewed the discussion we had had with the Finance Minister.

Mr. Ballin stated he had had some discussion already with regard to the matter and that he did not believe the Finance Minister's proposals would hold good, and that he did think the Germans were big enough to adopt our proposals. He said he would see the Finance Minister and also the Chancellor during the day and that he would support us in the matter, as he considered that the whole problem of these captured people was the most important problem which was before the German people at the present time; that they could not be allowed to starve, that the Germans had not the foodstuffs themselves to keep them alive, and that the Germans must go a long way in the support of such neutral agencies as could solve this problem.

After a considerable discussion of various points I shook hands on leaving, and as a parting word he stated: "You can depend on me to help with all my might."

DOCUMENT NO. 138

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with DR. MELCHIOR, financial adviser to the Imperial Finance Minister and adviser to the M. M. Warburg Bank of Hamburg, 5 February 1915, concerning the attitude of the German Government with regard to indemnities and the alternative financial proposal of the Finance Minister

At 3 o'clock I had a meeting with Dr. Melchior, the financial adviser to the Finance Ministry, and also adviser to Messrs. Warburg's bank at Hamburg. Mr. Melchior informed me he had discussed this question with Mr. Warburg and with the Finance Minister, and that for technical and diplomatic reasons which he enumerated in much the same terms as the Finance Minister, it was wholly impossible to abandon the contribution on Belgium. He stated, however, that the Germans would help us, and then repeated the whole of the financial proposals which had been made to us the day before by the Finance Minister. I again went over the ground showing how these were wholly and absolutely impossible from a financial point of view; that there was no banking operation possible such as he fancied could be built up. He referred two or three times to Mr. Warburg of Hamburg, and to Mr. Warburg's influence with the New York bankers and with the National Reserve Board in the placing of commercial bills; and it became obvious to me that they were anxious to take advantage of this influential relation in placing some kind of commercial paper as a solution to this problem.

After discussing the weaknesses of the Finance Minister's project, Dr. Melchior made a suggested alteration in that he proposed to follow the system of the present contribution; that the provinces should issue a bond for monies with which to buy food, to be called Relief Bonds; that the Société Générale should discount these bonds, should be authorized to issue an equivalent amount in currency, or that the Reichsbank should rediscount the bonds from the Société Générale or accept the currency; and that with the guarantee of the Reichsbank commercial bills for the foodstuffs could be placed initially in New York and constantly renewed until after the war.

I pointed out that it seemed to me they all went wrong over the question of quantities; that inasmuch as all of the money which we received in Belgium from the sale of foodstuffs is bound to melt away in the various services, the problem became one of finding the total cost of all food imported into Belgium and Northern France; that this would turn out to be a minimum of forty million marks per month, and that it must go on for say twelve months, which meant the finding of a hundred million dollars; that it was wholly and absolutely impossible to conceive that such a sum could be built up on commercial bills; that the capacity of the New York market was certainly not over ten or twelve million dollars for this purpose.

I went very fully into the sentimental phases of the situation and pointed out that the whole effect of this contribution levied on Belgium in the eyes of the American public had been most disastrous from every German point of view; that here was our Commission making frantic appeals to the American people for money and food with which to save the Belgians from starvation, and coincidentally with these appeals in everyone's ears came the news of the levy of forty million francs per month; that the general expression in America was: "What is the use of pouring money and food into Belgium in order to enable the German Army to extract the

last drop of blood from these people?" and that this action was drying up the wells of philanthropy at their sources. I explained to him that the Germans did not seem to be able to understand that the sentiment in the United States was not pro-English, but was pro-Belgian, and that so long as the German people continued to put themselves in the wrong with regard to Belgium, it was absolutely hopeless for them to dream of securing American sentiment. If they valued American good feeling, the maintenance of press bureaus in the United States, the expenditure of monies and effort in an endeavor to build it up, was a hopeless waste so long as the telegraph wires carried news daily and weekly of the forced extraction of blood from the Belgians. In any event Dr. Melchior did not seem particularly cordial upon our point. He said he would discuss the matter at further length and give it more consideration. In any event they wanted no transactions with England directly or indirectly. I pointed out that there must be transactions with England, as the food must pass English waters and English ships were used; and that if they wanted the Belgians fed, any proposition put up would have to have the approval of the English; and that it was useless to cook up schemes which were impossible for me to carry with the English; that, like it or not, if they wanted the service of this Commission or any other American body the Commission was going to be consulted in any project and the approval of every interested party secured, or we would withdraw and leave these 10,000,000 people to the Germans.

DOCUMENT NO. 139

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation by GERARD and himself with VON JAGOW, 6
February 1915, respecting indemnities, other problems of relief, and the attitude of
public opinion

BERLIN, 7 February 1915

At 4:30 I accompanied Mr. Gerard to call upon Herr von Jagow, Minister of Foreign Affairs. He told me he had had some discussion with Mr. Zimmermann, and also with the Chancellor and with Mr. Helfferich, and that Dr. Helfferich was formulating a plan to solve our difficulties. He stated that of course the monthly indemnity on Belgium could not be abandoned, but the matter could be solved in another manner, and stated that we had better continue our negotiations which we were carrying on with Dr. Helfferich. I stated that the proposals outlined by Dr. Helfferich were not agreeable to us, and that I felt that this matter did not lie entirely in the Finance Department, but lay largely in the Foreign Office, because it was a matter which concerned all Germany in relations and its good reputation abroad; that it seemed to me a great deal of a task to continue to feed the Belgians, no matter from what source money might be obtained, so long as the German Government continued to extract from these people a similar amount of money. I

told him that as apparently the indemnity was only laid on Belgium after we had become well established in our work, I felt sometimes that we had been the cause of this terrible infliction, because if the people of Belgium had been as desperate as the people in Poland for want of food, it is impossible that the fine would ever have been imposed. He replied that the people of Belgium had enormous resources, and that forty million francs a month was much less than they could really afford to pay; that this was collected merely to support the occupying army under the provisions of the Hague Convention and that none of the money was sent to Germany; and he again affirmed that we should continue our negotiations with Dr. Helfferich, who, he stated, would help us in every possible way, as would the other members of the Government.

I then took up with him the question of passes for the people employed on our work;(92) that it was almost impossible for us to obtain the passes which we needed; that there were great delays; and that the passes very often proved inadequate for the purpose for which they were issued; that we were made to feel most of the time that a favor was being conferred upon us that we were allowed to work in Belgium; and that I did think it was most necessary that the whole of this attitude and method should be revised. I suggested that in the future passes should only be issued on a request signed by Mr. Whitlock or the Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy, but that a pass should be issued instantly upon sending in such a request; that practically I wanted Mr. Whitlock given the right to issue passes himself for this work.

I then took up the question of our steamers coming up the Channel after the 18th February, the presumable date of the submarine blockade.(93) I pointed out that under the English regulations and the conditions of their charters, it was wholly impossible for these ships to go to Rotterdam by way of North Scotland. After some discussion the Minister promised to have orders issued of the most scrupulous care of our steamers.

I then returned to the discussion of the indemnity question, stating to the Minister that there was one phase of this whole question which Germans obstinately ignored: that the Germans were obviously anxious to win the good feeling of the American people; that they were most severe in their denunciation of our lack of neutrality, and yet they did not take the most essential precautions to win and hold the esteem of the American people; and that if they held at least one-half of the American sentiment, they could be assured of impartiality in national conduct and therefore it was worth while to make some effort. I pointed out to him that America was not nascently pro-British, while at the present time 70 per cent of the American people were extremely pro-English; that this sentiment did not arise out of any love of England, but arose out of the fact that the Americans were pro-Belgian, and that it was entirely out of their views as to the treatment of Belgium by the Germans and their belief that the English were fighting the Belgian cause which led their feelings to lean so predominantly toward the English; and that I was absolutely

satisfied that in order to win American opinion Germany must mend her methods toward Belgium; that if Germany today would take a generous and grand view and would release the Belgians from their monthly indemnity, I believed it would do more to win American opinion than any other act possible; that therefore this whole problem became one of the Foreign Office, whose duty it is to guard foreign opinion and relations; and that I hoped he would consider the thing as a problem apart from the financial schemes of Dr. Helfferich. Those schemes might be of able financial character but they implied that Americans supply the money and that Belgians ultimately repay it; and while it reflected credit on the skill of the Finance Ministry, it did not reflect any particular credit or give cause for gratitude toward Germany.

Mr. Gerard pointed out that he himself had been the vehicle through which the Germans had communicated their offers to the Belgians, after the taking of Liège, offering the Belgians not only guarantees as to their national integrity, but also large indemnities; and that therefore it was not much of a step to say now that when the Belgians are completely conquered they should at least be assured their national integrity, even though they do not receive any indemnities, and that they should be free from themselves paying indemnities to the Germans.

He also reminded the Minister of the Chancellor's speech on the 4th August, in which assurances were given with regard to Belgium which had not yet been withdrawn.

DOCUMENT NO. 140

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation by GERARD and himself with HERR VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG, IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR, 7 February 1915, with regard to indemnities, finance, and other problems of relief

BERLIN, 7 February 1915

At 6 o'clock I accompanied Mr. Gerard to a meeting with the Imperial Chancellor, His Excellency von Bethmann-Hollweg. Mr. Gerard presented to him the essential facts with regard to our position: that the question of the feeding of the Belgians would soon get beyond the resources which we could command by philanthropy or from the assistance of the Belgian Government; that if we were to feed the people of Northern France as well as the Belgians, we should require 40 or 50 million marks per month; and that the Allied Governments had refused to come to our assistance so long as the Germans continued their monetary levies on Belgium. The Chancellor stated at once with emphasis that the Germans would never give up this contribution, reiterating that it was absolutely impossible; that, on the other hand,

they recognized the very necessary character of the work and were prepared to find some other method of financial assistance; that Germany wanted no help from the Allies in anything. That in the face of the world and of German public opinion they could not for one moment retreat from an act which they had taken under the full rights confirmed by the Hague Convention. He stated that financial proposals were being drawn up by Mr. Helfferich in consultation with the financial members of the German Civil Government in Belgium and that a method would be worked out which would make our path easy from a financial point of view. I pointed out that we had had discussions with Mr. Helfferich and that all of his proposals revolved around the Belgians undertaking to pay for the foodstuffs ultimately, and that in the meantime the American public or American bankers should furnish the money; and that the first part of the proposal was a matter with which I had nothing to do and must be settled with the Belgians, but I could state at once with regard to the second part of the proposal, that is, the finding of the necessary money in America, that this would meet with the strongest opposition. That I had no doubt that upon my arrival in London the English Government would immediately demand to know whether the Germans had accepted our proposal, and that I would be compelled to inform them that it had not been accepted. Upon this the English would announce to the world that they had offered to pay for the feeding of the Belgians themselves if the Germans would withdraw their forced contributions from Belgium, and that I did not believe that in the face of such an announcement the Americans would be disposed to at all facilitate the matter. Moreover, it might release the English from all feeling of responsibility in the matter. That I felt strongly that this was a matter in which both Governments must meet half way through this Commission. He stated that he could have no negotiations with the English in any shape or form, to which I replied that we were not proposing any such negotiations but merely that each Government should assent to an arrangement with the Commission. Mr. Gerard pointed out that the Commission was absolutely the only way through which the Belgians could be kept from starvation, and that in keeping them from starvation the greatest possible military service was being done to the Germans. The Chancellor replied again that it was utterly impossible that they should give up the contribution and that he could not discuss the matter on this footing; and again affirmed strongly that German public opinion would not stand for it. Mr. Gerard pointed out that he had discussed the matter with the editor of one of the most prominent German papers, who had told him that he thought it was the proper course to take; and Mr. Gerard suggested that if His Excellency would acquiesce, he, Mr. Gerard would call in a lot of editors and lay the proposal before them and endeavor to formulate public opinion. The Chancellor said this did not suit the occasion, and stated that Germany was fighting with her back to the wall, in a situation for which he could not find an English word to fully express himself---that the word "serious" was not at all adequate as a description of the position in which Germany lay at the present moment. He stated that all Germans were grateful to the Commission for the work they were carrying on, and he would pledge himself to support the Commission in every way; but he could not entertain the proposals which had been made, and begged the Ambassador not to press the point. I stated to

him that in pressing this point we were pressing a point which we felt sure was one which gave the Germans a unique opportunity to demonstrate to the world their desire to be fair and generous to the Belgians, and, disregarding all that had happened, the Germans had not turned from the view which they had held from the beginning with regard to Belgium. Mr. Gerard pointed out that the Germans had consistently taken the attitude that they were not conquering Belgium, but had merely entered it as a military necessity, and that it would only be consistent with such an attitude if they did not exercise the rights of conquerors in levying the cost of occupation upon these people. I pointed out it should be the desire of every German to secure the favorable opinion of the United States toward the Germans, and that the first and primary thing necessary to obtain such good opinion was by showing the generous attitude toward Belgium. He stated that American opinion was apparently of little value, as the Americans were supplying arms to the Allies and would probably continue to do so, and that in so doing they were prolonging the war. To this Mr. Gerard replied that the position was akin to two people playing chess, where one, which he might call the Germans, stopped in the middle of the game and asked to have the whole rules of the game altered; that the rules of this game had been set down and practiced by every nation for years, and that if the rules were to be changed it could not be done in the middle of the game.

I told His Excellency that there was one other line of action which I thought that the Germans could take with regard to Belgium, which I thought would be most helpful. That it was vital that industry(94) should be re-established in Belgium as far as it was possible, but that before any such industry revival could take place the Belgians must have a greater freedom of movement, and told him that I sincerely hoped that he would reconsider the present attitude toward the better class of Belgians and see if they could find some method by which these better classes could be allowed to move around the country with greater facility, as it was hopeless to get industry reestablished unless this was done. I told him that not only myself but all of my colleagues in the work had been on the most intimate terms with thousands of Belgians and that I could give him my word of honor that neither myself nor they, as far as I could learn, had ever had any suggestions of conspiracy and rebellion since we undertook this work; and that I felt the Germans were perfectly safe in allowing twenty or thirty thousand Belgians of the more important order to have complete freedom of movement within the Occupation Zone. He said, "I wonder if this is really the case"; and stated that he would have the matter looked into and see what could be done.

Mr. Gerard again returned to the question of the indemnity and pressed the point vigorously that the Germans could well afford to, and that it was positively in their interest that they should give way. To this the Chancellor said that it is finally, and once for all, absolutely impossible. I then stated to him that no matter what proposals were brought forward, I hoped that he would bear in mind at all times that these proposals would have to be agreeable to the English, otherwise we could not introduce one pound of foodstuff into Belgium; that the English were in no

wise convinced that the work we were carrying on was necessary, and that they certainly considered it was not in the interest of the Allies; and that our whole operations hung on a slender thread of sentiment, a large measure of which toward the Belgians existed in England, but that a breath could blow away this sentiment and the Germans would be faced with ten million starving people on their hands. Mr. Gerard pointed out that the same situation existed in Poland(95) and that if they were to obtain the establishment of the same system of food introduction, it would entail the satisfaction of the neutral world with the other belligerents over Belgium. The Chancellor replied that they recognized these points and that they would take them into consideration in the proposals which he hoped they would be able to make; and he stated that the Commission need have no fear but that a solution would be found for other monetary necessities, but that it could not be the solution which the Commission had proposed.

DOCUMENT NO. 141

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation by HEINEMAN and himself with DR.
SCHACHT, head of the German Finance Department in Belgium, and HERR
KAUFMANN, of the German Civil Government in Brussels, 8 February 1915,
with respect to the financial proposals of German officials

BERLIN, 8 February 1915

I had lunch with Dr. Schacht and Herr Kaufmann of the German Civil Government in Brussels, together with Mr. Heineman. During the course of the lunch I mentioned that I had had a meeting with the Chancellor and that he had stated that a solution would be found by which the Commission would be financed and that I had represented to him that any solution found must be one which took into account the susceptibilities of all of the parties concerned and that he assured me this would be done. Dr. Schacht informed me it was a great mistake on our part to have asked to have the contribution removed, stating that it put us in a bad light. To this I replied that it mattered nothing to us as to the color of the lights when we were performing a just and righteous mission; that I considered, and the whole world would yet consider, that the continued attitude of the Germans toward Belgium was an undoubted blot on their whole national career, and that it was only the lack of imagination that did not lead them to see that an entire change of attitude toward Belgium would produce for them the friendship of the world, now that the English were getting mixed up with neutral shipping in a way which aggravated neutrals. He told me that he was going to have a conference with the principal officials in the Finance Ministry and that they would make out some plan of financing the Commission. I told him that he must understand now that I left it to him to keep his colleagues in line with certain definite principles as to any plans

which they had to bring forward; that, in the first instance, they could not put forward any plan which did not take into account the susceptibilities of the Belgians; in the second instance, the plan had to have the approval of the Commission for the Relief in Belgium or they could never carry it into execution; and, in the third instance, the Commission would have to get at least a negative approval of the plan by the Allied Governments or the Commission could not carry on its work. Further, it was wholly useless to formulate plans designed to secure political prestige for Germany alone, and, throughout, any such plans would have to be of absolutely neutral character. Dr. Schacht agreed with this and said that his own view was the adoption of the modification I had suggested the day before: that it should be proposed to the Comité National that the provinces should issue relief bonds; that a general debenture should be superimposed over the top of these collective provincial bonds; that this debenture should be guaranteed unqualifiedly by the Imperial German Government, and that if the Commission could obtain the guarantee of the Belgian Government at the Havre that this would put the whole character of the transaction out of the realm of international friction; that these debentures under these circumstances should be subscribed by the wealthy Belgians abroad; that it ought to be possible to place them in the United States and even England. I told him that if this were adopted it would be necessary for the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium to make the issue--- that the issue could not be made under any government auspices whatever. I told him that I intended to leave for Brussels that night and would therefore be unable to attend the conference with the Minister of Finance on Tuesday. He asked me to remain, as he considered it important that we should have an all-round discussion. I told him that I felt very diffident about discussing anything which concerned the imposing of monetary obligations upon the Belgians; that I had no right to discuss any such projects; and that the only people who could discuss these things were the Belgians themselves; that so long as my Commission was occupied in endeavoring to relieve the Belgians of obligations, I could express myself with freedom and undoubtedly with the approval of all Belgians; but when it came to, imposing further financial obligations upon them, I felt that I would rather the Minister would formulate his proposals and lay them directly before Mr. Francqui.

DOCUMENT NO. 142

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with DR. SCHACHT and HERB VON LUMM,
Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Reichsbank, 9 February 1915, concerning
methods of financing relief by means of a Belgian loan, guaranteed by Germany

BERLIN, 9 February 1915

I had a meeting at the Reichsbank at twelve o'clock and there were present Dr. Schacht, Mr. von Lumm, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Reichsbank, and Mr. Heineman.

The meeting was called to consider the financial proposals put forward by the Finance Minister, those put forward by Dr. Schacht and others. I explained that I did not wish it to be understood that I was representing the Belgians in this matter and that as I supposed their proposals would revolve around facilitating the borrowing of money by the Belgians with which to buy foodstuffs, they must bear in mind that primarily this was a matter between themselves and the Belgians; secondarily, however, as they expected to borrow the money from American agencies, I would be glad enough to inform them of such conditions as must necessarily surround any attempt on the part of the Belgians to borrow money in America, either with or without German assistance; that they must bear in mind that the American Government had practically prohibited the making of loans to any of the belligerent governments, and that therefore this loan would have to be neutral. It could only be made neutral by virtue of being guaranteed on both sides. Furthermore, the susceptibilities of the Belgian people and the susceptibilities of the English must be taken into account, as well as the Germans; that no loan could be issued unless there was a firm agreement that the objects of the loan should be solely for the support of the civilian population; that there would be no requisitioning of foodstuffs in Belgium so long as the loan was unpaid; and, on the other side, the English would have to agree to give facilities for the engagement and passage of the ships. The conversation lasted a long time, chiefly in German, and the Chairman of the Reichsbank seemed initially much opposed to the idea; but after infinite discourse they seemed all agreed on the proposals as above laid down, that is, that if the Belgians wished to borrow fifty million dollars in America, the German Government would unqualifiedly guarantee the loan; that the Belgian Government at the Havre should be asked to guarantee the loan; that an agreement should be entered into by which the Germans undertook that there would be no food requisitions in Belgium at any time during the currency of the loan; that the proceeds either in money or food should be entirely for the civilian population, and that the English should undertake to place no obstacles in the moving of ships for this purpose; and they undertook to recommend this procedure at the Cabinet meeting which they were to attend at six o'clock this evening.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER IV, continued

3. Allied Decision to Subsidize Relief. February 1915

On his way back to London Hoover had many conferences in Brussels with members of the Commission and the Comité National, and with Governor-General von Bissing. He discussed with Francqui the financial situation, and went over with him a plan of floating a relief loan in America to be launched should the Allied Governments refuse to subsidize the Commission. In an interview with the Governor-General, Hoover attempted to settle various matters which were giving trouble, such as passes for the delegates of the Commission.⁽⁹⁶⁾ As far as guarantees were concerned, von Bissing assured Hoover that the General Government would faithfully adhere to all the engagements which they had undertaken. While Hoover returned to London without the full measure of concessions that he had asked, he had yet secured from the highest German authority a clear and definite confirmation of the various guarantees already given and had succeeded in getting assurances which, in the last resort, might at least prolong the feeding of Belgium.

It was a week after Hoover's return before Sir Edward Grey issued his statement that, since the Germans "refused to consider the cessation of their pecuniary exactions" in Belgium, his Government must decline to grant a *direct* subvention to the Commission. In the meantime, Lloyd George, who had been won over to the support of the relief during the earlier exchange negotiations, placed Hoover's arguments before the Cabinet. The whole-hearted support of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other ministerial friends of the Commission's work carried the day. It was decided to recommend to the French Government a budgetary allowance for the Belgian Government which included £1,000,000 per month for "Mr. Hoover's fund." This did not constitute a *direct* subvention to the relief, but, as far as the C.R.B. was concerned, it amounted to the same thing.

DOCUMENT NO. 143

Letter,
FRANQUI TO HOOVER, regarding the difficulties of the German proposals for financing relief

BRUSSELS, 16 February 1915

MY DEAR HOOVER:

It was only today that I had occasion to meet Dr. Schacht, who was attended by Messrs. Kaufmann and Somary. Mr. von Lumm was absent. The conversation was very indefinite, that is to say, nothing precise resulted from it. We talked about conversations which you had had with various German people, of the situation of the Treasury, of our Committee, etc.

I did not fail to lay stress upon the very great difficulties which we were about to encounter if means were not found for us to procure the necessary resources to meet the alimentary needs of the Belgian population. We successively considered the opening of credits with the Belgian banks, which should be represented by promises to pay, backed by German banks established in New York; then also an interior loan which should be guaranteed by one institution or another; and finally came to the last scheme which you discussed at the time of your visit to Germany, to wit, the constitution of a special body which should issue bonds guaranteed by the Belgian Government as well as by the Belgian provinces, to be duly authorized to that end by the German authorities.

I also brought to the attention of these gentlemen the fact that if this last scheme was to be carried out, it was indispensable that we should be authorized to inscribe upon the bonds issued that the German Government formally undertakes, until such bonds are completely redeemed, not to requisition any alimentary commodity, whether derived from cultivation in Belgium or from importations carried out under the auspices of the C.R.B.

These gentlemen asked me why I laid stress upon this point, as they could not see any reason why such a declaration should appear upon the bonds. I immediately replied that it was indispensable that we should be able to inform definitely the persons to whom we might appeal as to the maximum amount of the needs of our Comité for each month; and that merely for the cereals, beans, peas, etc., imported, this maximum would attain a monthly sum of Frs. 40,000,000. I added that, if a formal declaration on the lines indicated above was not made by the German Government, it would be impossible for us to fix the said maximum, seeing that by requisitioning in Belgium all the cattle, all commodities other than those necessary to the making of bread, as well as all harvests garnered in the month of August next, this maximum might one day attain 80 or 90 million francs per month.

One of these gentlemen immediately understood me, and it was finally decided that the matter should be referred to Berlin, with the certainty of obtaining an authorization to give such an undertaking.

Subsequently these gentlemen told me that they believed it advisable, before commencing the execution of a program like that mentioned above, that a new endeavor should be made with the Belgian and English Governments, with a view to obtaining the financial co-operation necessary to the smooth running of our business. They insisted that negotiations should be undertaken in this direction, at the same time asking me to go and see you in a fortnight's time so that we might together go to Havre to make a last effort. They added that, with a view to not annoying Havre, it was perhaps advisable that you should not tell anybody of the plan which had been put forward. They advised me to telegraph you in this sense and I thought it well to comply with this desire. I therefore cabled you as follows through our Rotterdam office: "Think indispensable tell nobody of our idea issue

bonds for Relief Commission until advised by us." As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, my conversation with Dr. Schacht was of a most indefinite nature. They seemed to have no precise instructions, although each one was anxious as to the situation which would be brought about if we did not succeed in procuring the necessary resources.

We separated after promising to meet again in a fortnight as soon as an answer had been received from Berlin to the question which I laid down regarding the undertaking to be taken by the German Government not to requisition any further commodities whatsoever until the complete reimbursement of the loan we were to eventually float abroad.

I should be greatly obliged if you would ask (or cause to be asked by one of our friends) these gentlemen at Havre what they consider it advisable for us to do; and after having received their opinion, please let me know your opinion, so that I may act here in accordance with it.

After having received a reply from Havre, and if you consider there is any urgency, you might telegraph me what you require.

Your very devoted

(Signed) EMILE FRANCQUI

[Translation]

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DOCUMENT NO. 144

Letter,

GREY TO HOOVER, reviewing the negotiations with the Germans and stating that as a result of the German position the plan of a direct subvention from the British Government must remain in abeyance

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

22 February 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Your return from Germany, and the information you have given me as to the result of your journey, afford me an opportunity to sum up the negotiations which have passed between the Commission for Relief in Belgium and His Majesty's Government, in reply to the various letters you have written me.

When the work of the Commission was originally set on foot through the efforts of the United States and Spanish Ambassadors in London on behalf of the Belgian Government, His Majesty's Government agreed that all the food supplied from neutral countries through the Commission should pass into Belgium without interruption, for distribution to the Belgian people under the guarantees given by the German Government to the Commission. His Majesty's Government also contributed £100,000 to the funds of the Commission and this sum has been supplemented by grants in money and kind from Canada, Australia, New Zealand. We have also been able to extend facilities which ensured your shipping reaching Rotterdam, and in certain instances to relax in your favour our prohibitions affecting exports of food and transfers of money. Military considerations might be held to render such action on our part inadvisable, but it appeared to us necessary in the circumstances to disregard such considerations.

You represented to us, however, that such grants were quite inadequate to your needs, since your expenditure on foodstuffs, distributed in pure charity alone, amounted to between £400,000 and £500,000 monthly. You therefore asked for a monthly subvention from His Majesty's Government to supplement the very generous private contributions which you were receiving from the American public.

We did not see our way to accede to your request, and indeed for some time we regarded the whole project of the distribution of food in Belgium with some doubt, in view of the action of the German authorities. While respecting the food actually imported by you, they did not until December accede to your representations regarding the cessation of requisitions for the use of the German army of the supplies of native food remaining available for the civil population of Belgium; and they even carried away cattle and cereals from Belgium into Germany itself. They also levied large monetary contributions upon the cities and communes in Belgium, and these exactions have now culminated in the levy of a sum of 40,000,000 francs a month from the whole country. It was evident that if, under such conditions, the British Government undertook through your Commission to supply money or food to the Belgian population, the only result would be an equivalent diminution of the food and supplies already there. The British Government, in fact, would have been facilitating the feeding, and paying for the maintenance, of the German army. Under these conditions, therefore, it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to make a direct grant to the Commission.

Eventually, however, His Majesty's Government recognised that the work of the Commission was directed on sound lines to supply the urgent needs of the Belgian people, and had the less doubt on this point in view of the additional guarantees obtained by you in December from the German Government that at least all kinds of foodstuffs which would need to be replaced by the Commission should be free from all requisition, and in view of the assurances you were able to give His Majesty's Government that the foodstuffs imported by you had not been interfered

with by the German troops. Further, I was able to inform you last month that His Majesty's Government would grant the Commission a monthly subvention to enable it to carry on its work, on condition that the German Government would undertake to cease all requisitions of food of any kind, and all levies and contributions of any kind whatever in Belgium, with the exception, of course, of such taxation of the people as is admitted under the Hague Convention.

At your request, this offer was not made public at the time, but you were authorised to inform the German Government of it. I now understand that during your recent visit to Berlin you informed the German Government of the exact position of affairs but that, while they consented to stop all requisitions of food in the Zone of Occupation east of Ghent, they refused to consider the cessation of their pecuniary exactions, and especially the levy of 40,000,000 francs a month, which they apparently intend to continue.

Solely on account of this attitude on the part of the German Government, the proposed arrangement between His Majesty's Government and the Commission must be regarded as having broken down. We shall of course maintain our general favourable attitude towards your work, and our offer of financial support will remain open in the event of the German Government receding from their present position in regard to their levies in Belgium, but for the moment the idea of a direct subvention out of Government funds toward the charitable work of the Commission must remain in abeyance.

I cannot conclude this letter without expressing our appreciation of the generosity of the American people and the admirable organisation established by the Commission, which have alone made this work possible. The people of this country will, I am sure, recognise in your work a prominent example of the qualities of efficiency and public spirit which distinguish the many neutral services rendered by Americans in Europe at the present time.

Yours very truly

(Signed) E. GREY

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DOCUMENT NO. 145

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with LLOYD GEORGE and VAN DE VYVERE
concerning the financial situation of Belgian relief and the present state of
negotiations

LONDON, 17 February 1915

I received notice to call upon Mr. Lloyd George at 3:30 and found there Mr. Van de Vyvere, the Belgian Minister of Finance, and Count de Lalaing, the Belgian Ambassador.

Mr. Lloyd George stated that there would be a cabinet meeting on Thursday at twelve o'clock, in which the question of feeding the Belgians would come up for general review. He stated that Messrs. Churchill and Kitchener were very much opposed, on military grounds, to a continuance of our work; that his own views had been greatly altered by his discussions and correspondence with me, and that he found himself able to support us unqualifiedly in our humanitarian task. He asked me how much foodstuff had been subscribed from America. I told him out of approximately £5,000,000 worth of food delivered and in transit, £1,000,000, was composed of American gifts; that we had had gifts from other quarters, British Colonies, etc. He asked how much money we had had from the British Government up to date, and I told him £100,000; and Mr. Van de Vyvere explained that we had £2,000,000 from him. He reviewed some arrangements with the Belgians, mentioning £300,000 in payment of Belgian railway workmen. I told him I knew nothing about the transaction at all; that from my point of view I received a million pounds a month from the Belgians to purchase food with and transmit it to Belgium, and to account therefor, and that as to what internal arrangements were made I was not interested so long as I got the million pounds a month; and that I would, in fact, prefer to have as little to do with such arrangements as possible; that my whole approach to the problem was from a humanitarian point of view, and that I must argue the whole matter on that footing. Mr. Lloyd George asked me to review to him---in order to refresh his mind---some arguments which I had placed before him previously, as he wished to repeat them to his colleagues. He asked that I give him a memorandum, and asked how quickly I could get it; to which I replied that I could have it ready at half-past six. He stated that I should make it as vigorous and as strong as possible, and to approach the subject as though our work were about to be suppressed, and to put any arguments in which would meet such a proposal. I then returned to the office and we prepared the following memorandum:

DOCUMENT NO. 146

Memorandum,
HOOVER TO LLOYD GEORGE, reviewing financial and other aspects of relief,
and urging the necessity of British support

LONDON, 17 February 1915

The Right Hon. David Lloyd George
Chancellor of the Exchequer

DEAR SIR:

As to your request that I should send you a memorandum on the matters affecting the provisioning of the civil population of Belgium.

1. Except for the breadstuffs imported by this Commission there is not one ounce of bread in Belgium today. The 7,000,000 people there are at present receiving the small allowance of 250 grams of flour per them per capita, necessitating the importing of approximately between 65,000 and 70,000 tons of wheat per month. In addition to this the native supplies of potatoes and meat are showing signs of rapid exhaustion, and measures must be taken to supplement the bread supply which we are now providing. Of the 7,000,000 population about 1,500,000 are at present entirely destitute and are being wholly supported by this Commission, and before the next harvest over 2,500,000 people will have to be supported. Foodstuffs are sold to those who can still pay, and payment is received in Belgian paper money, that being the only currency in the country. These foodstuffs are sold at a small profit in order to compel the more well-to-do population to assist in the support of the destitute. The moneys received from these sales are used to purchase supplementary food in the shape of potatoes and soup-materials for the destitute. The cost of feeding the destitute averages about 12 francs per capita per month, and therefore now aggregates between £500,000 and £600,000 per month. If it were possible to secure exchange in Belgium for the paper which we receive, our budget would balance except for the above expenditure on benevolent account. On the other hand, the export of this paper money to London is useless and infeasible, and hitherto it has been distributed to the communes to pay communal salaries and other services, and the equivalent amounts have been supplied by the Belgian Government on this side. One may, however, entirely disregard these internal sales operations, as they do not represent the gold necessary to purchase foodstuffs, which will now be a rising amount of from £1,000,000 to £1,500,000 per month.

2. Under the agreements entered into between this Commission and the German Government there has never been any interference with the foodstuffs introduced by us. We can account to the satisfaction of any auditor for every sack of wheat from the time it leaves Rotterdam until it reaches the Belgian civil consumer, and in fact so rigorous has been our attitude on this matter that the Germans have acceded to our demand for a restitution to us from military stores for amounts equivalent to those consumed by billeted troops and by officers and men eating in public restaurants. Early in our work we undertook negotiations with the Germans to bring to an end the requisitioning of native foodstuffs, and at the end of December we reached an agreement with regard to the Occupation Zone (which comprises the most of Belgium), and since that date there have been no requisitions of native food whatever in that zone with the exceptions of one or two minor instances which were corrected upon our complaint. During my recent visit to Berlin I made arrangements for the extension of this agreement to cover, so far as practicable from a military point of view, the "operation" zone, which comprises the country

westward of Ghent; and in any event, we are sending but little foodstuffs into that territory.

3. The question as to whether the Germans would themselves out of their own provisions feed the people of Belgium is one upon which I am, from the result of my observations and discussions during my recent visit to Berlin, perfectly clear and confirmed. I attach hereto a memorandum expressing the German official view of this question. I put it forward without comment as to its proper character but only as showing the feeling which permeates the entire German official mind on this question; and with this, to them, moral justification of their attitude, it seems to me hopeless to expect this service.

Of more importance than this, however, is the fact that Germany is already short of food supplies and the Germans high and low emphatically state that they will not starve their own people in order to feed the enemy population.

4. I cannot too strongly affirm that unless foodstuffs are introduced into Belgium from foreign sources, the decimation of this population will begin within thirty days. Already the population is restive enough and is being held in check by the influence of the communal authorities and members of these committees through their insistence that the food supply will stop instantly there is any disorder in the country. Futile as it might be, such disorder will certainly arise and long before a famine has decimated the people of Belgium; and the women and children will have been slaughtered as the result of the futile outbreaks of violence.

5. The British people entered upon this the greatest war of their history for the sole purpose of maintaining the Belgian people and their national integrity. It would be a cynical thing if the land of Belgium were discovered at the completion of this task to be but an empty husk! Compared to the cost, either from a military or a financial point of view, it is not worth taking the risk that this should happen.

This cost from a military point of view can be measured in the days by which this war will be extended, because the monetary outlay of supplying food to these people is negligible beside the vast sums otherwise involved; the extension of the war through the importation from abroad to the Belgian civil population of 70,000 to 80,000 tons of breadstuff per month can amount to a lengthening of this conflict but by a few days, even assuming that the Germans would supply this bread. From an economic point of view the war will be won not by compelling the Germans to give up 6 per cent of their breadstuffs to the Belgians, but by the pressure on the other 94 per cent (that being about the ratio between the respective consumers). On the other side of the balance sheet, the Belgians are on strike; their attitude keeps a considerable number of Germans off the fighting line; their passive resistance in refusing to work arsenals and machine-shops and railways is a service to the Allies which probably accounts, when interpreted into days, to something greater than the other side of the ledger will show. Assuming that the Germans should in the last

resort change their minds and feed the desperate and starving population, they certainly would only do so upon receiving in return the services of this population. Nothing can alter the fact that these people---your allies---will starve or be slaughtered in thousands unless support is given; and to my mind no pleas based on military exigency can divest any of the belligerents of the moral responsibility for which they will be held responsible in history as the result of such a tragedy.

6. In the matter of public sentiment in the neutral world, I can only speak for my own country. In the ordinary course it views European struggles with a practical evenly divided opinion; but in this struggle the English people have won the undoubted sympathy of 95 per cent of my countrymen, because of Belgium, and their belief that the English people are fighting for the restoration of the liberties of this people. My countrymen, greatly affected by the situation of this civil population, have come forward and continue to come forward with a generosity unprecedented in the history of relief work; and I cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that should this relief work fail to receive the sympathy and support of the English people, it would have a most serious bearing on the whole attitude of public sentiment in the United States.

7. It is not, however, at all on the above grounds that I plead the cause of the Belgian people, men, women, and children; it is on the ground of broad humanity, for which the British people have ever stood, even at their own cost; and this---one of the most critical occasions in the history of your people---is one in which we are certain there will be no failure in their magnanimity.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 147

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of a conversation with LLOYD GEORGE and VAN DE VYVERE,
in which Lloyd George announced the decision of the British Government to
furnish a budgetary allowance to the Belgian Government for relief

LONDON, 18 February 1915

Had a meeting with Mr. Lloyd George at the Treasury together with Mr. Van de Vyvere and Colonel Hunsiker. Mr. Lloyd George informed us that the British Government had decided to recommend to the French Government a budgetary allowance for the Belgian Government which included £1,000,000 per month for "Mr. Hoover's fund," but that out of this £1,000,000 per month the salaries of the

railway employees in Belgium must be paid. After some discussion between Mr. Van de Vyvere and Mr. Lloyd George I gathered that the subsidy would be fixed until the end of June.

I asked Mr. Lloyd George if he had received my memorandum of the previous day and if it was of the character which he desired. He said that it was perfect except in one particular, i.e., that military observations from laymen always infuriated military men and that he had therefore used the document in the Cabinet meeting and presented to them all the points except those of military order. I told him that their decision had taken a load off our hearts, and he replied: "You have made a good fight and deserve to win out."

4. Income and Expenditures. March 1915-March 1917

In addition to its benevolent resources the Commission in the first four months of its existence, i.e., to February 1915, secured £3,600,000 in various ways. This sum included the original £100,000 granted by the British Government in November 1914 and £600,000 advanced by Belgian bankers out of funds held abroad by them. The advances came from the Belgian Government at Havre in December 1914 to February 1915. The successful outcome of Hoover's negotiations for a formal arrangement of regular monthly subsidies resulted in a monthly income to the Commission of Frs. 12,500,000 from the French Treasury and £500,000 from the British Treasury beginning with March 1915, both as loans to the Belgian Government for relief in Belgium. As is described in chapter VI the Commission extended its operations to include Northern France as soon as finances were arranged in April 1915. For this purpose the Commission secured Frs. 25,000,000 in April 1915 and Frs. 12,500,000 each month beginning with May. These sums were advanced out of a sum set aside by the French Treasury and were paid over to the C.R.B. by the Belgian Treasury. Beginning with March 1915, therefore, the Commission received monthly subsidies of the equivalent of approximately \$5,000,000 and \$2,500,000 for Belgian and French relief respectively, but with no guarantee that these advances would extend beyond June 1915, the beginning of the new harvest. For a few months at any rate the Commission was assured of a substantial portion of its financial requirements. On the other hand, charitable collections so generous in the first few months were now comparatively small and the exchange transactions fell far below expectations. The result was that the Commission still found it impossible in the spring and summer of 1915 to meet the increasing needs of the Belgians. The first step, however, was to secure the continuance of subsidies, inadequate though they were. Hoover's successful negotiations with the Germans for the protection of the harvests as described in chapter VIII were responsible for the continuance of subsidies from June onwards. Early in the spring of 1915 he proposed a plan of revival of industry in Belgium which among other benefits was designed to make the Commission in part self-

supporting. These negotiations as described in chapter IX were difficult, prolonged, and finally unsuccessful.

During all of 1915 and into 1916 the Commission continued to plead its poverty. In September 1915 the monthly subsidy for French relief was increased to Frs. 20,000,000, i.e., about \$3,500,000; but government support for the Belgian program remained at the \$5,000,000 set in March 1915 until late in the fall of 1916. This was due to the attitude of the Germans, their attempts to control the relief distribution organization in Belgium, and the counter demands of the Allies for more inclusive guarantees regarding Belgian native produce.⁽⁹⁷⁾ The reorganization and strengthening of its Department of Inspection and Control⁽⁹⁸⁾ went a long way toward softening the Allies' attitude toward the Commission. In November 1916 the French and British increased the monthly subsidies to Frs. 18,750,000 and £750,000 for Belgium, and in September 1916 the French increased the subsidy for Northern France to Frs. 35,000,000. For the winter of 1916-17 the C.R.B., therefore, received each month from the Allies the equivalent of about \$7,000,000 for Belgium and \$6,000,000 for Northern France.

DOCUMENT NO. 148

Letter,

HOOVER TO MINISTER HYMANS, asserting need of additional subsidies if relief is to be continued on present scale

LONDON, 24 August 1916

*His Excellency Paul Humans
The Belgian Legation, London*

DEAR MR. HYMANS:

As I told you a few days ago, we have been endeavoring to secure that Mr. Francqui should come to England to take up with us the whole question of future finance for the Relief. As I have had no word as to whether he is coming it is imperative that I raise the question without further delay.

The position is simply that the realized value of the present subsidy of the Belgian Government is £950,000 a month, whereas, with the extraordinary rise in food prices the past few months, our authorized import program is going to cost over £1,700,000 per month; and in addition to this the Belgian people, as you know, are in need of and are asking for an additional expansion in imports which will cost a further £300,000 per month. In other words, we are in imperative need of a secured income of £2,000,000 per month, or the doubling of our present subsidy. The

income from charity is erratic and uncertain. After the fall elections we may perhaps, by increase of our American receipts, reach a total of say £100,000 a month; and our commercial exchange brings us in £25,000 to £30,000 per month, the whole of which is simply a margin of security.

The following table shows the present cost of the program permitted by the Allied Governments:

Commodity	Quarterly quantities authorized by Allied Governments (Tons)	Cost per ton (Belgium)	Total cost per quarter
Wheat	162,000	£20	£3,240,000
Bacon	4,000	77	308,000
Lard	8,000	72	576,000
Maize	24,000 ^a	10	240,000
Beans and peas	9,000 ^a	30	270,000
Rice	15,000 ^a	18	270,000
Yeast materials	3,000	13	39,000
Cocoa	1,000	98	98,000
Condensed milk	1,500	50	75,000
Total cost			£5,116,000
Cost per month			£1,705,300

a Interchangeable.

The following table shows the total cost of our deliveries into Belgium during the quarter ending July 25th:

Commodity	Quarterly quantities authorized by Allied	Quantity delivered (Tons)	Expenditures
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	Governments (Tons)		
Wheat	162,000	164,187	£2,438,302
Bacon	4,000	3,453	264,345
Lard	8,000	7,499	529,627
Maize	24, 000a	21	199
Rice	15,000a	21,118	363,230
Peas and beans	9,000a	2,615	80,804
Yeast materials	3,000	1,931	22,500
Condensed milk	1,500	881	43,167
Total cost			£3,742,174
Cost per month			£1,247,391

a Interchangeable.

It will be seen from this table that we did not deliver the full program in some particulars during this quarter, but with the shipping which we now have we shall, during the third quarter of the year, be able to deliver practically the whole program, and we hope to continue it.

I may mention that the rise which has taken place in the cost of wheat during the last few weeks, due to the shortage in the American harvest, has increased the cost of the Belgian program by no less than £270,000 for this item alone, and the rise in the price of wheat has caused a rise to some extent in all subsidiary cereals. We shall be able to continue the program only until the end of September, and we are able to do this simply by virtue of under-deliveries owing to short tonnage during the past winter, during which period we were able to save something out of our income.

I do not at the present moment raise any question as to ways and means with regard to finance, as I think this matter should be first considered by the Belgian Government, except that I must point out the extreme urgency of the matter.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 149

Letter,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO HOOVER, stating approval of increase in
subsidy for Belgian relief to £1,500,000 monthly

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
27 October 1916

C. Hoover, Esq., London

DEAR SIR:

I am now able to inform you that the Cabinet have decided to approve an increase
in the subsidy for Belgian relief to £1,500,000(99) per month.

Yours very truly

(Signed) A. W. LIDDERDALE

DOCUMENT NO. 150

Letter,
GREY TO PAGE AND MERRY DEL VAL, declaring that the increased subsidy is
conditioned on the participation of the C.R.B. in both the guarantees for the
protection of and methods of control of Belgian relief activities

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
7 November 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

1. As Your Excellency is aware, the question of an increase in the subsidy granted
by the Allied Governments to the Commission for Relief in Belgium through the
Belgian Government has recently been under consideration and His Majesty's
Government have agreed to this increase. In connection with this question,
however, His Majesty's Government have had carefully to consider the question of
the disposal in Belgium of the moneys arising from the sale of foodstuffs there, and
they have only decided to approve the continuance of the subsidy and its increase
to a higher figure subject to the following condition:

"That the profits of any sale in occupied territory of foodstuffs bought by the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall not be appropriated to bodies or organizations in such territory which are not covered by the guarantees given by the German Government to the Commission for Relief in Belgium and accepted by His Majesty's Government as the basis for the continuance of the Commission's work."

2. This condition is one to which His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance, and they desire that all the appropriations made by the Relief Commission in occupied territory should be narrowly scrutinised with a view to ensure that the guarantees of the German Government do, in fact, apply to them in particular. It is hardly necessary to point out that it is an essential point in these guarantees that they are given to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, a neutral body whose independent position enables it to enter into definite contractual relations with the belligerent Governments, and not merely to the Comité National or to other bodies which do not enjoy a similar independence. Consequently, no object or organisation can be regarded as properly protected by the guarantees unless the neutral Commission is a party to all agreements and regulations affecting such object or organisation and is also a party to its management and control.

Believe me, My dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

*His Excellency the Honorable W. H. Page
&C., &c., &c.*

(Identical letter sent to H. E. Señor Don Alfonso Merry del Val]

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DOCUMENT NO. 151

Letter,
POLAND TO VAN DE VYVERE, respecting the financial difficulties of the
C.R.B. and the causes

LONDON, 27 January 1917

His Excellency Monsieur A. Van de Vyvere, Havre

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 23d.

As you anticipated, we have received the sum of Frs. 12,500,000 of the French share of the January subsidy on the old basis.

We note that you hope to adjust the question of the increased subvention on the French account for the months of November, December, and January, and that against this sum you expect the return of the advance of the sum amounting to approximately Frs. 10,000,000. Within the next few days I expect to forward you a statement of the serious financial situation which is confronting the Commission and the necessity for the immediate increase of the funds available for expenditure by the Commission monthly to approximately £700,000, or, alternatively, the immediate reduction in the Belgian program of imports of something over one-third.

The above situation is the result, first, of the sum necessary to pay for the increased program which was approved, effective in October, not having been provided; and, second, because of the startling increase in the cost of all food products within the last few months.

With assurances of the highest consideration, I beg to remain,

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND,
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 152

Letter and statement,
POLAND TO PERCY, stating that monthly subsidies must be increased by one million pounds sterling or the import program be reduced by two-fifths

LONDON, 29 January 1917

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

I beg to hand you a statement of the financial situation of the Commission for Relief in Belgium as of the 25th January 1917, showing, on the basis of the present approved program, the monthly deficit between the cost of imports into Belgium and our average income.

You will see that decision must be made immediately between two alternatives:

- a) Either the monthly subventions must be increased by about £1,000,000, or
- b) We must immediately reduce the value of our imports into Belgium approximately two-fifths.

This decision must rest with the Allied Governments---we realize how momentous it will be for the people of Belgium.

We should not be carrying out our responsibilities if we failed to give you our judgment on the present food situation of your Allies. Attached hereto is a table showing the per capita per day ration to the whole population, based on the present authorized monthly program of imports and the native food supply.

You will see that this provides for the whole population:

Per capita per day	Grams total	Grams proteins	Grams fats	Grams carbohydrates	Utilized calories
Imported food	387	27	28	178	1095
Native food	673	20	11	123	730
Total ration	1060	47	39	301	1825

It is most difficult to obtain satisfactory figures as to the total native food supplies, but our estimate for Belgium cannot be seriously in error, as wheat, on which we have reliable data, forms about half of the value of the native products.

The ration of the British Isles is estimated at not less than 4,000 calories per capita per day, and the minimum upon which a population may maintain its physical standard under a condition of light work, is generally agreed to be not less than 2,000 calories.

The grave responsibility confronting the Allied Governments, therefore, should it be decided to reduce our imports 40 per cent, will be apparent, as it would leave these people with a per capita ration of but about 1,400 calories per day.

With all the earnestness which over two years of service may entitle us to express, we beg, on behalf of the Belgian people, that this alternative be not chosen.

On the contrary, in accord with our chairman, I ask that the subsidies of the Commission be sufficiently increased to allow us to continue our present imports, based on the minimum program which you have approved.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

A Statement of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, London, of the current monthly income and requirements as of the 25th January 1917, based on the authorized program, showing the necessity for either an increase of subsidies or a radical reduction of the food imports into Belgium

On the 7th October 1916 Mr. Hoover, Chairman of the Commission, forwarded to the Foreign Office a report of the food position in Belgium, with recommendations as to the absolute minimum food program which must be provided. This included an estimate of the approximate monthly cost. A request was made that the additional monthly quantities specified should be approved for importation and that there should be provided the additional funds necessary to cover the difference between the monthly income at that time and the monthly cost of the new program.

At that time our monthly income for Belgium was about 1,000,000. The total cost of the increased program at prices then existing was £2,070,000, with the prospect of larger charitable donations; it was estimated that an increase of subsidies of £900,000 was necessary.

On October 25th we were advised by Sir Eyre Crowe that the recommended increased program had been approved.

On October 30th notification was received that the British Cabinet had approved increasing the subsidy to the Commission to a total of £1,500,000. At the existing rate of commercial exchange this involved an effective increase in subsidy of £467,000 in place of the £900,000 which had been asked for. This therefore contemplated necessarily a monthly deficit on the basis of the approved program of £433,000.

(It is to be noted in this connection that we have for the months of November, December, and January, received the British portion of the increased subsidy mentioned in the communication of October 30th, but up to the present time we have not received the increased portion of the subsidy from French sources.)

I attach a table which shows the conditions in September (before the new program went into effect) as to quantities, delivery prices, and total cost; the increase in cost of the September program if purchased at January prices; the increase of unit prices, etc.; and the cost of the present authorized program at present prices.

From this you will see that the unit costs of commodities purchased for delivery in September, compared with the current prices as of January 25th, show an increase of 33% per cent.

Had the September program (before the authorized increase was made) been purchased at the present January 25th prices, it would have cost £2,025,000, or an increase over the September cost of delivery of £510,000.

It will be seen that this January program, upon which our present imports are based, at the prices now obtaining, requires, a monthly outlay of £2,516,000.

Our monthly income is now approximately as follows:

Received through the Belgian Government:	
a) From British sources	£750,000
b) From French sources (increased subvention of October 30th assumed in force)	675,000
Received from Commercial Exchange, public subscriptions, etc.	100,000
Total	£1,525,000
Cost of January program	£2,515,000
Monthly deficit	£ 990,000

The Commission has been carrying the monthly deficit by drawing upon its working capital in the hope that the necessary increase in subsidy could be arranged. We have depleted this working capital to such a point that our whole credit and operations will be endangered if this depletion is carried further.

One of two alternatives is immediately before us: either our subsidies must be increased, through the proceeds of the proposed relief loan or otherwise, approximately £1,000,000 beyond the provision of the letter of the Foreign Office of October 30th, 1916, or we must cut down our program of imports into Belgium sufficiently to reduce the monthly cost by two-fifths.

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

[Fig. 5a. Hoover's Memoranda, 11-12 February 1915, of conferences with German officials in Brussels. \(see page 243\).](#)

[Fig. 5b. Hoover's Memoranda, 11-12 February 1915, of conferences with German officials in Brussels. \(see page 243\).](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 153

Extract of letter,
POLAND TO HOOVER, concerning financial position and referring to steps taken
to increase subsidies

LONDON, 2 March 1917

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
New York

MY DEAR HOOVER:

Finances. I attach herewith a statement showing the approximate financial situation to date. Lord Eustace Percy is now having an interview with Mr. Bonar Law concerning increases and the provisions necessary. I have told him that if they will give us bank guarantees in the United Kingdom for £1,200,000 we shall be able to go on for another month, during which period increases in our subsidies may be arranged. Mr. Chevrillon fears that from no lack of desire but from necessity it will be most difficult to obtain increases on the part of the French Government. Lord Eustace asked whether there was any hope of the United States Government offering to assume part of the cost of ravitaillement. I told him that as Congress adjourns within a couple of days I should think not, but in the event of an extra session I thought there would be a good chance of favorable action, with you in the country to urge it, taking the place for the time of a bond issue.

I was most anxious to have the benefit of Mr. Chevrillon's counsel during this critical time, and he was good enough to come over last Monday. I hope he will remain for some time.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 154

Letter,
POLAND TO PERCY, stating financial position for April 1917, and new subsidies required

LONDON, 28 March 1917

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

On the 10th February I sent you a statement of the financial situation of the Commission referred to the 1st of February. After the break of diplomatic relations the conditions rapidly changed and under date February 26th I sent you a memorandum showing position for the month of March.

I send you now a similar memorandum as of March 27th, for the month of April 1917.

You will note that there is little change from the situation for March. In order to protect our commitments in London, Rotterdam, Paris, and Scandinavia subsequent to April 30th, to the extent of 40 per cent, the least amount consistent with sound business methods, we still need a confirmed bank credit with the Banque Belge, of £1,325,000.

The above makes no provision for replacing the supplies which we have failed to deliver during the last two months because of the interruption of the service by the Germans. The reason that our cash resources have remained practically *in statu quo* since February 1st is of course due to the fact that we have not been able to send in some 180,000 tons of food.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

Above statement forwarded to:

Monsieur Hymans, Belgian Minister
Monsieur Carton de Wiart
Monsieur Chevrillon
Monsieur Cambon

5. The Relief Loan Plan. October 1916-February 1917

Without relaxing his pressure on the Allied Governments to increase subventions for the Commission, Hoover in October 1916 revived the relief loan(100) proposal first brought forward in the spring of 1915. As the following documents show, the negotiations covering this new effort to break the financial deadlock made slow progress and were abandoned in February 1917 when the Germans launched their unrestricted U-boat campaign. The question of finances for relief was overshadowed by the larger question of whether the Commission could continue at all.(101)

DOCUMENT NO. 155

Telegram,
HOOVER TO HONNOLD (NEW YORK), on need of funds and possibilities of relief loan in the United States

LONDON, 5 October 1916

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Financial position of relief particularly Northern France has become extremely grave. Would like have early telegraphic views our New York colleagues on probable success issue short term notes for relief purposes Northern France. An American Security Company to be created which would issue three-year 5 per cent notes at par secured upon municipal and communal obligations of Northern communes, which would be obtained in same manner as we now operate. Margin of these obligations could be deposited from those we already have in hand. French Government to guarantee entire issue in addition. Whole proceeds to be used by Commission feed occupied French civilians. Loan could be formulated with every sentimental emphasis. Seems to us widespread sympathy for French people humanitarian character of loan would enlist wide clientele not available war loans and proposal of these people borrow money with which to live instead of charity would strike imagination American people. Provision dealers should also help. If we could raise about hundred million dollars for Northern France spread over twelve months and if expenditure under the trust were made retrospective to September 1st, could indirectly greatly assist Belgian position as we could transfer our current income since September 1 to Belgian purposes. Seems to us all our committees could be used to push issue and we earnestly hope for your most valuable consideration and advice at earliest moment.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 156

Telegram,
HONNOLD TO HOOVER, reporting likelihood of failure of relief loan because of other European loans about to be offered in American market

NEW YORK, 8 October 1916

HOOVER, LONDON

Proposition receiving earnest consideration notwithstanding your suggestion comes at most inopportune time inasmuch as market is flooded with foreign offerings and negotiations for further large loans are pending. However, it may be possible to meet in some degree your wishes, but if so it will probably be for smaller amount and on less favorable terms. We will not remit our efforts and will keep you posted but our feeling is that American absorption of European loans will soon reach point of saturation even when a particularly strong element of sympathy enters. Suggest you confer with H. P. Davison, who is now in London.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 157

Telegram,
HOOVER TO HONNOLD, urging the loan scheme and reporting offers of co-operation of bankers

LONDON, 15 October 1916

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

It is our idea that a loan to be called the American Relief Commission Loan should on sentimental and national grounds receive the support of the whole American banking community, who should donate their services free even to include underwriting if it should be considered desirable to underwrite. In this form it should not conflict with any other finance and would represent a truly American backing to America's greatest philanthropic effort. Have seen Morgan and Davison, both of whom evince great interest. They have discussed matter with Government and will discuss matter with you on Davison's return.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 158

Extract of telegram,
HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, reporting agreement of American bankers to
undertake the relief loan without charge

LONDON, 26 December 1916

CHEVRILLON, PARIS

Have today received following telegram from New York:

"Bankers ready to act on loan soon as formal request received. They reiterate transaction will be undertaken without expense to Relief, this being their Christmas expression of appreciation to you."

It seems to me if British and French Governments in agreement, that the Belgian Government should be approached as soon as possible. It seems to me desirable that the matter should be closed up as quickly as possible. The bankers include Morgans, Guaranty Trust, and all other important groups, who are acting entirely out of good feeling; and I would suggest that Treasury here should be authorized by both French and Belgian Governments to settle whole details with Morgan's firm in London, unless your side can send someone here to fix matter up definitely. I am anxious to go to America at the earliest moment to assist in this issue from a sentimental point of view and to attend to other important matters concerning the relief. I have a request to come to Washington to discuss certain matters and am wanted there by January 15th.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 159

Letter,
HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, describing the status of relief loan negotiations
and requesting him to intervene with the French and British Governments to
advance the matter

LONDON, 9 January 1917

His Excellency, Monsieur A. Van de Vyvere
Minister of Finance, Havre

DEAR MR. VAN DE VYVERE:

Some two months ago we were asked by the French officials to undertake negotiations for a loan in America for the support of the relief in Northern France, to be assured upon municipal obligations from that territory, with the guarantee of the French Government. A great deal of negotiation has taken place between myself and the American bankers, as represented by a committee in New York which embraces practically the whole of the banking strength of the United States. Finally, on the 24th December I was advised by them that they considered that to make a successful loan for relief purposes it would have to be issued on behalf of the Belgian, French, and British Governments jointly. They considered that such a loan could be made without security and probably for \$150,000,000 and as a contribution toward the relief; and as a compliment personal to myself, they offered to undertake the issue of the loan without any charge whatever. It was understood that the loan would be for a short time, but neither the rate of interest nor the period has yet been suggested.

I laid the position immediately before the French Government, suggesting that they should take the matter up with yourselves and the British Government, and I asked Mr. Francqui and Mr. Sengier to inform you fully of the position, and they inform me that you are fully agreeable in principle. I had so confidently expected that the matter would have been brought officially to your attention that I had taken passage on the steamer leaving last Saturday, with the anticipation that matters would be so advanced that I could proceed to New York, it being the unanimous desire of the American bankers that I should be there to formulate the propaganda in the matter.

It appears that the French Government has taken the matter up with the British Government, but some difference of opinion apparently at the same time exists between them as to the relation of this loan to other arrangements between the French and British governments, and so the matter is dragging very badly.

I am rather anxious at the present moment, as the opportunity has been created and the high level of sentiment which exists at the present moment toward Belgium in the United States should be taken advantage of without further delay; and furthermore as Mr. Sengier informs me you are despaired of further increasing our subsidies beyond £1,500,000 a month. You know the cost of the present program is close on £2,100,000 and unless we can see some daylight I see no alternative but to reduce the food supply by the end of this month.

This loan would be a solution to the situation, and I am wondering whether or not you could not intervene to advance the matter.

The American groups ask that they should be formally requested by the Allied Governments to undertake this loan, and they have appointed Messrs. Morgan, Grenfell & Co. to negotiate on behalf of all of them, and these formalities are

necessary to get the matter in motion. The loan is to be issued with the endorsement of the Commission for Relief, to be undertaken by the American bankers without charge, and to appeal to that section of the American public which will not subscribe for war loans. It is therefore necessary to agree on a formula as to the purpose and method of spending the money; and I propose the following, which meets the acceptance of our New York colleagues:

"The object of the loan is to provide continued financial support to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, for the relief of the civil population in the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France. The proceeds of the loan are to be deposited with the bankers of the Governments and retained by them solely for the purposes set out below, and are to be drawn upon by the Commission in monthly sums sufficient to cover the monthly food imports authorized by the Allied Governments. The proceeds of the loan are in the first instance to be expended for the ravitaillement of the civil population and the support of the destitute in the occupied territories by and under the direction of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and the Commission shall continue as heretofore to be administered by a neutral Chairman appointed with the approval of the American Ambassadors and Ministers in Europe and by Directors appointed by the Chairman. If peace should intervene leaving an unexpended balance, such balance shall be released to the French and Belgian Governments to be expended upon the economic rehabilitations of the civil population. The loan shall be called the Relief Commission Loan."

The interrelations between the three Governments are of course not a matter which concerns the bankers or myself. I would suggest to you, however, that the actual cost of the relief as between the two countries is 40 per cent to the French and 60 per cent to the Belgians. This may form for you an idea as to the relative basis of repayment. The formula which I have set out above, you will see, provides for the expenditure of the loan on the basis of the commodities authorized, which would enable us to take whatever is necessary with rising and falling prices.

There appear to me to be many advantages in doing this operation, and doing it quickly, for, aside from the above objects, it is an effective guarantee of the continuity of the Relief, as it would be difficult to terminate such a relation set up between the American people and the Belgian people. It also would appear to me to be an advantage to the credit of the Belgian Government to be a party to a successful loan. Furthermore, the loan, if successful, will enable us to stop public appeals for charity and substitute the dignity of a well credited borrower therefor.

I am very anxious to get off for America on Saturday the 13th, at least, leaving the position such that it may be signed up and ordered by telegraph by the time I should arrive in New York, as my colleagues are very insistent that we must strike the iron while it is hot.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 160

Telegram,
POLAND TO HOOVER (NEW YORK), on progress of Allied approval of loan

LONDON, 20 January 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Accord between governments regarding Commission loan progressing, but no further action likely until time appears to bankers favorable for launching a new loan. In view of uncertainty it appears to us advisable approach governments here concerning immediate increase subsidies. Do you approve?

CHEVRILLON, POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 161

Telegram,
POLAND TO HOOVER, reporting failure of British Government to act on matter of the relief loan

LONDON, 11 February 1917

HOOVER, NEW YORK *Confidential*

So far find it impossible obtain any definite information from Government here as to loan. Are continually put off. Am again representing imperative that definite advice be given us at once. Are you in favor of issuing ultimatum that unless definite statement of some sort be made to us immediately the Relief will definitely and permanently withdraw from any connection with loan?

Expect forward New York \$9,500,000 from income February, instead \$7,000,000, and in addition am asking British Government forward \$5,700,000 to fully protect New York liabilities and in addition to establish British guaranteed confirmed credit with Banque Belge, London, for £1,370,000 to cover overdrafts and partially cover European liabilities.

POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 162

Telegram,
HOOVER TO POLAND, directing that loan matter not be pushed until issues raised by the unrestricted submarine campaign be settled

NEW YORK, 14 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Please allow loan matter to lie entirely quiescent until we have solved our two great problems of a shipping lane to Rotterdam and the re-establishment of a neutral body to take over the distribution. In any event it would be impossible for us to put out the loan until the relief has been re-established. If the relief is re-established, the bankers here are confident of their ability to issue the loan without difficulty. In the meantime we will be glad to receive all the cash you can forward to this end.

HOOVER

6. The United States Government and Relief Finance. April 1917-March 1919

The severance of diplomatic relations with Germany by the United States and the subsequent declaration of war had important consequences for the Commission. The first effects concerned the functions of the C.R.B. in Belgium. These are discussed in chapter XII. Of only less importance were the effects in financial arrangements. Since 1914 the American Government had given diplomatic support to the Commission abroad and official backing in the United States as the only agency authorized to carry charitable aid to the Belgians through the blockade. None of the Commission's funds, however, had come from the United States Treasury, but with America in the war the Commission turned to Washington for financial support. One of the first of America's war measures was the establishment of large credits in favor of the Allies, whose enormous war expenditures had brought them to a desperate financial situation. The Commission saw to it that in connection with these war credits there was specific provision for Belgian and French relief. Thus there were relief loans to Belgium and France out of which \$7,500,000 and \$5,000,000 monthly were to be advanced to the Commission for its program in Belgium and Northern France. Up to the time these credits became

available the British and French treasuries had turned over to the Commission approximately \$270,000,000.

DOCUMENT NO. 163

Telegram,
C.R.B. NEW YORK TO HOOVER,([102](#)) advising probable Congressional action respecting Allied credits

NEW YORK, 26 March 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Inform Hoover with minimum delay as follows:

It is not improbable President in message to Congress April 2d will recommend large credit to Allies, possibly billion dollars. If this is done, think may be able to have him specifically recommend that certain amount, say one to two hundred million be earmarked for Belgian relief, also possibly recommend that, say two million be specially voted as gift to cover Commission's expenses. Please cable earliest possible your views, also whether Belgian Government would welcome such a loan. If we are to proceed with the matter, please send suitable cables urging same which can be used in lobbying and have similar cables sent from Belgian Government.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 164

Letter,
PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE C.R.B.([103](#)) TO
PRESIDENT WILSON, requesting that part of the proposed credit to the Allies be allocated for relief work in Belgium and France

29 March 1917

*To the President
The White House Washington, D.C.*

SIR:

Your Committee, appointed to co-operate with the Commission for Relief in Belgium, have the honor to submit for your consideration the following suggestions:

First: There is a prevailing report current in the press of the country that in the event of the United States entering into the war with Germany a credit of large magnitude will be created for the benefit of some or all of the Allied Governments. We suggest that in case this be done a portion of the credit so offered be specifically allocated by previous agreement with the borrowers for expenditure by our Commission in the relief work now carried on in the occupied areas of Belgium and Northern France. Such a course would have, as it seems to us, several advantages: It would inure directly to the benefit of the Allies because to that extent it would relieve them of the monthly payments they are themselves making for the same purpose; at the same time it would give to this country an appropriate share in the responsibility and burden of financing a work which has been carried on, though unofficially, in the name of the United States.

It is not our opinion or desire that the advances thus made should be permitted to replace or diminish private relief. If the contemplated advance, as we assume it may be, is made in a form to carry with it financial assistance to the recipient on terms more beneficial than an current in the market, the corresponding burden to this country thus assumed might be distributed to private subscribers, who would then be afforded an opportunity to help *pro tanto* in the support of Belgium. In any event we propose to continue our efforts to stimulate charitable gifts.

The following particulars as to our needs and resources are submitted for your guidance:

The foodstuffs we are permitted to deliver into Belgium and Northern France call for a monthly expenditure (mainly in American purchases) of about	
Our monthly	\$18,000,000
	\$7,000,000

receipts from
the
Governments
of Great
Britain and
France for
account of
Belgium are

Our monthly
receipts from
the
Government
of France for
account of
Northern
France are

6,000,000 13,000,000

Leaving to
be provided
through
benevolence

\$ 5,000,000

As a matter of fact our receipts from benevolence have averaged less than \$1,000,000 per month, America's contributions averaging only about \$300,000 per month; consequently, we have never been able, and are not now able, to provide, for these 10,000,000 people even the meager ration authorized by the Allied Governments.

Our second suggestion is that a recommendation should be made by the President to Congress for an appropriation of \$2,000,000 as a gift to cover the working expenses of the Commission from its inception to the end of the current year. This represents less than five-eighths of one per cent of the moneys handled by the Commission, a fact of striking significance, reflecting, as it does, not only the ability with which its affairs have been administered, but also the value of the voluntary services rendered by those responsible. Up to the present such expenses have been met out of the funds provided by the Allied Governments. This has always been a matter of chagrin to Mr. Hoover and the members of the Commission, and it would lift a burden from their hearts if they could feel that the services they have administered in the name of America and for which they have been overwhelmed with expressions of gratitude, has indeed been rendered by America free of expense to the recipients.

Yours respectfully

(Signed) A. J. HEMPHILL
Chairman of Advisory Committee([104](#))

DOCUMENT NO. 165

Telegram,
HONNOLD TO HOOVER, stating probable manner in which Allied credits will be passed and asking Hoover to Secure assurances from Belgian and French Governments that they desire credits for the Commission

LONDON, 15 April 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Credit for Allies will probably pass House today in blanket form and Senate before middle next week. Allocation will be left to President, who anxious to provide specifically for Commission say one year's requirements or one hundred fifty millions. Cannot do this, however, unless you assure us that governments concerned so desire. Without such assurances our requirements will be merged in general credits to governments concerned and Commission will continue to draw its support from them as in the past. Very anxious to have assurance asked for before middle next week as seeing McAdoo with Bertron soon as bill passed. If you are able to arrange have you any suggestions as to how money should be paid to us and whether directly or through French and Belgian financial agents.

Think you will agree that it is in interest of governments concerned to have Commission's needs specifically allocated, since apart from other considerations it is not improbable that sooner or later the resulting loans will be cancelled. Furthermore additional and perhaps more substantial assistance will be more certainly assured for the future if America be allowed to commit herself now in a way to our support. Since present bill provides credits only for Europe, it will be necessary to pass special bill to cover expenses. This is agreed to in principle, but am asked to submit substantiating figures when in Washington next week. Kindly cable soon as possible more or less itemized statement past expenditure and estimate for future.

HONNOLD

DOCUMENT NO. 166

Letter,
DE FLEURIAU TO HOOVER, quoting approval of French Government to
American credits for the Commission

LONDON, 16 April 1917

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have communicated to Mr. Ribot the substance of your letter of yesterday concerning the kind intention of the President Wilson to provide for the financial needs of the Commission for Relief if the interested Governments agreed to that proposal. I am now authorized to express to you the agreement of the French Government and I think advisable to quote the terms of the telegram of Mr. Ribot:

"J'approuve en ce qui concerne le Gouvernement français et le ravitaillement des régions françaises envahies l'ouverture de crédits que M. le Président Wilson se propose de faire à la Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France, et qui témoigne une fois de plus de la sympathie montrée par les Etats-Unis à cette oeuvre si essentiellement humanitaire. Comme l'a indiqué M. Hoover, dès que la question de principe aura été réglée, nous étudierons de concert les points de détail et d'exécution.

RIBOT"

Please excuse the informality of that paper and believe me

Yours sincerely

(Signed) A. de FLEURIAU

DOCUMENT NO. 167

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B. (NEW YORK), reporting Belgian suggestion that sufficient
of American loan to Allies be allocated to relief to permit discontinuance of
benevolent appeals

LONDON, 18 April 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Belgian Government officially state that they would be very grateful if American Government would earmark from proposed forthcoming advances to Allies a sufficient sum to cover the whole cost of relief and it should be sufficiently large to

cover the whole of Commission's requirements, thus eliminating external benevolent appeals. They have advised Minister in Washington. Owing to the very necessary restriction in shipping and general food difficulties, we have reduced Belgian and French program to the absolute minimum on which they can subsist by drawing on their resources of cattle, et cetera, and the total cost on the reduced basis will work out at about thirteen million dollars per month. Taking into account cash we have in hand, earmarking 150 million dollars would be sufficient to carry us over twelve months.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 168

Letter,

HOOVER TO CONGRESSMAN FLOOD, withdrawing the Commission's request that the Government make special appropriation to cover administration expenses of the Commission in view of the loan of \$75,000,000 agreed upon 24 April 1917

WASHINGTON, 19 May 1917

DEAR MR. FLOOD:

I have been thinking about the request which the Commission for Relief in Belgium has made for a special appropriation to cover the expense of the work of the Commission during the last two and one-half years. You are no doubt aware that the Government has agreed on a loan of \$75,000,000 to France and Belgium to cover the needs of the Commission for the present.

The idea at the bottom of the original request, which was made before the recent loan was agreed to, was to obtain some Government support of the financial needs of the Commission, and to secure a certain measure of Government connection with an approval of the work to reinforce its position in Europe. Now that the Government has done so much more in recognition of the Relief work by granting the special loan to cover the needs of the work for the next six months, it seems to me unnecessary for us to ask for any further recognition or aid. As we have been compelled to resell a large quantity of foodstuffs bought but which we were unable to ship due to the suspension of our operations for a period at the outset of the submarine war, we have made a considerable profit on these goods, against which we can debit the Commission's overhead costs, and thus not be forced to take them from the credits established by charitable gifts or subsidies from our Allies.

If this suggestion meets with your approval, I shall be glad to be understood as withdrawing our request for a special appropriation for expense.

Very truly yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

The first monthly subsidy from the United States Treasury for Belgium became available in May 1917 and for Northern France the following month, and with these advances the customary subventions from Allied sources ceased. This discontinuance of Allied advances caused the Commission a temporary embarrassment, as the American subsidies were available only for expenditure in the United States, while the Commission had European disbursements for freights and purchases amounting to around \$5,000,000 a month. It required some time to reorganize charters and contracts so that the maximum obligations could be liquidated in America, and to arrange for funds for the necessary European expenses. During this period the Commission utilized charitable funds and certain balances which remained from previous Allied subsidies. Moreover, during a few months of 1917 the German U-boat blockade was so tight that the Commission was able to deliver only a small percentage of its program. Cargoes of perishable supplies had to be diverted and sold, and hence during these months the Commission "saved" certain sums because of the interruption in its operations. When the Germans finally agreed to establish a safe lane for relief vessels, the flow of importation began on a somewhat restricted scale but at a cost far in excess of previous months as a result of the rise in freights and the prices of foodstuffs. By October 1917 all the Commission's funds which were free for expenditure in Europe were exhausted.

DOCUMENT NO. 169

Letter,
FOREIGN OFFICE TO POLAND, asking the C.R.B. to refund the unexpended balance of sums received from British credits

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
5 July 1917

*The Secretary,
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London*

SIR:

I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st ultimo, in which you state that the French and British subsidies for April and

May have been paid over to the Commission but that the whole amount received has not been expended.

2. I am to observe that sums actually spent after the end of May 1917 would appear to give rise to a claim against the Government of the United States of America. I am therefore to request that you will arrange to refund the unexpended balance, as on the 1st ultimo, of sums which the Commission has received from British credits.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient, humble Servant

(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

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DOCUMENT NO. 170

Letter,

POLAND TO BRITISH UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE, pointing out that to refund the unexpended balance as requested would necessitate the liquidation of C.R.B. affairs

LONDON, 13 July 1917

*The Under-Secretary of State,
Foreign Office*

DEAR SIR:

Replying to your letter of the 5th of July in regard to claims against the Government of the United States, the position of the British Government in this matter is not quite clear to me. There is of course no distinction in our accounts between funds received from the British or French Governments for the ravitaillement of Belgium. Our subsidies, as you are aware, have always been made to us through the Belgian Government. It was our understanding merely that the United States Government had agreed to make it possible for the Belgian Government to place a loan in the United States and had agreed to furnish \$45,000,000 at the rate of \$7,500,000 per month if necessary for six months in order to provide the Belgian Government with sufficient funds to carry on the ravitaillement in place of the subsidies which had previously been supplied by the British and French Governments. This, however, is a part of the transaction with which we have nothing to do in our accounts and upon which we are only unofficially advised. Our monthly transactions vary from £2,000,000 to £3,000,000, and our contingent liabilities usually are about £8,000,000 to £9,000,000. To obtain the unexpended balances on hand at any time, it would of

course be necessary to close our accounts and completely liquidate our affairs, which would require considerable time.

It was our understanding that there was to be no liquidation of the affairs of the C.R.B. but that the regular procedure would be carried on as usual with money supplied to us as usual by the Belgian Government.

Since we are unadvised in regard to this, will it be possible for you to furnish us with the agreements upon which the claim against the United States is based, whereupon we will immediately refer the matter to Washington and endeavor to have it put in order.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 171

Telegram,
HOOVER TO POLAND, Stating that American Government loans to belligerents must be spent in the United States and urging that British and French Governments continue to finance European purchases of C.R.B.

WASHINGTON, 30 October 1917

COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, LONDON

With respect to your various telegrams on expenditures to be made in Europe, we agree it is absolutely vital to continue purchases in Holland and in England. Our only concern is to secure the necessary funds in Europe. There is no reason why European Governments should not renew advances to the Belgian Government for relief purposes. The terms of American loan do not permit remittance of these moneys abroad, and any method as to guarantees or payment to the Wheat Executive are simply evasions of the American law on this subject and we cannot in any particular participate in them. In a broad way the remittance of money to Europe for this purpose would simply mean reduction of funds available for Allied purpose in the United States and in no way assists the general situation. I am asking Mr. Lansing to take the matter up formally with the various governments concerned; in meantime I see no reason why Belgian Government should not itself guarantee Banque Belge the necessary overdraft which you require. We are in entire sympathy with purchase of clothing, but it all comes under the same heading. We are not dealing with a sentimental situation but with a simple war necessity; no one can accuse this Government of failing to take its proper part in the whole war

situation and you need have no fears in this direction. An appeal had been made to the President by the King of the Belgians, to which the President has replied that the American Government will give every assistance for expenditures in the United States, but he asks the King of the Belgians to interest himself in securing the provision of the necessary funds from the European governments concerned to carry on European expenditures of Commission.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 172

Telegram, (105)

ALBERT, KING OF THE BELGIANS, TO PRESIDENT WILSON, urging additional American finance and ships for Belgian relief

18 October 1917

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. WOODROW WILSON,
President of the United States of America, Washington

During more than three years the American Commission for Relief under Mr. Hoover's able leadership has achieved with marked success and under the most trying circumstances the task of supplying the Belgian nation with the bare necessities of life. Moreover, Your Excellency's Government has lately assumed the burden of financing the Commission. Those unmistakable marks of sympathy make me feel confident that whatever the difficulties may be, the United States will never allow their noble work to be jeopardized. However, since several months the imports of foodstuffs have been inadequate and the last reports which reach me from the invaded territory are such that I consider it my duty to make a personal appeal to your intervention. The Belgian population is confronted not only with hardship and suffering but with actual famine; the death rate is steadily increasing. Infantile mortality is appalling. Tuberculosis is spreading and threatening the future of the race. Only by immediate and energetic action can the lives of many of my unhappy people be saved during the impending winter. My Government has put all available ships at the disposal of the Commission and is unable to provide for more. For the additional transports as well as for cargoes and financial means Belgium must rely entirely upon the United States. I do not doubt but your Excellency will give to Mr. Hoover full power to meet the present emergency with adequate measures, and in such conditions we are confident that Mr. Hoover will assure the success of the great task he has nobly assumed in the name of the American nation.

ALBERT

DOCUMENT NO. 173

Telegram,
FRENCH MINISTER OF FINANCE TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR AT
LONDON, asking that British Government agree to French and Belgian financing
of European expenses of C.R.B.

PARIS, 25 November 1917

TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR, LONDON

From the Minister of Finance

I had a conversation on Friday with Mr. Van de Vyvere, Belgian Minister of Finance, on the subject of the credits necessary to enable the C.R.B. to meet its expenses in America and Europe.

1. The monthly credits opened for account of the C.R.B. in the United States are to be increased from 12 1/2 million dollars to 15 million dollars---6 million as France's share and 9 million as Belgium's. The American Government have given their consent to this increase, on the condition that the Belgian and French Governments guarantee to provide for the European expenses of the C.R.B.

2. I gave this guarantee as far as I was concerned, and asked our delegates to notify Washington and make arrangements with the Federal Treasury to increase our monthly contribution from 5 to 6 million dollars. To enable the Belgian Government to give a similar guarantee, which they are willing to do, the adherence of the British Government is indispensable. It has been agreed with Mr. Van de Vyvere that joint action should be taken by the French and Belgian Governments to obtain the consent of the British Government. After you have consulted the Belgian Minister, who is to receive instructions to act in concert with you, I would ask you to state the following proposition:

The French Government will undertake to provide for a third of the monthly expenditures for relief---i.e., the fraction corresponding to the needs of the French population; the other two-thirds---about £1,500,000---to be taken by the Belgian Government from the joint advance made to them by the British and French Governments. It is important to obtain the consent of the British Government to this arrangement.

But the authorization given to the Belgian Government to effect this transaction will only result in distributing the burden of the credits destined for the European expenses of the C.R.B., which expenditures are almost equally divided between England, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries. If the British Treasury is

opposed, as I have reason to believe, to the employment of pounds sterling for payments of the two last categories, the only way open to the C.R.B. would be to obtain credit openings in its name in Holland and in the Scandinavian countries. In view of the negotiations which the C.R.B. will enter into, I have agreed to give the French Government's guarantee, and I have every reason to hope that the British Government will give theirs.

[Translation]

At no time since the First Battle of the Marne were the Allies nearer defeat than during the summer and fall of 1917. The German U-boat campaign did enormous damage to shipping on which the Allied cause was so dependent. On land the ambitious Nivelle offensive in April ended in disaster and was followed by mutinies in the French Army. The collapse of Kerensky's final drive in Galicia in July signaled the end of Russia as a military factor in the war. In late October occurred the battle of Caporetto where Italy suffered the worst defeat of the war. Except in finance, which was more important than is often recognized, the weight of American assistance had not begun to be felt.

These months were a correspondingly difficult time for the Commission. In addition to the critical shortage of shipping there was a short crop in America and the further complication of a near breakdown of railroad transportation. The occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France had been on short rations from the first of the year, and the Commission was helpless to augment its importations to relieve the growing distress. There was, in fact, no single problem of finance, of shipping, of supplies, but a general problem of relief in which all these elements were involved. During most of this critical period Hoover was in America organizing the production and conservation of food supplies on which the Allies--- and the relief of Belgium and France---depended. In addition to these heavy responsibilities he continued as active Chairman of the C.R.B. and with the shifting of the center of gravity in economic war matters from England to America he continued to conduct the important negotiations concerning these matters.(106)

The United States Government pursued a generous policy toward the relief within the restrictions of the Congressional enactment. At Hoover's request the United States Treasury in November 1917 increased its monthly subventions to \$9,000,000 for Belgium and \$6,000,000 for Northern France. There was no increase in this amount until November 1918, when the monthly subvention for Belgium was raised to \$20,000,000 for rehabilitation. There was no increase in the advances to France, and relief subventions to both were discontinued in March 1919 when relief purchases ceased and the Commission began liquidation.(107)

The following documents deal largely with the successful efforts of W. B. Poland, the European Director of the Commission, to secure the necessary funds from the Allied Treasuries for the Commission's European disbursements. Poland secured, first, certain advances which enabled the Commission to liquidate the overdrafts in London banks which it had been forced to make in order to keep the stream of supplies moving. This matter of European finance---like that of shipping---was put on a more satisfactory basis when, as a result of Poland's energetic representations to the newly formed Allied Supreme War Council, the Entente Powers adopted the principle that Belgian relief was a "war measure" and entitled to equal priority in the matter of finance and ships with other war activities.(108) This arrangement, however, deprived the Commission of some of its independence in Europe, for thereafter its program of ships and of food had to be passed on by the Allied Maritime Transport Council (A.M.T.C.)(109) and the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement (C.I.R.)(110)

This method of procedure(111) went into effect in January 1918, and from that time on the Commission liquidated its European costs through the British Ministries of Shipping and Food and the Admiralty. Relations with the A.M.T.C. and the C.I.R. were uniformly satisfactory.

DOCUMENT NO. 174

Letter,

POLAND TO PRIME MINISTER LLOYD GEORGE, asking for a decision from the British Government to guarantee, with France, the European expenses of the C.R.B. to prevent the breakdown of the relief work

LONDON, 21 December 1917

To the Right Honorable David Lloyd George, Prime Minister

SIR:

In the early days of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, now nearly three years ago, the scope of the work, the method of operation, and the safeguards in the form of German undertakings surrounding the ravitaillement of the populations of the invaded territories of Belgium and the North of France were carefully explained to you. We realized that your support of the work was absolutely essential to its continuance. You gave this support and have continued to give it, sometimes under adverse criticism.

A new and critical situation in respect of this work has now arisen, due to the inaction of the British Government, which, failing action on the part of the officers of the Foreign Office or the Treasury, we are now forced to bring to you.

During the early months of the brutal submarine campaign it was impossible for us to import anything approaching the proper ration for the 9,500,000 people for whose care we became the agents of the Governments and peoples of Belgium, France, Great Britain, and the United States.

On the basis of restricted imports the limited subsidies at our disposal sufficed for a number of months, although toward the end, with a deficit of nearly £1,000,000 per month.

In October, owing to the enormous increase in prices and to the fact that we are at last able to forward something approaching an adequate ration, the cost of the program of imports which after the most rigid inspection had been approved by the British Foreign Office and the French Government as absolutely necessary to maintain national life, was found to reach the figure of £5,500,000 per month, or \$26,000,000.

On October 20th, a memorandum was despatched by the Commission to the Governments of Great Britain, Belgium, and France, setting forth the whole situation as to food, ships, and finance, and request was made that adequate funds be immediately provided.

After numerous negotiations, the United States declared that it would provide in the form of loans \$15,000,000 per month for expenditure in the United States provided France and Great Britain would guarantee the European expenditures of the Relief, amounting to \$11,000,000.

At a meeting on November 25th, the French Government agreed to carry:

- a) The whole European cost of the ravitaillement of the French population.
- b) One-half of European cost of the ravitaillement of the Belgian population, provided England would carry the other half. It was requested that the Belgian Government be allowed to allocate to the Relief the necessary funds out of the joint loan of Frs. 500,000,000 made by France and Great Britain to Belgium.
- c) In order to overcome the very difficult situation regarding Guilder exchange and to furnish the Commission with the 6,000,000 guilders required for its monthly operations in Holland, the French Government authorized the Director of the Commission to effect a benevolent loan in Holland to the amount of 60,000,000 guilders, for which it agreed to deposit French Bons du Trésor and requested

England to give a like authorization and to agree to participate in the deposit of collateral.

This proposal was forwarded through the French Ambassador to the British Government.

Up to the present time, no answer has been received by the French Government, nor has the Commission for Relief been given any decision or any assistance by the British Government in the financing of this work. We have presented to both the Foreign Office and to the Treasury complete expositions of our financial situation and definite statements of what was required to keep the work of relief going.

Briefly, the situation is as follows:

In Holland we require from 6,000,000 to 7,000,000 florins per month for the payment of certain freights and insurances which cannot be paid elsewhere; for the unloading and despatch from Holland to Belgium and France of the cargoes imported; to pay for the purchases of from 5,000 to 10,000 tons of native Dutch produce which otherwise would have to be purchased overseas. Our funds in Holland will only carry this work to the 1st of January, after which date the relief of the invaded territories must absolutely cease, unless new credits are provided.

In the United Kingdom we have been carrying on operations only through the courtesy of the Banque Belge in granting us an unsecured overdraft, which overdraft must be repaid on January 1st. This overdraft now amounts to approximately £500,000 and will amount to £800,000 by December 31st.

We have requested of the Foreign Office the following action by the British Government:

1. That there be deposited at once in Holland to the credit of the Commission for Relief the sum of 6,000,000 florins.
2. That the British Government deposit in sterling, in London, to the credit of the Commission for Relief, the sum of £2,500,000 to meet the overdraft at the Banque Belge and to finance our operations for the month of January.

Failing such action being taken immediately, the Relief must cease.

I beg to call your attention to what we believe to be facts in regard to the relief, that is, that if ever the people of the invaded territories and likewise the people of France and the United States, and to a certain extent the people of England, come to know that the Allies have abandoned to starvation the 9,500,000 of their own people, the war will cease. The twenty-nine deputies of the North of France, the most influential in the French Assembly, are determined that their population shall be fed. They are able to combine at any moment with the Pacifist and Socialist

elements in France, and can, overnight, cause the downfall of any French Ministry which fails to declare the protection of the invaded regions part of their fundamental policy.

Through its representatives, the population of Belgium can exert a powerful force in the same direction, not only in France, but on its own army. There is no doubt that the recent conditions of semi-starvation which existed in the occupied territories drove some hundreds of thousands of excellent workmen and workwomen into the employ of the Germans, either in Belgium, Northern France, or in Germany, and this released to the front line trenches equivalent numbers of German soldiers. The correctness of this general estimate of the strategic and military aspect of the relief is assented to and concurred in unofficially by officers of the French Government. We should like an opportunity of discussing it with you.

The present situation of the Relief is absolutely critical and unless the British Government acts within the next few days this organization will be bankrupt and discredited, not only in the commercial sense but as to the reputation of its executives, who, depending upon the action of the British Government, have guaranteed to the Banque Belge protection of the overdraft.

Having apparently failed in bringing this situation to the realization of any of the officials of the British Government, as a last resort we are appealing to your sense of justice and humanity and military expediency, in which we have the most absolute confidence. I desire greatly to be accorded the privilege of an interview, in order to present this situation briefly, and have taken the liberty of thus addressing you at the suggestion of our Ambassador, Mr. Page.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director of Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 175

Letter,
BANQUE BELGE POUR L'ÉTRANGER, LONDON, TO THE COMMISSION,
requesting reimbursement of overdraft

LONDON, 22 December 1917

Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR SIRs:

We are in receipt of your letter of the 21st instant, and note that the overdraft you may require in the next few days may have to be increased to £600,000 or £700,000, to be repaid out of a remittance you expect.

As already explained such large overdrafts are not usually convenient at the end of the year when banks are making up accounts and calling in loans, and we trust that you may be in a position to reimburse the overdraft before the close of the year.

We are, dear Sirs,

Yours faithfully

BANQUE BELGE POUR L'ÉTRANGER

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DOCUMENT NO. 176

Telegram,
POLAND TO LLOYD GEORGE, stating that unless Allies agree as to financing C.R.B. European expenses it will be necessary to halt relief after 1 January 1918

LONDON, 27 December 1917

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DAVID LLOYD GEORGE, PRIME MINISTER

Following my communication to you of the twenty-first, as we have been advised of no action and as our funds were exhausted we were forced to stop all purchases of food in Holland and the United Kingdom which amount to about twenty-eight thousand tons per month. The French Government this afternoon have generously agreed to provide us with a temporary advance of one million pounds but this will only satisfy our overdraft and carry us until just over January first after which time unless the Allies are able to reach an understanding in regard to financing the work in Europe we shall be obliged to announce to the world that because of lack of funds we are no longer able to provide food for these people. I trust that before this grave action is forced on us you will grant us the opportunity which I have requested of presenting the case to you in person.

POLAND
Director for Europe
Commission Relief in Belgium

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DOCUMENT NO. 177

Telegram,
LLOYD GEORGE TO POLAND, referring him to the Treasury and the Foreign
Office

TREASURY, 1 January 1918

W. B. POLAND, ESQ.,
3 London Wall Buildings, E.C.

Matter referred to in telegram of the 27th December has been referred to
Chancellor of Exchequer and the Foreign Office for decision. Please communicate
with them.

LLOYD GEORGE

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DOCUMENT NO. 178

Letter,
POLAND TO LORD ROBERT CECIL, referring to the above telegram and asking
for a decision

LONDON, 1 January 1918

*Lord Robert Cecil,
The Foreign Office*

DEAR LORD ROBERT CECIL:

I have received today a telegram from Mr. Lloyd George, stating that the question of finances for the relief of the occupied territories of Belgium and France has been referred to the Foreign Office and the Treasury and requesting that I communicate with you and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. As I advised at the recent meeting on December 29th, the Relief has already had to be stopped in Holland as to purchases of food and in the United Kingdom as to purchases of both food and the terribly needed supply of clothing, and although we have had, indirectly, advice that the Treasury intend to cover our present overdraft with the Banque Belge, no credits have actually been given us nor has any arrangement been made for the further carrying on of the work. In accordance then, with the indications of the Prime Minister's telegram, will you not be good enough to advise what steps may be taken to bring the question to a definite conclusion.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 179

Letter,
FINANCIAL AGENT OF FRENCH GOVERNMENT, LONDON, TO POLAND,
advising that the funds at his disposal do not permit the payment to the
Commission of \$1,000,000 as authorized by his Government

LONDON, 28 December 1917

DEAR MR. POLAND:

After having received your letter of the 17th instant, I saw Monsieur Chevrillon, to whom I explained verbally the difficulties which prevented my giving satisfaction to your demand. I expected to meet him again but was not able to get in touch with him.

In spite of my lively desire to help you under these terrible circumstances, and in spite of receiving the authorization given to me by Monsieur the Financial Minister to pay you £1,000,000 (one million pounds), to my great regret I find it impossible to advance to you even for two or three days the sum which is necessary to you. The end of the year is indeed burdened with such heavy payments that cannot be deferred and which will leave no margin to the sums at my disposal.

Believe me, dear Mr. Poland, with many regrets, and my distinguished sentiments,

(Signed) F. AVENOL

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 180

Letter,
BRITISH TREASURY TO THE BELGIAN MINISTER IN LONDON, stating that
£750,000([112](#)) has been set aside for the use of the Commission

TREASURY CHAMBERS, LONDON
2 January 1918

*To His Excellency Baron Moncheur,
Belgian Minister in London*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

In reply to your letter of the 31st ultimo (No. 11366), I am directed by the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury to inform you that They are causing the sum of £750,000 to be transferred to the credit of the account of the Belgian Government at the Bank of England on the 2d inst.

I am to explain that Their Lordships have not hitherto had direct financial relations with the Commission for Relief in Belgium; any sums which the Commission has received from British funds have been advanced by Their Lordships as part of Their loans to the Belgian Government who have in turn made payments to the Commission. My Lords would prefer to continue this arrangement and They have therefore given directions for the above sum to be transferred to the credit of your Government instead of the Commission for Relief in Belgium as requested by you.

I am,

Your Excellency,

Your obedient Servant

(Signed) JOHN BRADBURY

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DOCUMENT NO. 181

Extract of letter,
POLAND TO HOOVER, concerning the financial embarrassment of the Commission in Europe and informing him that the Foreign Office was at that moment reconsidering the whole matter

LONDON, 2 January 1918

Herbert Hoover, Washington

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am sending you attached financial correspondence which may be of interest and value to you in keeping you thoroughly posted as to just what we have been doing over here. This begins where our last communication ended and carries up to date. The extraordinary situation through which we have been going is perfectly harrowing and we are never quite sure whether we ought to continue our attitude of

courtesy or kick and cuff. However, we are keeping in touch with Mr. Page on the general lines and believe that up to the present time it has been proper to be somewhat restrained in our attitude, recognizing the enormous difficulties that all governments have to face in these times; but I must say that almost all the sweet Christian spirit has been lost by representatives of the Commission in London, and we believe that forbearance has nearly ceased to be a virtue. In reply to a demand for a personal interview with Lord Robert Cecil, today his secretary advised that the Foreign Office was again considering the whole position and would probably call upon me for an interview later in the day. Before this letter has reached you, undoubtedly the matter will have been settled in some way

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 182

Memorandum,
from FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO POLAND, giving agreement of British, French, and Belgian Governments regarding the handling of C.R.B. European purchases and expenditures

LONDON, 5 January 1918

The French Government has just informed Mr. Paul Cambon that in the course of a meeting held in Paris the 2d January, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Van de Vyvere, and Mr. Sergent, after having examined how the C.R.B. could be put in a position to pay the expenses in Europe, agreed on the following arrangement:

The amount of the European expenses, the monthly amount of which is limited provisionally to the maximum of one million five hundred thousand pounds, will be borne as to one-third by the French Government. The other two-thirds will be advanced in equal parts to the Belgian Government by each of the Governments British and French.

The contract of expenses will be centralized in the Commission de Ravitaillement, London. The expenses approved by the representatives of the French and English Treasuries alone will be provided from the advances of the two Governments. These approvals will be subordinated to the observation of the following conditions:

1. No purchase of raw materials or goods which it is possible to procure in the United States will be provided for from the above indicated advances;

2. Authorization for purchase in neutral countries where the exchange is difficult will not necessarily be accorded and will depend on the financial situation of the moment;

3. The rations of foodstuffs and clothing may be submitted to a revision after arrangement between the French and British Governments, according to circumstances, and following notices which may be given by the Minister of Blockade;

4. To fix the total of purchases, the possibilities of revictualment and tonnage of the Allies as a whole will be taken into account.

The agreement takes effect from January 1918. If it should be proved that the provisional limit of one million five hundred thousand pounds per month is insufficient, the question of the monthly figure will be officially re-examined.

During the meeting there was an exchange of remarks, which should be considered as a complement to this agreement:

It was understood that the C.R.B. should attempt in Holland the realization of a loan destined for the payment of the expenses it incurs there. This negotiation would be independent of that which the Allies are pursuing with a similar object, and would have priority over that of the Allies. The C.R.B. will be authorized in its negotiations to offer the guarantee of the two Governments. Mr. Bonar Law, who, before giving the British guarantee, had expressed the wish that the Government of the United States should add theirs, has withdrawn this previous reservation and has declared himself as disposed to give every facility to the C.R.B. to conclude a loan in Holland.

The French Government would be happy to see the British Government take measures without delay for the putting into execution of this agreement. It would be advisable particularly to authorize the Belgian Government to take from its advances the sum of £500,000 sterling referring to the month of January.

The British Government should also inform Mr. Poland of its favorable views regarding the proposed operation in Holland, concerning which it would be good for the representative of the C.R.B. to immediately commence negotiations. The French Government has already promised its guarantee as far as it is concerned.

[Translation]

Memorandum

of meeting, MAJOR MONFRIES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY OF THE C.I.R. [Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement], AND POLAND AND SHALER OF THE C.R.B., on relations of C.R.B. and C.I.R.

LONDON, 1 February 1918,

The object of the meeting was to clearly define the understanding of the C.I.R. as to the application of the measures of control of C.R.B. operations outlined at the joint meeting, Paris, on January 2d, between representatives of the British Treasury, the French Ministry of Finance, the Belgian Minister of Finance, and Mr. O. T. Crosby, Assistant Secretary of the United States Treasury.

Operations in the United Kingdom.---Major Monfries stated that the operation would be that, in accordance with the approved programme, requisition would be made on the C.I.R. for such commodities as would be furnished from the United Kingdom. These might cover individual requisitions or monthly programmes. Possibly this might be extended to cover periods of three months. The orders would then be submitted to the various British Heads of Departments, who would fill these orders if practicable or refuse them. In case they were filled, the commodities would be turned over to the Commission at designated points and the various Departments would reimburse themselves by drafts on the Treasury, which would in turn be charged against the monthly subsidies of the Belgian and French Governments in the agreed proportion of approximately one-third to England and two-thirds to France. Statements covering the charges would be submitted to the C.R.B. monthly or from time to time by each of the Departments separately.

Existing contracts would be considered as definite commitments and would be provided for.

Charters.---It is the understanding of the C.I.R. that when neutral charters are offered to the Relief they will be referred to the Inter-Allied Chartering Board([113](#)) (either direct or through the C.I.R.), who in case it is possible to arrange the charters will make to the C.R.B. the proper notification, or otherwise would advise them of the impossibility of making the charters, and in this case would endeavour to make other shipping arrangements. The owners would be paid direct by the Department of Ship Control, who would draw against the Treasury as in case of purchases, submitting to the Commission statements of expense.

It was stated that the Commission would no longer be allowed to arrange for its own Cross-Channel shipments, but such charters would be handled in the same manner as the neutral charters above. Existing charters would be considered as definite commitments, and would be provided for.

London Overhead Administration Disbursements.---It was outlined that a general statement was to be submitted by the Commission to the C.I.R. monthly of C.R.B. financial requirements of this character, whereupon it is the understanding of the C.I.R. that the necessary funds will be put at the disposal of the C.R.B. by the Treasury, probably by credits arranged through the Belgian Government. The disbursements of the C.R.B. to be made in the usual manner.

Operations in Holland---The understanding is that the general programme of purchases and financial requirements for each month will first be approved by being submitted to the C.I.R. After this the operations will be carried out as at present by the Rotterdam office of the C.R.B.

In case it is possible to arrange a Relief Loan all the operations will be exactly as at present within the limits of the authorized monthly program. In case such loan cannot be arranged, the various departments of the British Government must be called upon to arrange guilder credits in order that the operations may continue.

As to the present situation, there being outstanding liabilities in excess of the funds in hand, a general statement is to be at once submitted to the C.I.R., which promises to arrange for funds to meet the commitments and to prevent the interruption of operations without the necessity of overdrafts.

It was understood that a general financial programme for Holland should be submitted monthly. It was stated by the representatives of the C.R.B. that owing to the requirements of their accountancy vs. the Belgian and French Governments, it would be much more desirable to have the same procedure followed that has been in force up to the present time, to wit, that all subsidies should be paid over to the Commission in monthly instalments and as necessary, disbursements should be made to the various departments by the C.R.B. itself. However, the outline of Major Monfries as above would be carefully gone into to see whether under it the C.R.B. will be able to carry out its obligations to the Belgian and French Governments.

DOCUMENT NO. 184

Letter,

HOOVER TO SECRETARY McADOO, stating increased financial requirements of Commission for rehabilitation of Belgium, of which the President has approved

WASHINGTON, 13 November 1918

*Hon. William G. McAdoo,
Secretary of the Treasury*

DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

BELGIAN RELIEF

You will please find enclosed herewith copy of the letter of instructions sent to me by the President, and I am informed by him that he has transmitted to the various departments the necessary directions as to solution of this problem. I am addressing you on some matters of organization separately.

In accordance with the approval of the President at today's conference, I beg to confirm that the Treasury will increase advances for food and clothing to the Relief through the Belgian Government up to a maximum of \$20,000,000 per month and to make such provisions as would give three months' notice before termination of this arrangement.

The immediate necessities of Belgium in my view are absolutely essential military measures. This population must be maintained or it will become an impediment to future military action by the Allies if this should prove necessary.

The undernourished condition of the population necessitates an immediate increase in its food program, and this is more especially emphasized by the denudation of the country of such stocks of foods as remained in the country from last harvest by the retreating German Army.

In order to provide food there will be required an expenditure of \$17,000,000 a month for purchases in the United States, until such a time as conditions return to normal. Further than this, the population has had no textiles for four years except secondhand clothing, and immediate steps must be taken to provide clothing or raw material for its manufacture. In this matter we need to expend a total of about \$20,000,000 spread over perhaps three months, and in this we can probably relieve the Quartermaster of certain stores. Altogether, it appears to me that it will be necessary to provide from the United States Government at least a sum of \$20,000,000 per month for purchases plus unspent credits in the United States. In addition to this, I am very hopeful of being able to set up credits in New York from Belgian banks to American banks, which will carry on a considerable program of industrial rehabilitation. Such arrangements, however, to be with the approval of the Treasury.

It is impossible for us to proceed with this great program without assurances from the Treasury that it will be supported, for on sudden cessation the population would starve, and we shall be left suddenly with large orders and commitments that cannot be compassed. It would ordinarily require at least three months to make the necessary changes. I realize the pulls on the Treasury at this time and, to some degree, the difficulties under which the Treasury operates; on the other hand, these measures are vital not only to the maintenance of the state of war, but in the

continuance of our future policies in Europe. The advances would obviously need to be made to the Belgian Government through the Belgian Minister, and he is presenting a program of this order.

I believe that the Belgian Government should provide for the funds from other quarters for transportation and distribution of this program, and Mr. Davis and I will endeavor to insist upon this provision in Europe.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER V

SHIPS

The procurement of ships in which to transport food was no less important than the procurement of funds with which to buy it. And more than any other department of the C.R.B.'s activities shipping was directly affected by the course of military events. Shipping problems began in the last days of October 1914, when Hoover secured, not without difficulty, British permits for the dispatch of the "Iris" and "Coblentz" from London to Rotterdam; they continued in growing complexity until five months before the Armistice in 1918, when the Allies and the United States authorities having decided to regard relief as a "war measure," agreed to furnish sufficient tonnage for the needs of the work. No question --- unless it were finance --- was more persistently difficult than ships, and none was more vital to Belgian relief.

As is well known the shortage of ships very nearly caused the Allies to lose the war. The great crisis did not come until 1917, but long before that time the mounting needs of the Allies and the steadily diminishing tonnage available were reflected in the troubles of the C.R.B. These troubles, which shippers everywhere experienced to a greater or less degree, were augmented for the Commission because its tonnage requirements were so great and because its ships, to reach their destination at Rotterdam, had to cross the narrow seas where the naval war, carried on largely under water, was most intense. The hazards of mine and submarine were great, and owners, reasonably enough, preferred to employ their ships elsewhere on equally profitable and less dangerous voyages. Moreover, since the C.R.B. ships crossed and recrossed both the British and German blockade lines, complicated regulations were established and frequently revised by the blockade officials.

Notable among these requirements were: the C.R.B. flag; special markings; safe-conduct passes; and special sailing routes.

The first phase of the shipping story concerns British and German permits, regulations, and guarantees and successful efforts of the Commission to secure immunity to non-neutral vessels under its flag. The second, the effects of the German "War Zone" decree of 1915. The third, Hoover's various projects in 1915-16 to secure ships for relief service, i.e., the use of interned German ships; the employment of United States naval colliers; negotiations leading to the acquisition by the Commission of ships under the Belgian flag as an inadequate but permanent relief fleet, and the plans to purchase additional vessels. Then came the great crisis: the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, its disastrous effects on relief shipping, and Hoover's and Poland's efforts in America and London to prevent drastic curtailment of the C.R.B. requirements, and finally, the successful negotiations with Allied and American authorities in 1918 for the provision of sufficient ships for relief.

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1. The C.R.B. Flag. November-December 1914

On the 20th October 1914 the British Foreign Office informed Ambassador Page(114) that the Government was not stopping the shipment of food supplies for the civil population of Belgium from *neutral* countries in *neutral* ships. This negative and limited acquiescence to the penetration of the blockade quickly proved inadequate to the needs of the Commission, which aimed at the necessary program of 80,000 tons of provisions each month calling for the employment of forty ocean steamers under continuous charter. There was no huge volume of neutral shipping, and that procurable was extremely expensive. Hoover, recognizing that transportation was a major problem, at once approached the British Foreign Office for further concessions. On the 5th November 1914 he asked Sir Edward Grey(115) to give special privileges to relief cargoes, and suggested that the real solution to the shipping troubles was to permit the Commission to charter ships flying the British flag. In addition to his request for permission to use *non-neutral* vessels in the relief service Hoover asked that Government Insurance(116) be made available for British ships in the C.R.B. service. As far as the Commission was concerned these two concessions were closely connected as owners would not charter their vessels to make the hazardous passage across the North Sea to Rotterdam without this insurance.

Before granting these concessions the British demanded further guarantees from the German Government not to interfere with any ships in the Commission's service. This assurance the Germans promptly gave. Out of these negotiations came the Commission's own flag on the seas, the special markings of its vessels, and the rigid system of British and German safe-conduct passes for each relief voyage.

DOCUMENT NO. 185

Letter,
HOOVER TO PERCY, regarding British safe-conduct passes for C.R.B. ships

LONDON, 8 November 1914

*Lord Eustace Percy,
Foreign Office, London*

DEAR LORD PERCY:

Presuming on your kind offer to give us occasional advice in our struggles I should be glad to know if it would be a possible thing for us to approach the Foreign Office through the proper channels to obtain the following scheme, viz.: that some kind of document should be issued by the Foreign Office which would serve as a pass for our complete cargoes consigned to the Commission for Relief in Belgium care of the American and/or Spanish Ministers, Rotterdam; these passes to be sent by us to the ports where we have ships being despatched and to be there viséd by the British Consul and to be attached to the bill of lading and taken up with the bill of lading when the ship arrives. Such a document asking immunity from all British Naval Authorities would be of great encouragement to the people who are contributing free gift ships---as there is some alarm in their minds that the ships may be lost.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

[Fig. 6. Letter, 8 March 1915, Sir Edward Grey to Hoover.](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 186

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, concerning British Government insurance for C.R.B. ships

LONDON, 10 November 1914

Had a discussion with Ambassador Page in the matter of the statement by Sir Edward Grey on the question of the British Government insuring the ships of this

Commission, Sir Edward having made the statement that the British Government would be a great deal influenced in this matter if the German Government would undertake to interfere in no way with the Commission's shipping. I drafted a cablegram to Mr. Gerard setting out the position to him and asking him to interest himself in securing from the German Government a series of passports for our ships leaving the United States. This cablegram was dispatched through the American Embassy to Mr. Gerard, via Washington.

DOCUMENT NO. 187

"Note Verbale,"

GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMERICAN AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN,
giving Ding consent to the C.R.B. to use non-neutral ships for relief shipments into Rotterdam

BERLIN, 23 November 1914

TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Department of Foreign Affairs has the honor to reply to the Embassy relative to the "Note Verbale" of November 14th F.O. 1105, that the Imperial Government is entirely in sympathy with the efforts of the American Commission in Brussels, designed to supply food to the population.

For this reason the Imperial Government would consent willingly, at least for the present, reserving the right to revoke this consent should it become necessary, that foodstuffs should be sent to Dutch ports even in other than neutral vessels, and would grant, in such a case, for the use of those foodstuffs, the same guarantee as if the delivery were made in neutral ships.

In order to avoid seizure by German warships, it is recommended that these non-neutral ships be provided with a certificate by the proper American authority in which it shall be declared that these ships carry foodstuffs which are being transported by the American Relief Committee, with the consent of the German Government, to Belgium through Dutch ports for the purpose of feeding the Belgian population. Further, these non-neutral ships should have a passport drawn up in the form given below and issued by the Imperial German Embassy in Washington.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 188

Letter,
BRITISH ADMIRALTY TO THE COMMISSION, giving permission to a British ship with C.R.B. cargo to proceed to Rotterdam, but withholding insurance

LONDON, 27 November 1914

John Beaver White, Esq.
The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

SIR:

In further reply to your letter of the 25th instant, I am now in a position to inform you that the proposed voyage of the S.S. "Badminton" has been carefully considered.

It has been decided, so far as the Admiralty are concerned, that the vessel may undertake the voyage to Rotterdam, but will not be held covered against War Risks under the Government Insurance scheme.

I feel convinced that you will realize that owing to the inevitable risk which a vessel must run on such a voyage it would be inequitable to expose shipowners, subscribing to a system of mutual insurance, to risk of pecuniary loss on a voyage which the Admiralty cannot recommend.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

DOCUMENT NO. 189

Circular letter,
ADMIRALTY TRADE DIVISION TO BRITISH WAR RISK CLUBS, suggesting that shipowners decline to carry cargoes to Dutch ports

ADMIRALTY WAR STAFF,
LONDON 2 December 1914

SIR:

Cases are constantly occurring of applications being made by British Shipowners as to the safety or otherwise of the route to Dutch ports.

Quite apart from the safety or otherwise of the routes, it is pointed out that the Admiralty considers it most undesirable that any British vessels should be employed in adding to the already very large supplies of grain, etc., which are flowing into Holland.

As you are aware, the Admiralty do not put an absolute prohibition on such voyage, but merely rule it out of the permissible voyages under the Insurance Scheme.

At the same time, it is hoped that British Shipowners will in future decline to carry any such cargoes, and I should be much obliged if you would circularize the members of your club accordingly.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

DOCUMENT NO. 190

Letter,

PERCY TO HOOVER, regarding the policy of the Admiralty in connection with shipments to Rotterdam

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
6 December 1914

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have just got your letter and have represented the position strongly to Captain Webb. I think you will now be sure that the circular([117](#)) referred to matters totally different from the trade in which you are engaged, and that all we now have to do is to make it clear to shipowners that this circular does not supersede or alter in any way the policy expressed in Captain Webb's letters to Mr. White. I will push this matter with all the force I can.

The last paragraph of your letter does not exactly represent what I understand to be the position. The question of the employment of British ships by you, with or without an assurance from the German Government, was received by Sir Edward, together with all the other questions you raised at that interview, for the decision of the Cabinet. Such a decision has never been come to, but I have let this matter drop because you were able to settle the question direct with the Admiralty, who are responsible. The question of *amount of risk involved to British shipping by a*

voyage to Rotterdam is one which can be better and more expeditiously settled direct between you and the Admiralty---it is far better in such business matters to deal with the officials concerned direct than with Cabinet Ministers! That is the only question which the Admiralty have to decide; the question of the desirability of facilitating your business in every way which is compatible with the interests of the people of this country has already been settled long ago by the Cabinet. That decision stands and you must not let the momentary difficulties created by the action of overworked officials at the Admiralty or elsewhere dishearten you. Neither must you feel hurt if I put up to you from time to time the unfounded rumors we hear about what is happening in Belgium. I want to nail lies as they come up, but you mustn't take any such enquiry as indicating that our sympathy with you in your work is slackening in any way. Whatever appearances may be, please accept my word of honour that we only desire to help, not to interfere.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 191

Letter,

ADMIRALTY TRADE DIVISION TO HOOVER, concerning C.R.B. ships for Rotterdam, enclosing second circular letter to War Risk Clubs

ADMIRALTY WAR STAFF, LONDON
7 December 1914

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Lord Eustace Percy has told me of your letter to him concerning trade to Rotterdam, and in this connection I beg to enclose copy of letter which has been sent to the War Risk Clubs in regard to the vessels which you are proposing specially to charter to take foodstuffs for the Belgian refugees.

I need hardly point out that the circular asking British shipowners not to trade to Holland was in no way intended to hamper the work of your Commission, but was dictated by other considerations in connection with the war in which Great Britain is engaged.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

TO BRITISH WAR RISK CLUBS:

In reference to my letter of the 2d instant, respecting voyages of British vessels to Dutch ports, I beg to state that the desire expressed therein was not intended to apply to ships carrying supplies for the Belgian Relief Commission.

The Admiralty, while unable to allow such voyages to be made under cover of the Government Insurance Scheme, are anxious not to hinder the work of the Relief Commission.

Will you be good enough to inform those members of the London group of War Risk Associations who are concerned in the matter.

The list of vessels probably chartered for this purpose is attached.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

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DOCUMENT NO. 192

Extract of letter,
HOOVER TO RUNCIMAN, requesting extension of British Government insurance to cover C.R.B. ships to Rotterdam

LONDON, 10 December 1914

The Right Honorable Walter Runciman, M.P.
Board of Trade, London

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The second matter is one of great importance to us---and that is the question of British Government Insurance on cargoes and vessels going to Rotterdam for our purpose.

Although the circular issued by the Trade Division of the Admiralty to British owners suggesting that they should refrain from going to Rotterdam was amended to the extent that the wishes of the Government did not extend to our ships, the amended circular stated that the British Government Insurance would not apply.

It appears that it had been the impression of the Protective Clubs that British Government Insurance did apply to their ships engaged on this mission and the owners with whom we now have charters are compelled to take out independent insurance at Lloyd's. Furthermore, the moral effect upon the shipping world has been so great as to make it almost impossible for us to secure ships at all at any price. The rates have been advanced in an extraordinary manner for Rotterdam, and this combined with the insurance put upon us bids fair to cost us something like £30,000 to £40,000 extra over what could be done if the British Government Insurance applied to our ships as far as Rotterdam.

I have taken the matter up with the Belgian Government and they have agreed that they will undertake to guarantee the British Government against any loss which might be incurred on that section of the voyage from British waters to Rotterdam and return, and I understand they are prepared to do this without receiving any proportion of the premium, so that if the British Government could see its way to extend the Government Insurance to all our vessels to Rotterdam the effect would not only be actual in facilitating insurance but would be of the greatest moral and material benefit to us in inducing the British shipowners to give us their help.

Some time since, in an interview with Sir Edward Grey, he suggested that if an undertaking could be obtained from the German Government that ships engaged on our work would not be interfered with, it might facilitate the views of the British Government as to the extension of insurance, although he could give no undertaking in the matter. We have obtained this assurance from the German Government so that so far as the risk extends to naval action, that has been eliminated not only for the portion of the voyage from British waters to Rotterdam but also throughout the ship's whole voyage, thus to some extent possibly reducing the total risk.

I would therefore greatly appreciate it if you could reconsider the whole insurance question and see if the Government could manage to meet our difficulty to this extent. As you are perhaps aware, we had originally hoped to receive some subsidy from the British Government in this work, but I understand that the Government is not inclined to participate to this extent, and you can quite readily appreciate our anxiety to reduce expenditure at any point so that such funds as we have may produce the maximum results in the way of foodstuffs introduced to the civil population in Belgium. Such a concession as the above would not represent any direct outlay on the part of the Government but would represent to us a material subsidy.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 193

Letter,
HOOVER TO RUNCIMAN, concerning the benefits of the Government War Risk Insurance to C.R.B. ships

LONDON, 21 December 1914

The Right Honorable Walter Runciman, M.P.
Board of Trade, London

DEAR MR. RUNCIMAN:

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your valued favor of the 19th instant.

It is quite right that the ships that I wrote you about on the 10th instant are conveying only foodstuffs for the relief of the civil population of Belgium, all of which are shipped and distributed under the auspices of this Commission. Such being the case we understand from your letter that your Board will give such ships the benefit of the Government War Risk Insurance Scheme, and we will therefore be obliged if you will be good enough to notify the Shipowners Protective Associations so that the matter will be made clear to all concerned. We have received from the Admiralty general consent for the steamers proceeding and they have advised that they will give special consent for each ship if required.

We thank you most sincerely for what you have done for us in this matter.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 194

Telegram,
PAGE TO U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE, regarding ships with whole cargoes for Belgian relief

LONDON, 28 December 1914

SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

The Foreign Office informs me that the British naval authorities will undertake in the future to facilitate the voyage only of such charity ships to Rotterdam as contain whole cargoes of food for Belgian relief. It is important therefore that such ships

should not contain other cargo, and to secure this protection all ships for Belgium relief must be reported by Lindon Bates, the Commission's representative in New York, to the British Ambassador in Washington. After conferring with Sir Cecil Spring Rice it might be advantageous to give this arrangement wide publicity because certain societies and committees continue to ship contributions of food on ships that carry other cargo.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

DOCUMENT NO. 195

Example of statement
required of masters of ships using the C.R.B. flag

ROTTERDAM, 27 January 1915

I undersigned, J. Hutcheon, Master of the British Steamer "Polvarth," do hereby solemnly promise and declare *not* to use the flag entrusted to me by *The Commission for Relief in Belgium* for any purpose whereby any of the belligerent nations have an advantage.

I further promise *not to take any cargo on my homeward trip*, whilst flying the Commission's flag, and undertake to deliver this flag immediately on arrival at the first port of call in the U.K.

(Signed) J. HUTCHEON, *Master*

DOCUMENT NO. 196

"Note Verbale,"
GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMERICAN AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN,
stating certification required for non-neutral ships carrying C.R.B. cargoes

BERLIN, 24 December 1914

TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, BERLIN

In supplement of its "Note Verbale" of 23d November 1914, No. II WK Be 179, relative to the supply of food for the population of Belgium, the Foreign Office has the honor to inform the Embassy of the United States of America that it appears desirable that the following statements should be included in the certificates with which nonneutral vessels are to be provided:

a) The express declaration:

1. That the ship contains solely food (and clothing) for the population of Belgium to be unloaded in a Dutch port;
2. An undertaking of the master of the vessel on his word of honor to abstain from any and all actions on the outward or return voyage, involving assistance to our opponents.

b) It is further desired that the following should be pointed out in the certificates:

3. That certificate and pass are valid only for the single *outward* voyage, and are to be delivered to the German Consul upon arrival at the Dutch port of destination, or to the German Minister at The Hague if there is no such consul. Similar papers for the return voyage will be issued by the Imperial German Legation at The Hague;
4. That the papers do not bar a search of the vessel and the cargo must be stowed so that search can be conducted quickly and easily;
5. That the date of departure from the United States is to be communicated to the Imperial German Ambassador at Washington, the date of departure from the Netherlands on the return voyage is to be communicated to the Imperial German Minister at The Hague;
6. That an offence against these provisions or against the obligations assumed works forfeiture of all rights to preferential treatment.

The Foreign Office begs to request the Embassy of the United States of America to be good enough to take the necessary steps in order that the certificates may be worded in accordance with what has been stated above.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 197

Copy of
German safe-conduct pass issued to ships used by the C.R.B.

The undersigned Imperial Minister hereby certifies on the strength of the arrangement concluded between the Imperial Government and the Government of the United States of America that the

British Steamer "John Hardie"
Master *James Walker*

has on board exclusively goods of the American Commission for Relief in Belgium intended for the suffering civil population in Belgium.

1. It is valid only for the present homeward voyage via Cardiff or Barry and must be delivered immediately upon arrival in an American port to the local Imperial German General-Consul or to the Imperial German Ambassador at Washington.
2. The Master has undertaken upon his word of honor to abstain during the outward and return voyages from any or all actions that may involve assistance to Germany's enemies.
3. Vessels of the Imperial Navy have the right to search the ship.
4. In case of non-compliance with the above conditions the ships lose all right to preferential treatment.

THE HAGUE, February 6th, 1915

The German Minister

(Signed) VON MUELLER

2. The German "War Zone" of 1915. February-April 1915

The German "War Zone" specified in the declaration of the 4th February 1915 included all the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland and the English Channel. After the 18th February every enemy merchant ship met in these waters was to be destroyed and neutrals were warned that it might not be possible to prevent attacks on their ships since the British were alleged to be using neutral flags. Although paragraph 6 of the German Admiralty's instructions of the 18th February 1915 to U-boat commanders provided that the Commission's ships should be spared, the C.R.B. was advised to direct its vessels to avoid the war zone and to follow a course designated by the German Admiralty around the north of Scotland and thence down the eastern part of the North Sea and through a lane twenty miles wide along the Dutch coast. For many reasons, not unknown to the German Government, it was impossible for the Commission to follow the German stipulations and maintain the program of imports into Belgium. Some of these reasons are given in the following documents.

The Commission's oversea purchases came largely from North America where the vessels were supplied with German safe-conducts at the time of departure. Important supplements to these shipments were cargoes of maize from South America and of rice from India. Following the trade custom the Commission

bought many of these cargoes afloat as they were en route to England. The vessels with these cargoes could not be ordered to Rotterdam without entering the war zone since the British required that all relief cargoes which included those from North America report at a British port for Admiralty inspection. Moreover these vessels had to be furnished with a German safe-conduct which could not be provided if the vessels did not put in at a British port. The Commission also bought large quantities of supplies in the London market and shipped these in small cross-channel boats which had to traverse the war zone to reach Rotterdam. All these vessels, after discharging at Rotterdam and receiving a new German safe-conduct, were obliged to put in at some British port for bunker coal, thus braving the war zone again. It was not until April 1915 that the German Government, as a result of Hoover's energetic protests, agreed to permit relief steamers to call at British ports and to cross the English Channel immune from attack. In the meantime the relief steamer "Harpalyce," outward bound in ballast from Rotterdam, was torpedoed in the North Sea.

DOCUMENT NO. 198

Letter,
GERMAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, TO C.R.B., NEW YORK,
recommending that in view of the German "war zone" declaration, C.R.B. ships
take the northern route to Rotterdam

GERMAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON
15 February 1915

Lindon W. Bates, Esq., New York City

DEAR MR. BATES,

With reference to the recent declaration of a war zone around the English coast I beg to draw your attention to the fact that, though of course the German commanders will do their best to avoid any mistake, *every* ship entering the war zone will be in danger. Also the letters of safe-conduct which this Embassy gives to the relief ships will not remove this danger as an examination of these papers by submarines will probably not be feasible inside the war zone. I can therefore only very strongly recommend that the relief ships take the course north of Scotland indicated by the German Admiralty.

Yours very truly

(Signed) E. v. HANIEL

DOCUMENT NO. 199

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., NEW YORK, protesting against German requirements that
C.R.B. ships take northern route

LONDON, 17 February 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Please inform German Ambassador our British Admiralty and Board of Trade regulations and all our charter parties require all our ships call Falmouth for orders and necessitate proceeding direct Rotterdam through Straits, otherwise all charter parties break down and will be impossible enforce delivery. Last Monday in Berlin I discussed matter with Secretary Foreign Affairs who assured me as ships are marked and can cross Channel in daylight Germans would give instructions they not be interfered with in accordance their previous undertaking with us. Unless we can proceed as usual route entire supply to Belgium will break down.(118)

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 200

Telegram,
C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, TO HOOVER, advising that German Minister at The
Hague refuses safe-conduct passes except to Relief vessels returning direct to
America via northern route

ROTTERDAM, 25 February 1915

HOOVER, LONDON

We have just been advised by local German Consul that German Ambassador Hague refuses to give return passes to steamers employed by our Commission, except those holding papers from American ports, and these passes are only good for return via northern route. German Consul unable advise at what port steamer can call in England when proceeding by northern route. Have taken up with American Legation Hague, and they are now asking for definite statement from German Minister there, and will also take up with Gerard in Berlin. German Legation Hague refuses any kind of pass on steamers purchased en route. Are you guaranteeing safe return of all steamers from Rotterdam to United Kingdom ports? Will advise result of Hague negotiations as soon as possible. Three steamers have left Rotterdam for England without passes but are using Commission flag, namely: "Treneglos," "Ariel" "Rockabill."

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 201

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, protesting against German regulations
outlined in preceding document

LONDON, 26 February 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Please telegraph Whitlock and Gerard fully result your negotiations and also forward each of them following telegram from me and I am sending it direct to Van Dyke. Begins: Utterly impossible for us to procure sufficient food supplies for Belgium exclusively from North American ports and are therefore compelled to buy floating cargoes and to engage foodstuffs from other quarters of the world, some of which are transhipped from British ports. Furthermore utterly impossible for us to deliver one pound of foodstuff in Rotterdam if ships required to go or come north of British Islands as shipping cannot be engaged under this condition, and unless German Government is prepared to give instructions that the markings on our ships, which are visible for miles, and our flag, are to be respected in the passage of ships to and from British ports to Rotterdam engaged solely on our work, the whole business becomes absolutely hopeless. No ships will use our markings unless on our mission. We are only securing the passage of these ships by virtue of the insistence on our part that our flag will be respected under the agreements which we have with the German Government and the assurances given to me personally by His Excellency von Jagow, and if the German Government is no longer prepared to respect our flag and their undertakings to us it appears to us that our efforts must come to an end. I cannot believe that there is any intention on the part of the German Government to otherwise than assist in every way in their power this humanitarian effort. Ends.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 202

Letter,
VON JAGOW TO GERARD, granting permission to C.R.B. ships to use the
Channel route

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN

5 March 1915

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

Many thanks for your kind letter of the 1st instant enclosing a copy of the telegram of Mr. Hoover. Herr von Bethmann Hollweg and I retain the most pleasing remembrance of Mr. Hoover and both he and Your Excellency may rest assured that the Imperial Government maintains its former attitude to afford the humanitarian work of the Relief Commission on the part of Germany every possible support.

We had also been informed of Mr. Hoover's anxiety through our Legation at The Hague, and I had thereupon ascertained at once through the Imperial Admiralty that ships of the Relief Commission should also proceed undisturbed by the English Channel route provided that they be recognizable by the customary insignia, which should also be illuminated so as to be plainly visible at night. The German submarines have been instructed accordingly. Herr von Mueller at The Hague will in the meantime have advised Mr. Hoover of this fact through the American Minister at The Hague.

In this connection we must naturally assume that all means will be taken to exclude the possibility of a misuse of the insignia of the Relief Commission. To this end the Imperial Foreign Office will invoke again in an official communication the kind mediation of Your Excellency to obtain from the British Government a declaration containing the assurance that only those ships that are actually in the service of the Relief Commission may carry the insignia of the Commission.

As Your Excellency will easily understand, we were unable, in view of the existing danger from mines in the war zone, to refrain from declining to issue safe-conducts to the ships of the Commission for the journey to and from England. On the other hand, we will gladly issue safe-conducts, as heretofore, to those ships of the Commission which do not touch at English points, and at the same time urgently recommend them, precisely on account of the danger from mines, to choose the northern route around Scotland indicated in the "Nachrichten für Seefahrer," No. 3161, 1914.

We believe that in this manner all the wishes of the Relief Commission, whose efforts cannot too highly be appreciated, have been met as regards sea traffic.

I am happy to avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 203

Telegram,
PAGE TO GERARD, protesting against German refusal to grant passes to British ports

LONDON, 18 April 1915

AMBASSADOR GERARD, BERLIN

The refusal German Minister Hague to issue safe-conduct passes to relief ships from Rotterdam to British ports amounts in effect to withdrawal of German undertaking Not to interfere with ships engaged in this humanitarian task and whole problem this shipping needs renewed understanding with German Government. In order to get matters clear they should understand: first, that while relief cargoes from America bear safe-conduct to Rotterdam from German Ambassador, yet they are compelled to call at Falmouth to secure permission from British Admiralty to proceed, thus are compelled touch British ports; second, owing high prices American food supplies, nearly one-half relief cargoes are now River Plate and Indian cargoes bought afloat, which come into Falmouth for orders and only at this point come under control Commission, and at Falmouth they receive Commission markings and British permit to proceed, therefore the Commission should be supplied from The Hague with German safe-conduct passes which they can hand to captains at Falmouth to carry them to Rotterdam; third, practically all the Commission's ships are engaged for only one single voyage, and ships leave Commission's service not when they have discharged at Rotterdam but when they have returned in ballast to their next loading port, which is almost universally United Kingdom; also even when engaged for second voyage they must under British orders call at United Kingdom port and in any event usually must do so for coal. Commission totally unable induce ships go Rotterdam unless they can assure them safe-conduct return.

In conclusion Commission must have right to secure from German Minister Hague, upon application and usual declarations undertakings and markings safe-conduct passes from United Kingdom ports to Rotterdam and likewise on application at Hague must receive passes for ships from Rotterdam to United Kingdom or other port where she is proceeding in ballast. Otherwise British Admiralty will refuse issue any permits for British ships proceed to Rotterdam and as there are practically only British ships available whole business comes to an end.[\(119\)](#) All these ships carry vivid markings of the Commission and the Commission puts every ship under bond to surrender markings upon reaching destination of her service; moreover

British Government has entered widest undertaking not to use and to prevent use these markings for any other purpose than the Commission's work. The whole requires most energetic solution as the irritation growing here over sinking of "Harpalyce" is developing the hand of that party opposed on military grounds to feeding the Belgians; and if German Government is desirous Commission should be able to continue it requires complete agreement by them with these moderate requests and better precautions that Commission's markings shall be respected. Moreover if it develops that sinking "Harpalyce" was done by torpedo in broad daylight without warning while carrying Commission markings and safe-conduct pass it appears that German Government to preserve its good name and faith should take some appropriate action.

PAGE

DOCUMENT NO. 204

Extract of telegram,
C.R.B. ROTTERDAM TO HOOVER, reporting refusal of German Minister at The Hague to grant safe-conduct passes to C.R.B. ships touching England for coal or otherwise

ROTTERDAM, 16 April 1915

HOOVER, LONDON

German Embassy Hague has refused to issue safe-conduct passes to any ships touching England for coal or otherwise. German Embassy states that they only agreed issue safe-conduct passes back direct to America. White seeing Legation today and will wire further details later. First ship refused is "Dowgate," who have put responsibility up to us

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 205

Extract of Telegram,
HOOVER TO WHITE, C.R.B. ROTTERDAM, quoting message sent to Washington urging the President to press German Government to resume issue of passes to C.R.B. ships

LONDON, 16 April 1915

JOHN WHITE
RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Have asked Page telegraph Washington following import tonight:

"Commission informs me German Minister at Hague refuses grant further safe-conduct passes ships unless they proceed direct United States for further cargoes for Commission without calling at United Kingdom ports. This is direct contravention of original undertakings to safe-conduct all Commission ships whether going or coming Rotterdam. Most their ships chartered for single voyage and return and leave service of Commission when they have returned in ballast to United Kingdom port after discharging cargo in Rotterdam. In any event all ships which intend make second voyage on behalf Commission must call English port for coal. This gross violation agreements may make work impossible particularly as insurance and charters are undertaken in cognizance of agreement of non-interference. While it is possible they can secure continued service by offering extra payment and cash guarantees it makes their already overtaxed funds totally inadequate as they have today sixty large ships under charter. In this matter the Germans are not only violating their undertaking but are rendering the work almost impossible as it is nonsense to assume Commission can charter ships go Rotterdam without provision for their return. Doubt arises in minds Commission as to whether Germans endeavoring to break down Commission's work by this action and anxious to know whether or not German Government wishes them discontinue feeding Belgian civil population. Ask President name humanity and interest ten million noncombatants dependent on Commission for daily bread use his influence through Ambassador Gerard obtain amelioration of this impasse and provide for safety of Commission and people who serve it."

Seems to me Mr. Ballin would be glad assist you in Berlin get this whole pass business straightened out and you could also take up "Harpalyce."[\(120\)](#) If proves to have been torpedoed they should contribute our funds £150,000 as some compensation for increase on insurance rates. War risk concessions are already agitating on this matter of passes and proper attitude of German Government is more importance to us than[\(121\)](#) interned ships unless we could get interned ships out at once and unless the Germans themselves would insure them.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 206

Letter,
VON JAGOW TO GERARD, stating that the German Government had issued

instructions to its Minister at The Hague to resume the issue of passes to C.R.B. ships

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
18 April 1915

EXCELLENCY:

In reply to your two kind communications of 17th April, I would emphasize anew that the philanthropic work of the Relief Commission for Belgium is fully appreciated as far as Germany is concerned, and that every support will gladly be lent it. Accordingly, the German submarines have now been directed to allow the ships of the Relief Commission to proceed unmolested, if they are recognizable by their marks of identification, so that a special letter of safe-conduct would not really be necessary.

However, the Imperial Legation at The Hague has now been authorized by me, by telegraph, to issue to the vessels of the Relief Commission letters of escort not only for the return voyage to America, but also for the trip to England, provided that the ships in question are required by the terms of their charter to return to England and that they take no cargo for England.

For their safety, however, and in order to avoid errors in identification, the ships in question must be strongly urged to carry by day and by night clearly recognizable marks of identification.

Furthermore, it is to be recommended to the Commission's ships, should they wish to return to America, not to call at English ports solely for the purpose of coaling, but rather to provide themselves with coal at Rotterdam.

To make this possible, we shall gladly lend our assistance that they may be able to purchase German coal in Rotterdam

I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest respect.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

[Translation]

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3. A Relief Fleet. March 1915-May 1917

By the time the Commission had won the right to use nonneutral ships, a new problem had to be faced. Within a few months after the outbreak of the war the

demands of governments and private commerce for ships drove charter rates to unprecedented heights. Obligated to compete in this rising market, the Commission found itself forced to spend an ominously increasing proportion of its inadequate funds for transport instead of supplies. Hoover realized that this condition would get worse rather than better, and in December 1914 he instituted various projects with the object of securing a permanent relief fleet which would make the Commission virtually independent of the market. His first proposal concerned German interned ships.

There were at this time a great many merchant ships flying the German flag which, on the outbreak of the war, in order to escape capture, had taken refuge in neutral ports in various parts of the world. There they had been interned and there they remained. Early in 1915 Hoover had discussed informally with officers of the Hamburg-American line([122](#)) the question of using some of these vessels. According to preliminary discussions of the project a neutral Dutch shipping company was to operate the vessels at low rates for the Commission. As the documents which follow show, Hoover began negotiations with the British Foreign Office on the 13th January([123](#)) and secured British Government approval with many restrictive stipulations. He then received the approval of the German Government and finally completed contracts with actual shipowners under the very difficult conditions imposed. At this point, though the contracts had the support of the British Government (who realized the impending ship shortage), the French Government peremptorily refused to approve the transaction. Months afterward when the French became desperate for shipping they requested the Commission to revive the question, but the German Government on this occasion refused. The failure of the French Government to approve the plan probably cost the Allied Governments hundreds of millions in freight charges before the war was over. The negotiations themselves were spread continuously over sixteen months and bring out many angles of the war mind.

DOCUMENT NO. 207

Letter,

GREY TO HOOVER, concerning conditions under which the British Government would permit the C.R.B. to use German interned ships

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
16 March 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have carefully considered your letter of the 13th January(124) regarding your desire to employ certain German ships now in neutral ports to carry foodstuffs for your Commission.

I enclose a memorandum showing the general conditions on which we should feel obliged to insist in regard to any such transaction. If you can negotiate an arrangement which fulfils these conditions we shall, I think, be able to give you an undertaking to respect these ships in the same way as we now respect the ships employed by you.

The temporary transfer of these ships to a neutral flag would, however, have to form the subject of a special informal arrangement between His Majesty's Government and the neutral Government concerned, before we could consent to its coming into force.

As regards the limit fixed for the payment you are to make to the neutral firm, the object of this limit is of course to secure that the German owners shall at most receive merely a nominal profit on the transaction. It is understood that you will do your best to secure the necessary tonnage at a price as far as possible below that limit, and as near as possible to the minimum which would afford a reasonable profit to the neutral company without leaving any share whatever to the German owners. We feel that you should be able to negotiate on this basis with the German owners, since the latter will benefit to a considerable extent by the mere fact that they are relieved from the heavy upkeep expenses and from the deterioration which must result from the present enforced idleness of these vessels.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

EMPLOYMENT OF GERMAN SHIPS BY THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

1. The title to these ships must be transferred to a firm in some neutral country. The transfer must be made in a form which would not normally entitle the ships to a change of register or to fly the flag of the neutral country concerned; and the ships must either revert to the German owners as soon as they cease to be exclusively employed by the Commission, or must in any case be recognised to be liable to be treated as German ships so soon as they cease to be so employed. A special arrangement must be made between His Majesty's Government and the neutral Government concerned by which the ships shall, for the period of their employment, be permitted to fly the neutral flag.

2. These ships shall be operated by, and the entire crew composed of, neutrals.

3. The Commission shall charter the ships from the neutral firm who shall operate them.
4. The Commission shall submit the name of the neutral firm in question to His Majesty's Government before the transaction is finally concluded.
5. The ships shall, after His Majesty's Government have finally approved the transaction and have made the necessary agreement with the neutral Government, be immune from interference on the part of His Majesty's Government to the same extent and in the same way as the ships at present employed by the Commission, so long as they are employed solely and absolutely in carrying foodstuffs on behalf of the Commission, and the Commission shall notify His Majesty's Government immediately it ceases to employ any particular ship.
6. A list of such ships in the employ of the Commission shall be furnished to His Majesty's Government and any change in the list of ships immediately communicated.
7. The Commission shall not pay for more than 4s. per ton deadweight per month as charter money to the neutral Company and no other payment outside this sum shall be made by the Commission to the German owners. The Commission shall inform His Majesty's Government of the terms of the whole transaction before it is finally put into force.

DOCUMENT NO. 208

Letter,
WHITE TO HOOVER, concerning negotiations in Berlin with officials of the Hamburg Line and the Royal Dutch Lloyd Line relative to the use of interned German ships

ROTTERDAM, 17 April 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR HOOVER:

GERMAN INTERNED SHIPS

In connection with the negotiations for the above, Mr. Hulse was in Berlin and saw Mr. Ballin, arranging for a meeting at Amsterdam yesterday with Mr. Loezer, Director of the Hamburg America Line, and Mr. Wilmink, President of the Royal Dutch Lloyd. We enclose, herewith, preliminary contract agreed to at that meeting.

This will be subject to some changes at a further meeting which we hope to have as soon as we learn from you whether or not the Royal Dutch Lloyd will be acceptable to the British Government.

The Hamburg Line have vessels in all parts of the world and will be able to supply us with any possible number of vessels we may require.

There may be some difficulty in regard to securing crews. It is proposed to make an arrangement for ten boats as soon as they can be got ready and for more boats to be taken on as fast as crews can be arranged for them and as soon as they can be used by the Commission. Under these conditions it seems to me that it would be a mistake for the moment to take any further charters, especially in view of the very considerable stores now on hand in Belgium and the large tonnage arrivals for next month.

It seems to me that there will unquestionably be complications in regard to the nominal transfer to the Dutch flag of these vessels, and there may be difficulties in getting the agreement of the British Government to the contract on the terms proposed.

In connection with the arranged rate of 4/- per ton, you may be interested in knowing that the idea which the Hamburg America people had when Mr. Hulse was in Berlin was 8/-; they then stated that it would be impossible for them to find anything under 6/-, and Mr. Hulse finally laid on the table an agreement under which we are working with the British Admiralty, from which they were able to see that it was impossible to secure a better price than 4/-. As to whether we shall be able to get under this figure I do not know, but I have the feeling that unless the people here have an opportunity of making some profit out of the business, and that the German owners can at least make a nominal profit, we shall have difficulty in getting the business through.

On account of the sinking of the Dutch boats, the wages of the crews will be largely increased, and in any case it will be very difficult to secure crews at all. In regard to the question of an engineer of the Hamburg American Line of German citizenship above military age, going as a passenger or supercargo on each vessel, you will understand the wishes of the German owners for this requirement. They would be willing to undertake that this engineer should not be allowed on deck on passing through the English channel or otherwise in accordance with any regulations that it might be necessary for the British Government to make. In the interests of the operation of the boats, it would be desirable to have an engineer who thoroughly understands all the machinery, to be available, and it may be possible that this point will be the one on which our negotiations will fall down, especially if a cut in the price is insisted on. You can understand that if the owners of the vessels can be assured that the machinery will be well looked after, they would be willing to have the vessels operated at a price less than if this point were left uncertain. Director

Loezer stated the case of a ship which they had chartered some time ago where their engineers were not in charge and where the machinery of the vessel was badly damaged by an engineer who did not know thoroughly the mechanical working of the boat. You can easily see that an engineer might do more damage in operating boats for several months than any possible profit that could be made out of the figure mentioned in the contract plus the actual cost of keeping the boat lying in port as at the present time.

We believe that the present contract is sufficiently accurate for you to place before the necessary authorities for their approval.

Immediately on hearing from you that the Dutch Lloyd is satisfactory,⁽¹²⁵⁾ we shall take the necessary steps here to have them approach the Dutch Government, also to have the matter placed before the Dutch Government by the Legation.

There is another question raised which we shall be obliged if you will take up, by cable, with the Government at Washington or through the office at New York as seems best. This has to do with the sending of the crews to the United States for the vessels now interned there. We understand that the law dealing with the bringing in of neutral crews to join vessels is uncertain, and the Dutch Lloyd would not be willing to go on with the agreement until this point is cleared up. The German crews, or at least the important members of the same, are still at New York or in South American ports, and it is the intention to send out Dutch crews from here to take over the vessels. Under the immigration laws of the United States it is uncertain whether this would be allowed. It seems to us, however, that it should be possible to overcome this point and to get the necessary permission from the authorities in New York or Washington through our New York office, who would probably know the proper authorities to approach in the matter. As this may take some time we think it would be advantageous if they get on with it immediately.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) J. BEAVER WHITE

DOCUMENT NO. 209

Letter,
HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, asking for the consent of the French Government to the project of use of German interned ships by the C.R.B.

LONDON, 8 September 1915

L. Chevrillon,⁽¹²⁶⁾ *Esq., Paris*

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I think I informed you from time to time that we were negotiating to try and get the right to use German interned ships for this trade. These negotiations have been going on since last December and we have finally formulated contracts, of which you will find enclosed two copies. The British Government has approved, and has asked for the approval of the other Allies, which I understand they have received with the exception of the French, and the whole matter is now held up at that point.

In a general way the price which we pay for these ships works out at about 40 per cent of the price at which we have to charter ships in the market. It will make a difference of about 4 centimes per kilo in the price of bread in Northern France. Aside from the fact that it will save us from £100,000 to £150,000 a month and thereby decreases the cost of the ravitaillement in Northern France very appreciably, it also has an important bearing from the point of view of the Allies. At the present moment we are the largest shippers outside of governments, and our entrance into the shipping market maintains the price of transatlantic shipping at fully 10 per cent above what it would be if we got out of it, and it affects the price of bread in both England and France in just about that proportion of their transport costs. Under the arrangements made the sums of money going to the Germans for the use of their ships is infinitesimal. Four shillings per ton deadweight on a 5,000 ton ship would represent £1,250 per month, and out of this practically the whole operating expenses of the ship have to be paid, and it is estimated by our shipping experts that the margin over operating expenses will not exceed £500 a month. Of this margin one-half goes to the Dutch firm which operates the ships, and one-half to the Germans, so that on a ship of this size the Germans would only be getting a revenue of £250 a month. They of course have the benefit of being relieved of the cost of maintaining their idle ships, which is the principal thing which has influenced them. They have also been greatly influenced by the humanitarian aspects of the enterprise, and we had strong support from the humanitarian elements in the German Government in our different negotiations with Herr Ballin.

I was wondering if it would be possible for you to stir up the French Foreign Office a little, in view of the above, and see if you could get them to signify their approval to the English Government.

The matter is one of pressing importance as we are having the greatest possible difficulty in securing enough shipping for our work, and, in any event, the freight that we lose represents a considerable sum of money in which the French people are directly interested.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 210

Letter,

CHEVRILLON TO HOOVER, outlining the objections of the French Government to the use of German interned ships by the C.R.B.

PARIS, 6 October 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.,

President The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR HOOVER:

I have had several long conversations yesterday at the French Foreign Office with the outcome that the ship question is decidedly taking a bad turn. There was a note in the handwriting of Mr. Delcassé himself giving his opinion as inclined to be adverse, and, curiously enough, a very long letter from Mr. Klobukowski, the French Minister to Belgium, very strongly giving his arguments against the proposed combination.

I immediately saw one of the very high officials of the Department, but found that his conviction was also made and strongly opposed to our proposal. A note will be presented to the English Government setting out the objections of the French Government, more or less in the manner formulated by Mr. Klobukowski.

For your information, I will now present the case as set forth in this letter and such as I remember it from having had it read to me rapidly:

"In the first place it is a known fact that the Hamburg-America Company is on the verge of failure and the proposed combination might just save it. The upkeep of the boats in New York(127) is a very considerable expense, of which that Company would be relieved.

"The boats having a neutral crew, many German sympathizers might be employed in the service, which might lead later to deplorable consequences. Also, at the close of hostilities, the boats would be scattered in such a way that many of them would be probably in home waters and therefore in a position to be immediately utilized by Germany to start at once on a career of industrial competition instead of lying in New York until they can be put in service again.

"A further reason is that the hostile press would not fail to say that the German submarine war has been so active and so successful that the Allies are obliged to take this course as the only temporary remedy to a very grave difficulty.

"Finally, the proposed combination is nothing else but 'dealing with the enemy.' The Allied Governments still consider that the work of the Commission is only tolerated under the plea of humanitarianism. The duty of provisioning and victualing the populations in a territory occupied by German troops is incumbent upon the German Government; the work is performed at the expense of the Allied nations under protest, and the idea of chartering a German fleet, of paying a German company, of relieving it from an enormous expense, of guaranteeing its ships from any attack, of putting them in perfect train for immediate action after the war is over, all this for a service which Germany should perform, cannot for a moment be entertained. No Allied Government could accept such a paradoxical position as that of a German fleet of steamers circulating freely, the only steamers of any of the belligerent governments immune from war risks or capture."

Such will be the reasons presented by the French Government in answer to the English suggestion, and I am afraid that the Foreign Office here will refuse to budge from its position unless some profound modification of the proposed arrangements is agreed upon.

I will add that it is the opinion of the French Foreign Office that, at the time when the English consent was given, no adequate idea was formed of the important tonnage involved. I have it from the British Embassy here that the figure of tonnage came as a surprise when the matter was discussed for approval by the French Government. I do not quite understand how our French Minister at Havre came to be consulted, but it is certainly a fact that his communication came at a moment when the Foreign Office here was hesitating and clinched a decision.

I will be glad to have your suggestions on any further steps on this side, but I believe that, for the present, the only action to be taken is with the English Government.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) L. CHEVRILLON

DOCUMENT NO. 211

Extract of letter,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, anticipating consent of British and French Governments as to the use of interned German ships for carrying relief

LONDON, 6 March 1916

Mr. C. A. Young, Rotterdam

DEAR MR. YOUNG:

GERMAN SHIPS

I understand that you will receive formal permission from the British Government during this week to complete the contract for the use of the German ships. I hope to be able to telegraph to you in a day or two that you can take the matter up with Mr. Wilmink.

The French Government seems to have seen some light in the matter as a result of my visit.[\(128\)](#)

As to publication of the amount of shipments into Belgium, there is not the slightest objection to this

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 212

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, stating final consent of British Government and authorizing resumption of negotiations with Royal Dutch Lloyd

LONDON, 15 March 1916

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Have now received final authorization from British Government to conclude contracts regarding use of interned German ships in the terms of the original agreements. You will please take the matter up with Wilmink and others as may be necessary to determine what is the present position.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 213

Letter,
WILMINK TO HOOVER, reporting the refusal of the German Government to permit the use of the interned ships

AMSTERDAM, 1 July 1916

Herbert Hoover, Esq.

Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR SIR:

I have received today a letter from Mr. Ballin asking me to inform you that a favorable decision in the question of tonnage for your Commission is not to be expected for the moment. According to Mr. Ballin the opinion in Berlin seems to be that with the Belgian ships at your disposal you can provide sufficiently for the feeding of the Belgian population, and for this reason apparently they will not allow---at least not for the moment---the use of German tonnage for this purpose.

For your guidance, I expect to be in London some time during the latter half of July and will not fail to make an appointment, in case you might wish to see me.

I am, dear Mr. Hoover

Yours sincerely

(Signed) WILMINK

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The German decision not to permit the C.R.B. to use interned ships was closely related to the growth of the influence in Germany of the naval party which demanded unrestricted submarine warfare. To those in Berlin who supported this policy the humanitarian aspect of the Commission's plan was presumably less important than the realization that to permit the C.R.B. to use the interned ships would relieve the Allies of an equivalent tonnage burden. During the course of these negotiations the shipping situation had been getting steadily worse. In 1915 the Commission had lost six ships by mines or torpedoes in the North Sea. In the spring of 1916 Germans began a more aggressive naval policy([129](#)) in the war zone; the available tonnage considerably diminished, while shipping rates mounted. The refusal of the Germans to allow the use of interned ships for relief would have left the Commission in much more desperate straits than was actually the case had not Hoover some months before the final German decision undertaken negotiations in other directions to find the needed tonnage. A scheme to establish a shipowning company as a part of the Commission was discussed but had to be abandoned. An appeal to the United States Government to permit naval colliers to be used by the Commission failed for the reasons shown in the documents which immediately follow.

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DOCUMENT NO. 214

Resolution,

H.R. 79, 64th Congress, 1st Session, in the House of Representatives, by Mr. Loud, relative to the use of navy colliers, etc., for the transfer of relief supplies

WASHINGTON, 6 January 1916

Mr. Loud submitted the following resolution, ([130](#)) which was referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs and ordered to be printed.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the people of the United States, through various relief organizations, in compassion for the destitution of needy people of Europe, caused by the war now raging there, have contributed and are contributing large amounts of money, materials, and supplies for their relief; and

WHEREAS for the ocean transportation of such relief materials and supplies a large portion of the amounts so generously contributed has heretofore been paid: Therefore be it

Resolved, That such materials and supplies shall, during the present calendar year be transported in the auxiliary ships, to wit, colliers and supply ships, of the Navy, without cost to the relief organizations:

Provided, That such materials and supplies shall be in suitable cargo lots, and that the loading and discharge of such cargoes shall conform to such regulations as the Secretary of the Navy shall deem necessary to carry out the intent of this resolution:

Provided further, That not more than one-fourth of the tonnage of all such auxiliary ships of the Navy shall be used at any one time in such service.

DOCUMENT NO. 215

Letter,

U.S. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY TO HOOVER, declining to authorize the use of naval colliers in relief work

NAVY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON

14 February 1916

*Mr. Herbert C. Hoover,
Chairman Commission for Relief in Belgium, New York City*

SIR:

I have given careful consideration([131](#)) to the subject of transportation for Belgian relief supplies in Navy colliers. to Belgium, as requested in your letter of 10 February and a telegram of 11 February from Mr. Bertron.

After consultation with regard to the matter, and after due deliberation, we have decided that it is impracticable to authorize the use of Navy colliers for this purpose.

I regret exceedingly that conditions make it impossible for us to aid you in your deserving work.

Very truly

(Signed) JOSEPHUS DANIELS
Secretary of the Navy

In addition to the proposals already noted, Hoover presented still another which, in spite of obstacles, was in part accepted by the governments concerned.

Among the vessels which the Commission had secured for relief service were a number which were Belgian owned. In general these had been bargained for by the Commission for each trip in the same manner as the British and neutral charters. In January 1916 Hoover proposed to bring all these vessels to the service of the Commission on a permanent basis. Some of these Belgian owned boats were flying the Belgian flag and the remainder had been transferred to British registry early in the war. The acquisition by the Commission of these ships for relief service would have meant a real contribution to the Commission's shipping program, but difficulties were immediately encountered with the Shipping Control Committee,[\(132\)](#) which opposed releasing Belgian ships under the British flag to the exclusive use of the Commission. Nevertheless with the assistance of the Belgian Government the Commission did secure most of the vessels under the Belgian flag and was thus assured of the permanent service of some nineteen vessels at a reasonable charter rate, and it could look ahead with some confidence toward successfully meeting part of its program each month. Though Hoover continued to press the Allied Governments for those Belgian vessels under British flag, the decision was finally adverse and the Commission was obliged to find the additional tonnage required in the open market as heretofore.

DOCUMENT NO. 216

Telegram,
HOOVER TO MINISTER HYMANS, describing the shipping difficulties of the Commission and requesting the assistance of the Belgian Government in securing Belgian owned ships for relief service

LONDON, 12 January 1916

MINISTER HYMANS, *Care of Prime Minister de Broqueville*

Commission Relief in Belgium has been unable secure any British charters since 12th December and all our British ships en route Rotterdam have been detained here since 23rd December owing to Admiralty refusing permission to proceed until North Sea more free from mines. Situation is extremely serious and the outlook very alarming. We are endeavoring to arrange for all available Belgian-owned ships to enter our service but find that many are under the English flag and therefore liable to be prohibited from proceeding to Rotterdam. Please discuss situation with Minister Segers and raise question whether ships under Belgian flag which have been requisitioned could be released for our service and replaced in so far as required by Belgian-owned ships under British flag.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 217

Telegram,
HOOVER TO PRIME MINISTER DE BROQUEVILLE AND MINISTER SEGERS OF THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT, urging that the Belgian Government pass the necessary legislation making it legal to requisition Belgian ships

LONDON, 26 January 1916

PRIME MINISTER DE BROQUEVILLE, AND MINISTER SEGERS, HAVRE

According information received from representatives of English Marine it is probable that friendly arrangements can be made between the Belgian shipowners and ourselves for the chartering of Belgian vessels for the Commission. In order to allow the Belgian owners to break their existing contracts, it is urgent that a bill should be passed making it legal to requisition Belgian ships without a moment's delay. Each day's delay means one day for Belgium without bread. The security of the boats themselves makes it necessary to place them under requisition. Whilst waiting this step no charters can be definitely fixed.

HOOVER

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 218

Letter,

HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, describing the relief-shipping situation and outlining proposals for using Belgian ships

LONDON, 19 January 1916

Louis Chevrillon, Esq., Paris

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

We have been investigating and discussing Belgian-owned ships and we find that there are about twenty-five Belgian ships flying the English flag which would be suitable for our purposes, and there are about twenty-six Belgian ships flying the Belgian flag besides those already in the services of the Belgian Government which would also be suitable. Belgian-owned ships which fly the British flag are necessarily subject to English law and ten of them are at present requisitioned by the British Admiralty. Through the Belgian Legation here we have put up an urgent request that the English Government should requisition the remaining fifteen such ships, in order that they might terminate legally all their outstanding contracts and charters, and that immediately afterwards they be released (the whole twenty-five ships) on condition that they enter into our service at a reasonable rate.

Furthermore, we have telegraphed this morning to the Belgian Government at Havre, urging them strongly to requisition, on their own account, the twenty-five ships which fly the Belgian flag, and are therefore subject to Belgian law, that they should then release the ships from requisition, subject to the owners entering into a reasonable contract with us, we undertaking that if the Belgian Government should require any of them for military purposes we would hand them over at once. This amount of shipping, together with such neutral ships as we could engage, would solve our whole problem, and this looks to be the only immediate solution. Even if we obtained the German refugee ships, there are not enough of them, under our present agreement, to serve our whole needs, and at any rate it would be at least three months before a single cargo would be delivered into Rotterdam by this means, which would mean that Belgium and Northern France would have been without food for a period of from thirty to forty-five days. If it should eventuate that we obtain the Belgian ships and also the German, we could release the Belgian ships for the general traffic of the Allies. I do not, of course, know whether we shall succeed on this Belgian line, or not, but in any event, it is no real solution of the

shipping position from the Allied Governments' point of view, because all this Belgian tonnage is already in the service of the Allies and in some capacity or another, either private or public.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 219

Letter,
CHEVRILLON TO HOOVER, discussing French attitude to the plan to use
Belgian ships

PARIS, 29 January 1916

*H. C. Hoover, Esq., President
The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London*

DEAR HOOVER:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your telegram of the 26th instant suggesting that I should seek support from the French Government of the Belgian scheme. I have, within the last two days, called at the various ministries, Admiralty, War, Foreign Office, Public Works; and although I find all earnestly interested in the question of a prompt solution of our difficulties, I find no inclination to give a blind support without more information than that which I possess. I have therefore cabled you yesterday as follows:

"Belgian scheme favorably considered, but Government will not recommend blindly, without knowing to what extent will affect military necessities. Insists on full list of ships in order to examine which can possibly be spared, as even those under British flag may be working for French military account."

You must, of course, consider that when I apply to the French Government I have in reality to take up the matter with a number of officials of various departments, each of which must be covered as to responsibility and refuses to recommend a measure unless he feels that he may consistently do so without prejudice to his other responsibilities, which are, of course, very numerous, very urgent, and very large.

I thoroughly realize that having cleared the matter in London and come to an understanding you may be under the justified impression that the French assent amounts to a mere approval of what the British Government considers proper to do.

Quite unfortunately this is not at all the case, and I am convinced here that negotiations to convince the Government that a certain measure is urgent will take more time and worry here than it does in more practical England.

I have, however, the positive assurance that in the instant I can lay before them a list of the ships to be requisitioned, with the particulars of each, and the exact number of ships needed by the Commission to complete its fleet, our matters will be attended to with prompt despatch. However, I am meanwhile trying to obtain a recommendation from the French Government of the requisition of Belgian ships by the Belgian Government provided that as each ship is requisitioned the French Government is allowed to accept or refuse requisition according to military necessities. This is the best I can do at present and I will not fail to write you further developments.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) Louis CHEVRILLON

DOCUMENT NO. 220

Telegram,
HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, notifying him that the adverse decision of the Shipping Control Committee in London left the Commission with the few ships under Belgian flag which might have to be confined to the service solely of the Belgian population

LONDON, 3 February 1916

CHEVRILLON, PARIS

Am informed that decision here has been adverse to use by Commission of Belgian-owned ships flying British flag, which forces us back practically solely on Belgian ships flying Belgian flag. These at best could deliver only about 300 grams food per diem to Belgian population alone, and I fear we shall have to take decision these ships be confined to service of Belgians and full responsibility providing shipping for French population must rest on French Government who primarily Government most concerned.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 221

Letter,
HOOVER TO A. SHIRLEY BENN, describing the urgency of the shipping
problem

LONDON, 4 February 1916

A. Shirley Benn, Esq., London

MY DEAR BENN:

I have a feeling that perhaps I have not effectively stated the necessities of our case. The Belgian and French people themselves made certain demands upon us as representing the absolute minimum of food on which they could continue to keep their populations alive. We, on the other hand, in a desire that there should be no over-representation to the Allied Governments in the present critical shortage of ships, have most seriously reduced in its quantities the demand made upon us, down to a point representing what we consider an absolute minimum on which these populations can be kept going. I have the feeling that the Committee([133](#)) must have taken the attitude that we were probably asking for twice what we could get along with and thereby reduced us one-half.

In round numbers, we have ten million people to deal with. Cutting us down to a carrying capacity of, say 60,000 tons per month of, shipping under the Belgian flag, means 200 grams per capita per diem of food to these people. It is our obligation to furnish them with practically their entire supplies of bread, bacon, lard, rice, peas, beans, maize, condensed milk, soap, and supplies to some portions of the country of sugar, coffee, etc., etc. You can realize what this reduction in tonnage means when I tell you that the British people alone consume over 400 grams of flour per diem, to say nothing of all the other commodities. In other words, the effect of our position will be simply that the Allies are saying to their kindred in Belgium and Northern France, "We, of course, must have 400 grams of bread for our own people; we must have the bacon, lard, peas, beans, rice, potatoes, etc., which they require; but you, on the other hand, being prisoners in hands of the Germans, shall be further penalized by having your foodstuffs reduced to a quantity on which a human being cannot survive."

Therefore, do you not think it would be a square deal to these people that the whole of the breadstuffs of the Allied Nations should be pooled and that Belgium and Northern France should get their share? Is there any reason why we should not have our share of the ships to provide practically our share in such a pool? A reduction of 20 grams per day---that is, less than three-fourths ounce per day---in

the bread consumption of the United Kingdom, would give us more tonnage than we want.

There is a deeper question involved than the above. It is not my position as neutral to point out political results. My sole job is to advocate on humane grounds the feeding of these people, and I think it would be desirable for you and other friends of the Belgians to point out to the Government the seriousness of the political mistake of reducing the foodstuff of these people to a point where they can justly say they have been deserted by the Allies, who are hogging after the food for their own people.

Now, after all this violence, I wish to make a constructive suggestion. In the first place, of the Belgian-owned ships under the British flag, some twelve or fourteen are at present requisitioned by the Admiralty. On the other hand, some ten or twelve of these ships are free and engaged in general trade. It cannot therefore concern the Admiralty particularly if the ships which are free from requisition at present are handed over to us, and in order to enable the owners to cancel their outstanding charters it is necessary that these ships should be requisitioned. This, I believe, could be accomplished by the Food Committee without bothering the Admiralty. Furthermore, we have fourteen voyage charters of English ships arranged for future dates, carried over some four months, and if we could have an assurance that these charters would not be requisitioned away from us this would also help.

Again, I may mention that on this general question there are a good many British ships plying in the Pacific between neutral ports, and there are even some ships on the list we asked for, which are trading between neutral ports, and it does seem to me that, in all these circumstances, it must be of some interest to the Allies to feed their own people rather than facilitate outside trade.

The Belgian people have a feeling that if they requisition the entire shipping flying the Belgian flag for our purpose, this shipping could be devoted to feeding the Belgian population; but this leaves the French population of two and a half million people dependent on a few British charters which we have and such neutral charters as we may pick up, and of course the Belgian shipping does not provide enough tonnage for even a minimum bread supply for the Belgians alone. My only right of complaint in this matter is not personal but purely on behalf of the ten million people whose very existence is imperilled and the last I want to do is to give offense in the advocacy of their interests. So do not allow any one to take my sentiments as being in the slightest of an unfriendly character to the interests of the situation as a whole.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 222

Letter,
HOOVER TO CAPTAIN BULTINCK OF THE ADMINISTRATION DE LA
MARINE BELGE, requesting the use for the C.R.B. of certain ships of the Royal
Belgian Lloyd

LONDON, 18 August 1916

Capitaine Commandant Bultinck
Administration de la Marine Belge, London

DEAR CAPTAIN BULTINCK:

With regard to our conversation of today on the needs of the Relief Commission in shipping, I beg to say that although we have taken a sufficient number of neutral charters to supplement the Belgian ships during the third quarter of the year, we have as yet been unable to secure the necessary supplement to the Belgian fleet for the fourth quarter and from thence forward it seems to us that the only solution of the needs of the Relief Commission is to obtain from the Belgian Lloyd further ships for our regular employ, beginning with the fourth quarter of this year and from thence forward.

We are receiving complaints from the Bunker Committee that we are disorganizing the neutral chartering market by our extravagant bidding for shipping, and we are quite unable to do otherwise as we must have the ships and the only way to prevent this disorganization by having our independent bidding on the market, is to put into our hands sufficient regular shipping from the Belgian Lloyd. We simply cannot take the responsibility of leaving Belgium and Northern France without food supply so long as we can obtain neutral ships at any price, and therefore we are constantly under pressure to bid against the Government for such shipping. We have repeatedly tried to lower prices by holding back lower bids, etc., until delays have threatened our supplies. It seems to us therefore that it is in the interests of all parties that we should have the Belgian Lloyd ships, in order to guarantee us a regular supply of food and at the same time to reduce our pressure on the neutral shipping market.

Unless we can obtain some assurance that we shall have a regular line of shipping for the fourth quarter we are compelled at once to begin a campaign for more neutral ships for this quarter and possibly disrupt things again in the same way as during the third quarter of the year. A few weeks ago we were without sufficient shipping for this quarter and we were compelled to go out and obtain ships at some price, and the result is the very reasonable complaint of the Bunker Committee

which it is beyond our capacity to remedy. It appears to us that a common sense view of the situation is that there are so many ships in the world that we have got to have our proportion and that unless our energies die out we shall get them some way, but it is much better that we should be put beyond the necessity of being a disturbing factor to the whole shipping world.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 223

Memorandum,
HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, outlining the progress of negotiations for the use of
Belgian ships

LONDON, 8 February 1916

MINISTER WHITLOCK, BRUSSELS

SHIPPING

The Belgian Government completed the Law of Requisition last Sunday and it is now in force. The necessary requisition orders are going out today for all the ships flying the Belgian flag, of which there are nineteen. They are badly scattered all over the world, and it will take at least two months to get the whole fleet into action on our behalf. We shall, however, be able to get deliveries from some of the ships within the next thirty days.

This fleet will give us about 60,000 tons per month in Rotterdam and with a certain number of neutral charters, which we can no doubt get at some price, we shall be able to deliver at least an undercurrent of food supply. Our position has become considerably brighter the last few days because of this success with the Belgian ships and because of our having been able to secure a few more neutral charters. Also, what is more, we have had only one ship sunk in the last fifteen days. The shipping we have arranged seems to assure us normal deliveries in Rotterdam until the end of March and we have about one-third of our requirements arranged for April, all of this being entirely aside from the Belgian shipping.

The second part of our shipping program, that is, the securing of Belgian-owned ships which fly the British flag, has met a curt refusal from the Control Committee. I enclose herewith a letter written to Mr. Shirley Benn for this committee before the refusal and another written immediately after.

I may mention that Lord Curzon is chairman of this committee and is at present with the King of the Belgians, who has been asked by Mr. Hymans to take the matter up with Lord Curzon.

Furthermore, I have informed the French Government formally, that shipping under the Belgian flag will be unable to entirely supply the Belgian people, and that reluctantly we have been compelled to take the decision that we cannot ask the Belgian people to starve in favor of the French, and that the responsibility for the people in Northern France is primarily that of the French Government and that unless they can furnish us shipping we have to decline to continue. This attitude has produced a perfect storm in Paris, and I am going tomorrow to see if I can direct the hurricane so as to secure the second stage in our shipping program.

DOCUMENT NO. 224

Letter,

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO MINISTER HYMANS, describing the shipping difficulties which impelled the Government to requisition another vessel under charter to the Commission

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
22 February 1916

Monsieur Paul Hymans
Belgian Minister, London

SIR:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 10th instant (No. 1463) regarding the requisitioning of the S.S. "Flandrier" chartered by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

I have laid this whole question before the competent authorities and I have the honour to assure you that it is the policy of His Majesty's Government to give to the Commission for Relief in Belgium such facilities for obtaining tonnage as are possible in present circumstances. But I wish to lay before you, for the consideration of the Belgian Government, the very great difficulties, and indeed dangers, to which the Allied Governments are exposed by the present extreme shortage of shipping. His Majesty's Government are in the position of having in large measure to supply the urgent needs of the other Allies, and they are therefore responsible in that measure for the due and proper allotment of resources on which the ability of the Allies to give effect to the guarantees just solemnly renewed to the Belgian Government must largely depend.

While, therefore, I welcome the representations you have recently been good enough to make in this matter, as tending to bring to a clear issue the question of relief to which your Government naturally attach such supreme importance, and while everything possible will be done to meet these representations with a favourable response, I trust you will represent to your Government the great difficulties in which His Majesty's Government are placed and will make it clear to them that the conflict, which so frequently takes place between the military requirements of the Allies on the one hand and those of the Belgian Government in connection with the work of relief on the other, is not to be construed as throwing doubt on the good will repeatedly expressed by His Majesty's Government towards that work. I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant

(For the Secretary of State)

(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

DOCUMENT NO. 225

Letter,

HOOVER TO PERCY, stating the shipping requirements of the Commission

LONDON, 8 September 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

With regard to the shipping situation, I can only reiterate that the actual tonnage which we now want to deliver into Belgium and Northern France is 101,000 tons, actual weight. The tonnage required by virtue of space measurements and the necessity for the provision of some small margin for delays is another 24,000 tons, or, say, a total of 125,000 tons. Out of this as long as we can ship rice, beans, and some other commodities from this country, we do not need overseas for approximately more than 16,000 tons, leaving a balance of overseas tonnage required of 109,000 tons. The twenty ships we have in our constant employment flying the Belgian flag, should deliver approximately 60,000 tons per month, leaving 44,000 to be provided. If we obtained this tonnage from the States we should be able to handle it with ten voyage charters, or, in our regular employ, with an additional twenty average steamers per month. All this of course depends upon our being able to continue shipping supplies of beans from this country and upon our being able to obtain commodities in the States without having to go to the

Argentine. Our position is that we have enough tonnage arranged to the end of October and we have about 50,000 tons of arrivals arranged for November. If we could get the twelve Belgian Lloyd ship's which fly the British flag, which are under discussion, to add to our regular fleet, we would only need to go into the neutral market to secure about four or five voyage charters per month. I believe this would be a much more satisfactory arrangement, as it seems to us obvious that there would be a drop in neutral rates by removing our competition, and the same neutral ships would be available to the Allied Governments that are available to us.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

The refusal of the British authorities to turn over to the Commission the remaining Belgian vessels under British registry and the great difficulty of procuring charters in the open market led Hoover to revive the project of buying ships outright for the use of the C.R.B. In early 1917 plans were in hand to buy eleven ships of the American Transatlantic Steamship Company-the so-called Wagner fleet. These vessels were "blacklisted" by the Allies, for the reason that though they were of American registry, they were suspected of being German owned. The total cost of such a purchase involved some \$10,000,000. Several of the vessels were already in British and French Prize Courts, and the ensuing diplomatic and legal complications held up the project. Another plan of a similar nature which involved the purchase of vessels just constructed in American shipyards proceeded to the actual signing of the contracts of sale. Both plans were dropped in May 1917 when the Commission learned that the Allied and American Governments proposed to requisition all steamers under their flags and pool their shipping resources.

DOCUMENT NO. 226

Telegram,
HOOVER TO COMMISSION'S LONDON OFFICE, cancelling arrangements for
ship purchases

NEW YORK, 3 May 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Cancel all arrangements with White and others regarding purchase ships. Pool to include all Allied shipping will probably be formed to control purchase and assignment of tonnage and even should we purchase ships now it would only mean that we would have that much less tonnage assigned us later on.

HOOVER

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER V, continued

4. Unrestricted Submarine Warfare. February-April 1917

In spite of the fact that as a result of the "Lusitania" and "Sussex" controversies with America the Germans did not launch the proposed unrestricted U-boat campaign in 1916, eleven of the Commission's vessels were sunk or badly damaged by torpedoes or mines during that year. These losses(134) occurred despite the German safe-conduct passes and detailed instructions from the British Admiralty with which all relief ships were provided. Moreover although the Allies did not adopt the principle of unified shipping control until late in 1917, the growing insufficiency of tonnage had forced the authorities---notably the British---to extend the policy of requisition, until by the end of 1916 practically all vessels under Allied flags were in the government service. This condition bore heavily on the Commission forcing it to rely mainly on its Belgian vessels, which were too few for its needs, and on neutral charters, which were increasingly difficult to obtain.

The commencement of the German unrestricted U-boat campaign on the 1st February 1917 brought disaster, sudden and complete, to the Commission's shipping program. Neutral shipping was promptly withdrawn from the Commission's service, the owners preferring to hold their vessels idle in safe harbors to exposing them and their crews to the hazards of torpedo and mine. There remained for the Commission only its Belgian ships. But even these could not be used, for though the German announcement had specified a "safe lane," no such "safe lane" existed, since the German danger zone and British mine fields off Heligoland and the Danish and Dutch coasts overlapped, making Rotterdam inaccessible. On the 1st February 1917 the Commission had seventeen oversea cargoes en route to Rotterdam. Of these but two reached the Dutch port safely; two were sunk by torpedoes; and the Commission ordered the remaining thirteen to English ports pending assurances from the Germans that they would be free from attack. Further sailings from America and elsewhere were halted for the same cause. Despite every effort on the part of the Commission, the Germans refused to permit relief vessels to pass through the English Channel or to grant immunity to relief vessels which called at English ports for coal, inspection, or orders. After extended negotiations, which are given in the following documents, the Germans announced a safe lane for oversea relief vessels, the route passing north of the Shetland Islands, thence along the Norwegian coast, and through an extremely narrow lane in the North Sea to Rotterdam. The Commission made persistent

efforts to move the thirteen oversea cargoes held in English ports, and though the Germans agreed in principle to this they nevertheless made restrictions which made the operation impossible. Eventually the Commission unloaded the cargoes of these impounded vessels in England, and the vessels themselves returned to the United States. No scheme could be devised for moving these provisions to Rotterdam, and together with the large stocks of food owned by the Commission in England and France---a total of nearly 100,000 tons---they were sold on government orders to prevent deterioration. This forced sale did not mean an absolute loss, but it deprived the people of Belgium and Northern France of supplies of which they were in acute need.

On the 24th February 1917 relief vessels began to move again, though the northern route was not declared absolutely safe by the Germans until the 15th March.⁽¹³⁵⁾ The German safe-conduct passes, now issued through the Swiss diplomatic offices in America, stipulated the northern route, and in addition British sailing certificates required that each relief vessel sailing from America call at Halifax for British inspection. The consequence was that the voyage to Rotterdam was greatly lengthened. Henceforth, too, since its ships could not touch at English ports, the Commission was forced to bunker for the round trip in America, losing cargo space in consequence, or take on inferior coal at Rotterdam. The Commission was in worse straits than ever as the few vessels left in its service were necessarily less effective in delivering the required program.

From February to May 1917 was a period of reorganization for the Commission. America severed diplomatic relations with Germany on the 3d February and declared war on the 6th April, and Americans were no longer neutral. The reorganization of the Commission in the occupied territories, as described in chapter XII, did not relieve Hoover and his associates of any of their responsibilities in the vital matters of shipping, finance, or procurement of relief supplies.

DOCUMENT NO. 227

Memorandum,
GERMAN AMBASSADOR AT WASHINGTON TO THE COMMISSION, NEW YORK, Stating regulations for C.R.B. shipping under the German unrestricted submarine policy

GERMAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON
2 February 1917

Commission for Relief in Belgium, New York City

GENTLEMEN:

Enclosing herewith a memorandum regarding the details of the military measures at sea, I beg to inform you that safe-conduct only comprises the navigation routes outside the blockade around Great Britain and France proclaimed by the German Government on February 1st 1917.

Yours truly

For the German Ambassador

(Signed) HANIEL
Minister Plenipotentiary

MEMORANDUM

From February 1, 1917, sea traffic will be stopped with every available weapon and without further notice in the following blockade zones around Great Britain and France, Italy, and in the Eastern Mediterranean:

In the North:

The zone is confined by a line at a distance of twenty sea miles along the Dutch coast to Terschelling fire-ship, the degree of longitude from Terschelling fire-ship to Udsire, a line from there across the points 62 degrees north 0 degrees longitude, to 62 degrees north 5 degrees west; further to a point three sea miles south of the southern point of the Faroe Islands, from there across point 62 degrees north 10 degrees west, to 61 degrees north 15 degrees west; then 57 degrees north 20 degrees west, to 47 degrees north 20 degrees west; further to 43 degrees north 15 degrees west, then along the degree of latitude 43 degrees north to 20 sea miles from Cape Finisterre and at a distance of 20 sea miles along the north coast of Spain to the French boundary.

In the South:

The Mediterranean: for neutral ships remains open: The sea west of the line Pt. des Espiquette to 38 degrees 20 minutes north and 6 degrees east, also north and west of zone 61 sea miles wide along North African coast beginning at 2 degrees longitude west. For the connection of this sea zone with Greece there is provided a zone of a width of 20 sea miles north and east of the following line: 38 degrees north and 6 degrees east, to 38 degrees north and 10 degrees west, to 37 degrees north and 11 degrees 30 minutes east, to 34 degrees north and 11 degrees 30 minutes east, to 34 degrees north and 22 degrees 30 minutes east.

From there leads a zone twenty sea miles wide west of 22 degrees 30 minutes eastern longitude into Greek territorial waters.

Neutral ships navigating these blockade zones do so at their own risk. Although care has been taken that neutral ships which are on their way toward ports of the blockade zones February 1, 1917 and have come in the vicinity of the latter, will be spared during a sufficiently long period, it is strongly advised to warn them with all available means in order to cause their return.

Neutral ships which February 1, 1917 are in ports of the blockade zones can with the same safety leave them.

The instructions given to the commanders of German submarines provide for a sufficiently long period during which the safety of passengers on unarmed enemy passenger ships is guaranteed.

Americans en route to the blockade zone on enemy freight steamers are not endangered, as the enemy shipping firms can prevent such ships in time from entering the zone.

Sailing of regular American passenger steamers may continue undisturbed after February 1, 1917, if:

- a) The port of destination is Falmouth.
- b) Sailing to or coming from that port, course is taken via the Scilly Islands and a point 50 degrees north 20 degrees west.
- c) The steamers are marked in the following way, which must not be allowed to other vessels in American ports: On ship's hull and superstructure three vertical stripes one meter wide, each to be painted alternately, white and red. Each mast should show a large flag, checkered white and red, and the stern the American national flag. Care should be taken that during dark the national flag and painted marks are easily recognizable from a distance and that the boats are well lighted throughout.
- d) One steamer a week sails in each direction, with arrival at Falmouth Sunday and departures from Falmouth about Wednesday.
- e) United States Government guarantees that no contraband (according to German contraband list) is carried by those steamers.

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DOCUMENT NO. 228

Telegram,
C.R.B. LONDON TO C.R.B. ROTTERDAM, regarding request that German

Government exempt C.R.B. ships from certain restrictions resulting from unrestricted submarine campaign

LONDON, 2 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

After conference with British Foreign Office and Ambassador Page, Ambassador will communicate Berlin reference German regulations relief shipping calling attention that prohibited German zone prevents arrival of ships by north as well as south of England. One-fifth our tonnage originates in English ports by purchases in United Kingdom. German regulations totally eliminate this tonnage, which cannot be obtained overseas under present conditions. Also number of ships have sailed destined for British ports, which will arrive within next few weeks and cargo of which together with those already arrived will be excluded, which would break down ravitaillement. Also necessary vessels touch English ports for coal. For these reasons German authorities earnestly petitioned to allow to continue present guarantees of safety to vessels protected by marks and German safe-conducts from and to United Kingdom ports, Rotterdam, and overseas. Meanwhile ship in all available foodstuffs into occupied territories particularly Dutch products up to full quantity obtainable. Assure people of Belgium and France that Foreign Office expects ravitaillement to continue without serious interruption and that they must not be unduly alarmed. Call upon Legation Brussels, The Hague, for additional information.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 229

Telegram,
AMERICAN CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT THE HAGUE TO AMERICAN EMBASSY AT LONDON, giving status of C.R.B. supplies in Belgium and necessity of making arrangements as promptly as possible to permit continuation of shipments

THE HAGUE, 2 February 1917

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON

It is requested by Gregory that you be good enough to advise the Commission for Relief in Belgium that the present wheat situation is reported by Brussels as follows:

"Including Rotterdam stock for Belgium, native wheat 146,000 tons, exotic wheat 65,000 tons, total 210,000 tons. This would last until about May 1st at present ration. Until October 1st no new crop would be available. It is urged by the Commission that all endeavors be made to allow cargoes for it to enter through the free zone into Dutch ports, the British authorities to make inspection in Holland or at port of departure. That Germany be asked as a condition to allow the export of coal either from Germany or Belgium to Holland to coal Commission's ships for return trips, and that in order to move this coal, ample transport facilities be furnished."

LANGHORNE

DOCUMENT NO. 230

Telegram,
C.R.B. LONDON TO HOOVER (NEW YORK), announcing British decision that C.R.B. ships need not touch at United Kingdom ports and outlining request for modification of German regulations

LONDON, 9 February 1917

HOOVER, RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

British Government has agreed that Commission ships in or outbound need not touch at United Kingdom ports, but for your confidential information must touch at British ports elsewhere such as Halifax or Bermuda or West African Coast. Merry del Val through Spanish Ambassador Berlin and our Rotterdam office through German Legation Hague and Brussels office and British Foreign Office through King of Spain are asking German Government on basis concession British Government that boats not required touch United Kingdom to modify German regulations as follows:

1. All relief vessels clearing overseas ports or Rotterdam subsequent to February 1st and which do not touch at United Kingdom ports shall be furnished safe-conduct passes by German authorities and when protected with Commission signs and marks shall be allowed to approach or leave Rotterdam by either north or south routes through German danger zones and overseas without molestation.
2. Relief steamers now in U.K. and steamers which cleared overseas ports before February 2d and which may arrive later furnished safe-conduct passes and unmolested to Rotterdam or overseas.
3. All vessels in No. 2 allowed touch U.K. ports unmolested.

4. All relief ships carrying U.K. purchases protected between Rotterdam and U.K. both directions.

5. German Government to arrange for coal for relief ships at Rotterdam.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 231

Telegram,

HOOVER TO SPANISH MINISTER AT BRUSSELS, requesting him to ask German Government to permit C.R.B. ships to proceed by the Channel to Rotterdam

NEW YORK, 14 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

I have received a wireless from Marquis Villalobar direct from Berlin. I have replied as follows: Will you please see if you can get this message delivered to him:

"Am extremely glad to receive your cable. Under present situation I cannot leave here, but we are unceasing in our labor to obtain the re-establishment of the Relief. I am convinced that this can only be accomplished if the German authorities are prepared, first, to allow our staff to remain as before or accept some other neutral body in Belgium and Northern France on the same basis of freedom of movement and relations to distribution as hitherto enjoyed by our staff. In this particular I would suggest to you that a group of neutral army officers should be the most agreeable to both sides, and if by cooperation of Dutch Government this could be obtained, it should effect many facilities which are highly desirable. Furthermore we must have a safe lane opened to our ships into Rotterdam. At present moment our ships lie loaded in a dozen ports. Seventy thousand tons of food are in the United Kingdom, hundred thousand tons will be loaded here within the next ten days, and thirty thousand tons are afloat. The whole of our service is paralyzed until we can guarantee the immunity of these ships, and our resources are being consumed in enormous penalties and demurrages right and left. The only logical lane is via Falmouth and the Channel to Rotterdam, and if German submarines are able to distinguish Dutch ships en route from Flushing to Southwold and American ships en route New York to Falmouth there should be no difficulty in continuing this lane by distinguishing our ships between Falmouth and Southwold. This is the most practical lane safe from mines and most possible of insurance and charter. The responsibility for the continuation of the Relief rests squarely upon the shoulders of

the Central Empires, for our ships are prepared to sail and a staff can be quickly re-established under your patronage in Belgium."

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 232

Letter,
ZIMMERMANN TO SPANISH AMBASSADOR IN BERLIN, stating conditions
under which C.R.B. vessels may proceed to Rotterdam

BERLIN, 18 February 1917

*To His Excellency Monsieur Luis Polo de Bernabé
Ambassador of Spain in Berlin*

MONSIEUR L'AMBASSADEUR:

In reply to the letter of the 8th and 13th of this month---Nr. Reg. 2328, 2368, and 2369---which Your Excellency was good enough to address to me, I have the honor to assure you that the Imperial Government is profoundly grateful for the great interest which His Majesty the King deigns to manifest in the humanitarian enterprise of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and does not fail to appreciate the great value of his precious support. Also the Government attaches particular importance to the continuation without interruption of the work of ravitaillement of Belgium and the occupied territory of France. However, this desired continuation is in no way hindered by the proclamation of the war zone of January 31st.

1. Actually a note was attached to this proclamation giving a respite extending to the 13th of February for those neutral boats traversing the war zone in the Atlantic and in the Channel, and the vessels of the Commission which were en route would have had, consequently, plenty of time to arrive at their ports of destination, or else they should have known of the proclamation of the war zone before their departure. The vessels still on the high seas will be obliged to take the course to the north of the Shetlands outside the war zone. Free transit across this zone, especially by the Channel, will not be conceded, to my deep regret, for reasons of a military nature, especially as the Allies might abuse this concession for their own ends.

2. As regards vessels still in English ports, they would have been able to leave these ports during the respite up to the 5th of February, had they not been hindered by the British Government. In the meantime, the Imperial Government begs you to furnish them with a detailed list of the vessels in question and the ports in which they are at present.

3. Safe-conducts cannot be delivered in the future except on the condition that the vessels take the course north of the Shetland islands outside the war zone where no danger from the operations of the German Navy will threaten them.
4. Foodstuffs purchased by the Commission in England can only be sent to Flushing by the paddle-wheel boats of the Dutch Line to which a special permission has been granted.
5. To make bunkering possible to the vessels of the Commission, Belgian pit-coal will be furnished to them at Rotterdam.

The Imperial Government is persuaded that it will not escape the perspicacity of the Royal Government that further concession to the wishes of the Relief Commission would be incompatible with the German military measures dictated by present circumstances. They depend on the eminent military judgment of His Majesty the King, which certainly will not refuse to recognize the justice of the views expressed above. The Imperial Government therefore hopes that Your August Sovereign and His Royal Government will continue to lend their efficient aid to the humanitarian enterprise under the conditions created by the state of war.

I take this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) ZIMMERMANN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 233

Letter,
POLAND TO MERRY DEL VAL, SPANISH AMBASSADOR AT LONDON,
replying to the preceding

LONDON, 22 February 1917

*His Excellency Señor Don Alfonso Merry del Val
Ambassador of Spain in London*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I beg to attach a communication which has just been received from the Swiss Legation, conveying a reply from the German Government, through the Spanish Ambassador at Berlin, on February 21st 1917, to the request which you were good enough to make concerning the modification of sailing regulations, and which I

afterward requested His Excellency Monsieur Carlin to repeat. May I offer you certain observations in regard to several points which present themselves in connection with this memorandum? (The numbers used herein refer to the numbers used in the German communication.)

1. All vessels in port when the German edict concerning Relief ships was issued, were held. Vessels on the high seas, either not being equipped with wireless or not being allowed to use their wireless if they had it, could not be communicated with and, of course, arrived at their ports of call in accordance with their sailing orders. The statement, therefore, that these vessels could be communicated with, cannot be accepted and they should be allowed to proceed to their destinations without interference.

2. As to vessels then in U.K. ports, their sailing orders, insurance policies, etc., precluded their taking the northern route, which had at that time been declared unsafe and hazardous and continues to be so to the present, so far as we know. Had these ships taken this route and been lost, their insurance policies would not have covered either hulls or cargoes. Among these vessels also were included a number of ships loaded with produce purchased in U.K. ports, whose insurance policies and German safe-conducts provided only for their transfer direct to Rotterdam from the Thames via Flushing. All these vessels should therefore be allowed to proceed to Rotterdam without molestation.

3. We have been absolutely unable to get neutral vessels to accept charters to Rotterdam via the northern route because of the fact that, at the best, it consists of but a narrow free passage between the danger zones of the belligerent governments--if indeed such a way exists at all---and this route lies through the section made particularly dangerous by floating mines. We therefore beg that an exception be made in the case of our Relief ships and that they be allowed to approach Rotterdam as heretofore by the southern route.

4. Foodstuffs purchased by the Commission in England are only allowed to be forwarded to Flushing by the paddle boats of the Dutch Line. These boats are not in a position to carry more than the smallest quantity of cargo; indeed we understand that they actually carry no cargo at all. It is evidently quite impracticable for them to transport the 20,000 to 25,000 tons of provisions which we purchase in the U.K. and send to Rotterdam monthly. Persistence in this regulation simply means that the German Government effectually prohibits and cuts off from the people of France and Belgium the supplies which have hitherto been obtained from this source, and it is a fact that the conditions are such that we cannot make up this quantity from overseas shipments. These shipments should therefore be handled as heretofore, in C.R.B. vessels with German safe-conduct passes, direct from the Thames to Rotterdam.

5. The action of the German Government in making this arrangement is appreciated. But if the Imperial Government really wishes, as it states, to assist the work of ravitaillement we feel that it should indicate this desire by attempting to meet the modifications which have been asked for by us. These requests for modification of the German regulations have been made only after a careful study of the regulations and in the belief that if the German Government insist on the original regulations being carried out they will, to all intents and purposes, render the transportation so hazardous and difficult that it will be impossible for us to obtain charters and that, therefore, the German Government will themselves break down and end the great humanitarian work which they state they wish to continue.

May we ask Your Excellency once more to present to the German Government the very serious aspect of the situation?

Yours very faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND, *Director*

DOCUMENT NO. 234

Letter,

POLAND TO PERCY, protesting against unofficial British proposal to unload C.R.B. cargoes detained in United Kingdom ports

LONDON, 27 February 1917

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

The proposal which you have unofficially presented, that the Relief vessels now detained in United Kingdom ports by reason of lack of German safe-conducts, shall commence to be unloaded on Friday, March 2d, under the auspices of the British authorities, has been informally considered by the Commission.

In the event of indications of serious deterioration of cargoes, or evidence that the German authorities do not intend to arrange safe-conduct passes carrying immunity from submarine attack, it seems evident that some radical action will have to be taken by the Commission, but we do not believe that this time has yet been reached. Action of this nature by the British authorities, under these circumstances, might be followed by most serious consequences to the whole ravitaillement service. Even the color of precedent so established by the British Government, for the seizure of supplies imported by the Commission, might be taken advantage of by the German

authorities in Belgium and France or made a plausible excuse for otherwise interfering with the Relief.

Dr. Kellogg is proceeding to Holland and Belgium for the purpose of presenting the whole question of the sailing of Relief ships to the German authorities and getting action from them.

The entire subject of the Commission's action in regard to these cargoes tied up in the United Kingdom ports, including the question of unloading, has been referred to our Chairman in New York and to the State Department, from whom we have not yet heard.

We therefore request that no action with regard to unloading be actually taken by the British authorities until we advise that we consider negotiations with the Germans have been exhausted.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND,
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 235

Memorandum
of conference at Foreign Office regarding Relief vessels detained in United Kingdom ports due to submarine warfare

LONDON, 28 February 1917

MEMORANDUM OF MEETING AT FOREIGN OFFICE

Present: Monsieur Chevrillon, Lord Eustace Percy, Mr. Poland.

1. *Insurance*.---Neutral cargoes and hulls. The Commission is to endeavor to get full insurance on cargoes, at market rates, and in the event of failure, the Government will make up the amount lacking.

As to hulls, the Foreign Office has submitted to the Treasury a proposition that insurance on the basis of the same rate be agreed upon, but this has not yet been put in order.

As to Belgian vessels, the Government is prepared to take over all insurance.

In the case of neutral vessels which may be ordered, on account of lack of bunkering at Rotterdam to United Kingdom ports for coal, the Government is considering assuming full insurance of hulls and cargoes within the danger zone, but this has not yet been put in order.

2. Action of the British authorities in regard to Relief vessels detained in the United Kingdom.---The British take the position that it is absolutely necessary to discharge these vessels in the United Kingdom because no reliance can be placed on the German safe-conducts that they will effectually protect in the danger zone. Further, they would not offer the same guarantees as a safe-conduct by the northern route, for several reasons:

1. The submarines might not be advised that they must protect the boats of the Commission.
2. It might be difficult for a submarine in these danger zones to make a distinction as to which boats they should protect and which not.
3. The Germans may be inclined to sink all boats of the Commission in the hope that they will force the Allies to replace them.
4. One boat of the Commission has just been sunk in the danger zone (probably by a mine) and another has undoubtedly been torpedoed, whether in the danger zone or not is for the moment uncertain.

The British Government considers that it would be a crime on their part to venture cargoes of foodstuffs which are needed in England and submit them to such danger of being destroyed, at a moment when the country might itself be in danger of running short of supplies.

The British Government therefore considers that it is absolutely necessary to unload these foodstuffs and that it is very unlikely that the Germans will produce such safe-conducts as the British Government will consider a sufficient protection to warrant the dispatch of foodstuffs from the United Kingdom to Rotterdam. Nevertheless, the British Government will consider these foodstuffs as belonging to the C.R.B. and will undertake not to requisition them or use them for consumption unless it should be absolutely necessary. The British Government cannot be bound in this respect by any period of time.

On the other hand, Mr. Chevrillon and Mr. Poland, for the Commission, called attention to the fact that while it might be necessary, as a matter involving the release of tonnage or the protection of foodstuffs against deterioration, to immediately unload the vessels in U.K. ports, if there were a suggestion of confiscation by the Government, it would involve the whole principle of the ravitaillement work and should seriously endanger its continuance. Therefore, in

accordance with the letter to Lord Eustace Percy on this subject, of February 27th, the Commission could only agree to unload on the understanding that the cargoes would be considered exclusively the property of the Commission for Relief and not subject to levy or requisition by the Food Control or other British authority, and the matter was left on this basis for the time being. It was further pointed out that unloading on any other basis might be taken by the Germans as an excuse for interrupting the work. Attention was likewise called to the circumstance that the withholding of this food supply of 60,000 odd tons from Belgium and France, in connection with the other serious interruption of practically one month, might result in such a critical condition as would have grave political consequences.

3. *Coal supplies.*---The British take the positive position that they will not send coal to Rotterdam to supply C.R.B. boats or to make good to the Dutch Government coal that might be given to C.R.B. boats from Dutch supplies. They argue that the Germans are merely blackmailing and holding up the British Government. Further, vessels left in Rotterdam without coal, may be sent out by the British in defiance of German regulations to South Wales for coaling, without safe-conduct passes, the British Government agreeing, as before stated, to assume insurance for hulls from Rotterdam to South Wales and from South Wales out of the danger zone.

[Fig. 7. GERMAN SAFE CONDUCT PASS, 2 FEBRUARY 1917, FOR C.R.B. STEAMER "FEISTEIN"](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 236

Extract of letter,
POLAND TO HOOVER, describing the situation as result of attitude of German and British Governments respecting safe-conducts for C.R.B. ships in United Kingdom ports; also regarding the effect of these developments on insurance and chartering

LONDON, 2 March 1917

H. C. Hoover, Esq., New York

MY DEAR HOOVER:

Our great concern at the moment is the adjustment of the issue of safe-conduct passes so that vessels may proceed from the States; this is being urged in every way. When we attempted to despatch vessels from Rotterdam the German authorities refused to give absolute guarantees against submarine attack until March 5th, indicating very clearly that our position was correct in considering the north-about route unsafe.

The situation as to United Kingdom cargoes is very grave. I call your attention to my letter to Lord Eustace Percy under date February 27th, under separate cover. By messages received today, the Germans are proposing methods by which these vessels may be moved across, but the British Government, we are sure because of the pinch for food, finds objection to the details proposed by the Germans and insists that at least some of our vessels be unloaded. We regard this as grave and that it may be taken as an excuse by the Germans for interfering with the ravitaillement, but hope that this action in unloading may be defended on the basis of depreciation of cargoes and necessity for releasing vessels to get additional tonnage. The Foreign Office have practically demanded the unloading of the "Samland," the "Vaarli," loaded with grain from the Argentine, and the "Vergotti," also loaded with grain from the Argentine; and this will be put in order on the distinct understanding that these cargoes are the property of the Commission and will remain so.

Our next great difficulty is in regard to insurance. Lloyds and the Companies have cancelled their arrangements effective March 4th, and despite every endeavor which we have made with the Government, we have not been able to make an arrangement yet for their taking over insurance on hulls and cargoes of neutral vessels. We do not know what we may have to pay, but I have told Nash, Guthrie, and Harvey that we will go ahead up to 8 per cent on neutral cargoes and after that will not insure at all; but as to hulls it will be necessary for us to assume extra war insurance over 2 per cent in order to be able to make contracts. This I have authorized, but notwithstanding everything I do in this respect I anticipate the gravest difficulty in obtaining any neutral charters for Rotterdam, as shipowners consider it very much more hazardous than trips to the United Kingdom; in addition to which, owing to the very serious lack of tonnage for the Allies, we are finding many open and more concealed obstacles put in the way of our charters, which we are endeavoring to combat in every manner possible, although they will be vital factors in the near future.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND,
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 237

Memorandum of meeting,
FOREIGN OFFICE, ADMIRALTY, FOOD CONTROL, AND C.R.B.
REPRESENTATIVES, regarding the unloading of C.R.B. vessels in the United
Kingdom

LONDON, 3 March 1917

Present: Lord Eustace Percy, representing the Foreign Office; Commander Wyatt, representing the Admiralty; The Wheat Commission, representing the Food Control Board; Mr. W. B. Poland, representing the C.R.B.

After some questions regarding the position of C.R.B. ships, etc., Mr. Poland said that, before going on with the meeting, he would like to inquire its object. The Wheat Commission (the names of whose members were not understood) showed surprise that there was doubt in regard to the objects; they being---as understood by the Wheat Commission---to arrange for the unloading of all grain held by the C.R.B. Mr. Poland thereupon stated that the cargoes in C.R.B. ships belonged to the peoples of Northern France and Belgium; that the C.R.B. was their trustee and was obligated to forward the cargoes to the people, who were approaching a point of starvation; that if it was the intention of the British Government to seize or confiscate these cargoes, the Commission for Relief was prepared to enter an immediate protest which would be carried to the highest authorities. It was therefore necessary, before carrying on any further discussion, that the position of the Government in this respect should be clearly stated.

After some informal discussion, Lord Eustace Percy said that the meeting was solely for the purpose of discussing the best manner in which the cargoes of vessels could be handled provided it was necessary to unload them; that the Government agreed it was distinctly understood the cargoes remained the property of the Commission and were unloaded for their account in order to relieve ships; that they were subject to C.R.B. demand at any time.

Mr. Poland stated if it was clearly understood by all the gentlemen present that these cargoes should remain without question the exclusive property of the C.R.B. (and they thereupon acknowledged that it was so understood), then he was prepared to discuss the unloading of certain cargoes. This for the reason that the delay in putting the German safe-conducts in order made it desirable to relieve the shipowners from the loss of the use of their vessels and also to provide additional tonnage.

Lord Eustace Percy reiterated that the British authorities considered the proposals made by the German authorities to be insincere and that the British authorities did not propose to concede the unreasonable demands made by the Germans.

After further discussion it was decided to unload S.S. "Samland" at Bristol, S.S. "Vergotti," S.S. "Einar Jarl," S.S. "Vaarli," and S.S. "Fridtjof Nansen," all loaded with wheat, at London. S.S. "O. A. Knudsen," loaded with wheat, was not to be unloaded, at least until after the others.

Mr. Poland agreed to give to the Secretary of the Wheat Commission details of the cargoes of above steamers. The C.R.B. was also to have an inspector present to represent them at the unloading of the vessels.

The meeting then adjourned.

DOCUMENT NO. 238

Letter,

POLAND TO MERRY DEL VAL, protesting against German restrictions and explanations presented in Zimmermann's letter of 18 February 1917

LONDON, 15 March 1917

*His Excellency Señor Don Alfonso Merry del Val
Spanish Ambassador, London*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of March 12th, stating that the German authorities have expressed their readiness to place coal at Rotterdam for the bunkering of Relief Commission's steamers as soon as they receive an authentic communication to the effect that the work of the Commission will be continued on the lines laid down in a proposal made the 18th February last by the Governor-General in Belgium. I find no reference in previous correspondence to proposals made by the Governor-General, but this morning we received text of a communication which you were good enough to send us, signed "Zimmermann" dated Berlin, February 18th, which contains the following:

"With a view to settling this question, negotiations have been set on foot by the General Government in Belgium directly with the Protecting Ministers of the Commission. These negotiations have had as a result that the Americans will remain at their posts until further orders, the question of the introduction of other neutral agents into the Commission, in the first place to assist the Americans and subsequently to replace them, being reserved for the present."

Is this the communication referred to? If so, will Your Excellency be so good as to transmit to the German authorities the statement that, as they know, since they have been furnishing safe-conduct passes, we are and have been despatching vessels from overseas to Rotterdam via the northern route outside the German prescribed danger zone.

As to the transfer of produce and vessels between United Kingdom ports and Rotterdam, this is entirely suspended owing to the failure to receive any definite

undertaking of safe-conduct on the part of the German authorities covering this service, their communications to date stating merely that in principle they are agreed to such a transfer. This we are informed by the British Government is not sufficient.

As to the continuance of relief, the Commission will, as in the past, do its utmost in every way to import supplies into Belgium and the North of France and will also maintain its representatives in those countries just as long as it is possible for them to carry on their activities and fulfill their guarantees to the interested governments.

It is to be pointed out, however, that from the 1st of February to the middle of March, on account of the German submarine regulations, instead of delivering 100,000 tons of produce into Rotterdam, as should have been done, we have been able to deliver only 12,000 tons. On the other hand, as soon as German safe-conduct passes were again issued, all vessels in United States ports were despatched to Rotterdam and we now have en route sixteen vessels, containing 55,000 tons of food.

In the German communication received today, the statement appears in (1) that to the proclamation of January 31st, establishing the war zone, a note was attached giving a respite extending to February 13th for those neutral boats traversing the danger zone in the Atlantic and in the Channel. Such a note was not conveyed to us, and this is the first intimation we have had of it.

We have understood from the communications from the German Legation at The Hague to our Rotterdam office, that the question of providing 20,000 tons of coal per month for outward-bound Relief steamers was only dependent upon our agreeing to transport a similar amount of Belgian coal by our returning barges into Holland, which arrangement was concurred in by the Rotterdam office. Are we now to understand that this arrangement is brought into question? Are we also to understand that the reply of the Imperial German Government, that coal would be provided at Rotterdam, as expressed in its communication to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin, communicated to us in your letter of February 23d, is now made conditional?

It is very necessary that the attention of the Imperial Government be called to the likelihood that if outbound Relief steamers are detained in Rotterdam by inability to obtain coal, the British Government will prohibit the entry of C.R.B. vessels to Rotterdam, with the result that the Relief service will again be interrupted.

We trust that the German Government will not reverse its undertaking in regard to providing bunkers at Rotterdam, upon the strength of which we have been despatching our vessels to that port; and we request that we be immediately advised as to the final position of the German Government in this respect.

We renew the expression of our thanks to Your Excellency for the highly valued attention you are so generously giving to these affairs.

Yours very truly

(Signed) W. B. POLAND,
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 239

Telegram,
HOOVER TO VILLALOBAR, announcing the sinking of five C.R.B. vessels and requesting that the German Government be asked to give reliable guarantees for the safety of these ships

LONDON, 5 April 1917

HIS EXCELLENCY THE MARQUIS VILLALOBAR
C/O THE SPANISH LEGATION, THE HAGUE

The torpedoing within last two days of "Feistein" and "Trevier" carrying 10,000 tons wheat having German safe-conducts and markings, pursuing supposed safe route laid down by German authorities again jeopardizes whole relief. This makes five ships torpedoed since February carrying 23,000 tons grain, and unless we can get some definite and believable assurance we cannot induce a single ship, much less the crews, to pursue this work and I have serious doubts whether Allied Governments will allow us to go on sacrificing ship after ship in constant violation of every sacred undertaking made by German authorities. We are doing our best to prevent this becoming point at which relief breaks and we are depending wholly upon your good self to see if you cannot find some solution that will again give reassurance that our ships can be protected and that we can continue.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 240

Letter,
HOOVER TO MERRY DEL VAL, enclosing memorandum describing the situation of C.R.B. activities resulting from the unrestricted submarine campaign

LONDON, 8 April 1917

His Excellency Señor Don Merry del Val
Spanish Ambassador, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I enclose herewith a memorandum reviewing the incidents and perils in which the whole Relief Commission is now plunged.

In view of this situation, we can only hope to succeed if: first, our Atlantic shipping is respected on the northern lane; and, second, in view of the shortage of shipping and food supplies, if we are provided at once with safe-conducts and a re-established service from the United Kingdom with which to move the stocks which we have accumulated here.

The position is one of extreme gravity for the whole enterprise and I am wondering if you will again exert yourself to bring this matter and if possible the memorandum enclosed, to the attention of the German authorities.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

MEMORANDUM

On the second of February 1917, we received from the Director of the Commission in Brussels telegraphic advice that the Imperial German Government insisted that the Commission should send its ships to Rotterdam by a route northward of the newly declared war zone, and that ships at that time in the war zone should proceed out of it by the most direct route, and could safely do so up to the evening of the 4th of February. At that time we had fourteen ships at sea carrying 76,000 tons of foodstuffs, either en route to or already inside the declared zone, and all but a few of them out of communication. Also at that moment we had stored in the United Kingdom 47,000 tons of foodstuffs awaiting shipment to Rotterdam. The notice given to us was entirely too short to make arrangements in all cases, either for the alteration of the route or the transportation of our stocks in the United Kingdom, and as a consequence eleven of the ships arrived in the United Kingdom ports in due course. In any event, we were advised by the Dutch and English Admiralties that the war zone declared by the German Government overlapped with the mine zone in the North Sea and there was no safe lane open on the route stated by the German authorities.

We were compelled to direct our New York office, not only to hold up all shipments abroad but also we were compelled to hold all arrivals and stocks in the United Kingdom until such time as a safe passage to Rotterdam could be agreed upon. The British authorities made no difficulty over the recession of the previous

requirement to search in the United Kingdom ports, and ultimately the German war zone was minimized so as to establish a lane into Rotterdam through the North Sea which they declared safe. The German authorities agreed to again respect our markings and to furnish safe-conduct passes by this route from America. These arrangements we settled on the 28th of February, and our traffic was resumed from the Atlantic seaboard after a cessation of one month and the accumulation of large demurrage costs.

In the meantime we had made repeated appeals to the German authorities for safe-conducts for the steamers then in the United Kingdom ports to proceed to Rotterdam, but as we could obtain no satisfaction in this matter, we were compelled to discharge the cargoes in order to release the ships and to prevent the perishable supplies from spoiling. Ultimately, on April 3d, the German authorities conditionally promised to give passage to four steamers then remaining in United Kingdom ports undischarged, but these steamers were not to proceed until the 1st of May. As it was hopeless to preserve the foodstuffs over such a period, these steamers were discharged as well.

The net result is that today we have upwards of 96,000 tons of foodstuffs in the United Kingdom. We were only able to deliver 24,000 tons in Rotterdam during the month of February and 9,600 tons during the month of March, as against 120,000 tons required per month. Owing to the alarm arising out of the unrestricted submarine warfare and from the sinking of our ships mentioned later on, even when on the "safe" lane, we have not been able to secure sufficient charters to fully re-establish our service. During the month of April, assuming that we have no further losses of steamers, we shall deliver less than 55,000 tons into Rotterdam. During these three months the Belgian and French populations will have been deprived of over 270,000 tons of foodstuffs critically necessary to prevent the most intense suffering amongst the people. Nor is the outlook for the future at all improving.

Of equal importance, however, with the direct loss and suffering entailed by the shortage of deliveries as mentioned above, has been the entire failure of the German submarines to adhere to the previous or new undertaking entered into by the Imperial Government as to the safety of our ships.

On the 3rd of February we learned that the Belgian S.S. "Euphrates" of 4,250 tons, outward bound in ballast, provided with the Commission's markings and a safe-conduct pass from the German Minister in The Hague, had been torpedoed without warning and most of the crew drowned. This act occurred before the expiration of the period notified as safe to the 4th of February.

On February 6th, the Danish steamer "Lars Kruse," carrying 2,300 tons of maize, inward to Rotterdam, provided with the Commission's markings, was sunk and only one member of the crew saved. The German authorities assert that this ship struck a mine, but much evidence points the other way.

On March 8th the Norwegian steamer "Storstad," en route to the newly agreed "safe" lane, carrying 10,000 tons of maize, with Commission's marking and safe-conduct pass from the German authorities in the Argentine, was stopped by a submarine and subsequently torpedoed by it without examination of the ship's papers. One of the crew died of exposure and another was lost.

On March 16th the Belgian steamers "Haelen" and "Tunisie," outward bound on the "safe lane" from Rotterdam in ballast for New York, carrying all the Commission's markings together with safe-conduct from the German Minister at The Hague, were shelled by a German submarine, and six members of the "Haelen" crew were killed. They managed to escape, but the "Haelen" was so injured that she had to put into a Norwegian port for repairs.

On March 17th the Belgian steamer "Ministre de Smet de Naeyer" was shelled by a submarine in the North Sea, but managed to escape. She was outward bound in ballast and was provided with the Commission's markings and had as usual a safe-conduct pass from the German Minister at The Hague.

On March 31st the Norwegian steamer "Feistein," inward bound within the "safe" lane, carrying 4,650 tons of wheat, was torpedoed and sunk without warning in broad daylight off the Dutch coast near Terschelling. She carried all the Commission's markings and safe-conduct pass issued by the Swiss Minister, Washington, on behalf of the German Government.

On the 4th of April, the Belgian S.S. "Trevier," carrying 4,396 tons of wheat, was torpedoed in broad daylight without warning ten miles off the Dutch coast within the "safe" lane. She carried full markings and safe-conduct pass from the Swiss Minister, Washington, issued with the authority of the German Government, and six members of the crew were seriously wounded by shell fire after they had taken to the boats.

On April 2d the Norwegian steamer "Anna Fostenes," inward bound, loaded with 3,100 tons of wheat, was torpedoed near Rotterdam well within the "safe" lane. She carried full Commission's markings and safe-conduct pass issued by the Swiss Minister, Washington, on the authority of the German Government.

On April 8th we received word that the Norwegian steamer "Camilla," inward bound, with 2,600 tons of wheat, on the "safe" lane, had been torpedoed without warning. She carried as usual the Commission's markings and a safe-conduct pass issued by the Swiss Minister at Washington on the authority of the German Government.

Since resuming traffic on February 28th, three steamers have arrived safely and five have been sunk.

It is impossible to express the indignation which we rightly feel over these acts, and we are at a loss to know whether this continued sinking of steamers in violation of their undertakings is a settled policy of the Imperial Government or whether it is due to the reckless irresponsibility of submarine commanders. In any event the immediate peril and loss of life of innocent seamen continuing resolutely in the service of helpless people is transcended only by the tragedy of suffering imposed on those millions of men, women, and children we are trying to preserve.

DOCUMENT NO. 241

Letter,

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO C.R.B., regarding protests to the German Government and suggesting that the C.R.B. declare its inability to guarantee supplies for Belgium unless Germany make good the losses and provide against further sinkings

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
23 April 1917

The Commission for Relief in Belgium

SIR:

I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to inform you that the Spanish Government have not only transmitted to the German Government the protests recorded by the Governments of Great Britain and France regarding attacks by German submarines on your Relief vessels, but have added thereto an expression of their own reprobation of such outrages.

2. I am now to suggest for your consideration that the Commission, on their part, should move their Spanish and Dutch Patrons to make it known, in the name of the Commission, both at Berlin and at Brussels that, in view of these repeated attacks, which are in direct breach of the formal and solemn guarantees of the German Government, the Commission will be unable to assure the continuance of supplies, unless the German Government take immediate steps to provide that their engagements are respected by their naval officers, and not only replace the stores which have been lost, but also supply from their own merchant fleet a tonnage equivalent to that of the Belgian Relief vessels which have been torpedoed.

3. By adopting this course the Commission would free itself from any charge of interrupting the course of supplies and would place the responsibility of the due performance of this duty upon the German Government, who can hardly fail to appreciate the difficulties as to transport arising from the hesitation naturally felt by

the Allies in providing vessels which run graver risks than those employed in their own service because they are navigated without armament and without special precautions.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant

(Signed) EYRE A. CROWE

DOCUMENT NO. 242

Letter,
POLAND TO FOREIGN OFFICE, regarding the C.R.B. losses from submarines,
and justifying the continuation of relief

LONDON, 30 April 1917

Sir Hugh Daly, The Foreign Office, London

DEAR SIR HUGH:

I beg to acknowledge communication from the Foreign Office received April 26th concerning attacks on Relief vessels. I note particularly that for the moment the Foreign Office has taken the responsibility of holding up at Halifax all Relief ships destined to Rotterdam. The Foreign Office, furthermore, indicates that they do not consider themselves "justified in granting facilities for additional Relief vessels to proceed on their voyage unless and until reliable evidence had been adduced that the German Government have no intention of sinking such vessels." I do not, however, understand that the British Government is proposing by this communication to suspend the Relief service, but wishes a review of the entire situation concerning the sinking of our vessels.

It is desirable, therefore, to give the facts as far as we know them today, and we believe this should be kept quite confidential.

Since the new submarine activity was instituted by the Germans, the following vessels have been attacked by submarines or sunk by mines:

S.S. "Euphrates." January 22d. 4,250 tons. Southwest bound in ballast from Barry Roads. Torpedoed in daylight about 250 miles out, within the present danger zone, but before same had been established. Vessel provided with German safe-conducts and all markings, Evidence of sole survivor, who was below at the time, indicates

that at least pennants and balls were being displayed. No explanation of this occurrence except individual turpitude of commander of submarine.

S.S. "Lars Kruse." February 4th. 2,300 tons of maize. This vessel was en route from the Argentine. She was sunk during the night a short distance off the French coast within the danger zone. There was but one survivor, who was below at the time of the explosion, The vessel was provided with Commission markings but had no German safe-conduct. No testimony as to submarine. Seems possibly to have been due to mines laid by submarine.

S.S. "Storstad." March 8th. 10,004 tons maize. Provided with C.R.B. flags and markings; cargo was billed to C.R.B. as certified by German consular visa; but carried no German safe-conduct. She was shelled, torpedoed, and sunk during daylight without examination of ship's papers, about eighty-five miles southwest of Ireland while within the danger zone. According to the captain's statements this vessel was instructed to proceed from Gibraltar to Rotterdam north about, but was not instructed to keep out of the danger zone.

S.S.'s "Haelen" and "Tunisie." These vessels were attacked by a submarine on March 16th, two or three days out from Rotterdam bound north about in ballast. It was broad daylight, and they were displaying all Commission flags and markings and were provided with safe-conducts. They were in the safe passage east of the German danger zone. There seems to have been no excuse for the attack unless it be put down to the stupidity of the submarine commander. After the vessels were abandoned by the crews the submarine approached, whereupon the captains showed their safe-conducts and explained that they were Relief vessels, whereupon the submarine commander instructed them to proceed, which they did without further interference. The "Haelen" was severely damaged by a shell and seven of the crew were killed.

S.S. "Ministre de Smet de Naeyer." March 28th. 4,000 tons of wheat. This vessel was en route to Rotterdam and, according to the captain's statements, was instructed to go north about but was not instructed to keep out of the danger zone. We have no means of ascertaining the truth of this statement. At all events on March 28th he was a short distance off Kirkwall, well in the danger zone, when the vessel was attacked by a submarine. He managed, however, to escape and got out of the danger zone, arriving safely in Rotterdam.

S.S. "Feistein." March 31st. 4,447 tons of wheat. Was provided with safe-conducts and markings. This vessel apparently got off the exact course and entered the British minefield area. There were three explosions between four and six o'clock in the evening. Two or three of the sailors claim to have seen bubbles of a torpedo, but the captain and officers saw no submarine or torpedo and did not appear to consider the evidence reliable. It does not seem likely that a German submarine

would be cruising in the minefield area, and the probability is that the vessel did strike mines.

S.S. "Anna Fostenes." April 2nd. 3,062 tons of wheat. We have received no other definite information concerning this occurrence than the Admiralty's statement that she probably struck a mine in Lat. 54°N. 4°E., on the very edge of the danger zone.

S.S. "Trevier." April 4th. 4,330 tons of wheat. This vessel was sunk by shell fire and torpedoed by a German submarine during daylight. She appears to have been just within the danger zone on account of the captain's not having definite instructions as to the position of the Terschelling lightship. The vessel was provided with all Relief ship flags and markings and safe-conduct. She stopped and gave ample opportunity to the submarine for inspection. The captain thought the inspection had been made and found satisfactory and was proceeding on his way when struck by a torpedo.

S.S. "Camilla." April 8th. Loaded with 2,651 tons of wheat. Provided with Commission flags and markings. Was attacked by submarine off coast of Norway. We have no accurate report on the position of this boat as to whether she was in the danger zone or not, or of the circumstances surrounding her loss. We note in a Danish paper a statement by the captain that his vessel was boarded by men from a submarine; that the crew were driven into the boats and that the men from the German submarine were preparing to sink the vessel with bombs. However, she was afloat when last seen. We know nothing more of this circumstance.

S.S. "Kongsli." April 20th. 7,800 tons of wheat. Vessel was struck by mine or torpedo at 10:00 p.m. when eighteen miles west of Ymuiden in free zone, and had all Commission flags, markings, and German safe-conduct. It is impossible to determine whether torpedoed or not. No one saw a submarine. The vessel did not sink and was towed into the Hook. Cargo only partially damaged.

Attention is called to the fact that while ten steamers have struck mines or been attacked by submarines during the time January 22d to date, during the same period vessels carrying 95,853 tons of provisions have arrived at Rotterdam from overseas, and that more particularly during the month of April eighteen overseas vessels carrying 58,652 tons have reached Rotterdam.

Taking all these facts together, it does appear that the Germans have some basis for the claim which they make to excuse their dastardly record; i.e., that all the vessels, which can be proved to have been torpedoed as far as present information goes, were in the danger zone.

On the part of the Commission, in view of the foregoing and in view of other communications of the German authorities through neutral ministers of which the British Foreign Office is advised, I am willing to take the responsibility of saying

that these occurrences do not yet indicate a purpose on the part of the German authorities to break down the Relief, and that despite the losses of our ships, we are amply justified in going ahead with the Relief work; and that we should continue to send forward our vessels with the utmost dispatch to Rotterdam.

Attached is a copy of a communication received from Baron von der Lancken by His Excellency the Marquis de Villalobar dated Brussels, April 13th, which outlines the German position and reiterates the undertakings which the Germans have made, that Relief vessels will not be interfered with by the Germans if they keep outside the danger zone.

I also attach copy of a communication just received through His Excellency the Minister for Belgium presenting a picture of the very distressing situation now arising in the occupied territories. This is only one of many communications of a similar character which we have received. I feel sure that the British Foreign Office will concur with us, not only that the situation demands the release of the vessels at Halifax and that we continue to forward relief cargoes from America, but that the greatest possible efforts must be made to increase by every means in our power the shipments to the people of Belgium and Northern France, among certain sections of whom starvation has indeed already commenced.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND,
Director

5. The Shipping Crisis. May-November 1917

From the first month of unrestricted U-boat warfare until the Allies and the United States had the convoy system effectively established,⁽¹³⁶⁾ the losses of British, Allied, and neutral merchant ships upon which the Allied cause was absolutely dependent were enormous. In January (before the unrestricted U-boat campaign was launched) acts of the enemy had caused the loss of 368,521 tons. In February the total was 540,006; March, 593,841; April (the peak), 881,027; May, 596,629; June, 687,507; July, 557,988; August, 511,730; September, 351,748. The true situation was not disclosed to the public, but Admiralty and shipping officials admitted that unless some means of successfully combatting the U-boats were promptly found the limit of endurance would be reached by November 1917. As late as the 29th June 1917 Admiral Sims reported that if losses continued at the rate of the last four months the Allies might be "forced into an unsatisfactory peace."⁽¹³⁷⁾ Naturally the Commission's operations suffered, as did all other shipping activities. In addition to the effects of the submarine blockade referred to on preceding pages the C.R.B. lost twenty-two vessels from mines or U-boats

during 1917---twice as many as in 1916. During this period, likewise, the hard-pressed belligerents showed less and less hesitancy about requisitioning ships under charter to the Commission.

Under such circumstances it can easily be comprehended why during the four months following the institution of unrestricted submarine warfare a total of only 115,000 tons of food reached Rotterdam, compared to a minimum program to sustain life in Belgium and Northern France of 110,000 tons each month.(138) With the breakdown of its oversea service the Commission immediately increased its purchases in Holland, but this country had a serious food problem and hence permitted but little exportation. The Commission's cross-channel service, England to Rotterdam, which had in the first two years transported nearly 20 per cent of the total program was, after complete termination, slowly reinstated. This service, however, remained hazardous and limited, and furthermore Great Britain was getting short of food and there was but little to be obtained in the London market for Belgium. As the following documents indicate, these trying times led to some sharp controversies which did not make the Commission's burdens any lighter. Nor did they cause it to slacken its efforts to get food into Belgium. In America, which had become the main source of supply for Allies, European neutrals, and the C.R.B., Hoover fought to guard the interests of the people of occupied France and Belgium in the face of the enormous pressure of the harassed Governments of the Allies. As United States Food Administrator he was able to prevent the loss of such tonnage as the Commission possessed and, by suggesting the possibility of a food embargo, to secure for the Commission a few badly needed cargoes from the Swedish, Dutch, and Norwegian Governments.

DOCUMENT NO. 243

Letter,
HOOVER TO LANSING, suggesting participation of neutrals in assisting
Commission's shipping

WASHINGTON, 26 May 1917

Hon. Robert Lansing,
Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. LANSING:

As you are probably aware, the Belgium Relief Commission is delivering about 60,000 tons of foodstuffs per month and it requires shipping to handle an additional 40,000 tons per month.

I understand that you already have particulars from the British Embassy as to the amount of Swedish, Dutch, and Spanish shipping which is available over and above the needs of those countries, and that you have particulars of the draft agreement between the British Government and the Spanish Government which shows the proportion of ships which the Spanish Government, at the beginning of April, was prepared to allow the British Government to charter and the proportion which it stipulated should be reserved for Spanish use.

I understand that this information shows a vast surplus of tonnage of these three neutrals available for service. The tonnage which we have in use at present transporting the present food supply is Ally tonnage, which could be armed if employed in any other trade. I also understand that various neutrals are making inquiries here as to whether their food supply will be cut off under the embargo.

It seems to me that the time has arrived when we might consider some definite service from these people of a character which does not jeopardize their ships but which leads them into the path of a little humanity, and that we should say to them that they should undertake to provide the transport of 100,000 tons of foodstuffs for the Belgian Relief, and to transport the wheat involved, which will amount to 60,000 tons per month, from Australia; and that unless they are prepared to enter upon this path of decent dealing we shall reserve all the questions of the export of foodstuffs from this country to these neutrals until further notice.

It seems to me that if this hint were given at the present moment it probably would be as effective as direct action under embargo legislation. The Belgian Relief Commission is prepared to pay the same price which is made in this work for employment of ships for the Allies, or in setting a figure the price of foodstuffs exported from the United States will also be considered. I think it would be desirable to have these ferments working in the neutral mind as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 244

Letter,
HOOVER TO FRIDTJOF NANSEN OF THE NORWEGIAN SPECIAL
MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES, outlining arrangements for providing
supplies and ships for the C.R.B. and export licenses to Norway

WASHINGTON, 22 August 1917

*His Excellency, Fridtjof Nansen,
The Norwegian Special Mission to the United States, Washington, D.C.*

My DEAR MR. NANSEN:

In order that we may come to a definite understanding of the fulfillment of our agreement concerning the division of the Norwegian grain supplies now in the United States, and the allocation of Norwegian shipping for the purpose of transporting these supplies to Rotterdam and Norway, I review below the agreement as I understand it:

First: Your Government is to immediately transfer to the Commission for Relief in Belgium 16,000 tons of rye and 14,000 tons of wheat, now on the Atlantic seaboard, at original contract prices.

Second: The Norwegian Government will receive licenses for exporting 2,300 tons of wheat and 18,000 tons of barley.

Third: The Norwegian Government will charter to the Commission for Relief in Belgium the ships named below:

"Hermion"	7,000 tons cargo ins.
"Ramfos"	5,000 tons cargo ins.
"Olaf Kyrre"	4,000 tons cargo ins.
"Folkvard"	4,400 tons cargo ins.
"Kapana"	2,300 tons cargo ins.
"Fram"	3,600 tons cargo ins.
making a total of	26,300 tons cargo ins.

Fourth: It is understood that the Commission for Relief in Belgium will effect hull and war insurance on the above ships from Atlantic ports to Rotterdam, as follows:

"Hermion"	Kr. 5,267,000
"Ramfos"	4,054,000

"Olaf Kyrre"	2,000,750
"Folkvard"	4,000,000
"Kapana"	2,500,000
"Fram"	4,500,000

Fifth: It is understood that the charter rate will be Kr. 38 per quarter plus 25 per cent, which includes hull insurance, equivalent to the current rates between Atlantic ports and Norway. In view of the fact that the Commission for Relief in Belgium office will effect the insurance, the Norwegian Government will deduct from the total charter cost, the cost of the current hull insurance between Atlantic ports and Norway. Freight to be paid before departure in Kroner currency.

Sixth: It is understood that a steamer will be placed at the disposal of the Commission for Relief in Belgium immediately to lift the balance of the 30,000 tons, that is, 3,700.

Seventh: It is to be noted that the United States Government does not write insurance, and consequently the insurance offered by the Belgian Commission cannot be guaranteed by the United States Government.

We have already instituted inspection of the above named ships, and would be pleased to have your approval of this arrangement([139](#)) at the earliest possible date in order that we may complete the program.

Yours very truly

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman, The Commission for Relief in Belgium

Accepted by

(Signed) FRIDTJOF NANSEN,
High Commissioner to the United States from the Norwegian Government

DOCUMENT NO. 245

Letter,
HOOVER TO POLAND, regarding shipping matters and stating the difficulties of finding a solution of shipping troubles

WASHINGTON, 29 August 1917

William B. Poland, Esq., London

MY DEAR POLAND:

I am greatly obliged for your letters of the 3d, 6th, and 14th of August, with various enclosures, which are just at hand.

I fully realize the Belgian necessities and we should, by all means in our power, get the total program increased to 115,000 tons a month. We have obviously several methods of attack:

First---our own fleet

Second---further charters

We are apparently to have two consigned by the French Government as a result of all of their wide promises to furnish us with some tonnage, and, in this matter, I think you should add to my strong statements at this end, all the pressure that you can to convince the French Government that it must find the tonnage for its own people. In addition to this, we are hoping to get, under pressure of a shipping board here, the seven Wagner boats, and I am hoping that you may be able to get something out of Swedish quarters as per your letter.

It is well to bear in mind that the American fleet is very small, and that it is practically all required to carry our troops and material along our coasts and to France, and that we are running short on our imports into this country of very vital foodstuffs because we have not the ships under our own flag to press into service.

I hope to effect some results by pressure on neutrals. We will be securing you the Norwegian tonnage which departs within the next few days, and we will get something out of the Dutch. This, of course, will only be the actual cargoes delivered and not continuing charters. A hint has been thrown out to these people here that it might be possible for them to arrange, subject to other international conditions, for a supply of wheat from Australia, if they would go, and get it; the condition to be that one-half of such wheat should be delivered to the Belgian Relief.

I wish to assure you that there is absolutely nothing that my mind can invent that we haven't tried to do in the last month. It was hopeless to get anything done here prior to the 10th of August, at which time most of the powers under the Food Bill came into action, and certain powers came to the Shipping Board. Also, at the same time, Mr. Hurley became the head of the Shipping Board and is co-operating finely to help us.

There are some factors in this question that fill me with great anxiety. The United States has been over-exporting its pork products, and we must moderate shipments

from here, or we shall have actual shortages through this country, and we cannot afford to allow our population to run short of such foodstuffs without creating more opposition to the war than now exists. We are doing everything in our power to reduce consumption, but you should not be too optimistic about increasing, or even maintaining, the present pork products supply from here.

As to Francqui's trouble in finance, the only solution is the one which I repeatedly proposed, and that is for the Société Générale to advance the money to the Secours,(140) and for us, in turn, to give them securities or advances in London. This, of course, must be done with the full approval of the British Government, which it has long since granted. If we can increase the program, it will no doubt remedy the situation to some extent.

Altogether, the Belgians should get it through their heads that the world is entering into a period of absolute desperation in regard to food supplies; that this program is no longer wholly a shipping problem, which is bad enough, but it is also a problem of the actual supply of food for all the parties concerned.

I received a very insulting telegram through the Belgian Government a few days since, and I replied in terms which produced from them an apology last night. I stated that none of us would stand for this sort of an attitude, and that they had better take over the business themselves . This attitude on the part of the various persons of this character has not done the Belgian cause and this Government any good. It must be borne in mind that we are supplying \$7,500,000 a month(141) to the Relief here and doing all in our power even to the prejudice of our own people, by way of omitting from here absolutely essential imports, in order to give them shipping, and by way of sending foodstuffs which we can only secure by enforcing a reduction of consumption among our own people. It is about all they have a right to ask from any nation.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 246

Telegram,
HOOVER TO HONNOLD, objecting to diversion of Belgian ships from relief

WASHINGTON, 15 October 1917

HONNOLD
COMMISSION Fort RELIEF IN BELGIUM, NEW YORK

Inform Mali(142) that if the Belgian Government divert any single vessel from the Relief I will prevent the sailing of such vessel from American ports.

If the Belgian Government has no consideration for her own people the American Government has and will enforce it.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 247

Telegram,
STATE DEPARTMENT TO AMERICAN LEGATION AT HAVRE, quoting the
President's reply to King Albert's message relative to inadequacy of supplies
imported into Belgium

WASHINGTON, 26 October 1917

AMERICAN LEGATION, HAVRE

For your information. The following cablegram has today been addressed by the President to the King of the Belgians in reply to a message(143) received on October eighteenth concerning the inadequacy of food imports into Belgium and expressing the hope that further measures will be taken to meet the situation:

Quote. I have given most careful consideration to Your Majesty's cablegram, and I need not assure Your Majesty of the deep solicitude which I feel for the civil population of Belgium as conditions become incessantly more difficult and the obstacles to be overcome increase in number.

While the Commission has delivered some 400,000 tons of foodstuffs since the submarine warfare began, it has shipped an additional 250,000 tons which have failed to reach their destination either because of sinkings or because of inability to complete delivery of goods in transit through the war zone, besides which the delays to steamers in transit have entailed the loss in carrying capacity of over 100,000 tons. The Commission has been powerless to prevent these losses and no one feels more deeply the suffering entailed than do its members.

Frankness in making a complete statement of the causes of the shortage compels me to say that even the Belgian authorities have from time to time increased the difficulty by requisitioning Belgian ships under charter to the Commission at critical periods.

The relief work requires the regular movement of 220,000 tons of shipping, and while the losses of ships and the failure of neutrals and of the Allies to supply

shipping last June reduced their regular fleet to 120,000 tons, the Commission have by the addition of steamers furnished by this Government, and purchases of ships by the Government waived in their favor now built up their fleet to 160,000 tons.

Furthermore, with my approval, Mr. Hoover has obtained from various governments certain tonnage for this purpose in return for food supplies. This has been done with an insistence we have felt could be justified only by the duty of maintaining the lives of these helpless civilians. For no other purpose have we gone to such length. We now have the hope through these means of securing sufficient additional neutral shipping, and with success in the negotiations now pending, there may be available a fleet of sufficient size.

Your Majesty is doubtless familiar with the financial difficulties of the Commission, which arise out of the inability of this Government to provide funds for expenditures outside of the United States, and the necessity of securing financial assistance from the other Governments for expenditures abroad, in which matter I trust Your Majesty will interest yourself.

The foregoing is but a general survey of the situation, but I trust it will convey to Your Majesty some idea of the difficulties with which the Commission has to contend. I need hardly reiterate that we are determined to do everything this Government can to meet the requirements of the civilian population of Belgium which has such a claim upon our sympathy and friendship, and that if we are unable to render them the full measure of services to be desired, it will be through no lack of effort or sympathetic understanding on our part. Unquote.

It is desired that you take an opportunity to impress upon the Belgian Government the fact that this Government has not only done all that could reasonably be expected of it to provide food for the civilian population of Belgium, but has exacted from neutral nations additional foodstuffs for the Belgians in return for concessions as to food and supplies. This has been done by Mr. Hoover with an insistence and severity that we have not exercised on our own behalf, and has caused some resentment which we have willingly accepted in the interest of Belgium.

Furthermore, we have given Belgian food shipments from the United States priority over all the Allies.

Neither this Government nor Mr. Hoover has any obligation other than good will in the matter, and Mr. Hoover has repeatedly asked the Belgian Government to take over the purchase and transport of supplies.

For your confidential information, I may say that the tone of implied criticism in messages from Belgian sources and the apparent attempts to load responsibility on individuals and this Government are difficult for us to understand. It is hoped that

by taking every occasion to create an understanding of the true situation, and the difficulties before the Commission, you will succeed in ending the influence of those who apparently are seeking to convey an impression that the inadequacy of the food supply in Belgium is in any way attributable to negligence or lack of sympathetic understanding on behalf of this Government or its officials.

While Hoover labored in America with neutrals for the allocation of relief cargoes, Poland, the director in the London office, struggled, but with discouraging results, to procure neutral charters in the open market and to keep the charters already secured from being taken over by the British shipping authorities. Most neutral owners did not care to risk the dangerous relief service, and furthermore the Allied Governments had set up an effective but unofficial "control" of neutral vessels through the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ Thus as Allied shipping control became more broadly effective, the difficulties of the Commission increased. It appeared that in a short time all available tonnage would be in government service and nothing would remain for relief. Poland, therefore, appealed directly to the heads of the Allied Governments to accept the principle of Allied responsibility for relief tonnage. Poland's efforts were crowned with success, when at the Inter-Allied Conference in Paris on the 29th November, before which he had pleaded the case of the Commission and its charges, the Allies declared that priority over all their own provisioning be given to the population of Belgium and Northern France. This was priority for food, but at the same time the decision guaranteed the necessary extra ships to the Commission to make possible the delivery of the agreed program. This was a decided triumph, but it was some time before the accepted principle was put into practice. As far as ships were concerned it was not until four months later, on the 25th April 1918, that the Allied Maritime Transport Council⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ was directed to find the necessary supplementary tonnage for the Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 248

Letter,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO POLAND, refusing to approve C.R.B. charters
for more than one voyage

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
3 October 1917

The Director
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

SIR:

I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of September 15th stating that the Commission for Relief in Belgium have chartered the Norwegian S.S. "Avona" for two and the Norwegian S.S. "Songa" for four consecutive voyages.

I am to state, in reply, that the owners of these vessels have already been informed through the usual channel that these charters cannot be approved. His Majesty's Government regret they cannot depart from the rule by which they have hitherto been guided that only charters for one voyage can be approved.

I am to ask you to be so good as to furnish a statement of the amount of tonnage now in the service of the Commission for Relief in Belgium or in sight for that service.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant

(Signed) W. LANGLEY

DOCUMENT NO. 249

Letter,
POLAND TO UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
replying to the above

LONDON, 17 October 1917

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR SIR'

I refer to your No. 193,902/x/Coal.T.

First I would like to say that in regard to the "Avona" and the "Songa," these charters were submitted to the Allied Shipping Board before signature, and further that all charters for successive voyages contain a clause providing that each trip is subject to the approval of the Allied Board.

I note that in the case of the "Avona" and "Songa" the owners have been informed by the British Government that the charters which we effected cannot be approved.

You state that His Majesty's Government regret they cannot depart from the rule by which they have hitherto been guided that only charters for one voyage can be approved. I beg to say that no such rule has ever been applied to Relief charters. It has always been customary for us to charter ahead as far as possible, quite in accord with the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive. I think it possible that the effect of the application of such a new rule to the operations of the Relief has not been quite appreciated. You are of course well aware that the Belgian vessels, which are the only ones upon which we can count definitely in arranging our program from month to month, supply but about one-half of our required tonnage, and that the balance must be supplied from neutral or other charters. You will appreciate that in making provision for monthly shipments aggregating some 110,000 to 120,000 tons, which can be subject to no variation and upon which it depends whether the people of Belgium are or are not to starve, such arrangements cannot be made from month to month but must be determined far ahead.

In protecting our future imports we have therefore made the following charters ahead:

<i>Norwegian</i>	
<i>Vessels</i>	
"Otta"	4 voyages
"Björnstjerne Björnson," to end of war, say	5 voyages
"Imo"	2 voyages
"Ivona"	2 voyages
"Songa"	4 voyages
Total Norwegian voyages ahead	17
<i>Swedish Vessels</i>	
"Sandefjord"	3 voyages
"Fridland"	3 voyages
Total Swedish voyages ahead	6
<i>Total voyages</i>	23

ahead

The application of the rule which you speak of would totally disarrange our shipping program and endanger the whole Relief.

Inasmuch as the British Government, in accord with the French Government, have in principle guaranteed to make up to the Relief the tonnage necessary to carry its approved program, any interference with these charters effected would make necessary additional allocations by the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive, the final effect being merely an interruption and disturbance of arrangements without altering in any way the shipping requirements. I therefore most respectfully but urgently request a reconsideration of your position in the light of the above.

In support of this request, I again call attention to the clause in our charters making each individual trip subject to the Chartering Executive, which would enable any emergency to be met at the time without, however, disarranging our whole program.

In accordance with the last paragraph of your letter, I beg to hand you a summary of our charter position month by month, up to and including December 25th, the end of our shipping month, also a recapitulation of same.

Our actual metric ton cargo requirements (allowing for case goods) for delivery in Rotterdam monthly on our present program amount to 111,000 tons, without any leeway or protection.

The experience of the past indicates that it is imperative, to insure delivery of this amount regularly, that we provide a shipping protection of not less than 20 per cent, which would make our provision for food delivery requirements Rotterdam each month 133,000 tons. You will see from the recapitulation herewith that for the three months ending December 25th we have so far provided but 102,000 per month, leaving us short on our present arrangements on the above basis 31,000 tons a month or on the basis of actual delivery of cargo 9,000 tons per month.

We are proposing to present this whole question of the protection of Relief charters and Relief cargoes to the Government within a few days, but meanwhile in the light of the above I think we are justified in asking that the charters of the "Songa" and "Avona" be not interfered with, and I hope that you will be able to advise us to this effect.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 250

Letter,
POLAND TO UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE, reporting the failure of the
Chartering Executive to provide promised tonnage

LONDON, 1 November 1917

*The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
The Foreign Office, London*

DEAR SIR:

Referring to my letter of the 29th October to the Under-Secretary of State, I have just returned from an interview with the Secretary of the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive, who informs me that although we can rely on them to extend every assistance possible to the Relief, and that in view of the arguments presented it may be possible for them to confirm the several trip charters of the "Songa" and "Avona" which we had arranged, and to confirm the chartering of other Swedish vessels, still it is impossible for them to definitely assign, to the Relief, ships to make up the shortage of 10,000 tons for December and 40,000 tons for January.

In view of the above and the absolute necessity of this tonnage to insure the minimum living ration to the people of Belgium and Northern France, we beg that the Foreign Office will indicate to us how, in accordance with the understanding between the British and French Governments, the Relief is to be protected.

Action must be taken at once to avoid grave consequences.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

[Fig. 8. North Sea and Atlantic, showing danger zones.](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 251

Extracts of letter,
POLAND TO HOOVER, describing the results of his interviews in Paris with
French officials and stating the decisions of the Inter-Allied Conference in
reference to C.R.B. finances and shipping

LONDON, 7 December 1917

MY DEAR HOOVER:

Shaler and I returned yesterday from a two weeks' trip to Belgium and France in which we were successful in accomplishing every object of the journey.

The first and most important was to provide for the financing of the European expenditure(146) along the lines indicated by your telegrams. Soundings of the British made it apparent that we could expect nothing from them until France had declared herself. We left London November 22d. Arriving in Havre we had a thorough understanding with Van de Vyvere as to the steps to be taken by the Belgian Government; arranged interview by wire with the French Minister of Finance; drove to Paris with Van de Vyvere, where we met Chevrillon; had a preliminary meeting with your friend Monsieur Homberg, who agreed to every proposition; presented to Minister Klotz a memorandum which had been drawn up. Van de Vyvere made an excellent argument. The Minister finally agreed that France should assume the entire European cost of the ravitaillement of her own people, and one-half the cost of the ravitaillement of Belgium, provided England would do the same. He also authorized me, in order to protect the guilder exchange, to effect a loan in Holland in guilders for an amount which has since been fixed at 60,000,000 guilders at the best terms obtainable: France to put up the necessary collateral; England being requested to join with France in the transaction; the loan to be guaranteed by England, France, and Belgium. This seems the most satisfactory way of meeting the very difficult question of guilder exchange, but I must say I foresee great difficulties and think there is about one chance in ten of success. However, I shall proceed to Holland immediately and hope for the best.

We have not yet heard of England's acceptance of the French demand, but I have no doubt whatever that it has been arranged before now.

Our second objective was to obtain the unequivocal guarantee of the French and British Governments---if possible joined by the United States---that the necessary tonnage and food for the ravitaillement of Belgium and Northern France should have priority over any other European provisions, whether for carrying on the war or sustaining the civil population.

To this end we first interviewed all of the principal Ministers of the new French Cabinet and, not without considerable opposition, finally obtained their enthusiastic support for the measure. We clinched this by a notable interview with Monsieur Clemenceau in which I forcibly presented the demands of the people of the invaded territories and asked his personal support for providing the necessary ships, food, and money. This he gave in the most positive way and assured us that the French Government would be behind every move we made. At the same time our objects

were explained to several members of the American Mission,(147) and particularly we received the warm support of Dr. Taylor.

The French Government then, at the Allied Conference which followed on November 29th, demanded that shipping and food for the Relief should have priority over all the Allied requirements, and this was acceded to as expressed in the attached extract.

We impressed upon all the members of the French Government, and particularly upon Monsieur Clemenceau, that the mere agreement in principle to the above meant nothing, but it was necessary that officers should be designated to whom the Relief could present its demands and who would have authority forthwith to order them filled.

At an interview with Monsieur Clemenceau, he expressed a desire to have the same evening a memorandum of some of the facts which were presented to him in regard to the Commission. I dictated the memorandum attached [here omitted], which was sent in without an opportunity of revision and which I am rather ashamed of, since so much more might have been said and the whole subject better presented.

The question as to whether or not the Comité Hollandais(148) should be continued was again brought up and, upon our explaining that the provisions sent in by them were not supplementary but were included in our distributions to the French cities, the government officials seemed unwilling to make further appropriations to it.

We were told by various French officials that all of the *évacués* coming out of France---and there are some 300,000 of them now---were united in praise of the American Commission and continually made statements that without our efforts the population would have succumbed.

It would have been impossible for the government officials or any of the French persons whom we met to have been more appreciative or sincere in their expressions of thanks. The gratitude of everyone was touching to the point of being embarrassing. This we found not only in Paris but whenever it was mentioned along the French lines, where we afterwards went, that we were of the American Commission or as it was often called, the Hoover Commission, which had been feeding Northern France. The same was true with all the Belgians, whether of the Government in Havre or along the Belgian front

I am afraid you may have thought some of my telegrams were vigorous, but as a matter of fact we were in a perfectly desperate situation and for three or four days were absolutely bankrupt. We had to turn down an insurance cheque for £100,000 and had other payments of £90,000 and smaller amounts due which we were being urged to meet. In this emergency I could get no relief from the British, but fortunately Monsieur Klotz was in London and I appealed to them on the basis of

the necessity of their protecting the reputation of the Commission on personal grounds and on the political grounds of what would happen to them in France if it were apparent that they had abandoned us at such a time. I imagine the last was the most effective, but in any event, they handed me direct a cheque for £1,000,000.(149)

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 252

Extract from a decision
of Inter-Allied Conference in Paris, 29 November 1917, giving C.R.B. priority in
ships and food

The Allies declare that they give priority over all their own provisioning to the ravitaillement of the populations of Belgium and invaded Northern France on the basis of the C.R.B. program such as defined in the Conference held in London between the C.R.B. and the British Government. They guarantee the necessary tonnage for the execution of this program, taking into account the ships which the C.R.B. now has at its disposal and those which it may procure in the future either directly or with the help of the Allied Governments.

[Translation]

6. Shipping Problems of 1918

By the end of 1917 the convoy system and other measures against the U-boats adopted by the Allies and America had demonstrated their effectiveness. The German High Command, which now controlled the political as well as the military policies of the Central Powers, recognized that in spite of the Allied shipping losses the U-boat campaign had failed, since the power of Great Britain had not been broken and the entrance of the United States into the war had brought tremendous economic and moral strength to the Allies. Recognizing this and the certainty that within a few months the weight of American man power would begin to bear more heavily on the Western Front while the resources of materials, morale, and men of Germany and her allies diminished, the High Command decided on that last, desperate assault to gain a decision in France. The first of the five German offensives began on the 21st March 1918. The second came on the 9th April; the

third on the 27th May; the fourth on the 9th June; and the final drive on the 15th July.

The first German successes on the Western Front reacted on the general shipping problem, for, while the U-boat losses had been checked, the tonnage available to the Allies was still dangerously low and new burdens were imposed by the necessity of accelerating the transport of American troops and supplies to France.(150) Thus in spite of the fact that the Belgian and French relief had been recognized as a "war measure" and the C.R.B. program of ravitaillement had been, in principle, given priority over Allied needs, the Commission did not get the ships to carry out its program.(151)

From January to the middle of May the disheartening struggle for ships went on. Hoover in Washington and Poland in London ceaselessly pressed the Allied authorities. to put the accepted principle into practice, and finally, as the documents which follow show, their appeals to the heads of the Entente Governments produced the so-called "fifty-fifty" agreement whereby the Allied Maritime Transport Council was directed to find one-half the supplementary tonnage for the Commission and the United States Shipping Board to find the other half.(152) As a result of this decision and in spite of the very real shipping shortage, the Commission was able, for the first time since October 1916, to meet its full program of deliveries in July, August, September, and October. This was a matter of very great importance to the people of occupied territories, who had been forced to go on cruelly short rations while the Commission was trying to break through the blockade that the U-boats had established.

Had the war continued, the shipping problem would unquestionably have been difficult throughout the winter of 1918-19, but with the Armistice came the release of considerable tonnage from war services. During the following seven months, therefore, the Commission moved practically 1,000,000 tons of provisions into Belgium and Northern France, supplying these territories with necessities during the first months of readjustment and reconstruction. The last oversea shipments of the Commission arrived in Belgium in August 1919.

DOCUMENT NO. 253

Letter,
STATE DEPARTMENT TO HOOVER, reporting that British and French Governments incline to the use of tonnage for military purposes rather than for C.R.B.

WASHINGTON, 15 April 1918

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

In Mr. Polk's absence I beg to refer again to your letter of the 10th instant to him with which you enclosed a copy of a letter that you had addressed to the President with reference to Belgian relief.

Pursuant to your request, cables were sent to the American Ambassadors at London and Paris and to the American Minister at Havre, requesting them to obtain the views of the governments to which they are accredited concerning the tonnage referred to in your letter.

The Department is in receipt this morning of cables from London and Paris, paraphrases of which I enclose herewith.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) GORDON AUCHINCLOSS
Assistant

From Paris.

The Ambassador was informed by the Foreign Office on April 13th that a conference would be called on the 23d instant in Paris for the purpose of settling the whole subject of tonnage. The necessity for administering relief to Northern France and Belgium is fully appreciated, although a preference was expressed for the use of the sixty thousand tons of shipping referred to for the transportation of troops.

From London.

I have just been sent the following answer from the Foreign Office:

"The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, with reference to Mr. Page's memorandum number 514 of the 12th instant relative to a question of allocating 60,000 tons of shipping, either for the transportation of American troops and supplies to France or to the Belgian relief, has the honor to say that in the present circumstances it appears to His Majesty's Government to be of paramount importance that this tonnage should be devoted to military purposes. Two. There would be no objection on the part of His Majesty's Government to the Commission for Relief in Belgium being invited to charter further Swedish ships now in Sweden."

Memorandum,
POLAND TO ALLIED MARITIME TRANSPORT COUNCIL, setting forth
shortage of tonnage for relief in Belgium and Northern France

LONDON, 18 April 1918

MEMORANDUM IN REGARD TO THE SHIPPING REQUIREMENTS OF THE
COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE, FOR
THE MEETING OF THE INTER-ALLIED MARITIME COUNCIL, PARIS, 22D
APRIL 1918

The civil population of the occupied territories of Northern France and Belgium is approximately 9,600,000 people. Normally Belgium imports two-thirds of her food supply and France a large proportion. At the present time practically all the native food resources of Northern France and the military zone of the Étapes in Belgium (Flanders) have been wiped out, except for 190 grams per capita per day of potatoes from native production and 100 grams of indigenous flour, and the population of about 3,600,000 persons depends almost solely upon imported foodstuffs.

In the remaining territory of the General Government, including about 6,000,000 people, through lack of fertilizers, work animals, etc., the native crops, as in France, have diminished to about 40 per cent of pre-war production.

The Governments of France, Belgium, England, and the United States have given their solemn guarantees to the people of the invaded regions that they will be provided with at least sufficient foods to prevent starvation and the permanent physical deterioration of the race

The Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France have been entrusted by the Governments with the responsibility of providing this necessary food.

In carrying out their duties, the Commission have prepared a program of monthly imports based upon the absolutely minimum living ration necessary to feed the civil populations. This ration, which takes into account all the native resources of the country, has been approved by the respective Governments. The imported products which it provides produce 60 per cent of the entire food values of the people's monthly ration, and they cannot be reduced without incipient starvation resulting.

General Conditions

The overseas importations required to provide the ration amount to 120,000 gross tons of cargo (Annex A) 120,000 tons

Allowance of 15 per cent to obtain ship deadweight	18,000 tons
Total monthly deadweight ship requirements	138,000 tons
Belgian requisitioned Relief tonnage (D.W.) monthly	50,000 tons
Shortage to be made up by neutral charters or otherwise, monthly	88,000 tons
Permanent deadweight fleet requirements @ 66 days per round trip (138,000 tons monthly)	303,600 tons
20 per cent allowance for protection	60,700 tons
Total deadweight permanent fleet requirements	364,300 tons
Less permanent Belgian Relief fleet	110,000 tons
Shortage to be made up by neutral vessels or otherwise	254,300 tons

The Commission have been able to arrange additional neutral charters as per list attached (Annex B) for one or two voyages, which nevertheless leave us short for the monthly periods ending:

15th June	55,000 tons
15th July	70,000 tons
15th August	60,000 tons

as shown in Annex A.

Owing to the Commission's inability, in spite of appeals to the Governments, to secure charters during February and March, there is at present due to lack of importations, a shortage of bread grains in the occupied territories equivalent to a complete deprivation of bread from overseas grain for twenty days. The situation confronting the people of Belgium and France is the most serious since the war began.

By a decision of the Inter-Allied Council which met in Paris December 5th last, it was established that the relief requirements of Belgium and France, both as to food and ships, should have priority over all other Allied requirements. This has been put into practice as to foodstuffs but in regard to shipping, while the principle has been acknowledged, the respective shipping executives have not given effect to the decision.

It is, therefore, proposed at this meeting that the necessary steps be taken to render the decision practically operative.

To this end, on the first of each month the Commission will be requested to furnish to the Allied Maritime Transport Council, London, a statement showing its requirements, shipping arrangements, and deficiencies in tonnage and steamers for the succeeding three periods of thirty days, beginning with the 15th of the month.

The Allied Maritime Council will thereupon indicate to the Relief the steamers which may be used to complete its program, by name, place, and date of loading.

DOCUMENT NO. 255

Extract, from minutes of meeting
of Allied Maritime Transport Council, Paris, 25 April 1918, relative to supply for
the C.R.B.

PARIS, April 25, 1918

RULING OF ALLIED MARITIME TRANSPORT COUNCIL

The Transport Council decides that all the articles necessary for revictualing the occupied districts in Belgium and Northern France shall be included in the program of the Wheat Executive if that body consents and shall be given the priority promised to them by the resolution of the Allied Conference of December 1917.

The C.R.B. should carry out the greatest amount of the necessary transportation possible with its own tonnage and that of the Belgian Government. Any further tonnage necessary will be allocated by the Wheat- Executive from the tonnage provided by the Associated Governments. The permanent organization of the Transport Council is directed to arrange for such further tonnage as is necessary in order to assure the carrying out of this decision, subject to the assent of the Associated Governments.

DOCUMENT NO. 256

Telegram,
HOOVER TO POLAND, regarding failure of the Allied authorities to make good
the tonnage promised

WASHINGTON, 8 May 1918

POLAND, RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

British authorities in London telegraphed British authorities here to help out Belgian Relief, and, as has been invariably case heretofore, this help consists in advising the American Government to do something when it is clearly obvious American Government has insufficient shipping to handle its own prime necessities. If the authorities really intend to carry out provisions Paris Conference the British authorities must instruct Guthrie to turn over to Belgian Relief instantly specific neutral ships; otherwise you may take it that all expressions of priority or interest are absolutely valueless and give no indication of sincerity. We require 40,000 tons deadweight shipping for May loading. As Swedes have considerable unemployed tonnage, I cabled the King of Belgium telling him fate Relief hangs absolutely on his personal intervention the King of Sweden and that Allies will guarantee that any boats in employment of Relief may return to Swedish ports at the end of service without molestation.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 257

Telegram,
POLAND TO HOOVER, stating the necessity that British, French, and United States Governments regard relief as war measure to prevent starvation in Belgium

LONDON, 11 May 1918

HOOVER, WASHINGTON

Referring to our 96 this date we understand on excellent authority that United States Shipping Board inquired of British War Office if they concurred in furnishing 60,000 tons required to fulfill relief program in order to give effect to the Resolution of Priority, which tonnage must be allocated at expense of shipment of men and munitions, and the British War Office replied they did not concur in this action.

It appears to us that this is the dividing of the ways and that the United States Government together with Great Britain has now to make the decision as to whether or not the people in Belgium and Northern France are to be fed. Purely as a

war measure and independent of all considerations of humanity and the debt owed to our own Allies, we are sure the feeding of the people of the occupied territories is equally as important as the shipment of troops and food to Britain and France. We are sure that if this question were left to the decision of the public of Great Britain and the United States, Belgium and France would be fed. Do you not believe the time has come to lay the situation before the public? And also will you not take this up personally with the President as we are taking it up with Monsieur Clemenceau and the Prime Minister. As a temporary measure to meet the May requirements we urge you to secure the concurrence of United States with the British proposal as outlined in our 96, as we feel sure this is all they will do at this time and at least establishes joint governmental responsibility.

POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 258

Telegram,
POLAND TO HOOVER, regarding the plan for British and Americans to furnish tonnage on a fifty-fifty basis

LONDON, 13 May 1918

HOOVER, WASHINGTON

Our 96 was misleading in describing proposal as British that United States and England furnish each half the shortage of tonnage to fulfill the necessary program. British first insisted that entire tonnage must come from United States, but finally on urgent request of Maritime Transport Council they agreed to the other basis as a compromise measure, which we believe is all that can be secured at the present time. If the above is definitely agreed to by the American Government Stevens(153) can secure conformity with it by the British authorities. The principle assuring C.R.B. ship requirements would then be established and it would only be necessary to prove our needs. There are many considerations at this end which seem to make American approval of this measure vital to securing our tonnage. I cannot too strongly urge you to do everything possible to obtain concurrence of the Shipping Board to Stevens' proposal of eleventh April. Relief Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 259

Telegram,
HOOVER TO LLOYD GEORGE, urging the latter's assistance in providing tonnage for the C.R.B.

WASHINGTON, 16 May 1918

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Would like you to present the following with the British National Committee to Mr. Lloyd George as from me as head of the Relief, not as a Government official:

"As Chairman of the Belgian Relief, I wish to again ask your personal intervention upon behalf of these suffering people. Three years ago, upon my personal appeal, you intervened to save the Relief and established it firmly as an unparalleled enterprise in humanity, with the full sympathy and generous financial support of the British peoples. That action, which cost much in sacrifice to the British people in its demonstration of their true and broad humane objectives in the war, became one of the most potent forces in the conviction of the American people of the Allies' just cause. At our adherence to the Allied cause our Government considered its obligations included a participation in the maintenance of these peoples who have suffered first and continue to suffer most from barbarism, and in so doing we have not only taken our share of a burden and humane duty but we have all of us, in the midst of the freezing flood of war, contributed to keep alive in the hearts of our people its higher aims. The problem today is ships. Our people have stripped to the bone to furnish transport of supplies and men for Allied support. We can furnish no tonnage unless sacrifice is made somewhere in these directions. The tonnage required is so pitiable, either in transport of men or supplies, in the vast totals, as to seem to justify the risk. Today to consign the Belgian people to starvation after three and one-half years of almost unendurable suffering and steadfast loyalty and service in the Allied cause, is indeed a terrible fate, and it will destroy an invisible but great spiritual force among our two peoples worse than the loss of a great battle. I feel that without Your Excellency's intervention and positive instruction the Relief cannot be saved and a direction from yourself to your authorities and a communication of your approval of necessary diversions to our President would yield solution by our joint shipping authorities."

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 260

Telegram,
LLOYD GEORGE TO HOOVER, answering the preceding

LONDON, 23 May 1918

HERBERT HOOVER, CHAIRMAN
THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, WASHINGTON

I have received through Mr. Poland and the British National Committee for Relief in Belgium your cable of May 16th. I had already conferred personally with the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr. Poland, and British officials, and I understand that you have since learned through the Allied Maritime Transport Council of our willingness to provide one-half of the tonnage necessary to make up the monthly shortages of the Commission for Relief. I am gratified to hear today that the United States Government have agreed to take similar action and that, therefore, there is now no necessity for me to communicate with President Wilson as suggested in your cablegram. Details of the measures which we purpose to take are being cabled to Lord Reading through the Ministry of Shipping, and emergency arrangements are being made for ten thousand tons of flour to be shipped from the United Kingdom.

His Majesty's Government maintain their deep solicitude for the people in occupied Belgium, and will spare no effort to relieve the privations they so gallantly endure. I am entirely in accord with the decision of the Inter-Allied Council that the relief requirements of Belgium and Northern France, both as regards food and ships, shall have priority over other Allied requirements, and I trust that the present joint action will assure the continuity of essential supplies.

I take this opportunity of saying how much I appreciate the lasting services you have rendered to all the Allies by your unflinching and effective efforts on behalf of the people of Belgium.

LLOYD GEORGE

DOCUMENT NO. 261

Telegram,
HOOVER TO POLAND, announcing the agreement of U.S. Shipping Control to the fifty-fifty proposal

WASHINGTON, 21 May 1918

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

American Shipping Control in conformity with British 50-50 agreement have allotted steamers "Harold" 5,100, "Talbot" 11,700, "Storviken" 7,500, "Dicto" 6,000, and "Senta" 5,800. Also accept obligation additional 18,000 June-July loading, which will complete American quota. This sufficiently concrete evidence that British offer has been accepted. A ghastly situation in Belgium has thus been averted by the individual efforts of the C.R.B.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 262

Telegram,

HOOVER TO POLAND, stating President's directions to the U.S. Shipping Board to supply fifty per cent of tonnage shortage to the C.R.B.

WASHINGTON, 22 May 1918

POLAND, RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

The President today confirmed the directions to Shipping Board here that it should find at once one-half deficit tonnage for Belgian Relief and in accordance therewith ships have been assigned during the last few days to us by Shipping Board. I wish you would express my own personal thanks to Stevens for his assistance in this matter and inform him that Mr. Hurley will be confirming the American undertaking to find its half of the shipping.

I would also like to congratulate you on the sterling and predominant service that you have given in this, one of the most difficult crises through which the Relief Commission has passed.

HERBERT HOOVER

From the beginning of 1918 to the Armistice the Commission lost thirteen vessels,⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ bringing the total casualties of this character to fifty-two.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ A majority of ships lost were provided with both German safe-conduct passes and C.R.B. markings, but in some cases the ships were undoubtedly off the prescribed course when attacked. The Commission entered vigorous protests in every instance where torpedoing was suspected and whenever the Germans admitted that the Relief ships had observed all German regulations, they made good the loss by replacing the cargo or paying for the damage. Although numbers of vessels lost were outward bound in ballast, the actual food cargo sunk amounted to 114,000 tons. Add this to the 95,000 tons of foodstuffs sold in England and in France in the summer of 1917 because of the submarine blockade on cross-channel movement and we have a total of over 200,000 tons of relief supplies sunk or sold en route and lost to the relief. This amount lost was the equivalent of two months' rations for the people of Belgium and Northern France.

During the four and a half years, ships flying the Commission's flag carried across the two blockades over 5,000,000 tons of relief provisions. Transatlantic vessels to the number of 993, and 1,320 smaller steamers discharged their relief cargoes at the Commission's transshipment ports. Seventy vessels, on an average, were steaming

in the service of the Commission at all times. The technical management(156) of such a fleet was no little task in itself, but as the preceding documents show the struggle to get ships and to keep those that had been chartered made all other problems in comparison unimportant.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER VI

NORTHERN FRANCE

Many of the documents in the foregoing chapters have dealt with the relations of the C.R.B. with the French Government, but there have been only incidental references to the circumstances which led to the Commission's assumption of responsibility for the provisioning of the French population of the invaded regions or to the organization and methods by which this relief was accomplished. In some respects the relief of Northern France represented merely an expansion of operations already undertaken by the Commission. The 2,000,000 French people needed the same kind of relief supplies as the Belgians, which meant that the Commission had to purchase in greater quantities and to find and operate more ships than if only the Belgians were to be fed. In other respects, however, French relief was separate and distinct. In finance, for example, the Commission looked to the French Government and was accountable to it. In the actual distribution of relief a different system was employed and a new set of guarantees covering distribution, the use of native products, etc., had to be secured from the Germans distinct from those in effect in Belgium. These particular arrangements were due not merely to the fact that the beneficiaries were of a different nationality but to different forms of government established by the Germans in the regions their forces had occupied. A brief summary of these forms of government is necessary for an understanding of many of the problems of relief in Northern France.

In the Occupation Zone, which included all of the Kingdom of Belgium (except East and West Flanders), and the French districts about Maubeuge and Givet-Fumay, the supreme authority was the German General Government in Belgium, at the head of which was the Governor-General. In this zone Belgian city and communal administrations continued their functions; local police and courts performed their duties, all, of course, under the close supervision of German officials. The Governor-General's authority was paramount, and frequently it intervened; but in general there was less disturbance of local institutions and greater individual freedom than in the regions nearer the front and under a different régime. It was in this Occupation Zone that the greater part of Belgian (as distinct from French) relief was delivered.

Between the Occupation Zone and the front lines was a strip of territory about fifty miles wide which included all occupied French territory between Verdun and the North Sea (except the Maubeuge and Givet-Fumay districts) and Belgian East and West Flanders.(157) This Army Zone, which was under the authority not of the General Government in Belgium but of the several German armies operating in the region, was in turn divided. An Operations Zone extended about twelve miles behind the actual front lines, and behind this was the Etape Zone comprising the territory between the Zones of Operation and Occupation. Subject only to the higher authority of the Supreme Command, the several German army commands imposed absolute rule in the Operations and Etape Zones. The application of military law was more drastic in the Operations than in the Etape Zone, but in neither did anything remain of civil institutions or personal freedom. The armies assumed proprietorship of property, of food, of currency; they arrested all French male citizens of military age; they forbade the inhabitants to leave their own communes, and in general restricted the conduct of private affairs to such an extent that the people had scarcely any greater liberty than actual prisoners of war. Although the systems of administration were not identical in all the Army Zones, there were but few variations except in the Flemish provinces, where the Germans mitigated the severity of their rule on the theory that the Flemings might be persuaded to break away from their allegiance to the Belgian State.

Its early activities in Belgium did not bring the Commission into contact with the military administration of the Army Zone. East and West Flanders were, it is true, at once included in Belgian relief, but the initial guarantees given by the army command in those provinces had been secured through the medium of the Governor-General in Brussels. It was the relief of the French population which extended the relations of the Commission to include both the German military authorities and the Government of France.

The situation in occupied regions of France was no less desperate than in Belgium. Industrialized, densely populated, and effectively cut off from the world, the two millions of French people(158) behind the German lines quickly came to the end of their food resources and stood like their Belgian neighbors to the north in the face of starvation, As has been noted, two sections of French territory, the region about Maubeuge (with a population of about 110,000) and a part of the Meuse Valley from Fumay to Givet (with about 20,000 population), had been joined to Belgium for administrative purposes. The people of Maubeuge appealed for help and on the 24th November 1914 the relief organization agreed to the extension of aid to this region. A similar extension to the Givet-Fumay region was authorized on the 31st December 1914. No promise could be given to continue this extension or to permit it to be taken as a precedent, for further extension was entirely beyond the resources in the hands of the C.R.B.

1. Conditions and Early Negotiations. November 1914--March 1915

The need of relief in Northern France had been recognized and had become a concern of the Commission long before the 2d January 1915, the date of the first document below. There were, however, decisive reasons which prevented the undertaking of the ravitaillement of France coincidentally with that of Belgium. The first of these reasons was the military situation. After the fall of Antwerp and Ghent on the 7th and 13th October 1914, the situation in the greater part of Belgium quickly stabilized under the General Government which the invaders established. This stabilization---a necessary precedent to organized relief---came considerably later in the French regions, which remained zones of active military operations some weeks longer and which, even after the western front solidified, were for a longer time unorganized under the military system of the Etape and Operations Zones later established by the army commands.

Secondly, it was necessary to establish a diplomatic foundation for the whole project of civilian relief and to secure specific recognition and finance for Belgian relief before there could be any thought of extension. It is clear from the foregoing chapters([159](#)) it was not until February 1915 that the Commission had secured from the belligerents the recognition necessary to place the relief project on a relatively stable basis and the promise from the Allies of the financial support to enable it to be carried on.

During this period of the Commission's struggle for recognition and long before the extension of relief to occupied French territory was officially sanctioned, French citizens received help through the relief organizations in Belgium. Thousands of refugees from the regions devastated by the machine of war streamed across the Belgian frontier and received the same aid that had been given to Belgians made destitute by the same causes. In November and December, 1914, Hoover authorized feeding in Maubeuge and Givet-Fumay, but at this time the Commission had neither the resources nor the official authorization of the French Government([160](#)) for extending relief to the other French districts behind the battle line. The Commission's position was that while it was willing to assume the added burden of French relief, it could not do so on its own responsibility without the approval and financial support which the French Government was somewhat slow to give.

DOCUMENT NO. 263

Extract of letter,
GERARD TO HOOVER, quoting reports of need for relief in cities of Northern France, and quoting further a cable from the U.S. Department of State relative to the extension of C.R.B. activities

BERLIN, 2 January 1915

*H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London*

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Another matter which may interest you is brought up by our late Consul at Roubaix, who says that the civil population of Roubaix, Tourcoing, Lille, and the surrounding cities is in great need of flour and that the authorities offer to pay for the same if delivered. I telegraphed to the Department, stating that our Consul at Roubaix had telegraphed me that 1,000 sacks of flour per day were needed for Roubaix, Tourcoing, and Lille, and requested an arrangement with the German and British Governments for importation. Our Consul transmitted a letter from the Mayor of Roubaix, stating that 250,000 persons would be starving within a few days in those cities, and that the flour would be paid for and that the German Foreign Office assured every facility for importation through military authorities with co-operation of the Consul at Roubaix. I transmitted this information to the Department without comment and I have since received word from our State Department, in substance as follows:

"That the British Government raised no objection to the importation of foodstuffs in Belgium under the auspices and guarantees of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and that their attitude was the same as to foodstuffs for France; and that the question how far it is desirable that the Commission should extend its activities to districts in France, now in German occupation, seemed to be one primarily for submission to the French Government.

"In any case, the Commission would have to satisfy themselves whether they would be permitted by the German authorities to form an adequate organization in districts so close to warlike operations, and that if it was desired to establish a system of distribution distinct from the work of the Commission, that this proposal would equally appear to be one for submission to the French Government."

The above is the substance of the reply of the British Government to our State Department, and I transmit it to you without comment.

.....

Please command me at any time when I can be of service to your Commission.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) JAMES W. GERARD
Ambassador

Fig. 9. RELIEF AREA OF BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

DOCUMENT NO. 264

Letter,
HOOVER TO GERARD, stating the willingness of the C.R.B. to undertake this expansion and giving the opinion that it was incumbent on the French Government to support such an operation

LONDON, 6 January 1915

*His Excellency James Gerard
American Ambassador in Berlin*

DEAR MR. GERARD:

In respect to that portion of your letter of the 2d instant, relating to the position of the French people north of the German lines, we have had this called to our attention repeatedly.

We have felt that it is up to the French Government to support their own people, but we are not adverse to taking on the extra labor entailed in finding the foodstuffs and transporting them through Belgium into this section, provided of course the Germans agree; but we do feel that as our labor is voluntary the least recompense which the French could give for such service from all our people would be that they should make a substantial subscription to our funds for Belgian work. I may tell you that we already are sending some food into one section of France, but other sections we have been unable to undertake, as we have no resources with which to do so.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 265

Letter,
HOOVER TO PAGE, describing his reception of a commercial proposal from

merchants in Lille and explaining the attitude of the Commission toward French relief

LONDON, 26 January 1915

His Excellency Walter H. Page
London

DEAR MR. PAGE:

We had a call this afternoon from Mr.----- . Mr.----- appears to have been despatched by the merchants in Lille to see if he could arrange for the importation of 10,000 tons of corn monthly to that city. He came to us to ask us to import the food for his purposes and suggested to us that he should have commission for himself in the matter, in remuneration for his services; and he also advanced the idea that, of course, he expected we should make a profit out of it also. He tells me he is armed with the money and is able to represent the people of Lille in this matter; that he is going to the French also and probably to the French Government. He says he has been to the English Foreign Office.

It is difficult to express myself with sufficient forcefulness on the question in polite language, but I wish to say, here and now, that, so far as having dealings with an American of the type of Mr.----- is concerned, I have not the nervous energy to associate or mix with men of this character in any business matter, however minute it may be. If the people of Northern France are about to starve and if the French Government wishes these people fed it may make us a formal request and we will take the matter in hand with the same feeling of interest as we are experiencing in feeding the Belgians, as endeavoring to materialize the best ideals of the American people and to do so in a manner which will be to the national credit. We would supply the given ration of flour to the whole people of Northern France, destitute as well as rich, the French Government undertaking to supply us with the money to do this and making such arrangements for the repayment of the money by the local communes or other authorities as they may see fit; but as to entering into this business as a commercial transaction, in a corrupt relationship with Mr.-----, the mere suggestion is an insult.

We have told Mr.----- that if he is engaged in a commercial transaction to import food into France as a speculation for himself, with any Frenchmen who may be engaged with him, it does not interest us and we do not think it will interest the American Government or any of its officials, nor are we prepared to lend ourselves to any such transactions; and we made this perfectly clear as, in the meantime, Mr.----- will endeavor to enlist your support and I have no doubt that he will also endeavor to set up relations through the French Government.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

In January 1915 Hoover was deep in the campaign to get the government subventions without which the Belgian relief could not go on. His chief concern naturally was the maintenance of this work already established, but throughout these negotiations he continually stressed the needs of the French population whose condition became more desperate as each day passed.⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Meanwhile repeated attempts through diplomatic and other channels to get the support of the French Government failed. The Paris Cabinet held that Germany was responsible for the lives of the inhabitants of the invaded districts and that she must be held to that responsibility. Fully aware of the certain outcome of this rigid policy, Hoover pleaded the cause of 2,000,000 French citizens before the President of the French Republic.

DOCUMENT NO. 266

Letter,
HOOVER TO POINCARÉ, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, setting forth the condition of the people in the occupied regions of Northern France, outlining the steps taken by the C.R.B. to improve this situation, and appealing for the support of the French Government

LONDON, 17 February 1915

Monsieur le Président de la République Française
Palais de l'Elysée, Paris

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT:

I deem it my duty to lay before you the position of the French civil population north of the German lines, and I am asking Mr. Gifford Pinchot, one of our members, to deliver this letter to Your Excellency in person.

This Commission has been engaged for the last three months in the provisioning of the civil population of Belgium, and is now dispatching into Belgium practically the entire breadstuffs for the whole population of 7,000,000 people. During the months of January the actual amount sent into Belgium approximated 90,000,000 kilos of breadstuffs, representing a cost value of about 32,000,000 francs.

This organization is supported partly from the sale of breadstuffs to the people of Belgium who still have resources, and, to a considerable extent, from philanthropy from all over the world, as over 1,500,000 Belgians are absolutely destitute.

Hitherto the Belgian people have depended to some extent upon the native supplies of potatoes and meat which are now becoming rapidly exhausted, and in consequence if the Belgian population is to be saved from decimation, our monthly budget must very materially increase over and above the figure for January. Whether we shall succeed in maintaining the food supply in Belgium until next harvest is a matter of the most serious concern.

My object, however, in addressing Your Excellency, is not to recite the above facts except as they have a bearing on the French population between the French frontier and the German lines, which population I understand amounts to between two and three million people. The breadstuffs in this region have now been practically exhausted by the occupying army and the population and the supply of vegetables and meat will shortly be at an end. The blast of famine has already struck at the heart of certain localities and actual starvation is in progress. Representatives of these people have come over the Belgian frontier literally in scores, praying for food from our organization. We have sent representatives throughout Northern France with the approval of the German authorities and I cannot too strongly impress upon Your Excellency the extreme gravity of the situation.

Some four weeks ago we extended the boundaries of our labors to take in practically the whole arrondissement of Rocroi, as our investigation indicated that unless foodstuffs were introduced into this section the actual deaths from starvation, which had set in, would quickly decimate the population before outside arrangements could be made. Overtaxed as our resources already were for the Belgians, yet the Belgians themselves agreed to divide their last morsel with this population until something could be done. I therefore came out to London and represented to the French Government, through a member of our Commission who went to Paris, and myself made representations of this situation through the French Ambassador in London, to which appeals, made in the name of the French people of Northern France, we have had no reply. I have now again been to Belgium and have again investigated the situation in Northern France, which has now become acute to the last degree. Owing to the strain that has been put upon us I have been most reluctantly compelled to direct that no foodstuffs shall be sent over the frontier from Belgium into France after the first day of March. At the present moment 400,000 French people are being fed by this Commission, but unless we can receive financial assistance we cannot go on. It is no use dividing the food between the Belgians and the French in order that all may die. We have no right to take money provided to feed the Belgians and give it to the French.

I know perfectly well that Your Excellency will immediately reply: "Why do not the Germans feed the French civil population?" I have nothing to say except that, not only do they not do it, but they state emphatically that they do not intend to do it, that they have insufficient food supplies for themselves and do not propose to prejudice their own people. If Your Excellency could see the mobs of French women and children which surround every German camp from daylight to dark to

gather the refuse from the German soldiers, Your Excellency would then believe that these French people will pay the last penalty unless someone comes to their rescue.

The load of work and worry carried by this Commission is already large enough, but, in the interests of common humanity, if the French Government can help us financially we will feed these people. A great many of the communes have resources in the shape of paper money and, in the case of the larger cities, ample resources in credit. We cannot, however, export either money or credit from Northern France, although we could undertake to take the obligations from these communes, ultimately handing these obligations to the French Government in discharge of advances made to us in gold.

I will not trouble Your Excellency with any description of the personnel or organization of this Commission; that is a matter that is open to investigation at all times. Nor are we seeking the labor of feeding the people in Northern France, but it happens that there is no other engine, through which this service can be performed at the present time, as this Commission is alone permitted to traverse the lines of the various belligerents and this under international agreements which have taken a long time and much patience to perfect. Mr. Pinchot will give Your Excellency any further information.

In conclusion, before taking the heavy responsibility of saying to these people "you shall not have bread," I make this last appeal to the French people themselves in the name of their own countrywomen and children.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 267

Telegram,
HOOVER TO GIFFORD PINCHOT, stating the attitude the C.R.B. was prepared to take if the French Government declined to give its support to the relief enterprise

LONDON, 25 February 1915

GIFFORD PINCHOT
CARE AMERICAN EMBASSY, PARIS

Believe would be fine idea for you go Northern France and investigate. Would be necessary for you go Berlin to get necessary passes to enter Belgium and Northern France. Will send you necessary letters today. Consider it essential we should have

definite statement from French Government one way or the other as to whether they are prepared save their own people in Northern France from starvation. As to our undertaking public subscription in France with guarantees you mention, do not think any possibility of raising sufficient money to even touch the fringe of problem by this means. As to guarantees, that is what this Commission was created for and stands for, and I do not see how any further superimposed check on Commission can answer any useful purpose. If French Government are not prepared to give us positive reply I propose make statement to press of the world that we have up to now fed the people along the border, that our resources do not permit us to continue, that we have applied to French Government for aid, that we do not believe this is a proper appeal to the world's charity, that the responsibility for the death of these people rests on the French nation itself; and I propose to do this simply to free this Commission from responsibility as to what will follow on withdrawal of our present supplies.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 268

Memorandum,
by PINCHOT, of a conversation with M. RIBOT, FRENCH MINISTER OF FINANCE, stating that the French Government would not formally approve providing funds for the C.R.B. but that money would be furnished to the Belgian Government which might be used for that purpose

[Paris, 27 February 1915]

On Friday, February 26th, after five days unavailing attempts to see Monsieur Delcassé or Monsieur Poincaré---to whom I was the bearer of a letter from Mr. Hoover, I succeeded in seeing M. RIBOT at his office.

M. RIBOT told me---asking me to keep the matter confidential within the Commission:

1. That the French Government would give no formal approval to that item of the Belgian budget which provides funds for the Commission for Relief in Belgium, but that money would be furnished to the Belgian Government and the Belgian Government would be asked no inconvenient questions.
2. M. RIBOT said that 400,000 persons in the invaded French provinces now being fed by the Commission would not be deprived of this food supply, and that the Commission should address itself to the Belgian Government for additional funds, as it might need them. "Not," said he, "to keep the French in the invaded provinces

in luxury, but to give them what is necessary to prevent them dying of starvation." He added that the French Government was unwilling to undertake in its own name the feeding of its people in the invaded provinces, because to do so would be to put into the hands of the Germans the argument that since the French Government was permitted to feed its citizens therefore the German Government should be permitted to feed the people of Germany. I believe that M. RIBOT said directly---but if not he implied---that the French Government was unwilling to refuse publicly to feed its own people ---and from that I made the natural inference that my failure to see either M. Poincaré or M. Delcassé was to be laid to their unwillingness to say either "Yes" or "No" to the propositions for feeding the starving French made in Mr. Hoover's letter to Monsieur Poincaré.

My interview with M. RIBOT lasted not exceeding five minutes. He was careful to say that he was speaking not officially but in his private character only.

DOCUMENT NO. 269

Extract of letter,
HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON,([162](#)) stating the total C.R.B. stocks in Belgium at that time and discussing certain proposals for the relief of Northern France

LONDON, 10 March 1915

Monsieur Chevrillon
Paris

MY DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I am greatly obliged indeed for your letter of the 8th([163](#)) and all the trouble you have taken. As to the statement of Mr. Guérin of Lille, he certainly knows nothing whatever about our business. At the present moment our total stocks in Belgium are not fourteen days' supply (estimated ten days) and our arrivals are scarcely sufficient to meet already reduced rations which the Belgians are now on, and that reduction is partly due to the inclusion of the French population in the valley of the Meuse. The question is not what we have imported into Belgium but what there is left and, as I stated above, that is all there is.

In the meantime I have a telegram from Brussels saying that two Swiss Army officers, accompanied by a German officer, had been making a tour of Northern France and that they stated that they intended to take over the provisioning of the French people north of the German lines, under an arrangement with the French Government. I send you a copy of a further telegram I have on this subject, amplifying the matter a little more.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 270

Letter,

CHEVRILLON TO HOOVER, referring to Guérin's negotiations with French authorities and a proposal to bring the entire population of the invaded districts into the French lines

PARIS, 9 March 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
London

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have seen yesterday Mr. Guérin of whom I spoke in my last letter. He mentioned having met you in Brussels and discussed with you the possibility of provisioning the whole of Northern France and especially the town of Lille. He is here under a safe-conduct from the German military authorities and must return on the 17th instant.

Mr. Guérin has begun negotiations with the various ministries, has seen Mr. Poincaré and Mr. Viviani and expects to come to a solution of the problem within a few days.

Confidentially, I can tell you that the alternatives are either to try to arrange with the Commission over which you so ably preside or to bring the whole of the population of the invaded districts into the French lines.

General Joffre has already been consulted on the subject and expressed himself as able to transport the people into France within three days. This of course is very confidential yet and the probabilities are that this measure will be resorted to as a last resource; the inhabitants are anxious not to leave all their belongings and interests at the mercy of the invader.

Meanwhile Mr. Guérin has begged me to discontinue my steps with the Government for a few days when he will be in a position to state the attitude taken by the Government. Of course the new decisions([164](#)) taken in regard to the blockade of Germany and Austria may modify the views of the German authorities as to the victualing of Northern France, and these matters are now under discussion.

Under the circumstances, the best that I can do is to await for two or three days the result of Mr. Guérin's interview. I have pointed out to him very strongly that he should always have in mind the desires of your Commission as to the exportation of a certain tonnage of grain from France.(165) I do not doubt that these desires will be fulfilled should the Commission ultimately be asked to take up the provisioning of Northern France.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) L. CHEVRILLON

DOCUMENT NO. 271

Telegram,
HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, stating objections to French proposals to give relief to North of France

LONDON, 11 March 1915

L. CHEVRILLON, PARIS

Yours March 9th. Scheme perfectly ghastly every point of view. There is in fact only one way to handle this problem and that is through this Commission. Our negotiations with Germans progressing favorably on all points required by us, basis being that food is furnished by charitable institutions which we represent.(166) Swiss proposals to ship foodstuffs from Marseilles by rail wholly impracticable. We have never been able secure transport even two thousand tons a month over same Belgian railway routes by which they would need to bring ten to fifteen thousand tons monthly. Even if railway supply practicable there is serious risk by shipping foodstuffs through Germany and the comparative cost would be the difference between railway haul all the way from Marseilles to Lille as against canal haul from Rotterdam. What is more the necessity for immediate relief is appalling and any scheme provisioning through Marseilles involves long delay. We are not keen on the job but feel that the size of the problem is not recognized and can only be adequately handled in our way.

HOOVER

2. Fundamental Guarantees. March-April 1915

Anticipating the ultimate support of the French Government in some form, Hoover had taken steps in two directions so that relief could be delivered to the North of France immediately the various agreements were reached. First he had drawn on the credit of the Commission in order to accumulate a supply of flour for French relief without diminishing the Belgian ration; and, second, he set about getting guarantees from the various German authorities, whose attitude, he already knew from his conferences in Berlin and Brussels in February 1915, would be favorable. As the following documents show, formal authorization for the extension of relief to Northern France was secured from the Berlin authorities through Ambassador Gerard, but the all-important working agreement with the Army Headquarters was procured by the C.R.B. itself without diplomatic intervention. These early agreements as well as numerous subsequent guarantees were negotiated directly with the army command.

DOCUMENT NO. 272

Letter,
HOOVER TO CONNETT, in reply to the latter's report of observations of
conditions in Northern France

LONDON, 8 March 1915

A. N. Connett, Esq.
Brussels

DEAR CONNETT:

NORTHERN FRANCE

I am in receipt of your letter on this subject and we have had a lot of negotiations at this end which are still going on. We have had many assurances of ample funds to take care of this business, but it is going to be subject to very definite conditions that there shall be no interference with our foodstuffs and that we shall be given sufficient liberty of movement to organize the distribution in such manner as will guarantee that these foodstuffs reach the civil population only. The authorities in Brussels seem to have entirely ignored the fact that this is not entirely a question as to the necessities of the administration, as we might possibly administer the whole business without employing a single American, but, on the contrary, a question of satisfying the Allied Governments that guarantees given are duly carried out, and these Governments are not prepared to accept the assurances of anyone but Americans whose character and career they can inquire into; and there must be enough of them to effectively deliver such a guarantee.

I have in mind for the United States Government to appoint every member of this Commission whom I may designate an attaché to the Brussels Legation,(167) and I will be glad if you would discuss this with Mr. Whitlock as to whether or not this will in effect solve our troubles in the main.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

On the 18th February Lloyd George informed Hoover that his Government had decided to recommend to their French Allies a budgetary allowance to the Belgian Government which included £1,000,000 each month for the Belgian relief program.(168) Unquestionably this formal recognition and financial support of the C.R.B. by the British Government had considerable bearing on the subsequent attitude of the French Government toward caring for their people through the Commission. Ribot's guarded statement(169) to the Commission's representative on the 26th February indicated that Hoover must now turn to the Belgian Government for finances for the French program, but it was not until a month later, on the 26th March 1915, that the question of finance for the North of France was actually put in order, as the following documents show.

DOCUMENT NO. 273

Telegram,
HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, stating the immediate need of funds

LONDON, 18 March 1915

MR. A. VAN DE VYVERE
MINISTER OF FINANCE, HAVRE

Owing to rapid exhaustion of food supplies which are available for purchase, it is necessary for us to enter into immediate contracts if we are to assure the delivery of foodstuffs for the months of May and June. Our liabilities already exceed our cash available by over £1,000,000, and we cannot induce merchants to accept our further contracts for shipping and purchasing of wheat, flour, et cetera, unless we have further resources at once. I have no objection to incurring any amount of personal liability in this work, but I simply cannot obtain further credit, and it is highly important that we should at once make contracts for at least £500,000 further purchases for Belgian account, and I should be glad to know if we can expect early transfer. As to French position it will cost approximately £300,000(170) per month to supply the French population north of lines; and in order to enable us to purchase

supplies for immediate delivery and make contracts abroad for delivery, which will require two to three months, we need from them for their particular account at least £900,000 immediate cash, as it is necessary to expend this amount of money within the next fortnight in order to secure their supplies, and thereafter would want 9300,000 per month for two months, making a total of £1,500,000 to supply their population until end of July. We can secure supplies if they will place us in a financial position to do so. We should be glad for them to appoint any responsible man to sit on the Commission, supervise the whole of our transactions on their behalf, and if they desire to appoint someone of this character I would suggest that you consider Monsieur L. Chevrillon, 23 rue de la Paix, Paris, who has been of material assistance to us in our work and who should be well known to Mr. Delcassé.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 274

Memorandum

by SENGIER(171) of interviews with M. DELCASSÉ FRENCH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND M. RIBOT, concerning the failure of the additional subsidy from France to come through the Belgian Government

PARIS, 22 March 1915

PRESENT: Messrs. Hoover, Francqui,(172) Sengier.

Mr. Delcassé was very surprised to hear from Mr. Francqui that the Belgian Government had not notified the C.R.B. that the French Cabinet had come to a satisfactory understanding with regard to the feeding of the civil population of the French occupied territory. The matter of settling finance being not in his sphere, it was arranged for a meeting with Mr. Ribot, Minister of Finance. Mr. Francqui and Mr. Homberg (Vice-President of the Banque de l'Union Parisienne, at present attached to the Ministry of Finance) called on Mr. Ribot the same afternoon. As a result of their visit the following memorandum was written out:

"The French Government wishes to have no official relations with the Commission for Relief in Belgium nor with the Comité National; but it would be grateful to these two organizations kindly to help the civil population on its occupied territory.

"Messrs. Delcassé and Ribot declared that Mr. Viviani had already come to an agreement with Mr. de Broqueville that the Belgian Government should draw and place at the disposal of the Commission for Relief, upon the credit of 250,000,000

francs opened for the Belgian Government at the Bank of France, all sums necessary to the feeding of the necessitous population of the North of France.

"The Belgian Government will deduct from the credit of 250,000,000 francs the sums thus drawn. On the other hand, the credit at the Bank of France will be finally increased by an equal amount, so that the sums placed at the disposal of the Belgian Government for its own needs, will not thus suffer any diminution.

"In order to follow up all these arrangements, it is indispensable that Mr. Van de Vyvere should immediately place at the disposal of the Commission for Relief in Belgium a sum equivalent to one million pounds sterling, the amount necessary for the purchases to be effected without delay. Furthermore, monthly, and for the first time on 1st April next, a sum equivalent to £400,000 sterling will be required."

"E. FRANCOIS"

[Translation]

It was understood that Mr. Sengier, on behalf of the C.R.B., would leave immediately for Havre and arrange with the Belgian Government for the carrying out of the agreement set out in this memo. This memo not stating any definite amount of money but "all sums" of money necessary to carry on the feeding of the French population, it was decided that Mr. Sengier should obtain from the Belgian Government an amount of £1,000,000 working capital considered necessary by Mr. Hoover to start the work on a business basis, a further £400,000 to be supplied every month.

It was also understood that the French Government should send its representatives to Mr. Klobukowski, Minister of France, at Ste. Adresse, [\(173\)](#) and hand him a copy of said memorandum.

DOCUMENT NO. 275

Letter,
FRANCOIS TO VAN DE VYVERE, concerning the subsidies from the French Government for Northern France

PARIS, 23 March 1915

Monsieur Van de Vyvere
Minister of Finance, Havre

M. LE MINISTRE:

I have the honor to send you, as an enclosure, a memorandum drawn up as the result of conversations which I had yesterday with MM. Delcassé and Ribot. This memorandum defines the arrangements come to between the French Government and M. de Broqueville, relative to the subsidies to be allowed for the revictualing of the civil population in occupied French territory.

M. O. Homberg, who accompanied me at the time of my visit to M. Ribot, will semi-officially write to M. Klobukowski to inform him of the definite arrangements in the present memorandum.

I entrust the present document to M. Sengier and I trust that you will hand him a cheque for £500,000 which you kindly promised to cover our March needs, as well as a cheque for £1,000,000 destined for the purchase of provisions necessary for the French population.

M. Hoover and myself have obtained at Paris new information([174](#)) from which we draw the conclusion that it is indispensable, if we do not wish to have serious trouble, to make immediately the purchases which are to insure the revictualing for June and July; to this end it is urgent that we should receive the sums asked for.

I thank you, M. le Ministre, for all the support which you are giving us, and beg you to accept, etc., etc.

(Signed) E. FRANQCUI

P.S. At the last moment M. Homberg informs me that the French Government will send tomorrow to Havre an official who will inform M. Klobukowski fully.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 276

Memorandum,
by SENGIER, of meetings, on the 23d-26th March 1915, with VAN DE VYVERE regarding French subsidy. VAN DE VYVERE acts without complete instructions from the French Government

[Havre, 26 March 1915]

Mr. Sengier arrived in Havre on the 23d. En route from Paris to Havre he met Messrs. Van de Vyvere and Liebaert who told him that they had just seen Mr. Ribot and that they were authorized to hand to the C.R.B. an amount of £300,000. Mr.

Sengier did not discuss the matter very fully that night but made an appointment for next day and then produced before Mr. Van de Vyvere the memo in which it was stated that the Belgian Government should hand to the C.R.B. all the moneys necessary to carry on this work. Mr. Van de Vyvere, knowing from Mr. Ribot that he could give 300,000 only, refused to hand over the money asked for until he had received through Mr. Klobukowski proper notification from the French Government.

Mr. Sengier stayed in Havre the 24th and 25th, waiting for the French Government's delegates to turn up. On the 25th he had telegraphed to Mr. Homberg without reply; on the 26th Mr. Sengier insisted again upon the absolute necessity of receiving above money at once; Mr. Van de Vyvere then, notwithstanding he had no notification, consented to hand him the Frs. 25,000,000 accompanied by a note requesting Mr. Hoover's agreement to the terms of the advance.

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DOCUMENT NO. 277

Note,

VAN DE VYVERE TO HOOVER, stating the conditions under which the Belgian Government is advancing twenty-five million francs to the C.R.B. for provisioning the North of France

[Havre, 26 March 1915]

The Belgian Government, in conformity with the views of the French Government, advances to the C.R.B. a sum of 25 million francs, for which the French Government will reimburse it later.

This sum is destined for the immediate purchase of a stock of provisions for provisioning the invaded part of France. The capital of Frs. 25,000,000 must be renewed by the sale of provisions at cost price to the population of the French invaded departments---unless the French Government gives formal authorization to gratuitously dispose of a part of the foodstuffs.

I desire that Mr. Hoover, President of the C.R.B., notify me of his agreement on this point pending fuller instructions.

(Signed) A. VAN DIE VYVERE
Minister of Finance

[Translation]

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DOCUMENT NO. 278

Extract of telegram,
HOOVER TO GERARD, asking latter to secure undertaking from the German Government that imported foodstuffs will not be interfered with in Northern France

LONDON, 9 March 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Please send following telegram to Gerard:

Am able to secure subscription considerable sums of money from charitable institutions(175) for feeding French people south of Belgian frontier. In order, however, to secure this money it is necessary for me to create a special department Commission for Relief in Belgium in co-operation with National Committee in Brussels in order that foodstuffs and funds may be handled and accounted for properly. It is also necessary that we should have undertaking from German Government that these foodstuffs will not be interfered with in any manner and that we shall be allowed to place in this territory at least five American members of Commission and shall have the right to move about in full superintendence of the work of distribution. I am not allowed to proceed with shipments until I have these guarantees in hand, and as the matter is one of urgent humanitarian interest I trust that you will again lend us your kindly services and that the German Government will meet us in a liberal and prompt manner.(176)

HOOVER

Two weeks passed without reply from Gerard. In the meantime Hoover heard that the Germans would allow only neutral officers in uniform to act as the Commission's representatives in the Army Zone. He thereupon telegraphed Gerard asking if this were true and offering to attempt to secure American Army officers if the Imperial Government so desired. Still without news from Berlin, Hoover wired Van Dyke at The Hague asking him to relay these proposals to Gerard and to urge prompt action from the German authorities as conditions in the French provinces were growing rapidly worse, while the Commission though ready to move supplies at once was unable to act until the German guarantees were received. As the following documents indicate, the delay was due to interchanges between Berlin and the German authorities in Belgium and Northern France rather than to the formulation of new proposals relating to the Commission's methods of supervision.

Extract of letter,
VON BISSING TO FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN, giving his observations on the
proposed relief in Northern France in connection with the work in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 21 March 1915

Foreign Office, Berlin

I desire to make the following observations, as far as I am concerned, in answer to the note of the American Ambassador, Mr. Gerard, which has been transmitted to me.

As regards the feeding of the French population south of the Belgian frontier, I give, for my part, the express and formal declaration that the provisions which the Commission for Relief in Belgium in association with the Comité National in Belgium may introduce into France through the occupied territory from neutral countries abroad will remain free from all military requisitioning.

Likewise, I am inclined to believe that, should these goods be transported through territory occupied by troops on the firing line or in the zone back of this line in East or West Flanders, the competent military authorities in such districts would be prepared to furnish the necessary assurances as far as they are concerned.

. . . I must lay stress upon the fact that the feeding of the districts of Northern France must not be carried out by drawing on the reserves destined for Belgium, and I therefore suggest that precautions be taken through marking the sacks, etc., whereby the supplies destined for France which may lie temporarily in Belgian depots, will be separated strictly from those destined for Belgium.

.....

(Signed) FREIHERR VON BISSING

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 280

Letter,
VON JAGOW TO GERARD, stating that there would be no objection to neutral
civilian delegates

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
21 March 1915

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

In reply to your esteemed query of the 17th instant, I have the honor to inform you that Germany does not require that the distribution of provisions to the population in the French districts occupied by the German forces should be made under the supervision of neutral officers in uniform. In view of the experiences in Belgium, we would also admit to the French districts neutral commissioners without uniform. Should the American Government, however, attach much value to the fact that, in the event of the taking over of the provisioning of the said districts it be represented by two or three American officers in uniform, no objection would be made on the part of Germany. Preliminary notification, however, of the names of the gentlemen whose admittance is desired would be appreciated.

I am happy to avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

[Translation]

On the basis of the general engagement of the Berlin Government given above and on that of the military authorities which follows, the Commission began at once to move food supplies into the North of France. Distribution began in the districts of Valenciennes on the 6th April and in Lille four days later. Other regions were penetrated in the succeeding weeks, the last points to be reached being Guise and Ternier, where the first deliveries were made on the 6th May.

The preliminary agreement with the German Army authorities (given immediately below) was unsatisfactory to the Commission and was not acceptable to the British(177)who for the time being did not go beyond an expression of disapproval. On the 13th April the Commission secured a new and more satisfactory agreement (Document 283) which defined the relationship between the Commission, the French committees, and the German authorities.

The local distribution organization which came into being in Northern France through the auspices of the C.R.B. was the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, usually referred to as the Comité Français (C.F.). In structure the Comité Français resembled the Comité National of Belgium, but under the conditions of German rule in French territory, the activities of the C.F. were severely restricted. There was a central committee(178) with headquarters at Brussels, which was primarily an accounting rather than an executive agency. Central control was exercised through the Brussels office of the C.R.B. For each of the six zones controlled by the six German armies between Verdun and the sea there was a

district committee. Each of the six districts was further subdivided into regions containing a group of communes, and for each region there was a regional committee. These district and regional committees handled the details of distribution under the limitations of German orders and in close co-operation with the representatives of the C.R.B. There were in the administration of French relief no diplomatic patrons representing the relief organizations and no German officials representing the German civil government. The Commission's delegates([179](#)) dealt directly with the military authorities under whose very strict observation they performed strenuous but interesting duties.

DOCUMENT NO. 281

Memorandum,
of conference between MAJOR GENERAL ZOELLNER AND CONNETT,
regarding relief of Northern France

CONFERENCE

At General Headquarters on the 21st March 1915, morning

PRESENT: Major General Zoellner, representing the Commander in Chief of the Army, and Mr. A. N. Connett, representing the C.R.B. (Commission for Relief in Belgium)

Mr. Hoover's telegram, dated London, 18th March 1915, concerning the supervision of the distribution of foodstuffs to the civilian population of the portions of Northern France occupied by the German army was produced and discussed.

2. The German army administration agree in principle that American officials in uniform act in the manner proposed as supervisors for the activities of the C.R.B.
3. The German army administration gives the assurance that in no case will the goods be claimed for the needs of the army, but that they will be solely used for the civilian population of the occupied portions of France.
4. The German army administration has requisitioned and given receipts for the foodstuffs for man and beast existing in Northern France, so that all stocks have passed to the possession of the German army administration.- Therefore no stocks whatsoever any longer exist which belong to the French population, with the exception of poultry and vegetables in the gardens. To exclude any misunderstandings, the fact must therefore be stated, that the claiming for army purposes of the stocks now already requisitioned, should not be regarded as a new

requisition. The most indispensable foodstuffs for man and beast have hitherto been delivered to the population by the Germans in strictly specified rations.

5. With regard to the utilization of the new crop, the German army administration has a free hand, because, by supplying seed and furnishing labor, horses, motor plows, and so on, the administration itself effects the things essential to the securing of the crop, and furnishes compensation for the use of the land and of French labor.

6. The German army administration assures the C.R.B. of the greatest liberality in regard to freight charges and will grant at least the same concessions as for the provisioning of Belgium.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 282

Letter,
HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, outlining proposed extension of relief to Northern France

LONDON, 8 April 1915

L. Chevrillon, Esq.
Paris

MY DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I have asked Mr. John White to go at once to Brussels and take up with the head of our Belgian organization, Mr. Crosby, the whole question of extending the organization to the French sections, and Mr. Guérin is in Brussels at the present moment in conference with them.

From a study of the transportation, both by our office here and the one at Rotterdam, we are proposing to establish a central distribution station at Lille, one at Cambrai, perhaps one at La Fère, and another at Mézières. We are despatching the most experienced men we have in Belgium to take charge of these stations and we are also shipping material toward these points by canal. We are expecting the French people to divide the territory up into proper provinces from a transportation point of view and to appoint a French director to act jointly with the American. Our first duty, however, was to get foodstuff landed on the ground; we can formulate the organization as we go along.

We are sending you today copy of this week's report which contains a complete description of the Belgian method of distribution, which we expect by degrees to establish over France, so far as it is physically possible.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 283

Agreements,
between the SUPREME COMMAND OF THE GERMAN ARMY at request of the QUARTERMASTER GENERAL (represented by MAJOR VON KESSLER) and the C.R.B. (represented by O. T. CROSBY AND A. N. CONNETT), regarding the provisioning of the population in the occupied French territory

BRUSSELS, 13 April 1915

MAIN AGREEMENT

1. The German Commander-in-Chief gives his consent for the C.R.B. to undertake the supply of the population of the occupied French territory with foodstuffs.

2. The German Commander-in-Chief gives the assurance that the goods imported for the said purpose will never be called upon for the use of the German Army, but shall be used solely for the French population of the occupied territory. The German Commander-in-Chief will issue strict orders to all the respective subordinate authorities to the effect that these goods must never be seized.

Any goods which may not have been distributed at any time will remain at the exclusive disposal of the C.R.B.

3. The C.R.B. is authorized to appoint in the occupied territory of Northern France, American citizens as its delegates, who may, subject to the supplementary agreement No. 1 attached hereto, satisfy themselves of the carrying out of the assurance given under paragraph 2.

4. The requests to the C.R.B. for, and the distribution of the goods will be effected according to the determinations of the C.R.B., in conjunction with the German military authorities, by French trustees, who are to be nominated by the French communities, subject to the approval of the German military authorities and of the C.R.B. These trustees will represent the French communities in the transactions

with the delegates of the C.R.B., more particularly in connection with accounts and payments.

5. The German Commander-in-Chief will afford every facility for the carriage of the goods to the place of destination. The goods will be admitted free of duty, and freight will be charged according to similar principles as may, from time to time, be in force for the supply of Belgium.

The transport is regulated by the supplementary agreement No. 2 attached hereto.

6. In order to eliminate doubts as to origin and destination of the goods supplied, all means of transport and storing rooms will be labeled officially by the German military authorities in such a manner as to make the goods recognizable as those covered by the stipulations of paragraph 2.

7. If military exigencies should so require, this agreement may be canceled by the German Commander-in-Chief at any time without giving any reasons, by a notice to that effect to the C.R.B. However, all goods imported by the C.R.B., then being already within the occupied French territory, shall be disposed of in accordance with the stipulations of this agreement, the American delegates remaining long enough to discharge their duties with respect to such goods, in so far as this is considered practicable for military reasons.

8. The right of the German military authorities to requisition for military purposes against "Bons" the foodstuffs for men or animals still existing in the country is in no way affected by this agreement.

Likewise, the German military authorities reserve to themselves all rights in respect to the new crop.

(S.) VON KESSLER, Major

(S.) OSCAR T. CROSBY

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY AGREEMENT No. 1

Respecting the position of the Delegates of the C.R.B. in the occupied French Territory

1. The delegates of the C.R.B. are authorized to satisfy themselves that the goods supplied by the C.R.B. are being used in accordance with the guarantees given.

2. The German military authorities will afford them every possible assistance in the carrying out of this duty. On the other hand, for military reasons, they will be expected to limit themselves to such matters as are within the scope of their duties.

3. The delegates are aware that their activities in the zone of the field army will have to be subjected to certain restrictions. These will be fixed as binding by the military authorities, wholly in respect of the military situation at the time being.

4. There will be established in the occupied territory: A Central Office and Five Distribution Districts

5. In each place, two gentlemen of American nationality will be admitted, as selected by the C.R.B.

If desired, they will receive, free of charge, quarters, officers' rations, and suitable attendance. A military motor car will be placed at their disposal for the journeys necessitated by their duties. Every gentleman will be granted a passport guaranteeing his personal safety.

6. At the Central Office, a delegate of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, who is in charge of the accounts of the C.R.B., will be admitted in the place of one of the two American delegates.

The selection of the person is subject to the approval of the German Commander-in-Chief.

7. To each place an officer, speaking English and French, will be attached, who will be detailed exclusively for this duty. He has to accompany the delegates on their journeys, for their personal safety, and will generally assist them in every possible way.

8. The Distribution Districts established as per paragraph 4 will be divided into subdistricts. For each subdistrict there will be selected a Chief Place, where trustees of French nationality will be nominated in accordance with paragraph 4 of the main agreement.

9. The delegates are authorized to visit these trustees at the Chief Places for purposes of supervision and accounts, and there to receive the representatives of the communes of the subdistricts personally. This authorization may temporarily be restricted by the military authorities, if the military situation so requires it. However, in such cases, the delegates shall be at liberty to summon the representatives of the communes for discussion of business to the delegate's place of residence through the medium of the military authorities.

10. All correspondence, including the personal correspondence of the delegates, has to be handed open to the attached officer, who will forward it by the quickest

means and in the zone of the Imperial Post, free of postage. The use of the military telegraphs and telephones will be allowed through the medium of the attached officer; no fees will be charged.

11. Upon entering upon his position, every delegate will certify by his own signature that he has been acquainted with the above stipulations. At the same time, he takes upon himself the obligation to carry out his duties in such a manner as may be expected from an honorable citizen of a neutral state.

(S.) VON KESSLER, Major

(S.) OSCAR T. CROSBY

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY AGREEMENT No. 2

Concerning the transportation of the goods supplied by the C.R.B.

1. As far as possible, the transportation shall take place by water. No tolls are to be paid for the use of the waterways. The payment of the freight to the lightermen is a matter of the C.R.B. Special regulations will be fixed for the granting of passes for the lightermen.
2. For the shipment by rail of foodstuffs for man and beast, the German Railway Administration in Brussels will demand no more than 50 per cent of normal freight rates. The same reduction of rates will apply to the return of empty bags. The minimum freight for one car is frs. 9. For cars which are delayed during the loading or unloading, the full demurrage, as specified by the tariffs, must be paid.
3. The waybills accompanying the rail shipments must contain a regular attestation, made in accordance with the decision of the German Railway Administration, and stating that the goods are destined for the French civilian population.
4. The railway cars used for the transportation must be provided with labels which show that the contents are the property of the C.R.B.
5. All means of distinguishing the goods, as labels, etc., are to be supplied by the C.R.B., in agreement with the German Railway Administration.
6. The loaded railway cars will be delivered, sealed, at destination. Delegates of the C.R.B. will not be allowed to accompany cars or trains in transit.
7. Applications for the necessary railway cars must reach the stationmaster at least two or three days beforehand. The German Railway Administration do not

guarantee the supply of the cars; however, they will as far as possible attend to the needs of the C.R.B.

(S.) VON KESSLER, Major

(S.) OSCAR T. CROSBY

[Translation]

3. Administration. April 1915---February 1916

The organization of the work in the French districts followed a course similar in many respects to that in Belgium. But as the following documents show, conditions in France produced their own problems. It was for example less easy to organize the local committees since the greater part of the adult male population had either been mobilized in the French Army or had been virtually made prisoners by the Germans. This removal of the family bread-winners combined with the almost total suspension of industry in preponderantly industrial communities produced a relatively greater degree of destitution than was found in Belgium. The Commission's negotiations to secure indigenous crops for the French population, difficult in any case, were further complicated by the fact that the German armies had actually cultivated the fields in some districts and had furnished seed in others.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Very delicate questions of policy arose from the efforts of some German commanders to force French civilians to labor on projects of military value to the forces of occupation. Finally there were administrative complications due to the fact that in addition to the Commission, the French Government and the Comité Français, the Belgian Government, the Comité National, and the British Foreign Office were in a greater or less degree involved in the enterprise.

DOCUMENT NO. 284

Letter,

HOOVER TO DE FLEURIAU, stating program of the work in Northern France and some of the difficulties encountered

LONDON, 23 April 1915

*A. de Fleuriau, Esq.,
French Embassy, London*

DEAR MR. DE FLEURIAU:

With regard to the information which you asked for yesterday, I beg to enclose copies of the arrangements entered into between our staff and the German General Staff with regard to the distribution of foodstuffs in Northern France. This agreement was in substitution of a very unsatisfactory "treaty" entered into early in March.

We have established headquarters for our operations with necessary warehouses, at Mézières, Bethel, Vervins, St. Quentin, Valenciennes, Maubeuge, and we are still negotiating with regard to placing representatives at Lille. This city is, however, so close to the firing line that the Germans do not seem as yet ready to approve and insist that we shall feed the people at Lille from Valenciennes warehouses. Foodstuffs have some time since been moving into these warehouses in considerable quantities. It is not our policy, however, to carry more than four or five days' supplies at any one of them.

Our staff report that they have the greatest possible difficulties in the organization of the detailed distribution by virtue of the fact that all capable Frenchmen have necessarily been drafted out of the country, either into the army, or refugees, or as prisoners, and consequently we can never expect to set up so highly organized and efficient a service in the detailed distribution as that maintained in Belgium. Furthermore, we had hoped to establish, at least partially, the system employed in Belgium by which that portion of the population which still has some resources in money could pay for their breadstuffs and these payments coming back into our hands through Belgium would enable us to revolve our funds to advantage and, to some extent, minimize the amount of support we should need to receive from outside. Owing to the great impoverishment of the population and the drafting out of the more able people, however, it seems hopeless for us to establish organization to effect this result to any great extent.

As I informed you yesterday, a theoretical calculation of the minimum ration of the remaining people in this section would involve, at the present high cost of food supplies, something in the neighborhood of £700,000 a month. On the other hand we should certainly have difficulties in reaching the entire population and we have calculated we could carry the business on with £500,000 per month.

As I explained to you yesterday, our accounts are entirely in the hands of the well-known firm of Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, who also for our purposes maintain the American members of their firm in Belgium. We keep our accounts with respect to the French population entirely separate from the Belgian and will be able, at the completion of this work, to show the exact cost of every particle of foodstuffs, its destination, any money which we may have received for it, and otherwise a complete and entire statement of the position, which no doubt will be presented to the French Government by the Belgian Government, to whom we look in this matter.

I regret to say that some misrepresentation has got abroad in Northern France that this is a commercial enterprise, and I hope that no such impression has reached your Government. The whole of this Commission is carried on by voluntary effort, without remuneration of any kind, and the members of the Commission would not for one moment consent to be placed in such a position. The value of volunteer effort will be shown by the fact that we have been able to fix the price at which flour is to be sold to those who can still afford to pay in Northern France, at about 52 centimes per kilo, and it may interest you to know that the retail price of flour in London today is 53 centimes. If any profit is made on the sale of the flour to the better-to-do population in Northern France, this profit will automatically go in reduction of the loss made in supplying the destitute.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 285

Letter,
HOOVER TO DE FLEURIAU, announcing the suspension by the C.R.B. of food shipments to Lille and Roubaix as a consequence of German efforts to make French civilians work for German troops

LONDON, 2 July 1915

A. de Fleuriau, Esq.
The French Embassy, London

DEAR MR. DE FLEURIAU:

We beg to inform you that we are this morning advised that on Wednesday last our direction in Northern France stopped the whole of the food supplies in transit to the Lille and Roubaix districts, involving about 600,000 people. This was in consequence of a threat(181) given to the people of Roubaix by the military authorities that unless they made sacks (for sand bags) for the German army, the Germans would themselves hold up our food supplies for the city of Roubaix. Under the undertaking imposed upon us by the Allied Powers with regard to this work, we feel that it is our duty to obtain further instructions from you as to continuing the ravitaillement in view of the above incident.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 286

Letter,
HOOVER TO CREVRILLON, regarding progress of work in Northern France and
some of its special problems

LONDON, 7 July 1915

Louis Chevrillon, Esq., Paris

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I have been back from Belgium and Northern France for about a week. When I left Belgium we had practically completed a detailed report of the whole of the operations, organization, and everything of the kind in Northern France. I had expected it would follow me out two days later and I should be able to place before you the whole situation in a clear form. Something has held the matter up, but I hope the report will arrive in a day or two.

In a general way the whole country is well organized and the French committees are doing good and efficient work. They are keeping accurate accounts and the food distribution has penetrated into all sections of occupied France, even as far south as that section east of St. Die, where we have a local committee doing active work and receiving regular shipments. The problem is one of larger administration than we ever anticipated, as the population are practically destitute of all necessities and I do not see how we can pull them through with £500,000 per month. It is in view of the presence of this fact and the whole question as to how long and under what circumstances we are to continue that I have hoped to have the data.

Mr. Guérin has been trying to get a pass to go out to Paris where I had expected to meet him with you.

We are having some trouble of a diplomatic character and you will please find enclosed copy of a letter which I addressed to the French Embassy here. The case is somewhat parallel with the matter you raised and on which I feel that we should have precise instructions from the French Government. I do not feel that it is for us, as a body of neutrals, to be threatening the Germans with vengeance of one kind and another, and I hate to see the food supplies cut off in large sections in endeavors to intimidate the Germans. Altogether, many difficulties are accumulating and one of them is constantly raising friction between the French and Belgian National Committees.

For your confidential information, I believe the French people are quite capable of carrying out their own enterprise now and they would be glad to be dissociated entirely from the Belgian section. The system which our men have put into action, and which the French committees have now well seized upon and are carrying out with great circumspection, will result in the French Government being able, if it so desires, to collect the entire expenditure in Northern France from the communes after the war, so that the whole business has been reduced to a matter, practically, of the French Government making loans to these communes and should not be looked upon as benevolences.

There is another feature of this business which it seems to me should be planned out and that is the illusion that the money is being provided from an Alice in Wonderland idea---that Belgians are providing the money. Every German and Frenchman in Northern France knows perfectly well that this money is all provided directly by the French Government or indirectly by the French banking institutions, as advances to the communes, and if it could be advanced one stage further and the advances made direct to us from the French Government it would save us a lot of circumlocution.

I hope to be able to write you much more fully at an early date.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 287

Letter,

HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, giving general report on French relief and asking him to secure instructions from the French Government regarding continuation and general agreement with the methods in force

LONDON, 12 July 1915

Monsieur A. Van de Vyvere
Belgian Minister of Finance, Havre

DEAR SIR:

I have now had the advantage of intimate consultation on the whole French position, with (a) Mr. Crosby, the head of our organization, and Messrs. Chadbourn and Kellogg, his principal assistants in the Northern France work; also with several of the American departmental heads; (b) with Mr. Guérin, the head of the Comité

du Nord de la France; and (c) Messrs. Francqui and Van Bree of the Comité National; and I desire to present our combined views on the food necessities of the French people in this region.

1. *Remaining Population.*---For the purpose of our administration, the occupied French territory has been divided into six districts by the German military authorities. These districts have civil populations estimated by us, from considerable. experience, as follows:

Lille	660,000
Valenciennes	620,000
St. Quentin	330,000
Vervins	290,000
Charleville	150,000
Longwy	105,000
Maubeuge	100,000*
Givet-Fumay	30,000**
Total	2,285,000

*Assigned for provisioning to the Province of Hainaut.

** Assigned for provisioning to the Province of Namur.

2. *Food Requirements.*---The almost total exhaustion of local foodstuffs makes the imported requirements larger and more costly pro rata of the population than the work in Belgium where there remains a large store of native food. Careful investigation and infinite consideration indicate that the very minimum ration on which this population can be kept alive is as follows:

	Daily ration(<i>grams</i>)	Invoiced to the committees at (<i>Frs. per kilo</i>)	Sellingprice to public(<i>Frs. per ration</i>)
Flour (bread)	190	0.52	0.12
Rice	20	0.45	0.01
Legumes	20	0.70	0.02
Coffee	20	2.50	0.05
Salt	10	0.07	...

Sugar	10	0.85	0.01
Lard	30	2.00	0.07
Bacon	30	2.00	0.07
Total	..		0.35

If these rations be applied to the above population, it will be seen that there will be required:

	Metric tons		Metric tons
Flour	12,988	Rice	1,367
Legumes	1,367	Coffee	1,367
Salt	683	Sugar	683
Grease (or lard)	2,050	Bacon	2,050

The cost to the population, at the above prices, of the whole of these foodstuffs amounts to about Frs. 24,000,000 per month. The material which is now being furnished was purchased in the months of April and May, as it was necessary to provide supplies at this time sufficient to last until about the end of August. The prices at which some of these foodstuffs were purchased were very high, but if the work is to continue the wheat supplies will be purchased at a lower rate from the 1915 crop and thus a saving of at least 25 per cent can be made on this item, or, in other words, the above budget may, after the middle of September, be reduced to approximately Frs. 21,000,000 or Frs. 22,000,000 per month. I attach hereto a table showing these rations worked out in detail.

3. *Consumption to Date*,---Owing to the prohibition on the export from European countries, it requires from two to three months after we have decided to purchase to effect delivery into Northern France from North and South American markets. Therefore we have not yet, except in the matter of flour, rice, and legumes, delivered the whole of this ration, as we have not been able to accumulate sufficient supplies. Furthermore, although delivery to the principal centers began in April it did not absolutely reach to such remote districts as that east of St. Die until June. I hold an acknowledgment, as per copy enclosed, from the Comité du Nord de la France, that they have consumed to the 30th June foodstuffs to the value of Frs. 19,782,310.75.

4. *Total Funds*.---I have received the following sums for French account:

27th Frs. 25,000,000 which 2

March	realized £978,761.	June
10th	Frs. 12,500,000 which	19
May	realized £481,498	June
29th	Frs. 12,500,000 not yet	
June	all realized	

And I understand that I am to receive Frs. 12,500,000 for each of the months of July and August, or a total credit of Frs. 75,000,000.

The difference between the sums received to date and goods consumed is invested in partial payments on account for foodstuffs in the course of transit, these foodstuffs being en route all the way from Buenos Aires and Chicago to Northern France.

If, for purposes of calculation, we assume Frs. 20,000,000 expended up to the end of June, we have an outstanding balance of Frs. 55,000,000 available, or at the rate of Frs. 20,000,000 per month, this will be sufficient to carry the business until some time in the month of September; and from that time on it will be necessary to increase our allowance on French account if we are to carry this population on the above ration. There is no doubt in our minds that the minimum sum we can proceed with, from September 1st, is Frs. 20,000,000([182](#)) per month, instead of Frs. 12,500,000 that we now receive.

5. *Period of Continuance.*---The harvest results, so far as the civil population is concerned, are going to be negligible. Owing to the absence of able-bodied men, the harvest will be small (the German Army has planted considerable areas which they inform us were abandoned). It is, of course, understood what the attitude of the German Army will be with regard to requisitions, but it cannot be counted upon with any confidence as a relief measure. It must be observed also that a considerable portion of the "ration" is of imported material and would be required in any event. Our general view is that, while the individual peasant may hold all or a portion of his crop---if any---there is unlikely to be anything much for villages or towns, and if the conditions which existed in March are not to recur then the work must go on steadily through the autumn, regardless of the harvest.

We should be glad to receive an indication of intention as we must now give orders for September supplies.

6. *Financial Measures Now in Force*---The foodstuffs, on arrival in Northern France, are debited by us to the Comité du Nord. They are then redebited by the Comité du Nord to the Regional Committees and by the Regional Committees to the commune. The communes, in turn, sell to the population but as there is no real money in circulation a series of local currencies is availed of. We had originally

hoped to extract some real money from the population so that the credit given us could, at least in part, serve as a revolving fund, but this has had to be abandoned.

I will not trouble you with details of how the communes get an obligation from the citizens but two important facts stand out: (1) a communal obligation to pay for the whole of the foodstuffs is secured; and (2) we have so far required an additional guarantee that the foodstuffs would be ultimately paid for by exacting an undertaking on the personal responsibility of the members of the Regional Committees. Therefore, the French Institutions([183](#)) could, after the war is over, collect the entire amount advanced us, from the communes, and thus the whole of the present transactions are in the nature of loans from the French Institutions, as a banker to the communes. Some little feeling has arisen over the additional personal guarantees that we have required, and while these were essential in the early stages of organization in order to impose a proper system of obligation on the communes, it is possible that we have now reached a stage where the entire working out of the distribution of obligation may be left to the Comité du Nord. I enclose herewith copy of one of the personal obligations which are required to be signed by Comité members. I also enclose note from Monsieur Guérin on the question of abandoning these personal obligations. We should be glad to have instructions on this point.

It has been our desire to complete this enterprise to the satisfaction of the people of France and we have therefore imposed upon the people in the North a rather exacting organization, and there is some tendency to be restive in the matter of these guarantees. I am in hopes that Mr. Guérin will be able to go to Paris where he can lay before the French Institutions his views on the matter. Now that the committees throughout the country are doing good and useful work and the financial system is well understood and executed, I see no reason why the French Institutions should not open their financial relations a little more directly with their own people. We require detailed monthly report from each Regional Committee and hope in due time to transmit you these reports.

7. *Exchange.*---The question of exchange is becoming most important. In dealing with Belgium and Northern France we use the uniform form figure of Frs. 25.40 to the £, for two reasons: First, it would be hopeless for us, in such widespread and remote operations to follow the course of exchange; and, secondly, and most important, if we followed the rise in exchange we should be compelled to increase the price of foodstuffs accordingly. That this matter is likely become a matter of importance will appear from a small calculation: the first two remittances which we received from you, aggregating Frs. 37,500,000, realized £1,460,260. 2. 0, through the Banque Belge. At 25.40, this represents only Frs. 37,088,604 and is so in our account with the Comité du Nord, this being the basis of exchange, and there will probably work out a loss.

8. As explained to you, on arrival in Northern France, the food stuffs are debited to the Comité du Nord at prices fixed by us. The price which we fix in North France,

we estimate to be wide enough to cover cost of purchase and transport. I need not remark that this being a volunteer organization there is no intended profit. However in handling this quantity of foodstuffs from so many different markets and under so many kinds of quotations, it would be entirely impossible to indent them to the Comité du Nord at the variable figures of cost, because, for one reason, the foodstuffs arrive and are consumed before we can make up an accurate statement of the actual cost. It may prove, however, that there is a margin of profit which can be used to adjust exchange matters, but this cannot be determine until the work is complete or, at least, until the work is advanced to where we can review some long previous data. In any event, I propose that when this enterprise is completed, our accountants, Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, should determine what has been the actual cost of the foodstuffs delivered to the Comité du Nord and any balance between the actual expenditure and the obligations taken by us can be settled in cash.

In conclusion, we should like instructions on the following points:

1. Are we to continue the work beyond the present credit of Frs. 75,000,000?
2. Are we authorized to expend up to Frs. 20,000,000 per month after the exhaustion of the present credit?
3. Are the French Institutions satisfied to allow the financial arrangements with the communes to be settled by the Comité du Nord and that we should not, in the future, press for personal guarantees of the district committee members?
4. Will the French Institutions be satisfied with the method of accounting which I propose as between ourselves and the French Institutions?

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 288

Letter,
CHADBOURN TO HOOVER, regarding rumors that C.R.B. imports were going to Germans and concerning the feeding of French civilians forced to work for the occupying forces

LONDON, 15 July 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR HOOVER:

With regard to Mr. Chevrillon's letters, the last of which is dated the 13th of July, in which he inquires about the feeding of German civilians, I beg to say that I have had the direct responsibility and the most intimate contact with the whole situation in Northern France ever since the beginning, and that there never has been, so far as I know, a single German civilian or soldier who has had an ounce of foodstuff which we have imported. This proposition is a total and complete illusion on the part of somebody because there is one tribute that we can pay to the German Army and that is that they have scrupulously helped us in carrying out this part of the guarantees and no one has been so insistent that there should be no ground for complaints on this particular account as has been the German General Staff.

With regard to the other point of feeding French civilians who are at work for the German Army, we have not considered it our business to prevent these people from having food, even when they were working under duress. We have consistently taken the single attitude that every Frenchman in Northern France is to receive food; that no one else is to receive this food; that it is an obligation on us to see to it that the Germans do not prevent the French from receiving food or use the threat of suppressing our supplies as a lever to compulsory work by the French. In other words, we take the attitude that the food should flow freely to the people in Northern France; that no interruption should take place, no matter what the condition of their employment; that our guardianship consists thus of two phases: first, that no one else receive the food except the French; and, secondly, that no one interrupts the flow of food to the French. You can take it absolutely that this has been carried out to the last letter and I would add that the staff and myself who have had this matter in charge were not prepared to give volunteer effort of this kind to any other sort of control. All of us have worked absolutely for nothing; we have mostly paid our own expenses; and it is only upon the ideal set out above that we were warranted in taking the hardships and the incidental humiliation which we have supported on behalf of the French people.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. H. CHADBOURN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 289

Letter,
HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, setting forth a positive program of finance, distribution, and accounting for the approval of the French Government

LONDON, 27 August 1915

A. Van de Vyvere, Esq.
Belgian Minister of Finance, London

DEAR MR. VAN DE VYVERE:

With regard to the work in Northern France, it seems to us that, in the interests of both the Belgian Government and certainly of ourselves, we should have a distinct and positive program agreed by the French Government so that we may know where we stand as to ultimate accounting, and as to incidental administration. We should be very glad, therefore, if you could see your way to submit the following to the French Government and inform us if it would be in accordance with their desires:

1. The Institutions in France will furnish to the American Commission for Relief in Belgium, as agents in London, about 22,000,000 francs, or such less amount monthly as the American Commission may call for, the first instalment being payable during the month of September.

2. These moneys are to be used for the purchase and transport of foodstuffs to the civil population in the occupied territory of Northern France.

3. The American Commission is to deliver these foodstuffs to the Comité Français, either directly or through the Comité National Belge (as may be decided by the American Commission and the Comité National Belge). The foodstuffs are to be valued at prices to be determined by the American Commission and shall be fixed so as to reserve a small margin to the American Commission, this margin to form a reserve for unexpected losses, but any residue to be accounted for by the American Commission and the Comité National Belge to the Institutions upon the completion of the work.

4. The Comité Français is to deliver these foodstuffs to the District Committees. The District Committees will sell the foodstuffs to the communes or cities. The prices which the communes or cities are to pay shall be:

a) The valuation fixed by the American Commission or the Comité National Belge, plus

b) The actual expenses of the Comité Français and the District Committee.

These amounts are to be payable, as to (b) in cash, and as to (a) in an obligation of the communes or cities, due three months after peace. The Comité Français is to hand these "obligations" to the Comité National Belge, or the American Commission and by the latter they are to be handed to the Institution. They may be deposited with the Société Générale de Belgique for safe keeping until peace.

5. The communes or cities are to sell or distribute the foodstuffs to the population at such prices as will cover their expenditure only.

6. Pending the production of the obligations, the members of the District Committees are to undertake jointly and separately to pay for the foodstuffs shipped to them, but these undertakings are to be liquidated upon the production of the obligations as above. These undertakings are to be payable to and in such form as may be determined by the Société Générale de Belgique.

7. It is distinctly understood that the American Commission, the Comité National Belge, and the Comité Français are entirely humanitarian institutions working without profit, that they take no personal liability upon themselves; that should peace come while work is still in progress, the Institutions will assume all the assets and liabilities of the American Commission they may have in hand for French account without any claim upon them whatever.

8. The American Commission and the Comité National Belge will produce from time to time statements audited by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, showing their expenditure for French account and the "obligations" they have in hand.

9. It is recognized that the American Commission, in addition to the functions above set out, have entered into various undertakings with the various belligerent governments, especially with the English, Belgian, and German Governments and have given various guarantees to these Governments covering the transportation and distribution of these foodstuffs. Therefore the City and District Committees must absolutely conform to the directions of the American Commission and of the Comité National Belge in all matters of food transportation, preparation, distribution, and prices. The Comité Français shall also accept the direction of the Comité National Belge or the American Commission in all matters of accounting.

10. The American Commission, the Comité National Belge, and the Comité Français agree to centralize all correspondence, statistics, documents, reports, etc., into the hands of their joint representative Monsieur Louis Chevrillon, at the office chosen in Paris, 23 rue de la Paix.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER
Chairman

Memorandum

setting out the detailed handling of Northern France work between the C.R.B., the Comité National (Belgium), and the new French committee, the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France

BRUSSELS, 16 September 1915

It is absolutely indispensable that all the transactions which have been and will be made, and whose object is the provisioning of the Northern France districts, should be accounted for in every particular.

On this subject, at a meeting held the 16th September, Mr. Hoover decided that the following regulations should be adopted:

1. COMITÉ NATIONAL

I. Starting from the 1st September the C.N. will invoice to the C.F. the goods at the price charged by the C.R.B. to the C.N.

II. As the prices charged by the C.N. to its provincial committees are superior to those that will be charged to the C.F. by the C.N. it would be advisable to cut off entirely, or at least to reduce as much as possible, the purchases made by the C.F. from the Belgian provincial committees (unless the goods bought are not supplied by the C.R.B. to the C.F.).

III. For the period from the beginning up to the 1st September, the C.N. in agreement with the C.R.B. auditor will make a statement of all the goods supplied to the C.F. and proceeding from C.R.B.'s direct shipments.

The C.N. will return to the C.F. the difference between what has been debited by the C.R.B. (Rotterdam) to the C. N. and by the C.N. to the C.F.

IV. The C.N. will request the C.F. for the return of all the real expenses that have been borne by the C.N. for the goods delivered to the C.F. up to the 1st September (insurance, general expenses, etc.).

From the 1st September the C.N. will remit monthly to the C.F. a bill for the same expenses.

2. MILLING AND VARIOUS COSTS ON THE GOODS OF THE C.R.B. PASSING THROUGH BELGIUM

To obtain the same costs it is advisable to perform all the work in one or two mills placed under the C.F. control.

As very favorable contracts have been obtained in Louvain (Frs. 1.00 for the milling of 100 kgs. of wheat, all the by-products being the property of the C.F.), and in order to prevent justifying subsequently the special accounts with the Belgian provincial committees, it is advisable to consider suppressing milling as well in Hainaut as in Namur.

The freight charges will be higher when milling at Louvain, but the reduction of the milling costs will compensate this.

Purchases of Sundries in Belgium

The buying is effected under the management of Mr. Le Blan, delegate of Mr. Guérin, in Brussels.

Every month a statement of these purchases will be signed for approval by Mr. Le Blan. A monthly report concerning these purchases will be supplied by the office that attends to same.

Margin in the Accounts of the C.F.

Mr. Hoover agrees that a reserve of Frs. 200,000 should be kept for wasted bags and a reserve of Frs. 1,000,000 for eventual losses not covered by the insurance.

For the present, so as to reduce the margin, all goods from the C.R.B. will be billed to the district committees by the C.F. at the C.R.B. prices.

Accounts C.F.

The following accounting system will be established in order to emphasize the following transactions:

- a) Transactions relating to the goods supplied to the district committees on the same conditions as when shipped from Rotterdam with a subdivision regarding the direct shipments and those in transit by the storehouses.
- b) Transactions relating to the C.R.B. goods which have to go through any transformation in Belgium, such as the wheat that has to be milled, the green coffee that might be roasted, etc.
- c) Transactions relating to goods purchased in Belgium from particular purveyors. (This is the statement that is to be signed by Mr. Le Blan.)
- d) Purchases from the C.N. of goods proceeding from the C.R.B. (such as salt and other articles coming from the general stock).

e) Purchases (from the C.N.) of goods which have been bought in Belgium by the C.N. (for instance, coffee coming from the "Valorisation").

f) Purchases (from the C.F.) of goods proceeding from the transformation of C.R.B. imports (such as cerealine, cornmeal, soap, etc.).

It is understood that, for purchases mentioned under paragraphs (d), (e), and (f), the prices will be those paid to the C.N. by the Belgian provincial committees for the similar goods.

g) Purchases from the provincial committees, of goods imported by the C.R.B. The price paid to the provincial committees, will be the same as that paid by the latter to the C.N.

h) Purchases from the provincial committees, of goods not imported by the C.R.B.

i) Freight charges or money advances made by the district committees in order to settle the costs upon arrival of the lighters or wagons.

j) Handling expenses relating to the goods in transit through Belgium.

k) General expenses which are to be subdivided into office expenses, furniture, etc., salaries to the employees of the central office and those who attend to the storehouse control.

l) All returns made to the district committees.

m) Sacks account.

n) Special account for clothing and shoes.

o) Costs of insurance.

p) Monthly payments to the C.N.

q) Special accounts for Maubeuge, Givet, which do not receive food but money.

Naturally, all accounts to be kept by districts. All these accounts to be approved by the C.R.B. auditor.

[Translation]

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The series of highly important negotiations concerning the forthcoming harvest, upon the outcome of which depended the life of the relief work in both Belgium

and France, came to a successful conclusion in the summer of 1915.(184) In August, General Headquarters decreed that a daily per capita ration of 100 grams of indigenous flour would be put at the disposal of the population in occupied French territory. With this agreement in hand Hoover had in September secured an increase in the subsidy for the program in Northern France to Frs. 20,000,000 per month; but other difficulties were arising. There were the scarcity and high cost of food and the lack of shipping,(185) but more important than these were the new restrictions on the Commission's importations applied by the British Foreign Office.(186) These restrictions were inspired largely by the hostility, to the entire relief, of the military authorities both British and French, and Hoover decided the time had come for a thorough understanding with the two governments. The following documents describe his negotiations in London to secure formal approval by the British and French authorities of the Commission's organization in the North of France relief and his efforts in Paris and at the French G.H.Q. to get more active support of influential officials.

DOCUMENT NO. 291

Memorandum,

By HOOVER, reviewing the work in Northern France to the 30th October 1915, presenting a program for the following months, describing the organization of relief, and requesting the official approval of the French and British Governments

LONDON, December 1915

MEMORANDUM

The Commission for Relief in Belgium is formed of a group of volunteer gentlemen, chiefly American, acting under the patronage of the American and Spanish Ambassadors and Ministers in various European centers. The Commission operates entirely without profit and purely from the humanitarian desire to relax the incidence of war upon occupied civil populations. It was originally organized to assist the 7,000,000 people in Belgium, but has extended its operations to cover the 2,200,000 civil population in the occupied area of Northern France.

Since its inception it has imported to these populations foodstuffs to the value of 375,000,000 francs.

The work of the Commission in the ravitaillement of the occupied area of Northern France has now been in progress at an increasing volume, since April last. Up to the 30th day of October the sum of Frs. 69,307,449.26 has been expended upon this account, and it may be stated with emphasis that the population is today in good health and physical condition, and the horrors of famine or evacuation have been

successfully prevented. The Commission has received to the 31st of October, total of Frs. 95,000,000, the balance of which money is absorbed in the stock of goods in transit, which from overseas ports requires practically two months foresight. The Commission has negotiated a number of agreements with the German authorities as to the organization and protection of the work, and as to the guarantees that the food supplies distributed shall reach the civil population alone. Furthermore, the Commission has set up a number of undertakings with the Germans with respect to the participation of the Commission in the control of the distribution of domestic supplies, as the result of last harvest, to the civil population.

In order to control the distribution in the occupied area the Commission has divided that area into six districts, presided over in each case by an American representative of the Commission under the immediate control of a chief representative of the Commission stationed at Charleville, and under the general control of the Commission's office in Brussels. In each district the Commission has assembled a French committee, comprising gentlemen of the highest standing in the district, who execute the general control of the distribution under the guidance of the American representative; and the Commission has further set up in each commune a committee acting under the direction of the district committees and again subject to the direction of the American representative. In order to facilitate accounting, the Commission has set up a general committee, called the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, which maintains an office with the Commission in Brussels, under the general presidency of Mr. Louis Guérin, but under the actual administrative representation of Mr. Le Blan.

The Commission ships foodstuffs required direct to the district committees from Rotterdam or other points and debits to these committees the entire cost of such foodstuffs at prices calculated by the Commission to cover its entire expenditure. The total of these debits against the district committees is aggregated in the Brussels office under the general title of Comité Français, and with the assistance of the accountants of the Comité National Belge. The accounts of the Commission abroad are conducted by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company whose representatives in Brussels audit the accounts of the Comité Français.

The district committees in turn deliver the foodstuffs to the communal committees and debit them at the original prices of the Commission, plus a small margin to cover their out-of-pocket and incidental expenditure. The communal authorities give an obligation for the foodstuffs delivered to them, this obligation being repayable after the war, and these obligations are accepted by the Commission in Brussels as a liquidation of the obligations of the district committees. The district committees in turn giving a financial guarantee that they will produce these communal obligations to the full extent of the foodstuffs consigned to them.

The communal committees dispose of the foodstuffs to the population at a fixed ration under regulations imposed by the Commission in such a manner as to care

for the destitute as well as for those who can afford to pay and at prices determined by the Commission.

UNDERSTANDINGS DESIRED

As the Commission feels that it is now necessary to reconsider the whole organization and future of the work of the Commission with a view to the continued work, it desires an understanding with the Allied Governments on the following essential points:

- 1. Future importations and the finance thereof.
2. Organization in Northern France.

FUTURE SUPPLIES

The whole situation as imposed by the approaching winter and the gradual exhaustion of summer supplies has been the subject of a very intimate study by the American staff in consultation with the French district committees and the following program of minimum food supplies(187) has been drawn up:

.....

It has been agreed after consultation with the district committees as to available domestic supplies, that this represents the minimum supplies which, with such other local supplies as may be obtained, will for the next four or five months, in any event, maintain the population in health. It will be noted that the supply is entirely below that generally advanced by dietary specialists, as required to support life; but the Commission feels that it will be sufficient and that the dominant factor--even were more monetary supplies available---is the volume of shipping which can be obtained from over the seas. While it may be stated at once that the population in this area would be grateful for a larger supply, yet the Commission feels that this is all that it can hope to deliver with any material certainty, in view of the present position of the shipping world, and that if it can carry out the above ideal it will at least have protected the general health of the people. The ration above is founded upon practical requirements rather than theoretical data, although such have been kept in view as far as possible, and in view of the difficulties of delivering, even the above may turn out to be rather an ideal than a commitment of realization. It has hitherto been impossible to deliver the whole program owing to unexpected shortages in shipment, shipping, loss of ships, and various uncontrollable causes. The Commission wishes permission to import the above quantities of materials into Rotterdam and desires to have an assurance that subvention of Frs. 24,000,000 per month will be forthcoming to cover the expenditure.

ORGANIZATION OF NORTHERN FRANCE

In order to facilitate the work of the Commission and to afford a basis on which the Commission may expect to ultimately liquidate its trust as to expenditure and accounts, the Commission desires a confirmation by the French Government, or by the English Government acting on its behalf, on the following points:

a) That the method of accounting and disposal of supplies as set out above is upon a basis satisfactory to the Allied Governments, and that inasmuch as the Commission is an entirely humanitarian institution working without profit it has no responsibility on its members, and should peace come while the work is still in progress the French Institutions will take over all foodstuffs in transit and at cost and assume the liabilities outstanding thereon. Furthermore that while the Commission has set up every safeguard it can devise as to accounting beyond delivery of the communal obligation, and auditing, the individual members shall not be held responsible for any failure in this particular, as it is to be understood that the members are doing their level best under the most trying and difficult circumstances.

b) The Commission desires that it should be set out clearly that all French committees and their membership are set up entirely subject to the direction of the Commission and its representatives and hold their appointment and membership entirely subject to the will of the Commission, and that no independent action of any character by any member of any such committees shall be taken without previous express approval of the Commission, this latter being vitally necessary, as all negotiations with governments involved must be centralized in the Commission or absolute chaos will ensue.

DOCUMENT NO. 292

Letter,

PERCY TO HOOVER, giving the approval of the French and British Governments to the financial and administrative arrangements set out in the preceding memorandum, but withholding approval of the program of imports

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,
27 January 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

We have received from the French Embassy a memorandum which I enclose herein, and which I understand was drawn up by you and Monsieur Chevrillon, dealing with your Organisation for relief in Northern France.

I am directed to inform you that the general financial and other principles set forth in this memorandum are approved as a basis for your work.

We cannot at present extend this approval definitely to the programme of imports which was embodied in this memorandum, but I will communicate with you further on this point.

We shall conclude, unless we hear to the contrary, that your organisation in Northern France will be conducted on the lines set forth in this memorandum in the future without material alteration.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 293

Memorandum,
By HOOVER, of conferences with officials of the French Government and General Staff in Paris and Chantilly, 10th-15th February 1916, on relief in Northern France. (Extracts only.)

LONDON, [18 February 1916]

Thursday, 10th February 1916

Arrived Paris three o'clock in the morning via Dieppe; went with Chevrillon at ten to call on Lieutenant Serruys at the War Ministry, he being the delegate of the General Staff to keep track of our operations. Discussed with him the general attitude of Staff toward our work; gathered that it was generally favorable but disturbed by continuous German requisitions; went over details of several of these reports also recent F.O. despatches re cattle, etc. Also discussed shipping question. He informed me that Germans were buying neutral ships in Spain, apparently to embarrass the Allies. He suggested we should buy neutral ships. (Appeared to me from the despatch he showed us that Spanish were buying from Germans.) He suggested I should see the General Staff at Chantilly, and said he would take the matter up.

At eleven o'clock went with Chevrillon to see Monsieur Gout, Foreign Office, (he being the link with the Marine Department). He was not initially very enthusiastic over the feeding of Northern France and Belgium, but after a long interview seemed satisfied. Chevrillon and I presented strongly the various phases, humanitarian, military, political, and our embarrassment over shipping. Discussed details of shipping position([188](#)) and our own present perilous position and urged

him that the French Government should take a strong line and insist that our requirements be put on a par with military or food operations of the Allies and that we be assigned our tonnage in the same way. Discussed German ships and he agreed initial refusal was an error and urged we take it up again. I pointed out the great improbability that the Germans would now accede, as they were obviously convinced that the Allies were embarrassed for tonnage and for them to give us 200,000 tons of shipping would simply relieve the Allies of that amount. He urged we take it up again, but I replied generally that while we would try, we had now but little hope and that we must have immediate tonnage or disaster must result. He agreed we should see General Staff and Prime Minister.

At four o'clock went with Chevrillon to see Monsieur Chappsal, Under-Secretary in charge of the ravitaillement of civil population of France (Department of Commerce). He strongly supported our ravitaillement but was against German shipping, claiming that the German submarines would capture one of their own ships and convert it into a privateer. Agreed we should be put in first rank of necessities and said he would urge it on his Minister.

At 5:30 I saw Monsieur Nail, Under-Secretary (Marine). Chevrillon outlined our history, purpose, and present position, humane, military, and political importance of our work in Northern France. Was very sympathetic, said we had his unqualified support; said must see the Prime Minister and he would arrange it. Agreed we should be put in forefront in apportioning tonnage, but considered ultimate solution was for us to buy neutral ships and French Government would take them over on peace. Various measures of this order were discussed, but we brought the issue back constantly to the footing of immediate action, which could only be done by strong measures at governmental hands-in forcing tonnage to accept our mission.

Friday, 11th February 1916

10:30---Went with Chevrillon to see Monsieur Metain, Minister of Labor; briefly recited our difficulties, principally shipping. He said he needed no conviction as to the prime importance of our work. We could count on his earnest support.

11:30.---Called on M. Lucien Poincaré, brother to the President---social call. He said I must see the President and he would arrange it.

5:30.---Called with Chevrillon on Monsieur Sembat, Minister of Public Works, he, jointly with M. Thierry, being in control all questions of mercantile shipping and M. Sembat representing the French Government in joint councils with English on shipping questions. We went over the position fully and strongly urged our necessities. He asked us to prepare him a memorandum and said he would strongly urge the matter at Saturday's Cabinet meeting.

Saturday, 12th February 1916

5:00.---Called on Monsieur Berthelot, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who had M. Kammerer with him (the latter being in the Finance Department---Foreign Office link). Berthelot was our principal destroyer on German shipping contract, together with Klobukowski, French Minister to the Belgian Government at Havre. He remained only a few minutes---leaving us with Kammerer, with whom we went over the old ground, we insisting vigorously that the job was primarily the concern of the French people and if they would only come out of the shell of "we do not object" and take on a formula of "we insist," things would go better. He agreed we must be saved somehow.

Sunday, 13th February 1916

4:00.---Motored with Chevrillon to Chantilly, and discussed matters with General Staff. Colonel Buat and Captain Marsal received us and we went over a multitude of grounds, military, political, financial, shipping, etc. They agreed that the principle of a minimum food supply just sufficient to supplement natural supplies must be maintained, but they were strong on the minimum. We express satisfaction with this agreement that the Commission must go on. We then spent an hour on details of German requisition and transgressions against native food, which they had accumulated against us. Went over a mass of detail about distribution methods, and, I felt, left them somewhat reassured.

Finally I stated that it seemed absurd to us, an American body, that we should be at constant trench warfare with the French and English General Staffs over this work. That we were in constant battle over imports absolutely vital to preserve the life of French people and we were prepared to surrender and let them do the job if they could do it better. That we were always in an equal quarrel with the German Staff over native food-and we were getting very, very tired and worn. This caused some amusement---and I am convinced a better attitude altogether. I am satisfied we will have better co-operation.

Monday, 14th February 1916

At 5:30.---Went with Chevrillon to the Elysée, where we were received by President Poincaré. He stated that he had asked me to call, as he wished to express the appreciation and admiration of the French people for the work we were doing on behalf of their northern countrymen. He stated that he had kept himself in touch with the work and said that he was filled with admiration for the efficiency and the ability with which it had been administered; that it had now become an enormous enterprise and one of great complexity. He had fully realized the pressure we were under from the people in the North to increase the supplies, and the still greater pressure we were under from the different Allies to reduce them; also the difficulties we were constantly getting into with the Germans in our endeavor to protect the native food supply. He said no one expected us to reach the ideal in any of these directions. I told him that our whole desire was to keep the population

alive and in health until the war was over; that this meant a good deal of privation, especially to those classes who had always had more than sufficient, and that it had necessarily meant a good deal of complaint from them. I also stated that we were in jeopardy of total failure owing to the lack of shipping and I felt that a more direct support of the Commission from the French Government would be of great assistance. He stated that the Council had already discussed the matter fully and made direct representations to the British Government, hoping to thus afford a solution of our shipping and other difficulties.

Mr. Chevrillon told him that the question of maintaining food supplies to the people in the North was one of vast military, political importance, but that this phase of the question was obviously not for discussion with a neutral; that my attitude was wholly that of the humanitarian aspect, but from the French point of view these weighty factors must not be overlooked. The President said that he fully realized the importance of these phases of the matter, that they had been thoroughly ventilated from time to time in the councils of the French Government; that, of course, the humanitarian aspect must in the end dominate all questions; that the French people were fighting for their existence and the existence of the French nation embraced the two and a half millions of Frenchmen in the North.

He rose and again stated impressively that he wished to convey to me the thanks of the French Republic.

Returned to London, Tuesday, 15th February 1916.

In March 1916 Hoover made a personal investigation of conditions in the North of France and on his return asked the Foreign Office to permit increased importations to these regions, to which the Foreign Office agreed in April 1916.⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ In this month, the Commission became involved in the controversy raised by the attempts of the Germans to force the French people to work for them. The particular incident was the deportation of men and women from the district of Lille, against which the Commission protested vigorously at the German G.H.Q. This controversy, which is treated in detail in chapter X, added another complication to the difficult negotiations with the belligerents concerning native crops, on which Hoover was then engaged. In spite of its strong stand against the deportations policy⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ the standing of the Commission with the Germans was not weakened, and with the relaxation of tension in the summer of 1916 satisfactory arrangements for the 1916 harvest were made with the army command.⁽¹⁹¹⁾

[Fig. 10. Hoover's Memoranda on Inspection Trip Through Northern France in March 1916.](#)

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER VI, continued

4. Supplementary Program for the Cities. March 1916-April 1917

Within the limits set by the arbitrary restrictions of the Foreign Office and the obtainable shipping the Commission was delivering food to the entire population of the French provinces in sufficient quantities to prevent acute hunger or deterioration to health. In the rural districts where garden produce could be raised and where concealment from the requisitioning authorities was possible, the food situation was much easier than in the crowded industrial districts where the inhabitants were absolutely dependent on the supplies brought in by the C.R.B. There was unquestionably some suffering in the Lille district, and there were complaints to Paris on the inadequacy of the ration, the loudest complaints usually coming from those who in times of peace had enjoyed an abundance of the things now so carefully measured out to them. Political pressure in Paris induced the French Cabinet, in contrast to its original position respecting relief, to sanction and subsidize private French committees which proposed to supplement the C.R.B. imports by supplies from Holland and Switzerland. Hoover had, of course, no objection to the importation of supplementary supplies for the industrial districts, but, since the Commission was held responsible for the protection of the French people by seeing that the Germans observed their agreements and by importing and distributing food from abroad, he did object to having the Commission's position weakened by the establishment of new committees which the Germans could play off against the C.R.B. The British Foreign Office, which clearly saw that new committees would make it more difficult to hold the Germans strictly to their guarantees, strongly supported Hoover in his representations to the French Cabinet. The arrangement finally adopted left undisturbed the French committee(192) established in Holland and subsidized by the French Treasury to the extent of Frs. 30,000,000, but provided that no new distributing organizations be set up in the occupied territories. The supplies purchased in Holland by the French committee were turned over to the Commission, which transported them to Northern France and distributed them as a part of its supplementary program for the cities. For the years 1917-1918 the purchases of the French committee imported by the Commission amounted to about 44,000 tons, mainly vegetables and fruit. During

the same period the Commission's other imports of flour, fats, and other staples to Northern France were over 400,000 tons.

DOCUMENT NO. 294

Letter,
HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, explaining the cost of the French program and stating the necessity for increased subsidies

LONDON, 24 August 1916

Louis Chevrillon, Esq.
Paris

DEAR MR. CHEVRILLON:

The steady increase in necessities for the North of France together with the extraordinary rise in the prices of foodstuffs during the last month, renders it necessary to reconsider the entire financial problem involved in the relief of the people in Northern France.

The following table shows the amount of foodstuffs delivered into Northern France during the three months ending 25th July, together with the cost thereof:

QUARTER ENDING 25TH JULY

Commodity	Quarterly shipments permitted by Allied Governments (tons)	Actual deliveries (tons)	Cost £
Wheat	70,500	75,142	1,111,146
Bacon	3,200	2,697	206,386
Lard	6,400	5,609	394,032
Maize	6,600	6,200	62,000
Peas and beans	4,950	1,980	61,088
Rice	13,200	15,656	269,283
Coffee	3,300	3,940	216,211

Fish (salted)	1,500	nil	nil
Condensed milk	4,950	3,433	167,531
Soap	3,000	2,383	72,871
Sugar	4,000	5,061	156,379
Cocoa	750	nil	nil
Total			2,716,927
Total per month			905,642
Or (@ 28.50)			Frs. 25,810,797

The following table shows the probable cost during the next quarter of the program of shipments permitted by the Allied Governments:

COST OF AUTHORIZED PROGRAM AT PRESENT PRICES

Commodity	Tonnage authorized per quarter	Cost per ton delivered Northern France	Total £
Wheat	70,500	20	1,410,000
Bacon	3,200	77	246,400
Lard	6,400	72	460,800
Maize	6,600	10	66,000
Peas and beans	4,950	30	148,500
Rice	13,200	20	263,600
Cocoa	750	98	73,500
Fish (preserved)	1,500	40	60,000
Condensed milk	4,950	50	247,500
Soap	3,000	31	93,000
Sugar	4,000	33	132,000

Coffee.	3,300	60	198,000
Purchases in Belgium, say			100,000
Total			3,499,300
Total per month			1,166,433
Or (@28.50)			Frs. 33,243,340.50

We are at present negotiating with the German Government with a view to an increased proportion of wheat from the native produce, and this may result in diminishing our requirements for imported wheat to about 15,000 tons a month or a saving of, say, £300,000; but the condition of the population is such that we must undertake at once the importation of meat and other supplies. Two thousand tons of meat per month would cost about £160,000 per month, and other supplies needed will restore the demands to the full figure of requirements, or at least Frs. 33,000,000 per month. As you are aware, our present monthly subsidy is Frs. 20,000,000, which at present sterling exchange yields approximately £710,000 per month. You will notice that we overspent during the quarter ending 25th July, but we were able to do this as we had some money in hand as a result of our being unable to deliver the full program during the winter, owing to the shortage of shipping. It appears to me therefore that if we are to continue to keep the population going, it will be necessary at once to increase our subsidy.

I am wondering whether you would be good enough to lay this before the French Government for their consideration.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 295

Memorandum,

By HOOVER, on conferences in Paris with French and British 25th-28th August 1916, on finance and program for Northern France and particularly on the supplementary imports for the congested districts around Lille. (With supplementary memoranda.)

[Paris, 28 August 1916]

MEMORANDUM

I left London for Paris on 24th August, arriving on Friday morning the 25th at Havre, where I lunched with Mr. Berryer, Minister of the Interior of the Belgian Government, and Mr. Vandervelde, Minister of War. I informed them generally as to the shortage of the Belgian subsidies,(193) owing to the rise in prices, and of the demands for more foodstuffs.

On Friday night I went to Paris.

On Saturday morning at 9:30 had a meeting with Lord Eustace Percy and Lord Granville at the British Embassy. Discussed the question of increased food supply in the North of France and the abolition of the various new committees which have arisen through the stimulation of the district committees in the North. At 10:30, with Lord Granville, Lord Eustace Percy, and Mr. Chevrillon, called upon Mr. Margerie, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who had also present Mr. Laroche.

Had a long discussion, during which Mr. Margerie outlined the necessity for more food for the people in the North, their constant demands made to obtain it, the desire of the French Government that they should have a more liberal supply, and the reasons for the establishment of relief measures from Switzerland and Holland for supplementing the work of the Commission. He stated that the Delesalle Committee had been given a credit of thirty millions of francs for Dutch imports and that if the Commission was unable to supply the situation the Government was anxious that the Delesalle Committee should be allowed to operate through the N.O.T.(194) I stated that the negotiations between the Swiss Government and the German Government for the establishment of Swiss offices in the North and the establishment of arrangements with the Dutch through the N.O.T. by which the Dutch organizations would be extended over the North of France completely undermined the ability of the C.R.B. to protect the people, and that it means simply an era of intrigue and rivalry which we would not participate in, and that if the French Government was desirous of setting up any other nationality to take up the work in the North of France we should be only too delighted and that they should consider their hands entirely free; that we were in no way jealous in the matter, but that we were perfectly satisfied that if such arrangements were made they would be absolutely fatal to the interests of the people and that whoever was set up in charge of the relief must have a complete monopoly in order to deal competently with the German authorities. I stated that there was a tendency to oversee the necessities of Lille and the vicinity, but that, eliminating the hysteria in the matter, the people did require a further supply of foodstuffs, for which permits had not yet been granted to us by the English Government(195) (especially fats and protein); that the curtailed ration on which we were operating was undoubtedly too low, and that the sensible thing to do was to put us in a position both as to permits, finance, and shipping, to competently care for these people. A prolonged discussion took place in which the English representatives insisted strongly upon the maintenance of a controlled

monopoly, the elimination of the other schemes. Finally Mr. Margerie drew out three questions for me to reply to in detail, requesting that we should draw up a complete memorandum for discussion at a meeting to take place on the 28th at ten o'clock.

In the afternoon at 3:30 I again attended at Mr. Margerie's office and met Mr. Kammerer together with Mr. Laroche, to discuss the financial aspects of the French relief. I outlined to them the increased cost owing to the rise in the price of food and the cost of the additional shipments, and stated that it would be useless to talk of further food supplies or even of the maintenance of the present supply, unless we were assured of at least 35,000,000 francs per month. They considered this was possible of arrangement, and it was left that I should incorporate this in the memorandum to be prepared for Monday morning. I also presented the outstanding accounting questions and it was agreed that my views thereon should also be put into the memorandum.

On Sunday at ten o'clock I attended at the British Embassy with Lord Eustace Percy and Mr. Chevrillon. Chevrillon and myself drafted up a memorandum from the Commission embracing the questions put by Mr. Margerie and the proposals of the Commission, and Lord Eustace Percy drew up the views of the British Government.

On Monday at ten o'clock we attended at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there being present Mr. Margerie, Mr. Laroche, Lord Granville, Lord Eustace Percy, Mr. Chevrillon, and myself. We read through the memorandum which had been prepared. After prolonged discussion the French representatives accepted the views expressed in the Commission's memorandum, and it was left that they should consult the Minister of Finance to arrange for an increased subsidy and that the English representatives would put it up to their Government that the French Government was insistent upon the proposals of the Commission being accepted.

They accepted our proposals as to accounting.

I. MEMORANDUM BY HOOVER AND CHEVRILLON

As a basis of conference, the representatives of the French Government put the following three questions:

1. Is Mr. Hoover disposed, and is he able to increase the rations over and above those at present imported?
2. Is Mr. Hoover disposed, and is he able to increase the list of products with which France is provisioned sufficiently to reach as far as possible the amount of 3,000 calories per capita?

3. Is Mr. Hoover willing to act as our intermediary in the purchase, transportation, and distribution of supplementary products, paid for by committees or by individuals, and to be provided from time to time?

Mr. Hoover declares himself ready to fulfil these wishes provided that the Allied Governments authorize the importation of the necessary quantities, and see that the Commission is furnished with the indispensable and necessary ships and finance.

As regards the third question he thinks it necessary to point out that it would be difficult to purchase or transport commodities for private persons and that even for committees the contingent total must be determined so as to include therein the regular supplementary ration for the children and the city populations---thus insuring that supplementary importations due to the initiative of any one committee should be only most exceptional.

Finally, it is necessary to explain the present situation and to set out the views of the Commission as regards the putting into practice of the demands of the French Government.

[Translation]

II. SUPPLEMENTARY MEMORANDUM BY HOOVER AND CHEVRILLON

A. The Commission for Relief in Belgium, in the course of its negotiations with the German military authorities on the subject of the local harvests of this year,(196) has insisted that the whole amount of the produce of the soil due to the labor of the civil population should be reserved for the consumption of that population.

The Commission thinks it may foretell that the results of these negotiations now in being, will be as follows:

- a) Requisition by the Germans of the whole amount of the new harvest of cereals and of potatoes;
- b) Allowance to the C.R.B. of 240 grams of wheat per capita per diem;
- c) Allowance of 400 grams of potatoes per capita per diem;
- d) Allowance of an amount of barley sufficient for the manufacture of yeast;
- e) Exemption from requisition of various fresh vegetables.

B. In order to satisfy the needs of the population, the Commission proposes to furnish foodstuffs, nature and quantity of which are specified in the attached appendix. This new program will furnish the following number of calories:

For the whole population	2,170
Supplement for city populations	294
Total calories for city populations	2,464
Supplement for children and invalids	300

Taking into consideration the smallest ration allowed for the children and the supplementary rations furnished by local resources in the agricultural districts, the outlined program corresponds about to a ration for the adults of 3,000 calories.

C. In case of success in the negotiations at present proceeding with the Germans, there will be a reduction in the importations of wheat of about 15,000 tons a month i.e., a net economy on overseas importations of about 10,000 tons.

If the negotiations for the introduction of Dutch produce succeed, articles such as butter, cheese, and a great part of the meat will come in from Holland, which will represent a further reduction of tonnage of more than 3,000 tons.

D. The new program implies the following increase on present amounts:

Increase per Capita per Diem	Commodities	Grams
For whole population	preserved fish	9
For urban population	meat	50
For urban population	butter	10
For urban population	cheese	20
For infant population	cocoa	10

NOTE.---The above quantities represent an increase in tonnage of about 3,530 tons a month.

E. The monthly budget corresponding with the new program will be about Frs. 45,000,000, from which must be deducted the sum of Frs. 12,000,000 in case of the success of the German negotiations mentioned above. The Commission therefore requires a monthly subsidy of about Frs. 35,000,000 in round numbers from 1st September 1916. The increase of Frs. 15,000,000 on the present monthly subsidy is attributable in part to the increase of ration, compensated, however, up to a certain point, by the anticipated German concessions, and also to the considerable rise in the prices of foodstuffs in the last two months.

F. As regards the different committees instituted by the people of the invaded territories for the introduction of additional supplies, the Commission wishes to insist most urgently that it is impossible to protect the foodstuffs for the population and the local production unless the entire amount of importations is under its own control. The Commission recommends therefore that these committees or organizations should be placed under the following regulations:

a) Their purchases will be consigned to the Commission at the original place of purchase and the Commission will transport them to their destination.

b) These purchases will be distributed to the whole population and in no case can they be delivered to an individual.

c) In cases where the foodstuffs introduced are other than gifts, their price of purchase at the original place of purchase shall not be greater than that obtainable by the C.R.B.

d) The nature and quantities of foodstuffs thus introduced shall be approved by the Allied Governments.

e) No foreign agent of these committees shall go into Northern France or shall treat either directly or indirectly with the German authorities, and any negotiations on the subject of the ravitaillement shall be conducted with the Germans only through the medium of the Commission.

G. The Commission proposes to introduce certain laws in regard to accounts in the North of France, and to impose certain obligations as regards payments to be made by the communes or the municipalities; these rules and obligations shall have received the approval of the French Government.

In order to establish the good faith of its administration and to relieve it of responsibility the Commission desires that a committee should be officially instituted, comprising certain representatives of the French Government and the delegate of the Commission resident in Paris, in order to co-operate with the Commission and to formulate the methods of accounting to be used and to give a discharge to the Commission in the administration of the funds which it receives.

H. The Commission is ready to offer its services to the French Government for the ravitaillement of that portion of the Belgian population in the occupied areas, which will be liberated by a withdrawal of the German lines. In this case the Commission holds itself ready to send into French ports the foodstuffs in transit on the sea at any given moment. However, in order not to make any interruption in the feeding of those people remaining behind the German lines, the Commission desires to receive the authorization to create a stock of foodstuff at Rotterdam of 100,000 tons.

[Translation]

III. MEMORANDUM BY LORD EUSTACE PERCY

The representatives of the British Government at the conference desire to make the following general remarks on the foregoing proposals put forward by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

The view of His Majesty's Government is that the relief of the occupied territories must be (a) supplementary to native foodstuffs and (b) confined to the minimum quantity necessary, in conjunction with such native foodstuffs, to maintain life and health and to conserve the future efficiency of the population.

Strictly, therefore, as Northern France has admittedly produced, in the present harvest, enough cereals and potatoes to feed the whole population, no wheat or potatoes should be imported into the territory.

It may be taken for granted that, in view of the guarantees almost certainly procured from the Germans in regard to potatoes, it will be unnecessary to import potatoes.

As to wheat, the Commission will still have to import about 8,000 tons a month to supplement native supplies guaranteed by the Germans. Strictly this should not be allowed, but the Germans should be told that, whatever happens, the population will have to satisfy its bread requirements from native wheat entirely.

As regards the amount of foodstuffs absolutely necessary to maintain life and health and to conserve the efficiency of the population in the future His Majesty's Government are advised that a per capita ration of 3,000 calories is too high. It is higher than that actually enjoyed by the German population itself, even probably by the industrial section of that population engaged in heavy manual labour. It must therefore be too high for a population like that in the occupied territories, where industries are not running and where the whole male population of military age has been taken from the country. It is true that the Relief Commission has proved its ability to protect the foodstuffs which it imports, but nevertheless an increase of

imports beyond what is absolutely necessary is highly undesirable, for the following reasons:

a) The protection of the imported foodstuffs is not a thing permanently assured, but is on the contrary only maintained by constant vigilance and the constant repression of frauds and abuses. As soon as any part of the population has more food than it absolutely and immediately needs, sales begin to take place to German soldiers, etc., and other leakages occur which the Commission could only imperfectly check.

b) The possibility of seizures in violation of the German guarantees can never be excluded, and this danger will reach very serious proportions as soon as any part of the population in invaded territories can be alleged by the Germans to be living better than the Germans themselves. The Germans know well that the Allied Governments would with difficulty reconcile themselves to put an end to the work of the Relief Commission even if the enemy were suddenly to seize one or two thousand tons of some imported article of which the Germans stand particularly in need. Excuses would be made, some local German commander would be made responsible, and the enemy would escape with impunity. It is of the utmost importance that Allied Governments should safeguard themselves from being placed in such a dilemma.

c) Just as there is a danger that if the industrial populations are left without food the enemy will tempt them to work for them by offers of nourishment, so, on the other hand, there is a danger that, if those populations are given a ration sufficient to enable them to undertake heavy labour, the enemy will be led, by agitation excited in Germany itself, to require them to perform such labour.

Other reasons of the same kind might be adduced, but those cited are sufficient to explain why His Majesty's Government, who were the first to countenance relief of this kind and who cannot therefore be suspected of inhumanity or lack of consideration for the population of their Allies, feel obliged to insist on the restriction, so far as possible, of the importations into occupied territories. Consequently they would prefer to maintain the present ration unaltered, and even to put further pressure upon the Germans by cutting off all importations of wheat. The only increases for which they recognise that there is clear justification are those for children.

The question of the figure to be fixed for the ration is, however, one for the French Government to decide. His Majesty's Government are prepared to accept their decision and to co-operate with all their energies to carry it out. They hope, however, that the French Government will give due weight to the above considerations in taking their decision, and they consider that the Commission should be instructed to regard the ration fixed as, apart from exceptional cases, an ample maximum, and to import in practice no more than the amount which it finds by experience to be actually necessary at any given moment.

His Majesty's Government are in full complete agreement with the Commission in regard to the question of independent committees and supplementary importations and they regard this point as vital. Moreover, in view of the considerations advanced above, they believe that it will be essential, in approving any applications made for such supplementary importations, that the Allied Governments should consider whether the addition thus proposed to the ration of any particular district will augment it beyond the amount and calorific value necessary, and, if so, whether the regular importations of the Commission should not undergo some proportionate reduction. This, however, must be a matter for consultation between the Allied Governments in each case.

It may be added in conclusion that a special value is to be attached to constant communication between the Allied Governments and the Commission. The whole subject of relief is one of constant negotiations and arrangement, which, however, can in general be conducted unofficially in Paris and London without necessitating official intervention, which the French Government are understood to be desirous of avoiding.

DOCUMENT NO. 296

Memorandum,

By HOOVER, on the program of ravitaillement in Northern France

LONDON, [20 September 1916]

1. Arrangements have been settled with the German authorities providing co-operation between them and the Commission for Relief to increase the food supplies during the coming year. These arrangements include an increase of the supplies through the German authorities to a fixed amount of 200 grams of flour and 400 grams of potatoes per them per capita of the whole population. The Commission for Relief has arranged for an increase(197) in its resources and despite the heavy rise in the prices of foodstuffs abroad, the quantity of imports will be increased.

2. It has been decided to decrease the ration of imported flour to 100 grams per them as from early in October, thus giving a total flour ration of 300 grams per them or a bread ration of 400 grams per them per capita. This will necessitate the import of about 8,000 tons of wheat per month for bread purposes, and an additional import of 2,500 tons will be provided for purposes set out below, giving a total of about 10,500 tons of wheat imports per month. Although the cost of wheat has risen to about 60 centimes per kilo it is proposed to hold the price at 45 centimes, the C.R.B. standing the loss for the present. The price of 30 centimes for indigenous flour by virtue of the larger proportion will permit the price of bread

being maintained at not over 40 centimes per kilo without the loss hitherto suffered by the district committees.

3. The preparation of a supplemental ration of "Phosphatine," "Farine lactée," and "Crème de Riz," for the infants under five years, and of special "biscuits" for the children and infirm is in course of rapid extension. It is proposed from early in October to furnish 50 grams, to be later increased to 100 grams per them of products for the infants, and to furnish 50 grams per them of biscuits to the children over five years and the infirm, this also to be increased later if possible. These arrangements will require the use of the following commodities in the Belgian factories:

Maize	350
products	tons
Wheat	2,000
	tons
Lard	100
	tons
Sugar	370
	tons
Rice	400
	tons
Cocoa	100
	tons
Condensed	100
milk	tons

4. About 1,500 tons per month of condensed milk will be available primarily for distribution to the children and infirm, giving a total import of about 1,600 tons per month, and providing a ration to these classes of 50 grams per diem.

5. About 350 tons of cocoa will be imported monthly, primarily for children and infirm, of which 100 tons mentioned above will be retained for infant-food manufacture. The 250 tons distributed should permit a ration of 10 grams per them to the smaller children.

6. Negotiations are in progress, providing for the regular import of meat. One thousand sheep have already been shipped into three districts, and it is hoped to extend the quantities and variety of meat imported and to extend shipments over all districts.

7. A trial shipment of 500 tons of herrings in brine is en route and will be distributed during October. Every effort is being made to secure dried fish, although there is probably but a limited amount obtainable.
8. Negotiations are in progress for the purchase and shipment of regular amounts of cheese, and, if possible, some margarine and butter.
9. The import of 7,370 tons per month of rice, beans, peas, and maize products will be continued, and it is proposed as from 1st October to increase the proportion of beans in the above total up to 2,000 tons per month. It is hoped to secure more peas at a later date. Out of these products 400 tons of rice and 350 tons of maize products per month are reserved for child food as above. It is therefore possible to maintain a ration of these subsidiary cereals of 100 grams per diem.
10. The import of bacon and lard will continue at 3,200 tons per month, of which 100 tons is reserved as above, thus permitting a ration of between 45 and 50 grams per diem.
11. The import of 1,100 tons per month of coffee will continue, and in addition 500 tons of wheat will be used to manufacture torrealine, thus permitting a ration of 17 grams of coffee and 8 grams of torrealine.
12. Sugar will be imported at the rate of 1,320 tons per month, of which about 370 tons are reserved for manufacture of child food as above, thus permitting a ration of 15 grams per day.
13. Soap will continue at the rate of 1,000 tons per month.
14. The following table summarizes the ration of the commodities which should be effective from about 1st October:

<i>Through German authorities</i>	<i>Quantity in Grams</i>
Flour	200
Potatoes	400
<i>Through C.R.B. imports</i>	
Flour	100
Maize products	
Beans and peas	100
Rice	
Bacon and lard	45- 50

Sugar	15
Coffee	17
Soap	15
Meat	To be
Cheese	settled as
Preserved fish	imports
Butter	can be
	arranged

Supplementary ration for children and infirm

Phosphatine	50 (later 100 grams) for infants
Special biscuits	50 (later 100 grams) for children and infirm
Farine lactée	As sent
Crème de Riz	As sent
Cocoa	10 grams for younger children
Condensed milk.	50 grams for infants, children, and infirm

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DOCUMENT NO. 297

Letter,
HOOVER(198) TO THE COMITÉ FRANÇAIS, on internal accounting, and
directing that the debt acknowledgments of the communes for relief provisions be
transferred direct to the Commission

BRUSSELS, 15 November 1916

Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France

GENTLEMEN:

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

By the financial arrangements which have so far been established, the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France receives from the district committees acknowledgments of debt only, besides the surety bonds given at the beginning of the operations.

Although some of the communes pay all or part for their supplies either in cash or in town bonds, these securities are in no way transferred to the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, since they may not go outside the occupied territory of the North of France, and the Comité Français remains thus uncovered toward the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium for the total amount of the supplies. This debt is increasing to such proportions that it becomes necessary to examine the means of reducing same.

The financial situations of the districts show in their assets considerable book debts by towns and communes on account of advances made. By transferring these debts to the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, which in turn would re-transfer them to the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the district committees would free themselves of part of their debt.

The C.R.B. has indeed declared the readiness to accept in payment, just as the cash payments, the debt acknowledgments signed directly by the communes.

Enclosed I hand you a form of engagement which the communes that have received or are receiving cash advances or "bons de Ville" from the local committees, should be asked to enter into. I would ask you to instruct the districts to obtain from the communes in question the required signatures of sureties. As soon as you have received these you will credit the account of the district committees for an amount corresponding to the one of the security of the communes. These debt acknowledgments shall then be transferred to the Comité National which will credit you for same. Finally the Comité National will pass them on to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which will negotiate them to the best of the interests concerned.

I trust that the district committees will see to it that the guarantees in question are obtained as speedily as possible.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

[Translation]

Letter,
CHAIRMAN OF LILLE DISTRICT COMMITTEE TO HOOVER, expressing the
gratitude of those assisted by the Commission

BRUSSELS, 18 November 1916

*Mr. Herbert Hoover,
Chairman of the Commission, Brussels*

MR. CHAIRMAN:

It had been my intention to take the opportunity of your presence at Brussels, to convey to you, in the name of the Lille District Committee, our feelings of deep gratitude.

The population "ravitaillés" by the Commission for Relief in Belgium are unanimous in recognizing that thanks to you they have been able to bear privations of all sorts imposed by circumstances, not only as regards the feeding of the masses, but also for clothing, fuel, and feeding of small children, etc

Always ready to give satisfaction to the best of your ability, you have continued to increase the quantity and varieties of the foodstuffs, and you have also facilitated the purchases in Holland of the representatives of the large towns of the district.

What would have become of us without the American Commission? Such is what everybody is saying, which shows in its simplicity how appreciated are the services rendered by your organization over which you preside with so much activity and devotion.

Please accept in the name of the Lille District the expression of our deep gratitude.

(Signed) LABBÉ

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 299

Telegram,
BRIAND TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR, LONDON, quoting reports from the
Mayor of Lille and requesting him to approach Hoover and the British Government
with regard to increasing the supplementary rations to the towns of Northern
France

PARIS, 11 January 1917

FRENCH AMBASSADOR, LONDON

Representatives of the towns of Northern France communicate to me a letter of the Mayor of Lille dated 20th December---giving the distributed quantity of rations per capita per them at that date:

Flour	350 grams, of which 180 are German rye flour
Rice, beans and maize products	100 grams
Bacon and lard	45 to 50 grams
Sugar	15 grams
Green coffee	17 grams
Soap	15 grams

Besides this, condensed milk, dry biscuits, milk food for children, invalids, and the aged.

Please be good enough to make urgent representations of these quantities to Mr. Hoover, asking him if they correspond with his most recent information. Inform him that according to the Mayor of Lille the German authorities have not delivered the 350 grams of potatoes per capita per them promised but only 66 grams since the 22d September, and that at the end of November the Kommandatur declared that it was not possible to furnish potatoes and that they would be replaced by turnips from Belgium. Draw his attention urgently to this last fact, and ask him what steps he intends to take in this regard. The Mayor of Lille points out the situation, which is already known to us, that the supplementary programs for the towns are unfulfilled, owing to the prohibition of the introduction of Dutch foodstuffs, which will probably now be eased, owing to the agreement between Holland and Germans.

As regards supplementary programs, Finance Minister insists that the towns of the North should employ the loan of Fls. 12,000,000 which was granted to them for the purpose of supplementary ravitaillement, the interest on which necessitates large disbursements up to the present without purpose. It is therefore urgent from this point of view also to obtain the consent of the British Government to my proposals concerning the supplementary ravitaillement. Could not a portion of this loan be used to make purchases from the English share of Dutch produce? These purchases could be made for account of the municipalities and remitted to the Hoover Committee for transport and distribution. They would be deducted from the supplementary program and, naturally, the American Committee should keep account of this diminution of expenditure on our account. I beg you to take this

suggestion up with Mr. Hoover immediately, before discussing it with the British Government.

BRIAND

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 300

Letter,
POLAND TO BROWN, laying down the policy of the Commission regarding supplementary imports for the towns of Northern France

LONDON, 22 January 1917

W. L. Brown, Esq.
The Commission for Relief in Belgium, Rotterdam

SUPPLEMENTARY RAVITAILLEMENT FOR NORTHERN FRANCE

DEAR BROWN:

As you will appreciate, the handling of the question of supplementary ravitaillement for the North of France, that is, sending in supplies which may have been purchased by committees other than the C.R.B., is one of great delicacy. We cannot allow anyone to get the false idea that the C.R.B. is unwilling that any additional or supplementary food should go into the country, over and above that which we can import; but, on the other hand, it is rightly necessary, from the standpoint of business and political relations with the Germans, etc., and to the best interests of the French people, that all imports be handled through a single body. The general principle which should govern us is that if it is possible for the C.R.B. to furnish these imports, then no other committee should concern itself in any way with the operation, but if it is possible for some reason for other committees to get in supplies which the C.R.B. cannot get in, then we welcome their efforts in every way. I send attached copies of the conversations concerning this matter between the Commission and the French Government in Paris, 28th August 1916, which I fear have not before been forwarded to you. This will make the matter fairly plain.

Subject to an answer to my Telegram 49 of the 19th and subject to an interview with the Foreign Office on Monday, the following should govern your action in regard to the De la Salle [Delesalle] Committee:

In the event:

- a) Of the C.R.B. being able to supply the full quantities of the approved monthly program for Northern France (including 1,800 tons of meat) either with imported products or with local purchases in Holland (preferably the latter) then you must refuse to ship in additional quantities of the program products.
- b) Of your not being able to fulfil the complete program and, for some reason, the De la Salle Committee being able to send in quantities which you are not, making up this deficiency, you are authorized to forward such quantities up to the limit of the program approved.
- c) Of the De la Salle Committee offering other commodities than those covered by the approved program, for shipment into France, you should immediately communicate by cable or letter, as circumstances may require, requesting authority to handle these extra supplies, whereupon we will immediately take the question up with the Foreign Office and advise you of the result.

In my Cable 49 of the 19th I advised that the French Government states values of the shipments made by other committees will be deducted from Northern France C.R.B. monthly allowances. This is the result of a recent cable from the French Ministry, but Mr. Chevillon thinks that as this was not specified in the original conversations of last August it represents the desire of the French Government rather than an actual regulation.

Please advise if the above now places this matter in order.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 301

Letter,
BROWN TO POLAND, describing the procedure in handling purchases in Holland for the Comité Hollandais

ROTTERDAM, 4 May 1917

Commission for *Relief in Belgium*
London

MY DEAR POLAND:

The Comité Hollandais shipments have now settled down to a fairly steady basis, and it would probably be well to recapitulate the position. These purchases are being made out of a sum of 30,000,000 francs, which has been put at the disposal of this committee, the purchases to be made for the industrial districts of Northern France---Lille, Valenciennes, Roubaix, Tourcoing, etc. The buying is done by the Comité Hollandais, shipments being made by the C.R.B. and foodstuffs being consigned to the C.R.B. magazines for the C.H. The apportionment to the cities is arranged by the C.H. We inspect certain articles and control weights, customs papers, bills of lading, etc., for all shipments. To meet the necessary expenses, a sum of money is put at our disposal by the C.H. out of which the necessary payments are made and debited to the respective purchases, which are numbered in the same method as our own. The only articles which are being purchased both by the C.H. and ourselves are vegetables, eggs, and poultry. Under the French Government arrangement, meat, including poultry, does not come under the program of the C. H. but we are provisionally allowing them to purchase half of the available quantities. Vegetables and eggs are also being split on a 50 per cent basis, though this arrangement is subject to change as necessity arises.

Up to the end of April we had shipped for this organization 3,426 tons of foodstuffs and six tons of seeds, comprising 969 tons of eggs, 187 tons of rabbits and poultry, and the balance practically entirely vegetables. The shipments during the month of April totaled about 2,000 tons; a monthly recapitulation of the shipments made for their account is being regularly sent you.

Trusting this gives you all the necessary information,

Sincerely yours

(Signed) WALTER LYMAN BROWN

5. From Relief to Reconstruction. 1917-1919

In September 1916 Hoover secured an increase in the monthly subsidy for the North of France from Frs. 20,000,000 to Frs. 35,000,000, and at about the same time the British Foreign Office authorized an increased program for the winter of 1916-17.⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ Despite the lack of shipping the Commission managed to import this increased program for the last two months of 1916 and for January 1917. The great crisis brought on by German unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 made necessary important alterations in the machinery of relief,⁽²⁰⁰⁾ but in all the chaos of reorganization the Commission managed to import in the five months to June 1917 enough to keep the people alive. Beginning with July 1917 with a comparatively safe route for relief cargoes, importations increased, and there was no serious interruption thereafter. In April 1917 the Americans, being no longer

neutral, were withdrawn, and the duties of maintaining the German guarantees were taken over by the newly organized Spanish-Dutch Committee of Protection. Representatives of Dutch nationality were placed in the North of France. In spite of the withdrawal of its personnel from the occupied territory, the Commission maintained an office in Brussels headed by Fernand Baetens, and he in conjunction with the President of the Executive Committee of the Comité Français, Mr. Le Blan, continued to administer the relief in Northern France. The district, regional, and communal committees of the Comité Français continued as before, but as time went on the personnel changed. The severe strain told on the older members; many became ill and a few were allowed by the Germans to be repatriated and thus several of the responsible members of the Comité were living in Paris. With a view to strengthening the organization to enable it to carry its responsibilities Hoover took the steps shown in the following documents in the summer of 1918 to reorganize the executive committee.

DOCUMENT NO. 302

Extract of letter,
LE BLAN TO GUÉRIN, describing some of the difficulties of the Comité Français after the departure of the Americans

BRUSSELS, 2 July 1918

Monsieur Guérin
President of the Comité Exécutif du Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France,
Paris

DEAR PRESIDENT AND FRIEND:

For about a year, that is, since the departure of the American delegates, my friend, Mr. Van Brée, and I have had to resolve or intervene in various questions which touched the real essential principles of our organization. These questions were the care exclusively of the Executive Committee, and this all the more so since it was understood with the direction of the C.R.B. before they left Brussels that the C.F. should have the control of all the accounting operations of the distribution of foodstuffs imported and of the composition of the ration, operations in which formerly the American delegates intervened most effectively. As to the action of the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais, it bears chiefly, as you know, on the control of the guarantees given by the German authorities.

In these last days especially, we have been worried by several questions which it would have been highly desirable to submit to your judgment. We would cite especially the question of the ravitaillement of the laborers working for the

Germans, the supplementary rations to the big towns, the intervention of the communes in the cost of the ration, the advances to the communes, the price of the indigenous flour, etc., etc.

For the examination of all these questions, as also for their solution, we have always tried, whenever we have been able, to consult the delegates of the district, of whom several are members of the Executive Committee

You will not forget, moreover, that several members of the Executive Committee, as it was constituted at the beginning, have either gone away, or are not in a position to take effective part in the labors of the organization

We would find therefore a special advantage in having a complete and enlarged Executive Committee, the latter to send from Brussels, the administrative center of the committee, the district delegates, armed with a real authority, justifying, vis-à-vis the German authorities, their presence and their meetings in that town

A committee thus constituted, and which could meet with at least half its members present, could handle all the principal questions attaching to the organization; we ourselves would act as its delegates, that is to say, we should have as our mission to execute the decisions which it should take.

The composition of this committee would be notified to the German authorities by application of the agreement of 14th April 1915.[\(201\)](#)

(Signed) M. LE BLAN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 303

Memorandum,
HOOVER TO PICHON, regarding the necessity of reorganizing the Comité Français

LONDON, 27 July 1918

MEMORANDUM

Monsieur Pichon

MR. MINISTER:

As you are aware, the ravitaillement of Northern France is carried on by the Commission for Relief in Belgium through the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, the members of which were appointed by the Commission for Relief in Belgium in accordance with authority received from the French Government. The Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France has, during the last few months, suffered the loss, through absence and death, of several of its members, and we consider it necessary that the committee should be completely reorganized, in order to attain greater efficiency and to secure a better centralization in Brussels. We enclose a memorandum setting forth our views as to the needed reorganization of this committee which we should be glad to discuss with you at your convenience as quickly as possible on a proper working basis. The members of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France who are in Brussels are in complete accord with us on this necessity of reorganization and we have in our possession a letter which they have addressed to Monsieur Guérin asking his opinion on this matter. We think, however, that before this gentleman is consulted it is necessary, in accordance with the essential principles of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, that the matter be discussed between the French Government and ourselves.

We beg to remain,

Yours faithfully

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 304

Letter,
HOOVER TO GUÉRIN, on the necessity of reorganization of the Comité Français

LONDON, 14 August 1918

Monsieur Guérin
Paris

DEAR MR. GUÉRIN:

We recently received letters from Monsieur Le Blan in regard to the need for some reorganization of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France. While this is not a great matter, it has been apparent to us for some time that something should be done to strengthen Mr. Le Blan's hands. This is due, in large part, to the lack of direct contact of the American members of the Commission for Relief with the representatives of the districts of Northern France and your own absence from the North of France, and in order that those persons on the ground who, of necessity,

must take direct executive action shall be in position to impose their authority on internal questions. We are quite in accord, as no doubt you are, with the general ideas advanced by Monsieur Le Blan.

The Commission for Relief in Belgium, as you know, are held responsible by the French and British Governments for the conduct of the Relief of Northern France and in order to carry out this responsibility it is essential that the internal organization be strengthened. Under authority delegated to us by the Governments, the reorganization outlined in the attached memorandum has been forwarded to Monsieur Le Blan, as I am sure of your agreement. The arrangement permits of the re-establishment of the status quo ante whenever you can return to the occupied territories, and in fact represents a consummation of the administrative measures which we are all taking with the shifting responsibilities which we have to assume. The arrangement in no way affects your own status in carrying on the support to the Comité du Nord de la France and but represents the organization of effective measures due to your necessary absence.

Yours faithfully,

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 305

Memorandum,
By HOOVER, on reorganization of Comité Français

LONDON, 14 August 1918

REORGANIZATION OF THE COMITÉ D'ALIMENTATION DU NORD DE LA
FRANCE

The disorganization of the Comité Français through the departure of so many of its members, renders an immediate reorganization necessary. This reorganization will be effected as follows: The representatives of the six districts, who are also presidents of the district committees, will comprise the Executive Committee of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France (hereinafter called the Comité Français), together with the delegate of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, who is at present Mr. Van Brée; the representative of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, at present Mr. Baetens; the general secretary and the secretary and the active president of the Comité Français. This Executive Committee are to undertake the following duties:

1. The election of an active president, who should be resident in Brussels, and for this office we nominate Mr. Le Blan.
2. To fill all vacancies in the district representation in cooperation with the district committees.
3. While all general decisions as to matters of rationing, distribution policy, finance, and administration shall be subject to the approval of the C.R.B., the Executive Committee will have full authority and discretion in the occupied territories to act to the best interests of the populations concerned, and for this purpose will give general instructions to the district committees, with discretionary powers as to the details of execution.
4. All communications with regard to the above matters, to and from the occupied territories, are to be made exclusively through the channel of the C.R.B.
5. All questions involving the German guarantees and undertakings will, as at present, be under the protection of the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais.

Effective 1st September 1918.

DOCUMENT NO. 306

Resolutions,
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COMITÉ Français, regarding the
services of the C.R.B.

[BRUSSELS, September 1918]

COMITÉ D'ALIMENTATION DU NORD DE LA FRANCE

The members of the Executive Committee of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, meeting at Brussels, the 16th and 21st September 1918, once more express to the Commission for Relief in Belgium their feelings of real gratitude for the material and moral aid given to the inhabitants of Northern France during more than three years, and who, at the same time as they procure for the people the foodstuffs necessary to existence, permit them thus patiently to endure their unhappy fate;

The members of the Executive Committee address to their eminent President, Monsieur Herbert Hoover, and to all his devoted collaborators in the United States and in Europe, a testimonial of the profoundest admiration for the work accomplished;

They are conscious of the difficulties met with, particularly in the beginning of the last year, as well as of the almost superhuman efforts which had to be made to surmount them, and they express to the Commission for Relief in Belgium their sincere thanks and those of the inhabitants of the North of France, for all the efforts they have made in view of their ravitaillement, and are convinced that the general arrangements made to this effect have been dictated solely by the high interests of the cause in question.

The members of the Executive Committee place all their confidence in the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which has in its hands the fate of 1,600,000 French people remaining in the occupied territory, and for whom nine-tenths of their foodstuffs have to be imported from abroad.

They express the wish that there might be assured to the populations under the control of the Commission for Relief in Belgium a minimum ration of 2,000 calories per capita per diem, or a ration having as its basis in general approximately:

400 grams of bread,
50 grams of biscuits or alimentary pastes,
100 grams of feculents,
75 grams of fats or preserved meat,
15 grams of sugar,
Plus the other articles figuring on the program, such as milk, coffee, soap, fish, cocoa, etc.

To this effect, the members allow themselves to propose the monthly importation of: 16,500 tons of wheat, 2,000 tons of maize, 2,000 tons of rice, 3,500 tons of bacon and lard, 2,000 tons of dried vegetables, 1,000 tons of preserved meat, 1,400 tons of sugar, including therein the contingent for manufacturing, Plus the other articles on the program, following its determined quantities.

Finally, they express the desire that in case of a deficit in one of the branches of importation, it might be found possible to compensate it from another branch, so that the same proportion of food may be furnished at all times to the population so assisted.

Signed, at Brussels, the 16th and 21st September, 1918.

M. LE BLAN
MARC
RATY
BLONDET
TURBOT
LABBÉ

[Translation]

The fifth and last of the great assaults in the German drive of 1918 broke before the Franco-American defense between the Marne and the Argonne on the 17th July. The next day the French and Americans counter-attacked between the Aisne and the Marne and the tide of War on the west front definitely turned. Slowly at first, then with gathering speed, the Allied forces through August, September, and October bent back the German line from Verdun to the sea. Gradually the French regions where the Commission had worked were liberated, and before the Armistice they were clear of the enemy. There was still need of relief, and, as has been described in chapter III,(202) the Governments of France and Belgium asked the C.R.B. to continue for the time being to provision the liberated districts.

With the freeing of the North of France the administration of relief needed no longer to be managed from Brussels, and arrangements were made to replace the long established Comité Français with a new organization, the Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées. The new committee, which retained the existing sub-committees in the districts, came into being with headquarters at Lille on the 18th December, and the C.F. terminated its activities on the 31st. Directly after the Armistice the Commission had itself set up an office in Lille and many of the old members returned to take their places in the headquarters at Lille and the regional offices in Valenciennes, Laon, Charleville, Longwy, or in the office in Paris.

During the period from the Armistice to May 1919, when provisioning was taken over by the French Government, the Commission imported into Northern France 108,000 tons of supplies, and in addition carried out extensive medical relief and, with the co-operation of the U.S. Army and Navy, a temporary housing program by the erection of barracks in the destroyed towns.

DOCUMENT NO. 307

Inter-ministerial instructions,
FRENCH GOVERNMENT, relative to ravitaillement of population of the liberated districts

PARIS, 18 December 1918

INTER-MINISTERIAL INSTRUCTIONS ON THE RAVITAILLEMENT OF
THE CIVIL POPULATIONS OF THE LIBERATED REGIONS

The ravitaillement of the liberated regions of the North and East of France, until such time as the normal economic life can be resumed, will be assured under the high authority of the French Government by a committee which will take the name of Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées, avec le concours de la C.R.B. (General Committee of Feeding for the Liberated Regions with the co-operation of the C.R.B.) which will continue the task accomplished with so much devotion during the occupation by the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France.

I. ORGANIZATION

1. The General Committee purposes: (a) to assure the distribution and sale of foodstuffs of first necessity; (b) to facilitate by every means the resumption of normal life in the domain of ravitaillement, in giving help to co-operative and commercial organizations; (c) to ameliorate by every means the material situation of the liberated populations.

2. The general direction of the General Committee will be confided to an Executive Committee, with headquarters (in principle) at Lille, and composed of: M. Le Blan, President; M. Labbé, General Secretary; the delegates of the districts set out below; Captain W. H. Tuck, Delegate of the C.R.B.; M. Bernheim, Permanent Delegate of the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Blockade and for the Liberated Regions, and the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement will be represented on this Committee in all questions of principle: the first by M. Beri, at present Delegate for Foreign Affairs at the C.R.B.; the second by M. Bluzet, Director at the Ministry of Blockade and for the Liberated Regions; the third by M. Reibel, of the office of the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement, Head of the Department for the Ravitaillement of the Liberated Regions.

For the daily management and for the immediate solution of urgent questions, a permanent delegation of the Executive Committee will be instituted.

This permanent delegation will consist of M. Maurice Le Blan, M. Labbé, Captain Tuck, and M. Bernheim.

3. The liberated regions are grouped in four districts for ravitaillement, including those portions of the following departments which had been occupied: (a) District of Lille, portions which had been invaded of the Nord, and of the Pas-de-Calais; (b) District of Laon, portions which had been invaded of the Aisne, the Somme and the Oise; (c) District of Mézières, portions which had been invaded of the Ardennes and the Marne; (d) District of Longwy, portions which had been invaded of the Meurthe and Moselle and of the Meuse.

4. In each district the ravitaillement will be directed by a District Committee and assured in the various arrondissements by an Arrondissement Committee.

The arrondissement will be subdivided into regions the numbers and importance of which will be settled by the Arrondissement Committee.

At the head of each region there will be a Regional Committee and in each commune a Local Committee.

5. In principle, the Local Committees who were functioning during the occupation will remain in power; however, they can submit, in proportion as the normal life of the people is resumed, such modifications as may seem expedient on the suggestion of the Municipal Councils and with the approval of the Arrondissement Committees. The Executive Committee will have the final decision.

The Arrondissement Committees and the Regional Committees will also be composed of the old members who were working during the occupation; they will be designated by the Executive Committee, on the proposal of the delegates of the districts as shown below.

Each Arrondissement Committee will designate one of its members as a permanent delegate to the District Committee. The District Committee is composed of delegates of the district designated by the Executive Committee and the permanent delegates of the Arrondissement Committee; the Commercial Director, charged with the carrying out of the decision, will also be a member of the District Committee.

II. OPERATIONS

1. The Executive Committee has for its duties the general organization and the direction of the ravitaillement, principally the determination of actual needs; they will assure that these needs are provided for with the help of the foodstuffs supplied either by the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement or by the C.R.B.; they will supervise the equitable distribution of these commodities, as well as of the Secours granted by the various committees in their respective districts.

In principle, the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement will furnish flour, frozen or fresh meat, and potatoes, and the C.R.B. will supply the other commodities.

2. The General Committee for the Ravitaillement of the Liberated Regions is accountable to the French Government and to the C.R.B. for the foodstuffs and other articles which will be delivered to them, respectively, by the one or the other.

These foodstuffs and other commodities will be billed to them in order to be billed again and successively to the District Committees, to the Arrondissement Committees, to the Regional Committees, and to the Local Committees.

3. The financial responsibility of the C.R.B. vis-à-vis the French Government will be covered by the proofs of the distribution made to the General Committee for Ravitaillement of the Liberated Regions.

The financial responsibility of the General Committee vis-à-vis the French Government and the C.R.B. will be covered by the proof of the distribution of goods and secours to the inhabitants.

Each Distribution Committee should keep such accounts as will permit of the checking of all their operations.

4. The prices of foodstuffs sold to the populations by the Committees will be uniform in all the liberated regions; they will be fixed by the Executive Committee, taking into account the general costs of all kinds which devolve upon the various distributing committees.

5. In order to facilitate the operation of the various ravitaillement committees and to endow them with civil authority, each one of them will be subject to the declaration covered by the Law of 1st July 1901 on Associations.

6. All operations of the General Committee are carried out under the high authority of the Prefects and Sub-Prefects, who are entitled to be present at all meetings of the various ravitaillement committees.

The Minister of Blockade and for the Liberated Regions,

(Signed) LEBRUN

The Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement

(Signed) VILGRAIN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 308

Extract of letter,
POLAND TO P. N. GRAY, regarding post-Armistice conditions in the North of France and the organization of the Comité de Ravitaillement

LONDON, 3 January 1919

*Prentiss N. Gray, Esq.,
Assistant Director Commission for Relief in Belgium Washington*

MY DEAR GRAY:

.....

Now as to the French situation. I have been chasing about over this territory since November 5th, and except for twenty-four hours am visiting the London office for the first time since that date. The situation in the territory of permanent military operations is simply appalling. The territory where the line remained for some time is an absolute desert, with practically no people in it nor any habitations, and in many regions the ground itself will not be capable of cultivation for some years. Many of the large towns, such as Ypres, La Bassé, Bailleul, St. Quentin, Lens, Armentières, are either totally destroyed or uninhabitable. The nice old city of St. Quentin practically has not one habitable house in it. Words could not convey to anyone the desolation of these territories!

The French Government originally intended to take over the ravitaillement of the liberated regions themselves, but when they went over the country they found that the only working organizations were our committees of ravitaillement. They therefore asked us to continue, until conditions should again approach normal, to feed the people. All communications from the North were eliminated, and Dunkirk seemed the only port. The French Government also, because of its great cereal crop in the North and because of the halfprice which they charge for bread in the rest of France by means of government subsidies, decided to take over supplies of flour. We are having enormous difficulties in getting anything through this port of Dunkirk, however, and in future, now that we have established rail communication through Ghent-Brussels, will limit the imports through to about eight or ten thousand tons per month We have Sperry at this port, doing as usual, splendid work, but he has come up against a quarrel between the British and the French as to the use of the port, which has been taken over as a disembarking port by the British.

Practically all the locks and nearly all the bridges over the Lys, and Scheldt canals have been blown up. From the way things are going, I do not expect water communication to be put in service for three or four months, and except for the military lines, which are so congested we can hardly use them, the rail situation is also terrible. It is a big fight, but the distribution in Belgium is assured, and I think we can say the same as to food in France.

Our main concern now is to get shelter for the évacuées, who continue to pour into the devastated regions of France. The Belgian situation is much less severe, and is

being taken care of by the Belgian Government, with little or no assistance from us. In the department du Nord and parts of the Aisne and Somme, the need for shelter is acute. I succeeded in getting the United States Northern Bombing Squadron, with its transport and personnel, consisting of several hundred men, to volunteer to transport and set up barracks for us in these territories. They are doing splendid work. The military are also co-operating with us to the fullest extent, and, with the splendid assistance which is being offered to Hoover by both the U.S. Army and Navy, I believe we can do a fine and terribly needed work in all these regions. How long it will last is a great problem. I think the emergency will be passed in three or four months, and that we can begin gradually to withdraw.

Meanwhile the great question is to get the ships of food to supply our tremendously increased monthly requirements,⁽²⁰³⁾ and in that we are depending absolutely on you and Rickard. I know your great desire is to get in the game over here, but I am sure that the very greatest service you can do to Belgium and France is to devote your energy and abilities to the situation in the United States, at least for the present. We are counting on you for this, particularly as Hoover will be so tremendously tied up here in the great problems, both political and physical, of relief in other parts of Europe.

I send you a copy of the Reorganization plan for the North of France. The first steps toward reorganizing our force were taken with the aid of Kittredge as Chief Representative. He was with me for more than a month and a half, and was of the very greatest service in reorganizing the territory. After that, Admiral Sims insisted on his return to London, and we have just gotten Tuck in his place. At present the organization is: Captain Tuck, Chief Representative, Lille (Galpin in charge of office at Lille), assisted by Wellington for the Western Section, Department du Nord, and Richardson at Valenciennes for the North-Eastern Section and a strip of the Aisne Department; Dorsey Stevens at No. 1 and Robinson Smith No. 2 station at Laon, Department of the Aisne & Somme; Wickes at Charleville; Bowden at Longwy; Dr. Leach in charge of medical relief in the Western section and Dr. Malabre in charge of relief in the Eastern section; Sperry in charge of Dunkirk; Wilson, one of our men from the London office, in charge of the Breskens-Sluis-Bruges-Lille line of supply; Chatfield and Baetens in Brussels, in charge of the supplies through Belgium. Torrey is in charge of the Paris office (Chevrillon, as you know, being absent). Simpson, who was in charge in Paris, has gone to Serbia. Lieutenant Forter, of the Navy, with a staff of about five or six naval officers, is in charge of transportation and barrack erection. Major Krueger, of the Army, has been detailed to assist us in matters of accounts. This will give you a vague idea of the general situation

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 309

Memorandum,
of functions of the C.R.B., C.F., and C.R. in the liberated districts

LONDON, 7 January 1919

MEMORANDUM

Mr. Poland has furnished information as to arrangements recently made between the parties concerned, and in connection therewith this memorandum has been prepared with a view of stating the effect of the new arrangements to those connected with the accounts of the concerns interested.

References:

C.R.B. represents Commission for Relief in Belgium
C.F. represents Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France
C.R. represents Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées

It is understood:

1. That the C.F. will cease its operations at the 31st December 1918.
2. That from the 1st January 1919, the ravitaillement of the civil populations of the Liberated Regions of France will be conducted by the C.R. at Lille.
3. That the assets and liabilities of the C.F. at the 31st December 1918 will be transferred to the C.R.
4. That the C.R.B. (through its Rotterdam office) will supply the C.R. with foodstuffs, etc., as previously supplied to the C.F.
5. That the C.R.B. (through its Rotterdam office) will invoice direct to the C.R. for all foodstuffs, etc., so supplied.
6. That the C.R. will credit "C.R.B. London, Merchandise Account" with the invoices so rendered by the C.R.B. Rotterdam.
7. That for other transactions between the C.R.B. and the C.R. the latter will open an account under the head of "C.R.B. London, Current Account."
8. That items debited or credited by the C.R. to the C.R.B. London will be advised by the former, and on the contrary, any items debited or credited to the C.R. by the C.R.B. London will be advised by the latter.

9. That the C.R. will forward at the close of each month statements of:

a) C.R.B. London, Merchandise Account

b) C.R.B. London, Current Account

showing commencing balance, entries during the month, and balance at end of month, so that accounts between the C.R.B. London and the C.R. may be kept in agreement.

10. That the C.R.B. will have a sub-office at Lille under the management of Captain W. H. Tuck.

11. That the C.R.B. Lille office will be conducted on the same lines as the C.R.B. Brussels office and will send to London (monthly) statements of its transactions.

12. That the C.R.B. Lille office accounts will be examined at a later date at Lille by the Auditors of the C.R.B.

13. That the C.R.B. Rotterdam office will open a "C.R.B. London, Lille Account," for the purpose of recording any transactions, on a similar system to that in force between the C.R.B. Rotterdam office and the C.R.B. Brussels office.

14. That the C.R.B. Rotterdam office will prepare a statement of monthly issues to the C.R. Such statement to be examined and certified by the C.R. and returned to the C.R.B. Rotterdam office for despatch to C.R.B. London office.

(Signed) G. I. GAY,
Assistant Director

R. H. JONES,
Accountant Department

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6. The Destitute

Nothing has been said in the preceding documents of the care of the destitute in Northern France, where conditions placed this phase of relief on a different basis than in Belgium.(204) In establishing the work in the North of France, Hoover acted on the belief, in which the French Government concurred, that the situation could not be handled by charitable contributions. The funds used to support the relief in Northern France were, therefore, entirely government subsidies, and in the application of relief every individual in occupied France was considered as destitute and was supplied with a ration. For accounting purposes the Commission accepted receipts in various forms from the communes where the ultimate

distribution was made, and these it held as final records of the transactions. Thus provisions were, in fact, sold by the Commission at prices which it fixed from time to time. These sale prices, adjusted to conform to the cost of the goods, included a margin as a reserve against exchange losses and loss from deterioration or destruction of goods. The Commission periodically struck a balance, and if the extent of this reserve justified such action, a sum in local currency was applied to benevolent distribution. As the years passed the disbursements of this character increased, and on the liquidation of its operations the Commission was able to turn over to French committees large sums, which were effectively used for the relief of destitution in the devastated regions.(205)

As has been said the Commission did not appeal to the general public for charitable aid for Northern France, but to meet the great need for clothing, it distributed in these regions a portion of the used clothing collected in the United States and England in 1917-18.(206) In the last days of the Commission's activity in Northern France a sum of \$47,515.92 was placed in the hands of the director of the Commission by generous donors for carrying out special benevolent work.

When in the summer of 1919 the French Government assumed the responsibility for provisioning the devastated areas, the Comité de Ravitaillement was dissolved. In accord with the Commission a new body, the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées, was organized to carry on the relief of the destitute and especially child welfare work begun by the Commission and by the C.R. The "benevolent" funds remaining were turned over to the new committee. As soon as the Comité d'Assistance was in operation, the Commission withdrew the last of its American representatives from the North of France.

DOCUMENT NO. 310

Memorandum,
by POLAND, describing the organization and functions of the Comité d'Assistance

NEW YORK, 11 February 1921

MEMORANDUM

In April 1919 it was evident that conditions had again become sufficiently normal to justify the Commission for Relief in Belgium in winding up its work of feeding the 2,000,000 people of the occupied regions of Northern France, which had been undertaken in 1915 at the request of the French Government and was continued at their request after the Armistice.

It was also foreseen that the charitable activities of the Commission should be terminated so far as concerned direct intervention by an American staff. In order to avoid interruption when we withdrew and in accordance with the policy always insisted upon by Mr. Hoover, that the actual work should be carried out by a personnel of the country, definite steps were taken to place the C.R.B. benevolent activities exclusively in the hands of the French.

The Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées d'Accord de la C.R.B. was therefore organized with Mr. Hoover as Chairman and Mr. Poland, Mr. Rickard, Mr. Shaler, and Mr. Tuck, Directors, and Mr. Chevrillon, Treasurer, representing the American group, Monsieur Labbé and a distinguished body of French doctors and men of affairs, representing French interests. Regional centers were established, which, in turn, organized local distribution committees, composed in large part of those who had been identified with the C.R.B. organization for the past four years. The Regional Directors formed an Executive Committee with M. Labbé as President. M. Labbé was Chief of the Executive Committee of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France during the terrible years of German occupation, and after the Armistice was President of the Comité de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées. He is now Director of Education of Liberated Regions. Dr. Lambret, one of the celebrated surgeons of France, is Manager. Dr. Osset, a distinguished doctor for children, has especial charge of the "Consultation Nourisson." Senator Dron, who is also Mayor of Tourcoing, widely known for his influence in the affairs of the North, and in large part the originator of the "Consultation Nourisson," is another member of the Executive Committee. M. Paul Beri, for two years representing the French Government as Liaison Officer to the Commission for Relief in Belgium and at present Assistant Director of Crédit Commercial de France, is a member. M. Chevrillon, Treasurer, devoted C.R.B. representative in France during the whole war period, although a Frenchman, represents the Commission directly upon the Executive Committee. Other members of the Executive Committee and a small paid staff are persons of the highest standing and devotion to relief in the Liberated Regions.

In June 1919, the benevolent work which had been carried out by the C.R.B. largely through the men and women who afterward became associated in the Comité d'Assistance, was definitely turned over to this organization. This work consisted principally of "Goûtes Scolaire," a supplementary meal of biscuits and cocoa given to 40,000 or 50,000 French children; Child Clinics, by means of which children were examined, washed, freed from parasites, assigned medical treatment--or more usually special diets to counteract the effects of malnutrition; "Assistance Discrète," by means of which sums were distributed to members of the ruined families of the devastated regions to assist them to become once more self-supporting; Special Relief measures.

In 1919 some 7,000 children and in 1920, over 10,000 children were sent to health camps along the North Coast, where they received medical attention, a diet to

counteract their years of undernourishment, and were also given a certain amount of school instruction. The way in which they recovered under this treatment was a matter of wonder. The results were so good that this work has now been taken over by the Government.

In 1920 "Consultation Nourisson" was started all over the devastated regions. This concerns itself with the care of very young children from birth to about 18 months or two years, as well as care of mothers. The mothers receive expert medical advice and a donation of food, money, or medicine, as the circumstances require. The cost works out to about twelve to fifteen francs per child per month, and the results up to date, in reducing infant mortality, have been remarkable. In the Liberated Regions of France as of December 1st, 1920 there were 441 "Consultations," at which were employed 383 doctors, 120 nurses, 435 "Sage Femmes," 392 secretaries personnel of 1,330. There were 34,000 children being cared for at these centers, at a total cost to that date of Frs. 4,526,000.

Other expenditures for "Goûtes," "Vacance Scolaire," Child Clinics, "Assistance Discrète," and Special Relief, have amounted to Frs. 5,676,412, making a total already expended of Frs. 10,203,000. The funds which have been made available to December 1st, 1920 through the Comité d'Assistance and the earlier distributions of the C.R.B. Benevolent Fund amounted approximately to Frs. 26,595,000, of which a balance remained of approximately Frs. 16,392,000.

Future Operations.---The number of children cared for will very soon reach 45,000, which at 12 francs per month will require an expenditure of Frs. 540,000.

It is considered important that assistance be given to the most destitute of the expectant and nursing mothers. If this is undertaken the Comité estimate a monthly expenditure of	Frs.108,000
Administration and Special Relief will amount to	52,000
Requiring a total monthly budget of	700,000
Or, per annum	Frs. 8,400,000

At this rate the present funds will last but two years.

However, the benefits of the "Vacance Scolaire" were so apparent that the Department Bienfaisance of the Liberated Regions has taken over the whole activity. The results obtained by the "Consultation Nourisson" in the reduction of infant mortality, the raising of the standard of child life, and the education of the mothers are so remarkable that it has been strongly endorsed in the French Assembly, a resolution of thanks to Mr. Hoover having been passed by that body. Members of the Executive Committee have strong ground to hope that the whole or a portion of this work may be taken in charge by the Ministry of the Liberated Regions and that eventually it may be spread all over France, a splendid endorsement of the Comité's progressive work, made possible by the C.R.B.

If this is done, the unexpended funds of the Comité d'Assistance may be constituted into a Foundation, the income from which can be assigned to permanent child-welfare work. It has been suggested that such income might be directed to the care of expectant and nursing mothers, or to the establishment at industrial centers in the North of France of standardized sanitary laiteries to provide highgrade test milk to mothers and young children.

Another suggestion is that the balance available after 1920 be used as an endowment for a University of Labor to be established in the devastated regions as a permanent C.R.B. memorial.

The approximate financial position of the Comité d'Assistance, as of 1st December 1920, is as follows:

Made available from C.R.B. Benevolent Fund, C.R.B. allocations from "profits," transfers from the Comité de Ravitaillement of unexpended C.R.B. allocations and other funds, C.R.B. allocation through the A.R.A .	Frs. 26,585,000
Expenditures for Child Clinics, Supplementary School Meals, "Vacance Scolaire," "Assistance Discrète" Special Relief Frs 5,676,412 Consultation Nourisson Frs 4,525,588	10,203,000
Balance, as of 1st December 1920 (subject to correction)	Frs. 16,392,000

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 311

Letter,
FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO POLAND, relating to the liquidation of C.R.B. activities and expressing the gratitude of the French people to the Commission

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PARIS
22 July 1919

Mr. W. B. Poland, Paris

MONSIEUR LE DIRECTEUR:

In your letter of the 15th July you were good enough to inform me of the work accomplished by the C.R.B. in these last months. Although the C.R.B. had ceased to occupy itself with the ravitaillement of the devastated regions, they had continued their benevolent work during the month of June, in the medical care and work of assistance for children. They had, moreover, taken steps to turn over little by little to French personnel the whole organization of its committees, in such a way that at the 1st July all active participation on their part ceased. There remains but to liquidate the accounts of the institution, which will be done in the next few weeks.

The C.R.B. leaves as a last testimonial of its charitable activities a benevolent fund for the devastated regions, an offering instituted by the C.R.B., which amounts at present to 6 million francs. Monthly allocations will be made under the following three heads:

1. Child clinics and extra feeding of debilitated children
2. "Assistance Discrète"
3. General benevolence

You will indicate to me how, with the help of the Ministry of Liberated Regions and with the funds which you will receive from the local administrations, this work of assistance to children can be continued until the end of the school year (1st August 1920).

You will be in a position to allocate about 225,000 francs to account No. 1 and about 125,000 francs to each of the accounts 2 and 3.

Besides this, you hope that these funds can be increased by contributions coming from the United States, and from other sources of revenue, without any profit being made from these operations.

In your consideration, this institution should constitute a remembrance bequeathed by the Commission to the people for whom they have worked during four and a half years, and that it should become one of the ties which will continue to unite the people of the United States with the people of the North of France.

I have taken note of this information with the deepest interest. I recognize therein the spirit of benevolence and sympathy toward my country which has never ceased to animate the C.R.B., as much under the direction of Mr. Hoover as under your efficient and devoted care. I am sure that our populations will keep the memory of all that has been done for them by the C.R.B., and that it will be, even more so since you wish it, a precious tie between the United States and France. I have seen the C.R.B. at work, I have been able to appreciate it, and to appreciate your labor, and it is most agreeable to me to testify to it, and to renew to you, Monsieur le Directeur, the assurance of all my sympathy and my most cordial sentiments.

(Signed) LAROCHE

*Le Ministre Plénipotentiaire
Sous-Directeur d'Europe*

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 312

Letter,
FRENCH MINISTER OF THE LIBERATED REGIONS TO POLAND, conveying
the thanks of the French Government for the services rendered by the Commission

PARIS, 6 September 1919

*W. B. Poland, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France*

DEAR SIR:

I have taken note, with the greatest interest, of your letter informing me that the "Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France," upon the termination of its work of ravitaillement in the liberated regions, had set up a Committee for the distribution of the "Benevolent Fund" which it has collected for the devastated

regions of France and which is destined for Child Welfare and Medical Assistance work.

This new evidence of generosity and devotion shown by the C.R.B. worthily crowns the charitable work it has carried on in the, liberated regions during and after the enemy occupation, both in the sphere of feeding and of assisting the population.

Whilst assuring you of my whole-hearted support in helping it to carry out this new work, I have particular pleasure in expressing to you the gratitude of the French Government for the eminent services rendered by the Commission.

I shall be glad if you will kindly transmit to your collaborators the thanks of the French Government which is happy to see the close bonds which unite France to the great American Republic knotted yet more solidly in consequence of this new manifestation of sympathy shown by the C.R.B. to our liberated peoples.

Pray accept, etc., etc

A. LEBRUN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 313

Letter,
PRESIDENT OF THE COMITÉ D'ASSISTANCE TO POLAND, expressing the gratitude of the people of the liberated regions to the Commission and the American people

LILLE, 24 December 1919

W. Babcock Poland, Esq.
Director of the C.R.B.

DEAR SIR:

More than a year has passed since we once more became members of the great French family, an event which necessarily modified our relations with the C.R.B. The French Government and later on private initiative have progressively replaced the salutary aid accorded so generously by the C.R.B. to our regions since the spring of 1915. You know, as well as Mr. Hoover, what gratitude your concerted labors have awakened in our hearts. Let us express it once more, fully conscious of the service that the C.R.B. rendered to our populations during the interminable

duration of this horrible war. The C.R.B. has given us the means of resisting physiological deterioration, and, what is of even greater value, of fighting against the weakening of our morale.

This task once accomplished, the Committee might have considered its work completed. But doubtless it had become too attached to those whom it had saved from so many evils, to abandon them so abruptly. It desired its benevolent work to continue, not so much for the benefit of the adult population, who were returning little by little to normal conditions of life, as for the young and adolescent who had been so hindered in their development by insufficient food, and for the little children of our devastated regions, whose mothers found themselves deprived of those helpful institutions whose mission it is to combat infant mortality and to prepare the way for robust generations. The C.R.B. has therefore founded a system of relief work whose activities extend over the whole of the liberated regions. It indicated at the outset its express intention of employing a very considerable portion of its funds toward the creation of meals for schoolchildren, a substantial supplement to their food, which by degrees is restoring the health and strength of the children in our schools who have become anemic owing to the privations of the war.

We are happy to have been chosen by the C.R.B. to be the dispensers of its bounty. We are endeavoring to respect its intentions, which are so consonant with the general good, and we thank it with our whole heart for having followed up in so useful a way its humanitarian work during the period of occupation.

For four years, in spite of our anguish, in spite of our fears, in spite of our mourning and misery, the C.R.B. furnished us with the means of making every Christmas a little less somber, of giving back to every family a little joy for this festival, and reminding them, for at least one day in the year, that they should keep their faith in the future and yet hope for a happy issue. How could we lose such memories? What a pleasure it was for the French directors of the Comité d'Alimentation to distribute the Christmas biscuits and chocolate! We thank the C.R.B. again and yet again.

We send it the expression of our gratitude, to all without exception, uniting in the same feeling of sympathy its President, Herbert C. Hoover, its Director, W. Babcock Poland, and every American citizen who lent it their help and their support. We wish them all a happy Christmas!

We shall be obliged if you will convey this to the C.R.B. and we beg you, dear Sir, to accept the homage of our most devoted sentiments.

The President

(Signed) E. LABBÉ

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER VII

THE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES

Most of the documents of this book deal with the relations of the Commission with the governments with whom its affairs brought it into contact. The public relations of the Commission were, of course, much broader than this, for they included both the hundreds of thousands of men and women in Allied and neutral lands who contributed money and services to Belgian relief through the C.R.B.(207) and the people of Belgium and the North of France to whom the relief was given. In the latter category, which is the subject of this chapter, relations were maintained through the American representatives of the Commission scattered through the provinces of Belgium and Northern France.

The Commission's organization in its full development in the occupied territories included two American representatives, responsible to Brussels headquarters, in each of the eleven Belgian and six French provinces.(208) The duties of these representatives were varied, unconventional, and interesting, and they are more clearly shown by informal accounts such as those which follow than by the formal reports which the delegates periodically made. Both accounts given below were written shortly after the authors had been withdrawn from the service they describe as a result of the declaration of war by the United States.

The first contingent of ten of those selected by the Commission as delegates reached Belgium in December 1914.(209) The last Americans left the occupied territories in April 1917, as soon after the American declaration of war as they could be relieved by representatives of the Spanish-Dutch Committee created for that purpose.(210) Altogether about one hundred and thirty men were engaged at one time or another in this service during these two and one-half years, but only about thirty-five were so employed at one time. During 1917-1918 these former representatives were engaged in war service of some description. After the Armistice a number rejoined the Commission to take part in its reconstruction work in the devastated regions; others, as members of the American Relief Administration of which Mr. Hoover was also chairman, contributed the experience gained in Belgium to the organization of relief in Central and Eastern Europe.

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1. The American Delegate in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 314

An account, by FRANCIS COGSWELL WICKES, of the duties and activities of the C.R.B. provincial representatives in Belgium

LONDON, May 1917

The Délégué Américain.---The provincial representative of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the *délégué américain* as he was most commonly known to the people, is doubtless the one figure who stands forth most clearly in the popular Belgian mind in connection with the relief work in that country during the great war

In regard to anything concerning the ravitaillement or relief work, if something was considered to be wrong, or if assistance were needed, the solution was, of course, "to write to the *délégué américain*," or better still to go to visit him in person. But more than this, people came to him on all possible varieties of other matters: for release from military arrest, exemption of private horses from requisition, with requests for passports for commercial enterprises which it was desired to carry on with foreign countries, letters to be sent to friends in America, for advice in a thousand and one different ways, down even to applications for a position as nursemaid in America after the war. In all these latter matters, unless they could be found to have some connection with the ravitaillement, the representative was of course powerless. He would listen, however, with sympathy and interest to each person's particular difficulty, whatever it might be. He would assure the person that he would do anything in his power to assist him, attempting at the same time to indicate the limits of his true power, and his lack of competency in matters outside the ravitaillement. Often the representative was enabled to render real service by directing the inquirer to the proper authority or by giving him helpful counsel regarding his case, and almost always he could feel assured that he had given moral support had it been but to listen sympathetically to the story of some poor creature for whom nothing could be done.

So it was that the reputation of the *délégué américain* persisted to the very end; and though, as the months and the years of the occupation dragged on, the people gradually came to realize more fully the nature of his position and the limitations of his powers, they continued to regard him as a powerful protector of their oppressed country in its time of trouble. So it was that when, toward the end of March 1917, the rumor spread like wildfire through the populace that *les Américains* were leaving,(211) the question on everyone's lips was: "What will become of us now?" Patriotically they rejoiced that their country had gained a great ally in the cause of justice, but individually they felt themselves in very truth abandoned, with no longer a protector to whom they might turn.

Such was the *délégué américain* as he existed in the popular mind. In reality he was a somewhat different and infinitely more humble sort of a person, as will be well imagined.

The first delegates--- . . . The original group which came as the result of the first hasty call for volunteers was chiefly composed of American Rhodes scholars and others who chanced to be studying at Oxford and Cambridge and who possessed a certain spirit of adventure together with a desire for service. Their original knowledge of French was often most scanty; their acquaintance with the country they went to relieve betrayed sometimes the deepest ignorance, and their conceptions of its conditions as a result of the German invasion were even less accurate. They left hurriedly, with a few rough-and-ready clothes, such as one takes for a few weeks' outing in the country. In more than one case they came with tents and full camping equipments, prepared to sleep out nights and to do engineering work in the devastated country, not to mention their stores of chocolate and condensed milk intended for distribution to the starving populace which they would encounter on the wayside. They expected to serve but a few weeks---no one dreamed that the war would continue for years. Their ignorance was pardonable. Few people in the outside world then knew what were the actual conditions in Belgium, and none realized the enormity of the task which was being undertaken. They discovered conditions far different from what they had conceived and soon found themselves embarked upon a project whose vastness they had never imagined. Neither their anticipations nor their training had in any way prepared them for the work which they were to do. They did the work, however, and it will be admitted that they succeeded in it. For they were intelligent thinkers with a practical turn of mind, a systematic understanding of conditions and points of view, and an ingrained quality of adaptability, accustomed to independence and initiative---they were Anglo-Saxons of the western world. What they lacked in specific preparation they more than made up for in their zeal and in their possession of more fundamentally essential characteristics.

During the course of its history the Commission's personnel was constantly changing. It comprised in its members men of all ages, varieties of experience, and professions. With but few exceptions they all rendered valuable service. But the most representative provincial member, and, it may be added, the one who in the majority of cases was most successful in his provincial work, was of the type which it is here attempted to portray. He was perhaps successful above all by reason of the very fact of his youth and his lack of experience in any specific and narrowing direction. The relief work was something unique in the world's history, for which no ordinary training could in any real sense prepare a man. Lack of practical experience in life was perhaps rather an asset, as it left open a greater degree of adaptability. As the months and years passed, the original group of Rhodes scholars largely disappeared. The men who replaced them came more often directly from America. But the average man who found his way into the provinces continued to be of much the same type and caliber---one who in the latter days was only slightly

more prepared, in point of information, to meet the unusual conditions and duties with which he was confronted. His fitness for the position always continued to depend upon personality rather than upon previous training.

Duties in the early period.---The official position of the provincial member of the Commission, first called *delegate*, in what may broadly be considered the first phase of the work, and later *representative* in the succeeding period, may be summed up by the statement that it was his duty to see to it that within his province, the guarantees and conventions between the Commission and the different belligerent powers, upon which the relief work was based, were observed; that on the one hand the imported merchandise was consumed solely by the civil population, and that the native products, guaranteed against requisition, were permitted to reach the same destination; that on the other hand the food and clothing were equitably distributed without waste, leakage or individual favoritism, and that the prescriptions and rules necessary to this end were enforced. In short, the provincial representative did in small what the Commission was doing in large throughout the entire occupied country, in so far as its internal activities are concerned.

This brief statement of the representative's duties does not, however, give any notion of the many and varied activities which the position involved in its official aspect, not to mention the sometimes quite as important unofficial relations which his situation equally entailed. In those first days of the war the highly developed and largely industrialized country of Belgium had been, without warning, reduced, in a day as it were, to a primitive and almost medieval state by the fact of hostile military occupation. For the population posts, railways, telegraph, and telephone had suddenly ceased to exist, and almost everywhere the public were interdicted from going from one town to the next. For the first months there were not even news papers available to the people, and the complete isolation of each community from the rest of the world was thus almost perfect. Events of only a few weeks ago--things of before the fateful day of August 4th--had suddenly become relegated to a dim and distant past, which seemed more of a dream than a reality. The national life was dead. Social lines, in a measure, disappeared. Industrial life largely ceased. The Government had gone. The communal authorities alone, even in these dark days of dejection, continued to assert a certain degree of independence and a limited exercise of their functions, and to provide the rallying point for the later gradual awakening from the coma which had overtaken the population. The country, as a whole, was numbed and inanimate, bowed down under the sudden and terrible blow of conquest. The moral isolation had even a greater effect than the physical barriers. Hope was for the moment gone; there was no one to whom the people could turn; no one who could protect them. Though accustomed all their lives to the utmost facilities which modern civilization can provide, once suddenly reduced and under such violent circumstances to a primitive state of existence, former habits of thought ceased, distances assumed the proportions of the middle ages, the next town became a foreign land from which came only rumors and the

most venturesome of travelers, and the outside world was but a vague and misty unreality.

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In the early days the provincial delegate was much on the road. He made regular weekly rounds of his province, attending in turn the meetings of the different regional committees, which might be as many as twenty or more in a single province; bringing them the correspondence and instructions from the Comité Provincial; announcing what shipments could be expected, and how, and when; receiving from them in turn the post destined to the provincial committee, also the money paid for food by the communes, to be transported to the provincial center. He often found himself lodging on the road with one or another committee member. To these regular trips were added the frequent impromptu excursions called for by emergencies of one sort or another---a bridge fallen into a canal, thereby blocking the lighters, and the province in imminent danger of running out of food if the obstacle were not immediately removed; a train off the track, trucks broken open and food strewn about; an entire region on the point of famine, not to mention the danger lest that food get to an improper destination, possibly into German hands.

Canals and railways being, of course, in military control, the delegate must first rush to the proper German office to set the ponderous wheels of officialdom in motion; then he would dash off to the spot of the calamity, see the local military authorities; then summon whatever local Belgian influence he could find, round up sufficient workmen, put them to work, and finally supervise the job in person, quite probably actively lending a hand in extracting the débris from the canal or in righting the derailed truck. Again it was perhaps an ignorant Ortskommandant who was reported to have requisitioned the stores of a local *magasin*. The matter must be remedied forthwith, and again recourse was had directly to powerful officials, until the goods were restituted or replaced. A word from the delegate would often secure passes and privileges for Belgian committee members, when they themselves had moved powers high and low without avail. The delegate alone could get railway trucks for food shipments, he alone could do many things where the German authorities were concerned, and so in a measure there was a certain foundation for the exaggerated ideas entertained by the popular mind in respect to the delegate's powers. This prestige and respect in the eye of the military did not always persist, alas! It gradually but perceptibly passed, as did also those happy days when the delegate could gaily run his car, without stopping, across the frontier into Holland, merely waving his hand to the sentry as he passed and shouting something about "Amerikaner."

The regional committees, and even the local communal committees, possessed a large measure of independence to deal with the local situation as seemed to them most wise. Uniform prices and rations were indicated by the Comité Provincial.

Each committee kept its own books and accounts as it deemed best, and was counted upon to administer affairs honestly, equitably, and as local conditions seemed to demand. This confidence and independence was in almost all cases justified, although it certainly was neither centralization nor uniformity. The provincial committee was rather small at first, and concerned itself chiefly with financial matters and with the reception and reshipment of the food; it was executive, but as yet in a very small measure legislative. The delegate, of course, had an office, but he spent little of his time there. His work was in his province, and whatever problems arose he had to solve them there---Brussels could not help him even when he appealed to it. He might occasionally go to Brussels when shipments did not seem to be coming to his province as he felt they should, but even then it was generally easier to run out to Rotterdam or Maestricht to see what the trouble was. In the mind of the provincial delegate his duty was easily stated; his job was to get the food to the people, above all to his people, for his decentralized position tended to make him a provincial delegate in more than one sense. In the performance of his duty it was incumbent upon him to see that first of all sufficient food arrived in the province, and then that it moved properly out into the regions and to the communes. If there were a hitch in the machinery, he lent a hand to set it right again. It was his function to act as the medium of communication between the various committees, and it was he who acted as intermediary in all negotiations and relations between the Germans and the Belgian committeemen. For the rest he tried to be on friendly terms with everyone, including the Germans.

Unofficial service.---In these, his more purely unofficial relations, the delegate also rendered valuable service to the work in which he was engaged. The universality of his own position served as an important, element in helping to consolidate the Belgian committees which represented in their members all political and religious creeds and all social castes; though it must always be remembered that the chief factor to bring this about---and one conversant with Belgian social relations can alone realize the impossibility of the task under normal conditions---was the national crisis and the clear patriotic duty to which all men rallied with the most admirable spirit. It could not always be avoided, however, that a certain degree of class or party friction arose. The delegate would then appear to smooth away the difficulty, and his point of view would be almost uniformly accepted, his impartiality and independence being universally recognized. It sometimes occurred that it was necessary to apply unpopular measures. The responsible committee heads, involved as they were in the social and political system, lacked perhaps the courage and often the real influence to enforce them. Recourse was again had to the delegate whose word was law and against which there could be no question. To his honor let it be said that the delegate rarely exercised, and probably in no case abused, these very wide dictatorial powers which his unusual position gave him. In the vast majority of cases questions were decided in the ordinary parliamentary fashion by the committees themselves on the basis of the majority view, and after general discussion in which the delegate gave his opinion simply as an individual, though always it carried weight. His absolute decree occurred only in vital matters

after mature reflection and careful consideration with the chief Belgian committee members. To this discretion, as much as to his broad personal relations, is largely due the fact that, in the best administered provinces, the delegate maintained his authority throughout the entire period of the work.

Duties in the later period.---Following the first few months of rather rough-and-ready relief work, uncentralized and lacking in specific outline, there came the period of higher organization and more systematic administration---what may broadly be considered the second of two general phases of the work as a whole in Belgium, and, in consequence, of the position of the delegate, or representative, as he came to be called in this later period in the province. The transition from one stage to another was of course very gradual, and the line between the two periods can in no way be considered as clearly marked. Many factors led to this development, but only certain of these elements need here be indicated. Chief among them was, on one hand, the return of Belgium to a more or less normal state of external conditions, with the general permission of circulation and the reopening of posts and railways to the general public; and, on the other hand, the general realization that the war might last years and that the ravitaillement must be prepared to go on indefinitely. The Commission's work had ceased to be an emergency relief measure; it had become a vast distributing organization upon which depended the existence of seven millions of human beings in Belgium and upward of two millions in the North of France, and it must be made to operate with regularity, system, and precision in accordance. These features, together with the markedly growing tendency on the part of the military to centralize all their own authority in Brussels, thus rendering it gradually impossible for the provincial delegate to achieve anything through the local authorities when negotiations with the Germans were necessary, all made for the organization and centralization of the work on a broadly uniform basis and mitigated against the former almost absolute independence and often somewhat loose administration of the provinces.

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The representative was no longer necessary as a medium of communication between the regions. The posts were open to correspondents. Several Belgian delegates from each regional committee attended the weekly meetings of the Comité Provincial, and carried back the instructions and information to their regional meetings, at which in turn were represented all the communes of the region. The weekly rounds of the province were thus dispensed with. The emergency dashes to the rescue of blocked transports also largely disappeared. Under the efficient administration of the German Army, once well organized, accidents no longer seemed to happen. Furthermore, things were better organized on the part of the committees. Regions no longer lived in the former hand-to-mouth fashion, and it was rare if a week's delay could affect the distribution to the people. Strained situations always might arise, however, and it was remarkable that, even despite the later and more perfect organization, they did not occur more often. At

least one representative can remember spending the better part of a Christmas Day running about his province, trying to urge forward lighters blocked by high waters and ice-floes. A dozen and one difficulties were always capable of arising to break down the regularity of the system.

Nor must it be imagined that the representative now spent all his time in his office and no longer came in contact with the regional and communal committees except as they came to the provincial center. At least once a month, generally on the second or third day of each month, he visited every region to "take the *existences*," that is, the stock inventory, carrying with him a large printed sheet, lined and ruled, on which each regional bookkeeper in turn entered the exact stocks remaining in his warehouse at the end of the preceding month. Each week or so a trip would be made to attend one or another of the regional meetings, generally in company with one or two of the chief members of the provincial committee, sometimes with a definite view in mind, a local difficulty or irregularity to be rectified, or a special message to be conveyed; more often simply with the general purpose of keeping in touch with the local committees more directly than through their delegates to the Comité Provincial, and of bringing them to realize more completely the scope and exact nature of the vast organization of which these committees were only a local part. Then there were frequent trips other than those which included attendance at regular meetings of the local committees---trips on all sorts and descriptions of errands: a case of bacon or bag of rice reported to have arrived in bad shape, its true condition to be determined, and, if necessary, a report to be made to Brussels; a project for establishing a regular milk supply for a baby canteen or sick-children's committee, or a herd of cattle to be passed upon; the location of a native grain dépôt or new communal store to be decided upon; a flour mill to be inspected, more economical methods to be insisted upon, or the miller to be won over to a more generous contract; a yeast factory to be taken over under the management of the committee, or a new process for the manufacture of a coffee substitute or rice flour to be initiated and experimented with; an obstinate committee, which refused to instal the bakery control or accept prescribed rules of administration, to be brought to terms; a local laxity in the inspection or inefficiency in the transport system to be brought up to standard; a charge of maladministration in a communal committee to be disentangled, where village jealousy or differences in politics had possibly brought curé and burgomaster each to accuse the other of favoritism and unfairness and the entire local population had rallied to the support of one party or the other. Such were a few of the multifarious odd jobs which were constantly confronting the representative and demanding special trips through his province. It will readily be seen that his duties were by no means humdrum and monotonous, and that his motor was in small danger of rusting away from disuse. These were things which the early delegates necessarily had neither time nor occasion to do. Many such matters did not yet even exist, and the broader early methods did not call for any such attention to detail.

It must not be imagined, however, that the American representative was an expert in all and each of these many and varied matters, although he came to possess a large degree of experience on many technical subjects. On most of his trips upon such special missions he would be accompanied by the committee expert on the particular object in question; the head of the *département d'alimentation*, the State agriculturist, the head inspector, or an influential committeeman to smooth away personal difficulties, as the case might be, who often did most of the talking and permitted the representative to help the solution chiefly by the moral effect of his presence and accord. The representative's job was, in short, to keep the ball rolling. He should know all the departments of the provincial committee, be conversant with their methods, and, above all, be acquainted with their obstacles and shortcomings. As long as a branch of the work ran smoothly he would simply observe that branch. But when a hitch came, or something broke down, he must turn to and help put it in order again, and if possible in such order that that particular hitch would not occur again. He must watch the entire machine to anticipate difficulties before they arose, and to discover new and more improved methods if possible. He was in a sense not responsible for any one of the departments, nor yet even for the ensemble, except in a limited measure, yet he kept a watchful eye on the entire machine, and performed in a way the services of what would be called in modern business an efficiency man.

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Inspection and control.--- . . It was his duty, as stated above, to satisfy himself that all imported goods went to the civil population, that the guaranteed native products did the same, and that all goods in the control of the Commission and of the Belgian committees were distributed "equitably, and without waste, leakage, or individual favoritism." In a province of which the population would average between 500,000 and 1,000,000 inhabitants it was manifestly impossible for the chief representative, with his one or two American colleagues, to follow personally every gram of food and every meter of clothing from its arrival in the province to its final actual distribution. There must therefore be such a system of administration and control that any irregularity would immediately come to the American's attention. It was his duty first to organize a system which would insure this result, to insist that the measures and rules necessary to this end were put into action, and then to exercise such a supervision himself as to obtain the enforcement of the measures taken and the proper functioning of the system. The representative who strictly confined himself to the narrow limit of his actual responsibilities was still confronted with a broad field of activity.

This position of the representative will be perhaps still better understood when one considers the office side of his work, which was, in the later period, its more important feature. The American's office, in which worked his personal secretary and where were his own files and records, was generally a room apart in the same building as the various offices and bureaus of the provincial committee, occupied

by the administrative heads and different departmental staffs, committeemen, and employees of that organization. In his office the representative received and examined a series of regular tabulated reports on all branches of the work: yield reports from the mills, chemical analyses of wheat, flour and bread samples, population censuses and corrections, and, most important of all, the reports of the bakery and alimentation inspectors. The Department of Inspection and Control(212) was very highly developed, with a central office for the entire country in Brussels, and a provincial chief and numerous staff in each province cooperating with the local representatives. There were two or more inspectors in each region, who visited each commune in their appointed territory at least twice a month, rendering a report on each visit, filled out on a tabulated form, and sent to the provincial center. These reports, after examination by the inspection staff, would come up to the representative accompanied by an appropriate letter to the communal committee in question, calling for the correction of irregularities noted, or suggesting possible improvements to be introduced, which, if approved, would be ultimately signed by the American and by a chief member of the Comité Provincial, and dispatched. These reports covered a broad field of questions, dealing with the communal committee in such a way as to indicate clearly all conditions of the local situation which had any bearing on the ravitaillement work. In addition to these general alimentation inspectors there was the more limited branch of the department which specialized in the bakery control. This branch had again its own inspectors, sub-chief, and system of reports, operating in much the same manner as the others. Then there were special reports on particular cases, intensified investigations of special phases of local work, which would be called for and treated as the case required, and there was the constant consideration of the entire system with a general view to possible alterations and ameliorations.

Reports to the Brussels office.---The provincial inspection looked in two directions: it controlled the ravitaillement work carried on in the province, and it sent up to the central Brussels office regular weekly reports on the different well-defined phases of the work, as well as special reports on particular subjects, as from time to time demanded. These reports to Brussels again took the form of letters, jointly signed by the American and a committee member, and it was the representative who was personally responsible for their being drawn up. In return the province from time to time received instructions and queries from Brussels, as well as occasional visits from executive chiefs or from the inspectors directly attached to the central office. It is here that the later close connection between Brussels and the provinces is best observed. That office would call for reports of a detailed nature on, for instance, the operation of the Centrales---organisms created by the German authority to undertake the distribution of those native food supplies which they refused to confide to the administration of the Comité National and its subcommittees---or with regard to a rumored exportation of native livestock. Or again, an exposition of local methods of panification and bread control would be requested with a view to gathering all possible data on the subject and deciding upon the best uniform and practical solution of the bakery problem.

An important phase of the inspection work was the attention paid to the legal side: the prosecution of cases of theft and fraud, misuse of ration cards, and illicit traffic in the imported merchandise generally. Such prosecutions were more often undertaken with a view to inspiring the population with a wholesome fear regarding such matters than with the definite intention of obtaining conviction in all cases. This entailed close co-operation between the provincial inspection and the local *procureur du roi*, and results were again regularly reported to Brussels. Another feature of the inspection was the so-called "Letters to the Ministers," weekly reports regarding irregularities on the part of the Germans, chiefly requisitions of native food supplies, which were forwarded through the diplomatic channel to the Brussels inspection department, which itself took the initiative in regard to the correction of all such matters.

Inventories and special investigations.---Besides the very important inspection work, the provincial representative sent to Brussels periodic "wheat-situations"---statements of the exact grain and flour situation in the province, together with the estimated needs based upon supply on hand and the most recent census figures. Each month, after taking the *existences* in the regions, he must see that the results were properly totaled by the provincial statistical staff and duly forwarded to Brussels; also that further statements of receipts, distributions, and consumption were made out and furnished for the required date; and that a list of the persons supplied at the soup kitchens and different varieties of canteens was regularly rendered. These and other reports went to various destinations at Brussels, some to the Commission, others to the Comité National; they were made out partly by the American himself, partly by the Comité Provincial; but in all cases the representative was held responsible for their being duly furnished. There were "shipment receipts" to be filled out and forwarded for each lighter cargo or rail shipment received, showing net receipts, "shortages" or "overs," condition of goods, state of seals, demurrage, etc., and there were the skipper's bills of lading to be acquitted and the lighters turned about and sent back to Rotterdam for another load. There was a constant shipping correspondence with Brussels regarding dilatory tugs and strayed lighters, disputes with shipowners over demurrage and with underwriters on the subject of accidents and damages, as well as claims of the provincial committee against Rotterdam for shortages. Then there was a varied correspondence on a multitude of other subjects; such matters as, for instance, a skipper who had fraudulently acquired extra ration cards and was thus securing more than his legal share of food. The surplus cards had to be extracted from the skipper's possession---as he usually spoke nothing but Flemish, this was apt to add zest to the ordinary daily routine---and the result reported to the *Batelier* department at Brussels. Finally, there were a quantity of special reports, besides those of the inspection department, generally entailing a detailed investigation of some technical point, for which the capital was constantly asking the province. One week it would be on the *vicinaux*---the steam and electric narrow-gauge railways---requiring a map, designation of different lines and mileage, tonnage of each of various categories of goods transported, and number of

passengers carried during each of the last six months, and the kinds and qualities of lubricants employed during the same periods; all this with a view to supplying the lubricants necessary for the transport of food directly by the Commission in view of the exhaustion of the ordinary commercial sources of such materials. Another week Brussels would ask for a complete list of all the horses needed for local transportation in each province, with ages and detailed specifications of each animal, together with those considered to be absolutely essential, and mileage covered per month by horse transportation; this because in a rash moment the military had suggested that they might guarantee such horses from requisition. Whenever work seemed to be a little slack in any departmental office at Brussels, the time would be devoted to a questionnaire until special reports and investigations became a mania, the brunt of which fell upon the provincial representative alone. No early delegate would have dreamed of being called upon to show his experience, or his lack of it, as a veterinary or railway engineer.

Contacts with Brussels headquarters.---On the other hand, the centralization of many matters in Brussels tended to relieve the provincial member of the Commission of many of his former important duties. His dealings with the German authorities, for instance, became much more seldom, and in some cases almost rare. Ordinary matters of routine business were carried on by committee members or employees without the intervention of the American, and unusual negotiations were no longer within the competency of local officials, and had to be taken up with the *Vermittlungsstelle*([213](#)) at Brussels. Passes were likewise only to be obtained through the Brussels *Passzentrale*. Again, if the representative went to Brussels with the idea that he could convince someone of the necessity of sending his province more food, he was almost surely destined to disappointment. He would be confronted with imposing tables of figures, based partly on the statistics that he himself had furnished, showing exactly what were the stocks available and those already sent his province, as a result of which it would invariably appear that either he was entitled to no more or else there was no more for the moment to be had. As for going to Holland, even had it been of avail, the happy days of easy passes had gone to come no more.

It will thus be seen that the early local emphasis on the provincial work had largely been supplanted in the later stage. In place of the intense provincial loyalty which certainly did not make for absolute equality, the representative felt that his first duty was toward the country as a whole, as represented by Brussels, and the broad uniformity called for by that office. Local pride among provincial representatives and a healthy rivalry, as well as a considerable degree of independence, still continued, however. The independence of regional and local committees had in large measure vanished---they were almost purely administrative, restricted to the observance and enforcement of the rules of the provincial committee. The provincial committee itself acted on principles clearly outlined by the Comité National, and in many cases enforced rules as handed down word for word by the latter organization. It was strictly held to the duty of accurate accounting, and to

abstinence from methods which might make for inequitable preference. In all these matters the activities of Belgians and Americans, at Brussels as in the province, were inextricably fused and mingled. The two bodies were complementary: neither could have successfully carried on the work without the other.

Brussels conferences.---The close contact with Brussels necessitated regular visits to the capital on the part of the provincial representative. He always went for the Thursday meetings, that of the Comité National in the morning, and the Commission meeting in the afternoon, at which were present all provincial and Brussels departmental heads. In addition, every two weeks or so a general Commission meeting was called, at which all members would be present, and a prepared paper generally read. The representatives usually arrived in their motors on Wednesday afternoon, and would dine together at the houses of different groups or at certain accepted restaurants. The next day was devoted to business and to the meetings, from which each man took the printed *ordre du jour*, with the various instructions given. The head representatives' meeting, presided over by the Director, was necessarily much less informal than that of the Comité National, and matters were freely discussed, situations in different provinces compared, questions asked, and suggestions made. Aside from this there was always more or less business to be done personally with one or another departmental head.

Provincial committee meetings.---The end of Thursday afternoon saw most of the provincial representatives gone back to their respective provinces, to attend and take active part in the meetings of their provincial committees, which generally occurred on the following day. Here the representative had the place of honor at the side of the president, and here he was ready to support the remarks of the latter or answer general questions and give instructions on subjects which appeared to be more purely in the domain of the Commission than of the Comité National. At times representatives were known to berate provincial assemblies soundly.

The remainder of the representative's time in the province would be spent in attending various subcommittees, such as the executive session of the chief provincial committee members, the soups committee, the Section agricole, etc.; in conferences with departmental heads on different phases of the work; and in receiving the visits of all sorts and conditions of people who came on the miscellaneous and varied errands already referred to, as often as not having little or no connection with the ravitaillement.

Support of Belgian morale.---It is not necessary to enlarge upon the service rendered by the Commission for Relief in Belgium, even were it here in place. But one phase of the results which is perhaps most rarely considered may well be mentioned. Perhaps the greatest thing accomplished by the Americans in Belgium was not the bringing of food and clothing and the making possible of a well-organized system of charities without which the population would most surely have been practically annihilated by the worst horrors of suffering, want, and famine; but

it was their contribution to the upbuilding of the Belgian morale from the condition of absolute prostration, in which it still was upon their arrival as a result of the terrible days of August 1914, to a point where the Belgian looked forward to the future with an absolute faith in the ultimate victory. Were it not that the material relief was absolutely essential to the life of the country, it might almost be said that this moral contribution meant more to the people than did the physical support.

This fact has already been intimated in referring to the effect upon the people of the delegate's first arrival, but it is impossible to emphasize it too much. The feeling that in the American the country had found a sympathetic friend, and a protector in time of trouble, was by no means confined to the masses. Its echo was the same throughout all classes, and among those who understood fully the exact nature of the delegate's position and the inevitable limitations of his powers. The mere fact that they had by their side, for the time intimately associated with their lives, one who still possessed rights, who enjoyed certain privileges, was to them a comfort. They felt that whereas the American could not actually protect them, except in a few exceptional cases, his presence was a very real guarantee. The greatest service in this connection was of course rendered in the first months, when the moral dejection was the greatest, and it was the provincial delegate who, by his personal contact with the people both in his official and unofficial relations, did the most to revive hope and moral energy. Other circumstances naturally contributed to this result. Mighty steps were taken in this direction when relatively free circulation was permitted to the population within the occupied territory, when posts and railways again became available for private communication, when, as a result, there began to reappear commerce and industry on a small scale and necessarily very seriously limited by the absolute lack of imported stocks and of raw material, the destruction of many plants, and the great difficulty of transportation. The Belgian people possess a great deal of ingenuity and adaptability, and they showed it in this instance by making the best of the situation, and in developing, in view of the new and unusual requirements, as much commerce and industry as the conditions permitted. The material relief is necessarily very closely interwoven with this taking up again of what came for a time broadly and externally to approximate normal life.

Well before the exodus of the Americans from Belgium, even this small degree of commerce and industry had practically again disappeared, as a result of the deportations and the wholesale requisition of all materials and machinery. But the material relief had made the improved situation physically possible, in that it kept the people from starvation. Then it gave occupation and distraction to thousands of Belgians in the administration and carrying on of the work. The more influential and intelligent persons of each community were active members of the countless committees which sprang into being when the work began, and thousands of others were given employment in the offices or in the actual handling of the goods. These elements all contributed to the restoration of the Belgian morale. Those representatives who lived through the days of the deportations, [\(214\)](#) already

alluded to, cannot ignore the meaning of their sympathy to those who felt the full brunt of the tragedy. Nor can those who were privileged to experience the last days of the Commission in Belgium and who took part in the farewells of the departure with all its sadness, deny that their presence had been of very deep and intimate import to those whom they had come to relieve, and this quite aside from the material succor which they had originally come to provide. Many fast friendships were, of course, made during the long period of constant and intimate relations which existed between Belgians and Americans, but the emotion of the departure was not merely the expression of these personal friendships. It was far more: it was the echo of the feeling of a whole people who had appreciated the sympathy and taken strength from the moral support of the American delegate. It is this latter contribution which alone, the provincial representative could partially appreciate, and which, all unknown to itself, was one of the greatest features of the work done by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

It will be apparent that the American representative's position was one both unique and of intense interest. This was due, as much as anything, to the catholicity of his personal relation, which, whether it were in business or otherwise, comprised the entire population from the most influential of the country to the humblest, from the powerful industriel or wealthy landed proprietor to the salaried clerk or small agriculturist. Such was the situation that, despite his own youth and comparative inexperience in most cases, the representative stood on a basis of equality-and even rather more than that-with all. In this, as in many other aspects, the position of the representative was one of the most unusual that has ever existed, even as the Commission for Relief in Belgium is probably the most unique institution which the Great War has produced.

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[Fig. 11. Letter, 11 November 1914, van Dyke to Hoover](#)

2. The American Delegate in Northern France

DOCUMENT NO. 315

An account, by JOHN LOWREY SIMPSON, of the duties and activities of the C.R.B. district representatives in the North of France

LONDON, May 1917

When Glenn perched himself in a locomotive cab and conducted personally a trainload of flour into the North of France,(215) he opened the vistas of a new adventure for American youth. For this exploit was the precursor of the position of "French Delegate" or "North of France Representative," as it was variously called. And into the lives of the thirty men who filled these posts at one time or another streamed the full tragedy---shall we add comedy too?---of war and invasion, of occupation and of relief.

Paradox of a job! They were charged, these Representatives, to control the equitable distribution of foodstuffs, and to note the due observance of German guarantees in the occupied territory of Northern France. And Northern France differed as much from Belgium as Belgium itself differed from the great outside world beyond the lines of conquest and the frontiers of war. In Belgium there had been restored after the first few months some kind of social structure. There were central offices, ministers, civil authorities, negotiations, dinners---even tennis occasionally. There was nothing of this sort in Northern France; there was one dominating fact, insistent like tunnel pressure against the ears: a state of war. In Belgium the Representative performed unusual and extraordinary duties, but in circumstances exhibiting sometimes a certain semblance of normality. With all the eccentricities of his position, he had a code of action---a variable code, to be sure---but still some sort of guide to his way of doing things. In Northern France there was no normality; there was no code of action; there was no "way of doing things." There was a state of war. The North of France Representative interpreted his duties as best he might, and performed them whether or no. He was the personal spokesman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium in the French territory. He had on the one hand his network of local French distributing agencies, and on the other the German Army of the Western Front. Ahead of him was the firing line, and off in the hazy background a "Brussels office." His own small group were the only neutrals amid two million Frenchmen and nobody knows how many hundred thousands of their German enemies. His general orders were: "Report that the people are eating the food."

Two million people in the army zone.---The actual condition of two million people living in direct contact with a hostile army in active operation is not easy to portray. The lines of the picture are likely to be too heavy or too light. New delegates in Belgium have conjured up to themselves astounding notions of Frenchmen, Germans, and Americans all scampering from cover to cover in the thick of flying shrapnel. Others, who have been in Belgium but not in Northern France, may tell you that it was all very much the same. Neither impression would be correct. I was a North of France Representative for six months; I never dodged shrapnel, though I am sure I should have tried to had I seen any coming toward me; yet often as I crossed the line of the *étape* from Belgium into Northern France there was always something portentous about it. People were shot for crossing that line when they did not hold the slip of white paper I possessed.

That was possibly the fascination for the American youth: it was forbidden territory. Once past the line you stood where the army was supreme. Inhabitants walked outside their communes by courtesy of special permission. Civilians rode on trains only with thrice special passports. When one penetrated farther south one caught the grey sheen of moving troops; or one descried long supply trains---even occasional smoke of artillery fire. On fine nights there was the "line" to be detected by the distant flare of rockets and the dull glow of the guns. Yet always around and through everything else were the people. Here a village, and behind the hill a town. Soldiers out of number, of course, yet all so intermingled that at times one was at a loss to know whether there were people and some soldiers or soldiers and some people. It was the grim, attenuated tragedy of war which had settled down upon and enveloped a whole countryside. And withal, who shall say that it was tragedy pure and unalloyed? Surely not he who has seen a fat German soldier taking his ease in a sunny doorway and grinning broadly at a black-frocked gamin who strolled in his own composure whistling the *Marseillaise*.

The general character of the Representative's duties in these surroundings necessarily lends itself less to precise statement than in the case of the American Representative in Belgium. Perhaps the French work always corresponded in a very rough manner to the earliest phase in Belgium. Certainly there is no possibility of contrasting sharply in France as in Belgium a "late" period against an "early" one. There was indeed a change in the nature of the French work, due to the Germans' appropriation bit by bit of some of the power at first exercised by the Americans. But this change was too gradual, too stubbornly contested by the Representatives, to admit of a sharp classification. It may be generally said without risk of error that the Representative in relation to the French agencies occupied a more authoritative position than did his Belgian colleague in his own corresponding capacity. This resulted inevitably from the isolation and comparatively unprotected position of the French committees. The American was the one bulwark between the French organization and the Germans. In these circumstances it was not remarkable that his suggestions carried great weight. On the other hand, the North of France Representative was distinctly more hampered and restricted in his movements and enterprises by the occupying authorities than the Representative in Belgium. This was due primarily to the more intensive military control of the French territory, and in the second instance to the German accompanying officer.

A German accompanying officer.---"The American and his German officer": this was not a mere relationship of two human beings---it was an institution. It was a composite of the Siamese twins, a Punch and Judy show, a parliamentary debate, and important quantities of high explosive. I have never been told, but I dare surmise that more than one C.R.B. Director has spent sleepless nights wondering what was happening in those far-off district centers, between the "American and his German officer." The situation was essentially and fundamentally---what shall we say?---peculiar. The American was sent into Northern France to watch the food. The German officer was sent to watch the American. Of course each had his other

duties. The American Representative was charged not merely as custodian of the guarantees, but as an agent sent from Brussels to report upon the exact and special needs of his district. The German officer combined with his functions as detective extraordinary a considerable activity in facilitating the moving of foodstuffs and the planing of obstacles. Nevertheless, in the nature of things there existed at each district center a mutual observation bureau. The American and his German officer rode in the same automobile, visited the same communes, talked to the same Frenchmen, slept on the same floor, ate at the same table. It was like an interminable camping trip where two individuals, confined to each other's society, find added to the general limitations of that life the lurking suspicion that "the other fellow" is dipping secretly into the sugar stock. They may like each other, respect each other, desire the utmost good fortune---but, is he really making off with some of the sugar? The American called his officer his "nurse"; what the officer called the American is one of the secrets of the German Army into which we were never able to penetrate. It is a satisfaction to know, however, that in the face of their divergencies of training, ideas, and sympathy, and despite the tension which was unavoidable in their companionship, these German officers and Americans did actually manage to persist month after month in their tasks. And the feeding went on. So that one can afford to be a little amused now at a relationship surely as strange as any since the day when "the animals marched in two by two, the elephant and the kangaroo."

French committees.---Glenn's feat with his trainload of flour and his personal sales to the mayors was not indicative of the turn events were to take in the North of France work. Indeed, so little in sympathy did the authorities appear to be with this procedure that a stipulation was placed in the agreement of April 14th, 1915(216) to the effect that: "Delegates of the C.R.B. will not be allowed to accompany cars or trains in transit." However, this restriction worked little hardship other than from the standpoint of romance. Complete arrangements were soon made for handling regularly all foods. Among these arrangements one of the most important factors was the system of French distribution committees.

Almost all occupied France except certain narrow territories near the front received supplies through the Commission for Relief in Belgium. There was a general French committee for financial and distributing responsibility. This was the "Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France," or, as it was popularly called, the "Comité Français." It had its office in Brussels. But the French territory itself was divided into six districts: Lille, Valenciennes, St. Quentin, Vervins, Charleville, and Longwy. At the headquarters of each district was stationed an American Representative-and his German officer. It was also the general custom to have a French district committee at the same place. The districts were divided into regions or syndicats, with a local committee in each division. Finally, there were the communes and communal committees. In practice these French committees received, stored, and distributed the food. Shipments were billed from Brussels to the district committees. These made their allotments to the different regions or

syndicats according to needs. The railroad was used this far, but the regions had ordinarily to arrange with the communes for the final carting of supplies to the population. Furthermore, the entire system of statistics, financial control, reports, inspection, and statements of needs, functioned through the committees. The communal committees reported to the regions, the regions to the district committees, and these last to Brussels.

In the name of France.---The splendid devotion of her citizens engaged in the feeding service will not be the least of France's glories in the present war. In these days there is so much superlative set down on paper that one hesitates to write in any but the barest terms. Heroism has been proved the common trait of all peoples; no nation holds a vested privilege in suffering. Why talk of the obvious? Yet at the risk of joining the roaring horde of hyperbole strewers, I must express my admiration for the Frenchmen who bore the brunt of this work. If one considers the circumstances of the military occupation, the fact that every inhabitant has been marshaled almost as in a prison régime, the achievement begins to appear in its true proportions. Through all the space of that sad land Frenchmen have co-ordinated their efforts in a sustained enterprise the tediousness of which has been equaled only by its difficulty.

But the tediousness has been swallowed bravely enough, and the difficulties surpassed. And the food has gone to the people. How? Because in each city, each town, each hamlet, a little group of men ---sometimes men and women---has hammered at the task day after day for more than two years. If you went to I----- I do not doubt but that you would still find M. E-----, a senator of France, in his office at the mairie. The mairie has been turned into a Kommandantur, but for some reason the authorities left M. E----- his office. It is as though he had managed to preserve there, concealed somewhere about his great oil portraits and twinkling red grate, a bit of the real France---free France. In that office he has worked patiently through the interminable months. He is one reason why the food has gone to the people.

One day I was allowed to go to C-----, a village only a mile or two behind the trenches. It was the "front line" of the feeding service. Not very much of a village, I must confess: a cluster of grey buildings half battered to pieces by heavy firing. There were bomb cellars here and there, because the place was used as a resting post by the army and was frequently shelled. But, little as was left in this war-swept hamlet to betoken the ordinary measure of human life, there was the local delegate. A rather slight man, I remember, and very nervous. Running to cellars to save your life on the edge of an instant does not conduce to a phlegmatic disposition. But he was there, shells or no shells, cellar or death, and he was doing his work in some sort of fashion. And the food was going to the people.

It was this French organization which the American Representative had as his greatest comfort in his own delicate task.

The German Army.---The other great organization with which the American was in touch was the German Army. I believe, however, that the American was much more keenly aware of the presence of the army than the army was of the presence of the American. One evening, after a long day of inspecting communes, my accompanying captain took me to dine at an officers' mess in a post close behind the front. The chaps were men just off the line, quite a different lot from the various functionaries and officials one comes in contact with thirty miles "inland" from the battle. One young lieutenant gazed at me across the shaky candle-light, and asked very courteously and in perfect English: "But what in the world are you doing here?" I explained something of the C.R.B. and of my own position. He listened with great attention, but said he had never heard of any such relief service. On the whole he took a friendly and curious interest in me, nudged me when it was time to respond to a toast, told me about his work, yet could not refrain from glancing at me now and then as though to say, "After all, my dear chap, it's deuced funny that you should be here." He thought it rather decent of the German Army to give me an automobile to ride in, and hoped I would tell my friends when I went home that not all the Germans were "brutes."

"America! You've never been neutral, you know," he snapped; and then added quickly, "You must pardon me; my brother was killed at my side a few weeks ago, and I am not quite myself."

The incident is a casual one, but represents in a manner the attitude of the army toward the American Representatives. Relations were not intimate. When we were remembered at all, our position was recognized. Personally we were treated with courtesy and consideration. In the society of the army our place was among the officers. English was spoken to us with the greatest goodwill by those who knew the language. Negatively, the army was bound by its agreements to allow the food to be distributed to the population without let or hindrance, and to permit the Representative to supervise and verify the distribution unmolested. Positively, it was necessary to look to the army for means of transportation; telephone, telegraph, and mail service; permits and passports for movements of local delegates, cartmen, book inspectors, etc.; the allotment of suitable office quarters and warehouse facilities for all the committees; and many other authorizations and dispensations.

The greater part of these business relations with the army, however, were maintained through the intermediary of the German accompanying officer.

The American and his German officer.----When the Commission for Relief in Belgium began pushing its enterprise into the North of France, the German accompanying officer came into being. He was part of the agreement finally concluded between the Commission and the German Army authorities. He was attached to the Representative as a safeguard against the difficulties which might be encountered by a stranger in the army zone, as adviser, as co-operator, and as a military precaution against any abuse of the Representative's privileges. As a matter

of fact, it is in this last capacity that he lives most vividly in the memories and imaginations of most of the Representatives. The restrictions on the Americans which he was empowered to enforce were sweeping. One was forbidden so much as to converse with a Frenchman beyond the presence of the officer or some other military person designated by him. Joint quarters were taken by the officer and the American in each instance, and countless daily incidents tended to emphasize to the latter the sense of oppression and confinement. Furthermore, for reasons to which I shall refer presently, the position of the officer gradually strengthened itself at the expense of the American's.

It was perhaps this singular relationship with the German accompanying officer which more than anything else made the position of the American in France difficult to define. I have heard it rumored currently in our society at Brussels: "The director sends only the best men to France." On the other hand, there still echoes through our memories the supreme insult which was once uttered: "North of France delegates are about as important as so many mosquitoes." Of course the answer to the paradox is that the circumstances were unique. Effort and accomplishment could not be gauged by ordinary standards. Before I went to Vervins an "old stager" took me aside to caution me. "It's very easy," he said. "Just get on with your German officer---that's all there is to it---get on with your German officer." He put the case too simply, no doubt; but it was true that to succeed we had to "get on." A holiday jaunt to Cologne or Wiesbaden was sniffed at by the Belgian Representatives. But those little friendly week-end trips with the officers helped mightily when there next arose a question of a German soldier being lodged too near a bakery.

A trip to Germany with his officer was a net asset to the Representative; and a munitions discussion may be counted as a disaster. No topic on earth seemed so pregnant of disagreeable possibilities as American shipments of munitions to the Allies. President Wilson was always hauled into the discussion by some hook or crook. While my companions were denouncing him as trying to precipitate war between Germany and the United States, I was usually trying to hide a grin. I could not but think of those at home who were criticizing the President's too-pacifist policy. However, our job was not to settle the munitions question, but to see that the French people ate the food. So we eschewed discussions so far as possible, and there are recorded but few retorts similar to that one, perhaps the most famous in C.R.B. folklore:

"Well, anyway, Captain So-and-so, we elected our President, and you had your Kaiser wished on you."

Some of the Germans were not so lacking in all sense of humor as the nation is reputed to be, and could appreciate the fine lights of this situation. An officer who was a guest at our house one evening remarked to me that I must find my position taxing, even very unpleasant, engaged as I was in a work on behalf of a population

hostile to the occupying power, and surrounded as I was by the army's restrictions. "Get out!" exploded my officer. "He thinks he's very cute standing up against the German Army. He glories in it!"

Duties of the Representative.---Besides living on reasonably amicable terms with his accompanying officer, the American Representative had other duties. He was charged generally to assure himself: first, that no imported food was appropriated by the army; second, that an equitable distribution obtained throughout the district. His responsibility extended over an average population of more than 300,000 in an area some thirty to fifty miles square.

This necessitated the establishment of an American office in the district center for the handling of documents and correspondence. Usually one or two secretaries, either German soldiers or specially selected Frenchmen, assisted the Representative at his office. But this "bureau" is by no means to be confused with the hierarchy of French committees. It was entirely separate and apart, the personal headquarters of the American Representative. Through this office passed all communications between the higher French committees and Brussels. Sometimes the Representative required duplicates of important reports and documents, so that his own files might show a complete record of the relations between the committees and Brussels. Shipment receipts passed through the Representative's hands; in some districts he countersigned them himself, in others merely signed an accompanying voucher. In order to be thoroughly aware of the exact condition of supplies from day to day, the Representatives sometimes received telegraphic announcements of arrivals of cars. Furthermore, as the official French reports of stocks, arrivals, distributions, etc., were made to Brussels only once a month, the Representatives in certain of the districts had special reports submitted to them by the French committees, three times a month, once a week, or even daily.

The extreme development of the Representative's personal office was not characteristic of all the districts. Sometimes the French district committee itself maintained such comprehensive files and compilations of statistics as to render it unnecessary to repeat the work. At other posts the German officer and his staff of assistants centralized all the important information, and since the Representative had access to these records he felt that sufficient. "At my own station, Vervins, the division of the district into three (later two) subdistricts, and the absence of any central committee for the whole territory, made an unusual amount of office system necessary.

In all cases, however, the Representative sent out from his office circular and special letters to the French committees transmitting instructions from Brussels, with additional measures added at his own initiative to suit the special features of his district. He wrote calling attention to irregularities, authorizing changes when necessary, and occasionally responding to requests for information or for the settlement of local disputes on the part of the French committees. He furthermore

used his office communication system to assemble statistics and information from the different parts of the district at the behest of the Commission for Relief in Belgium or the Comité Français in Brussels.

With the information at hand either in his own office or in that of one of his collaborators in the district center, and with the assistance of his secretary, the Representative prepared his own special reports which he rendered to the Commission's Brussels office. These supplemented the routine reports of the French committees to Brussels. The French reports covered all supplies in general. The Representative gave particular information, when required, on such subjects as clothing, stocks, and needs, the possibility of making up garments in the district, public health and vitality, disposition of empty cans and crates, variations in population, etc. He also reported personally each week on the exact amount of wheat and flour remaining in the district.

In some cases his duty was merely to make sure that the French committee rendered a report on an exceptional subject, such as shortage claims, accidents to supplies in course of shipment, or acknowledgments of indebtedness for food delivered. In other strictly financial relations, as insurance, the dealings were directly between the Comité Français and the district committees. The Representative simply took cognizance of such transactions.

Abroad in the district.---But the organization and direction of his office did not constitute the most important of the Representative's functions. His personal trips or expeditions, his "field work" if you like, made up a far more interesting and valuable part of his duties.

In Belgium there was developed during 1916 a thorough-going system of Inspection and Control. By means of a large staff of Belgian inspectors the Comité National and Commission for Relief in Belgium were able to ascertain the manner of conducting affairs in every commune. No such scheme was possible in France. The much heavier restrictions of the army rendered out of the question the free circulation and easy communication necessary for that work. In some instances inspectors for small regions were allowed access to ten or fifteen communes. But there was no co-ordination or systematization of their work. Consequently the Representative was himself compelled to do an immense amount of traveling and inspecting. He and the German accompanying officer spent days on end touring the country in an automobile. They attended meetings of the district and subdistricts, visited the delegates of the *syndicats* and regions. The Representative discussed rulings and orders, delivered directly and personally the instructions of the Brussels offices, examined stocks and arrivals, advised as to storage, adjusted rations, settled questions arising between region and district. This personal contact with the French delegates of the middle order---those of the *syndicats* and regions---one may believe to have had a real value in maintaining the stability of the organization. In the district of Vervins there were some twenty-two (later twenty-five) regions. The

Representative tried to visit each regional headquarters once a month. That meant that once a month every regional delegate had a chance to present his grievances, state his needs, ask his questions---in short, put himself in touch with the higher authorities of the relief service. He was by so much the less lost in the wilderness of German occupation.

However, the field work of the representative did not end with the regions. He pushed his investigations and inspections as often as possible into the communes themselves. This statement must naturally be given a reasonable interpretation. There were, on an average, 350 communes in a district. No Representative could score a very large percentage of inspections against that number. But it was possible to choose a village here and there---one in this region, another in that corner of the district---for examination. Thus an idea could be formed as to the way affairs were handled in various quarters. A normal inspection consisted in looking over the books, viewing the storehouse for the food, ascertaining the quality of the protection from the army, inquiring into the manner of distribution, noticing the arrangements for baking, the quality of the bread, etc.

Charleville and Brussels.---What knitted together all the other powers and duties of the American Representative was his close touch with Charleville and Brussels. Charleville, the headquarters of the German officials associated with the feeding service, was also for a time the residence of a Chief Representative for the North of France. With him the local Representatives were able to communicate for information and advice. Occasionally he visited the different district headquarters, and on rare occasions the American Representatives were called to Charleville. However, these relationships were still altogether in the army zone; hence there was always a certain lack of ease and freedom. In May 1916 there ceased to be a Chief Representative for the North of France.

The weekly meeting at Brussels was really the strength of the Representative's position. These meetings were held every Saturday morning, and all Representatives were allowed by the army authorities to attend, except in cases where traveling was "undesirable for reasons of a military character." In practice Representatives were only occasionally detained. The Director of the Commission presided at these meetings, and gave full information regarding supplies, negotiations, policies, dangers, reports, and so many other things that if I enumerated them I should be re-writing the minutes of the last two years. Each Representative was given an opportunity to present his particular problems and questions. Discussion was free, decision finally taken by the Director after hearing all views, and instructions issued. Ordinarily the Representatives reached Brussels, every one with a dozen questions, inquiries, "points" of all kinds, about the work. After the meeting each had a new collection of notes to remind him of his answers and instructions for the coming week.

It is worth adding that the weekly meetings at Brussels saved the situation in more than one respect. In most of the districts the strain told appreciably upon those who occupied posts. The Commission did not ordinarily keep a man in the North of France more than six months at a time. Naturally, the effect of the sojourn depended upon both the particular district and the temperament of the individual. But in almost every case traces of the tension were noticeable. Some men who have been among the best of the Belgian Representatives have been quite unable to remain in the North of France. Against the sultriness and irksomeness of that life the weekly trip to Brussels was literally a godsend. It meant freedom for a day or two, fellow-countrymen, unrestrained intercourse, the sense of being still a human entity. The Brussels meetings probably doubled the period of usefulness of the aggregate of North of France Representatives.

The rôle of the German officer.---It has been stated that the greater part of the Representative's relations with the army was through the intermediary of the accompanying officer. The importance of this fact should not be passed over lightly. One is perhaps a little too inclined to remember these officers' arrogant usurpation of power in the feeding work, and to forget that they did actually render some extremely valuable services. They dealt with railway officials and with local *Kommandants*. They arranged to have storehouses and offices put at the disposition of the committees. They ousted soldiers from the bakeries, demanded the passports which made district meetings possible, sent telegrams far and wide, escorted Representatives into villages well within the zone of artillery fire. They were the buffers between the American and French organizations on the one hand and the German Army on the other. I well remember the evening when Captain ---- -- rescued me from the clutches of a decrepit *Landsturmer* who was marching me off with fixed bayonet to a fate I dare not divine. On the other hand, the officers' control of communications gave them a considerable power over the Representatives. The former had the right to censor all incoming and outgoing mails, not only between the Representatives and Brussels, but within the district. This could give rise to most heated differences, particularly when the power to censor was used to dictate the substance of instructions to local French delegates. Furthermore, by an interpretation of "military requirements" a show of justification was made out for all sorts of interferences in the functioning of the service.

It was not always thus in the North of France. Reference has already been made to the gradual strengthening of the officer's position at the expense of the American's. The fact is that at the beginning of the work the officer was really an "accompanying officer," and was so styled in German: *Begleitoffizier*. But as time wore on the personnel of the Americans changed. New men, unfamiliar with the work, came to relieve those who had engaged in its creation. It was found necessary to abandon the original custom of having two Representatives at a post; after that in each district one American had to wage his battle alone. The officers remained. Naturally they gained all the advantage of an "old hand" over a "green" one. Unfortunately it was impossible to find Americans who could devote indefinite

stretches of time to the task, and man after man had to be replaced. With every replacement the accompanying officer edged his advantage a little farther. He was charged with certain duties on behalf of the German Army in regard to the distribution of native foods. Then he was no longer called officially an accompanying officer, but a *Verpflegungsoffizier*, an "officer dealing with matters of feeding." In the meantime the American Representatives were disputing inch by inch this aggression into their province. "It is trench warfare," someone once told us, "and you are losing, and you will lose. Only, you must lose as slowly as possible." So we lost as slowly as possible. And the people kept eating the food.

But sometimes a veritable crisis precipitated itself ere one could catch his breath. I had such an experience before I had been in the North of France three weeks. The trouble arose over adding some new communes to the district, and my instructions to visit them and to report to Brussels before sending any food there. The Germans refused to allow me to enter the communes ahead of the food. It was really not a matter of stupendous importance, and was finally compromised by having, first, a meeting of communal delegates from the territory in question but at a point already in the service, then the first shipments, then my tour of inspection. But before we arrived at that arrangement my officer had completely lost himself in rage, I had had to go to Charleville to interview the higher powers, and there had been a special meeting of officials at Vervins. Such were not daily occurrences in the North of France, fortunately, but from time to time life was embellished with that sort of incident. The Representative had usually to rely on the resources of his own judgment at those moments. On the one hand, the maintenance of the guarantees and protective provisions; on the other, the undesirability of an open break with the Germans. It was for the Representative to hit somehow a middle course. The food had to go to the people.

Six districts.---In the Brussels office the big green boards speckled with black and white figures showed supplies going into six districts in the North of France. They were Lille, Valenciennes, St. Quentin, Vervins, Charleville, and Longwy.

Lille District included the territory farthest north, and contained the great industrial centers of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing. Valenciennes lay just southeast, between the Western Front and the Belgian border. This was a region of coal-fields, an extension of the Mons belt. The Representatives for the two districts lived together with their officers at Valenciennes during the greater part of the work. Later the Lille Representative and his officer moved to Tournai in Belgium. But both Representatives dealt with much the same sort of problem: thickly massed industrial and urban populations, comparatively little agriculture, acute distress. At Lille the want was greatest, and the difficulties of the Representative's task were complicated by the fact that he could visit the city of Lille and his chief committee only twice a week. On the other hand, in these districts the business training which accompanies industry gave a high degree of efficiency to the committees.

Next to Valenciennes came St. Quentin, named after the city. Two officers were ordinarily stationed there with the American. The French committee was strong, under the guidance of the mayor of St. Quentin. Altogether the co-operation among the French, German, and American forces was probably more practicable and better in this district than in any of the others.

At Vervins, the district in which my own experience was had, a system of extreme decentralization prevailed. The country was almost entirely agricultural, and the population scattered among a few small cities and innumerable towns and villages. It seemed impossible to effect one organization for the whole district, so three subdistricts were formed. Later two of these were combined. There were thus two or three chief committees instead of one, and none of them had its headquarters with the Representative at Vervins. This meant a considerable amount of office work for the Representative. But finally that was systematized and given largely into the custody of a very capable French secretary. Two or three German underofficers or private soldiers acted as secretaries to the captain attached to the post, and these assisted in the routine work of telegrams, correspondence, etc. Toward the middle of 1916 a lieutenant was added to the German staff.

Charleville([217](#)) was in some respects the most difficult of all posts. The Representative resided, not only with the German officer responsible for the district, but with the officer in general charge for the North of France. Charleville always seemed fairly bristling with "military exigencies," and the Representative found himself hedged about by an unusual number of absurd restrictions. An active, intelligent French committee redeemed the situation in some measure, but it took all the skill and tact which one individual could well muster to cope with the problem. Even here, however, the Representatives could usually assure themselves as to the proper conduct of the service.

Longwy was a straggling district, half agricultural, half industrial. The two German officers were genial spirits; life for the Representative usually ran rather smoothly. There was little office detail and considerable personal touch with local French committees. The most picturesque feature of the work here was the bi-monthly trip into an isolated portion of the district in the Vosges.

A day on the road.---A day on the road in the North of France: it used to be such a casual, how-do-y'-do sort of thing, and already it is tinged with the rambling half-light of bygone romance.

At some chill morning hour you clambered into the car and plumped down beside your officer. The fat chauffeur trod gingerly around and about his engine. He knew that if it did not start promptly he would be cursed with great German curses. An indefinite number of orderlies and secretaries potted here and there with rugs and leather bags and things. At last you were off. The secretaries and orderlies froze into indescribable salutes. The car swept through the village and out on the long,

thin road, as though determined to fly straight at the trenches, and over them, and to draw up for lunch in Paris.

Too fast and too cold for much talking, so you set about watching for the spire of M----- to appear over the hill-line.

At M----- there was a subdistrict meeting, some fifteen regional delegates gathered to discuss their problems and to receive instructions from the French chief delegate. You and your officer clattered in. Everyone rose. You shook hands with the chief delegate and those nearest, and then sat down at his right. The American was always seated at the right of the chief delegate. It was for the French a way of expressing something they couldn't well say. Did "Monsieur le Délégué Américain" have announcements? Yes, he did---so you pulled your French together with both hands and talked about the necessity of moving stocks of condensed milk to the regions having the fewest cows, and insisted that all empty cans be smashed, and asked where the greatest need for clothing was. Then the officer entered into an interminable discussion of accounts, and everyone nodded, and finally you clattered out as you had come.

On the way to T-----, another subdistrict center, you stopped off at C-----, whence had issued echoes of untoward happenings. Yes, you found it very bad; an inhabitant in charge of distributions had been establishing a private cache of food. Your German officer had a spasm of righteous indignation. He became lobster-red; and his voice soared high and then broke, like a rocket. Had he been proportionately as incensed at Germany seizing the North of France one shudders to reflect upon what might have happened to him. The mayor was called in, and the Kommandant, and the man who had taken the food was removed from his position and replaced. Then you pushed on to T-----.

At T----- there was no meeting, but you discussed matters with the chief delegate, explained a letter he had received from Brussels, and had a look at some soap just arrived. A bookkeeper remarked surreptitiously that he was convinced the war would be over within three months. Poor chaps! they had been saying that for two years. But you had little time to spend at the office, for your captain hustled you off to lunch with the Kommandant of T----- They were great friends, your officer and this Kommandant, both from the same city in Germany. So you had a good lunch, and toasts all around; everyone was most agreeable to you; you and the Kommandant resorted to French as a means of communication, and vied with each other as to who could speak it the more atrociously.

After luncheon your officer left to call upon some other friend and found a young lieutenant to "take care" of you. With this substitute twin you looked in upon several communes in the vicinity, thumbed over account books, solemnly smelled loaves of bread, and cocked an eye to the protection signs and the security of the lock on the bakery door. After two hours of that business you picked up your

officer, and found he had planned to take afternoon coffee at I----- . You preferred to examine some more communes, but "anything for peace in the family." So you went and drank eight cups of coffee, smoked seventeen cigarettes, listened to German for an hour and a half, understood nothing of it, yawned, silently cursed the day you were born---and when all hope was vanishing your officer announced that it was time to go.

On the way home you persuaded him to stop at one more commune for an inspection. Things were perfectly arranged there, so you felt better. Then the car scudded along, mile upon mile, under a frosty wintry moon. The villages began to loom as great splotches when they slipped into view and passed. As though they had quite bundled themselves up in the night and the cold and the moonlight.

Questions of power.---It must be clear that the North of France Representative had the reins less securely in his hands than the Americans in Belgium. The spirit of the French organization was splendid, and the committees and delegates were eager to receive advice and suggestions from the American. They felt that he was their bulwark. Furthermore, the particular sorrow of the situation in France gave a special zest and enthusiasm to the work of the Representatives there. Yet the practical difficulties were great. The Representative faced the same obstacle which beset the path of the French---a lack of freedom.

It was therefore a problem of personal ingenuity. Friendly relations had to be maintained in all quarters, German and French alike. Accomplishment had to be by suggestion and discussion with as few "ultimata" as possible. Great care had to be taken not to exhibit too keen a sympathy for the French; on the other hand, it would have been easy to offend the French by an apparent alignment on the side of the Germans. A solution could only be attained by announcing flatly that one's sole consideration was the proper continuance of the work. It was impossible to enter into any other disputes or claims. Were the guaranties being maintained? Was the distribution equitable? Did the people receive the food? Those questions, and those only, concerned the Representative.

For all that, the moral effect was not entirely lacking. Though he might not openly champion their cause, the American was there with the French. He was a friend, obviously, or he would not have come. I am sure the French realized that. I am sure that, quite apart from material considerations, they were glad because of the presence of these young Representatives. And despite all the delicacy of the situation, things could be done sometimes. Those of us who attended a meeting of Germans and Americans at Charleville one memorable day will not forget the discussion of the deportations from Lille.(218) Those deportations were checked shortly after that meeting.

In his own proper sphere the accomplishment of the Representative was probably less satisfactory to himself than to anyone else. The fact stands that the guaranties

have been generally maintained and the people have been fed. After all, that is what Mr. Hoover and his colleagues set out to achieve. The test of the success or failure of such an undertaking does not hang upon the question of whether an American Representative has commanded or cajoled a German officer. I recall that I once visited with my captain a commune where soldiers were sleeping in a room opening on the committee's flour storehouse. I was still new to the work. "This must of course be changed," I observed. "Nothing of the sort," retorted the captain. "Your business is to see that no food is taken by the army. You have no proof that that has occurred here. I deny that you have the right to demand a change." I finally closed a fruitless argument by stating that I intended to report the matter to Brussels. "Very well," snorted the officer. In the afternoon we passed by the place again. The officer absented himself for a few moments, and on returning announced: "On my own initiative I have ordered new arrangements made here. We shall examine them when next we pass in this vicinity. But you understand that it is I who have done this, that I deny absolutely your right to insist."

I grunted, and, still outraged, I privately recounted the whole incident to my Director at Brussels the following Saturday. "If such a principle is admitted," I protested, "the power of the Representative

"The power of the Representative!" The director smiled.

"By the way, Simpson," he added, "I believe you said that Captain ----- ordered the place to be put in shape, didn't you?"

"Yes, he did."

"Well, I guess that's what you wanted, wasn't it?" remarked the Director. And I am sure that his eye twinkled.

The front line of relief.---One fine evening in late spring we stopped, the inevitable German officer and I, at a little commune a few rifle shots behind the front., A wrinkled old woman and a bent old man came out of a house to scrutinize us.

"Good evening," I ventured (the officer was in decent humor);

"You don't know me, but I am the American Representative. I am here with the food."

"Really?" exclaimed the venerable person, in wonderment. "He's the American," she informed her husband knowingly. They both looked at me, and smiled. They were too full of years to be overwhelmed by even so strange a thing as "the American."

"They're fighting up there," the old woman remarked just then. I glanced about. Over the dingy grey houses of the village the glow of a fading day still streaked

across the sky. Some clouds straggled not far above the horizon, but below them one could make out a few black specks. Each speck gradually expanded, the while it grew dimmer. Of course that meant that near the trenches someone was firing at an aëroplane.

The ancient lady shielded her eyes with her hand and watched the scene. She was still smiling a little, as though to say:

"My word! Americans here, and people always shooting at one another. It's extraordinary how folk act."

I watched her as she watched the specks, which were always appearing and then growing larger and fainter.

I thought of the Commission's New York office, where clerks were scurrying about, and telephones whirring, and people were buying grain by the thousands of tons. Then there was London, with its shipping questions, and negotiations, and finance. I knew the London office too. And I had seen the harbor at Rotterdam, and the grain being sucked out of ships into lighters for Belgium. At Antwerp men were working to transfer some of this grain into smaller lighters for the North of France. At Brussels somebody was forever shifting the little black and white figures on a green board headed "Lille," or "Vervins," or something like that. And back in the town of Vervins itself my secretary was sorting telegrams in his own fashion.

But this old lady and old man standing in the sunset were different. They were what it all meant. New York was a long way off, and over on the horizon shrapnel clouds were floating. An old lady and an old man peering at shrapnel clouds. "And the people were eating the food."

That was really the front line of relief.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER VIII

HARVESTS(219)

The first relief measures and the initial diplomatic guarantees were based upon the assumption that the emergency was a temporary one. On the 16th October 1914 the Germans guaranteed(220) imported relief supplies free from requisition and on the 20th October the British Foreign Office announced(221) that they were not stopping importations for the Belgian civilian population. The door was thus

opened for emergency relief, but none of the belligerent governments appreciated the immensity of the problem or the extensive financial and diplomatic arrangements that it involved. It is interesting to recall, however, that Hoover, as his memorandum on the 20th October 1914(222) to Ambassador Page shows, perceived that the situation demanded a very considerable extension of the measures then taken. He wrote: "The organization and solution of the problem necessitates: (a) The expansion of undertakings by the military authorities not to requisition foodstuffs imported and further to cease the requisitions of native foods (b) The permit of the English authorities, conditional upon importing foodstuffs in neutral ships needs extension (d) It is absolutely necessary to secure positive subvention from the Allied Governments." Thus before the Commission was organized and days before the first emergency supplies were moving, Hoover in this document emphasized the three issues, viz., money, ships, and the protection from requisition of indigenous produce. The third of these issues, which is the subject of this chapter, was as vital to Belgian relief as the other two.

Money, in large amounts, and ships were clearly necessary in order to purchase and deliver the great quantities of food required; but obviously the Allies would never consent to the import of food if it were to constitute a replacement of the native supplies requisitioned by the German Army. Moreover, justice in distribution would not be assured unless both the imports and the harvests were controlled by the relief organization.

In theory the importations of the Commission were to furnish a supplement to local products sufficient to provide the people of the occupied regions with a ration adequate to maintain them in health. On the basis of this theory the Allies ultimately held that the whole relief enterprise was predicated on an agreement by the Germans to abstain from local requisitions and to reserve for the Belgian and French people the whole fruit of their harvests; otherwise the relief imports would be indirect but none the less valuable aid to the German armies. The British raised this issue at once when Hoover in the winter of 1914-15 began to ask for relaxation of shipping restrictions and subsidies(223) in order to put relief on the substantial basis that the situation demanded.

The protection of the local harvest had an important bearing also on another phase of the Commission's work---the determination of its programs of importation, which were to cover the deficit between the amount of local food available and the minimum required to sustain the population "without immediate and serious physical deterioration."(224) of the two factors which determined the theoretical program of importations the minimum ration requirement was constant or relatively so. It was calculated on the number of people to be fed, the calorie requirement per person per day and the calorie production of the food commodities available locally or by importation.(225) The second factor, local produce, varied from year to year. The principal causes of these variations were, in the beginning, disorganization,

destruction, and confiscation during the first months of the war; and, later, lack of man power, lack of fertilizers, and, in 1917-18, the decrease in the rural area of France under enemy control because of the German retreat in the autumn of 1916 and the spring of 1917.

Although the Commission imported bread grains greatly in excess of the amount locally produced, it was never able consistently to maintain the theoretical program. This was not due to want of effort but to external factors over which the Commission had no control. Foregoing chapters have shown how some of these factors---the lack of funds, the shortage of ships, the arbitrary restrictions of the British Foreign Office, the U-boats, and the world shortage of food---affected the program. Despite these difficulties, the Commission was able to approximate the ideal program closely enough to achieve the purpose of its existence---to save the population of the occupied regions from famine or serious physical deterioration from undernourishment.

As has been noted in chapter VI, the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France were divided for German administrative purposes into the Occupation and Army Zones, the one under a civil and the other a military government. This division had an important bearing on the problem of native produce. With respect to the Occupation Zone negotiations were carried on in a large measure through diplomatic channels, and the details of control were worked out in conjunction with the Comité National and German civilian officials. But in the Army Zones the situation was more delicate and complicated, for the German forces had a hand in producing the crops. Here the Commission dealt directly and exclusively with the military authorities in regard to both the protection and distribution of the local crops. Because of this administrative distinction, the documents of this chapter are divided into two groups. Part I relates to the Occupation Zone, Part II to the Army Zones.

PART I. THE OCCUPATION ZONE

1. The Belgian Harvest of 1914. November 1914-March 1915

With the assurance of the Governor-General of the Occupation Zone that imported supplies would not be requisitioned, the relief committee had secured the limited acquiescence of the British Foreign Office to importations.

Unquestionably no general opening of the blockade for relief purposes was conceived by the British. This situation became evident when Hoover on the 5th November(226) appealed to Sir Edward Grey for British Government recognition and financial support. Sir Edward made it clear that the continued requisition of native food by the Germans made it impossible for the British to contribute

support. Hoover replied that he would endeavor to persuade the German Government to discontinue these requisitions, and he was assured that success in this would certainly influence the British Government.

Hoover's first step was to inform Minister Whitlock of the British attitude and request him to approach the Governor-General. The following document is particularly interesting as it indicates the eagerness of Baron von der Goltz to see the relief work put on a permanent basis.

DOCUMENT NO. 316

Letter,

VON DER GOLTZ TO WHITLOCK, declaring that imported relief supplies will be devoted exclusively to the civil population and that the army will discontinue requisitions of local produce

BRUSSELS, 14 November 1914

His Excellency, The Honorable Brand Whitlock, Brussels

EXCELLENCY:

The Comité de Secours et d'Alimentation de Bruxelles, established under the patronage of Your Excellency and of His Excellency, the Spanish Minister, has brought to my attention the question of feeding the civil population of Belgium. I am informed that the Committee has decided so to extend its scope as to provide so far as possible for feeding and clothing the civil population of the whole of Belgium.

As Your Excellency knows, Belgium in ordinary time of peace produces only about one-sixth of the amount of flour necessary for its maintenance. Under existing circumstances, with practically no work being done in the country, with crops abandoned and with imports stopped, Your Excellency will realize that the question of feeding the civil population has become extremely serious.

The Committee informs me that it has purchased a large consignment of foodstuffs in England and that the necessary permission having been granted by His Britannic Majesty's Government, this consignment is now being brought to Brussels by way of Holland. The military authorities here have given positive assurances in writing that these supplies shall be devoted exclusively to the feeding of the civil population. While this consignment of supplies relieves the situation, the relief is, of course, only temporary, and in the interest of all concerned an effort must be made to effect some permanent arrangement whereby foodstuffs purchased abroad

may be brought into Belgium upon the distinct understanding that they shall be devoted exclusively to the use of the civil population.

The Comité de Secours et d'Alimentation informs me that it is prepared to collect the necessary funds and to purchase abroad such foodstuffs, clothing, and supplies as may be necessary. The Imperial Government is prepared to offer the most formal assurances that any supplies so purchased will be scrupulously respected by the German military and civil authorities and will be exempt from seizure and requisition. The possession, control, and disposition of all these supplies will be left entirely in the hands of the Committee or its designated agents. It is hoped that in view of the acute situation in Belgium and the assurances which I have the honor to communicate to Your Excellency, His Britannic Majesty's Government will be prepared to permit the free importation into Belgium from England or other countries of such supplies as may from time to time be purchased by the Committee under Your Excellency's patronage.

When informed that His Britannic Majesty's Government is prepared to agree to such an arrangement the Imperial German Government will not only order that the supplies imported for the civil population be respected, but will, further, stop all requisitions for foodstuffs in Belgium. Thus the total amount of foodstuffs which Belgium is able to produce will be left to meet the needs of the civil population.

I have ventured to offer to Your Excellency the foregoing assurances on behalf of the Imperial Government, not only because of the fact that Your Excellency is charged with the protection of German interests in Belgium, but also because I feel that in view of the disinterested and neutral position of the United States no promise could have a more solemn and binding character for Germany than when offered to a representative of the United States Government.

I venture, therefore, to appeal to Your Excellency to bring the foregoing considerations to the attention of His Britannic Majesty's Government and to use your good offices to assure the acceptance of an arrangement such as I have suggested.

While expressing my appreciation of Your Excellency's humanitarian efforts on behalf of German subjects and others in Belgium, I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

(Signed) VON DER GOLTZ

[Translation]

The above assurances of the Governor-General were of great value but were not sufficient. Hoover decided, therefore, to attempt, through Ambassador Gerard, to secure confirmation of von der Goltz' policy from the Imperial authorities in Berlin. Such confirmation would strengthen the Commission's position in Belgium and carry greater weight than military guarantees in the pending negotiations with the British.

DOCUMENT NO. 317

Letter,

HOOVER TO GERARD, concerning German requisitions in *Belgium*, the British attitude, and the protection of belligerent vessels carrying foodstuffs

LONDON, 5 December 1914

*His Excellency James Gerard,
American Ambassador, Berlin*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I take this opportunity of laying before you a matter of great importance and one which threatens to involve the well-being of millions of people.

As you are well aware, as one of the Honorary Chairmen of this Commission, we are making a stupendous effort to justify our countrymen, not only in efficiency and skill, but in broad dealing and humanity, in a task which has been put up to us.

In order to carry this out successfully, we have necessarily to receive the support of both the German and English Governments. We fully understand the German view regarding the population of Belgium: that they, having been dependent for many years for their food supply upon imports and having considerable resources still within the country, should be able to provision themselves, were it not for the wall which has been built around them by the British Navy. On the other hand, the English view is practically that the introduction of foodstuffs into Belgium is furnishing succor to a besieged populace and that any foodstuffs that we bring them relax to that extent the strain which would otherwise fall upon the German people. Between these two clashing mill stones there is daily danger that the whole seven millions of the civil population of Belgium may be reduced, not only to starvation but, through the outbreak of violence, to at least partial massacre.

In the initial stages, the attitude of the English Government was friendly and we were even allowed to purchase a certain amount of foodstuffs in England for transmission to Belgium. Our ships were assisted by the British Admiralty and generally the British Government was helpful to a great degree. This whole attitude

has, however, changed during the last week and we are now confronted with an attitude on the part of this Government which threatens to overthrow the whole of our efforts. I enclose herewith an order(227) which has been sent out by the British Admiralty to all British shipowners, and as seventy per cent of the foodstuffs which we are bringing to Belgium is in British bottoms, this practically means a cessation of our supply unless we can get some relaxation. We are bringing every pressure to bear that we can devise, direct and indirect, to get this remedied, but the firm attitude of the British Government at the present moment appears to be that the large scale operations which we are carrying on defeat the military objects in the relaxation of pressure upon the Germans. It is not that the Germans take the food which we import into Belgium, as we have been able to demonstrate the most scrupulous adherence on their part to the undertakings which they have given to us, but the general feeling on the part of the British that this in the main assists the enemy.

The reason for this change of front has been the recurrent requisitioning of native foodstuffs by the Germans and that, where we import one ton of foodstuffs, they make a requisition for a ton of the foodstuffs which, although it may come from the residues of supplies still in the country, simply means that by continuous requisitions on their part the Germans will secure the substitution of our foodstuffs for all of that which is now in the country. The British Government say that this indirectly amounts to our feeding the German Army.

I know it is a delicate point for us to approach, but it must be vital to the Germans that we should continue this work, and if they could only view the matter from an enlightened position, I feel sure that the good feeling of the German people would cause them to order a complete cessation of local requisitions.

The general indemnities which may be demanded from the Belgian people, to be collected at large from the country, is not a matter upon which we can offer any comment, but it seems to us that if their attitude toward the Belgian people were confined to a general scheme of monthly indemnities such as they threaten, instead of local communal requisitions and fines of money, it would overcome the most difficult problem with which we are faced. In other words, if the Germans take money out of Belgium it may indirectly cause great hardship, but it does not starve the Belgians because the whole problem of feeding the Belgians is the actual material foodstuff required, which we propose to introduce into the country in sufficient amounts to supplement the stores which are already there.

I know that this is a delicate thing for me to suggest, and an even more delicate thing for you to take up, but the impending fate of these seven millions of people surely warrants us in any endeavor which will alleviate their position.

We have now made a fairly complete canvass of the situation in Belgium and we can assure you that there is not, even in the best provided towns, more than two or

three weeks' of bread supply. Numbers of localities have been exhausted for some time and the people reduced entirely to a vegetable diet. There are between one and a fourth and one and a half millions of people being supported by the Communal Kitchens, and there are another two or three millions whose only bread supply is that which we can furnish through the market. This position is getting steadily worse, until within the next sixty days absolutely the only food supply for this whole population will be that which we can import.

I took the liberty a few days ago while in Rotterdam, of telegraphing(228) to you with regard to the possibility of the German Government itself making some subscription to our funds. We require about 20,000,000 marks per month in order to provision this population, and it struck me that of all the opportunities which have yet been presented for the Germans to put themselves in the best form before the American people this was the most excellent, and that if they have the vision to take up the broad attitude that the poor of Belgium are the wards of all of the Powers, and that the Germans are prepared to contribute their quota to their support, it would go a long way to break down the mass of criticism directed against them in America for their treatment of the Belgians. All of the destruction in Belgium and the levying of food supplies for the support of troops can be defended as a war measure, but to allow these people to starve while under their material control will raise a storm in the neutral world fifty times the volume of that which has already been created by any local destruction. It is my belief that the belligerent nation which refuses to participate in the succor of these people will yet have to carry the brand of Cain as their murderers. On the other hand, any kindness held out to them in this time of dire necessity will bring with itself credit which in after history will wipe out nine-tenths of the charges of ruthlessness in war.

For your information I send you herewith the charts showing the material which we had in motion at the beginning of this week. Our position is considerably further improved today.

One other subject before I close, and that is the question of the protection of belligerent vessels carrying our foodstuffs into Rotterdam. We are using your dispatch to encourage British owners to go to Holland but they immediately reply that there is no provision for their protection after they have discharged cargoes and started on their return voyage. I am sure the German Government in acceding to our request wishes to do it in a whole-hearted way, and will have no objection to undertaking that there shall be no interference with these ships on their return voyage from Rotterdam to British ports, so long as they fly our flag. We have no objection to the condition that there is to be no return cargo, and we will take the responsibility that our flag shall not be used except for the direct return.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 318

Letter,

GERARD TO ZIMMERMANN, concerning the exemption of local food supplies in Belgium from requisition and concerning the safety of belligerent ships flying the C.R.B. flag

BERLIN, 28 December 1914

Actual Privy Counsellor, Mr. Zimmermann
Imperial Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

After my call on you last Saturday, on which occasion I was not acting officially but as one of the Honorary Chairmen of the Belgian Relief Commission, I sent to my Government and to the Chairman of the Commission the following telegram:

"Acting not officially, but as one of the Honorary Chairmen Belgian Relief Commission called today with Spanish Ambassador and Netherlands Minister on Undersecretary of State Zimmermann, who gladly and without hesitation assured us that Commanding General in Belgium will give assurances to American, Spanish, and Netherlands Ministers in Belgium that German military authorities will not make any further requisitions of food supplies in Belgium while the International Commissions are sending in food, and for a reasonable time after the last delivery."

There is, however, another matter in which the Belgian Relief Commission required the assurance of the German Government. Supplies are being sent to Belgium in British ships. These ships fly the flag of the Commission, and carry nothing but these supplies for Belgium. Will the Imperial Government not give a public assurance that these boats will not only not be interfered with on the voyage to Belgium, but that there will be no interference with these ships on their return to British ports, so long as they return direct to such ports and sail under the flag of the Commission.

I have the honor to be, my dear Mr. Secretary,

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) JAMES W. GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 319

Telegram,

WHITLOCK TO STATE DEPARTMENT, announcing that von Bissing had given orders forbidding all further requisition of foodstuffs of whatever sort

BRUSSELS, 2 January 1915

STATE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON

I have received today assurances from Baron von Bissing, German Governor-General in Belgium, that orders have been given forbidding all further requisition of foodstuffs of whatever sort in Belgian territory occupied by German troops, and that the protection thus afforded covers cattle and their food as well. He will give any reiterated assurances that we may desire on any occasion that foodstuffs will not be requisitioned, and that we may establish and maintain any kind of control that we may see fit to adopt in connection with our relief work for the civil population. Similar assurances were given to my Spanish colleague.

WHITLOCK

Both Zimmermann's verbal promise to Gerard and von Bissing's assurances to Whitlock came promptly into Hoover's hands. These appeared to meet British demands completely since they provided that all foodstuffs of whatever sort would be free from requisition. Hoover believed that they were exactly what he required at this stage for his negotiations with the British for governmental support. He found, however, in his interview with Sir Edward Grey on the 13th January 1915(229) that the Foreign Office now required that the Germans be persuaded to abandon certain other policies in Belgium before the British Government would commit itself in the matter of financial aid. The Germans had imposed a levy of 40,000,000 francs per month on Belgium and Sir Edward Grey declared that the British Government could not be expected to contribute funds for the support of Belgian relief so long as the Germans continued to extort money from the Belgian people. In spite of this new stipulation Hoover continued to press for wider British support, and a week later Lloyd George(230) consented to the establishment of the exchange plan as one means of financing relief. In these negotiations with the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Hoover had supported his main argument with information from Berlin and Brussels that the protection of all native food supplies for the civilian population had been guaranteed by the Germans. Unfortunately, as the following documents show, the Imperial authorities had made an important reservation in the guarantees, which was contrary to the understanding of Messrs. Gerard and Whitlock on whose assurances Hoover had based his argument with the British.

DOCUMENT NO. 320

Telegram,
GERARD TO HOOVER, from which Hoover for the first time realized the reservations in Zimmermann's assurances regarding requisitions

BERLIN, 22 January 1915

HOOVER, LONDON

After sending you my letter of January 2d and telegram of December 26th I received a note from Foreign Office here stating that Germans would only refrain from requisitioning "food or forage which would require to be replaced by importation by the Committee of Belgian Relief." In addition ([231](#))

GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 321

Letter,
ZIMMERMANN TO GERARD, confirming, but with important alterations the guarantee against requisition in Belgium

BERLIN, 31 December 1914

*His Excellency, Mr. Gerard,
Ambassador of the United States of America*

The undersigned has the honor to inform His Excellency, Mr. Gerard, Ambassador of the United States of America, with reference to the esteemed note of the 28th instant, that the Imperial Governor-General in Belgium will issue without delay an order prohibiting all the troops under his command from requisitioning food or forage of any kind whatsoever which would require to be replaced by importations by the American Committee for Belgian Relief. The Governor-General will, in addition, authorize the Minister of the United States and the Spanish Minister at Brussels as Honorary Chairmen of the Committee, to convince themselves in any way which may to them appear advisable that the prohibition is observed most scrupulously.

With regard to the desire that non-neutral ships bringing food for Belgium may not be interfered with on their return to British ports, and that assurance to this effect

might be given, reference is respectfully made to the Note Verbale of the 24th instant, No. 3 of which contains provisions dealing with this desire.

The undersigned avails himself of the opportunity to renew to the Ambassador the assurances of his most distinguished consideration.

(Signed) ZIMMERMANN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 322

Decree,
by VON BISSING, prohibiting the requisition by the German authorities of
foodstuffs in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 21 January 1915

General Government in Belgium:

With my approval the guarantee has been given to the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, through the intermediary of the Foreign Office that all troops under my orders are forbidden to requisition foodstuffs or artificially prepared fodder materials of any kind whatsoever, replacement of which must be effectuated through importation by the Comité.

In issuing this prohibition in supplement to the decree of November 24th, 1914, (IV a. 11 b. No. 727/II. 11), I remark that it has been a question hitherto, in the supplies imported by the Comité, of flour and breadstuffs, rice, peas, beans, salt, maize, and sugar, but that, in the near future, there will also presumably be imported foddercakes and other artificially prepared fodder materials.

Supplies of this sort therefore may no longer be requisitioned under any conditions by the troops placed under my command, consequently not even against payment.

The exception made in article 6 of my decree of December 29th, 1914 (IV.a.1628/12 I.), in regard to the goods in bulk detained in Antwerp pp [*praemissis praemittendis*] is valid in the present case also.

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 323

Letter,
VON SANDT TO WHITLOCK, defining the Governor-General's ordinance
against requisitions as applying only to the Occupation Zone

BRUSSELS, 18 February 1915

To His Excellency, Mr. Brand Whitlock, Brussels

In reply to Your Excellency's very obliging communication of the 5th instant, I have the honor to say that the ordinance of the Governor-General of the 21st ultimo, concerning a further restriction in the matter of requisitions applies only to the Occupation Zone and not to the Étape.

I have the honor to remain, etc.

VON SANDT

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 324

Letter,
VON BISSING TO COMITÉ NATIONAL, declining to exempt from requisition
all foods produced in Belgium as demanded by the British Government

BRUSSELS, 12 March 1915

Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brussels

Referring to your letter of the 9th instant, I am quite willing, in order to encourage the humanitarian efforts of the Comité which have always had my warmest sympathies, to confirm herewith the previous declarations which have already been given to the Comité in October 1914 and January of this year.

According to these, the foodstuffs of all kinds imported by the Comité for the feeding of the civil population of Belgium remain exclusively reserved for the population of Belgium, and must remain free from military requisitions. I also repeat, in conformity with my declaration of January, that all troops under my orders in the Occupation Zone are forbidden to take, even against payment, foodstuffs and artificial foods for animals, of any kind whatsoever, which are replaced through importations by the Comité. I attach herewith copy of my instructions of January 21, 1915, to my troops.

I cannot agree with your opinion that "every product obtained from our soil" is already being imported by you, and could therefore no longer be requisitioned. In particular, it is not within my knowledge that oats, straw, hay, potatoes, fresh vegetables, and sugar are imported in such quantities that my prohibition should be extended to these articles also.

If English financial circles demand a more extended declaration in the sense that the Imperial General Government exempt from requisition all foods without any distinction, necessary for the maintenance of the people and animals, which shall be produced hereafter in the country, I regret that I am not in a position to give such a declaration. On the contrary, adherence must be continued to the principle that the stocks of articles specified in detail, which were still in the country at the time of the publication of my declaration of January 21, 1915, shall be kept for the country and may not be requisitioned in favor of the troops, even against payment.

Having thus quite clearly explained my point of view to the Comité, I am very willing, by the delivery of a passport, to make possible a trip to London of the Comité's delegate, Monsieur Francqui, for the purpose of negotiations planned by him.(232)

The Governor General

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING

[Translation]

Von Bissing's order of the 21st January 1915,(233) left no doubt that the Germans were determined not to extend their prohibition of requisitions to include all native products. This stiffening of the German position fortunately did not cause the negotiations to break down, for there was at this moment a softening in the British attitude toward the relief. Assured of British aid if he could get the Germans to relinquish indemnities Hoover decided to go to Berlin to plead the Belgian case before the highest officials. The complete story of these Berlin negotiations is told in chapter IV, Documents 131 to 143.(234) On the matter of indemnities Hoover found the Germans as unmovable as in the matter of requisitions and hence, if the British maintained the position they had taken, the Commission's program was headed for disaster because of lack of funds. In view of this serious possibility, Hoover discussed in Berlin and in Brussels other means of financing the Relief, particularly a relief loan to be floated in America. But here again the question of native produce arose. Hoover knew that the German assurance that all native produce would be reserved for the civil population would have to be actually engraved on the face of the certificates before the American bankers and public would consider the purchase of bonds.(235)

Hoover returned to London with a clear and definite confirmation from the highest German authorities of the various guarantees already given, but without the new guarantees he particularly desired. He found the British Government extremely interested in the report of his mission to Berlin and inclined to accommodation. The Foreign Office(236) kept its record clear by refusing "direct" assistance, but Lloyd George advised(237) Hoover that finance would be supplied through the Belgian Government "to the new harvest."

This timely but by no means permanent solution of the financial difficulties of the Commission had come rather more quickly than even Hoover had dared to anticipate. It was evident, however, that since his first conversation with Lloyd George on the 21st January(238) the Chancellor of the Exchequer had become a staunch supporter of the Commission. He was alert to the humanitarian aspect of the relief operations and more than some of the members of the Government he appreciated the force of world opinion which had been mobilized behind the Commission's activities. The first drive for relief contributions in America was in full swing and a powerful public interest in the fate of Belgium was aroused. There might be doubt as to whether American opinion was pro-Ally or pro-German but there was no doubt that it was overwhelmingly pro-Belgian.

2. The Belgian Harvest of 1915. March-July 1915

As soon as Hoover was assured of this temporary respite---a subsidy until June---he began to press the Germans to give such guarantees respecting the new harvest of 1915 as would insure justice to the Belgians and meet the reasonable British demands. The documents which follow show Hoover's efforts in this direction. They also indicate that the British were determined to make no further concessions.

DOCUMENT NO. 325

Extracts of letter,
HOOVER TO GERARD, describing the situation with regard to native crops and suggesting an appeal to the Emperor

LONDON, 27 March 1915

*His Excellency, James Gerard,
American Ambassador, Berlin*

DEAR MR. GERARD:

The real important situation, which I set out in my separate letter, revolves round our desire to protect this year's harvest in Belgium, for if the present military situation is going to continue there is nothing in God's world which will save the Belgians from extinction except their own products, and if these are going to be taken away from them we may just as well throw up our hands today as next August. We would like you to consider whether or not it would not be wise if you would have a personal discussion with the Emperor on this major question and possibly the minor ones. I feel that for us to go back to the civil authorities in Berlin only places us in further difficulties in Brussels, as von Bissing only resents any such negotiations on our part, and the civil authorities in Berlin have no authority over him at all. If you do not think it is possible to do anything by way of a personal interview and that it could be framed up by the Emperor in such a manner as not to put us in the wrong, I doubt the wisdom of opening it up in any formal way through the Foreign Office.

It comes to this: that interference on our behalf by the civil government in Berlin only makes our state worse in Belgium and we would rather fight along directly with von Bissing than have the interference of the German Foreign Office. If, on the other hand, the Emperor himself would interest himself in seeing that our humanitarian efforts are carried out on the lines of the separate letter which I enclose, our path would then be comparatively easy, for not only can I provide the finance until next August but the crop in Belgium would carry these people on another four months after that date. I have written this separate letter in such a form that it might be possible that you could use it directly with the Emperor.

.....

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

ENCLOSURE

.....

You will recollect the conversation which we had in Berlin with various members of the government, which finally settled down to a proposal from the German Government that they would facilitate the creation of Belgian provincial obligations which we group together and upon which we could float a loan for Belgian relief, and I was informed in Berlin that the German Government would have no objection to its being guaranteed by the Belgian Government at Havre, the object of this Belgian Government guarantee being to give assurances to the lenders that the loan would be recognized by the Belgian Government if it came into power. We were referred to Brussels to settle the details.

I went to Brussels and was there informed by a member of the German Finance Ministry that before this project could be further consummated it would be necessary to have a firm agreement with the English Government that the shipping of the foodstuffs into Belgium would not be interfered with through the whole period of the war. I therefore returned to England and busied myself at once about securing this assurance. The English Foreign Office finally replied that they would have no objection to giving the assurance but that it would be conditional upon an agreement from the German Government to you that (a) there should be likewise no requisitions or purchases by the Germans of native or imported foodstuffs, cattle, or cattle fodder of any kind in Belgium throughout the war, and (b) that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should maintain an adequate staff in Belgium properly to account for the responsibility of the distribution of the imported foodstuffs to the civilian population and the consummation of the guarantees as above. I communicated this fact to our colleagues in Brussels, and Mr. Francqui as Chairman of the Comité National took up negotiations with the representatives of the German Finance Department and stated that it would be necessary to have these undertakings. The local representatives in Brussels stated that this matter would have to be referred to Berlin, and nothing was accomplished. Later on Mr. Francqui addressed a letter to General von Bissing, asking that such undertakings should be given, because it was hopeless for us to secure finance unless such guarantees were given as would protect this year's harvests. His Excellency replied refusing to extend these undertakings already given, and in effect pointing out that these undertakings only applied to foodstuffs remaining in the country as at January 21st; that is, they make no undertaking as to anything introduced after that date. We are therefore brought to an absolute deadlock.

The English Government refuses absolutely to give any such undertaking as the Germans wish with regard to shipping unless the Germans give assurances on their side as to leaving the Belgians the use of their meager food supply and their future production, and, moreover, as stated above, it is utterly useless for us to endeavor to raise a loan from financial houses without both assurances. No one is going to lend us money with which to buy food when the probability stares us in the face that the German Army will take possession of the harvest or that the English will suppress our operations.

We are now getting into desperate financial straits and the Commission at the present moment is 32,000,000 marks in debt on the Belgian account. This arises from the fact that in the hope that we would solve the above difficulties we have made purchases which are vitally necessary in order to maintain the regular flow of foodstuff into Belgium. Our situation was so desperate that I asked Mr. Francqui to come over and see if we could not devise some measure to raise money. We have succeeded to the extent of enough money to cover our obligations to the end of April by advances which we are securing partly as a matter of exchange on Belgium and partly as advances on guarantees by Belgian banks. These operations, however, exhaust present resources. We have, however, to purchase over

40,000,000 marks of food per month on Belgian account and our philanthropic support has now dwindled to about 8,000,000 marks a month, so that unless we can obtain the assurances that we have asked for we shall come to a hopeless debacle about the 1st of May as we shall then be unable to meet our progressive liabilities from resources now in hand.

Inasmuch as it appears to me that the things we have asked for are so moderate, I cannot believe that the secondary German officials refuse owing to the lack of broad understanding as to the importance of this work from the German point of view, to say nothing of its humanitarian aspect.

.....

DOCUMENT NO. 326

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, commenting on unsatisfactory clauses in the Commission's agreement with the German General Staff

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
6 April 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Many thanks for your letter of the 29th ultimo, regarding your agreement([239](#)) with the German General Staff about the conditions of your work in Northern France.

As I told you the other day, the conditions of your work in these districts are not our business, but are matters for the French Government. But it may be worth while for me to point out, in connection with our recent correspondence, that this Government would regard these conditions as wholly unsatisfactory if applied in any way to Belgium.

Points 4 and 5 are of course the offending provisions. The Germans here admit that they have done in France what in effect they have recently taken steps to do in Belgium by enforcing the registration of all stocks of foodstuffs in the country--- namely to take all such stocks under their own control and then plead that they are their own stocks and not the stocks of the civil population. You remember the history of the military stores at Antwerp and you are doubtless aware of the other enormous seizures at Antwerp from private stores like those of the Liebig factory. You remember too the parade of generosity with which the Germans placed half their "military" stores at Brussels at your disposal in December, provided you replaced them eventually. The fixed policy of the Germans is clearly to make

larceny a title of ownership and we rely upon you to resist all such attempts at encroachment in Belgium by every means in your power.

But though point 4 is bad, point 5 is infinitely worse. We really must insist that in Belgium the Germans shall scrupulously respect the produce of the next harvest. Any attempt on the part of the Germans to go back on or to restrict the application of their undertaking to requisition no more foodstuffs in Belgium; any attempt to get hold of the next harvest by indirect means; will lead us immediately to reconsider our whole attitude. We must be satisfied that the certainty of the continuance of your supplies does not enable the Germans to divert to their own use one ounce of the food which would otherwise be at the disposal of the civil population. We must be satisfied of this, not only by guarantees given by the Germans, but by adequate supervision maintained by your agents and facilitated by the German authorities. We have compromised on many points hitherto, but we can assent to no compromise on this point. And the German conditions as to the French districts are therefore gravely disquieting, because they indicate an intention generously to allow you to exist provided that they are thereby enabled to take every scrap of food which the country has produced in the past or may produce in the future. This is intolerable and, in the interests of the continuance of the various arrangements under which you work, I sincerely hope that you will be able to induce the Germans to abandon this impossible position.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 327

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, commenting on the C.R.B. agreement with the German General Staff on feeding in Northern France

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
21 April 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Many thanks for your letter of the 19th. The new treaty([240](#)) with the Germans in France is certainly an improvement on the first one, but point 8 contains the objectionable features against which I protested in the first.

As to the harvest, I know that Mr. Gerard is going to the Emperor personally about it, so I will say no more than that a settlement on this point is absolutely necessary if our present arrangements are to continue.

As to the continuance of requisitions against "bons," the provision is, to say the least, strange. In the first treaty the Germans said that there were no more foodstuffs in the possession of the population, as they had all been converted into military stores. The two statements do not tally, but both are absolutely inadmissible from our point of view.

The above is my own opinion only, but I feel most strongly about it, and I don't think anyone here is likely to feel less strongly than I!

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 328

Extract of letter,
HOOVER TO GERARD, Stating that if the Germans refused to make a guarantee to reserve the local harvest for the Belgians, the Allies would cause the Commission's work to end on the 15th August 1915

LONDON, 1 May 1915

*His Excellency the Honorable James Gerard
American Ambassador, Berlin*

DEAR MR. GERARD:

.....

I have, however, just received an intimation from the Allied Governments of another phase of this matter which is of dominating importance. They now say that if the Germans will make no undertaking to leave to the Belgians their harvest, the Allied Governments will have to insist that the efforts and organization of this Committee come to an end on the 15th day of August and that it should then absolutely dissolve. This would be a great pity, because if the present situation should continue into next year and even if the Belgians did retain their harvest and their local production, their breadstuffs would not be likely to last beyond the end of October in any event. You can yourself imagine what would be the attitude of the military party in this country, with whom we have had such infinite difficulties, if next autumn we should propose to re-enter Belgium and in the meantime the Germans had requisitioned or absorbed any of the native food supplies. The contention of this element in the Allied Governments, that the efforts of this Commission were merely replenishing requisitioned material, would be self-evident and I am certain we could never again obtain approval to restart.

When I addressed you last it was with the hope that some undertaking with regard to the harvest could be entered upon, in order to facilitate the financial gap in our budget between now and harvest. We have had to fight our own way through this difficulty and are likely to succeed. But if the Germans would like to keep this Commission alive as against the eventuality that they still occupy the same territory after the end of next October, it is positively essential that they should make, at once, a broad and sufficient undertaking with regard to the whole of the foodstuffs produced within the Occupation Zone. If we are to go on after harvest we have also got to make some sort of definite financial arrangements for our support. If the German Government would comply with our request for a definite and broad undertaking with regard to the protection of the native food supplies during the whole of their occupation, I am satisfied that we could create some kind of a financial institution and float a loan on the back of the Belgian provinces. We should not, in this event, require any direct assistance from the German Government, but I can only reiterate that the whole future of the business now depends upon whether the German Government will enter into such undertakings with regard to native production.

WORK IN NORTHERN FRANCE

You will be glad to know that we have got this business on to a satisfactory working basis and have already distributed over 20,000 tons of flour to these people. The German authorities are co-operating in the most cordial and efficient manner and the work is going very smoothly.

SOME SIDE ISSUES

You will please find enclosed herewith, copy of a purported interview with General von Bissing, which appeared in the New York *Staatszeitung* on the 12th April. I have telegraphed most of this interview to Brussels and asked them to confirm from General von Bissing whether or no he made such statements. I cannot believe that he did. The inference from the statements is that we are a lot of commercial pirates operating under the cloak of charity and our staff at this end and in New York are so indignant that they threaten to resign unless the matter can be put right before the American people and I am afraid that some of them will break loose and express their opinions of General von Bissing in a manner which will not enhance the opinion of the neutral world as to his administration. I am, however, trying to hold them in leash. Every German official in Belgium must know perfectly well that there are now 1,500,000 people being fed gratis from the public canteens and that these canteens are being supported by this Commission. Also General von Bissing is perfectly well aware that whereas we do sell foodstuffs to those who can still pay, at a small margin of profit, this margin of profit goes to assist in the support of the canteens and to make up some part of the deficiency which must be otherwise supplied entirely by public charity. By the middle of August we shall have expended a total of over M. 250,000,000 on foodstuffs for the Belgians and of

this between M. 60,000,000 and M. 70,000,000 will have been spent on the destitute, which sums have been secured by way of donations amounting to approximately M. 50,000,000, and we have earned a balance of M. 10,000,000 or M. 20,000,000 out of profits made from the sale of foodstuffs to those who can pay. Furthermore we shall have achieved a point of merit in that although a small profit is earned on the foodstuffs sold, we have maintained the price of bread in Belgium at from 10 per cent to 15 per cent below the price in London. This could only have been accomplished by the efficient volunteer and self-denying efforts of the many hundreds of Americans who have been engaged upon this task. If we are to maintain this machinery in existence after August it is going to be necessary not only to have the question of requisition settled but that General von Bissing shall remove the stigma which he has placed over this body of idealists. I, however, sometimes feel constrained to believe that there is nothing that an American can do which in German eyes is not founded on sinister motives no matter how much the Germans themselves may benefit from it.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER,
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 329

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, stating that unless satisfactory guarantees respecting the Belgian crop of 1915 be promptly secured from the Germans, the operations of the C.R.B. would not be permitted after the middle of August 1915

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
4 May 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

You will remember that on April 6th I wrote to you a letter, [\(241\)](#) the latter part of which dealt with the question of the treatment by the Germans of the coming harvest in the districts in German occupation where you are carrying on your provisioning work. I there explained to you that we could assent to no compromise on this point; that we "must insist that in Belgium the Germans shall scrupulously respect the produce of the next harvest."

Some time has passed and I have heard nothing further from you. Meanwhile we have been allowing you to send seed into Belgium, in the belief that the harvest when it comes will be used exclusively for the civil population whom you have so

narrowly saved from starvation during all these months. We cannot wait much longer for a satisfactory declaration of the attitude of the German authorities, nor can I run any risk of your being able to say in the future that I did not give you sufficient warning of what may happen.

It is self-evident to me, and must be equally so to you, that your work will in all probability have to stop when the harvest matures, that is to say, I presume, about the middle of August, unless positive guarantees are forthcoming from the German authorities that they will scrupulously respect, and abstain from requisitioning, the harvest in all the areas where your work is going on. I even foresee that, unless such guarantees are given soon, a strong opinion will develop in this country that your work should not continue up to the moment of the new harvest, thus tiding the Germans over the whole period until they obtain new material for requisitions. The Germans have given nothing to the people of these areas during the past months; they must take nothing from them during the months to come.

In view of these probable grave results of the present uncertainty, I sincerely trust that you will be able to inform me very soon, and at any rate before the end of the present month, that you have obtained the necessary guarantees from the German authorities.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 330

Letter,
GERARD TO VON JAGOW,(242) Stating the necessity of German guarantees respecting the Belgian crop if the C.R.B. is to continue its operations.(243)

AMERICAN EMBASSY, BERLIN
5 May 1915

His Excellency, Herr von Jagow
Imperial Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

At the instance of Mr. Hoover, Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, I have the honor to bring herewith to Your Excellency's kind consideration certain aspects of the work of the Commission as regards the disposition of this year's harvest in Belgium.

As Your Excellency is perhaps aware, the Commission was unable to complete definite financial arrangements in England for financing the Commission without obtaining from the Imperial Government a broad undertaking that no more native foodstuffs would be requisitioned in Belgium by the German authorities until peace was concluded, such an undertaking referring only to the Occupation Zone, not to the Operation Zone.

Up to the present time the Commission has been able to revolve their resources by virtue of a considerable amount of commercial exchange in Belgium, which it has secured by advertising in the United States that it would make payments in Belgium as against moneys paid to it in that country and it has therefore gathered up a good many balances owing to Belgian firms and individuals in the United States as a result of pre-war trading operations. Furthermore, it has had some money from the Belgian Government for distribution among the communes in Belgium, in accordance with the arrangements made, with the approval of the German authorities, in Brussels on December 1st last. The Commission is not certain whether or not it can maintain its finances in order until the next harvest, but hopes for the best.

The Commission has, however, just received an intimation from the Allied Governments of another phase of the matter of serious importance. The Commission is informed by them that, if the Imperial Government will not make an undertaking to leave to the Belgians their harvest, the Allied Governments will have to insist that the efforts and organization of this Commission come to an end on the 15th day of August and that it should then absolutely dissolve.

The Commission considers this a great pity, because if the present situation should continue into next year, and even if the Belgians did retain their harvest and their local production, the breadstuffs would not be likely to last beyond the end of October in any event. The Commission is of the opinion that, should the Commission, having thus been compelled to suspend its work because of the absence of such an undertaking on the part of Germany, propose to re-enter Belgium next autumn, and the German authorities had requisitioned or absorbed any of the native food supplies, it would never be possible for the Commission to obtain permission from the British authorities to resume its activities on the ground that the Commission would be merely replenishing requisitioned supplies.

It therefore results, in the opinion of the Commission, that, if the Imperial Government desires to keep the Commission alive as against the eventuality that the German forces still occupy the same territory after the end of next October, it is positively essential that it should make, at once, a broad and adequate undertaking with regard to the whole of the foodstuffs produced within the Occupation Zone.

Furthermore, if the Commission is to go on after the harvest, it feels that it must make some sort of financial arrangements for its support. The Commission is of the

opinion that, if the Imperial Government would comply with the request for a definite and broad undertaking with regard to the protection of the native food supplies during the whole of the occupation of Belgian territory by German forces, the Commission is confident that it could create some kind of a financial institution and float a loan on the back of the Belgian provinces. In this event, the Commission would not require any direct assistance from the Imperial Government.

Mr. Hoover concludes by reiterating that the whole future of the undertaking now depends upon whether the Imperial Government will enter into such undertakings with regard to the native production.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) JAMES W. GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 331

Extracts of letter,
FRANCQUI To HOOVER, stating his opinion that on the basis of the agreements made the seizure of the Belgian crop by the Germans was not a sufficient reason for the British stopping further imports by the Commission

BRUSSELS, 7 May 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

The Minister of the United States has kindly handed me a copy of the letter you sent him on the 20th April last, which reached Brussels after a long delay due to the interruption of the mail service.

The perusal of your letter suggested to me the following remarks:

Future Policy.---As you have most wisely covered the needs of the Belgian population until the 15/31 August next, we must now, above all, consider the question of the next crop.

In order to explain clearly my views, I wish to review the guarantees granted by the German authorities and which have led England to allow the importation of goods to Belgium.

The first of these guarantees results from a letter of Baron von der Goltz on the 16th October 1914(244)

On January last, as the outcome of your endeavors in Berlin and of our negotiations in Brussels, we were able to obtain an additional guarantee. By an order dated 21st January(245)

This statement shows quite clearly that the next crop is unprotected. Should the German authorities seize all or a part of this, we could only base our protest upon the Treaty of The Hague and the international agreements, but the German Government would not be open to any reproach for breach of agreement.

On the other side, seizure of the new crop would in no case furnish the British Government with a pretext to stop the flow of goods to Belgium, as their consent has been given on the basis of Baron von der Goltz' letter of 16th October, which Mr. Gibson, Baron Lambert, and myself communicated to Mr. Asquith.

It seems therefore beyond doubt that if necessary---I mean in case of seizure of the next harvest---we are at liberty to keep on provisioning Belgium.

(Signed) E. FRANQUI

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 332

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, regarding the attitude of the Comité National on the British threat to stop imports

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
26 May 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

.....

I think the Belgians of the Comité National should recognize that we are putting up a fight to preserve their harvest for them, and not object to our action in the matter.

There is, it is true, no "bluff" about our action, as we are in deadly earnest about stopping the whole arrangement if the necessary guarantee is not given, but the whole value of our attitude as a means of putting pressure on the Germans will be compromised if the Comité National regard us as hard-hearted tyrants instead of backing our attitude up with what influence they have in Belgium.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 333

Extract of letter,
HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, regarding the likelihood that relief work would be ended on the 15th August and Hoover's intention of going to Berlin to attempt to get the concessions necessary to permit the work to go on

LONDON, 26 May 1915

*The Honorable Brand Whitlock
American Minister, Brussels*

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

I should be glad if you would communicate the following to our friends in Brussels, also the enclosed copy of letter from the Foreign Office.

From discussions I have had with the Foreign Office people There is no doubt in my mind that they are fairly in earnest as regards their notice that we must bring our work to an end by the middle of August unless some undertaking is secured with regard to the next harvest. I had intended to come to Belgium long before this to have a general discussion upon the whole situation, but the events arising out of the "Lusitania" incident have made this undesirable until some settlement has been reached in that matter. On two successive occasions where vital matters have been at stake, an entire change has been obtained by me through intervention in Berlin.

... I assume that this course will have to be pursued again, if the stream of foodstuffs is to be kept flowing.

.....

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER,
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 334

Letter,
PERCY TO HOOVER, declining to wait longer for German guarantees and stating
British intention to place the matter formally before the United States Government

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
31 May 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Many thanks for your letter of the 27th about the harvest. I quite recognize the difficulties you have been under as regards pushing the question at Brussels under present circumstances, but I do not think that it would be of any use to wait longer before taking the matter up officially with the United States Government. The matter is too serious to be any longer delayed---but an official communication to the United States Government should assist you in getting a favourable reply.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 335

Telegram,
HOOVER To BATES, suggesting that a representative of the Imperial German
Bank in America be informed of the situation and probable consequences

LONDON, 1 June 1915

LINDON BATES, NEW YORK:

Suggest you inform your Imperial Bank friend that we have been given absolute orders by Allied Governments to provide no food supplies for Belgium beyond August 15th unless Germans positively undertake that there be no requisitioning next harvest within Occupation Zone. I am confident there will be no retreat from this position and the whole work of Commission comes to an early end unless Germans continue the undertaking which they gave last December in such manner as to cover this harvest. We have done all we could and it is up to them to say whether they desire the activities of this organization to continue.

HOOVER

Having brought from different quarters considerable pressure on the Germans to agree not to requisition the Belgian harvest, Hoover went to Brussels to take the matter up personally with the German authorities. As a last resort he was prepared to go on to Berlin to appeal to the Imperial Government. But this was not necessary, for on his arrival in Brussels he discovered that the Germans were in a more conciliatory mood. The Governor-General, he learned, was ready to accept the principle that the Belgian harvest should be utilized exclusively for the Belgian people. This was a victory of the greatest importance, for it not only saved the local harvest for Belgians, but it also saved the relief enterprise from disaster. It remained for Hoover to work out with the Germans and the British a formula for applying the principle that would be acceptable to both parties.⁽²⁴⁶⁾ The following documents show the steps by which this formula was evolved and the decrees of the Governor-General putting the principle into effect.

DOCUMENT NO. 336

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, submitted by Whitlock to von der Lancken, suggesting a general guarantee to be subscribed to by the German Governor-General

BRUSSELS, 18 June 1915

MEMORANDUM FOR BARON VON DER LANCKEN

The Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, under the patronage of the Ministers of Spain and the United States, and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands, will continue to import, till the harvest of 1916, the necessary materials for the feeding of the civil population in the occupied territory, placed under the rule of the Governor-General in Belgium.

The Governor-General in Belgium will, on his side, leave at the disposal of the Belgian civil population placed under his orders, the produce of the harvest of wheat of 1915, relating to the materials for bread-making (wheat, barley).

As soon as the Governor-General has decided on the subject of the division of the harvest, whether it should be distributed over the whole country, or only in the agricultural districts, or else following some entirely different plan, the decision come to is to be communicated to the Ministers of Spain and the United States of America and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands for transmission to the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium so that they may make their plans accordingly.

DOCUMENT NO. 337

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, sent to von der Lancken through Whitlock, disclosing the pressure from the British Government and indicating the desirability of a prompt confirmation by the German authorities of the guarantees they had accepted in principle

BRUSSELS, 22 June 1915

MEMORANDUM FOR BARON VON DER LANCKEN

I. The C.R.B. has been for some time under negotiation with German shipping companies and with the German and Dutch Governments with a view to the employment of interned German cargo ships([247](#)) to handle the entire relief foodstuffs. This negotiation is practically consummated to the point of signing the agreement. Aside from giving employment to German ships on remunerative rates, the saving to the Commission and thus to the people of Belgium will amount to about £150,000 per month or £5,000 per diem. The only thing which prevents our completing this contract and thus employing these ships instead of others, is the negotiation for the harvest; and every day's delay costs the people of Belgium £5,000.

II. It has been with a great deal of difficulty that the English Government could be prevented from issuing a note through the press exposing their paternal interest in the people of Belgium and the desire to secure to them the harvest, and that the Commission is ordered to cease shipments into Belgium until such a settlement can be arrived at. It has been the feeling of the Commission that such an exhibition on the part of the English Government would greatly embarrass all negotiations, and their keen desire that the German Government should be the first to announce this arrangement. Since I came to Belgium we have had two indications from London of the extreme restiveness of the English Government, and it is with difficulty that they are being held back from what they consider would be an action advantageous to their prestige; and it would be most disagreeable to us, now that the German Government has agreed on principle, that it should appear that this had been done under pressure from the English Government as would be the case if any such public announcement were made now by that Government.

III. It is perfectly immaterial to the C.R.B. whether or not these negotiations reach a successful consummation, except as to their interest in the people of Belgium. The Commission is glad to serve the Belgian people and the German Government by giving free service of its members to this important humanitarian work. But, if it is not the wish of the German Government to facilitate this matter, or that the Commission should continue on personal grounds, it would be only too glad to

retire from the entire situation, which will involve Northern France as well as Belgium.

DOCUMENT NO. 338

Memorandum,
by VON BISSING, confirming the verbal guarantee not to requisition the Belgian crop of 1915. Forwarded by Whitlock to Hoover

BRUSSELS, 25 June 1915

Herbert C. Hoover, Rotterdam

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have just had the pleasure of an interview with His Excellency Baron von der Lancken, and he has handed me the enclosed memorandum from His Excellency, Baron von Bissing, Governor-General in Belgium, in which His Excellency sets forth his willingness to hold at the disposal of the civil population of Belgium the new crop that will be gathered this summer.

The formal exchange of letters on this subject will take place within a few days, when certain details shall have been arranged with the Comité National.

I am very glad, as I am sure you will be, at this happy outcome of our efforts, and I feel more than ever convinced that it is a very good understanding on all sides and that things will now go on in a very agreeable manner.

With many kind regards,

I am ever your friend

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

MEMORANDUM

The Governor-General in Belgium will hold at the disposal of the Belgian civil population of the territory placed under his orders the product of the grain harvest of 1915 used for the making of bread (wheat and rye).

On its side, the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium under the patronage of the Ministers of Spain, the United States of America, and the Netherlands, will continue to import into Belgium, in about equal monthly quantities, until the harvest of 1916, the necessary commodities for the feeding of

the civil population within the occupied territory placed under the orders of the Governor-General.

Immediately the Governor-General shall have taken a decision with regard to the distribution of the harvest of grain above mentioned for 1915, this decision will be brought to the knowledge of the protecting ministers.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 339

Letter,
HOOVER TO PERCY, concerning the German guarantees and asking for an undertaking by the British Government not to interfere with shipments and suggesting the nature of the limitations which the British might make in their commitment

LONDON, 30 June 1915

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

In the matter of our conversation of yesterday, regarding General von Bissing's undertaking as to the harvest, I understand that this will be communicated to you formally by the American Ambassador, with the request for an undertaking from you that this Commission will not be interfered with during the next year, in its effort to provision the people of Belgium. Such an undertaking is obviously necessary to us before we can agree with the Germans to continue imports.

If you still feel that you must impose limitations on your commitment, I would suggest that it should not go further than the following, duly put into diplomatic language:

"His Majesty's Government notes that General von Bissing has undertaken that the wheat and rye harvest in the Occupation Zone in Belgium shall be reserved exclusively for the civil population in Belgium, to be issued to the population in twelve equal monthly instalments. We also note that you wish an assurance to the Commission that their shipping shall not be interfered with by us, in order that they may be able to import the necessary supplement to the harvest. We are willing to give this assurance, but it must be understood that this undertaking continues only so long as the following conditions are observed:

"a) That the purchase and distribution of the harvest in Belgium shall be under the management of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, in the same manner as the imported foodstuffs, and that the Commission for Relief in

Belgium and the Comité National shall continue to administer relief in kind to the destitute, as heretofore, and any regulations entered into or imposed upon the Commission and the Comité National, with regard to their activities, shall be submitted for the approval of His Majesty's Government.

"b) With regard to other foodstuffs, not mentioned in General von Bissing's undertaking, no foodstuffs shall be imported into Belgium in substitution for or in replacement of foodstuffs requisitioned from the civil population by the military authorities.

"c) Attacks upon the ships engaged upon the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall cease."

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 340

Letter,
VON BISSING TO WHITLOCK, confirming von der Lancken's memorandum

BRUSSELS, 4 July 1915

His Excellency, Mr. Brand Whitlock

SIR:

I was happy to learn from the letter that Your Excellency was good enough to send me under date of the 3d July last that Your Excellency, as well as His Excellency the Minister of His Majesty the King of Spain and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands are in accord with the memorandum which, on my orders, Baron von der Lancken had the honor of transmitting to them on the subject of the different arrangements to be arrived at for the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation of Belgium in view of the next harvest and the continuation of the revictualment.

I beg to confirm as follows to Your Excellency the text of this memorandum:

"The Governor General in Belgium will hold at the disposal of the Belgian civil population of the territory placed under his orders the product of the grain harvest of 1915, used for the manufacture of bread (wheat and rye). On its side, the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium under the patronage of the Ministers of Spain, the United States of America, and the Netherlands, will continue to import into Belgium, in about equal monthly quantities until the harvest

of 1916, the products necessary for the feeding of the civil population in the territory occupied under the orders of the Governor-General in Belgium.

"As soon as the Governor-General has taken a decision on the subject of the distribution of the 1915 harvest of grain above mentioned, this decision will be brought to the knowledge of the protecting ministers."

After having received Your Excellency's letter I again confirm with satisfaction that the revictualing organization placed under the patronage of the worthy representatives of the three neutral powers, will continue until the harvest of 1916, under the auspices of their governments to assure the alimentation of the Belgian population.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 341

Letter,

THE MARQUIS OF CREWE TO PAGE, reviewing the negotiations regarding requisitions and stating the position of the British Government in respect to the German guarantee

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

7 July 1915

MM DEAR AMBASSADOR:

The Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation have been in communication with General von Bissing with a view to obtain from the German authorities in Belgium an undertaking that they will respect the Belgian harvest and will leave that harvest for distribution to the civil population free from all requisitions, seizures, or interference whatsoever on the part of the German civil or military authorities.

I now understand that-General von Bissing has consented to give the necessary undertaking as regards the wheat and rye harvest in the territory placed under his jurisdiction, and the Relief Commission has communicated to me the enclosed memorandum to that effect given by General von Bissing to the United States Minister at Brussels. It would seem, however, that this undertaking is made subject to an assurance on the part of the Commission that it will continue to import regular

amounts of foodstuffs into the territory under General von Bissing's jurisdiction in each month until the harvest of 1916, the distribution of the native harvest being conducted *pari passu* with the distribution of such imported foodstuffs. In order that it may be able to fulfil this condition, the Commission asks for an assurance from His Majesty's Government that they will maintain in force the arrangement by which, since last October, permits have from time to time been granted to the Commission, allowing it to import foodstuffs into Belgium, under the guarantee that these foodstuffs shall reach the civil population only.

His Majesty's Government are prepared to give this assurance, but they must give it subject to certain conditions, necessitated by the experience of the last eight months. In order to make the grounds of these conditions clear, I venture to draw attention to the history of the Commission's work.

Under the guarantees agreed to by the Commission, His Majesty's Government originally consented to permit the importation of foodstuffs by it at a time when the approaching scarcity in Belgium could be clearly foreseen, and they did so in the belief that the German Government would at last act with forbearance in face of that scarcity. But, in place of forbearance, the German authorities continued to requisition the native stocks of foodstuffs of all kinds in Belgium until the middle of January, and they not only seized such stocks for the use of the occupying army but exported them to Germany. The extent of the subsequent scarcity was therefore deliberately increased by the German Government and in November His Majesty's Government was obliged to call the attention of the Commission to these requisitions and to warn them that the continuation of such seizures must affect continued imports.

When in the middle of January the German authorities consented to give an undertaking to cease such requisitions and seizures as regards a limited number of articles of food, they continued their unlimited requisitions and seizures of all articles not included in the small list covered by that undertaking, and they now refuse to respect the native produce of even the articles included in that list, except upon conditions. His Majesty's Government must therefore maintain that the German authorities have taken advantage of the foresight and the labours of the Commission to deprive the Belgian people of their native resources.

The German Government have by this action and by the whole attitude they have assumed, shown their determination to divest themselves of all responsibility for the population whose territory they have occupied, and to leave that population to the exclusive care of their own rightful Government, its Allies, and the neutral world. Taking full account of this attitude His Majesty's Government have been obliged to stipulate and now wish to stipulate even more clearly, that the feeding and maintenance of the civil population of Belgium shall be absolutely divided from the feeding and maintenance of the occupying army, and His Majesty's Government have only sanctioned, and will only sanction, the work of the

Commission on the distinct understanding that this division is maintained; that is to say, that the Commission gives a complete guarantee that no foodstuffs for which it is responsible go in any way directly or indirectly to any person connected with the occupying army of the German civil administration, and that the relief distributed by it is not in any way taken advantage of by the army or the administration for their own ends. This rigorous distinction must be maintained, and it follows, as a condition precedent to any assurance such as the Commission now asks for, that the Commission and the Comité National shall obtain and continue at all times to enjoy the freedom of action corresponding to their independent responsibility for the feeding and the maintenance of the civil population.

I feel obliged to state these considerations because the German authorities have shown a constant tendency to take action incompatible with this distinction. Particulars have been published in the press throughout the world of the coercive measures adopted by the German authorities at such places as Ghent and Malines, and there are indications that they intend to make such measures part of a general policy of coercion throughout Belgium.

I am not here concerned, and His Majesty's Government are not concerned, with the question whether any particular class of workmen should or should not receive relief, but if the German authorities desire to use the machinery of the Commission and the Comité National for the purpose of coercing the working population of Belgium to employ themselves, against their own will and conscience, directly or indirectly in the service, or for the benefit, of the occupying army, they must themselves provide the relief which those bodies dispense and all arrangements between His Majesty's Government and the Commission must cease.

I trust that the above considerations will render clear the grounds on which His Majesty's Government must make the following stipulations:

1. That the purchase and distribution of the harvest in Belgium shall be under the management of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, in the same manner as the imported foodstuffs, and that the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National shall continue to administer relief in kind to the destitute as heretofore. Any agreement entered into by, and any regulations imposed upon, the Commission or the Comité National with regard to their activities, whether in relation to the harvest or in relation to any other matter, shall be submitted to His Majesty's Government by the Commission for their approval, before the conclusion of such agreement or the acceptance of such regulations.
2. With regard to articles other than wheat and rye, His Majesty's Government cannot of course give any undertaking; and they will not permit the Commission to introduce any such articles into Belgium until an undertaking is given in regard to them by the German authorities similar to that now given in regard to wheat and rye. As, however, the Commission assures His Majesty's Government that six

articles of food which it desires to import will in practice not form the object of requisitions in Belgium, His Majesty's Government are prepared on that understanding to allow the Commission from time to time to import these articles, viz---peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize for human consumption, so long as the import of these articles does not represent a replacement of other articles requisitioned by the Germans. This permission shall be subject to immediate withdrawal upon determination by His Majesty's Government that the import of these articles does in effect constitute such a replacement.

3. As His Majesty's Government have to complain of constant and flagrant violation by the German Government of their undertaking to respect British ships carrying the Commission's foodstuffs to Rotterdam, they must insist that any further attack made on such vessels shall relieve them from all obligations under the present arrangement.

Subject to these conditions, I hereby give an assurance to the Commission that His Majesty's Government will continue to give permits for the passage of its imports into the territory in Belgium placed under General von Bissing's jurisdiction.

It is of course understood that the present assurances given to the Commission by His Majesty's Government and by the German Government do not supersede, but on the contrary supplement and form an integral part of, the previous assurances and guarantees given by either government.

I am,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) CREWE

DOCUMENT NO. 342

Decree,
issued by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, regarding the seizure of all cereals produced by the harvest of 1915 in the Occupation Zone in Belgium. (Published July 5, 1915)

BRUSSELS, 30 June 1915

I have decided that all cereals used for the making of bread, and other agricultural products mentioned in Article I arising from this year's harvest, will be exclusively reserved for the provisioning of the population of the country under the General Government. To this end, I wish first of all that all the undermentioned stocks should be seized, according to the instructions of the present Decree. The intention

of this seizure is to prevent speculation in the price of bread; besides, this measure will make it possible to re-distribute in equal proportions the wheat and flour, having regard to the needs of the different regions of the country. I hope that the Belgian population, and especially the agricultural owners, will prove their good will in facilitating the carrying out of this measure, which is for the country's benefit alone.

ARTICLE I. All cereals (wheat, rye, oats, etc.) used for breadmaking, and also the barley intended for the consumption of cattle (and for the breweries) growing in the territory under the Governor-General's command, will be seized for the benefit of the country from the moment they are reaped, whether or not they are mixed with other cereals. The seizure includes straw, and flour (with the leavings) arising from the seized harvest. The seizure of straw falls after threshing.

ARTICLE II. Unless otherwise noted by this present decree, it is forbidden to exchange or otherwise dispose of by agreement or contract any of the seized harvest.

ARTICLE III. The owners of the seized stocks have the right and the obligation to do the work necessary to the preservation of the harvest, and also to proceed with the threshing, etc.

ARTICLE IV. If the owner does not carry out within the time fixed by the Chef d'Arrondissement (head of the district) all work necessary to the preservation of the harvest, the Chef will appoint a third person for such work, at the expense of the owner. The same ruling applies to the work of threshing to be done within the time limit set by the Chef d'Arrondissement.

ARTICLE V. A penalty of five years' imprisonment or a maximum fine of 20,000 marks will be awarded to:

- a) Anyone taking, in part or wholly, without authorization, the seized stocks, carrying them outside the communal territory; anyone attempting to spoil or destroy, or without authority transferring or consuming them.
- b) Anyone who, without authority, sells or buys, or contracts for, or makes an agreement about the seized stocks with a view to parting with them or purchasing them.
- c) Anyone who, contrary to his obligation, does not accomplish the work necessary to the preservation, harvesting, and threshing of the stock within the prescribed time limit.

Any infringement of these rulings will be judged by the military courts.

ARTICLE VI. The seized stocks will be bought and paid for in cash by a Commission which I shall appoint for that purpose, and the stocks will then be placed at the disposal of the population under the General Government.

ARTICLE VII. If it becomes necessary, special steps will be taken to ensure the execution of this decree.

Governor-General in Belgium

BARON VON BISSING
Colonel-General

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 343

Decree,
by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning methods of handling crop of 1915 in
the territory of the General Government

BRUSSELS, 23 July 1915

DECREE CONCERNING THE 1915 HARVEST OF BREAD GRAINS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Article 6 of the Decree of June 30th 1915 (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für
Belgien, p. 747ff.) prescribes:

"The requisitioned grain shall be bought for cash on delivery by a Harvest
Commission which I shall form for this purpose and shall be put at the disposal of
the population under the General Government."

In partial modification I decree as follows:

1. I assign to the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation the sole right to
purchase for cash, the requisitioned stocks and whatever bread grains remain, at a
uniform price which I will set.

The requisitions will not be suspended with this purchase.

2. Subject to my control a Central Harvest Commission will be established in
Brussels and in each chief town of the Provinces a Harvest Commission for the
Province.

3. The Central Harvest Commission shall be subject to my direct control and its president, members, and their regular substitutes shall be chosen by me. The president will be a delegate of the General Government.

As members of the Commission I shall appoint a representative:

- a) From the Civil Administration, to be at the same time vice president.
- b) From the Political Department.
- c) From the Commission on Banks.
- d) From the Commissariat of the General Government.
- e) From the Comité National.
- f) From the Commission for Relief.

In a parity of votes the president shall have the casting vote. The president has the right to summon experts in a consultative capacity to the meetings.

The language of the deliberations shall be German.

4. The Provincial Harvest Commission shall be composed of:

- a) The president of the local Civil Administration or his representative to sit as president.
- b) Two officers or officials, members of the Economic Commission of the Province.
- c) A member of the Députation Permanente.
- d) A representative of the grain trade of the Province.
- e) An agricultural representative of the Province.

The members designated under c) to e) shall not at the same time be members of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The members of the Commission and their regular substitutes shall be nominated by the Governor of the Province.

In a parity of votes the president shall have the casting vote.

The president shall have the right to call to the meetings experts in a consultative capacity. The president has the right to oppose decisions of the Commission and to appeal to me for decisions through the mediation of the chief of administration and the Central Harvest Commission.

5. The Central Harvest Commission shall determine what quantities are from time to time to be released from requisition and put at the disposal of the population.

It shall supervise the supplying of the Belgian population with bread and is especially to take care that after deducting the stocks to be reserved for sowing, the monthly consumption does not exceed more than one-twelfth part of the entire Belgian bread-grain harvest of 1915.

It will furthermore submit to me the suggestions in respect of the uniform ration per capita of population, purchasing price of threshed bread grains, milling, and the maximum prices for the sale of threshed bread grains, flour, bran, and bread.

The Central Harvest Commission will supply the Provincial Harvest Commission through the intermediary of the chief of administration with instructions in the case of important questions of policy after having obtained my decision in advance-and supervises their execution.

6. Each Provincial Harvest Commission is responsible for the monthly distribution of the bread grains to the Comité National. The distribution will be based on statistics to be gathered and kept up to date by the Commission. It will supervise the stocks in the Province and those sent in from other Provinces, control the fixed purchase prices and in general all operations of the special office which the Comité National will establish in each Province for the purchase and the distribution of the indigenous harvest.

The Commission has power to give instructions to this effect to the Belgian Communes. The rights and obligations of the Députation Permanente according to articles 121, 133, and 147 of the communal law, are, for this purpose, transferred to the president of the Provincial Harvest Commission.

7. Infraction of the regulations and mandates of this decree shall be punishable by imprisonment of not longer than 5 years, or by a fine not exceeding 20,000 Mks.; the two penalties may be exacted at one time.

The German Military Courts are the competent tribunals.

Penalties ordained by Article 5, of the Decree of June 30, 1915 (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens pp. 747-55) remain in force.

8. The present decree does not apply to barley.

9. I reserve the right to make alterations in the present decree.

Governor-General in Belgium

BARON VON BISSING

Colonel-General

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 344

Letter,

WHITLOCK TO VON DER LANCKEN, reviewing the negotiations and setting forth the British point of view and the understanding that had been reached

BRUSSELS, 16 July 1915

To His Excellency, Baron von der Lancken, Brussels

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

My colleague, the Minister of Spain, and I have communicated to His British Majesty's Government, the memorandum which the Governor-General of Belgium, Baron von Bissing, handed to us under date June 26th, and which covers the discussions which we have had on the subjects of the harvest of 1915 and the provisioning of Belgium.

I am happy to learn, and I am pleased to inform you, that the British Government has promised to allow and facilitate the import into Belgium until the harvest of 1916, of the foodstuffs necessary to the provisioning of the civil population of Belgium, under the conditions, the principles of which we have already had the pleasure of agreeing upon with Your Excellency, partly by exchange of correspondence and memoranda, and partly in the course of conferences which we have held with Your Excellency, my colleague, the Minister of Spain, and myself. It will be, I am sure, quite as agreeable for us to come to terms over the details of the execution of these conditions.

We have indeed many times, in the course of our discussions, admitted the following principles, which I am glad to say are the same as those to which the British Government refers:

1. That the feeding and upkeep of the Belgian civil population shall be maintained entirely separate from the feeding and upkeep of the German Army, and that under these conditions, none of the imported provisions, as also none of the cereals

(wheat, rye, winter barley, maslin), which according to the decision of the Governor-General are to be reserved entirely for the use of the civil population, will go either directly or indirectly to any person attached to the German Army or the German civil administration, and will not be bought for the purpose of export;

That the Belgian population alone will receive advantage of the Secours which the Comité National will distribute;

That the Comité National and the C.R.B. will continue to enjoy at all times a liberty of action in accordance with their mission and their responsibilities in provisioning and giving assistance to the Belgian civil population who are in need;

That the German authorities will at no time employ the Comité National nor the C.R.B. as a means to force the population of working people, against their will and against their conscience, to employment either directly or indirectly benefiting the German Imperial Army.

2. That the purchase and distribution of the harvest of cereals will be made in Belgium by the C.N. in the same way as for the imported foodstuffs, and that the C.N. also with the co-operation of the C.R.B. will continue to distribute help in kind to the needy as before.

The British Government has informed us, however, that they will regretfully be compelled to withdraw permission to the boats loaded with provisions for Belgium if, contrary to the intentions declared by Your Excellency, English boats carrying relief goods to Rotterdam are attacked.

I am also informed that the British Government will be disposed to facilitate the import into Belgium of other commodities besides wheat, rye, winter barley, and maslin, if your Government will give, on the subject of these articles also, the same guarantee as that given for the cereals.

The British Government has, however, declared that it will authorize the import of the following six articles besides the cereals, viz.: peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize for human consumption, as long as the import of these articles does not represent a replacement of articles requisitioned by the authorities under your orders.

It is not necessary to add that if Your Excellency wishes, for any reason, to bring some modifications to the plan suggested above, either in the form of rules or orders, or in some other way, making them as suggestions to the C.N. or the C.R.B., these alterations will at once be communicated to the Government of Britain through the intermediary of the Government which I have the honor to represent.

I have no doubt that Your Excellency will be good enough to signify your agreement with the above, and that you will at the same time confirm, in the name of your Government, as the British Government has done, the assurances and guarantees given formerly, and which are included with the stipulations above cited.

I take this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 345

Letter,
VON DER LANCKEN TO VILLALOBAR,[\(248\)](#) stating the understanding of the German authorities concerning the guarantees

BRUSSELS, 29 July 1915

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have had the honor of receiving the letter which Your Excellency was pleased to transmit to me under date of July 16, 1915 concerning the revictualing of Belgium by the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

I was happy to learn that, as a result of the measures which Your Excellency, as well as His Excellency the Minister of the United States had been so kind as to undertake, the British Government has pledged itself to facilitate until the harvest of 1916 the importation into Belgium of the products necessary for the feeding of the Belgian civil population within the conditions upon the principle of which I have already had the pleasure of placing myself in accord with Your Excellency.

I have already had the occasion to make known to Your Excellency that the Governor-General has declared himself agreed in principle that the work of revictualing of Belgium continue exactly, for the benefit of the population of that country, under the conditions which were formulated through the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

As to the details of these agreements I am glad to be able to inform Your Excellency that the Governor-General admits the following principles, which, I am sure, are the same as those admitted by Your Excellency, to wit:

That the feeding and support of the Belgian civil population must continue to be separated from the feeding and support of the German Army, and that the decisions made in this sense by the Governor-General in accord with the protecting ministers [MM. les Protecteurs] shall be carried out in all respects.

That the Belgian population alone shall derive benefit from the aid which is distributed by the Comité National.

That the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall be able to enjoy all liberty of action necessary for them to be in a position to fulfil the mission which has devolved upon them through the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

That the Governor-General shall never make use of the Comité National to force the Belgian population to employ itself in the service of the German Army contrary to the stipulations of The Hague conventions.

That the Comité National shall be the intermediary in the purchase of the harvest of grains in the territory placed under the orders of the Governor-General in Belgium, and that the distribution of these grains shall be done through the care of the said Comité in the same manner as the distributions of the imported goods; that likewise the Comité shall continue to distribute help in kind to the needy under the conditions determined by the previous agreements made between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

I have taken note of the communication of Your Excellency that the British Government will facilitate, in addition to the importation of grains, the importation likewise of peas, bacon, beans, rice, lard, and maize for human consumption, as long as the importation of these articles does not represent the replacing of other articles requisitioned by order of the Governor-General.

I have likewise taken note that Your Excellency will cause to be communicated to the British Government the modifications which might be brought by the Governor-General to the ensemble of the regulations decided upon by the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

In conformity with the request which Your Excellency is pleased to make of me in his letter, I have the honor, in the name of the Governor-General, to confirm to Your Excellency the assurances and guarantees previously given and which are specified in the preceding stipulations.

I have communicated to the Governor-General the assurance which Your Excellency was pleased to give me, that the work patronized by Your Excellency shall continue to exercise its beneficent action under the conditions of strict

neutrality justifying the aid and the protection which the Governor-General and the authorities placed under his orders have not ceased to bring to this institution since its creation.

The Governor-General is happy to state that the renewed assurance to this effect which Your Excellency has been pleased to give, constitutes for him a guarantee that the humanitarian purpose of this work can be pursued without injury to the rights which accrue to the occupant of the country, and to the interests of which he has charge.

I embrace this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my deep consideration.

(Signed) LANCKEN

[Translation]

The Foreign Office communication of the 7th July(249) and von der Lancken's undertakings of the 29th July(250) which assured the continuance of Allied finance and the protection of the harvest in the Occupation Zone provided the basis for the Commission's work during the second winter of the war.

The Governor-General's decree dated the 23rd July created the Central Crop Commission to put into effect the arrangements regarding native bread grains which had been agreed upon between the relief organization and the Germans. It is particularly to be noted that this decree provided that the Comité National should have the exclusive right to purchase the new crop and the remainder of any stocks from previous harvests. Though there was some confusion in the early months, by November 1915 the monthly issues of one-fifteenth of the total crop estimated at 202,000 tons became available. Thus the Commission, in making its program of necessary imports, could count each month upon 13,450 tons of native wheat out of the 1915 harvest. Important as this contribution was, the Commission had to import four times this amount, i.e., 54,000 tons each month, to maintain the bread ration in Belgium.

By a similar decree dated the 20th July the Governor-General had created a Barley Commission to control the small but important crop of this grain. The Commission included representatives of the Belgian Brewers' Federation and Yeast Manufacturers, but was without Comité National representation.

The decrees relating to the establishment of the Central Crop Commission and the Barley Commission are especially interesting because they mark the beginning of a policy which the Germans later greatly extended in dealing with many other articles

of Belgian production. They were the first examples of the "centrales" which the Germans created to centralize and control existing stocks of any article when a shortage threatened. Thus there came to be in Belgium an oil centrale, a butter centrale, a sugar centrale, a potato centrale, a vegetable centrale, and a chicory centrale. Except for a few of the centrales, this system of control was not a success in Belgium. The Central Crop Commission controlling bread grains was the conspicuous success and this may be attributed largely to the fact that the relief organization and the Belgians themselves played such a large part in its administration. Other centrales managed exclusively by the Germans appear to have done considerably more harm than good. The potato centrale, for example, dissipated and exhausted the 1916 crop months before the new crop was in. The main trouble, of course, was that the centrale system, where it was without Belgian representation, was a system imposed by a military government on a people whose spirit was unconquered.

3. The Extension of Protection of Native Produce. July 1915-March 1918

On an entirely different basis from the decree relating to bread grains were the two issued about the same time covering the extremely important question of fodder. Wheat, rye, and barley were reserved for the use of the civil population, but oats and hay were requisitioned for the benefit of the German Army, though in each case the producers were allowed to retain limited quantities for the upkeep of the animal stock. It is obvious that since the maintenance of meat, fat, and milk supplies depended on fodder, the fodder question was closely related to that of local food supplies. As has already been stated, Belgium was normally a large importer of fodder materials, and the announced policy of the Germans in reference to native supplies soon raised a new issue in the work of the Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 346

Order,
by GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning the seizure of the oat crop of 1915 in the Occupation Zone

BRUSSELS, 27 July 1915

ARTICLE 1. The oat harvest for 1915 in the domain of the Government General is seized for the administration of the army, at its removal from the soil. This seizure applies equally to the stalk. After threshing the straw is free from all seizure.

Every holder of an agricultural estate, and every buyer of growing oats, is obliged to see that the harvest is properly gathered in.

ARTICLE 2. Unless otherwise decided hereafter:

1. The oats seized cannot undergo any modification.
2. No disposition can be made in favor of a third person, by agreement or contract.

Among other things the following are considered as among the dispositions:

Purchase, sale, hypothecation, donations, loans.

ARTICLE 3. Every owner of an agricultural holding in the domain of the Government General in Belgium having produced oats during the year 1915 or every other proprietor of oats of the 1915 harvest, must take all the necessary steps for the conservation of the stocks seized, including threshing and treating the oats with all the care of a good farmer.

He is obliged:

- a) To sell to the administration of the army on demand, all oats, except seed and forage designated in 6a and 6b; to cart it, to deliver it, and to unload it in its due time.
- b) To accord to the delegates of the administration of the army free access to all places on his property in order to be able to execute their duty, to submit to them business books, if they possess any, and to furnish them with all details and directions as to where the oats harvested on his property are stored.

ARTICLE 4. Every owner or proprietor of an agricultural holding is forbidden to:

- a) Feed his cattle with oats suitable for sowing;
- b) Transport oats without safe-conduct of the administration of the army, with the exception of the movements from the field to the barn, from the barn to the thresher, and from the latter back to the barn.

ARTICLE 5. Should any proprietor or owner of holdings omit to perform the acts required by Article 3, paragraphs I and II, within a period fixed by the administration of the army, the latter will have them performed by third parties at the expense of the owner or proprietor.

ARTICLE 6. The following will be free from seizure in favor of the owner or proprietor of agricultural holdings:

a) At the time of sowing, for each hectare of the surface cultivated by him during the year 1915, 170 kilos of seed oats of first quality and harvested by the owner in question.

b) At the time of the need of forage, for each day and each horse in the possession of the owner, 2,500 grams of oats, or in round figures 920 kilos of oats for each horse for each year.

By "year" is understood the period from September 1st, 1915, to August 31st, 1916.

For each horse which is not the property of an agricultural owner of holdings producing oats, the administration will allow from seizure an annual quantity of 920 kilos of oats in round figures, to be purchased from the producers. On the demand of the chief of district, the rates indicated above can be augmented by the administration of the army for urgent cases and for the horses employed in mines, which shall have first consideration.

ARTICLE 7. The administration of the army fixes a price of Frs. 33 for each 100 kilos of good quality oats, at current prices taken by the administration and brought to it in good time at the place indicated by it and weighing at least 44 kilos per hectolitre. The administration of the army will fix the price of oats of minor quality on the basis of advices which will be furnished by experts.

ARTICLE 8. Whoever contravenes Article 1, paragraph 2, and Articles 2, 3, and 4 of the present decree will be punished with imprisonment up to five years or with a fine up to Frs. 20,000.

The two punishments can be inflicted simultaneously. At this same time, a contravention in the cases noted in Articles 2, 3a, or 4b may occasion a withdrawal of the allowance of oats, in favor of the administration of the army.

ARTICLE 9. The judgments are to be delivered by the German Military Courts.

ARTICLE 10. The execution of these judgments, and the method of execution is reserved to the Military Administration.

Governor-General in Belgium

BARON VON BISSING

Colonel-General

[Translation]

Order

by GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning the requisitioning of the hay crop of 1915 in the Occupation Zone

BRUSSELS, 6 August 1915

ARTICLE 1. The entire crop of grass and clover hay of the 1915 harvest, first crop as well as second crop, is requisitioned for the army administration from the moment it is cut.

Any farmer or other owner of a hay crop, whether grass hay or clover hay, is bound to see that the harvesting of the hay is properly carried out.

ARTICLE 2. As far as it is not otherwise decreed below, no hay may be disposed of in favor of a third person either by contract or sale. Under the above head come purchase, sale, mortgage, donation, or loan.

ARTICLE 3. Every farmer, or other owner of a hay crop in the Belgian territory under the General Government, is bound to take all necessary measures for the preservation of the requisitioned stocks, and in general is to treat the crops with the care of a good manager. He shall:

- a) On request sell to the representative of the army administration such hay except that designated in Article 6, gather, deliver, and load it;
- b) Accord to the representative of the army administration entrance to all parts of his estate for the execution of his duty, present for his examination all business books, and otherwise give him details of such hay crop as is grown on his premises.

ARTICLE 4. All farmers or other owners of the hay crop of 1915 are forbidden to transport or move the hay without a special safe-conduct from the administration, except as from the fields to the barns.

ARTICLE 5. Should any farmer or other owner of a hay crop of 1915 not carry out such orders as are given in Article 1, paragraph 2. and Article 3, paragraphs 1 and 2a, within the prescribed time, the army administration will have the work done by a third party at the cost of the owner.

ARTICLE 6. Such hay as the farmer requires for the feeding of his own cattle shall be free from requisition.

ARTICLE 7. The administration will purchase at the maximum price fixed for individual provinces in which the hay is delivered, such hay as is delivered in good quality and within the prescribed time at a place fixed by the administration.

ARTICLE 8. Any infraction of the rules laid down in Article 1, paragraph 2, Articles 2, 3, or 4 of this decree, will be punished by imprisonment not longer than five years, or a fine up to 20,000 francs. Both punishments may be ordered together. At the same time an infringement of Articles 2, 3a, or 4 can be punished by a withdrawal of the hay allowed to the proprietor in favor of the administration.

ARTICLE 9. Judgment for these punishments is made by the German military courts.

ARTICLE 10. The execution of measures of punishment is reserved.

Governor-General in *Belgium*

BARON VON BISSING
Colonel-General

[Translation]

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These two German decrees regarding fodder were not altogether satisfactory to the British Foreign Office, and when the Commission began to work out its program of imports for the coming winter it encountered new British restrictions. Heretofore the Commission had been practically free to import supplies in such quantities and of such character as the situation required or finances would allow. Hereafter, however, the Foreign Office scrutinized the relief program in detail and authorized only such items as it approved. Some commodities were eliminated, others were permitted in specified quantities. As early as August 1915 Hoover was instructed to cease the importation of maize, which could be used for both food and fodder. This temporary restriction was cancelled, however, on condition that the maize was distributed for human consumption and that none was imported specifically for fodder.

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DOCUMENT NO. 348

Extract of letter,
HOOVER TO PERCY, describing the fodder situation in the Occupation Zone and stating the necessity of importation in order that the Belgians may keep their cattle

LONDON, 11 October 1915

Lord Eustace Percy, Foreign Office

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

.....

FODDER IN THE OCCUPATION ZONE

Aside from instructions from General von Bissing to the local Kommandaturen that they are to carry out his previous decree in the spirit, i.e., reserve an adequate provision of all the hay crops for the local people, nothing further has been accomplished. The rye crop in the Occupation Zone is of course reserved to the civil population; the oat crop has been largely removed. They do not seem to be anxious for hay, and in fact there is no great amount of it in the country, beyond the requirements of the actual producers, who have the first call on it. My feeling is that the situation is as good as it can be made in this particular; or, to put it the other way, that the Germans have already taken as much material as will be available to them. On the other hand, Belgium never has provided home-grown fodder for her town animals and the amount of maize which we are importing is totally inadequate to keep these animals going. The Belgians are extremely anxious for the right for us to ship in the refuse from the Dutch sugar refineries and linseed cake from the Dutch linseed-oil mills, as these have been standard sources of fodder. I feel very strongly that this should be done at once because under the present stress of shortage of fodder the Belgians are freely selling their cattle to the Germans as they are not able to feed them.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

[Fig. 12. LETTER, 1 JUNE 1915, HOOVER TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMISSION'S ROTTERDAM OFFICE](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 349

Extract of letter,
PERCY To HONNOLD, authorizing the importation of specific amounts of fodder materials into the Occupation Zone

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,
21 October 1915

DEAR MR. HONNOLD:

As regards fodder, we are now prepared to authorise you to resume importations of maize, linseed cake, and sugar refuse into Belgium. As to amounts, Mr. Hoover's

letter states twenty thousand to thirty thousand tons of maize a month as a maximum. The Commission's report dated August 31st states the amount of maize to be imported as twenty thousand tons a month, and this was confirmed by Mr. Crosby's letter, Executive File No. 390, of August 20th, I had taken this amount to be the fixed maximum for the purposes of point 6 of the conditions laid down in Sir E. Grey's letter to Mr. Page of July 17th, and pending further discussion I do not think that this maximum of twenty thousand tons a month should be exceeded.

As regards the amount of linseed cake to be imported, this should not exceed ten thousand tons a month for the present, and we shall expect the Commission to fix a maximum for sugar refuse also.

The above authorisation is given in consideration of the guarantees given by Mr. Hoover as to the system of distribution adopted by the Section Agricole, and it is understood that the Section Agricole(251) will have control over any fodder imported into the Etappengebiet, equally with that imported into the zone of occupation. The continued authorisation will, however, depend on the Germans refraining from all requisitions or purchases of live stock in both zones, and on no live stock being sold to the German Army or exported to Germany. On receipt of any information that these conditions are not being complied with, or that the Germans are taking advantage of this fodder to pasture their cattle in Belgium, the present, authorisation will be immediately withdrawn.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

There followed a series of program curtailments by the Foreign Office, which were imposed at one time or another throughout the winter and the spring of 1916. Reports, frequently exaggerated, of German activities, particularly the export of Belgian cattle to Germany, which reached the Foreign Office through its own intelligence service, strengthened the opposition to relief which existed in military circles and brought more restrictions on the C.R.B. On the 16th December 1915(252) the British instructed the Commission to restrict importations drastically and to eliminate entirely the bacon and lard items in its program for Belgium. A new crisis for the Commission came in early January 1916, when the Foreign Office informed Hoover that because of reported leakages of relief supplies into Germany, further restrictions on importations must be made immediately and the whole relief might be stopped. Several questions were involved in this crisis. The Foreign Office insisted that the Commission was solely responsible for the fulfillment of the guarantees by the Germans and doubted the ability of the Commission to discharge this responsibility with the limited number of Americans then permitted in Belgium.(253) The negotiations relating to the reorganization of

this distribution and inspection machinery in Belgium to meet British objections are covered by documents in a preceding chapter.(254) In the course of these negotiations the Commission obtained two vastly important results in the spring of 1916: first, an all-inclusive guarantee from the Germans covering all products of Belgian soil(255); and second, a reorganization of the Commission's control of distribution in Belgium through the strengthening of the Department of Inspection and Control.(256) It was not until these arrangements had been completed that the Foreign Office, in the spring of 1916, relaxed the restrictions on importations.(257) The all-inclusive guarantee, mentioned above, extended the principle of protection of Belgian products from requisition to the prohibition of ". . . the exportation from the territory of the General Government of foodstuffs (including animals), produce, and fodder, serving for human alimentation and animals. . . ." and ". . . . the exportation from said territory of seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural supplies. . . ." The precedent established was never challenged, and in the following years it was merely a matter of working out the details for the control of the harvest in the Occupation Zone. The following documents cover the principal crop decrees of 1916, 1917, and 1918.

DOCUMENT NO. 350

Decree,
by GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning the bread grain harvest of 1916 in the
Occupation Zone

BRUSSELS, 8 July 1916

OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF DECREES FOR THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY OF
BELGIUM

No.235

DECREE IN REGARD TO THE CANCELLATION OF EARLIER HARVEST
REGULATIONS

The following Decrees are hereby annulled: Laws and Decrees S. 671, dated 5/6/1915; do., S. 747, 11/7/1915; do., S. 778, 23/7/1915; and the supplementary regulations of 30/7/1915; do., 10/8/1915 and the notice of the same date; do., 968, of 28/8/1915; the notices of September 10th; the Decrees of September 24th, October 9th, and December 18th, 1915, of January 22d, 1916, February, 29th, and April 1st; the notice of May 31st (page 2248). For punishable offences the old laws remain in force for the offences committed before the publication of this Decree. The same applies to the distribution of the 1915 harvest for personal consumption or for the feeding of cattle.

The Decree of May 16th, 1916 ("Official Bulletin," page 2158), concerning the purchase of stocks still remaining, continues in force.

II

DECREE CONCERNING THE REQUISITION OF BREAD CEREALS

ARTICLE 1. Cereals of all kinds (such as rye, wheat, or barley) which can be used in making bread, and to be harvested in the territory of the General Government in 1916, are, by this present Decree, requisitioned for the use of the civil population under the above-mentioned government from the moment that these cereals are reaped, and without considering whether they are or are not mixed with other cereals. The seizure extends also to flour and to the products of the bakeries and confectioneries arising from the seized cereals. The seizure of straw is raised after the threshing, and that of bran is raised after the wheat is milled.

The requisition extends also to the cereals and the flour arising from the previous harvests, especially to those quantities which were destined for the personal consumption of the producer or for the feeding of his cattle and which have not been used for these purposes.

ARTICLE 2. Except in so far as the present Decree shall decide otherwise, it is forbidden to change the requisitioned stocks or to dispose of any of them by sale or contract or agreement.

ARTICLE 3. The holders of the requisitioned stocks have the right and obligation to execute all work necessary to the due preservation of the produce; they have the right and obligation to proceed with the threshing. They are ordered to declare the stocks according to the exact truth.

ARTICLE 4. If the holders do not execute, within the time allowed for this purpose by the competent authorities, such work as is necessary for the due preservation of their stocks, these authorities can cause the work in question to be done by a third party at the cost of the holder of the stock. The same applies to all holders who do not proceed to the threshing within the time prescribed by the Provincial Harvest Commission.

ARTICLE 5. (a) Whoever, without being authorized, shall remove, or cause to be removed from the commune, the requisitioned stock; whoever shall destroy, spoil, or hide, or without authorization, shall transform or consume them;

b) Whoever, without authorization, shall sell or purchase these stocks, or without authorization shall make an agreement of any kind with a view to disposing of or acquiring them;

c) Whoever shall have infringed the obligations which are imposed by Article 3 of this Decree, shall be punished by an imprisonment of not exceeding five years, or a fine which can extend to marks 20,000, besides which, the stocks which were the cause of the violation of obligations can be declared confiscated.

The commandants and military tribunals are competent to judge as to infractions under the present Decree.

ARTICLE 6. The requisitioned stocks shall be purchased for cash and put at the disposal of the population under the General Government in the form of bread, flour, and bran. The use of the requisitioned quantities of these cereals for other purposes than that of bread-making will be submitted to the consideration of the Central Harvest Commission, which will make a decision for each particular case.

ARTICLE 7. The Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation has the exclusive right to make these purchases of the requisitioned stocks arising from the harvests of 1916, as well as the remains of stocks arising from previous harvests which have not been entirely used up; the purchase will be made at a uniform price which I shall fix in due course. This purchase does not, however, put an end to the requisition.

ARTICLE 8. If it is necessary, I shall order that a part of the seized cereals, at most 10,000 tons, shall be distributed to the persons I shall designate to that end, for the purpose of the manufacture of malt to be used as a substitute for coffee.

ARTICLE 9. Further regulations may be published with a view to facilitating the execution of this present Decree.

The Governor-General in Belgium

BARON VON BISSING
Colonel-General

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 351

Order,
issued by GOVERNOR-GENERAL VON FALKENHAUSEN, covering 1917 crop
in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 13 November 1917

His Excellency, The Marquis de Villalobar

MARQUIS:

Following upon our conversation of yesterday, I send you a note giving a résumé of an order which the Governor-General has sent out to all authorities, both in Brussels and the provinces, to again remind them of existing agreements and to insist on their strict observance. This measure has been taken particularly with regard to the drawbacks to the observance of these agreements presented by the somewhat frequent movements of officers and officials in the provinces. I trust it meets your ideas.

At the same time, and in reference to this order, the various central departments interested have repeated to their subordinates in the provinces detailed instructions regarding the application of the various clauses of the agreements and the measures to be taken to avoid the repetition of such contraventions as may be eventually brought to light.

I trust that these measures will help to dispel the apprehensions which you may have felt regarding the very firm intention of the Governor-General to have respected by the authorities under his orders the undertakings which he has given.

Please accept, etc.,

(Signed) RIETH

NOTICE

A new order of the Governor-General with regard to the relief work has just been issued to the authorities, both military and civil, of the territory placed under his orders. This order again summarizes the undertakings given by the Governor-General to the Protecting Ministers.

In this order the Governor-General again categorically requires that the agreements made should be respected to the letter, and states that he is determined to punish with the greatest severity those who disobey orders relating thereto. He commands that all communications from the Protecting Ministers or from the C.H.N.(258) acting in their name, should be carefully examined into and without loss of time; that the result of inquiries, and---if proof of a contravention shall have been obtained---the punishment inflicted should be immediately brought to the knowledge of the V.C.N.(259) Lastly, the Governor-General commands that suitable measures for the prevention of such acts should be taken in case of need.

Furthermore, the Governor-General expects from the authorities under his orders that any action or measure which might be interpreted as a failure on his part to keep his word should be first of all submitted to his decision.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO 352

Declaration,
of VON FALKENHAUSEN, to the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais with regard to the
guarantees

BRUSSELS, 8 March 1918

I have ordered the minute examination of the special points in question. The examination has been in part carried out and I have instructed the head of my Political Department to inform your Excellencies of the result. On several points, not very numerous, the examination still continues, but I am in a position to state generally ---and I am very pleased to have the opportunity---that from now I shall take care to give my special attention to the strict accomplishment of the engagements which my predecessors have taken with the Ministers of the Neutral States.

VOLUME II

**THE COMMISSION
FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM**

CHAPTER IX

REVIVAL OF BELGIAN INDUSTRY

The siege of the Central Powers did not actually begin until seven months after the outbreak of the war. By that time the short war theory and the hopes of a quick decision by decisive military action had been shattered. On the military fronts the armies had dug in and the war of movement settled down to a war of position. On the home fronts, likewise, governments adopted new tactics, based on the grim realization that victory would rest where the resources of man power, materials, and morale longest endured. Near the end of 1914 Germany placed her food supplies under public control, and Great Britain answered by declaring food contraband. In retaliation for this "hunger blockade" Germany proclaimed a U-boat blockade of the British Isles with the "war zone" decree of the 4th February 1915. Three weeks later (1st March 1915) the British issued the Reprisals Order, with the object of stopping all sea-borne commerce of Germany, whether direct or by neutral ports. Thenceforward the Allies sought continually for new means to stop all holes in the encircling barrier, while the Germans were no less diligent in their efforts to

conserve the resources of the Empire and the occupied territories and trust the U-boat to force their enemies to raise the siege.

These siege operations, naturally, had a much more direct bearing on relief than the costly military assaults launched in Galicia, at Verdun, on the Somme, or along the Chemin des Dames. Relief operations were, from the Allied point of view, a concession from the strict blockade; from the German, a limitation on the utilization of the resources, human and material, of the conquered provinces; and the C.R.B. was under severe pressure from hostile groups in both camps. Despite all this, the strength of the Commission steadily grew until by 1917 its international position was so firmly established that it continued to perform all but a few of its functions, although the American declaration of war had ended the neutral status of its chairman and his associates.

The opposition which gathered against every attempt made after the spring of 1915 to extend the activities of relief shows the growing intensity of the economic war and reveals the pressure on the Commission from both besiegers and besieged. There are many instances in the chapters of the preceding volume---the exchange operations, ship ownership, the control of native produce---and there are even more striking examples in the chapters which follow. In its endeavors to protect Belgian and French civilians from forced labor, the Commission succeeded only in diminishing the severity of German military methods. The attempts to revive Belgian industry and to extend relief to Poland failed, but these failures or partial failures involved no loss of prestige by the Commission. They indicate rather the obstacles to relief which existed after the spring of 1915---obstacles so numerous and formidable that had Hoover relied on temporary expedients, on informal guarantees, until after the siege began, the structure of relief, if it had arisen at all, would have been far less imposing and far less of a protection to the people of Belgium and Northern France.

Every industrialized country in the world was staggered by the sudden disruption of the world trade in August 1914. In every case, with one exception, there came, after a painful period of unemployment and financial stress, a gradual readjustment to the new conditions. Production was adapted to war needs and as long as raw materials were accessible or the reserve supplies lasted, plant and labor were fully employed. The exception was Belgium, perhaps the most completely industrialized state in the world and, with the possible exception of Great Britain, the most dependent upon access to raw materials and markets. The prosperity and well-being of a great majority of the Belgian people depended on the continued operation of their factories, and a majority of these plants looked abroad for the raw or semi-manufactured materials from which they made a finished product.

The German occupation and the Allied blockade strangled Belgian industry. Patriotic industrialists and workers naturally had no intention of manufacturing war materials for sale to the Germans to be used against the Belgian soldiers and their

Allies. And there was no other market. Immediately many plants closed. Others, producing goods of a de luxe or demi-luxe character, kept running, but presently they too began to shut down and the numbers of unemployed grew. The effects of this stagnation on a nation so constituted were far-reaching and serious. From the point of view of the relief organization the chief factors in the situation were:

1. The number of destitute who had to be entirely provided for by relief was greatly increased, thus adding to the heavy financial burdens of the relief organization.(272)
2. An intensification of the social problems of unemployment followed the closing of the factories, and under the abnormal conditions of the occupation there was serious danger of deterioration of the morale of a numerous population unable to support itself and dependent on charity.

The Commission realized that if even limited industrial production could be started not only would the social problem be ameliorated but the financing of relief---always an acute question---would be assisted through the sale abroad of Belgian manufactures. It was for these reasons that the Commission interested itself in an attempt to secure an agreement with the belligerents which would permit the revival of Belgian industry. These negotiations, begun in the summer of 1915, continued for a year and finally broke down when the Germans definitely refused to meet conditions regarded as essential by the British Government. Fundamentally the failure of the project was due to the strengthening of the blockade policy of the British and the intensification of the efforts of the Germans to defeat the blockade by the exploitation of the occupied territories and by the utilization of neutral intermediaries of trade.

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1. Unemployment and Destitution. July-August 1915

Very soon after the German occupation became established and conditions stabilized after the upheaval of the invasion, certain Belgian industrial interests began to investigate the possibilities of renewing the import of raw materials and the export of finished products. They got into communication with Dutch interests and also approached the Commission with the idea that raw materials might be brought in under guarantees similar to those respecting food supplies. During the first months of its operations the Commission was deeply involved in securing the diplomatic guarantees, the finance, shipping, and food to defeat the threatened famine and was in no position to take up the industrial question, which was highly complicated and of secondary importance. By the summer of 1915, however, the status of the Commission was such that Hoover felt justified in attempting to work out with the British and German authorities and the Belgian interests an arrangement by which some, at least, of the wheels of Belgian industry could be started. In presenting the matter to the British Foreign Office he pointed out the

relation of the industrial to the relief problem, particularly in respect to destitution, which had rapidly increased in the first months of 1915, and to the financing of food imports, which was then in a critical condition. Hoover recommended the acceptance of a proposal worked out in Holland to establish a neutral industrial commission to handle Belgian exports and imports, with the provision that the balances due Belgian individuals, as a result of these operations, be returned to them through the medium of the Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 388

Letter,
HOOVER TO PERCY, describing the unemployment in Belgium and outlining a plan for the revival of Belgian industry

LONDON, 4 July 1915

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

With regard to your request that I should put my representations in regard to the industrial situation in Belgium into the form of a memorandum, I beg to submit the following:

It is not necessary to dilate upon the unparalleled extent of the destitution in Belgium. The destitution is in the main wholly a problem of unemployment, and, moreover, not only is the relief of the destitute a factor of the amount of unemployment but also the whole question of the ravitaillement of Belgium is closely interlinked with this problem. If certain manufacturing industries could be rehabilitated, if their products could be exported, if the raw material could be imported, not only would the workmen be employed and thus taken off the relief side, but also a monetary balance would be created outside Belgium in favor of that country. If such monetary balances were handed over to this Commission, foodstuffs could be purchased therewith, and these balances paid to their owners in Belgium, in Belgian paper currency, from the food-sale receipts, and thus the problem of the ravitaillement of that portion of the population which could pay for their food could to a large degree be made to revolve upon itself.

It is impossible to estimate that amount of actual unemployment in Belgium. A recent inquiry into certain trades enumerated as unemployed 760,000 men, 270,000 women, with 619,000 children dependents. This census, however, was wholly inadequate as an expression of the entire situation.

This stagnation, which has been practically complete for the last nine months, bids fair to last for a considerable time yet, and the moral and physical deterioration of the working population is already in evidence and must seriously increase.

I am greatly impressed with the sincerity and desire of General von Bissing and his associates in the civil government of the Occupation Zone to get these people back into some kind of occupation.

The most practicable form of occupation is, not on public works or other forms of "relief" labor, but in the industries in which they are normally employed. A considerable number of these industries are engaged upon materials of non-contraband character and if the restrictions placed by the Allies upon overseas export from Belgian territory could be so relaxed that this type of produce could be exported, it is my belief that it would receive no obstruction from the German authorities, who, as I have stated above, are themselves anxious that this unemployment could be reduced. It is useless, however, to consider the problem as merely one of exports because Belgium is not a producer, except in a few minor industries, of raw material.

It is my strongest belief that the proposal from Holland for the creation of a neutral industrial commission which could receive such exports, market them, and could in turn purchase and import raw material for the manufacturers, would not only be a move in the right direction but could be the greatest contribution towards the relaxation of the calls upon our Commission in its work of provisioning the Belgian people. If such an institution were established, I cannot too strongly recommend that it should be stipulated that the sums in balance due to Belgian individuals and firms as the result of their operations, should be handed to this Commission. Furthermore, I believe that it is fundamental that it should be stipulated that the exchange rate should be maintained at 25.40 Belgian francs to the pound and its proper corresponding figure in dollars or guilders. This latter point may appear an unnecessary refinement of detail, but it is much more vital than might appear at first sight.

This Commission is conducting the whole of its transactions in Belgium on the basis of the 25.40 exchange, although the Belgian franc is today quoted at an equivalent of about 30 francs to the pound in Holland. If we were compelled to adopt this depreciated figure of exchange, it would be necessary for us in turn to increase the price of foodstuffs throughout Belgium by over 25 per cent and thus add to the accumulation of misery already existing. If it were insisted on as a condition of the organization of such a neutral body that the balance of sums due Belgium should be handed to us to be paid out by us in Belgium, I believe a considerable portion of the financial problem which we are called upon to face would not only have been solved, but an exchange rate of 25.40 would not affect the intrinsic position of any Belgian industry, for if we increase the price of food by 30 per cent the manufacturers must increase wages. I also consider that it would

only be a proper course if it were stipulated that such portions of the exported manufacture which are destined for North and South America, India, or such places as are served by our steamers, should be handed to us for transportation from Dutch ports. As these steamers now return to these ports in ballast, the cost of transporting foodstuffs would be considerably modified by any outward freights which we could obtain.

I should like to mention that I was informed in Holland that one of the objections raised by the Allied Governments against such operations of such a commission was the necessary relaxation of the restrictions as to monetary exchange with foreign countries which such operations involved. If, however, the balance of the sums due to Belgians as the result of the above operations were handed to this Commission and transmitted to Belgium in the form of food the ground for such objection must have disappeared.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER,
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 389

Letter and memorandum,
HOOVER TO PERCY, showing the relations of unemployment to relief and suggesting a plan for reviving Belgian industry

LONDON, 24 August 1915

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

I enclose you herewith a memorandum on the present relief situation in Belgium.

It appears to me that the position in Belgium can only be met by some definite action in the creation of productive employment. This can only be done by stimulating manufacture, and this involves non-contraband exports from Belgium and, of equal importance, the import of necessary raw material.

Aside from its effect on unemployment, and therefore our work in Belgium, the opening of this trade is of importance to the Allied Governments because, whereas we export from this country something like £2,000,000 in money per month to the Western Hemisphere for foodstuffs, the stimulation of exports from Belgium will

result in bringing back to this country, under the scheme which I propose, probably a greater sum than this, and any effect which we at present have on an adverse exchange position will have been neutralized.

Subject to further consideration of details I would suggest the following plan, in order to keep within the four corners of the present military situation:

1. An "Industrial Section" of the neutral Commission for Relief in Belgium to be created. Through the Ambassadors who act as Honorary Chairmen of this Commission an agreement will be sought:

a) With the Allied Governments, permitting the importation of non-contraband raw material into Belgium and the exportation of non-contraband manufactured goods made therefrom and from local Belgian raw materials.

b) An agreement with the German authorities by which they undertake not to requisition or in any manner consume the raw material or the products made therefrom and to facilitate the importation and exportation of such material.

2. The neutral Commission for Relief in Belgium to establish a sufficient staff of inspectors, both in and out of Belgium, to see that these guarantees are faithfully complied with, and to provide the necessary machinery otherwise involved.

3. It is proposed to organize each manufacturing industry into a syndicate; that this syndicate should send its own representatives abroad, who would arrange for the purchase and importation of raw material, and for the exportation and sale of the manufactured goods of the syndicate involved.

4. That the difference between the cost of raw material and the realization from manufactured goods should be handed to the Commission, and by them deposited in English banks to the credit of certain Belgian banks until after peace is declared.

5. The Belgian banks in Belgium to undertake to loan to the syndicates in Belgium local paper currency against the security of deposits in London, to a sufficient extent to enable them to pay for their labor and the purchase of local raw material.

Under the above plan there would be no monetary increment into Belgium and a large amount of employment could be created. It is proposed that each type of manufacture should be taken up as rapidly as it can be organized and as the character of its raw material and exports are approved by the foreign governments.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER,
Chairman

MEMORANDUM ON THE PRESENT SITUATION OF RELIEF IN BELGIUM

The relief work in Belgium comprises two entirely distinct and separate problems.

The first is the provisioning of the country with the minimum of supplementary foods to the native production. This is being accomplished through the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National in joint co-operation at an expenditure of from £1,500,000 to £2,000,000 per month.

The second is the most difficult problem, and arises from the fact that even if food existed in abundance in Belgium, owing to the complete industrial stagnation, the working classes are day by day becoming less able to pay for it, and the problem of caring for them by public charity is assuming financial dimensions entirely beyond any possible compass.

Therefore it is one thing to inject into the country sufficient foodstuffs which if spread equally over the entire population would give them sustenance, but it is entirely another thing to enable the very large section of the community who have no resources either to purchase these foodstuffs for themselves or alternatively for the relief committees to purchase it and distribute it as a matter of charity. Since the occupation of Belgium there has been a gradual tapering off of manufacturing industries, due to the gradual exhaustion of raw material and also the financial exhaustion of the employers. There has been a great effort by the large manufacturers to employ their work people at a certain minimum per week, regardless of their effectiveness, but one by one they have become exhausted and a correspondingly large number of people have been thrown on the responsibility of the relief organizations until it has now reached appalling dimensions, the number of people being assisted today having now reached over 2,750,000. The whole basis of the organized relief is to use the funds secured from abroad to supplement the resources of the local committees and the local relief committees in turn supplement the resources of the individual. At the present time about £1,000,000 per month is being in effect made available from abroad with which to supplement the local committees and in addition to this contribution to the local committees by public benevolence, and from the communal authorities out of taxation furnishes about £200,000 per month. This amount of money, spread over the above members, amounts to less than thirty centimes per them per capita of destitute, and inasmuch as the very minimum on which life can be preserved is sixty centimes per diem, it is evident that the money now being applied is only supplemental and that with the complete exhaustion of local resources about £2,500,000 a month will be necessary even if the numbers do not increase.

In order to grasp the present situation it is desirable to consider the different classes of the population, which may be divided into:

- a) The superior commercial and wealthier classes and their dependents, which comprise approximately 2,250,000 persons. This class in the ordinary course are able to support themselves by drawing on their reserves, given that food supplies are available in the country.
- b) The agricultural class and that portion of the population which derives dependence therefrom, the total of which comprises about 1,250,000 people. This class, by virtue of the reservation to them of the present harvest in such a manner that each proprietor retains a sufficiency of seed and food for himself and family throughout the year, the excess being purchased by the relief organization at a good price, are now thus placed in a position of economic security and need give no further anxiety.
- c) The industrial workers and that portion of the population dependent upon them, which totals roughly 3,250,000. This class largely comprises the mass out of which the above 2,750,000 are recruited. The whole problem is one of unemployment, and unless some remedy can be found for the productive employment of these people their preservation seems hopeless, because the provision of £2,500,000 a month for their support as stated above is beyond all possible accomplishment.
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2. The Proposed Comité Industriel. September 1915-January 1916

The Dutch plan, which Hoover had supported, did not receive the approval of the British Government, which stipulated a greater participation by the C.R.B. than the plan provided for, and suggested that the Belgian Minister in London and Hoover work out a new scheme. This was done and the British agreed in principle to the revised plan. With this encouragement, early in October 1915 Hoover renewed discussions of the industrial project with Belgians and Germans in Brussels, and with Francqui prepared a memorandum on the subject for presentation to the German authorities. The chances that the proposal would be accepted were not bright, for Hoover had learned that the Germans were as determined to exclude the Commission([273](#)) from participation in the project as the British were to include it.

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DOCUMENT NO. 390

Note,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO BELGIAN MINISTER IN LONDON, raising objections to the official Belgian plan for industrial revival and laying down certain principles for the whole project

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

11 September 1915

His Excellency, Paul Hymans
Belgian Minister, London

SIR:

With reference to your Note No. 3879 of the 20th ultimo regarding exports from and imports into Belgium, I have the honour to inform you that His Majesty's Government are prepared to consider the granting of greater facilities to Belgian trade if a scheme can be devised presenting adequate guarantees.

I do not desire to offer any criticisms of detail on the scheme(274) proposed in your Note under reply, but I desire to point out that that scheme provides no method of co-ordination between imports and exports. It is clear that the best method of guaranteeing that imports of raw material into Belgium are used for no object which could benefit the enemy will be to check the raw material imported by any given industry against the exports of finished products made by that industry. Strict control of this kind will be essential, and I do not see how such control can be in practice exercised unless both imports and exports pass through the hands of the same organisation.

I recognise that the form in which your scheme is proposed arises from the differentiation between exports and imports laid down in my Note of July 31st, but if any considerable imports of raw material are to be allowed, I think that this differentiation must be abandoned and exports and imports must be treated as interdependent.

Further, I am inclined to think that the scheme you propose does not sufficiently provide for that close connection with the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National which appears necessary if imports and exports are to be regulated on any fixed principle. Some fixed principle must be laid down in order to avoid complaints of discrimination between various industries. In the view of His Majesty's Government there are only three fixed principles on which such a work can be based, namely:

1. That Belgian industry should be enabled, so far as possible, to employ those sections of the industrial population which would otherwise fall and are now falling on the charity dispensed by the Comité National and
2. That Belgian industry should be enabled so far as possible to pay in exports for the foodstuffs imported by the Relief Commission, thus relieving the Belgian Government and the Allied Governments of the financial burden involved by their present contributions to the Commission.

3. That facilities for Belgian exports should not afford an opportunity for the supply by Germany of raw material or half-manufactured materials to Belgian industry, thus in effect opening a market for German exports.

I venture therefore, to suggest that you should reconsider your scheme in consultation with Mr. Hoover with a view to drawing up a detailed plan for submission to the competent authorities of His Majesty's Government who will consult the French Government in the matter.

As you are aware, the general question of Belgian trade has been the subject of many conferences between the office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Treasury and the Belgian Chamber of Commerce and the views formed on the result of these conferences might well be taken into account in drawing up any such plan. If you so desire, I shall be glad to depute a member of this office to confer with you and Mr. Hoover on the subject and explain more in detail than is possible in written correspondence the general requirements on which His Majesty's Government will feel obliged to insist in any scheme which may be drawn up for their approval.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(for the Secretary of State)

(Signed) A. LAW

[Fig. 13. LETTER, 18 JULY 1916, AMBASSADOR GERARD TO HOOVER](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 391

Letter,
HOOVER TO BELGIAN MINISTER IN LONDON, describing organization of the Comité Industriel and proposed regulations of its activities to meet requirements of all interested parties

LONDON, 28 September 1915

*His Excellency Paul Hymans
Belgian Minister, London*

DEAR MR. HYMANS:

In order to advance the matter of the import of raw material into, and the export of manufactures from Belgium, I desire to lay before you the plan of organization

which we believe is best conceived to carry out the desires of all parties. The arrangements which we have carried out and proposed are briefly as follows:

1. A Committee has been organized in Brussels, comprising representatives of various industries, to be known as the Comité Industriel.

This Committee is to be under the patronage of the American, Spanish, and Dutch Ministers and Ambassadors in Brussels, The Hague, and London. In addition to the Belgian members it possibly will include Dutch members and also representatives of the Commission for Relief.

It is proposed that this Committee shall organize agencies in Rotterdam and elsewhere to conduct the commercial phases of its business and that these agencies should be in truth comprised of the agents of various firms involved.

2. This Committee proposes that the basis of operations shall be the single factory as unit and that the following conditions should surround such a factory:

a) That it should be chosen with regard to the maximum employment of labor from the relief point of view.

b) That the entire output of the factory should be exported.

c) The raw material consumed should be solely of either oversea or undoubted Belgian origin.

d) The German Government shall undertake that such factory be free from requisition or purchase of its raw material, manufactured goods, by-products, plant, or equipment. Its entire personnel to be free from interference and influence by the German authorities.

e) Such factory to be placed under the protection of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, in the same manner as the food warehouses are at present. The whole of the goods to and from Holland of such factory to be transported by the Commission for Relief in Belgium under their flag and protection.

3. The whole of the accounts of export and import operations of the Comité Industriel to be consolidated in their Rotterdam agency:

a) This agency to be under the control of an Auditor to be appointed by (?).

b) Statistical record to be kept to determine the exodus of imported material.

c) At least once a month a balance-sheet is to be drawn up as to the expenditure on imports and the receipts for exports and any excess of receipts over expenditure is to be handed over to the Commission for Relief. The Commission is free to make

such counterpayments in Belgium from its local receipts for the sale of foodstuffs as may be convenient to it, at such rate of exchange into Belgian francs as it may determine in conjunction with the Comité Industriel. Any balances over and above such amounts are to be deposited in a neutral bank to be chosen by the Commission for Relief, and a certificate of deposit may be issued by the Commission in favor of the Comité Industriel, such certificate to be cashable only after the declaration of peace. These certificates may be the basis of local loans for payment of wages.

d) The first £10,000 of such deposits to be held by the Commission for Relief as a deposit of good faith by the Comité Industriel on behalf of all factories brought under their patronage in the execution of the requirements here laid down, and violation of any of these requirements shall subject this sum of money to forfeiture as a fine, and to the termination of the entire arrangement, the Comité Industriel in turn to assess this particular sum against any particular factory which shall be at fault.

4. The governments concerned are to issue an approved list of raw materials and manufactures which may be handled by the Comité Industriel, and are to approve the names of the firms to whom patronage is extended by the Comité Industriel.

It seems to me that if the above simple form of organization can be held to, the whole working arrangements will be infinitely more flexible and that the objects of the various authorities will be more nearly accomplished than if we extend our undertakings to a large amount of detail. Under the arrangements above proposed the Allied Governments would possess a number of checks and controls on any violation of their objectives and I may review what these controls amount to:

a) The names of the firms and the character of the material will have to meet the approval of the Allied Governments.

b) The Comité Industriel could collectively have the responsibility for the good conduct of its members.

c) There can be no question as to the jealous desire of the Belgians to comply with the objectives of the Allied Governments.

d) The arrangements proposed will provide that no money, either paper or metallic, will pass over the Belgian frontier.

e) The financial position of the Belgians except as regards the bare employment is in no way benefited by virtue of the financial restrictions proposed.

f) The guarantees asked for from the German authorities are sufficiently wide to cover all objects of the Allied Governments.

g) The proposed incorporation of the Ministers of the various neutral countries and the execution of final arrangements with them greatly strengthens the protection of the Comité Industriel and gives a background of security to the faithful performance of the engagements.

h) The incorporation of neutral members in the executive body of the Comité Industriel gives additional assurance that all the requirements on both sides will be faithfully observed.

i) The transportation and storage of all material being carried out in the name of the Commission for Relief in Belgium gives the actual ownership of this material to a neutral body.

Altogether I do not see that any wider series of protections can be devised than the above. When all is said and done the whole matter will rest on good faith and I believe that all of the men involved on either side in a desire to further this problem and diminish the distressing unemployment in Belgium are acting in no other spirit than that of perfect good faith.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER,
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 392

Memorandum

(undated but written about 13 October 1915), by HOOVER, describing the progress of negotiations for the revival of Belgian industry and analyzing the alternatives as result of German objections to the participation of the C.R.B.

The position to be taken in the revival of industrial activity in Belgium by the C.R.B. is set out in the attached memorandum which I wrote to the Belgian Minister. I also forwarded copy of this memorandum to the members of the Departmental Committee of the English Government, of which Lord Eustace Percy is the head, and I understood from him that, subject to some minor details the Departmental Committee appeared willing to recommend to the Cabinet the acceptance of this project. One of these details was rather a better German guarantee than appears in this memo.

On going to Brussels with this scheme, Mr. Francqui and I drew up a memo quoting this scheme in toto, omitting only the list of assurances which the British Government would have had appear in the latter part of the Hymans memo, and we introduced into the memo which Mr. Francqui and I drew up a prior German

guarantee to cover the detail asked for above. This joint memo by Mr. Francqui and myself was to be presented to the German Government on the 11th inst. They had previously had communicated to them, however, the rough details of the same project, at the time of a previous visit to Brussels, and had expressed their general approval in principle.

I am of course unable to anticipate the result of the conference of the 11th inst., but it appeared to me from the information I secured in Belgium that the Germans would object to the C.R.B. participation---and on this general question I have written the attached letter to the Belgian Minister.

I may summarize these alternatives and their ultimate effect as follows:

If the Germans refuse to accept the C.R.B. as the sole transportation agent, the alternatives are:

1. That the Comité Industriel should itself be the consignee of goods in and out of Belgium and in and out of Holland;
2. That a Dutch committee should be set up who would become the consignee in and out of Belgium and in and out of Holland.

I am under the impression that if either one of these alternatives were adopted, the following results would ensue:

- a) A second gateway would have been opened into Belgium and Holland for the transit of goods;
- b) There would be competition between the C.R.B. and such an organization, for transport facilities, and in this time of dearth of transport there would be a forcing up of prices and a possible crippling of the food supply, which must always take precedence. If, on the other hand, the entire transportation is in the hands of the C.R.B., back-loading can be obtained for lighters and forward-loading can be adjusted to the necessities of the food supply.
- c) If the Comité Industriel were set up as the gateway it would only be a short time before the Germans would advance the proposition that the Comité National should also become its own transportation and distributing agent---as they cannot be otherwise than desirous of eliminating all neutral agencies operating in their captured territory. This raises a manifestly serious question as to the whole control of the food supply and its support by the neutral world.
- d) The other alternative would be a Dutch committee, which to my mind has two objections, the first being that it gives such a committee the practical effective control of Belgian industry. The transportation in the hands of the C.R.B. gives the Comité Industriel a free pipe-line to the outer world, which has no objections either

as to profit or control of Belgian activities. Second---it sets up a rival organization in the transportation business, as mentioned above; and---third---it seems to me that it would only be a question of time before the German authorities would advance a proposal that such an organization should take over the food supply as well as the work of the Comité Industriel, as they would obviously look upon the Dutch as a more controllable body than the Americans.

I wish it made clear at all times that the one desire of the C.R.B. is to be of service to the civil population of Belgium in its own ultimate interest; that if the crisis should arise that the Germans positively refuse to agree to this extension of the C.R.B. activities and if it is a question of the abandonment of the industrial revival or, alternately, the adoption of either of the above gateways---this is a matter which the Belgians themselves must decide, as to which is to their greatest ultimate interest. We do not wish any sentiment of loyalty to us or any feeling that we would not be pleased to do the best we can under any given circumstances to enter into such a consideration.

From advices which I have had from Brussels since leaving I believe that the tension between the Germans and the C.R.B. is somewhat relaxed, and it may be that the Germans will not be so insistent on the elimination of the C.R.B. element in the Comité Industriel as was my impression when I left Brussels.

As had been feared, the Germans did not accept the proposal as presented in the Hoover-Francqui memorandum. They did not, however, officially and finally reject it or offer counter proposals, but left the matter in the air while they made tentatives in other directions. They offered to provide Belgian industries with raw materials if the Belgians would turn the products over to the Germans. This the Belgians emphatically refused to consider, whereupon the Germans returned to the idea of a neutral industrial committee with which the Commission should have no connection. This also failed, for such a scheme was unacceptable to the British, and to the French, who were lukewarm to the whole idea of attempting to revive Belgian industry on the ground that to permit the import of raw materials would, directly or indirectly, benefit the Germans. In the meantime, in November, while Hoover was in Brussels, there were further conferences, articles of incorporation for the Comité Industriel were prepared, detailed plans of operation were worked out, and a set of guarantees to meet the chief demands of the British were drawn up. Thus by the end of 1915 the Comité Industriel on paper was ready to begin operations, but on the fundamental issue of the disposition of the value of the exports (i.e., whether the sums received for exports in excess of the necessary expenditures for required raw materials should be turned over to the Commission or deposited in Belgian banks) the British and Germans were as far apart as ever.

DOCUMENT NO. 393

Guarantees to be given by the German authorities respecting the Industrial Committee (Comité Industriel)

[BRUSSELS, November 1915]

In order to promote the revival of Belgian industry a Belgian Industrial Committee whose articles of association are annexed, has been created with the object of importing raw material into Belgium and exporting manufactured products.

The Belgian industries will be divided, according to their class of activity, in syndicates or groups, whose organization and representation in the Association will be ruled by the enclosed articles.

The affiliation to the Association to be approved by the Governor General in Belgium, who retains the right of withdrawing at any time the said approval.

Provided that, under these conditions, the affiliation to the Industrial Association of the different branches of the industry and the works pertaining to them should have been approved by the Governor General, the guarantee is given that raw material imported, in consequence of the present agreement, and finished products resulting therefrom, shall be free from requisition of any kind whatever.

During their affiliation to the Industrial Association, the free use of the existing installations, machinery, and raw material in their possession, as well as the right of disposing without restraint of the working staff necessary for the continuance of the work, will be guaranteed to the manufacturers.

The export of finished products manufactured from said raw material is only allowed (except for products to be indicated afterward, which have no value for war purposes) under the guarantee that these products will not fall into possession of states at war with Germany.

The guarantee that, on one side, imported raw material and finished products resulting therefrom shall not be requisitioned and that, on the other hand, finished products (especially mentioned products excepted) shall not fall into possession of states at war with Germany, shall be assured by a Committee composed of persons of neutral nationality, indicated by the Spanish, United States, and Holland Governments or their representatives in Belgium.

The head office of that Committee will be in Brussels, a main agency to be opened in Rotterdam.

To carry the negotiations with the Industrial Association, with the affiliated syndicates or grouping bodies, and with the neutral Committee, a special department managed by German officers will be created by the Governor General.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 394

Articles of Association of the Comité Industriel

[BRUSSELS, November 1915]

I. Object:

The object of the Industrial Committee is to organize the supplying and supervision of the affiliated Belgian factories by furnishing them full guarantees:

- a) For the free import of the raw materials and the export of their products;
- b) To make the transfers of funds necessitated by these transactions.

The seat of the Industrial Committee will be in Brussels.

Its activity will be exercised for account of all the industries as if they were a single undertaking, under its management.

No factory can be affiliated without the preliminary authorization of the German Government.

The affiliated works will endeavor to utilize the maximum of labor in order to relieve poverty.

II. Patronage:

The Committee to be placed under the patronage of the Ministers of Spain, United States, and Holland, who have already informed the promoters that they have been duly authorized by their respective Governments to give their co-operation to the Belgian manufacturers

III. Composition:

The Committee will include one or several delegates of the different industrial groups and syndicates who will adhere to the present articles and to the regulations here enclosed.

IV. Brussels Office:

a) The Industrial Committee will organize a central office in Brussels and regional offices at places where necessary.

b) It will consider all the applications of groups or new syndicates for joining the organization, and after eventual approbation will submit them to the Belgian and English Governments as well as to German authorities.

c) It will keep in continual touch with the delegates of each group or industrial syndicate.

It will centralize all the correspondence of the different groups or industrial syndicates, which will refrain of [refrain from?] corresponding directly with their foreign customers or suppliers.

d) It will supervise the use of raw materials and admit to be worked in the affiliated factories only raw materials originating without doubt from Belgium or neutral countries.

It will see that the products shall, except by special authorization, be sent only to neutral countries and will deliver them to agreed destinations in accordance with the stipulations contained in the present articles and in the annexed regulations.

All the goods forwarded from or to Holland for account of the Industrial Committee will be shipped under the control of the Neutral Committee.

e) It will have to centralize all the accounts relating to imports and exports. For this purpose it will keep general accounts of the receipts in materials, exports of products, and money transfers with foreign countries made for account of affiliated manufacturers or firms.

f) In order to look after the movement of import and export, an office is to be opened at Rotterdam and, if necessary, agencies in the neutral countries to which export will take place.

g) It will look after the strict observance of the regulations here enclosed. These regulations may be modified at any time by decision of a simple majority of the Industrial Committee; each affiliated group or syndicate agreeing, beforehand, to accept the said regulations.

h) It will be empowered to inflict penalties against affiliated manufacturers or firms who will have failed in their engagements.

For this purpose the first million of francs proceeding from the sale of exported products will be appropriated to the guarantee of the engagements taken by the groups or syndicates in forming the Committee.

Every breach of such engagements will expose this sum to be seized by the representatives of the Neutral Committee to the benefit of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The Neutral Committee may also cause the exclusion of the failing group, syndicate, or factory.

V. Rotterdam Office:

a) This office will include one or several delegates of the Industrial Committee.

b) It will be its duty to centralize, under the control of the Neutral Committee, all the movements of the imports and exports oversea or to the neutral countries, as well as the money transfers with foreign countries.

c) For this purpose, it will keep a duplicate set of books showing:

1. Raw materials imported and products exported;
2. Expenses for the purchase of raw materials and proceeds of the sale of products;
3. General expenses.

All these accounts will be audited by a chartered accountant and might be submitted to the inspection of the belligerent Powers.

d) The surplus of receipts over expenses will be deposited monthly in neutral banks, under the control of the Committee of Neutrals, in order to assist eventually the needs of food supplying.

These deposits will be represented by certificates. These certificates can be used, wholly or partly, for the purchase of food for the Belgian people, and this, at an exchange rate in Belgian francs which will be fixed in accordance with the Industrial Committee.

In this case, the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation will remit, to the Industrial Committee, the equivalent in Belgian francs, of the amounts realized on these deposit certificates, and the Industrial Committee will divide them between the beneficiaries of the certificates to whom refer the realized payments.

The amounts not used for food supplies will remain deposited in a neutral bank until the cessation of hostilities and the deposit certificates of these amounts will be

remitted to the Industrial Committee, which is authorized to use them as collateral for loans, granted by banks in Belgium, for the payment of salaries.

e) The Rotterdam Office will have to direct to the foreign countries and under the control of the Neutral Committee, all the products exported from Belgium and to ship the imported raw materials to the industries which will be indicated by the central office in Brussels.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 395

Regulations of the Comité Industriel

[BRUSSELS, November 1915]

1. The Industrial Committee is formed from the delegates of various groups or industrial syndicates who have adhered or will adhere to its articles of association. They are elected for the term of one year and are re-eligible.
2. The Committee's head office is established at the Société Générale de Belgique.
3. The Committee selects among its members a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen. The Chairman and Vice-Chairmen are elected for one year. They are re-eligible.
4. The Committee meets as often as required by its interests and at least once a month upon convocation of the Chairman.
5. All resolutions are taken by the Committee on the ordinary majority of the delegates' votes. In case of division, the Chairman's vote is cast.
6. The Committee is empowered to appoint amongst its members an Executive Committee entrusted with the carrying out of the resolutions taken.
7. The Committee has the most extensive powers for carrying out its object. It takes all necessary steps to this end and has the right to create auxiliary branches in the provinces as well as abroad.
8. The Committee takes under its protection and control the factories of the affiliated groups or syndicates.
9. This protection and this control will affect only the material and products covered by a regular pass and intended to be imported, stored, manufactured, and exported through the adherents.

10. The said adherents bind themselves toward the Committee to observe scrupulously all the stipulations of the diplomatic arrangements agreed upon as to the reception and the use of the imported goods and the products to be exported.

11. The affiliated factories are immediately to inform the Committee of every infringement of the arrangements stated in the previous article.

To this purpose the said factories will establish and send immediately to the Committee a detailed report ascertaining the facts and giving the names and addresses of witnesses whose testimony could be called upon.

12. Whenever the adherents will be in possession of a regular pass they will have to deposit in the cash offices indicated to them for this purpose a security in cash or values agreed upon by the Committee, this security guaranteeing toward the Committee that the adherents will observe every engagement subscribed by them.

In case of breach of these engagements the Committee has the right, by decision indicating the grounds on which it is taken and without appeal, to seize, for the benefit of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, the whole or part of the said security.

13. The managers of the syndicated manufacturers bind themselves to inform the Industrial Committee in Brussels of every infringement of the engagements taken toward the Committee by any authority or work in order that they may at once be reported to the Neutral Committee.

14. The adherents bind themselves to accept and pay, within the month of its presentation, the bill for their share in the general expenses of the offices opened by the Committee in Belgium or abroad.

These expenses will be settled in the following manner:

To cover the first general expenses, they will pay a provision of 10 per cent on the amount of capital invested in their business or calculated on such other equitable basis as will be arranged by the Industrial Committee.

The manufacturers having closed contracts through the Industrial Committee will have to deposit 1 per cent of the amount of their transactions to cover the general expenses incurred by the Committee and its agencies.

Should this amount of 1 per cent be insufficient to cover the said general expenses, the Committee will be empowered to debit the balance to the general provision of 10 per cent.

15. Every group or syndicate affiliated will have to deliver to the Industrial Committee a complete scheme of organization that will show especially:

- a) The names of the participating firms.
- b) The internal regulations of the group.
- c) The raw material with their approximate quantities to be monthly imported.
- d) The manufactured products to be exported monthly with their approximate quantities.

The internal regulations of the groups or syndicates must clearly show:

- a) That every member of the group or syndicate adheres to the principles put down by the Industrial Committee and binds himself to observe them strictly.
- b) That all correspondence concerning the importations, exportations, and money transactions must pass through the Industrial Committee.
- c) The system of control on imported material and exported products to be established in their factories.
- d) The system of bookkeeping.
- e) The penalties for infringement on the regulations.

16. The Committee will fix the penalty for breach of the present regulations in every case.

17. The Industrial Committee might, at any time, upon the majority of the groups and syndicates affiliated, modify these regulations.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 396

Letter,
CHEVRILLON TO HOOVER, describing the opposition of the French General Headquarters to the scheme for the revival of Belgian industry

PARIS, 5 January 1916

*H. C. Hoover, Esq.,
President, The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London*

DEAR HOOVER:

Mr. Francqui will have mentioned to you his conversation in this office with Mr. Nobel, representing the French Army General Headquarters, who, on behalf of General Joffre to whom I have sent our reports, wanted to obtain various details on the work of the Commission and especially wanted to gather information on the scheme for reviving Belgian industries, concerning which the French Government is today consulted by the British.

It seems to be generally understood here that if such a scheme were to come to a head the Commission would be in charge of it, although you remember that I told you that this is not the advice of the French Embassy in London.

I am given to understand confidentially that the advice of the French General Headquarters is not in favor of allowing importations into Belgium. The French view is that there are practically no Belgian industries that might not, directly or indirectly, be made to work to the benefit of the German occupants. The principal Belgian industries, such as metallurgical, steel work, coal mining, textiles, are all out of the question; other industries would relieve the situation only to a very small extent and would further complicate the question of freights which is getting so acute. The French General Staff evidently take the view that the Belgian must endure till the war is over and assert that the principal claim in favor of the scheme, which is that Belgian workmen are emigrating to Germany, is not a correct statement.

I write all this for your guidance, as evidently here the question is going to be decided one way or the other and an answer to the British Government will be given. Should you desire to submit any arguments or observations that might modify the above views it is high time that you should advise me or come over here for this purpose. I notice that Mr. Francqui was very keen on the subject and wonder whether you are of the same mind.

In regard to shoes, I expect to have the export permit at the end of the week.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) L. CHEVRILLON

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3. Failure of Subsequent Negotiations. April 1916-January 1917

The failure of the Germans to accept the proposals set forth in the preceding documents ended the attempt to revive Belgian industry through the medium of an elaborate organization like the proposed Comité Industriel. In 1916, although there

were further negotiations regarding Belgian industry with which the Commission was concerned, new conditions gave these negotiations a different character.

During 1915(275) the German authorities had relaxed their original severe restrictions on Belgian exports and certain industries were allowed to export overseas by way of Holland. The British did not interfere with this activity so long as the value of the exports was deposited in a British bank. A portion of these deposits was released for dispatch to Belgium sufficient to pay the wages of the workmen in the factories engaged in producing for this trade. The Commission was not concerned in this arrangement, but when in the spring of 1916 the Germans required Belgian exporters to deposit the full value of the exports, the British threatened to prohibit Belgian overseas export unless the Germans agreed to permit the value of the exports being turned over to the Commission as had been previously proposed in the negotiations regarding the Comité Industriel. The German authorities again did not reply to this proposal but indicated their hostility to it by replacing restrictions on Belgian exports and ultimately prohibiting overseas exports entirely. The matter became a serious one for the Commission when in September 1916 the Foreign Office notified Hoover, through the American Embassy in London, that the British Government would not consider an increase in subventions for relief of which the Commission was greatly in need until the Germans replied to new proposals relative to Belgian exports. Hoover thereupon proposed that the British consent to the continuation of exports and to the return of their total value to Belgium through the medium of the C.R.B. The British agreed, but when Francqui put the proposal before the Germans they flatly rejected it.

DOCUMENT NO. 397

Letter,

LORD ROBERT CECIL TO AMBASSADOR PAGE, describing the conflicting British and German restrictions on Belgian exports and stating that exports must either be prohibited or their value paid to the C.R.B. for relief purposes

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

1 April 1916

*To His Excellency Walter Hines Page
American Embassy, London*

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

You will recollect that last November I approached you unofficially on the subject of the scheme then pending for the importation of raw materials into Belgium under the auspices of the Relief Commission. The German Government having neglected

to make any reply to the proposals, I was obliged recently to inform the Belgian Minister of the facts relating to the German policy of exploitation carried on in Belgium and to explain to him the impossible position in which His Majesty's Government are placed by this policy.

This letter was published and shortly afterwards a reply was issued by the German Press Bureau stating that the German Government had been unable to come to a decision on this subject owing to His Majesty's Government having made it a condition that the value of all exports from Belgium should be deposited in a bank in the United Kingdom.

As Your Excellency knows, this statement is false; for the scheme put forward by Mr. Hoover contained no such proposal, but on the contrary provided for the deposit of the value of such exports partly in a neutral bank and partly with the Relief Commission itself to be used for the purchase of foodstuffs.

At present, and for a year past, it is, however, true that in the absence of any definite Organisation for Belgian exports and imports, His Majesty's Government have exacted a condition that the value of all articles exported from Belgium under permit from His Majesty's Consul General at Rotterdam shall be deposited in a British bank, only such portions of these deposits being released under licence for despatch to Belgium as are necessary for the payment of wages to the workmen in the factories concerned.

It now appears, however, that the German Government are exacting from Belgian exporters an undertaking that the value of everything they export shall be paid into a bank in Belgium. There is thus created an absolute incompatibility between the requirements of His Majesty's Government and the German Government, and the Belgian industries consequently suffer from a conflict of regulations for which His Majesty's Government must hold the German Government primarily responsible.

There are only two alternatives now before His Majesty's Government. The first is entirely to prohibit all overseas export from Belgium. This His Majesty's Government are for obvious reasons reluctant to do; but while their present regulations afford ample opportunity to Belgian producers to pay their workmen and to conduct their industries, His Majesty's Government cannot possibly accept a system by which these Belgian exports become a means of strengthening Germany by allowing the whole value of them to go into Belgium and to form the object there of the extortionate levies and fines which the German authorities have imposed on the territory they have occupied.

The second alternative is that already offered to the German Government by the Relief Commission, namely, that the value of these exports shall be paid to the Relief Commission and shall be used by them for the purchase of foodstuffs

abroad, thus contributing on a business basis towards the work now carried on purely on a basis of charity.

I shall be glad if Your Excellency will take steps to confer with the Relief Commission and to lay this offer before the German authorities in Belgium. If those authorities will not accept it, and will not withdraw the conditions they now exact in the case of all Belgian exports, His Majesty's Government will have no choice but to take steps still further to restrict a trade which furnishes financial resource to the invaders of Belgium. The matter of course is one of considerable urgency and Mr. Hoover's presence in Brussels may make it possible for Your Excellency to take the question up immediately under favorable conditions.

Yours very truly

(Signed) ROBERT CECIL

DOCUMENT NO. 398

Note,

BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO U.S. CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT LONDON, refusing to consider an increase in subsidies to the C.R.B. until a reply has been received from the German authorities to the proposal given above

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
23 September 1916

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Chargé d'Affaires and has the honour to refer once again to his letter of April 1st in which he requested Mr. Page to be good enough to take steps to confer with the Relief Commission and lay before, the German authorities in Belgium an offer with regard to the conditions under which His Majesty's Government were willing to continue to allow goods to be exported from Belgium.

His Majesty's Government understand from Mr. Hoover of the Commission that he now requires a considerably increased subvention in view of the rise in the price of foodstuffs.(276)

Lord Grey must postpone the consideration of this matter until he is in receipt of the reply to the above-mentioned note, and he would therefore be glad if the United States Chargé d'Affaires will be good enough to take steps to induce the German Government to give an answer without further delay.

DOCUMENT NO. 399

Letter,

HOOVER TO LORD EUSTACE PERCY, referring to the above note and suggesting a solution by requiring that all money derived from exports be translated into Belgium through the medium of the C.R.B. relief operations

LONDON, 26 September 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

I have received a copy of a dispatch from Earl Grey to the American Ambassador, of the 23d of September, referring to the negotiations with regard to the importation and exportation of industrial material, the last dispatch referred to being that of April 1st.

Before this matter goes forward to Belgium, I would like to make a suggestion that the negotiations leading up to the dispatch of April 1st implied the importation of raw material into Belgium under elaborate control, and the exportation of manufactures. It seems to me obvious that in the present state of the shipping situation it is out of the question to again advocate the importation of raw material into Belgium.

Under the question of exports of non-contraband industrial material, this has already had a considerable development, as you know. His Majesty's Government agreed to such exports, conditional upon the money being partially impounded in England, and the Germans, on the other hand, have got out an order that no exports can be made unless all the money is translated into Belgium. It would appear to me worth considering whether this business should not be formulated into one by which approved exports are permitted, the whole of the money to be translated into Belgium, but only through the C.R.B. This would obviously considerably increase our commercial exchange, and to whatever extent this took place it would diminish our demands upon the Allied Governments.

I should be glad if you would think the matter over.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

Note,

FRANCQUI TO DR. BRUHN OF THE DEUTSCHE VERMITTLUNGSTELLE (BRUSSELS), describing the effect on Belgian industries of German restrictions on export and suggesting an arrangement like that proposed by Hoover to the British Government

BRUSSELS, 9 October 1916

Monsieur le Docteur Bruhn

Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N., Brussels

In accord with the Protecting Ministers the Comité National has the honor to bring to the notice of Doctor Bruhn the negotiations which were previously carried on with a view of obtaining the authorization to export to foreign countries Belgian manufactured products. As Dr. Bruhn knows, the Comité National proposed to organize a syndicate of all the Belgian exporters and suggested the depositing in a bank of a neutral country of all sums resulting from this exportation, it being understood that a part of these sums should be sent to Belgium in order to pay the wages of the workmen and cover the cost of manufacture, that another part should be devoted to the buying in neutral countries of the raw material necessary to Belgian industry, and that the balance would remain on deposit in the aforementioned bank until the signing of peace.

These negotiations have had no sequel. Subsequently, however, the Department of the General Government which occupies itself with Belgian industries authorized certain manufacturers, such as glass-makers, to export their products to foreign countries on condition that the total value of these exports returns to Belgium.

On account of the difficulties encountered in getting this money back into Belgium, the German authorities decided a few weeks ago to no longer allow overseas exports and only to authorize exports to Holland.

As a consequence of this decision the glass works were obliged to close down and pay off their workpeople, thus depriving from earning a living some 150,000 persons, who have become a charge upon charity. The other industries which had been able to take advantage of the authorizations to export which had been granted up to the present time, find themselves in the same case.

In order to reply to the views expressed by the German Government to see the working classes return to their work, the Comité National suggest today that authorizations to export to overseas countries be accorded to Belgian industries, on condition that the Comité National shall pay the manufacturers in full the amount of their invoices; the counterpart of these foreign invoices to be paid into the coffers of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to serve as payment for the foodstuffs bought by it and imported into Belgium through its intervention.

The Comité National is persuaded that its suggestion will be accepted by the English Government; it is likewise convinced that it will be accepted by the German authorities, for the solution which it recognizes responds to the manifest intentions of the Industrial Department of the General Government as far as the permits to export are concerned.

The Comité National will be pleased to receive a reply as soon as possible.

If this solution be admitted, the quantities of provisions imported might be, if not increased, at least maintained at the present figures, notwithstanding the considerable rise in prices.

(Signed) FRANCQUI
The President
The Comité Exécutif

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 401

Extract of letter,
PERCY TO POLAND, emphasizing the importance of the German acceptance of Hoover's proposal and stating the British belief that German policy is to depress Belgian industry in order to force workmen to work for Germany

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
27 October 1916

DEAR MR. POLAND:

.....

On quite a different matter, I suppose Hoover has gone into Belgium fully realising the importance we attach to the Germans accepting our proposal that the purchase money for all exports from Belgium should be paid over to the Relief Commission. This is of the first importance as we know that the Germans are using their refusal to permit exports except on condition that the whole purchase money for such exports shall be paid into a bank in Belgium as an additional means of forcing Belgian factories to close down in order that the unemployed workmen may be forced to go to work in Germany.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 402

Letter,
BRUHN TO THE COMITÉ NATIONAL, declining to permit the transfer of the value of exports through the C.R.B.

BRUSSELS, 23 October 1916

To the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brussels

In continuation of our letter No. 7361 of the 11th inst., it is respectfully stated that that portion of the proposals of Mr. Francqui in his letter of the 9th inst., which refers to the exchange of the value of the permitted exports of the glass industry for foodstuffs through the medium of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, has not been sanctioned. If, and how far, the export of glass may be sanctioned has still to be considered. The decision will be made known to the interested parties.

(Signed) BRUHN

[Translation]

There was no further attempt to revive the question of Belgian industrial exports. The effects of the blockade and the shortage of man power had become so acutely felt in Germany that the Government embarked on a thorough-going policy of exploitation of the industrial resources and man power of the occupied territories. The most sensational application of this policy in Belgium and Northern France was the institution of forced labor. The Commission's connection with this policy is treated in chapter X.

DOCUMENT NO. 403

Letter,
FRANCQUI TO WHITLOCK, reviewing negotiations with the German authorities and suggesting that the German policy is directed to force Belgians to work for Germany

BRUSSELS, 26 October 1916

*His Excellency the Honorable Brand Whitlock
Minister of the United States, Brussels*

EXCELLENCY:

Following your letter of the 6th inst., we addressed the German Vermittlungsstelle of the C.N. in a note, copy of which we transmitted to Your Excellency and in which, following the desire manifested by Your Excellency, we suggested that export to oversea countries should be permitted to the manufacturers of the Belgian industries, on the condition that the Comité National should pay fully to these manufacturers the amount of their products; we proposed at the same time that the counter value of these exports abroad should be paid into the account of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to serve as payment for foodstuffs to be bought by them and imported into Belgium under their control.

We were guided in making this proposal by the wish to render possible the labor for Belgian workmen and thus to respond to the views expressed by the Governor-General to see the laboring classes return to their occupations. We had pointed out on this occasion the unhappy situation in which the glass-workers found themselves, condemned to idleness by the prohibition of the German authorities of export other than to Holland. Finally we added that we were persuaded that this suggestion would be acceptable to the British Government.

We have just received in reply to this communication the note, copy of which we attach for Your Excellency.

This note has the more astonished us as the suggestion which we made corresponded entirely to the intentions manifested formerly by the Industrial Department of the General Government as regards the permissions for export.

Also we cannot but remark that this is but one further step in that policy which we have already pointed out on more than one occasion, and which has for obvious intention the reduction of our workmen to an enforced idleness, which will allow the German authorities to employ them, willingly or by force, on work undertaken for their (the German) benefit.

We beg Your Excellency to accept the expression of our highest consideration.

(Signed) FRANCQUI
The President
The Comité Exécutif

[Translation]

Letter,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMBASSADOR PAGE, describing German regulations on Belgian export and indicating the intention of the British Government to prohibit Belgian oversea export if an assurance is not given that Belgian workmen will not be deported

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
25 January 1917

His Excellency the Honorable W. H. Page
United States Ambassador, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

The attention of His Majesty's Government has been called to the fact that the German authorities in Belgium before allowing any Belgian goods to leave the country insist on the exporters signing an undertaking that the whole amount of the purchase money will be remitted to Belgium and that no part of it will be deposited in the United Kingdom in a blocked account. To make certain that the undertaking is kept the German authorities exact the deposit of a guarantee of twenty per cent of the value of the goods, and at the same time they are levying an export tax of five per cent on old orders and ten per cent on new ones.

In view of the above regulations His Majesty's Government feel that they will not be able to continue allowing the export of Belgian goods to oversea destinations. Before however taking a final decision they desire to know whether, in case they were nevertheless to allow such export to continue, a definite assurance can be obtained that the workmen employed in the Belgian factories where the goods are made shall not be deported to Germany.

I should be grateful if a communication to that effect could be made to the German authorities in Belgium through the American Minister in Brussels.

I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration,

Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servant,

(for the Secretary of State)

(Signed) VICTOR WELLESLEY

THE COMMISSION
FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER X

FORCED LABOR AND DEPORTATIONS

As has been noted in foregoing pages, the German occupation of Belgium and Northern France and the Allied blockade forced the industrial establishments of these regions to close and caused widespread unemployment. The slender resources of the unemployed were soon exhausted and they became wholly dependent on charitable aid for their support. Without that aid they faced the alternatives of starving or accepting employment offered by the Germans, and so aiding directly or indirectly the enemies of their nation. The Commission endeavored to keep the unemployed from being faced with this decision by increasing the funds available for benevolent distribution and, as has been described in the last chapter, by attempting to work out an arrangement with the belligerents which would permit the resumption of certain industrial activities. Further assistance was given to the workers by employment on public works undertaken by the Communes, and by small subsidies issued to former employees of state enterprises through the "Société Coopérative d'Advance et de Prêts, patronnée par le Comité, National de Secours et d'Alimentation." The German authorities were, of course, fully aware from the beginning of the advantage they would derive if Belgian workers could be seduced or forced to accept German employment, either camouflaged or open. They also recognized that the "secours" or benevolent aid furnished by the relief organizations sustained the workers in their patriotic determination not to work for the enemy. Recognition of this fact was the chief reason behind the German effort in 1915 to get control of relief distribution.⁽²⁷⁷⁾ It also explains the Germans' lack of enthusiasm for the industrial revival project discussed in the preceding chapter.

1. Belgian Workers and German Employment. November 1914-March 1916

During the first months of the occupation, before the shortage of man power had begun to be felt in Germany,

the occupation authorities made no overt attempt to compel the Belgians to work for them.⁽²⁷⁸⁾ They confined themselves to decreeing that no pressure should be used to restrain Belgians from accepting German employment, to offering high wages, and to efforts to manipulate relief in such a fashion that the resistance of the workers to German blandishments would be weakened.

Under pressure, the Germans abandoned the attempt to control relief, and in reply to a letter⁽²⁷⁹⁾ drafted by Hoover, Villalobar, and Whitlock, they agreed not to use the relief organizations to compel Belgians to accept employment that would

benefit the German Army. This, of course, did not settle the matter. The occupation authorities assumed that they alone were competent to decide whether a particular type of employment was for the benefit of the Imperial Army or "in the public interest," and they decreed that Belgians who refused employment described by the German authority as in the public interest should be imprisoned for not more than one year. The Belgians naturally could not accept in many cases the German interpretation of "the public interest," and, as in the Lessines case (Documents 410 and 411), they refused to work and went to prison.

DOCUMENT NO. 405

German decree,
establishing that the Central Allies are not in a judicial sense foreign or enemy powers for the occupied territory of Belgium, and making interference with labor for the German authorities a punishable offense.(280)

BRUSSELS, 19 November 1914

ARTICLE 1

The German Empire, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey are not to be considered, for the occupied territory of Belgium, as foreign powers or enemies in the sense defined in Articles 113 ff. of the Belgian Penal Code and by the statute of August 4, 1914 [Statute concerning crimes and offences against the External Security of the State].

ARTICLE 2

Any one who undertakes, by force, threats, persuasion, or other means, to restrain those willing to work from labor for German authorities or for contractors executing contracts for German authorities, shall be punished by imprisonment.

ARTICLE 3

The military authorities have the exclusive right of jurisdiction under this decree.

ARTICLE 4

This decree takes effect immediately upon promulgation.

The Governor-General in Belgium

FREIHERR VON DER GOLTZ
Field-Marshal General

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 406

Letter,
CROSBY To HOOVER, On the progress of conferences in Brussels brought about through the German attempt to control the relief organization especially by regulating "secours" to the unemployed.

BRUSSELS, 8 July 1915

Herbert C. Hoover, London

MY DEAR HOOVER:

The situation in regard to any new relations between the German authorities and the C.N. and C.R.B. has changed rather suddenly since last night. I sent you telegrams indicating that Francqui expected to make no accord whatever if any substantial changes were proposed by German authority, but to take this position---that it will be necessary to refer such changes to the governments concerned, and that to this effect he would ask permission to leave the country for a visit to England and perhaps Havre.

No conference between the German authorities and the ministers took place until yesterday. At that meeting a number of the points presented by General von Bissing's first note([281](#)) were somewhat softened in their application. The capital matter of secours, and that as connected with possible requirements by the Germans, that Belgians should work for them, was agreed to be left as determined by the Hague Conference of 1907.

Mr. Francqui was present, and the Ministers, with Mr. Francqui consenting, seem to have accepted the proposition of the Germans to this effect. When I was told of this by Mr. Francqui last night, I naturally raised the point that no two persons of opposite interest had yet agreed upon the interpretation of any paragraph of the Hague conference, and that it seemed to me merely a delay of possible trouble, to leave the matter without asking the Germans for their interpretation of the principal paragraph in question, namely Paragraph 52, Section I, of the annex to the Convention. Mr. Francqui seemed, at last, to feel this was desirable; and I understand that today the presidents of the Provincial Committee have taken the same ground. I have just learned, however, (3:00 p.m. Thursday) from Mr. Whitlock, that he and Marquis de Villalobar had yesterday considered the matter as settled.

Your telegram indicating that you were sending the new British regulations on the subject was received yesterday morning and communicated to Mr. Francqui, but he did not get it early enough to submit it before the meeting. Mr. Whitlock was therefore much surprised when I went over the subject with him this afternoon. He seems to feel, however, that he can follow my suggestion of holding the matter open by asking for an interpretation of the paragraph in question. I had no information until last night after the meeting above mentioned, that Mr. Francqui had any other idea than that of asking for the permission to go out for discussion in England and Havre.

Upon receipt of the expected letter from you, giving terms([282](#)) desired by the British government, it is probable the matter can then be definitely arranged.

I suppose if the British requirements are accepted by the German authorities, that Mr. Francqui's visit may then be unnecessary. It is not clear that the Ministers consider it important.

Sincerely and hastily yours

(Signed) OSCAR T. CROSBY
Brussels Office

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DOCUMENT NO. 407

Extract of letter, ([283](#))

VILLALOBAR TO VON DER LANCKEN, stating the principle verbally agreed upon, that the German authorities would not employ the C.N. or the C.R.B. as a means to force Belgian workers into employment beneficial to the German Army.

BRUSSELS, 16 July 1915

To His Excellency Baron von der Lancken

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

The British Government has promised to allow and facilitate the import under the conditions, the principles of which we have already had the pleasure of agreeing upon with Your Excellency.

That the Belgian population alone will receive the advantage of the secours which the Comité National will distribute.

That the Comité National and the C.R.B. will continue to enjoy full liberty of action in accordance with their mission and their responsibilities in provisioning and giving assistance to the Belgian population who are in need.

That the German authorities will at no time employ the Comité National or the C.R.B. as a means to force the population of working people, against their will and against their conscience, to employment either directly or indirectly benefiting the German Imperial Army.

.....

I have no doubt that Your Excellency will be good enough to signify your agreement with the above.

.....

(Signed) VILLALOBAR
Minister of Spain in Belgium

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 408

Extract of letter, [\(284\)](#)

VON DER LANCKEN TO VILLALOBAR, giving assurance that the C.N. would not be used to force Belgians to work for the German Army

BRUSSELS, 29 July 1915

To His Excellency, the Marquis de Villalobar, Brussels

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of the 16th of July with regard to the provisioning of Belgium

I am happy to be able to inform Your Excellency that M. the Governor General has agreed to the following principles, which I am sure are the same as those stated by Your Excellency, viz.:

.....

That the Governor General will at no time make use of the Comité National to force the Belgian working population to employment for the benefit of the German army, contrary to the stipulations of the Hague Conventions.

.....

(Signed) VON DER LANCKEN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 409

German decree concerning measures to ensure the continuance of necessary labor in the interest of the public([285](#))

BRUSSELS, 14 August 1915

ARTICLE 1

Anyone who without adequate reason refuses to undertake or continue labor in the interest of the public, for which he is called upon by German authorities and which is in the line of his professional activity, shall be punished by detention or imprisonment for not more than one year.

In particular, any reason for such refusal based on international law is to be accepted as adequate.

ARTICLE 2

Article 2 of the Decree of 19th November 1914 (*Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens*, No. 17, p. 57) is replaced by the following regulation:

Whoever undertakes, by force, threats, persuasion, or other means to restrain others from undertaking or continuing labor in the interest of the public, for which he is called upon by German authorities and which is in the line of his professional activity, or labor for German authorities or for contractors executing contracts for German authorities, shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than five years.

ARTICLE 3

Anyone who knowingly aids or abets a refusal to work which incurs punishment in accordance with Article 1, by furnishing support [Unterstützungen] or in any other

manner, shall be punished by a fine of not more than ten thousand marks, in addition to which a sentence of imprisonment for not more than one year may be imposed.

ARTICLE 4

If communes, unions [Vereinigungen], or other organizations aid or abet refusal to work as described in Article 3, the penalty shall be imposed on the leaders.

ARTICLE 5

Sums of money which are proved to be destined for the support of the persons designated in Article 1 shall be confiscated for the benefit of the Belgian Red Cross.

ARTICLE 6

The German military courts and the German military authorities have jurisdiction in these cases.

ARTICLE 7

Independently of the foregoing regulations, the competent authorities may when the circumstances so justify levy coercive impositions [Zwangsauflagen].

ARTICLE 8

This decree takes effect immediately upon its promulgation.

FREIHERR VON BISSING,
Generaloberst
The Governor-General in Belgium

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 410

Letter,
MASTERS OF THE LESSINES QUARRIES TO VON BISSING, concerning
conditions of the resumption of work in the quarries and the arrest of masters and
men by the authorities

LESSINES, 25 October 1915

His Excellency Freiherr von Bissing
Governor-General of Belgium

EXCELLENCY:

We learn that you have directed an inquiry into the facts as a result of which a certain number of directors and assistants as well as numerous quarrymen of Lessines were recently condemned to prison by a War Court for refusing to work.

We ask you to authorize us to demonstrate that the position taken by them is not only sanctioned by the rules of International Law but also by Article 1 of your Decree of 14th August 1915.

For more than a year all operations have been suspended in the Lessines quarries and great misery prevails among the working population of that city and the adjacent villages. Further, masters and workmen would embrace with joy the opportunity to resume work which would not be opposed to their patriotic duty.

This was our attitude at the first. We so declared it on 21st August to Mr. Martini, Berg-Assessor at Mons. We told him that if sufficient guarantee could be given that the product of the quarries would not be employed either directly or indirectly for military purposes, we were convinced that all difficulties would be easily settled. Unfortunately, the guarantees we asked were refused us without discussion, which could only be interpreted by us as a confirmation of our fears that it was desired to force us to aid the operations of the German Army against the Belgian Army and the Allies. Furthermore, we have received proof that the macadam of Lessines is shipped toward the German lines.

Under these conditions our refusal to work is legitimate, as we stated above, through Article 52 of regulations concerning laws and customs of war, and through Article 1 of your Decree of 14th August 1915.

Also, may we count upon the equity of Your Excellency, to have justice done to our fellow-citizens, recently sentenced.

We think it advisable to demonstrate once more the legality of our position, to confirm to you that we are disposed now, as at the first, to do all in our power to induce the workmen to resume work if this resumption may be undertaken under conditions compatible with our patriotic duty. A simple method would permit us to give satisfaction to the German authorities.

We are ready to endeavor to induce the workmen to resume work if formal assurance is given us that no product of the Lessines quarries will be acquired or requisitioned for any military purpose whatever.

We understand quite well that it might not be possible to authorize us to ourselves verify the execution of this engagement, but would it not be easy to grant to an authority or a citizen of a neutral country the right to control the destination of the product of the Lessines quarries?

If that were done we should be enabled to show our workmen that they might resume work without committing an act of treason toward their country, and we are sure that they would receive with joy the possibility of increasing the comfort of their families, now subjected by a spirit of sacrifice, to the greatest privations.

In closing, we venture to draw the attention of Your Excellency to the treatment inflicted upon the recently sentenced directors of Lessines.

They are under a régime of hard labor, which is particularly serious on account of the age and state of health of several of them.

We are sure that such action could only have been taken without the knowledge of the higher authorities of the German Government. Also, we dare to hope that Your Excellency will see fit, without awaiting the result of the enquiry which you have ordered, to intervene in order that the treatment to which our friends are subjected, may be mitigated.

We beg Your Excellency to accept the assurance of our high consideration.

Signed by *The Masters of the Lessines Quarries,*
except Jacquemin, Vandevælde, and new quarry owner

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 411

Letter,

VON BISSING, replying to the preceding and stating the German position

BRUSSELS, 5 November 1915

The memorandum of 25th October 1915 concerning the refusal to work at Lessines has not altered my opinion on the subject.

The opposition of the operators and the workmen to my efforts to settle the question of work and to effect the well-being of the population is not justified by the Convention of The Hague.

The operators should recognize my efforts to induce the workmen to earn a regular salary (see my Decree August 16) and had better demand the protection of the military power to force the recalcitrant men to work.

You may not refer the matter to the Convention of The Hague, for even if the macadam was not used exclusively for the needs of the occupied country, as for instance for the repair of important military roads, or, as an exception, once for the need of the army, this is no reason for refusing to produce it.

For as these products do not serve primarily for military undertakings of war, the workmen do not take part in operations of war against their country.

Therefore, I have no guarantee to give that the product of the Lessines Quarries shall not have a military application and I must reject this requirement, which is that the authorities should be subject to control as concerns the use of this macadam.

The application of my Decree of 18th August 1915 to the refusal to work at Lessines has received my approval, and the penalties imposed are just because they are not counter to Article 52 of the Hague Convention and the culprits were warned of the penalties they incurred in refusing to work.

The extent of the penalty is also justified by reason of the stubborn opposition of the offenders.

Finally, as regards the article relating to hard labor and to the régime to which the prisoners are subjected, this assertion is inexact, for I have been advised that, on the contrary, privileges were granted them at the prison at Mons, in the matter of cleaning the cells, baths, and the transport of baggage on their departure.

BARON VON BISSING
Governor-General

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 412

Letter,
GREY TO PAGE, indicating that the German methods of coercing Belgian workers are likely to cause the British to withdraw their support of relief

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
22 September 1915

The United States Ambassador, London

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

You will recollect that Lord Crewe's letter of July 7th,(286) laying down the conditions governing the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, contained the following remark:

"If the German authorities desire to use the machinery of the Commission and the Comité National for the purpose of coercing the working population of Belgium to employ themselves against their own will and conscience, directly or indirectly in the service, or for the benefit, of the occupying Army, they must themselves provide the relief which these bodies dispense, and all arrangements between His Majesty's Government and the Commission must cease."

In my subsequent letter(287) of July 17th, I stipulated that "there shall be no interference of any kind whatever by the German authorities either in the sale of these foodstuffs or in their free distribution in the way of relief to those whom the Commission and the Comité National shall consider deserving of such relief."

In reply to this, Baron von der Lancken stated in his letter(288) to Mr. Whitlock of July 29th that "Monsieur le Gouverneur Général ne se servira. jamais du Comité National pour forcer la population belge à s'employer au service de l'armée allemande, contrairement aux stipulations des Conventions de la Haye."

On August 14th and 15th the Governor General of Belgium issued two decrees which were published in the *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt* at Brussels on August 22nd. These decrees impose severe punishments on workmen who refuse to give their labour to "works of public interest" or who, being in receipt of either public or private relief, refuse to accept work offered to them. Similar penalties are imposed on persons, "communes, associations, or other groups" who, "by the distribution of relief or by other means," "favour" such refusal to work. The decree of August 14th is to be enforced by the military tribunals. The decree of August 15th imposes automatically imprisonment for a fortnight to six months on all who, having refused work, become a charge on either public or private relief.

Both these decrees contain a clause exempting from their operation those cases where refusal to work is based on considerations admitted by international law, and I am well aware that the German authorities will claim that this exemption is a sufficient fulfilment of their promise quoted above. They will also doubtless claim that the word "favour" implies a deliberate use of relief for certain objects and does not apply to the assistance given by the relief committees of the Comité National. Unfortunately, the German authorities cannot expect, in view of their known actions in such matters, that any reliance should be placed on the interpretation to be given to such vague phrases by their military tribunals. The report recently

published by the Belgian Commission of Inquiry (9th Report, August 6th) on the methods of coercion applied by the German authorities to the railway workmen at Luttre has revealed the German policy in such matters, and it is alleged on good evidence that, in order to give effect to that policy, the relief committees, communal soup-kitchens, etc., have in many cases been forbidden to give relief to classes of workmen whose labour the German authorities desire to enlist in their service. It is, however, unnecessary to rely on such allegations, since, by the decree of August 15th itself, the mere grant of relief to a workman renders that workman liable to imprisonment on the ground that he has in the past refused employment.

It is unnecessary to recapitulate the account given in the report above-mentioned, or to dwell on the measures of deliberate starvation, imprisonment, deportation, and torture to which these workmen have been subjected. This, it must be assumed, is the "law of nations" which is referred to in these German decrees and to which the relief committees are to be subjected, and this is the interpretation to be placed on the "Hague Conventions" and on the phrase "the service of the German Army" in Baron von der Lancken's letter. If any Belgian workman, knowing the wide extent of the needs of the German army and the manner in which every industry in Germany is already devoted to the task of supplying it, should refuse to work in industries indirectly essential to the maintenance of that army, relief is to be denied to him and starvation and imprisonment await him.

I feel that, were this correspondence to be published---and it will I fear, soon be my duty to ask Your Excellency's consent to its publication if present conditions continue--the people of this country would draw from it the conclusion that no further assistance should be given on their behalf by His Majesty's Government to a relief organisation whose activities are in danger of being so controlled by the enemy.

In face of the grave alternatives before which the whole work of relief is thus placed, I feel obliged to ask you to be good enough to draw the attention of the patrons of the Comité National at Brussels once more to the facts I have stated, in order that they may take the necessary steps to satisfy themselves both now and as time goes on, that the German authorities abstain from all interference in the work of relief which those authorities themselves have so recently promised to leave free and untrammelled. I sincerely regret to be obliged to trouble Your Excellency further in this matter in view of the efforts already made by Mr. Whitlock to put the whole organisation on a sound basis, but you will, I hope, understand the necessity for a clear understanding on such important matters.

In conclusion I must again call attention to what I said in my letter of July 17, that this work could not be based on the strict belligerent rights of either Government. Your Excellency knows that the Commission is enabled to exist solely by the assistance given to it by His Majesty's Government, and His Majesty's Government having so far gone beyond their duties and renounced their rights, they cannot

tolerate that they should be met in this matter by an assertion of rights on the part of those who have renounced their duties.

I have sent an identical letter to the Spanish Ambassador, and have furnished the Netherlands Minister with a copy at his request.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) E. GREY

During the winter of 1915-16 the Germans increased their pressure on Belgian workers, particularly on employees of the railways and railway shops. The method was first to forbid the Société Coopérative to continue its advances to the worker; then to offer the worker a job, to arrest and try him before a German court if he refused the job, and to give him a prison sentence or deport him to Germany if he persisted in his refusal. The idea of deporting Belgians for work in German factories appears to have been first broached at an economic congress of German industrialists and functionaries held at Brussels in June 1915. The plan was not put into effect on a large scale until a year later.[\(289\)](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 413

Letter,
C. M. TORREY, C.R.B. DELEGATE TO NAMUR, TO C.R.B., BRUSSELS,
describing efforts of German authorities to compel Belgians to work in railway shops

NAMUR, 29 March 1916

*The Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Executive Department, Brussels*

GENTLEMEN:

Regarding the question of attempts by the military occupants to force Belgian workmen to do repair and construction of a military or semi-military nature on the railroads, I have been made acquainted with the details of one case and the general features of two others in this province.

The case to which I should first refer is that at Rochefort in this province. Upon the occasion of a visit there yesterday, I was informed by three of the persons concerned of the facts in the matter.

It appears that the three with whom I spoke---Josef Francau, Eugene Paquet, and Emil Delhaize--- had, up to the 7th of February 1916 and for four months past enjoyed a chomeur's remittance from the local committees of Secours, of 1.50 francs a day and for two days each week. On the 7th of February 1916 a summons to these three and to eleven other able-bodied men of Rochefort (most of whom were in the like position of chomeur) came from the office of the German Kommandantur, commanding the men to present themselves at Jemelle, a village two kilometers away, where railroad repair and construction shops are situated. Following this demand, the fourteen presented themselves the same day at Jemelle, at these shops as requested. When all had gathered there at 8:00 A.M., a German officer evidently in charge of the shop asked them to work, describing the labor generally as that of repair, and offering as payment 3 marks 60 pfennigs a day. Further, it seems that certain specific positions, among them locomotive engineer, chief workman, and inspector of material, were offered to individuals who were interrogated and considered by the military to have the necessary qualifications. In any event, the men at that time and later seemed to agree substantially that the work demanded was either directly military (as making over cars for the carriage of soldiers and specific munitions) or indirectly so as being connected in general with the main purpose of the Germans' use of Belgian railroads.

This request to sign a contract to work and the offer of payment was made in the morning shortly after eight, and was immediately refused by each of the fourteen. Upon such refusal, they were detained at Jemelle until 10:00 P.M., at which hour they were conducted to the Kommandantur's office at Rochefort. There they were individually interrogated, stripped, and searched; and upon another refusal given at the end of this process, at 2:00 A.M. February 8th, they were taken off to Dinant, which they reached at 6:00 A.M., thence to Namur, which they reached (under military conduct) about 10:00 A.M. In Namur they were first put into prison without examination or interrogatory, and kept there thenceforward on a diet (they tell me) of bread and water. Finally on February 25 their formal examination and trial was held, at which they were condemned to a month's imprisonment dating from February 8th. On March 10 they were liberated.

Meanwhile, according to our Secours Central Bureau in Namur, the military commanded that the payment of chomage to such of these men as were chomeurs (like Francau, Paquet, Delhaize) cease. This order was complied with.

The names of the fourteen men in this case are as follows (all of Rochefort) :

Josef Francau
Emil Delhaize
Alfred Delhaize
Nestor Dumont
Eugene Auspere
Joseph Bodart

Theophile Bacquet
Eugene Paquet
Arthur Biebuca
Auguste Dumonte
Fernand Baiot
Leopold Barnich
Emil Charrier
Jules Delimois

The first three men (with whom I talked) are now working in private employ. None of the others has accepted the contract to work for the military, and they are engaged in various occupations---some again enjoying chomage. It is to be inferred that the Germans raised no objection to paying chomage to these men after their month of prison.

A second case, which resulted otherwise, took place about the same time at Jemelle. Nineteen men of that place, after offer made, signed the contract. But after such signature, they regretted their action and refused to work---whereupon they were, in the same manner, put into prison. The men at Rochefort said yesterday that after six weeks of prison they accepted the contract again, and are now working at Jemelle. The delicacy of entering the German railroad shop at Jemelle and talking to their employees deterred me from making yesterday a more exhaustive investigation, but I expect to have the full facts from a reliable source on Friday, the 31st, and shall immediately advise you.

The third case took place at Namur itself. Twenty-three workmen, most of whom were railroad employees before the war, were approached by the military on or about the 1st of March and asked to work at repairing locomotives and rail-wagons. They refused. Up to the time of the request and refusal, most of these men had received through the medium of the Société Coopérative d'Avances et de Prêts, rue Montague de l'Oratoire No. 14, at Brussels, a monthly remittance of 37 1/2 per cent of their salary before the war, with a minimum of 60 francs. But upon such refusal, the German authorities signified to the Société Coopérative their prohibition to remit any money. The case has been assigned meanwhile for military trial, the sitting to be held Thursday, March 30, 1916.

Further, the Namur agents of police, acting under orders of the military authorities, are now making visits to the houses of former railroad workmen, demanding of them to take up such work again, and noting any reasons given for refusal.

I enclose herewith copy of German affiches on the subject (of which 1st Copie A, page 1, Article 2, and Copie B, Article 1, will be of interest), and correspondence giving German consent to the Secours by medium of the Société Coopérative.

Very truly yours

(Signed) C. M. TORREY

P.S. I also enclose papers received later from our Provincial Secours office, as follows:

1. Order of military prohibiting payment of secours to Warlin.
2. Lists of men prohibited from receiving secours.
3. German letter to Société Coopérative.
4. Second list of secours prohibitions.

I have just had a statement from one of our C.P. staff (a) that only Belgian locomotives are repaired in Belgian shops so far as he has seen, and (b) that Belgian locomotives are used only for transporting materials, not troops.

2. The Deportation of Belgians, October 1916-September 1918

During the summer of 1916 a steadily increasing number of Belgians were forced to accept German employment in Belgium or in Germany. At first there was no technical violation of relief guarantees, but Hoover and the C.R.B. officials in Belgium exerted themselves in every direction to convince the German authorities in Belgium of the disastrous effects of this policy not only on neutral opinion, but on the conduct of relief. Civil officials and even the Governor-General recognized the soundness of these arguments, and disapproved the policy, but affairs in Germany had reached the stage where the opinions of civil officials carried but little weight. Recognition, at the Great Headquarters (to which von Hindenburg and Ludendorff came at the end of August) of the inferiority in man power of the Central powers led to drastic action. Early in September the Supreme Army Command demanded the complete mobilization of German man power. Strong opposition immediately gathered against this proposal. Why, it was asked, should such drastic measures be used in Germany until the manpower resources of the conquered territories had been utilized? Great Headquarters had not overlooked the man power of Belgium and Poland and it was determined to make use of it. Belgian deportations, it was clear, would serve the double purpose of releasing more Germans for military service and of meeting one form of political opposition to an extension of German conscription.⁽²⁹⁰⁾ At any rate the Supreme Command "requested" the Governor-General in Brussels to make up the shortage of labor in German industries by more extensive deportations from Belgium. The Governor-General acquiesced and wholesale deportations followed. To Cardinal Mercier's moving protest, von Bissing replied that the deportations were an attempt to save

Belgian workers from demoralization by unemployment which was caused by the British blockade. The outcry which followed in neutral and Allied countries and even in Germany was to Ludendorff merely an exhibition of a "very childish judgment on the war."[\(291\)](#)

The German determination to push on with the deportations on a large scale and regardless of consequences left the C.R.B. with two alternatives: to make an issue of the deportations with the certain result that all its activities would be terminated and the great mass of the Belgian people be left without the aid of foreign relief upon which they depended; or accept the situation as inescapable and to exert itself to mitigate the suffering which the deportations entailed and to continue to aid those Belgians left in their homes. Hoover chose the second alternative and the Allied Governments, recognizing the compelling reasons for this decision, did not carry out the threat implied in the correspondence of the British Foreign Office to cut off their support of relief activities. The American Government protested at Berlin, while in Belgium the C.R.B. endeavored to bring pressure on the German Government indirectly and to hold the German authorities to the terms of their guarantees.[\(292\)](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 414

Letter,[\(293\)](#)

GREY TO SECRETARY AMERICAN EMBASSY AT LONDON, asking for a statement whether German authorities are observing their guarantees in respect to liberty and conscience of Belgian workmen

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

4 October 1916

DEAR MR. LAUGHLIN:

1. You will recollect the communications which I felt obliged to address to you on various occasions regarding the question of forced labour in Belgium.
2. As you have been kind enough to assume, together with the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels, the function of supervising for the guidance of the governments concerned, the carrying out of the guarantees under which the Commission for Relief in Belgium works, I shall be glad if you could inform me whether, in the opinion of the Patrons of the Commission and of the Comité National, the guarantees given by the Germans to respect the liberty and conscience of Belgian workmen are being duly carried out.

(Signed) GREY OF FALLODON

DOCUMENT NO. 415

Letter, (294)

PERCY To HOOVER, setting forth policy to be followed by the C.R.B. in respect to forced labor and deportations

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
20 October 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I want to draw your attention to Lord Robert Cecil's recent answer in the House of Commons (295) to a question as to the distribution of foodstuffs in Belgium in connexion with the German labour policy. Lord Robert laid down in that answer that the Commission worked on the following principles:

1. The Commission supplies nothing to any German civilian.
2. The Commission supplies nothing, except bread, to any Belgian who earns enough to feed himself from native supplies.
3. Any workman working for the Germans under coercion must be maintained by the Germans entirely, without any assistance whatever from the Commission.

You should take this as a direction to the Commission on which they should model their action.

As you know, the Press at the present moment is full of the accounts of the coercion of Belgian workmen and their deportation to the place where the Germans wish them to work. There are two points in connexion with this that you should bear in mind.

First, if deportations take place, it does not matter whether they take place to Germany or to other parts of the occupied territory, since under the third rule set out above you will have no further responsibility for them. If, therefore, deportations take place on any large scale under any general decree of the Governor-General, it will become necessary to consider whether your importations should be proportionately reduced, and as it will be impossible for us here to judge accurately the extent to which any such decrees are being enforced at any given moment, or will be enforced by the time that any one of your shipments reach the ultimate consumer in Belgium, it will become necessary for us, in order to meet the pressure of public opinion here, to make a rough general reduction in your ration probably out of all proportion to the actual number of workmen coerced.

Secondly, to judge from the Press reports---and indeed from the necessities of the situation---all coercion of labor in Belgium is bound to be based upon the criterion that men who fall under your relief owing to unemployment are liable to be coerced. Now, all relief, whether in kind or in cash, given in Belgium arises from your importations and is made on your responsibility. Therefore, this criterion amounts to a statement that a workman renders himself liable to enslavement by the mere fact of accepting relief from you. This is clearly equivalent to the use of your relief as a means of coercing workmen against their conscience, and therefore constitutes a clear and deliberate violation of the German guarantees.

You should be guided by these considerations in dealing with this very serious and dangerous question.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 416

Memorandum,
by KELLOGG, regarding forced labor in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 20 October 1916

Among the undertakings given by His Excellency the Governor General to the Protecting Ministers is one which provides that the German authorities will not make use of the institutions of the relief work for the purpose of compelling the Belgian population to work for the service of the German Army. Until recently this undertaking has been rigorously lived up to, both as to the wording of the undertaking, and, which is no less important, as to its intention. Recent happenings, however, give grave cause to fear that measures are under way of execution which are in open contradiction to the intention and even to the wording of the undertaking. It is common knowledge that demands are being made upon unemployed, and even employed men, to work for the German army. The most conspicuous examples of these measures now under way of enforcement are in the Belgian Etappen, but there are in addition specific cases in the territory of the General Government, for example, in the province of Luxembourg and in the region of Tournai in the province of Hainaut. It is, of course, true that the region of Tournai has been, for purpose of military control, recently transferred from the territory of the General Government to that of the French Etappen, but for the purpose of ravitaillement this region is still attached to the General Government and is still provisioned under the general regulations and guarantees established for the territory of the General Government.

In the Luxembourg, orders have been issued which prevent the civil population from continuing to labor at certain public works established by the civil authorities of the province and the representatives of the Provincial Committee (which itself is but a suborganization of the Comité National). Further orders prevent the men thus thrown out of employment from being employed by private persons. These men are then invited by the German military authorities to work for them. This is a condition which, if not directly, at least indirectly, produces an infraction of the intention of the undertaking with regard to the forcing of labor. Indeed, in connection with the situation in the Luxembourg there have been numerous incidents which contravene the wording of the undertaking.

In Tournai the situation is even more serious. Direct demands have been made upon large numbers of men to take up work for the military authorities. On the refusal of these demands the men have been interned in camps, practically as prisoners, and put upon a ration of bread and water. The ration of bread has been fixed by the military authorities at 750 grams per person per day, and it has been ordered that the relief organizations furnish this bread but may not furnish any other part of the regular ration (bacon, lard, rice, peas and beans, etc.). If the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium should accept this situation without protest, they would be permitting an indirect infraction of the undertaking between the General Governor and the Protecting Ministers, and would even be a party to the punishment, by a limitation of the food rations, of these Belgian men.

There have been numerous instances in various parts of Belgium. of demands made by the military authorities on the local committees of the relief organizations for lists of chomeurs, with the expressed intention of using these lists as a means of determining what men should be impressed for labor in the service of the German Army. There have even been arrests and deportations to Germany of the local civil authorities for refusing to give these lists.

All together, the incidents and conditions which are apparent today in various parts of Belgium seem to indicate a definite purpose on the part of the military authorities to force parts of the civil population to work in the service of the German Army in contravention of the undertakings given by the Governor-General to the Protecting Ministers. The situation is one, therefore, that calls for immediate consideration and strong protest.

V. L. KELLOGG

Letter,
HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, suggesting a vigorous protest against German policy
of deportations

BRUSSELS, 8 November 1916

MY DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

Reports this morning from all over the country show seizure of men right and left regardless of employment, including members of our local committees and employees. I fear it is the beginning of the end.

It is worth your considering uttering a full and strong protest with all the vigor of which you are so capable.

This is a greater issue to the Belgian people than anything since the invasion and they look to you as to America for some strong action.

It may result in nothing, but it will have put the American stamp on it in indelible terms, and if we do nothing else for Belgium we will go down in a blaze of indignation at this, its worst of any trials since the first agony.

Sincerely

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 418

Letter,
HOOVER To DR. BRUHN OF THE DEUTSCHE VERMITTLUNGSSTELLE,
C.N., regarding position of the C.R.B. in respect to forced labor and deportations

BRUSSELS, 11 November 1916

Dr. Bruhn
Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle, C.N., Brussels

DEAR DR. BRUHN:

Dr. Rieth called this morning regarding any suggestions I might be able to offer with regard to regulations to be put in force to ameliorate the conditions surrounding the forced labor from Belgium. The matter is now in discussion between the American Legation in Brussels and the American Embassy in Berlin and, in consequence, it would be entirely wrong of me to intervene in any way.

The whole question is one which I feel very deeply and one out of which I can see no good end.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 419

Press statement([296](#))

concerning Department of State instructions to Chargé d'Affaires, Berlin, relative to the effect of deportations on neutral opinion, especially in the United States

WASHINGTON, 15 November 1916

In consequence of the deportations from Belgium, the State Department has directed Mr. Grew, its chargé d'affaires in Berlin, to discuss the matter personally with the Imperial Chancellor.

Mr. Grew is requested to inform Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg that such deportations cannot but have a most unfortunate effect on neutral opinion, particularly in the United States, which has the welfare of the Belgian civilian population very much at heart.

These instructions are the outcome of a long report from Mr. Grew stating that he had discussed the situation informally and unofficially with Herr Zimmermann, who admitted that the definite policy had been adopted of enforcing the labour of Belgians in cases where they refused to work voluntarily, on the ground that so many had refused to work that the strain on public charity had become intolerable.

The deportations are viewed here not only as a violation of international law, but in a certain degree as a violation of Germany's assurances made to Mr. Gerard in June, which, though relating to the deportation of French women from Lille, Roubaix, and Turcoing, ([297](#)) are felt to be applicable to the present case.

The theory by which the Germans justified the forced labor and deportation policy was that unemployment was demoralizing the Belgian workers and hence that work even for Germany was after all for the good of the Belgians. According to this theory only the *chômeurs* would be deported, but once the deportations were under way, the Germans ignored the distinction between employed and unemployed, and began to deport persons employed by the relief organizations. These raids on the

personnel of the Commission and C.N. constituted a violation of the German guarantees, since it dangerously interfered with the maintenance of the relief organization. The Commission protested vigorously to the German authorities, but to no avail. The threats of the British to stop relief and the protests of the United States Government at Berlin were equally without effect.

DOCUMENT NO. 420

Memorandum,
by WARREN GREGORY, regarding forced labor, with reports of the C.R.B.
delegates of deportations at Antwerp, Court-St. Etienne, and Wavre

BRUSSELS, 20 November 1916

The taking of chomeurs continues and will probably commence in the city of Brussels this week. Thus far our cards have been respected with one exception below noted. Indeed, in Antwerp, one of our representatives succeeded in getting on the train and taking back two men who had already been passed, to the great admiration and gratitude of the Belgian people. The exception noted is at Mons, where, on the 17th inst., nine of our men were taken. I am attaching copy of a letter written to the Vermittlungsstelle, which will describe the circumstances. I have also informed the Ministers, at their meeting on Friday last, of this transaction. I do not consider this single evasion of their promise as vital, provided it does not act as a precedent. I am, however, greatly concerned regarding the statement of Dr. Bruhn, which is the subject matter of the concluding paragraph of the letter. If this decision is adhered to, it will seriously cripple our working force, and I shall endeavor as vigorously as possible to obtain a rescission of this conclusion on the part of the authorities.

Attached also are reports from Messrs. Jackson, Richardson, and Brackett on this subject.

I think our men have done some good work in this regard, but in future our plan is not to send them unless the arrangement is being violated, for the reason that their presence may irritate the military authorities.

ANTWERP
15 November 1916

The taking of chomeurs to Germany from the province of Antwerp has been going on this week. Four thousand men are called every day to present themselves at the railroad station, and of this number up to date, from the closest calculations we

have been able to make, 5,856 have been sent to Germany. This is from the city of Antwerp alone and does not include the country districts.

When the men present themselves at the railroad stations the Germans make every effort to induce them to sign contracts to work. Among the inducements offered is pay at the rate of 6 marks a day. Those who do not sign but are forced to go nevertheless are told they will receive only 3 marks a day and have to work in camps. In addition, to the men that sign they advance 20 marks if single and 40 marks if married. They are then permitted to go home for two or three days before starting.

They are also promised that if they sign they can go to Longwy or Liège.

In general every pressure is brought upon the men to sign, but in most cases the Belgians have refused to do this. Those who present certificates that they are employed in general are released, but those who have no certificates are put on trains and sent to Germany.

One hundred and three men employed in the guano factory of Ohlendorf were all sent to Germany in a block, some of the workers being fifty years old.

We are sending a special report on this particular case to the Ministers.

The C.R.B. employment cards that we have issued have been uniformly respected and as yet we have no cases to report of C.R.B. employees having been taken to Germany.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) GARDNER RICHARDSON
C.R.B. Representative for Antwerp

COURT-ST. ETIENNE
15 November 1916

Yesterday, 14th November, I went to Court-St. Etienne to attend the taking of Belgian men by the Germans. I was obliged to leave, by order of the captain in charge, about half or three-quarters of an hour after the beginning, but about half an hour later came back and remained till the end, except for half an hour for dinner.

The men were brought in by a long path to a "filature" some distance from the town. The women and children therefore were not present. All men who stated themselves to be sick were examined by a doctor, and a certain number were thus released.

The others came on to the filature---to an open space between two buildings--- where they presented themselves and their papers, such as cartes d'identité and cards from the Meldeamt, together with any certificates of one sort or another which they might possess. They were on the whole very decently treated by the Germans, but they were usually too frightened or confused or embarrassed to be very intelligent, as proved by the fact that often when told to go "à gauche" which was the way out and to liberty (though they perhaps didn't know it) they took the other path, which led to Germany., Many were turned back by soldiers, but as there was nothing on their cards to show in which direction they should go, I have no doubt that some were taken whom the Germans intended to liberate. Certain ones who were sent or went to the right---i.e., toward Germany---were afterward released, owing to special examinations, explanations, or to efforts of persons interested.

Various burgomasters and employers were present to urge special reasons for exemption, or to give assurance that certain men were actually and regularly employed. The Germans certainly really tried to take the young and unmarried men without employment, rather, than others. They released many men who were employed in usines, and on farms, or who were small cultivateurs on their own account.

But toward the end of the list, when perhaps they were afraid they would not get as many men as required, they took a number of factory workers for whom their employer, Mr. Henricot, gave assurance that they were regularly employed. When he protested to the Commissaire Civil, the latter replied that this difficulty would not have occurred if the bourgomestre had given the lists of chomeurs. I believe certain workmen employed elsewhere were also taken.

Later, after the whole process was finished, I learned that two of the De Broux workmen, who had cards from the C.R.B., had been taken. I protested to the Commissaire Civil, explaining that the men worked exclusively for the Commission and had cards issued with the assent of his Government. He said we were lucky that so few were taken, that no one is irreplaceable, and that he had no instructions concerning our cards.

It appears that in the town, where the men collected before being marched to the filature, there was a bureau established presumably by the Kreischef, where the cards we had given were taken away and a stamp "Kreis Nivelles" put on the cartes d'identité of those who had had our cards. I am told that certain men, having obtained this stamp, went away without presenting themselves at the filature. The others came along with the crowd and, thanks to the stamp, were allowed to go free.

A few, however, whose attention had not been drawn to the bureau in the town, failed to obtain the "cachet" and arrived without it, but still provided with their

cards given by us. The officers seem to have been somewhat at a loss as to the proper procedure in such cases. My belief is---though I have no proof as I did not see them taken---that the two men taken by the Germans were of this class. (Cf. the Civil Commissaire's statement that he had no instructions concerning these cards.) Of these two men, one was later released, so that the final result was that only one of De Broux's laborers, out of about ninety-six who presented themselves, was taken. As far as I know, no member of a local committee who had received one of our cards was taken.

Conclusion: Orders had apparently been given to the Kreischef that our cards were to be respected, but they had not been communicated to the officers making the actual selection of men. These officers tried to choose primarily the men without work, and the young men without families to support. But they did not confine themselves strictly to these. In certain instances they took men concerning whom they had the positive assurance of their employers that they were working regularly. The decisions in these matters seemed more or less arbitrary, as certain laborers would be allowed to pass and others, for whom the employer made an equally positive statement that they were working regularly, were taken.

My impression is that the officers had orders to take so many---1,000, I believe---men, and that when they thought too many were being let off, and that there might be difficulty in completing the number, they felt obliged to take a larger proportion of those who presented themselves, workers or not.

(Signed) R. A. JACKSON

WAVRE
17 November 1916

As requested by Director Gregory, I was present at the requisition of men at Wavre on Wednesday, 15th November. Leaving Brussels very early in the morning, I arrived at Wavre before the gates of the city were closed to outsiders and before the requisition began; by means of the automobile pass and my personal card as delegate of the C.R.B. I was able to pass the various lines of guards and sentinels and reached the Place du Marché where the men were gathered.

Every approach to this square was crowded with men, women, and children, the men from neighboring communes waiting at different entrances the turn of their commune and held back in the meantime by lines of soldiers.

Arriving at the square, after some difficulty, I found Mr. Foreau, of the Brabant provincial committee and Regional President of Wavre, also Mr. Francq, one of the regional controllers.

From them, and by personal investigation, I learned that the cards which we have issued were actually in the hands of those who were entitled to them, i.e., those who had been duly listed by the regional president as engaged in the work of Secours and Alimentation either as members of the regional and local committee or in their employ.

These men were grouped together and they were later placed by the German officers with the town officials near the head of the column into which the men were formed.

The examination was conducted in two places; one on the "Place du Sablon" (Place du Marché), and the other at the Ecole Moyenne des Filles.

Besides the city of Wavre, the requisition included Limal, Limelette, Archennes, Bierges, La Hulpe, Chaine, Rixensart, Dion-le-Mont, Dion-le-Val, Genval, Lasne, and Nethen.

As Wavre was called first, I joined the C.R.B. group in the Wavre column and went with them to the Ecole des Filles, entering the examination room with them and remaining there for some time, together with Mr. Foreau, Mr. Francq, and an échevin of the city.

Being in this or the adjoining room, through which all men passed during the greater part of the forenoon, I was able to observe the examination of all the men from Wavre as well as some from neighboring districts. I gathered still more information later by mingling with the people and looking up members of our Committee in the various communal groups after they came out.

The method of conducting the requisition may be first described. First of all, the chomeurs and those who had signed a statement consenting to work were called for and taken; those from Wavre numbered perhaps 150.

Then the men of the communal government and those engaged in the work of Secours and Alimentation were passed in and released. After them, the rest entered without special order; those who claimed release on account of sickness were led to a room for medical examination by a physician and those who received this certificate were later released.

All the rest passed at once into a room where four or five German officers examined them, considering their certificates, and deciding whether they were to be taken or released.

From this room, they were sent to an adjoining room in two files, with the single phrase "à droite" or "à gauche." The former filed past an official who stamped their cartes d'identité with a cachet and dismissed them---free; the others were sent on to

another room guarded by soldiers and presumably escorted to the train for deportation.

It was impossible for anyone else to approach the train and no one was allowed to see the men after this separation. A strong corps of soldiers were present at the Ecole, a good many officers were moving about, mounted cavalry lancers patrolled the place, and several hundred soldiers were on duty in the square and about the city.

The following observations may be noted:

1st: All men from 17 to 55 (inclusive) except ministers, physicians, lawyers, and teachers, were required to be present (a copy of the "avis" is appended).

As the population of Wavre and the region covered in this requisition is over 30,000 there must have been some 4,000 or 5,000 men.

2nd: All who had the C.R.B. certificates were free. There were one or two cases in which some employees, who were not listed by the regional or communal president and so did not receive a card, were taken. I was not present when this occurred and did not learn of it until the next day.

3rd: It is difficult to estimate the number taken, but I judge it to be between 700 and 800, the proportion being greater in the smaller communes than in Wavre. In Bierges for instance, more than two-fifths were taken, while in Wavre, it seemed to be about one in ten or twelve.

4th: The majority of those who were taken were young men but a good many were over 40 years of age and some over 50. The greater part were probably unmarried, but a considerable number were men of family, in certain instances men of large families dependent upon their labor.

5th: The requisition was not confined to men without work: the controller pointed out a number of men whom he knew personally and knew to be steadily employed; other instances were afterwards called to my attention. Railway employees especially were among the number taken.

6th: Beyond the general facts stated above, no definite or consistent basis of selection was apparent. On the whole, those presenting certificates showing that they had regular employment were freed, and they were mostly those of the better classes; but many striking exceptions occurred.

7th: The examinations were made rapidly and the decision "à gauche" or "à droite," quickly made, was final. No discussion was permitted save in a few instances, where an explanation was given by the burgomaster or échevin.

There was no disorder, and no attempts at resistance were made, the men being hurried through in single file like animals. Those who were to be deported were treated with distinctly less consideration than those who were freed, but without violence.

Relation to the C.R.B.: Considering the matter in its relation to the C.R.B., I have come to the following conclusions:

1st: That in the Brabant the certificates of the C.R.B. are recognized and those who held them are released as agreed by the German authorities.

2nd: That the presence of the C.R.B. delegate at the requisition, while perhaps desirable at first for the sake of direct information, is probably unwise in subsequent requisitions in the province. This judgment is based partly upon theory and partly upon experience. The delegate of the C.R.B. must be present either by permission or by suffrance and may be summarily dismissed if the authorities so desire. He has no final authority personally to enforce any objections he may wish to make. His presence is not desired, but is, in fact, distinctly resented. When he has asked for permission, it has been refused. When he has entered without securing permission in advance, he has been asked to withdraw. His position is thus undignified. Having secured the agreement of the occupying authorities to release those who are properly provided with cards, the more dignified course for the C.R.B. is to assume that the agreements will be respected. This course is evidently more acceptable to the German officials, and the cards are even more likely to be honored than if a C.R.B. delegate is present. In case a man possessing our card is deported, the matter may be taken up in a more effective and dignified way with the final authorities. Information may be secured from the town officials, who are always present, or from our local committees, who know the men personally and are cognizant of all circumstances. These have been notified to inform us immediately of any infractions in cases of those who have cards.

3rd: This report is made from the point of view of a neutral observer in the interest of the C.R.B. and does not touch any other question concerning the requisition.

(Signed) F. P. BRACKETT

DOCUMENT NO. 421

Letter,

GREGORY TO DR. BRUHN, protesting against deportations of employees of the C.R.B. and the C.N.

BRUSSELS, 20 November 1916

*To the Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N.
Brussels
Attention of Dr. Bruhn*

GENTLEMEN:

I have the honor to recapitulate to you in writing the substance of our conversation of the 17th concerning the selection of men working for the ravitaillement service of this Commission.

A selection of men took place on the 16th at Mons, in the suburb of Nimy. Prior to that time the list of employees engaged in the ravitaillement service of this Commission and of the Comité National had been carefully examined and cut down to the minimum. Before the selection, Mr. Tuck and Mr. Gade, our representatives in the province of Hainaut called at the office of the Kreischef, as well as upon Captain Brande of the staff of the Kreischef, and left samples of the cards, and samples had also been forwarded to the office of Mr. Haniel, president of the civil administration. At the office of the Kreischef these gentlemen were instructed to present their men in a unit at the beginning of the proceedings. Accordingly the employees, numbering approximately 175, went to the designated place, accompanied by Messrs. Tuck and Gade, and also by Dr. Hilbert. Each man had his card in hand for easy inspection.

Of this total number 15 of our employees were originally taken, but some of them were later returned, so that the list of those who were finally taken is as follows:

On 16th November at Nimy

1. Brichaut, Victor, No. 40 Ruelle Rachot, Mons
2. Cantigneua, Maurice, 11 Cite Balasse, Mons
3. Cardinal, François, 40 Mont du Parc, Mons
4. Farix, Francois, 3 Rue du Petit, Quievroy, Mons
5. Fraix, Jean-Desire, Ghislain, Place Warocque, Mons

On 13th November at Havre

6. Vangrundenbergh, Gustave, Route d'Ath, Nimy

On 31st October at Jemappes

7. Dunortier, Oscar, Grant Place, Guesnes

On 16th November at Nimy

8. Maurice Ziger, Mons
9. Fernand Erquans, Mons

At the time these men were taken it was directly stated to the officer by our representative that the men were not chomeurs, but were actually employed in the ravitaillement service. Six of the men taken were dock-hands, who are now badly needed in Mons and the last two mentioned were members of the office force at Mons and badly needed. Care was taken to assure the officer that every man on the list was essential to the ravitaillement. work, but in the course of procedure the major informed the inferior officers "that he could not permit the passing of so many men." Our representatives were uncertain whether the officer intended to say that he did not know of the cards, or whether or not he definitely would not recognize them. They do say that the officials of the civil government were most courteous and endeavored during the entire proceedings to assist them, but were repeatedly overruled by the military officers. As soon as Messrs. Tuck and Gade saw that their further efforts would be of no avail they withdrew.

As I have stated to you, I fear that this proceeding may be a precedent by which large numbers of our men may be taken. I hope sincerely that this may be avoided, especially in view of the fact that at the selections which have taken place prior to the 17th I am advised that our cards were recognized at once and without difficulty.

I regret also that I am obliged to protest against the taking of men in the ravitaillement service simply because they may have been formerly engaged in skilled employments, such as railroading, blacksmithing, etc. It would seem that this is contrary to our understanding that only those who are chomeurs shall be taken. If a man is known to be working for us in good faith and has been so working for some time, then we have necessarily shown that he is not a chomeur, regardless of his former occupation. We have the additional ground that he is necessary for the ravitaillement service which is protected by a guarantee. I greatly fear that these exceptions will cause endless difficulties, because it departs from the simple principle laid down as above noted. I am not advised as to the number of these so-called skilled men engaged in our services but no doubt there are numbers of them. We did not attempt to make any exceptions when the cards were issued, but if it now results that these cards are recognized only in certain cases, then it will break down the system. When a man is taken not because he is a chomeur but because he is skilful in a particular line it must result on the basis of selection that it is not his present inability to find work but the necessities of the military authorities.

I am sure you will agree with me that this is a fundamental difference in the principle of selecting men. It will therefore be greatly appreciated by this Commission if the full and free exemption of men who are actually and bona fide engaged in the ravitaillement service could be made and we should be most pleased if instructions could be given accordingly.

Very respectfully yours

(Signed) WARREN GREGORY
Director

[Fig. 14. LETTER, 3 JULY 1916, AMBASSADOR CAMBON TO HOOVER](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 422

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., NEW YORK, regarding policy of C.R.B. in respect to
deportation

LONDON, 20 November 1916

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Am informed German authorities they expect to take two hundred fifty thousand work people from Belgium and Northern France. The whole operation is accompanied by the greatest suffering. German authorities apparently carefully weighed the possibility that this might result in breaking down Relief but determined to proceed in any event. We can see no hope in its suppression except pressure public opinion and protest by neutral governments. German procedure does not conflict with any actual guarantees in connection with Relief and we believe Allied Governments are so sympathetic to the welfare of the people left behind that we hope no drastic retaliation will ensue. Our impression is that press reports of actual incidents are rather understated than overdrawn. Am issuing a short statement as to our position through Associated Press. Do not believe it is in the interest of the Relief for us to offer any opinions in our own name.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 423

Letter,
GREY TO PAGE, requesting that the United States Government exert pressure on Germany to prevent the termination of relief work which may result from continuation of German policy

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
22 November 1916

His Excellency the Honorable W. H. Page London

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

1. I venture to ask Your Excellency to transmit a message from me personally to Your Excellency's Government in regard to a matter of which you have fuller knowledge and which you can more fully explain than would be possible for His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington to do, were I to transmit the message through him.
2. The recent deportations from Belgium and the reported recrudescence of seizures and exports of Belgian foodstuffs cut at the root of the guarantees on which the whole relief work in Belgium is based, and while His Majesty's Government are no less keenly anxious than in the past to fulfil their duties toward the populations of the occupied territories, it will be clear to Your Excellency that it may at any moment become materially impossible to continue a work the basic guarantees of which have been destroyed. I should therefore be grateful if you could communicate by telegraph to your Government a personal appeal from me that they will exert themselves at Berlin and Brussels to see that this great work of international benevolence and co-operation which I think Your Excellency will be able to assure your Government has never been used by His Majesty's Government for any but purely neutral purposes, and which they have indeed regarded as of inevitable military advantage to their enemies, shall not be endangered or destroyed by acts which it is impossible for the Allied peoples to countenance or tolerate.
3. The constant efforts and valuable services rendered by yourself and the United States Minister at Brussels on behalf of this work emboldens me to hope that your Government will not allow an undertaking to be imperilled with which they have become so closely identified in the eyes of the world.
4. I have sent a similar letter to the Spanish Ambassador.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador

Yours sincerely

(Signed) GREY OF FALLODON

DOCUMENT NO. 424

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., NEW YORK, stating policy of C.R.B. in respect to
deportations

LONDON, 24 November 1916

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

We feel deeply that all questions involving the opinion of the Americans in relief or otherwise are entirely apart from any service which you or we can perform to Belgian people in amelioration of forced labor questions. It is a violation of the most elementary principles of human liberty and upon which America through the President should take a determined stand in protest. You will realize the impossibility of any open action from us as such would jeopardize other protection which we can give the Belgian people through the Relief. We are gratified by your support. We do not think time arrived to take up matter Washington until all efforts this side been exhausted which will require further ten days. Matter is now before Belgian Government. The British Government assures us that there will be a solution to the matter which will satisfy responsibility and dignity of all Americans engaged in the work. Dr. Page authorizes me to say that unless Belgium will welcome full acceptance of all proposals(298) as to administrative measures in Belgium he will advise the withdrawal of the Commission.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 425

Telegram,(299)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE TO CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT BERLIN, protesting against the deportations

WASHINGTON, 29 November 1916

Mr. Grew is directed to obtain an interview with the German Chancellor as soon as possible and repeat to him the following:

"The Government of the United States has learned with the greatest concern and regret of the policy of the German Government to deport from Belgium a portion of the civilian population for the purpose of forcing them to labor in Germany, and is constrained to protest in a friendly spirit but most solemnly against this action, which is in contravention of all precedent and of those humane principles of international practice which have long been accepted and followed by civilized nations in their treatment of noncombatants in conquered territory. Furthermore, the Government of the United States is convinced that the effect of this policy, if pursued, will in all probability be fatal to the Belgian relief work, so humanely planned and so successfully carried out, a result which would be generally deplored and which, it is assumed, would seriously embarrass the German Government."

DOCUMENT NO. 426

Declaration(300)
of Allied Governments with regard to German policy of forced labor and
deportations with an appeal to the neutral world

LONDON, 5 December 1916

The German slave raids in Belgium and the deliberate paralyzation of local industries, on which Germany has entered in order to excuse the most barbaric infamy of which she has yet been guilty, threaten to put an end to the great work of the neutral Relief Commission, which has saved the Belgians from starvation.

The following declaration by the Allies, regarding the present state of Belgium was issued by the British Government last night, with the approval and concurrence of the French, Russian, and Italian Governments, who are issuing declarations to the same effect:

The Allies must warn the world of what is about to take place. As their own situation grows more desperate, the Central Empires intend to tear up every guarantee on which the work of the Relief Commission rests. They intend to cast aside all their promises, and to use Belgian foodstuffs and Belgian labor to support their own failing strength. The work of the relief which neutrals have built up for two years is about to lose its foundation, and is in danger of falling.

As soon as the financial resources of the Belgian Government were exhausted the Allies provided sums for the continuation of the work. They have furnished the Commission with shipping and all other necessary facilities. Further, they have done their utmost through the neutral Commission to protect Belgian industry from the disastrous consequence of invasion.

The Allies have only stipulated that the Germans should equally draw no advantage from the operations of the Commission; that they should not seize either imported or native supplies, and that the distribution of relief should not be used for the purpose of coercing Belgian workmen against their conscience.

These conditions which the Germans have pledged themselves to obey, have in the past been frequently violated. Belgian cattle have been driven out of Belgium to feed the German armies at the front, Belgian workmen are being coerced, and seizures and requisitions of foodstuffs have taken place throughout the occupied territories.

The Germans have also seized raw materials, machinery, and all the property of Belgian factories, essential to the maintenance of the national industry and have

thus deliberately created unemployment and misery. These infractions of the German guarantees have in the past been disavowed in many cases by the German Government, and the Allies were content to rely on the neutral Commission to watch over and enforce the fulfilment of the conditions under which it worked.

Now, however, the situation is changing. The Germans have abandoned all pretense of respecting personal freedom in Belgium. They have deliberately ordered the suspension of public relief works supported by the neutral Commission and have openly, in spite of all their professions to the contrary, aimed at creating the unemployment which would furnish them with an excuse for deportations.

They have become themselves the "organizers of and co-operators with man-hunts" which they solemnly pledged themselves by the Brussels Convention of 1890 to put down in Africa. Further, the machinery of Belgian industry has now been totally destroyed and the export from Belgium of foodstuffs essential for the maintenance of the population has begun again on a large scale.

The Allies do not intend to change their policy or to desert the oppressed people of Belgium in this most critical moment of the war, but as it will be impossible for the relief work to continue if its basic guarantees are destroyed, they appeal to the civilized world, not on their own behalf, but on that of the innocent civilians who cannot protect themselves to see that this great work of international benevolence and co-operation which has grown up in the midst of war, and for which the Allies have advanced the money, shall not be endangered by treachery or destroyed by violence.

. . .

DOCUMENT NO. 427

General Report,
by C.R.B., relative to deportations to date.

BRUSSELS, 30 December 1916

The requisition of men in Belgium has been carried out under the announced intention of furnishing work for the "sans-travail." The Commission for Relief in Belgium has been obliged to turn its attention most seriously to this expatriation of men, because included among the so-called chomeurs are a large number of its employees. it is not within the realm of the duties of the C.R.B. to protest against the general seizure of Belgians, but when it finds that the ravitaillement of Belgium is endangered by the fact of the requisition of its own personnel, it then feels that it should make vigorous protestation.

It should be borne in mind that the requisition of men is justified by the occupying authorities as a measure intended to relieve that part of the Belgian population which is out of work. *La Belgique* of 15th November 1916 prints a statement of von Bissing, the Governor-General of Belgium, which leaves no doubt as to the intentions of the occupying authorities. From this we shall quote. After discussing the cause of chomage in Belgium, which he attributes to the English blockade, the Governor-General says:

Hundreds of people being without work in Belgium, and work abounding in Germany, the occupation of Belgian workmen in Germany has therefore become an economic and social necessity. [Translation]

It would be useless to enter into the details of the entire argument, but the substance of it is a justification of requisition of men on the grounds of lack of work in Belgium. After this the question naturally arises: are C.R.B. employees and voluntary workers to be considered in the class of unemployed? The object of this paper is to outline the situation in regard to the requisition of men in Belgium with special regard to the seizure of C.R.B. employees.

When the requisitions commenced, the C.R.B. considered that the ravitaillement would not be endangered. It thought this for very good reasons, which are ably presented by the Minister of the United States in a letter to His Excellency Baron von der Lancken dated 27th November 1916, a quotation from which follows:

The Minister of the United States begs to draw the kind attention of His Excellency Baron von der Lancken to the following facts:

In the guarantees which His Excellency the Governor-General has been good enough to give to the Minister Protectors of the Comité National on July 29, 1915, it was provided that the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium would have full liberty of action for the accomplishment of their mission. As a complement to these guarantees it has recently been agreed between the Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N. and the Commission for Relief in Belgium that the latter were to remit to the members of the two organizations occupied in ravitaillement an identification card, like the enclosed pattern, which would be respected by the German authorities, and which would protect the bearers against possible requisition or deportation to Germany as chomeurs. [Translation]

The C.R.B. has issued these cards in each province, in good faith. The results which have come to us to date have been very discouraging.

It is interesting to note the form of procedure which was followed throughout Belgium, and for this the attached letter of John A. Gade will give an excellent idea. It is applicable to all the provinces except to Antwerp, where the guarantees

were observed. This letter of Mr. Gade's, dated 17th November 1916, follows in toto.

MONS, 17 November 1916

DEAR SIR:

The selection of "chomeurs" from the city of Mons took place yesterday morning in the suburb of Nimy.

In order that there might be no confusion as to the employment of the C.R.B. or to their authorized cards, we called the day before at the office of the Kreischef as well as upon Captain Brande of the Kreischef's office, leaving samples of the two cards issued by our office, namely the earlier yellow card and the later white one, with German identifications.

Samples of both cards had likewise earlier been forwarded to the office of Mr. Haniel, President of the Civil Administration. At the office of the Kreischef, Mr. Tuck and I were instructed to present our men in a unit, and at the beginning of proceedings. We informed the Kreischef's office of the fact that these instructions would be followed carefully, and that our employees number approximately 175 persons, representing the Regional and Local Committees of Secours and Alimentation, the "Commission des Récoltes," the employees busied with distributing bread, busied in our mills, and on our docks.

Mr. Tuck and I marched our men to Nimy, and accompanied by Dr. Hilbert, presented them, cards in hand, in a unit for early inspection. Among our employees, some sixteen were taken, the exact names of whom will at once be submitted. We remonstrated vigorously, especially when six dock hands badly needed at this moment were taken from us. One of the officers interrogating our men replied to our remonstrances that we had altogether too many employees for him to be able to pass them. We observed that every man provided with one of our cards was essential to our work, and the number had most scrupulously been cut down to the smallest possible working force for the head office

After a preliminary selection of the men by three inferior officers, the major present informed the inferior officers that he could not permit the passing of so many of our men.

We handed the names of two of our men, just taken, and essential to us, as members of our Provincial Committee, to Mr. Haniel's Secretary. He made strenuous efforts to procure their release, but unavailingly.

In reply to my question, whether the white card with which our men had been provided, did not protect them, we were informed that the card in question was not acknowledged as affording such protection.

During the entire proceedings the officers of the civil government did much to assist us, but were repeatedly overruled by the officers of the military government.

Mr. Tuck and I remained until our efforts were exhausted and the selection from among our men was completed.

Respectfully yours

(Signed) JOHN A. GADE

It will be seen that the American delegates in the Hainaut did everything within their powers to conform to the wishes of the German authorities. Regardless of that, the number of the C.R.B. employees taken in the Hainaut amounted to over three hundred.

The Province of Namur has suffered severely. We have the lists of men taken, but we have not the full reports of proceedings that we have from other provinces.

In the Luxembourg the situation is perhaps the gravest. The number of our men taken far exceeds, in proportion to the number of service cards issued, that of other provinces, always excepting Antwerp.

A quotation from the letter of December 21 shows from the Luxembourg the existing state of affairs:

This state of affairs has had as a result the disorganization of the services of ravitaillement and secours. Certain regional and local committees have been obliged to suspend their work completely and that until the arrival of help sent by our Central Administration. [Translation]

When this situation was brought to the attention of the Vermittlungsstelle, they promised a closer observance of the guarantees, as per postscript to a letter of the Director to Mr. Coppée dated December 8, 1916, which follows:

I have this moment received a telephonic communication from Dr. Bruhn, informing me that they have telephoned to the Military Officer in the Luxembourg, to take our cards into very special consideration during the requisitions which are to take place in the next two or three days.

I shall be very interested to know if this measure will succeed. [Translation]

Regardless of this, requisitions which have continued since then have showed no diminution in rigor. The question is serious, and unless these men are returned, the ravitaillement will be greatly hampered.

There is a better showing in the provinces of Brabant and the Limbourg.

In the Brabant twenty-four men with cards have been taken, and thirty-nine to whom cards had not yet been issued. From the point of view of the ravitaillement this number is not so alarming. The Limbourg fared well. In some parts of the province the requisitioning officers showed a disposition to respect our cards. This was particularly true of the town and outlying hamlets where the C.R.B. card-bearers were even exempted from appearing at the requisition. Their cards were stamped at the "Meldeamt" the day before.

Even at this, out of the whole province thirty-three were taken.

In the last report we spoke of the excellent showing in the province of Antwerp. Both at Antwerp and Malines the C.R.B. cards have been respected. Only two men were taken, and these were in the train before the protest was filed. But the very fact that our C.R.B. card-bearers were exempted at Antwerp is the strongest argument why they should have been regarded in the others. There has been a direct violation of the guarantee not to hamper the C.R.B. in the ravitaillement of Belgium.

As was stated in the report of last week, the C.R.B. has done everything in its powers to procure the repatriation of its employees. From the beginning of the requisition the Director and the Department of Inspection and Control have been in touch with the Vermittlungsstelle. In the Luxembourg, as we have above stated, the telephone message of Dr. Bruhn that the requisitioning officers had special orders to observe our cards had no result. Finally we have succeeded in procuring a form, approved by the Vermittlungsstelle C.N., on which we are to inscribe the names of our employees. These names, on separate sheets, are then to be handed to the Vermittlungsstelle, C.N. They have promised, in their letter of 20th December 1916 to look into each case, and if the complaint is found to be justified they will without further information arrange for the return of the individual in question. A copy of this letter and a sample of the form to be used follow in the appendix.

The number of our men taken up to date in the different provinces is as follows:

Provinces	Men taken having cards	Men taken, entitled to cards but not having
-----------	------------------------	---

		received them
Hainaut	453	...
Namur	250	15
Luxembourg	234	9
Limbourg	30	...
Brabant	24	39
	991	63

DOCUMENT NO. 428

Paraphrase of telegram,
SECRETARY OF STATE TO PAGE, requesting Hoover's opinion on deportations

WASHINGTON, 29 December 1916

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON

Department would be glad to have Hoover's opinion for its confidential information regarding continuance of Belgian deportations, whether there has been any change in the policy of the German authorities since the protest of this Government on November 29.

LANSING

DOCUMENT NO. 429

Statement, [\(301\)](#)

HOOVER FOR DEPARTMENT OF STATE, regarding deportations from
Belgium

LONDON, 2 January 1917

There has been no apparent change in German policy since the President's protest, deportation continuing on a large scale---now apparently three to five thousand per week. Despite assertions made to the President, no distinction is made as to whether deportees are unemployed or not and in fact there seems a definite policy to secure all members of certain trades and the desire to secure these and other

skilled labor leads press gangs to deliberate choice of those in actual employment. Moreover, they have taken all together, up to 15th December, over 700 persons employed by the Commission, despite the exhibit of credentials and their specific agreement with us to the contrary and against our protest. Furthermore, our American members have witnessed the taking of several thousands, particularly from Flanders to Northern France, and together with local French people, are now being forced to work for the German Army in the preparation of timber and fascines for the trenches. Refusal to perform such labor has here been met with refusal of food and other brutal acts. It is also reported to us from what we believe to be reliable sources that Belgian and French civilians have been required to work on trench construction in Northern France and certain deportees have been recently returned wounded by shellfire. Of the deportees to Germany, some 300 have been returned to the Hainaut Province, of whom a part were apparently returned because physically unable to work, but the remainder maintain that they were returned because of their steadfast passive resistance to pressure, although they were entirely refused food over a considerable period and were ultimately returned for their recalcitrancy. Their appearance confirms this.

Altogether, the assurances given the President that only unemployed were taken and that they are not employed on military work or brutally treated, are absolutely untrue, not only before but since the assurances were given. It does appear that the civil government in Brussels has made some efforts to prevent brutality in selection, to confine selections to unemployed, and to protect the employees of the Commission, and they have even solicited complaints, but they appear unable to control the military press gangs or effect any remedies.

It does not appear to us, however, that protest from the President, based on failure to carry out assurance given as to the method or purpose of these deportations is consonant with the attitude that the Americans should take, for the real issue is the very act of forced deportation as being a violation of the most primary human liberty and international law. Any protest on method or purpose alone will be construed as a recognition by America of the right to force civilians from their homes and country.

I am now convinced that the Entente Governments will take no action against the Relief as a consequence of these deportations, as they are convinced that stoppage of relief would be no remedy, and, they generally recognize, would only accentuate the misery.

The hourly witnessing of these outrages and the prayers to the Americans from a people now in a state of complete terror, since Americans have been so peculiarly their protectors during the past two years, make it difficult for us to control the natural feeling of our staff and we can only hope that no untoward incident may occur. My impression is that any further protest at the moment in the name of humanity and international law would have no other effect than to produce

irritation and the usual denials, although if other means fail a renewed protest should be delivered with the utmost vigor as a definition of America's attitude and as a deterrent to other outrages which may be contemplated.

For immediate practical purposes, in the hope of remedying or ameliorating this particular evil, I would like to suggest a personal and private message from the President to the Emperor, in the belief that the Emperor is intrinsically a humane man and generally desirous of promoting peace, such message to take the general line that the constant filtration of reports of these deportations and their surrounding circumstances is today one of the strongest stimuli to resolution for continuance of the war amongst the population in the Entente countries, and has afforded an unparalleled basis of anti-German propaganda among neutrals which no assertion of benevolent intentions can counteract, for the fundamental basis of deportation and compulsion of the population to work against its will and conscience being wrong can only bring suffering and criticism; that if Germany is genuinely anxious for peace she can scarcely hope for sympathetic sentiment to grow abroad to that end coincident with these acts, and that a total cessation of the deportations and forced labor and the return of the deported Belgians and French to their homes would be not only an act of great magnanimity but also of the greatest assistance in the promotion of peace sentiment.

Although the deportations continued despite diplomatic protests and a hostile world opinion, the Allies did not carry out their threat to put a stop to relief. They recognized, as did the members of the Commission, that while the responsibility might be placed on the Germans, it was the Belgians and French who would suffer the consequences. The Commission did what it could to mitigate the suffering caused by this policy, and to secure the return to Belgium of relief employees who had been deported.

DOCUMENT NO. 430

Note,
WHITLOCK TO VON DER LANCKEN, protesting against deportations of employees of C.R.B. and C.N.

BRUSSELS, 10 January 1917

The Minister of the United States has the honor to refer to his notes No. 4920, dated 27 November 1916, and 4944, dated 28 November 1916, concerning the carrying away of members and employees of the Commission for Relief in

Belgium and of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, deported into Germany as unemployed.

His Excellency the Baron von der Lancken will remember that the Governor-General was good enough to give, in the month of July 1915, to the Minister Protectors of the Comité National the assurance that the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National could enjoy all the liberty of action necessary to carry out the mission which has devolved upon them by the contracts arrived at between the General Government and the representatives of the neutral Powers. In addition and in order to prevent the application of the steps taken by the German authority relative to the work of the unemployed from prejudicing these guarantees, the Commission for Relief in Belgium, in accord with the German Vermittlungsstelle C.N. distributed to the members, employees, and workpeople of the various organizations connected with the Comité National special cards certifying their capacity, thus putting the German agents employed to carry out these steps, in a position to be able to avoid error as regards the said members, employees, and workpeople.

The Minister Protectors have been able to confirm that these cards have been delivered exclusively to persons who really have the right to them and that a very strict surveillance has been exercised to avoid abuse. They recognize willingly that in the province of Antwerp the cards of the Commission for Relief in Belgium have been taken into consideration and that their bearers have been exempt from deportation; but they regret to learn that in other districts of the country not only has no account been taken of them but the military authorities have torn them up, saying that they were without value.

Thus, up to the present, in the territory of the General Government, about a thousand men who bore the official card of the Commission for Relief in Belgium have been deported into Germany; the figure amounts to 1,054 if those are added who had a right to the card and were picked out for deportation before it was possible to furnish them with it.

The exact figures are, it appears, the following:

Provinces	Persons taken away although furnished with cards	Persons taken away not yet furnished with the card to which they had the right

Luxembourg	234	9
Brabant	24	39
Namur	250	15
Limbourg	30	...
Hainaut	453	...
	991	63

As regards Luxembourg particularly, it has been brought to the knowledge of the Minister Protectors that men have been taken in spite of the protestations of the presidents of the local and regional committees who were present at the requisitions and that no account was taken of the cards of the Commission for Relief in Belgium. It appears even that men were taken away in certain districts only on presentation of that card; in others they only escaped deportation by not showing the card of which they were bearers. The result of these facts has been, it appears, to completely disorganize the alimentation and assistance service in certain parts of that province; several regional and local committees found themselves, it is added, obliged to totally suspend their work; others have experienced, on account of the anxiety of the populations, the greatest difficulty in finding on the spot the staff strictly indispensable to provisionally replace the deported agents.

His Excellency von der Lancken will certainly realize that this state of affairs is contrary to the assurances which have been given to the Minister Protectors.

The Minister of the United States thinks it right to recall further that in the course of negotiations between the German Vermittlungsstelle C.N. and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the German Vermittlungsstelle C.N. kindly gave the assurance that the necessary steps would be taken to repatriate the members, employees, and workpeople of the Comité National, wrongly deported.

Mr. Whitlock is convinced that the steps promised will produce their effect; but he considers that the question has such a character of gravity that it appears to him to be his duty to inform the Governor-General of it by the kind intermediary of His Excellency Baron von der Lancken. He is confident that His Excellency the Governor-General will be good enough to give him the assurance that the members, employees, and workpeople of the Comité National already deported into Germany will be repatriated as soon as possible and that the necessary steps will be taken to assure that in the future no more members of the above-named organizations will be deported.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 431

Letter,
HOOVER TO PAGE, respecting deportations of C.R.B. employees

LONDON, 10 January 1917

His Excellency the Honorable W. H. Page, London

DEAR MR. PAGE:

Since furnishing you the memorandum and cable on deportation I have received a further report from Brussels([302](#)) of which I enclose two copies herewith, in case you wish to forward one to Washington. You will see by this report that up to the 30th December, 991 men, employed on relief work, have been taken, who actually presented their cards of identification in the manner agreed between us and the German authorities. A further 63 have been taken, who were not in actual possession of their cards so that a distinction might be drawn.

The taking of these men accords very ill with the constant assertion of the German authorities that they are only taking the actually unemployed. We have a vast amount of data relating to the details of deportation, but it does not seem to me worth encumbering your files with repeated proof of the same things. You will realize, of course, that while we protest against the taking of our people, we are very anxious that American authorities should not make the commitment, for which the Germans are apparently so anxious, by acquiescing in principle of deportation by negotiations as to failure to carry out the deportation according to assurances as to methods.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

By 1918 the Germans had gone beyond deportations to Germany, and were compelling Belgian and French beneficiaries of relief to labor on military construction. The Commission no longer had American representatives in Belgium, and it could do nothing except request the C.R.B. representative in Brussels to raise the question with the C.N., the C.F., and the Spanish-Dutch Committee for such action as they deemed advisable under the circumstances.

DOCUMENT NO. 432

Letter,

C.R.B. LONDON TO C.R.B. REPRESENTATIVE IN BRUSSELS, regarding the employment on military works of Belgian and French citizens receiving relief

LONDON, 19 September 1918

Commission for Relief in Belgium, Brussels

We would very much like to have you discuss the following serious situation with M. Francqui, M. Le Blan, and the Spanish and Dutch directors of the neutral committee, and ask that you send by first practicable mail their separate and independent judgment as to the course to be followed, and your own recommendations.

The grave action of the Germans in so working that now actually, in occupied France and Flanders and to a considerable extent in Belgium, imported rations are being issued to so-called "free" laborers from overseas imports, brings about a situation which threatens the entire ravitaillement. Free labor was first employed for non-military purposes, and the C.R.B. continued to feed it. Gradually it has been arranged with German cunning so that it is now largely employed in actual military construction, and we still feed it. Such labor is employed in building trenches, military railways, making trench timbers, getting out and placing concrete for military work. This is in direct violation of The Hague Convention and the Comity of Nations. What shall be done?

The alternatives seem to be, first, to allow the present situation to continue, which would make almost inevitable the exploitation of the people by those means of indirect pressure which the brutal conquerors of the country have developed, with the almost further certainty of refusal of the governments to allow the feeding of the occupied regions to continue, just as it was refused that food might be sent to the starving victims of the deportations; second, that a strong protest be presented through the protecting ministers and a demand made that the employment of Belgians and French on work of military importance cease, with the statement that if it is continued ravitaillement of these regions where it exists will not be allowed--at the same time making a complete statement in the press of the neutral countries as to the whole situation.

The results, if the Germans do not cease, would be of course most grievous, as many helpless persons would starve along with those working for the Germans. How could such a regulation be applied, e.g., what limits might be given? Would it cover all France and Flanders? The special workers for the Germans only? Who could determine between military and non-military work? Could the C.H.N. delegates do this? Would there be danger of the Germans' seizing the native products and devoting them exclusively to their labor battalions or workers for the Germans? These considerations we feel that you are far better able to discuss than

we, and the Belgian, French, and British Governments as well as the C.R.B. will take no action until we hear from you, but we hope you will discuss the question fully in giving your recommendation and will recognize that it can hardly continue.

3. The Deportations in Northern France. April-May 1916

In Northern France, where military rule and methods prevailed, there were also wholesale deportations. Here the object was not to force French workers to labor in German industry but to transfer industrial workers to the agricultural districts of France in the German Army Zone. The methods by which this was accomplished were harsh and inhumane. Without warning the military authorities seized several thousand persons in Lille without regard to sex or capability for agricultural labor, herded them on trains and distributed them in rural communes.(303)

The intervention of the C.R.B. described in the following documents was striking and effective. The Germans first suspended the deportations pending investigation and then abandoned the policy. Later four or five thousand women, children, and infirm were returned to their homes.

DOCUMENT NO. 433

Memorandum,

by POLAND, describing conversations at Charleville with Quartermaster General Zoellner and others regarding the deportations from Lille

ROTTERDAM, 8 May 1916

About the 25th April, Count Wengersky advised me that it was the intention of the General Staff to evacuate 50,000 persons from Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, to the agricultural districts of Vervins and Charleville, where there was insufficient rural population to plant and harvest the crops. He advised that, as far as possible, volunteers would be asked for, whole families would be transported together when practicable, the main object was to obtain laborers, and, in general, laborers only would be selected. I told him that while in principle we could not object to the moving of the population of these cities to points where they could support themselves, still we anticipated that such a movement could be carried out only with disturbance and suffering. On the request of Captain Weber and Captain zur Strassen, arrangements were made for adjusting the food supply to accommodate the changed distribution of the population which might follow.

On April 29th, our representatives came in from Lille with a history of the most distressing conditions resulting from the manner in which the German edict had been carried out. It appeared that there were no volunteers and that, despite the protests of the people, families were broken up, wives were taken out of families, young girls and young women sent away, the women being put in one part and the men in another. Many young women from eighteen to twenty-five years old were taken out of families and herded together, the most respectable being placed, in some cases, with most undesirable characters and sent off without proper protection and supervision and with no clear idea of their destination. The distress of the population was intense bordering on despair and insurrection. In the midst of reports as to these conditions, during our staff meeting, we were called to the telephone and advised by General Headquarters that we (the director and representatives of Northern France) were invited to proceed to Charleville by a special train to meet the American Ambassador, Mr. Gerard, who was then negotiating with the General Staff in connection with the answer of the German authorities to the Note from the United States in regard to the submarine warfare.⁽³⁰⁴⁾ The invitation was accepted and the party conveyed to Charleville, where it arrived about 5:00 P.M. Shortly thereafter a reception and tea was arranged, at which were present: the American Ambassador Mr. Gerard, Secretary of Legation Mr. Grew, General Zoellner, Count Wengersky, Captains zur Strassen and Weber, Oberleutnants Fritz and Paul Neuerbourg, Baron von Boecklin, and Baron von

The proper opportunity occurring, I begged leave to call General Zoellner's attention to the distressing conditions which had arisen in Lille, as a result of the evacuation movement. It was stated by the Director that three considerations might have, in our opinion, decided the German authorities to carry out this movement:

Firstly, lack of food in the congested districts of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing. This condition, however, would immediately disappear if the increased ration of 19,000 tons of flour, etc., which had been offered by the C.R.B., were introduced, and which depended only on the guarantee of the German authorities to issue 200 grams of potatoes per capita per day. As it was estimated that this might be accomplished by importing 25,000 tons of potatoes from Prussia, it was hoped that the German authorities would immediately furnish the guarantee.

Secondly, the idea of punishment for the slight disturbances and rioting at Roubaix, where the shops were broken into for the purpose of obtaining food. So far from having a salutary effect, it was pointed out that the extreme agitation of the population must have produced much worse conditions from a military point of view than had before existed.

Thirdly, if the not unreasonable desire of the German authorities to take the idle population from the above points and move them to agricultural districts, where labor was badly needed, was to be successful, the movement should have been

confined to actual workmen, rather than to those unable even to support themselves.

One of the considerations which most strongly influenced the Commission to undertake, at the request of the German authorities, the relief work for the people of the occupied territory of the North of France was the suggestions by the occupying authorities that a large number of the population be evacuated across the line, would be carried out and that our importations of food and other forms of relief might be a means of saving the people from the misery and distress which must attend any such movement. On behalf of the Commission I therefore respectfully protested against the evacuation and begged that it be stopped.

The actual facts were vouched for by Messrs. Wellington and Richardson. Captain zur Strassen and Count Wengersky maintained that the movement was being carried out now in a proper and satisfactory manner. Oberleutnant Fritz Neuerbourg and Captain Weber were silent. General Zoellner expressed himself as much surprised and stated that the condition described was not intended in his order. He was requested to consult Oberleutnant Paul Neuerbourg and had a private talk with him at once, at which it was understood Oberleutnant Paul Neuerbourg gave the facts as above.

Ambassador Gerard was much affected by the statements. General Zoellner advised that an immediate investigation would be made and the trouble remedied. It was understood that the general commanding the Lille operations had been summoned to Charleville immediately. The evacuation was suspended by telegraphic orders.

Our next news was on the 5th of May, when the representatives from Northern France again reported at Brussels. Apparently the movement had been stopped and it was understood that it would be confined to workmen only if resumed but this has not yet been officially confirmed.

Our imperfect information is that about 11,000(305) of the population have so far been evacuated. We shall endeavor to remedy any extreme cases of hardship resulting from this order and have indeed been promised *unofficially* that this will be done.

It should be noted that at the moment the relations between the C.R.B. and the occupying German forces in the North of France are very strained and it is difficult to accomplish much. It is considered probable that the result to the people of the North of France would be exceedingly unfavorable should the attention of the Allied Governments be called to these conditions through the offices of the C.R.B. until further reports are made. For the moment the action seems to have been ended. Ambassador Gerard offered to use his influence with the Emperor to modify these conditions if subsequent reports indicated to him that the German authorities themselves had not taken steps to do so.

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Belgium and the North of France

DOCUMENT NO. 434

Memorandum,
by L. C. WELLINGTON, C.R.B. DELEGATE AT LILLE, describing the
deportations from Lille

LONDON, 6 October 1916

1. The seed for the idea of removing a part of the inhabitants from the most congested district in the North of France occupied by the German troops seems to have been sown by a small riot which occurred in the city of Roubaix in the month of March. Exact facts cannot be given, but, in general, about two hundred people forced an entrance to a few small grocery stores in this city and seized what small amounts of food were to be had. It is assumed that when this was reported to the German Headquarters of the western front at Charleville, the conclusion was drawn that conditions were such that riots might again occur; that this one in particular was due to too great a congestion of an idle laboring population, which, under the circumstances, could not be sufficiently fed to prevent the recurrence of an uprising in one form or another. It was therefore decided at General Headquarters that it would be wise to remove fifty thousand people from the laboring classes, give them work in the fields of the agricultural districts of the North of France, and pay them a small salary. This scheme in theory was not a bad one, had it been possible to carry it out without undue hardship to the laborers themselves. It would place them in regions where it would be easier for them to supplement the diet which they receive from the Commission for Relief in Belgium (this Commission will be referred to hereafter as the C.R.B.); it would give them employment and a small salary.

2. It was therefore decided, at first, to test out this theory by a call for volunteers from the laboring classes to work in the fields. It is to be understood that the three cities of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing are the largest in the most thickly populated and most highly industrial region of Northern France; fully eighty per cent of the population is made up of laborers who, in ordinary times, are employed in textile mills and who have been accustomed to life in the city for generations. They consequently know nothing of agricultural labor, and it is not surprising that upon this call for volunteers there was response from no more than thirty-five or forty individuals.

3. Nevertheless it was considered feasible at General Headquarters to go ahead with the theory and to force the population to comply. Fifty thousand was decided upon

as an outside limit for the number of inhabitants to be deported and in order to make the necessary arrangements for the feeding of these people after they had been transported from the cities where they dwelt to the agricultural districts, a visit was made by Captain Weber.⁽³⁰⁶⁾ A conference was held between Captain Weber, the French Committee at Lille, and the American delegate of the Lille district. Captain Weber was sent to Lille as a delegate from General Headquarters. He requested, in the first place, that an arrangement should be made whereby the three cities from which inhabitants were to be removed should continue their war payments to their respective inhabitants. These payments are of two kinds--- "allocations militaires" and "chomage," or money paid by French municipalities to inhabitants thrown out of work owing to the war. In the second place, Captain Weber requested that the C.R.B. should transfer a sufficient quantity of food from the Lille district to supply the fifty thousand inhabitants who were to be removed from the Lille district to those of Vervins and Charleville. This last matter was taken up by the German captain at the Brussels office of the C.R.B. and consent was given. The members of the French Committee at Lille objected very strongly to the whole proposition of the removal of the inhabitants; firstly, from the point of view of the hardships that would necessarily result and also from the impossibility which there would be in continuing the war payments to the individuals who were to be removed.

4. The deportations commenced on 22d April, the day before Easter, and the order, coming through the German ranks as a military command, was naturally carried out in a blunt, brutal, military way. A whole regiment was placed in a given quarter of the city and machine guns were placed in the streets, and six, eight, or ten fully armed soldiers entered each house to remove all inhabitants capable of doing field labor.

The present account is given on information obtained from the acting mayor and other members of the French Committee at Lille as well as from the actual observation of the writer. The situation which ensued throughout the three cities in question is beyond description. Every household, whether entered or not, was thrown into panic for fear that some of its members might be taken sooner or later. Whatever his position, no individual was exempt from approach, and the fact that over twenty thousand people were shipped off in eight days is testimony to the methods that were adopted. If any explanations were made they seemed to the individual like simple pretexts for some form of cruelty. Each officer had orders to deliver a given number of souls at a designated point, and they were herded through the streets on foot or in cars like so many beasts, being made to wait hours in the cold. Any reluctant attitude was treated with the bayonet point. Industrial schools, with several hundred young women in them, were entered and cleared of all their pupils, who, often without the chance to see their parents, were ordered into tram cars and sent to a railway station, from which they were shipped to no one knew where. Girls of good family, women up to the age of fifty, and men up to the age of sixty-five were taken from all parts of the cities without any discrimination or

consideration as to what class of society they were from. Girls who had known nothing but the protection of refined homes were thrown together with prostitutes or men of low life. The lot of people were all examined as a matter of form by a German Red Cross doctor, but this examination seems to have been very superficial in most cases, many of which were passed when the individual was suffering from one disease or another and evidently incapable of doing field labor. Monsieur Crepy, the "Adjoint du Maire," tells of watching an examination in which several extreme cases of varicose veins(307). were passed upon by the doctors, and when their condition was noticed by an ordinary German officer and referred again to the doctor the reply was to the effect that they were quite capable of doing hard labor. It was evident to the French men of the Committee that the task of removing the people was often an odious one to the officers carrying out their instructions. The writer came in personal contact with the case of an employee in one of the shops of Lille. It was taken for granted everywhere that people who already had employment were not to be removed, but this distinction does not seem to have been made with very great care, for in this particular case the girl in question not only had employment but was provided by her employer with a certificate to show where and what her employment was. She was seized on the street when going to her work, was given half an hour to pack up what she wanted, and then marched off. By good fortune she passed an officer who had been one of her clients; she appealed to him and was released. One could go on and cite fifty or more tragic cases where families were broken up and consequent sorrow entered the houses of the three cities. Even the "Adjoint du Maire" himself of the city of Lille was not exempt. His house was entered, and it was only upon an explanation of his identity and position that his own servants were protected. We cite the case of a tram conductor who returned at nightfall to find that his wife had been removed during the day. This is typical of hundreds of others.

It was arranged by the C.R.B. to give these unfortunate people a supplementary ration for two days for the time during which they were being transported from their homes to their destination in the rural districts. Subsequently, the Commission has done all in its power to relieve this extreme distress by providing any extra clothing or food that has been available.

5. Naturally, the American representative wished to do all in his power to alleviate the situation in any way possible, and consequently an explanation of the tragedy was made in detail at Brussels at the end of the first week. It is the custom to have a reunion of the American representatives in the north of France in Brussels ever tin Saturday morning. Owing to a most happy coincidence, this Saturday, April 29, was the date when Ambassador Gerard had come on from Berlin to Charleville with the German Kaiser and the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, for conference at General Headquarters wit reference to the American Note on the "Sussex" affair. Ambassador Gerard requested an interview with the American representatives of the C.R.B. in the North of France and it was accordingly arranged that they, together with the Brussels Director of the C.R.B., should go to Charleville that

afternoon on a special train provided by Headquarters. It was decided that the least the American Commission could do would be to bring the tragedy of the Lille deportations to the attention of Ambassador Gerard and, if possible, to obtain from General Headquarters some action for an amelioration of the situation. Therefore at Charleville the matter was discussed in detail with the German officers concerned, in the presence of Ambassador Gerard and Quartermaster General Zoellner. It was argued by the Americans that from a military point of view a greater risk than before was being taken in rousing the antagonism of the Lille population, and that from the point of view of the C.R.B. the evictions were much against its wishes, inasmuch as one of the chief objects of the relief work is to feed the population sufficiently so that individuals will not be forced to leave their homes in order to be properly nourished. Arguments to uphold the theory for the evacuation of a portion of the congested population were given by the German officers present. After a general discussion there were conferences held apart, both with Ambassador Gerard and Quartermaster General Zoellner, who were given in detail the tragic and impractical aspects of the situation. It is to be noted that all the arguments of the American representatives at Lille and of the Brussels Director were upheld by the German officer, Lieutenant Paul Neuerbourg, who had been at Lille to see and hear the details as they appeared on the ground. Credit is due to him for this support, both from the point of view of sympathy shown for the French people and for the risk which he took in combatting the argument of officers of much superior rank. It goes without saying that this support lent great weight to the objections advanced by the C.R.B. A further conference was held that evening between Ambassador Gerard and Quartermaster General Zoellner, the result being that, instead of fifty thousand approximately, twenty thousand individuals were sent away from their homes.

6. The month following between three and four hundred individuals were returned owing to sickness, but up to the 1st August 1916, when the writer returned to the United States, no further action had been taken to repatriate them.

7. It is difficult for me to describe the resultant suffering which was visited upon these miserable people in the localities where they were put to work. This can be more accurately done by those Americans who have been in the agricultural districts which received the "Evacués." It must be understood, however, that any avowed attempt to make investigations of this sort would be met with a flat refusal from the German authorities who control the work of the C.R.B. and who keep its representatives under the closest surveillance. Nevertheless, I can cite my visit to the village of Queant, in the district of Valenciennes. About forty people from Lille, the majority of them women, were unloaded here. I was not allowed to speak with them, but I spoke a few words with the "Maire," who asked why they had been sent to his village. "To work in the fields," I told him. "But," he said, with a look of mystification, "these are girls of nice families; they know nothing of field labor; and, more over, we have already more than enough Russian prisoners to do that kind of work. There is no place to put these new people. The town is choked with

troops. They swallow everything and there is not even a bit of straw for our friends from Lille to sleep on, much less a roof to put over their heads. My wife and I are doing what we can, but there is very little left here."

It is known that the unfortunates were carted about in motor trucks, unloaded, and reloaded like merchandise. In some cases the promised salaries were paid by the Germans either entirely or in part in food instead of in cash.

A vivid imagination is not required to make conclusions as to the inevitable dangers to which particularly the women were exposed. Quartered in the same houses with troops, forced to work in the fields, to harvest the German crop, the story of the inhabitants of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing is an "Evangeline" too horrible for poetical treatment.

Needless to say the story of the Lille deportations lost nothing in the telling in the Entente press, and the Allied propagandists made the most of the incident as another example of German "frightfulness." There is no doubt of the brutality with which the evacuation of these unfortunate and innocent people was carried out, but it is clear that this brutality was not a deliberate policy of the higher German authorities. It is significant that in the confidential statement he was asked to prepare for the United States Department of State, Hoover discredited the extravagancies of the propagandists, exculpated the German authorities of intentional brutalities and placed the responsibility where it belonged---on individuals of subordinate rank who appear to have been both incompetent and insensible. The historical importance of the following document is obvious.

DOCUMENT NO. 435

Letter,
HOOVER To LANSING, reporting on the Lille deportations

LONDON, 10 October 1916

*The Hon. Robert Lansing,
Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. LANSING:

I have a request from the American Embassy in London to furnish you with a short, confidential statement with regard to the evacuation of certain persons from Lille during April 1916.

In this matter, I send you herewith:

1. Memorandum prepared at the time by Mr. Poland, who was then our Director in Belgium and Northern France;
2. Memorandum prepared by Mr. Wellington, our staff representative in Lille;
3. English translation, of the brochure issued by the French Government on the matter.

Our summary of the incident is as follows:

1. The German General Staff determined upon the evacuation of a large number of people from the congested urban sections around Lille into the agricultural sections of Northern France. The objective was two-fold---to relieve the congestion and food difficulties in the urban areas and at the same time to furnish more labor to the agricultural sections in order to increase the productivity of these areas. They initially called for volunteers, but, securing none, gave orders that compulsion should be used.
2. These orders were carried out with great brutality. People were seized, regardless of class, sex, and family membership. They were loaded on to railway trains on a few hours' notice and dumped into agricultural districts without any preparation; all sexes were thrown promiscuously in the open, under conditions of the utmost hardship.
3. The immediate protests at the German Headquarters by Mr. Poland, backed by Messrs. Wellington and Richardson, all of the Relief Commission, later on seconded by Mr. Gerard, brought about an investigation as to the methods employed; a suspension of the measures and ultimately rescission of the project. Furthermore as a result of the investigation initiated some four or five thousand women, children, and infirm have been returned; the balance have now settled amongst the agricultural population and we do not believe that they are specially discontented.
4. The Relief Commission provided foodstuffs for the people en route, gave them extra rations upon their arrival, and provided them with blankets, shoes, etc., in the refugee camps, generally protecting them in the best manner we could with the limited resources at our disposal.
5. It is our belief that the brutality of the operation was largely the fault of the local commandants and lack of adequate arrangements for the reception of and distribution of the évacués. We do not believe that any such brutalities were committed with intent of the high authorities. We believe they honestly and expeditiously corrected the matter as far as they were able when it came to their

attention, and we are informed that disciplinary measures were taken. We do not believe the stories of rape, concubinage, etc., spread in the propagandist press.

The incident is one of sufficiently terrible order, but as things go in this war it has resulted in less volume of human suffering than many other continuing barbarities in Europe.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XI

POLAND

The provinces of Belgium and Northern France were not the only regions where great armies marched and fought, where field and town were devastated, where homes were invaded by hunger and disease. Eastern Galicia, Congress Poland, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Rumania were invaded, fought over, and held, for varying periods, under the military rule of the invader. All did not suffer equally, nor were any---with possibly one exception---in a situation comparable to Belgium and Northern France. The occupied territories of Eastern Europe were, as far as food was concerned, normally self-supporting or nearly so; and hence, though the closing of their frontiers increased destitution and suffering, it did not mean famine for a large industrial population. This is not to say that there was no need for relief, for the need was very great, but this need was primarily for aid to individuals, the victims of destitution or disease, not for the organized revictualment of the occupied area. Extensive and invaluable individual relief, especially medical relief, was delivered in certain of these territories by the American Red Cross and several private organizations of American or European origin, but the only attempt to organize general revictualment---in Congress Poland---failed because the belligerents could not agree on the conditions under which this relief should be given. One reason for the refusal of the belligerents to make the necessary concessions has already been suggested; that is, that there was less need of general revictualment even in partially industrialized Congress Poland than in Belgium. But more than this, when these negotiations were undertaken, the siege warfare had begun and neither the Allies nor the Central Powers were willing to concede anything which might limit the effectiveness of the blockade or hamper measures of defense against it.

1. The Origin of the Polish Relief Project. February-December 1915

The C.R.B. first came in contact with the Polish relief problem in February 1915, when Hoover was in Berlin attempting to secure a cessation of German financial levies in Belgium and to provide for the financing of relief.(308) At this time representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation, who had just completed a tour of inspection in the districts of Russian Poland held by the German forces, were discussing with the Berlin authorities a plan for the relief of Poland. Hoover did not take part in these Polish relief negotiations except to give the Rockefeller representatives the benefit of the Commission's experience in Belgium and to urge that both relief efforts should stand together in insisting on a satisfactory basis of treatment from the Germans. The Rockefeller-German agreements, when completed, set up an International Commission for Relief in Poland, to be financed by the Foundation and the German Government.(309) The next step was to purchase food. American representatives of the International Commission attempted to make purchases in Rumania, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia, but without success. They also asked the British Government to permit oversea imports to Poland via Rotterdam, but the British would agree to this only on condition that the United States Government assume official responsibility for the work and for the observance of the Rockefeller-German agreement.(310)

By mid-summer 1915, when the International Commission's negotiations broke down, the military situation in Poland was rapidly changing, and the need of relief increasing. At the beginning of May the Central Powers had launched their great drive against the Russians with the battle of Gorlice-Tarnow. Overwhelmed by a great concentration of artillery, the Russian lines broke before the Mackensen phalanx, and an even greater disaster was averted only by a general retreat of the Tsar's armies from the Baltic to the Carpathians. The Germans occupied Warsaw on the 1st August, and by the middle of October virtually all of Congress Poland was in the hands of the Teutonic armies. The inevitable destructiveness of military operations of this magnitude was greatly increased by the deliberate policy of devastation carried out by the forces of the Grand Duke Nicholas in their retreat. The destruction of the crops, the confiscation of animals, and the forced migration of part of the population of the eastern districts rendered the agricultural sections unable to support themselves, much less to provide food for the industrial centers of Warsaw, Lodz, and the Dabrowa mining region.

In Congress Poland voluntary committees supported refuges for orphan children and, as far as their resources would permit, operated free soup kitchens for the destitute. Their funds came from private donations, from city administrations, from the Russian Government and Russian societies, and from Polish, Jewish, and other societies abroad. These funds were sufficient for the program, but the program was

not enough. Faced with a condition which local resources were entirely inadequate to meet, the Polish Citizens' Relief Committee of Warsaw, with the approval of the German General Staff, appealed to the C.R.B. to make an investigation with a view to undertaking the relief of this territory. Despite the magnitude of the Commission's responsibilities in Belgium and Northern France, and fully aware of the political complications inherent in the Polish problem, Hoover authorized Kellogg to make the requested investigation as a preliminary to negotiations with the belligerents.

Kellogg made his investigation in November and delivered his report early in December. In the meantime Hoover had discussed with German authorities the support they were prepared to give, and on the 22d December he placed the matter before Sir Edward Grey and asked for the approval and co-operation of the Allied Governments in the project.

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DOCUMENT NO. 436

Telegram,
C.R.B. LONDON TO HOOVER, regarding request of Warsaw relief committee for
C.R.B. investigation of situation in Poland

LONDON, 27 October 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION
NEW YORK

Brussels wires:

"Please wire Hoover New York, destitution in Poland approach of winter desperate. Requested by Warsaw Committee and Kessler(311) make personal inspection devastated territory, view possibility organizing provisioning under auspices Commission Relief Belgium. Am making no undertaking. Expect leave October 31 return November 10. Affairs Belgium satisfactory. Poland(312) in charge. German authorities grant permission old clothes into Northern France. Please wire wife Kellogg."

In view of already existing transportation and staff difficulties we believe should not depart from former decision to restrict activities to present sphere. Cable immediately your views regarding reply to Kellogg.

RELIEF COMMISSION

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DOCUMENT NO. 437

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B. LONDON, authorizing investigation of Polish relief situation

NEW YORK, 28 October 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION
LONDON

See no objection Kellogg investigating Poland, and we should lend every help possible to the situation. Could probably get an institution here to take on the administration. However, all would depend upon feasibility arranging approval Allied Governments, covering source of supplies and the securing of transport and finance.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 438

Report,
by KELLOGG, on conditions in Poland, based on investigations made in
November 1915

BRUSSELS, November 1915

The districts of Poland occupied by the German Army, which are the only part of Poland that this report concerns, are inhabited by about 7 1/2 million people and include an area of 75,000 square kilometers.

Three-fifths of the population is rural, depending on agriculture for its living; of the two-fifths in towns, nearly 80 per cent are factory workers and their families. For fifteen months without interruption this country and its people have had to suffer from the enormous hostile activities of two great armies with all the inevitable devastating effects of military operations on a grand scale.

During the great retreat of the Russian Army there was put into effect a military measure that, however well justified and effective it may have been from the military point of view, resulted in an enormous disaster to Poland, and terrible hardships for its population. This was the carefully planned and radically carried out laying waste of a broad zone of the country by burning its villages, destroying its crops and herds, and breaking up its means of transportation and communication.

Four thousand villages were burned and two million people were made houseless. As the houses of the country villages and towns in Poland are almost all built of wood with heavily thatched roofs, they were totally destroyed by the fires, only a heap of ashes and a slender brick chimney with open fireplace in its broader base indicating what was once a villager's cottage. Today, as one travels through the devastated regions, one's eyes are arrested and saddened by the sight of irregular rows along deserted country roads, of these black and bare chimneys standing up stark and staring from the flat Polish plain. These are all that reveal the sites of the one-time comfortable villages of the land.

The Russians attempted to take with them in their retreat the inhabitants of these villages, undoubtedly intending to take care of them in Russia. But the pressure of the German Army was too severe and the Russians had to hurry on eastward without their burden of frightened people. These were pushed right and left into the fields or forests adjoining the roads in order to free these roads for the army and its transport. By the time the German Army had arrived, many of the unfortunate people had gone into the roads again and had begun their slow procession homeward. Again they were pushed aside, this time hiding more deeply in the forests from fear of the strange invaders. With the final passing by of the German Army, the people came out again from their hiding places and began making their slow way westward. These sad processions were mainly composed of old men, women, and children and they were almost all on foot. The people carried with them those few of their belongings that they had clutched up when forced to leave their villages. Some of these fugitives traveled on foot as much as one hundred kilometers east and finally the same one hundred kilometers west.

Returning, as such simple, bewildered people naturally would under such circumstances, to their homes, they found there only ashes and bare chimneys. Some of them, notably the weaker and older, being unable to do anything on the sites of their former homes, betook themselves into the nearest city. Scores of thousands, for example, crowded into Warsaw and became at once a load on the already suffering population there. Others clinging more tenaciously to "home," began to make rude shelters for themselves by the side of bare chimneys. These shelters are in many cases merely a sort of dugout, with low mud walls and a roof above ground composed of poles, soil, and thatch. Into the single room of this shelter the family crowds to sleep and to protect themselves on days of rain. Their cooking is done outside in the fireplace at the bottom of the standing chimney. I saw on the occasion of my visit to one of these burned villages in the first half of November barefooted women and children trying to boil their potatoes---all their meal---at the outdoor fireplace in the rain and sleet.

In normal times the agricultural produce of the part of Poland occupied by the German Army was not sufficient to meet the needs of the population, the country being, as already noted, nearly two-fifths industrial. The deficient food was mostly supplied from Russia. The war operations lasted through the harvest period of

1915. Not more than one-third of the land lay outside the scope of these operations. As a result the harvest was very meager. Great quantities of standing grain were burned or otherwise destroyed, cattle and pigs were seized or killed, many farm implements were annihilated. In some districts no sowings had been made. Add to this the constant and heavy requisitions made by both armies on all undestroyed grain and animals, and it is very easy to see how it is that the Polish people now find themselves in terrible extremities for food.

To understand thoroughly the whole plight of the country, however, one must take into consideration also the position of the large factories and industries, as a large portion of the inhabitants are factory workmen with their families. In the present German-occupied districts of Poland the number of factory workers is about 750,000, making with their families a total strictly industrial population of 2,000,000. The influence of the war has been, in many ways, more terrible on this part of the people than on the agricultural part. Nearly all the factories and large industries have for various reasons stopped work from the beginning of the war. First among these reasons has been the impossibility of obtaining a supply of raw materials for the factories, as almost all of these materials have to be imported. This is the reason of the stopping of the spinning mills, which represent the chief industry of the country. The second reason is the cutting off of the Russian market, which has always been the chief buyer of Polish exports. This reason especially accounts for the stoppage of the iron mills, which represent the second industry in the country. Third, most of the factories making use of local raw materials have had to stop work because of the interruption of railway traffic and constant requisition by the military authorities. Finally it should be noted that a great many factories were actually destroyed during the fighting and sieges by bombardment or fire.

From as reliable statistics as can yet be collected, it is apparent that only about 20 per cent of the population occupied in industry and agriculture have worked normally during the long war period. Add to this the serious derangement to the occupations of other classes of the population. Not a single branch of the economic activities of the Polish population but was immediately affected. All trade with Russia was paralyzed at once, and commercial interests of all kinds suffered severely. A large number of representatives of the liberal arts found no sale for their offerings; governmental officers were out of employment, or at least received no salary. In an especially hard position were all those dependent on the Russian Government, as old-age pensioners, families of soldiers, etc., etc. The number of soldier families in Warsaw alone is 35,000, and in the whole of the occupied districts the number reaches 300,000, which means a total of 1,200,000 persons affected. In the same situation are the families of the old-age pensioners, the pensioners themselves being nearly all invalids.

The outcome of all these immediate results of Poland's unfortunate position as the seat of more than a year of war on the grand scale is that the country is stripped of its means of subsistence and the great mass of its people are now either wholly or

in part dependent on charity or rapidly approaching this condition. In Warsaw alone, for example, at least one-third of the population is now being aided by local charities. Famine diseases, such as hemeralopia, xerosis conjunctival, ulcus corneae ex inanitione, are becoming prevalent. A special disease of this type, known as hydrops-anasarca ex inanitione, consisting of a swelling of the whole body, degeneration of muscles, weakness of sight and hearing, and general deterioration, has appeared. In the town of Sosnowize alone 110 cases of the disease were noted in six weeks, half of the number being children.

Efforts were being made by the Poles to relieve some of the hunger and suffering. A large Bürger-Komitee was organized in Warsaw very soon after the beginning of the war. This committee is composed of twenty-four leading men of the city with Prince Lubomirski as chairman. Each member is chairman of a special section, or subcommittee, made up of other men not included in the main Bürger-Komitee. Each section has its own special subject of attention, as finance, food, children, women, finding work, the homeless, etc. Contributions of money have been secured from various private sources and some money gifts have been received from America and elsewhere. In addition the Bürger-Komitee has obtained a small credit from a Warsaw bank. On the basis of these gifts and credit, the committee had organized and is carrying on a considerable amount of charitable work. It is maintaining eighty-one soup kitchens and tea houses in which soup or tea and bread are given daily to a large number of people either wholly gratis or against the payment of a few kopeks, this payment being regulated by the ability of the recipient of the charity to pay. Over 100,000 people are receiving food from their soup kitchens and tea houses every day, one-third of whom pay from 5 to 10 kopeks a day. The ration in these soup kitchens is one liter of soup and 200 grams of rye bread daily.

In addition the Bürger-Komitee is helping to maintain a considerable number of refuges for houseless old men and women and for children who have been made orphans or half orphans by the war.

Twenty-five thousand children are now being cared for. Most of these unfortunates are fugitives from the destroyed country villages. The committee also maintains sixty-four special shops scattered over the city where limited amounts of certain food necessities are sold at reduced prices.

Special Jewish soup kitchens have also been established, mostly on a basis of charity extended by Jewish organizations. One private institution alone, "Esra," maintains twenty-five soup kitchens in which 35,000 people receive soup and bread at the price of four kopeks.

The continuation of war conditions and the isolation of Poland from outside sources of food supply are completely exhausting both the financial resources of private charity and also the actual stocks of food commodities in the country. Prices

of what foodstuffs are available have increased by from 200 to 1,500 per cent. The following figures show this situation very clearly:

	Price before the War(<i>Roubles</i>)	Present Price(<i>Roubles</i>)
Wheat flour, sack	8	50
Sugar, one pud (16 1/3 kilos---- 36 pounds)	4.40	16
Barley grits, one pud	2	12
Peas, one pud	1.50	12
Soap, one pud	4	30
Candles, one pud	10	32
Naptha, one pud	2	30
Bacon, one pud	10	64

But even if the Bürger-Komitee and the other charitable Polish organizations had considerable financial resources, they would be unable to make these resources go far, first because of the high prices of what foodstuffs are available and second because of the actual total exhaustion of certain foodstuffs. There are practically no fat meats or other fats at present available. Also dried vegetables, such as rice, peas, and beans, are practically exhausted. Sugar is almost wanting, and, because of the destruction of cattle, milk is available in only very small quantity. There is great need of condensed milk. Children and the infirm aged are suffering terribly from lack of milk, both for direct consumption as drink and as means of preparing special child's and invalid's foods.

There is a certain limited quantity of flour and a larger supply of potatoes. What foods are available can of course be easily distributed in Warsaw, Lodz, and other cities, but in the country means of distribution are wanting and if it were not for the fact that the potatoes are still scattered in the fields and local regions in which they have been grown, starvation of the people would assume horrible proportions. Thousands of families, including old and infirm men and women, and children of tender age, are maintaining life at present on practically no other food than potatoes. Potatoes alone, in whatever quantity available, without fats and proteins, cannot long support life, especially in a cold country and among people subject to exposure. The weak, of course, go first: the children, the aged, and the sick. Then the strong become weak and the new-weak succumb.

Besides the lack of food, the lack of footwear and bed-covering is becoming very serious. I saw barefooted children in November, even in the charitable refuges in Warsaw where the greatest efforts are being exerted to care for these little unfortunates; the committee in charge simply could not provide the necessary shoes and stockings.

The Poles need charity: that is, actual gifts of food, clothing, and money. Materials are more valuable to them than money because of the actual inability to buy any longer certain necessities in Poland, and because of the enormous prices of the few available commodities. But more than the charity of actual gifts are needed the permission and the means of importing food and clothing from the outside world. The Poles ask the world for this rather than for money. They can manage to establish foreign credit to a certain extent, if only they can be given opportunity to buy commodities abroad with this credit and to bring them into Poland. They ask, in a word, for exactly the kind of assistance that the Commission for Relief in Belgium is now giving Belgium and the North of France.

That is the reason they address specifically to the Commission what is really a petition to the world.

DOCUMENT NO. 439

Memorandum,
by HOOVER, of meeting with Major von Kessler, representing the German General Staff, and others, relative to relief in Poland

BRUSSELS, 2 December 1915

On December 2, I had a meeting with Major von Kessler, representing the German General Staff, together with Messrs. Kellogg, Poland, Count Wengersky, and Captain Uhl, for discussion of Polish relief.(313)

I stated that the attitude of the Allied Governments would undoubtedly be based on a number of considerations.

First of all would be that the native foodstuffs of Poland at present existent in the country, and a quantity equivalent to any which had been absorbed by the German Army, would need to be made available for the Polish population. Major von Kessler stated that practically no food of any consequence had been taken out of German Poland and there was no difficulty over the restriction of the native food to the population.

I stated that the second and most difficult problem would be one of finance, and it was obvious that charity was no longer available for these large food schemes; that some form of substantial regular income must be set up for the Commission, and I asked Major von Kessler if it would be feasible to formulate some kind of obligation on the primary governments and municipalities in Poland, to be taken up by the Reichsbank and interpreted to us in the form of foreign exchange to the amount of 20,000,000 francs per month. He stated that he would take the matter up and represent strongly the necessity of some such arrangement as this.

I then represented to him that the present attitude of the Allied Governments toward foodstuffs going into these occupied populations was such that I believed if we wished for success it would be necessary for me to be able to put the matter up as a sort of cooperation of the Germans and the Allies through us and that the Germans would have to be prepared to find in Germany a certain amount of foodstuffs, and I understood they had an excess of potatoes, sugar, and salt, and could furnish some cereals. In these circumstances the question could be confined to oversea imports, fats, condensed milk, and high protein producing foodstuffs. He stated that the situation was so acute that something of this kind might be accomplished and that, in any event, we should find the Germans prepared for the fullest co-operation of which they were capable in their present physical condition.

He stated that Germany was short 15 to 20 per cent of her usual food supplies, but that this reduction was no disaster to the population and of no military value to the Allies, but no further reduction could be allowed to the population by way of sacrifice of food supplies to the kindred of the Allies, and he advanced the usual German view that if the Allies wished to impose a blockade on their own kindred the responsibility for the consequences must be with the Allies.

I then said that, of course, the Commission for Relief would require facilities for organization and it seemed to me our results of general work with German officers in Northern France had been so admirable that we should want to follow that type of organization. Major von Kessler stated there would be no difficulty whatever on this point.

I stated that shipping would be a prime difficulty even if all the other stumbling blocks were overcome and that we should certainly have to depend on the Germans for shipping across the Baltic and probably for oversea shipping, if the Allies would consent to our use of German ships. Major von Kessler stated that shipping across the Baltic could be arranged provided the Allies would agree not to submarine the ships carrying relief. As to oversea shipping, that question could only be settled by us with the Allied Governments.(314) I informed Major von Kessler that in all these questions which embraced the rights and wrongs of the civil population it was necessary to have wide ventilation of the question in all neutral countries in order that public opinion might be formulated which might impress the governments on both sides and tend to bring them to a solution, and I thought it would be desirable that such public opinion were created. I represented to him what had been the results for Belgium on both sides and he agreed with me that it was not only admirable but necessary.

DOCUMENT NO. 440

Petition,(315)

by CITIZENS OF WARSAW TO THE C.R.B., asking for extension of its operations to Poland

WARSAW, 3 December 1915

To the Commission for Relief in Belgium

SIRS:

The saving action undertaken on such a large scale by the American social corporations in Belgium expressed itself in the organizing by the Commission for Relief in Belgium of food supply for many millions of inhabitants of Belgium and partly of France.

From the very beginning of the war Poland found itself in a peculiarly difficult situation. During fifteen months without interruption this country has had to suffer from the enormous hostile activities of the two armies, which devastated it far more than Belgium, where the war operations lasted only a couple of months.

We state hereby in a general outline the extent of the disaster which has fallen on the Polish land, the actual state of penury of the inhabitants, and take the liberty to suggest some of the means which could be undertaken to improve at least partly the critical situation. Knowing the noble feelings which ruled the American nation in their so generous help in Belgium, we dare hope, Sirs, that you will not refuse to support our petition.

Area and number of inhabitants

The districts of the Kingdom of Poland occupied by the German Army, are inhabited by about one-third of the total population of Poland and reach an area of 73,120 square kilometers. The population amounts to 7,596,000, of which the rural districts have 4,690,000 inhabitants and the town districts 2,906,000; Warsaw, 1,000,000; Lodz, 644,000.

The occupation of the inhabitants

As we see, from the above, three-fifths of the population is rural and therefore agriculture is their chief way of earning their daily bread. The population of the towns, on account of the comparatively weakly developed commerce in this country and owing to a certain concentration of factories in towns, consists chiefly of factory workers---about 80 per cent.

The normal food supply

In normal times the agricultural produce of the part of Poland occupied by the German Army was scarcely sufficient to cover the demand, the country being to a certain amount industrial. The deficient food was supplied from Russia.

The influence of the war on the agricultural production

The war operations had an ill influence on the harvests of 1914 and 1915. Only a small part of the land---about one-third---was not affected by the crisis. A large percentage of the estates and farms have been either totally or partially ruined; great quantities of grain were burned during the fires, these being the result of the battles and fights which were going on. A perhaps greater catastrophe was the destruction of large quantities of standing corn, in the northern and eastern districts of the country, during the last retreat of the Russian Army, as this retreat took place in the months of July and August with the result that no harvest was possible. We must also draw attention to the fact that owing to the military operations large quantities of farm stock were requisitioned or destroyed, also a great number of agricultural estates, with the result of decrease of production. For these reasons no sowing took place in certain districts of the country, either this year or last. Owing to the lack of accurate figures and statistics, we cannot give a precise calculation of the actual decrease of the agricultural production. From the above we come to the conclusion that this year's production has been greatly reduced.

Influence of the war on industry

To understand thoroughly the plight of the country we must take into consideration the position of the large factories and industries, as a large portion of the inhabitants of this country are factory workmen. In the occupied districts of Poland

the number of factory workers is about 750,000, which amounts to about two million with the families. Their prosperity depends only on the possibility of these factories being active. The influence of war on this part of social life has been even more terrible than on agriculture.

Nearly all the factories and larger industries stopped work from the beginning of the war for the following reasons:

1. Impossibility to supply the raw materials to the factories, as they were imported from abroad in normal times. This consideration stopped all work in the spinning mills, which occupy the first place in this country.
2. Owing to the cutting off of the Russian market, which was always the chief buyer of Polish export, a lot of factories had to be stopped, especially the iron works, which occupied the second place in the production of this country.
3. Of the other factories, which employed the local raw materials, and which found buyers in the country itself, only a small number were capable of continuing their work, and this owing to the stoppage of the railways, their occupation by the military authorities also total destruction of a large number of factories which were situated on the actual fighting line. Handcraft and trade suffered to less extent than industry, yet for the same above-mentioned reasons and especially owing to the lack of raw materials, only a small number of workshops were active during the war. From statistics, which we were able to gather, we may come to the conclusion that only about 20 per cent of the population occupied in trade, industry, or agriculture worked normally during the war period.

Other classes of inhabitants

Revising the position of the other classes of the population, we can specify that the economic shock of the war was so great that not a single branch of social life was spared, and everybody suffered to a larger or smaller extent. As soon as the means of communication with the West were stopped, all the transit commerce with Russia was paralyzed. A large number of representatives of the liberal arts, also of civil servants, could not earn anything owing to the changed conditions. In an especially disastrous position, after the retreat of the Russian Army, were those who were dependent on the Russian Government, and were left behind. In this class we must especially draw attention to the families of the soldiers, also of the old-age pensioners.

The numbers of soldiers' families in Warsaw alone is 35,000 and in the totality of the districts occupied by the German Army attains 300,000---which means a total of 1,200,000 affected.

The state of the population

The result of this situation of the country has naturally had a disastrous effect on the condition of its inhabitants.

The number of persons dependent in Lodz alone on public philanthropy is 70,000, and in the whole country, several hundred thousand.

According to the opinion of the competent German authorities, the quantities of flour, meat, and sugar still found in the country may suffice for the first needs. An adequate supply of potatoes and salt has been promised, as well as assurance given not to requisition any of the above articles.

Products which are most needed in the country

But, as it is clearly seen from the above, the quantities of products existing now in the country cannot satisfy the needs of the population, and this compels us to request most earnestly the Commission for Relief in Belgium to allow the free import through its channels to Poland of food products, especially of rice, peas, beans, etc., and also of bacon and fats.

Remitting this most earnest petition to the Commission we dare assert, Sirs, that thanks and blessings of millions of human beings will accompany your noble efforts to bring them assistance.

(Signed)

The Catholic Archbishop of Warsaw

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE MOST REV. ALEKSANDER KAKOWSKI

The Mayor and Aldermen of the City Council:

PRINCE ZDZISLAW LUBOMIRSKI
MR. PIOTR DRZEWIECKI
MR. EDWARD GEISLER
COUNT WLADYSLAW POTOCKI

The President and Members of the Polish Relief Organizations:

MR. ZYGMONTI WIENIASKI

The President of the Jewish Congregation in Warsaw:

MR. MICHAL BERGSON

The President of the Protestant Evangelical Congregation of Warsaw:

THE REV. JULIAN MACHEEJD

The Presidents of the Industrial Society:

PRINCE ZDZISLAW LUBOMIRSKI

MR. ANDRZEJ WIERZBICKI

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 441

Letter,

DR. E. H. LEWINSKI-CORWIN TO HOOVER, quoting resolutions of the American Polish Relief Committee of New York, asking the assistance of the C.R.B. in Poland

NEW YORK, 3 December 1915

Mr. Herbert C. Hoover, President

The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

At the last regularly convened meeting of the full Committee, the following Resolution was unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS the needs of the civil population of Poland are known to be intense; and

WHEREAS the existing relief committees outside of Poland cannot afford help in a sufficiently large measure

THEREFORE Be It Resolved that this Committee urge upon the Commission for the Relief of Belgium to take steps for relieving the starving population of Poland as early as possible; and be it

Further Resolved that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the President, the Secretary, and the Director of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium.

In sending this may I add a personal word to the effect that present conditions in Poland are most harassing and that unless immediate relief is sent, tens of thousands of people will die of starvation and cold. It is the firm conviction of all those who know the situation that only a Commission like yours can do effective work, as the supplies which you could send would be immune from requisition by

the German Government; and that American agents will be absolutely impartial in the distribution of relief.

I am closing with the hope that your Commission will see the way clear to start their beneficent activities at once.

With sincere regards, I am,

Very truly yours

(Signed) E. H. LEWINSKI-CORWIN
Secretary

DOCUMENT NO. 442

Letter,
HOOVER TO GREY, proposing relief to Poland

LONDON, 22 December 1915

SIR EDWARD GREY
Foreign Office, London

SIR:

Knowing your keen desire to mitigate in every possible way the human suffering arising out of the war, I feel justified in bringing before you a suggestion on behalf of the civil population in Poland.

I attach hereto a petition which this Commission has received from the large representative relief committee in Warsaw, and also the report made as the result of personal investigation at our instance by Dr. Vernon Kellogg, until lately Director in Belgium of our work there.

No added words of mine can darken the picture of misery and despair which these statements depict, representing as they do what would have been the state of Belgium but for the relief afforded under international auspices, with your earnest support.

I have had some informal conversation with German authorities, who assured me that there are cereals and potatoes available in Poland and elsewhere, from which, by mobilization and organized distribution, some sort of minimum ration can be provided. The other items of dietary do not exist in Poland and they are critically necessary to preserve health to the strong, life to the weak, and to forefend from the

whole population already incipient famine diseases. The shortage of these particular commodities in Germany leaves no hope of help to Poland from that quarter.

I am assured by these German authorities, that protection will be afforded to local and imported supplies for the exclusive use of the civil population, also that every facility will be afforded to this Commission in its task of organization and distribution under proper guarantees. It appears to us that the deficient fats, beans, etc., together with condensed milk for children, can only be obtained by imports from overseas, for which there would seem to be a route practicable from the Western Hemisphere to Sweden, with transshipment thence via Danzig or Libau. We could not undertake such a task without the approval and co-operation of the Allied Governments. In the provision of food supply for these people we should need, not only to rely on charity, but to assemble all the economic resources of Poland and its institutions, in much the same manner as has been done in Belgium, and we should need the permission of His Majesty's Government to facilitate exchange and banking operations.

The painful gravity of the situation in Poland cannot be gainsaid, nor need I apologize for the interest this organization has taken in the Polish people, in addition to our other very grave responsibilities. We have no desire to add to our burdens, but if the fourteen months of service in Belgium have commended us to the various belligerent governments, it is our duty to use the confidence thus acquired on behalf of the Polish people; and I wish to add that if the Allied Governments are prepared to assent to such relief measures, and if any other institution can be summoned to undertake their execution, this Commission would be glad to give any advice arising out of its experience or, alternatively, we should be glad to incorporate such other body in any organization we might set up.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Yours very faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER,
Chairman

2. The Commission's Negotiations with the British and German Governments. January-August 1916

A month elapsed before Hoover received a reply from the Foreign Office. In the meantime the Poles and their friends in America endeavored to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear on the British to relax the blockade to the extent of allowing the Commission to import relief supplies. Without definitely refusing to

consider the relief project, the British Government did not encourage it, maintaining that the Central Powers by confiscation and export of native Polish supplies were wholly responsible for the present condition of Poland.

In the public controversy which continued for the rest of the year the question of Polish relief became more and more a weapon with which the belligerents attacked each other on the battlefield of propoganda. The Germans declared that the inhuman and illegal blockade of the Allies was responsible for the sufferings of the Poles, and the Allies replied that the inhuman and illegal policies of the Germans, their exploitation of the resources of conquered territories, made relief futile. In his official reply to Hoover, Sir Edward Grey did not close the door on further negotiations, but he demanded a guarantee from the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments(316) not to export native Polish products or use them for the occupying armies before the Allies would make any arrangement with the Commission for relief.

DOCUMENT NO. 443

Telegram,
POLISH ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TO H. H. ASQUITH,
BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, requesting sanction of British Government for
Polish relief through the C.R.B.

CHICAGO, 9 January 1916

TO HIS EXCELLENCY H. ASQUITH, PRIME MINISTER
DOWNING ST., LONDON

The Undersigned duly elected officers of legally constituted organizations numbering half a million American citizens, representatives of 4,000,000 Polish-speaking residents of the United States, hereby most respectfully present a unanimous request to His Majesty's Government that the blockade against ships carrying provisions and clothing consigned from the United States and destined for the war-stricken districts in Poland, be raised, and vessels carrying such cargo be permitted to disembark at the harbor of Danzig or some other suitable port for distribution among inhabitants of that part of Poland devastated by war. We base this request upon the broadest demands of humanity. The terrors of war visited upon the innocent peaceful population of Poland have been augmented by famine, pestilence, and death; one-third of a generation, the youngest, has practically ceased to exist; the remaining youth, old men, and women are now upon the threshold of actual extinction by starvation, disease, and exposure. The world cannot countenance the extermination of an entire nation in such excruciating agony. The ways of diplomatic discourse are too slow in the presence of such calamity: death

would win the race. We believe action must begin at once. In this honest belief we appeal most respectfully to the sense of justice and humanity of the great British nation. Out of the stricken district forming historical Poland two and a half million men have been called to fight for the Allies' cause. Over twelve hundred thousand soldiers of purest Polish blood have been killed or wounded, and now their families are without food or shelter, suffering far more than any other victims of the war. As the situation there is identical with that of Belgium, the country being almost entirely in the hands of the Central Powers, we earnestly hope and believe that the English Government's magnanimity and Your Excellency's wisdom and generosity will accede to our most urgent appeal. We are prepared to furnish food and clothing for our stricken brethren in Poland, and earnestly request that we be permitted to render our kin in Poland immediate assistance. It is our desire and earnest hope that the American Commission for Belgium should take charge of the entire relief work, thus offering to His Majesty's Government complete and absolute guarantee that food and clothing will be distributed only and exclusively among Polish sufferers in districts devastated by war. Now the very life of the people of Poland depends solely upon Great Britain permitting us to send food. We trust that the Almighty will inspire His Majesty's Government to grant our request. Anxiously awaiting a favorable reply, we beg to remain Your Excellency's most obedient servants:

THE POLISH NATIONAL ALLIANCE (*President*, K. Zychlinski; *Secretary*, J. S. Zawilinski)

POLISH ROMAN CATHOLIC UNION (Peter Rostenkowski, *President*; J. S. Konopa, *Secretary*)

POLISH WOMEN'S ALLIANCE (*President*, Anna Neumann; *Secretary*, Emily Napieralska)

POLISH FALCONS ALLIANCE (*President*, Dr. Starzynski; *Secretary*, T. Samulski)

POLISH ALMA MATER (*President*, Julian J. Nejman; *Secretary*, M. Brochocki)

POLISH UNION OF AMERICA (*President*, Dr. R. Tenerowicz; *Secretary*, Jacob Dembiec)

POLISH NATIONAL COUNCIL (*President*, S. Adamkiewicz; *Secretary*, M. Medwecki)

POLISH UNIFORMED SOCIETIES (*President*, F. R. Porzuczek; *Chancellor*, A. Czechowicz)

POLISH CENTRAL RELIEF COMMITTEE (*President*, T.M. Helinski; *Secretary*, S. Osada)

ST. JOSEPH'S POLISH UNION (*President*, T. Polasinski; *Secretary*, A. Kazierski)

DOCUMENT NO. 444

Telegram,
ASQUITH TO K. ZYCHLINSKI, POLISH NATIONAL ALLIANCE, CHICAGO,
replying to the preceding and placing responsibility for situation in Poland on
Germany([317](#))

LONDON, 14 January 1916

MR. K. ZYCHLINSKI
POLISH NATIONAL ALLIANCE, CHICAGO

I have read with interest the telegram representing the views of the Polish organisations in the United States. His Majesty's Government are earnestly considering the question of Polish relief in consultation with the French Government, but they are faced with accumulating evidence that not only is the present shortage of the necessaries of life in Poland due to the systematic confiscation and export of native stocks by the occupying armies, but also, notwithstanding the deplorable condition of the country today, this process of spoliation still continues. The past history of this process was summarised in a report by a leading member of the Polish Independence Party published in our own press last November, and evidence of the continuance of these confiscations appears daily in the Austrian press. Four thousand five hundred wagon loads of potatoes were to be sent from Lublin to Vienna last October, and a decree of December 23rd regulates the importation from Poland into Austria of cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, eggs, meat, tallow, milk, and many other articles. On November 12th the Vienna press announced the arrival of large shipments of geese from Poland. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the stoppage of such exports and the replacement by Germany and Austria of the stocks seized in the past would remove the danger of starvation and that little if any importation from overseas is necessary. The first step to be taken in the interests of Poland is the establishment of an organisation on the spot to control all remaining stocks and to obtain from the German and Austrian Governments the guarantee of a daily ration to the population equivalent to the foodstuffs seized in the past. In view of what has happened in Belgium where the Germans have used every effort to remove all resources of the country not covered by specific guarantees, it is certain that any permission to import from overseas before these steps have been taken would only stimulate the requisitions of the enemy by giving him the assurance of supplies to replace what he takes.

Please accept my assurance of the deep sympathy of His Majesty's Government.

(Signed) H. H. ASQUITH

DOCUMENT NO. 445

Letter,

GREY TO HOOVER, stating guarantees demanded from Germans prior to discussion of importation into Poland by C.R.B.

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

5 February 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have carefully considered your letter of December 22nd, regarding the proposed scheme for the relief of Poland.

In face of the accumulating evidence of German and Austrian requisitions in Poland, some mention of which you will find in the enclosed telegraphic correspondence with Polish organisations in the United States, I fear it would be impossible to enter into any arrangement with you in regard to any scheme of relief until the German and Austrian Governments have prohibited the export of all foodstuffs from Russian Poland and have guaranteed that native stocks of foodstuffs shall not be drawn upon to maintain the occupying armies.

If and when this is done, it might be possible to come to an arrangement with you to allow the importation of certain articles into Poland in return for undertakings on the part of the German and Austrian Governments to supply an adequate ration of other necessary articles and to give you a free hand in the distribution of all stocks of foodstuffs thus made available. But the prohibition of export and the guarantee mentioned above must be regarded as conditions precedent to any further discussion, since these measures are demanded by the situation now existing, quite independently of the question of imports, and the fact that they have not yet been put into force constitutes evidence that the German and Austrian Governments will never co-operate in any work undertaken in the interests of the population of Poland.

Yours very truly

(Signed) E. GREY

Hoover immediately took advantage of the slight encouragement contained in Sir Edward Grey's letter. He asked Ambassador Gerard to get, if possible, the required

undertakings from the Berlin authorities, while he continued to press the British Government for favorable consideration of the plan, utilizing recent reports of Polish conditions made by Caspar Whitney of the C.R.B. and F. C. Walcott of the Rockefeller Commission.(318) Finally Hoover drafted a memorandum containing specific proposals for Polish relief. This he submitted to the British Foreign Office, the Russian Ambassador at London, and the German Government through Ambassador Gerard. The Hoover plan contemplated the provisioning of Poland only to the 1st October 1916, for Russian Poland, unlike Belgium, is predominantly agricultural and it was therefore assumed that after the harvest there would be sufficient local supplies to furnish an adequate ration for both rural and urban population.

DOCUMENT NO. 446

Letter,

HOOVER TO GERARD, requesting that he take up the Polish relief question with the German Government

LONDON, 7 February 1916

His Excellency, the Hon. James Gerard, American Ambassador, Berlin

DEAR MR. GERARD:

As you are aware, we have been since early last December trying to see if something could not be done with the Allied Governments to open a hole in the blockade for Polish relief. In this matter we have been unceasing in our importunities here and have been backed up by the various Polish associations throughout the world. These associations in the United States have been called into general convention and other means taken to ventilate the whole question.

You will also recollect that I wrote you some time since that we had had some unofficial approaches from members of the German General Staff,(319) and, as you are aware, we sent Dr. Kellogg to Poland and subsequently, in order to keep the matter alive, I asked Mr. Whitney and Mr. Walcott to make reports. You will please find enclosed four documents:

1. A letter addressed by me to Sir Edward Grey on December 22nd.
2. A telegram sent by the United Polish Committees in the United States to Mr. Asquith.
3. Mr. Asquith's reply, and

4. Sir Edward's reply to me on February 5th.

This last document is the one of importance and, although it does not at first sight appear to go very far, and is written in the usual phraseology of combatants, I can assure you that there are really possibilities in it, for it contains some considerable, although qualified, promise. It is impossible to guarantee anything in these times of unprecedented heat, but I feel convinced that the more humane section of the English Government wishes to see something done for Poland.

On the other hand, these men have their own difficulties with their own associates and their own people. The two preliminary points set out by Sir Edward Grey, the prohibition of exports from either Austrian or German Poland(320) and undertaking that the native stocks should not be drawn upon, do not seem to me to be an insuperable thing to accomplish, and I have the feeling that if the Central Governments would do this and if they would go further and allow the export from Germany of certain amounts of cereals, potatoes, sugar, and salt, we could open a gate of importation from abroad via Stockholm and Danzig for at least a similar value of foodstuff. In any event, it will probably occur to you that a counter offer of this kind from the Central Governments would put them right in public opinion.

I understand that, in view of the pressure of publicity which has been given to the Polish question and the fact that their blockade carries with it some responsibility in the matter, the British Foreign Office has, this morning, sent the entire correspondence to the press. Knowing perfectly well your keenness on behalf of the Polish people and the efforts you have made at different times to ameliorate the situation, I have the feeling that perhaps you will be willing to again make a further attempt in the matter, for there is really, in this dispatch, some foundation for a negotiation. The matter has now got beyond everything we can do as simple, unofficial persons, and I feel that if you are able to develop something with the German Government, Mr. Page at this end would be able to advance it another step on this side. In any event, the matter is now in your hands and I await your advice and judgment as to what can be done.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER,
Chairman

[Fig. 15. Letter, 5 February 1916, Sir Edward Grey to Hoover](#)

Guarantees

respecting relief proposed by the German General Government at Warsaw

[BRUSSELS], 11 February 1916

AGREEMENT

In the event that the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall be able to assist in the ravitaillement of Poland, the following principles are agreed to by the German Government.

1. The Americans have the right of control in exact agreement with the convention arranged for the North of France and/or Belgium.
2. The German Authorities pledge themselves that all the food supplies introduced by the Americans shall be applied exclusively to the use of the civil population and distributed according to the methods now obtaining in North of France and/or Belgium. The distribution is to be made through the Polish Local Committees under the supervision of the American Representatives or Delegates and the German Relief Officer for the civil population.
3. The German Authorities guarantee that all food supplies originating in Poland shall be used exclusively for the civil population and the constabulary. Excepted from the above are surplus potatoes left after the needs of the civil population and constabulary have been completely covered. The constabulary is required to pay cash marks or equivalent for whatever foodstuffs they purchase or requisition at a fair market price. The allowance of potatoes per capita per day for the population in determining this surplus is to be at least four hundred grams per day.
4. The German Authorities guarantee that the transportation of the imported American food supplies destined for the General Government of Poland, the Etapp of Biala, and the Government of Wilna shall be shipped from Danzig to the German frontier at one-half rate and without charge from the German-Polish frontier to its destination in Poland or the Etapp.

The above guarantees are given by the General Government of Poland,

THE GOVERNMENT OF WILNA

THE GOVERNMENT OF BIALA ETAPP

OBERLBUTNANT SCHALL

Witness: F. C. WALCOTT

DOCUMENT NO. 448

Note

on conditions of industry in the Kingdom of Poland under German occupation

WARSAW, January 1916

There are three principal industrial centers in Poland, namely: Lodz, with about 300,000 workmen, Warsaw with about 250,000, and the Dabrowa mining district with Czestochowa about 200,000; of these 750,000 men and women, about 350,000 worked in the large factories, 400,000 in the smaller ones and at home. With an average family of three for every workingman, it means over two million people now almost entirely destitute.

The sudden outbreak of war brought the Polish industry to a complete standstill; but shortly afterwards the offices of the Warsaw Branch of the State Bank being reopened and a certain amount of goods traffic being re-established, our factories reopened to work.

Some branches of the industry such as metallurgic and tanning works, having on books orders of the Russian military authorities, and enjoying on this account certain facilities, have even increased their normal production.

Generally speaking, our industry has shown a great ability to adapt itself to the changed conditions of production during the war and, successfully overcoming a lack of fuel and great difficulties in traffic, employed in December 1914 in Warsaw 55 per cent of the normal number of workmen, which figure, constantly increasing, reached in July 1915, 75 per cent of the normal employment.

In Czestochowa, which the German Army occupied at the beginning of the war, and in Lodz, occupied with a short interval since the beginning of October 1914, the industry came to a complete standstill. Exceptionally only, and for short periods, have single factories in order to assist their workmen, employed for a few days a week certain classes of them.

The whole industry of the Dabrowa district is nearly out of work, with the exception of coal mines, which reopened their activity after having set in a working condition their traction plants, which the German Army had destroyed in November 1914.

Upon the occupation of Warsaw and of the rest of Poland by the German Army, similar conditions, as mentioned above for Lodz and the Dabrowa district, began to extend over the whole industry.

In the first place, we must mention, that a certain number of large factories have been destroyed by the retreating Russian Army; others have been transported to

Russia. Specially metallurgy suffered herefrom, particularly factories having orders for the Russian Government, the chemical branch, and many others, such as the probably greatest in Europe for the textile industry, the textile manufacture of Zyrardow.

The remaining factories have lost the possibility of selling their articles to Russia, which for many branches of industry has been the principle outlet, as well as to Lithuania and to the country, because of interruption and difficulties of goods, and passenger traffic, and postal communication. It should not be forgotten that permissions for travel are subject to certain difficulties.

On the other hand, the industry remained quite without any supply of raw materials and coal. The supply of coal especially remained until the end of 1915 much below the indispensable private needs of the population, charity and municipal institutions, not to mention industry.

The stocks of raw materials, which at the time of the occupation of Warsaw were at factories and stores, have been sequestered by the German authorities.

In the Dabrowa districts, Czestochowa and Lodz, enormous quantities of raw materials and unfinished products have been sequestered and carried away. Up to the present it is not known at what prices and at what time the payment will be made. In Warsaw, on the contrary, all sequestered goods are bought by a special "Society for purchase of war raw materials" at theoretical prices fixed in free contracts. In fact, these prices are imposed beforehand and with a heavy loss to the industry. People not willing to sell at these prices are running the risk of having their goods sequestered on the same conditions as in Lodz.

The release of raw materials indispensable for production, even from the stocks of the factory, is granted with difficulties only, and in quantities not sufficient; in some cases the German authorities have based their refusal of release of raw materials upon the fact that the factory would employ workmen, such specially trained as are lacking in Germany (metal-branch). It has been forbidden to manufacturers in Lodz to give any help to the men, even to their women and children, as long as the workmen belonging to the family and able to work, have not given their consent to go to work in Germany.

The policy of the occupying authorities can be summed up as follows: all raw materials and unfinished products from Poland must be used up by the German industry; the live power of the factories, their workmen, must be transported to Germany.

As our workmen are unwilling to go to Germany, they must be compelled to by misery at home, through full stoppage of all work. All articles in the Polish press regarding this question are systematically crossed by the censor.

The Association of Manufacturers has in reply to a memorial handed on the 21st September 1915 to the Governor-General received an answer, the conclusion of which runs as follows:

"In conclusion the Governor General is of the opinion that it is wrong and injurious to industry to endeavor to bring it into activity during the war and before the re-establishment of free commerce and traffic and before the demand for articles is forthcoming. He is rather of the opinion that the re-establishment of an industrial life should be left to the development of general conditions of the war, political and economic, and that no interference of the authorities should at present take place."

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 449

Memorandum, (321)
by HOOVER, proposing the basis on which relief to Poland could be undertaken

LONDON, 21 February 1916

There are approximately 15,000,000 people in the German occupied eastern area, including Russian Poland and Western Russia. Of this population between 3,500,000, and 4,000,000 people are concentrated in, or in the immediate neighborhood of the cities of Warsaw, Lodz, Tchenstochova [Czestochowa], Vilna, Kovno, and Biala Etappe.

In order to handle the problem of provisioning from a practical point of view and at the same time with proper safeguard to all the international phases of the matter, the following basis is proposed:

1. The American Commission shall undertake the revictualling of the above-mentioned cities only.

The German Government to undertake to furnish to the cities above mentioned a supply which will cover a ration of 400 grams of potatoes per diem per capita, 10 grams of salt per diem per capita, 10 grams of sugar per diem per capita, and 3 grams of tea per diem per capita.

The American Commission to import cereals to an amount which will afford a ration of 340 grams per diem per capita of wheat, or beans, peas, rice, maize, also, with 40 grams of fats per diem per capita, and a moderate amount of condensed milk for children.

2. That the German Government shall undertake to revictual the whole of the balance of the population in the occupied territory.
3. The German Government will undertake to devise financial means for the provision of gold exchange abroad to pay for the foodstuffs purchased by the American Commission. The Allies to give necessary permits for these financial operations by the Commission.
4. The German Government will make the necessary arrangements to turn over to the Commission sufficient German shipping to do the entire transportation from North America or other places to Danzig.
5. The revictualing to last only until October 1, at which time the new harvest will take care of the entire civilian population.
6. The German Government to undertake that there shall be no interference with the imported foodstuffs; that they shall be consumed absolutely by the native civilian population; that the American Commission will be furnished every facility for the control of the entire revictualing of the cities in question, including the German contribution to the ration.
7. In order to carry out the above it will be necessary to import approximately 40,000 tons of foodstuffs per month. It is proposed that such portion of these foodstuffs as goes to the well-to-do population should be sold, and in this particular the German Government is prepared to give free railway transport over the occupied areas and one-half railway rates over the German State Railroads. It is proposed to provision the destitute without cost.

DOCUMENT NO. 450

Paraphrase of a telegram,
LANSING TO PACE, regarding the interest in America in Polish relief

WASHINGTON, 26 February 1916

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

There is here a strong feeling of sympathy for the destitute of Poland and a demand which is increasing that relief should be sent to them. The Department advises to all inquiries that Hoover is endeavoring now to obtain the necessary permission to extend over Poland organization of the Belgian Relief Commission. Advise Sir Edward Grey, if you see no objection, of the anxiety of large numbers of American citizens and of their wishes to send assistance to Poland. Refer to Department's 2926 of the 23d and request Hoover to make prompt reply.

LANSING

DOCUMENT NO. 451

Letter,
HOOVER TO GERARD, concerning the proposal for Polish relief presented to the
British Government

LONDON, 24 February 1916

His Excellency, the Hon. James Gerard American Ambassador, Berlin

DEAR MR. GERARD:

POLISH RELIEF

I always approach this practically hopeless subject with feelings of depression. Mr. Walcott has arrived here and we have both been extremely active in English Government circles, endeavoring to get something done. It seems almost hopeless, but we do not intend to give up as long as there is an atom of hope.

I enclose herewith a memorandum which we got up by way of basis of discussion with the English Government. Since writing you we decided that it was quite useless to suggest that a preliminary step should be taken by the Germans apropos of Sir Edward Grey's letter, but that we must try to push the English Government to an undertaking that if we could get something in the nature of this memorandum from the Germans they would pledge themselves in advance to accept it.

I hope no one will think that we have displayed any lack of energy in this matter. I have myself interviewed fully fifty people of importance----officials and other personalities---in fact my agitation of the matter has got me into some trouble with regard to Belgian relief, as it is obvious that the blockade wing of the English Government does not want this matter agitated. On the other hand, there are certain members of the Cabinet who are favorable and it seems to me that it wants a decent man to peg away at it with all his abilities.

So far as the question of chairmanship is concerned, I have no desires in the matter. I think it would be fine for you to be chairman and if it is desired that my present body of operators should take the matter in hand I should be delighted to have the title of General Manager or any other, so long as I could be assured of your permanent support.

Our friends in America are also agitating strongly in the whole of this matter, and it is possible that the pressure of American opinion may yet have some effect.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER,
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 452

Letter,
HOOVER TO COUNT DE BENCKENDORFF, Russian Ambassador at London,
requesting that the Polish relief proposal be taken up with the Russian Government

LONDON, 1 March 1916

His Excellency Count de Benckendorff Russian Ambassador, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

With respect to my call at the request of Ambassador Page, I enclose herewith:

1. Memorandum of plan of organization which we propose for the relief of the population.
2. Recent report by Mr. Walcott of the Rockefeller Foundation.
3. Report by Dr. Kellogg of our staff.
4. Petition which we have received from certain Warsaw committees.

The plan which is enclosed has been informally submitted to Sir Edward Grey and is under consideration at the present moment. You will notice thereby that the method we are proposing involves limiting our relief to urban and refugee population and imposing upon the Germans not only a contribution of actual foodstuffs to these urban populations, but further imposing upon them the entire sustenance of the agricultural population.

Furthermore, it provides that the Germans shall pay the expenses of our imports and furnish ships.

You will realize that, looking at it purely from the point of view of the German interest, they must maintain alive the agricultural population in order that the fields may be planted for the forthcoming harvest, at which time the relief is to absolutely come to an end, i.e., October 1, 1916.

For the Germans to take care of the agricultural population and make a contribution to the foodstuffs that we use for the urban people, it will be absolutely necessary for the Germans to import from Germany large amounts of foodstuffs and thus more than cover the points raised by the Allied Governments as to the abstraction and absorption of the native food supply in Poland.

You are fully aware that the situation is one of the utmost gravity, and that every day is of importance in the maintenance of such vast numbers of human lives. Under the inspiration of your suggestion that you might, if agreeable to Sir Edward Grey, take the matter up by cable with the Russian Government, I hope you will not resent my suggestion that it might be discussed at length with them by cable, instead of awaiting instructions through the post.

I am, Your Excellency

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER,
Chairman

The British reply to Hoover's in memorandum of the 21st February was finally delivered on the 10th May. The Allies accepted the proposal in principle, but with certain conditions, the most important of which were that Austria-Hungary make the same commitments as Germany in respect to Polish relief and further that the Governments of Germany and the Dual Monarchy make similar guarantees in respect to Serbia,⁽³²²⁾ Albania, and Montenegro, which had been conquered by the armies of the Central Powers in the last months of 1915 and in January and February 1916. Either of these conditions was probably sufficient to wreck the relief project, and at best they meant long, and difficult negotiations. The present negotiations had moved so slowly that it was no longer possible, as originally planned, to bring food from America to Poland on German ships. Hoover, therefore, proposed to ask the Swedish Government to permit the export of supplies for the immediate relief of Poland. The Foreign Office vetoed this scheme, being unwilling, apparently, to give Sweden any further cause to ask for an increase in imports through the British blockade.

As had been anticipated, the Germans refused to accept the British conditions with regard to that part of Poland under Austrian administration, and with regard to Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro. Gerard, however, made a counter proposal, to which the Germans were agreeable. This counter proposal was promptly rejected by the Foreign Office, which still insisted on the conditions of the earlier note.

DOCUMENT NO. 453

Extract of memorandum,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO PAGE, replying to the proposal made by Hoover
relative to Polish relief

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
10 May 1916

On the 21st February last the United States Ambassador communicated to Sir E. Grey a memorandum([323](#)) embodying the following proposals---for affording relief to Poland:

.....

His Majesty's Government at once referred the question of principle involved in these proposals to the Russian Government, who have now accepted it. His Majesty's Government are accordingly prepared to agree to the immediate inauguration of the above arrangement, provided that the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments are prepared to give certain assurances. In assenting in principle to the grant of relief to a territory occupied by the enemy, in spite of the statements recently published by the German authorities that they are in reality able to relieve the Polish population unaided, His Majesty's Government feel that they have made a concession in return for which they have a right to demand that their enemies shall now at length place beyond doubt their intentions towards the populations of occupied territories whose treatment by them in the past has been so much at variance with the responsibilities of civilised warfare and the dictates of humanity. The assurances required are as follows:

1. The scheme submitted by the United States Ambassador relates only to that part of Russian Poland at present in the occupation of the German forces. His Majesty's Government consider it essential that any system of Polish relief should apply to Russian Poland as a whole, and they cannot recognise the existing division into two spheres, occupied respectively by German and Austro-Hungarian troops. There must be a definite undertaking by the two Governments that the export from the whole of Russian Poland of all foodstuffs, native or imported, will be absolutely prohibited, and that any excess over domestic needs which may exist in the southern part under Austrian administration (which is understood to be self-supporting) will be employed exclusively for the provisioning of Northern Poland, whether such foodstuffs are utilised to supply the towns under the care of the Relief Commission or the country districts to be revictualled by the German Government.

2. It is understood from a document([324](#)) which has been communicated to His Majesty's Government by Mr. Walcott of the Rockefeller Foundation, and of which a copy is annexed to this memorandum, that the German authorities in Northern

Poland undertake that all food supplies originating in Poland shall be used exclusively for the civil population and the constabulary. His Majesty's Government cannot admit that the constabulary should be allowed to use native foodstuffs which have subsequently to be replaced by supplies imported by the Relief Commission. They must therefore request that in this respect the constabulary should be placed on the same footing as the occupying army.

3. From the same document it appears that the German authorities wish to export from Poland any excess of the potato supply. As a result of the experience which they have gained in connection with Belgian relief, His Majesty's Government are most reluctant to agree to the exportation from Russian Poland of so-called excess supplies, since the question of what constitutes an excess is largely a matter of opinion. Nevertheless, in order not to prolong the negotiations, His Majesty's Government agree to the export of potatoes at such times and so long as, in the opinion of the neutral relief authorities, an excess supply in fact exists over and above the requirements of the whole of Russian Poland.

4. The German vessels mentioned under paragraph 4 of Mr. Page's proposal must fly a neutral flag, be under the sole control of a neutral body to be agreed upon, be manned by neutrals, and be run entirely at the expense of the German authorities.

5. It should be understood that the responsibility of the German Government is not ended by the supply of the partial ration mentioned in the above scheme of relief. His Majesty's Government cannot undertake to allow the Relief Commission to import more than a minimum supplementary ration over and above the maximum which the enemy are in a position to supply at any given time.

6. The neutral relief authorities in Poland must enjoy absolutely free and unfettered facilities for the communication to their London office of any data connected with their work. They must have every facility to satisfy themselves of the manner in which the undertakings of the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments are being carried out in all parts of Poland. It is, of course, understood that the "German relief officer for the civil population" mentioned in the enclosed memorandum before alluded to shall have no control of any kind over and shall in no wise interfere with the complete discretion of the American Commission or its representatives.

7. The German and Austro-Hungarian Governments should undertake, as a part of the present arrangements, adequately to supply and care for the populations of Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro, all of which countries are now being reduced to a state of starvation through the removal, or the use by the occupying forces, of the supplies of native foodstuffs. The carrying out of this undertaking should be under the supervision of neutral subjects or organisations in those countries.

His Majesty's Government trust that the above proposals, which represent merely the renouncement of indefensible practices and assurances for the due respect of the lives and rights of the population of occupied territories in the future, will meet with the prompt acceptance of the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments, so that the necessary preliminary arrangements may be made without delay.

DOCUMENT NO. 454

Letter,

HOOVER TO PAGE, calling attention to the slow progress of negotiations, the shortness of time remaining, and suggesting securing the co-operation of the Swedish Government([325](#))

LONDON, 12 May 1916

*His Excellency, the Hon. W. H. Page
American Ambassador, London*

DEAR MR. PAGE:

We have had an opportunity of examining the memorandum on Polish relief which you received from the British Government yesterday. On this business there is no actual relief action for us to take until it has been submitted to the German Government and their impressions on the matter ascertained.

In the meantime we think it is desirable to point out that five months have gone by since Polish relief was proposed by us and three months since this plan was formulated, that this scheme implies a complete termination on the 1st October and that, therefore, there only remains four and a half months from today in which to operate. Assuming we get at once the undertakings from the German Government in accordance with the British Government demand, the time involved in securing and transferring the German ships, their equipment and return loaded to Baltic ports would probably absorb fully three months. It appears to us, therefore, that oversea food supplies cannot be brought into Poland in consequential amounts during the period yet remaining.

The only hope of the immediate relief of Poland exists in the co-operation of the Swedish Government. If it were agreeable to the British Government to make arrangements for the export of supplies from Sweden it might be possible to secure some immediate relief. I am, therefore, asking Mr. Warwick Greene to go to Stockholm to examine the position there. In any event, nothing tangible may be done until the German portion of the contract is negotiated, with regard to which we are not optimistic.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 455

Letter,

GREY TO PAGE, vetoing any request to the Swedish Government for assistance in relief of Poland

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

23 May 1916

DEAR MR. PAGE:

With reference to your letter of May 12th in which you suggest that the Swedish Government should be asked to supply immediate relief to Poland as soon as the German and Austrian Governments agree to the conditions laid down by us, I would like to say that it appears to be unnecessary to ask for any active assistance from the Swedish Government, and there are reasons of a general political kind which make us particularly anxious to avoid it.

We shall, of course, have no objection to the Relief Commission importing into Poland any foodstuffs which they may be able to obtain in Scandinavia as soon as the scheme actually comes into force, and no doubt the Swedish Government would be prepared to give permits for the export of such foodstuffs from Sweden, if such are required. It would, however, be undesirable that the Relief Commission should call upon the Swedish Government for any more positive assistance than this issue of licences.

I should like to add that it would in the opinion of the Allied Governments be far preferable if supplies were obtained and transported from Roumania. This would among other things have the advantage of avoiding any question of replacing in the country of export the supplies despatched to Poland, since there are abundant stocks of grain in Roumania which are not required by the native populations and which in fact it is to the direct advantage of that country to export.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 456

Telegram,
GERARD TO PAGE, reporting German refusal of British terms and offering a counter proposal([326](#))

BERLIN, 1 June 1916

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

Have had conference today with Geheimrat Lewald representing an interior department, Geheimrat Grunewald, representing Foreign office, Prince Lubecki of Polish Committee, and Donovan and Stoever of Rockefeller Commission. Germany cannot accept the proposition as made by England because:

First. Germany can contract only as to Polish territory in her own control. However, in my opinion there is no doubt but arrangement similar to one outlined below can be made with Austria. Please note that all towns named are in territory occupied by Germany.

Second. Germany cannot make question of relief of Poland dependent on Germany and Austria relieving Servia, Montenegro, and Albania, since Germany is not in control of these countries. Germany, however, will use its good offices for the establishment of similar relief work in these countries.

I think an arrangement on the following lines can be made:

First. The arrangement to apply to all Polish territory occupied by Germany commencing fifty kilometers back of firing line.

Second. Germany will give to inhabitants of cities to be relieved the ration proposed.

Third. Germany will undertake the remainder of population outside will be fed.

Fourth. It is necessary that occupying or police army of about 150,000 men be fed on food bought in Poland. These troops are sometimes ten or fifteen in a village and difficulties of transport make this necessary.

Fifth. Proposition as to ships accepted.

Sixth. Germany will arrange to pay for goods wherever bought and their transport.

Seventh. Germany agrees to proposition that excess potatoes shall be exported only when Commission agrees and that no food is be exported from Poland and used except as above stated.

Provisions as to details of control can be arranged. Germany is willing to accept control as stated in contract signed by Geheimrat Lewald, Doctor Bicknell, and me in April 1915. Will get details as to numbers of occupying police army and how many in towns and how many in country.

GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 457

Letter,
GREY TO PAGE, declining to accept the German proposals([327](#))

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
15 June 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of June 2nd in which you are good enough to communicate the reply received from the German Government to the proposals of His Majesty's Government for the relief of Poland.

The phrase somewhat loosely used in this reply as to the arrangement being made "to apply to all Polish territory occupied by Germany commencing fifty kilometres back of the firing line" is, I suppose, intended to allude only to the responsibility assumed by the German Government to feed this area, and does not imply an attempt on the part of the German Government to extend the importations of foodstuffs to be made by the American Commission to any other districts but the cities specified in the original proposal which you handed to me, and in my reply. His Majesty's Government could not, of course, for a moment consider importations to other destinations besides those towns; but I do not know whether His Majesty's Government are to understand that the German Government intend to allow the population within fifty kilometres of the firing line to starve.

I do not think it is necessary, at this point in the discussions, to enter into any detailed analysis of the German reply, and I will confine myself to the two points of primary importance raised in it.

The German Government disclaims any responsibility for the relief of Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania on the ground that it is the Austro-Hungarian Government which is in control of those countries. I cannot accept this disclaimer, knowing to what extent the policy of the Central Empires is controlled by the German Government and knowing it is therefore not a question of the German Government exerting its "good offices" with the Austro-Hungarian Government, but of the two Governments jointly assuming a responsibility towards the

population whose territory has been invaded by their joint armies. Nothing short of a binding engagement of this kind, which the Central Powers are perfectly able to give, can satisfy the Governments of the Allies, who in this matter are only asking for the same measure of joint action on the part of their enemies which they themselves have already taken in their consultations and their decision upon this question of Polish relief.

The second point is, to my mind, of even greater importance. The German Government disclaims responsibility for the Polish territory occupied by Austria on the ground that that territory is not within the sphere of Germany's control. The Governments of the Allies regard Poland as a whole and they cannot allow the fate of its population and the question of life and death whether that population shall or shall not die of hunger, to be parcelled out between Germany and Austria, each country claiming a part of Poland in connection with their political schemes for the future, and each disclaiming responsibility for the part occupied by the other. Until there is agreement between the Governments of the Central Empires to throw the resources of the whole country into one, and to give to the Poles, as Poles, the produce of the soil of their own country, the Governments of the Allies cannot move. This is a question of principle, but even were it not so, the conduct of the Austro-Hungarian Government, as it is developing at the present moment in Southern Poland, would make it impossible for His Majesty's government to leave that region out of account in the scheme of relief. I annex hereto a copy of an Order issued by the Austrian Governor-General of Lublin which throws sufficient light on the methods of coercion and the intentions of exploitation which the Austrian Government are employing and cherishing.

For the rest, we must adhere to our original demands, which I still believe would be accepted as reasonable if the German and Austrian Governments were sincere, and I can only trust that the efforts of the United States representatives in enemy countries and of the representatives of the American Relief organisations will soon elicit a more satisfactory reply from the Governments of the Central Empires.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

LUBLIN, 26 April 1916

The Royal and Imperial Military Governor-General of Lublin has published the following announcement:

In May when the spring work in the fields will be practically completed, the military administration will begin work, within the territory administered by it, on

the building of roads and on the Vistula. Numerous labourers will be used for this purpose. The military administration will summon them from among the local population, and form them into labour detachments, each of which will be employed as far as possible within its own village or its neighborhood. It will, however, be impossible to avoid the employment of some detachments in other districts of the Government than their own. It is, however, to be clearly understood that all labour detachments will be used exclusively within the territory of the Government of Poland in Austro-Hungarian occupation. As need may arise, all men fit for work will be called upon. The only exception will be those to whom the district authorities may grant exemption in consideration of their profession or for other weighty reasons, in accordance with instructions issued to them. In case of need also women will be employed, provided they come forward of their free will. The workmen will be properly paid and fed.

The attention of the population is hereby drawn in advance to the forthcoming order, and to its purpose, so that no one should give credence to false rumours. As work is concerned which will be of considerable economic advantage to the entire country and in connection with which each particular workman will find a sufficient livelihood to maintain himself and his family, the military administration expects that all men fit for work will apply in their own well-understood interest for inclusion in the labour detachments, and will in that way avoid compulsory orders. The intended works are unavoidably necessary from the military point of view, and must be carried out in any case. The military administration hopes that it will not be necessary to use compulsion.

(For the Governor-General)

DIETRICHSTEIN
Major General

[Translation]

3. Subsequent Polish Relief Measures, November 1917

The British letter of the 15th June 1916 presaged the final breakdown of the negotiations. It was, of course, too late to put the original plan into effect before the harvest. Moreover, important political developments had significantly changed the whole Polish problem. The shortage of man power which had produced deportations and forced labor in Belgium led the Germans to greater lengths in Poland. Along with deportations of Polish workers to Westphalia, a plan was evolved to recruit a Polish army to be used by the Central Powers. Nominally this army was to represent the independent Poland which Germany and Austria, after months of wrangling, had agreed to establish on the fragment of Polish territory

occupied by the Germans. The German-Austrian declaration respecting independent Poland was not made until the 5th November 1916, and in the meantime two further efforts were made in behalf of the Poles. On the 7th July the State Department appealed(328). to the belligerents "in the name and interests of humanity," and President Wilson on the 20th July sent personal letters to the King of England, the President of France, and the Emperors of Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, asking for a fresh consideration of the project and pledging the cooperation of the people of the United States. These appeals were in vain. There were no concessions in the replies of the British and German Governments, but only arguments to saddle each other with the responsibility for the failure of Polish relief.

DOCUMENT NO. 458

Communication,
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, appealing to all belligerent governments to make concessions necessary to permit relief of Poland

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON
8 July 1916

Mr. Page to Sir Edward Grey

The United States Government, at the request of the various belligerent Powers, has been acting for many months as an intermediary in the negotiations between the belligerents relative to a proposed agreement as to the terms under which relief supplies may be introduced into Poland and distributed therein.

Since, however, all the negotiations have so far failed to result in any agreement which could bring about the desired result, although all the countries interested have manifested a willingness to permit relief supplies to be sent to Poland under certain specified conditions, the Government of the United States, therefore, in the name and interests of humanity, now appeals to all the belligerent Governments to consider whether it is not possible for the Powers on each side to make such mutual concessions in the terms proposed by them for the regulation of shipments of relief supplies into Poland as will make it possible for an agreement to be reached under which relief can be given to the suffering inhabitants of Poland.

DOCUMENT NO. 459

Letter,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO PAGE, stating conditions required by the British

Government for relief in all occupied territories, including Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania, as well as Belgium, Northern France, and Poland

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
26 July 1916

His Excellency the Hon. W. H. Page

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Excellency's communication of July 8, in which you are good enough to lay before His Majesty's Government an appeal to all belligerent Governments to come to an agreement for the relief of Poland.

His Majesty's Government desire to settle, once and for all, the whole question of importations of foodstuffs into territory in the occupation of the enemy. They therefore make the following final proposal:

If the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments will reserve wholly to the civil populations of the territories which their armies have occupied---viz., Belgium, Northern France, Poland, Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania---the entire produce of the soil, all livestock, and all stocks of food fodder, or fertilisers in those territories; if they will admit to these territories neutrals selected by the President of the United States with full powers to control the distribution of food to the whole population and to transfer, when necessary and possible, from one territory to another surplus stock existing in the one and lacking in the other; and if the President of the United States will undertake the selection of these neutral agents, His Majesty's Government will on their part give them every assistance in their power and will admit into such territories any imported food supplies necessary to supplement native stocks and to afford to the populations a fair subsistence ration, so long as they are satisfied that their enemies are scrupulously observing their part of the agreement.

If this offer is refused, or if the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments do not reply before the harvest in the occupied territory begins to be gathered but continue to refrain from stating officially, for the information of the Allied Governments, their exact attitude in regard to these questions of relief, His Majesty's Government will hold them responsible, and will exact from them such reparation as can be secured by the Allied arms or enforced by the public opinion of the neutral world, for every civilian life lost through insufficient nourishment in every territory occupied by the armies of the Central Powers.

It is obvious that if this proposed scheme is to be put into operation successfully no time must be lost. The new harvest will shortly be gathered, and for the plan to be

of any advantage to the populations of the occupied territories the fruits of the harvest must be placed in neutral control before they have been appropriated for the use of subjects of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration, Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant

(For the Secretary of State)

(Signed) W. LANGLEY

DOCUMENT NO. 460

Letter,
HUGH GIBSON, SECRETARY AMERICAN EMBASSY IN LONDON, TO W.
B. POLAND OF THE C.R.B., enclosing German reply to British terms for relief in
Poland as forwarded by Ambassador Gerard

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA LONDON,
10 August 1916

W. B. Poland, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR MR. POLAND:

On July 29th the Ambassador at Berlin telegraphed us the following translation of a note received from the German Foreign Office in regard to the feeding of occupied territories:

"From the very beginning the Imperial Government declared its readiness to offer its assistance in order that the distress apparent in those parts of Russia that are occupied by German troops and systematically wasted and deprived of all victuals for the use of the remaining inhabitants by the retreating Russian hosts be eased by the relief work of the United States of America, which is organized on such a great scale. The Imperial Government has particularly offered all guarantees consistent with the requirements of war that the imported foodstuffs will only serve the needs of the population of the territory occupied. Accordingly the American relief might have been realized several months ago with the same provisions as in Northern France, had not the Government of Great Britain prevented its accomplishment by clinging to its unfounded and impracticable conditions. In this way it has become practically impossible to convey a considerable amount of foodstuffs from America to Poland by the expiration of the term set, as the end of the relief work is October first. Accordingly further negotiations are devoid of purpose. But on the other hand,

thanks to the intense culture of the land effected by the Imperial Government by using all the means available and every effort possible in the occupied territory, and owing to the favorable harvest prospects, a relief action after October first, 1916, can apparently be dispensed with. The fact that the population of Poland and Lithuania will, to some extent, suffer until the new crop is lodged and later on will sometimes have to put up with straitened circumstances can therefore not be laid to the blame of the Imperial Government but to that of Great Britain."

I enclose herewith for your information copy of a note from the British Foreign Office in reply to the foregoing.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) HUGH GIBSON

DOCUMENT NO. 461

Letter,

FOREIGN OFFICE TO MR. LAUGHLIN, UNITED STATES CHARGÉ
D'AFFAIRES IN LONDON, stating that in view of the German attitude further negotiations by the British Government are useless

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

7 August 1916

SIR:

I have the honour to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of Mr. Page's communication of July 31st in which His Excellency was good enough to convey the reply of the German Government to the offer of the Allied Governments with regard to the relief of occupied territories.

I will not comment on the vagueness or the inaccuracies of this reply, such, for instance, as the baseless statement that it would be impossible to import any foodstuffs into Poland before October 1. Such controversy would, I feel, be useless.

His Majesty's Government now have before them the present statement of the German Government in regard to Northern Poland, and the statement of the Austro-Hungarian Government in regard to Serbia which I had the honour to bring to the attention of the United States Government in my note of July 20. Both statements are diametrically opposed to the assertions of those who submit constant appeals to the Allied Governments on behalf of these occupied territories.

His Majesty's Government note that in the opinion of the German Government, which may be now regarded as in control of Austria-Hungary also, further negotiations are devoid of purpose. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government feel that they can do no more and they must leave it to the Government of the United States to take such further steps, if any, as they shall think right and useful.

I have the honour to be, with high consideration, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant

(For the Secretary of State)

(Signed) W. LANGLEY

The tone and content of these British and German notes left no doubt about the futility of further efforts along this line. Within a few months the unrestricted U-boat campaign, the Russian Revolution, and the declaration of war by the United States so transformed the political situation that there was never again any question of reviving the neutral relief project. This, of course, did not mean that the Poles of the Congress Kingdom no longer were in need. The harvest of 1916 had improved conditions somewhat, rendering the import of large supplies from abroad less necessary, but there was still great suffering. Polish factories had either been dismantled by the Germans or forced to close their doors for lack of raw materials; thousands were unemployed and without funds to buy the food which the harvest made available. The Polish and Jewish relief societies in America, in order to aid their kinsmen, made great efforts to increase their contributions for transmission to the local relief committees in Poland. They very soon encountered difficulties, for the Allied blockade not only stopped the flow of food into territories controlled by the enemy, but it also rigorously restricted the movement of funds. The financial life of Poland had been merged with that of Germany, and hence any considerable importation of dollars into Poland would strengthen the German exchange. In view of the suffering, however, the British had permitted limited relief remittances to go through to Warsaw.⁽³²⁹⁾ After the United States entered the war, the U.S. War Trade Board, which handled such matters, followed a similar policy, permitting certain firms and relief societies to transmit limited relief funds to territories occupied by the enemy.

In the autumn of 1917 the societies interested in relief in, Poland desired to transfer very considerable sums to Warsaw. In order to overcome the objections of the Allied Blockade authorities the C.R.B. endeavored to bring the British and Germans to consent to the transmission of these funds through the Commercial Exchange Department of the Commission.⁽³³⁰⁾ By this arrangement the Polish

relief funds were to be translated into equivalent marks through the Commission's food imports into Belgium. The marks were then to be transferred to Warsaw for distribution by the local relief committees. In this way relief contributions could be sent from America to Warsaw without bolstering the German exchange, which the Allies wished to prevent, and at the same time the Commission would be furnished with additional funds for its operation. This latter point was important to the C.R.B., for at this time its funds available for necessary European disbursements were exhausted.(331)

This plan, which would have been of great benefit to both Polish and Belgian relief, failed, as the following documents indicate, because the British blockade officials feared it might benefit the Germans, while the Germans feared it would not.

Although the Commission in these long negotiations was unable to bring the belligerents to agree to the establishment of Polish relief, the effort was not without benefit to the Polish cause. The publicity given to the negotiations and the appeal to world opinion promoted by the Commission and the Polish societies in America created an interest in and a sympathy for the Polish people which had an enormous influence in bringing about a solution of the Polish question along the lines of Polish aspirations.(332)

DOCUMENT NO. 462

Letter,
POLAND TO HOOVER, regarding British objections to relief remittances to
Warsaw

LONDON, 9 November 1917

H. C. Hoover, Esq. Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR HOOVER:

I have received your several cables in regard to forwarding Polish Relief Funds to Warsaw through the medium of food importations into Belgium. Upon the receipt of the first one I cabled Rotterdam, explaining the proposition and asking them to obtain the consent of the German authorities to the procedure; also the acquiescence of the Dutch Minister, and also to obtain from Francqui his statement that there would be funds available to carry on the operation in German marks in Belgium. As a matter of fact, I think there is no question whatever about these funds, but we have not heard a word in answer to our cable, despite its urgent nature and a hurry-up that has been sent since. There seem to be a great many political considerations connected with the whole matter. Upon receipt of your first

cable, as a matter of form I inquired of the British Foreign Office if the proposal had their approval. I attach copy of reply from the Foreign Office and other correspondence in the matter.

I have been in communication with Mr. Beal of the Embassy, who is appointed on the Committee referred to by Mr. Carr. Mr. Beal advised me confidentially that there is a standing committee on the Financial Blockade of Germany which has been considering this subject of funds being sent into Poland. At present funds are sent over to Holland where pounds are transformed into guilders. The Dutch banks then buy German marks. These funds are then transferred through the German postoffice, usually at Hamburg, and by this means are delivered to various Polish relief committees in Poland. After some time, frequently several months, receipts are returned, or, where the funds have not been delivered, the money itself is returned, so that on the face of it there appears to be a fairly good control. On the other hand, I am advised that most of these receipts are merely marked with a cross and there is great doubt in the minds of the Financial Blockade Committee whether the money is in fact delivered properly. The most important point, however, is that there seems to be no check upon the exchange. The Polish peasantry will accept only Polish paper roubles. These, it is understood, are turned out in any quantity as required, and dependent upon the capacity of printing presses. Some of the members of the Committee have expressed the belief that Germany gets from one-half to three-fourths of all the money sent in in this way. Last year the small contributions amounted to between £300,000 and £500,000.

I pointed out to Mr. Beal and he will lay a memorandum, which I have prepared, before his Committee, showing that the only way at present available for sending this relief into Poland without bolstering exchange value of German marks is through the food contributions sent into Belgium and transferred in Belgium into German marks and then transferred under the control of the neutral Dutch Government directly to the Warsaw Committee, where it matters not into what currency it is then converted. A memorandum will be drawn up along these lines today which I trust may be useful although I note you can make arrangements with the British Government in New York.

The matter of exchange to be used is one that causes me some anxiety. I presume the Comité National will not want to make an actual loss on this transaction, which will mean that the standard rate of 25.40 would have to be used. I notice you twice refer to a favorable exchange rate being given. Will you not outline by cable on receipt of this letter just what your ideas of appropriate exchange would be.

Another argument brought up by the Finance Blockade Committee is that the Germans make a practice of taxing the Poles just as soon as they find they have any money to pay taxes with and in this way immediately collect everything in the way of cash that is sent in. They also advance the argument that, as the peasantry are working directly for Germany, providing assistance of this kind is almost

equivalent to assisting the Germans with money. These are arguments with which you are already familiar.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 463

Letter,

SIR ADAM BLOCK TO BOYLSTON BEAL, stating the objections to the transmission of funds to Warsaw by the C.R.B. or otherwise

LONDON, 16 November 1917

Boylston Beal, Esq. Embassy of the United States of America London

DEAR MR. BEAL:

In reply to your letter of 13th November respecting relief in Poland, my opinion is as follows:

The relief is, I take it, primarily intended for Poland, and would in the ordinary course take the shape of a remittance of money.

By sending food to Belgium and selling it there you would not be relieving the destitute, but merely placing food within reach of those who have the wherewithal to pay. Further, by the sale of the food you would obtain a credit in enemy-occupied territory, which can, of course, be transferred to give financial relief to the population of other enemy-occupied territory without having had any *direct* influence on the mark exchange. Indirectly, however, the sending of food must have an effect on the mark exchange as it liberates the country where the food is sent from providing funds for the purchase of food abroad.

Further, would the Germans allow the purchases of foodstuffs being made in German marks?

I must say that, as I stated at the meeting at the Foreign Office the other day, it seems to me very unwise indeed to send money into Poland at this moment whichever way it goes. War is war, and destitution and starvation are the calamities of war. It is praiseworthy to mitigate such calamities, but it is the duty of the Germans to support the populations of the country they occupy. Sending money into Poland merely enables the Germans to prolong the war. In fact, the proposal in

its origin seems to me to be bad. The German is only too delighted that the starving Belgian should pay for his own food sent in from abroad. It impoverishes the Belgian and relieves Germany from the necessity of finding food.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) ADAM BLOCK

DOCUMENT NO. 464

Letter,

VON DER LANCKEN TO VAN VOLLENHOVEN, declining to consent to the transfer of funds to Poland by way of Belgium

BRUSSELS, 15 November 1917

*His Excellency, Mr. Van Vollenhoven
Dutch Minister, Brussels*

SIR:

Referring to your kind letter of October 31, 1917, No. 13015, I have the honor to inform you that I have communicated to the competent authorities the request contained in the above letter, to hand to the Dutch Consul at Warsaw about one and a half million francs, to be transferred to the Benevolent Committee for Poland.

The competent authorities regret very much to be unable to comply with your request, the said transfer being contrary to the monetary interests of Germany. They call your attention to the possibility of transferring values in marks from foreign countries to the occupied territories of Poland, viz., the purchase of marks in neutral countries.

Yours truly

(Signed) VON DER LANCKEN

THE COMMISSION
FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XII

AMERICA IN THE WAR

Preceding chapters have shown how the Allied blockade and German measures of retaliation menaced or curtailed the activities of the Commission. From early 1915, when the siege warfare actually began, there were recurrent crises chiefly attributable to the growing intensity of the economic war. All these, however, were overshadowed by the event of 1917 which retarded and for a time stopped the flow of relief imports and put an end to the neutral status of the Chairman and the personnel of the Commission. This neutral status was the essential condition of the Commission's existence as a body recognized and supported by the belligerents and endowed by them with privileges and immunities which permitted its operations within and across the opposing lines. It was reasonable to assume that this loss of its neutrality would cause either the replacement of the Commission by another body of neutral membership or the discontinuance of relief. It caused neither. The American declaration of war forced the withdrawal of Americans from behind the German lines in Belgium and Northern France, but at the request of the Allies and with the consent of the Germans the external organization of the C.R.B. remained unchanged in status or function. Thus, though its Chairman became the United States Food Administrator and the Allied Supreme Council recognized Belgian and French relief as a "war measure," the Commission did not become a belligerent, but continued its relations with the Germans through the neutral patrons and through its own representative in Belgium and through the Belgian, French, and Spanish-Dutch Committees. The fact that the belligerents strongly desired the C.R.B. to carry on and that it was able to do so is significant of its position as a non-belligerent war-time institution, a position resting on carefully laid foundations and buttressed by the faithful and efficient discharge of great responsibilities.

1. The Diplomatic Crises. May 1915-February 1917

The strained relations between Germany and the United States which followed the sinking of the "Lusitania" in May 1915 presaged a crisis in the life of the Commission of a character entirely different from those which it had previously encountered. The problem for the Commission was to prevent if possible any interruption in the flow of relief to the Belgians and French while the machinery of relief was being reconstructed or adapted to the changed political situation. If the United States declared war, the members of the Commission would no longer be neutrals, they would not be permitted on territory behind the German lines, and it was likely that the Germans would insist not only that the C.R.B. delegates in Belgium be withdrawn but that the Commission's great external organization for the purchase, transport, and delivery of supplies should be replaced by an organization of citizens of a neutral state. This would, of course, mean a fundamental reorganization of the whole relief enterprise.

There was, however, another possibility---that the United States would not immediately declare war, but merely break diplomatic relations. In that case the

members of the Commission would still be neutrals and their remaining in Belgium and Northern France would depend on the German attitude. As for the external organization, a diplomatic break presumably would not immediately force a fundamental change. In order to prepare the C.R.B. representatives in Brussels and Rotterdam for the possible emergency, Hoover on the 13th May 1915 wrote out for them his thoughts on the situation with tentative instructions for the steps to be taken in case the diplomatic break occurred.

DOCUMENT NO. 465

Letter,

HOOVER TO C. A. YOUNG,(333) indicating his anxiety over relations between Germany and America due to the sinking of the "Lusitania," and outlining plans in case Americans would have to withdraw from Belgium

LONDON, 13 May 1915

*Commission for Relief in Belgium
Rotterdam*

DEAR YOUNG:

We are becoming even more anxious over the question of what may arise as the result of the sinking of the "Lusitania" with respect to our work in Belgium, as it is our impression, from what we hear, the American government is likely to take pretty vigorous action, and this, from the present outlook of things, may take the form of withdrawing their diplomatic representatives from German territory, which I assume will include Mr. Whitlock and others from Belgium. The technical withdrawal of an Ambassador is a mark of indignation, but it does not necessarily mean that there is any jeopardy to his nationals remaining in such territory. I shall have to be guided by the various American Ambassadors on this point. If it should happen that we have to withdraw from Belgium, it seems to me there is only one course open to us and that is to appeal to the Dutch Government to co-operate with us in substituting Dutchmen for our staff in Belgium. In other words, that we should ask them to secure for us some Dutch gentleman of character and experience who will take Mr. Crosby's place and who could secure something of a staff to take the place of the American element. In this view, I made an application to the Allies yesterday, to know if this would be a satisfactory arrangement under our guarantees, and I expect a favorable reply from them.

I have been in some quandary as to whether I should not come tonight to Holland, so as to be on the ground myself to co-operate with you in such an arrangement, but for the moment I think I should remain here to keep better in touch with the

developments of the situation than I could from that end. We, however, telegraphed to you yesterday that we thought it desirable to ship as quickly as possible the main requirements in Belgium, i.e., on the old hypothesis that 80,000 tons should be shipped into that country each month.

This is a sort of compromise from what I wrote to you the other day. I do not wish to precipitate any panic by anything that we might do. It is of course possible that this situation may blow over through some diplomatic means, and if we had taken any drastic measures, such as withdrawing our people or precipitately dumping in Belgium, we might have made the situation worse.

When all is said and done, it is my belief that the Germans are so anxious that these people should be fed that they will not interfere with these foodstuffs, and that the necessities of the situation have now grown in their minds to a point where we can rely on this as a measure of protection more than we could initially. As a matter of practical administration the co-operation of the C.R.B. and the Comité National in Belgium make enormously for efficiency; but if all of the C.R.B. people were withdrawn from Belgium the feeding of the Belgians would still go on, although of course on a less satisfactory basis, and it is my feeling that so long as the Germans do not interfere with the foodstuffs the Allies will continue to allow them to filter in.

If it became necessary to reorganize the Commission by recruiting Dutchmen for Belgium, I would not propose to make any alterations either in London, New York, or Rotterdam, but merely to substitute Dutch friends for the Americans now in Belgium. Nor do I believe that under these circumstances it would be necessary to maintain as many Dutchmen as we have Americans, but to rely more largely on the Comité National in the distribution than has hitherto been done. We all recognize that now that the organization is well protected and works like a machine in Belgium, our members have but comparatively little actual administration work to do, but in the main are maintained in Belgium to give assurances as to the guarantees and to give moral support to the Comité National.

It is probable in any event, no matter what happens, that diplomatic pourparlers will employ two or three weeks before the final breaking point arrives. If in the meantime we continue shipments on a rather heavy scale into Belgium we shall have got the local people well stocked up, so that they can stand a shock. Such a program on our part obviously undermines our previous scheme of lighter stocking of the provincial warehouses, but these new situations compel us to guide ourselves the best we can as they arrive. Our one and prime object is to save the Belgian and French people until harvest, and I should be glad to have your own good judgment on all these points freely by telegraph from time to time.

I may telegraph to you, asking you to see Dr. Van Dyke and approach Mr. Loudon for advice on the question of substituting Dutchmen.

I also have the feeling that it would be very desirable if Mr. Crosby could come up to Rotterdam and see this letter and be in a position to co-operate with us in whatever measures we have to take. On the other hand, if it should eventuate that we have to make a quick retreat, it would be most unfortunate if he were out of Belgium for long, thus running the risk of being unable to organize such a retreat. On this point, however, I have a feeling that we should be given the same opportunities that diplomatic staffs have. If it became necessary to substitute Dutchmen, I imagine that we should want the Dutch Government to take up with the Germans the question as to whether the Germans would agree to give to the Dutchmen the same facilities that we have enjoyed and the same undertakings.

Altogether you will see from the above that we are in a state of mixed feelings, but I write to you all complexions and shall depend upon the telegraph to instruct you of our views and of the steps to be taken from moment to moment.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover

The long drawn out "Lusitania" negotiations finally came to an end with no serious reactions on the C.R.B. beyond certain manifestations of resentment against Americans by German officials. The following year⁽³³⁴⁾ the "Sussex" incident again brought a period of strained relations, but Bethmann-Hollweg and the German moderates were still strong enough to delay the adoption of the unrestricted U-boat campaign and a break was averted. A few months later, however, the break came. On the 31st January 1917 Count Bernstorff informed the American Government of the German decision to begin unrestricted U-boat warfare and on the 3rd February diplomatic relations with Germany were broken. Hoover was at this moment in the United States, engaged in financial negotiations made necessary by the inadequacy of the subsidies the Allies were then able to provide.⁽³³⁵⁾ It seemed at first that the diplomatic break would be quickly followed by the declaration of war and by the refusal of the Germans to give immunity to relief ships so long as they were under the direction of Americans. Faced with this prospect and in order to prevent any stoppage in the flow of relief, Hoover advised the Commission's London headquarters that the American delegates should remain at their posts in the occupied territories as long as possible; but if they were forced out by the Germans, arrangements should be made with the Dutch Government to take over the whole responsibility for relief then carried by the C.R.B. Five days later, news came from Belgium that the Germans would no longer permit the C.R.B. delegates to perform their duties in Northern France or the Belgian provinces, but that five or six men might remain in Brussels. Such an arrangement would effectively prevent the Commission from discharging its responsibilities regarding distribution and the fulfilment of guarantees by the

Germans. The C.R.B., therefore, notified the Germans and the Allies that it was compelled to withdraw its entire organization from Belgium and Northern France. The external services of the Commission would be continued until some new arrangement was made.

DOCUMENT NO. 466

Telegram,

LANSING TO PAGE, concerning the feeling of the United States Government relative to the continuation of Belgian relief and quoting Hoover's wishes respecting the American delegates in Belgium and other relief matters

STATE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON

3 February 1917

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON

Regarding Belgian Relief:

Department would be glad if you would express to the British Government the strong feeling of this country and of the Government that the relief of the Belgian and occupied French population must in any event continue, for this country will wish to show no less interest in this great work of humanity than has been shown during the last two years by the British and the French Governments, should it become impossible for the Americans to remain in Belgium and in control.

Hoover considers it desirable that the work of relief should be taken over by the Dutch Government, a transfer which could probably be best negotiated by the Belgian Government and American Minister at The Hague. We have telegraphed Whitlock asking him to remain at his post and asking him to secure from the German authorities, for members of Relief, the treatment of diplomatic and consular staff. Mr. Hoover desires you convey following message to Poland and Kellogg:

"Think it extremely desirable for all members in Belgium to remain at their posts even after the departure of diplomatic and consular staff, if Germans will guarantee their freedom to depart if situation becomes entirely untenable. Wish you to take Mr. Page's advice in all matters and to consult freely with Belgian and British Governments particularly on the following questions: First, if any change in sailing directions of ships afloat, such change, if any, to be issued by British Admiralty; second, whether and by what route ships at present in Rotterdam and Atlantic ports should sail. If new British mine field does not interfere, represent to British

Government strongly desirability of taking route outside war zone at the present time.

"Ask Spanish Ambassador if he will communicate through Brussels and Berlin that as British mine field and necessity to bunker in the United Kingdom and conditions of charter and insurance render Falmouth Channel route the only practicable passage, the Germans should agree at once to respect relief ships on this route and issue passes to this end, and that all departures are held up meantime. Remit us all the money you can lay hands on at once."

LANSING

DOCUMENT NO. 467

Telegram,
HOOVER TO LONDON OFFICE, concerning withdrawal of Americans from Belgium and desirability that entire work be taken over by Dutch Government, this proposal being due to the attitude of the Germans on assurances of immunity of the Commission's shipping if it remained under American direction

WASHINGTON, 6 February 1917

COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, LONDON

It appears to me that situation is developing toward ultimate necessity of withdrawing our men from Belgium. In this case it seems to be absolutely critical that relief should be taken over officially both internally and externally by Dutch Government; that the personnel in Belgium should be comprised of government or army officers, not volunteers, and that the Government should take over buying and transport operations as part of their own existing import operations. There are many reasons for this attitude: First, if we were to recruit a body of volunteers from minor nationalities to replace Americans and continue external operations as at present, the Commission could then exert no real influence upon Germans inside Belgium. It would be simply impossible for us to take responsibility for integrity or loyalty of the actions of such a staff, no proper communication could be carried on and no proper control exerted over distribution, and if we go to war utterly impossible to hold the C.R.B. together abroad, as the whole of its personnel will probably wish to engage for their own country. It is imperative that we should liquidate the C.R.B. as an institution and secure its honorable discharge. On the other hand, if the Dutch Government took over the work officially, the external operations would become a mere extension of their present operations and the situation of routing and protection shipping is in any event identical with their own case. They could easily reaffirm to themselves all North France agreements.

Belgian arrangements are in their joint names already. They would also be under obligation to supply as much local produce as possible and they have strategic position to command respect from the Germans. Of equal importance is that the high esteem in which the Dutch are generally held in the United States and weight of the Government name would enable us to continue efforts in recruiting benevolence and even possible American Government financial support. Owing to existing national sentiment no such support could be commanded for the relief if it were conducted under body of mixed neutrals.... In failure of the Dutch it would be better to hand over the whole operation to Danish Government and in failure of this it would be better that internal operations be taken over by the Swiss Government and for the Belgian Government or Comité National to take over external operations. I wish you present these views to Mr. Page and if you all agree to them strongly impress them upon the British, French, and Belgian Governments. Please confirm.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 468

Telegram,
VILLALOBAR AND FRANQUI TO HOOVER, stating the attitude of the German Government regarding the status of the C.R.B. in Belgium, indicating a change in attitude of the German Government

ROTTERDAM, 11 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Villalobar and Francqui suggest the following telegram to be sent by Gregory to Hoover. Gregory sends same for your information but expresses his own views in telegram which follows. Villalobar and Francqui telegram begins:

"The German Government has notified us that they could no longer authorize American subjects to continue in the service of the C.R.B. in the North of France and in the provinces of Belgium. The German Government consents to allowing five or six Americans to continue to reside in Brussels in order to assure the service of the central administration. The German Government will be very happy to see the C.R.B. continue its activity in Holland, England, and America on condition, however, that C.R.B. boats will strictly observe the indications laid down by the new blockade and will take the Northern Route for Rotterdam. Belgian coal will be furnished Rotterdam through the medium of the C.R.B. in Belgium, which will assume the transport of this coal by its canal boats returning to Rotterdam. The German Government suggests to take other neutrals who would enjoy the same

privileges that the Americans have been accorded until now in order to replace the latter. We could engage temporarily a few neutrals, Spanish, Dutch, and Danish here. The Marquis de Villalobar is working in accord with us and he will telegraph you direct. Finally concerning the merchandise bought in England, the German Government will only consider this question on the condition that this merchandise will be transported to Holland by the Dutch boats which regularly constitute the service Holland England and by no other. This line of boats will be respected by the German Government."

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 469

Telegram,
GREGORY(336) TO HOOVER, referred to in the preceding

ROTTERDAM, 11 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Gregory advises that von der Lancken informs Whitlock orally as follows:

"Whitlock is asked to remain as assurance of German good faith to the Commission but without diplomatic privileges. Whitlock will probably go out. C.R.B. may retain a few principals in Brussels, and von der Lancken suggests Whitlock, Ruddock, Dietrich, Gregory, and Gray. Could probably get permission substitute and add to others, but all provincial delegates must be replaced by other neutrals and automobile privileges withdrawn. Above applies to present international status. C.R.B. steamers must not touch English ports. Assurance to our men of safe-conduct not in writing but oral assurance repeated."

We must act promptly and you must advise at once if Allied Governments will continue imports on above basis. If not, think little practical good accomplished by our remaining and we had better close operations as soon as possible. Gregory states positively that in event of war he will not remain here. Von der Lancken has promised to place above in writing to Spanish Minister. It might under all the circumstances be desirable to substitute an entirely new personnel of some other neutral country. Please inform Hoover. Further telegram on same subject being sent today through American Legation, London.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 470

Telegram,
GRAY(337) TO HOOVER, regarding German attitude and the willingness of the
American representatives to stag with the work under any conditions.

THE HAGUE
11 February 1917

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON:

Kindly inform Hoover and the Relief Commission that Gray, now in Rotterdam,
advises as follows:

"On the night of February 8th, Rieth and von der Lancken returned to Brussels from Berlin. Conference between Lancken and Villalobar was immediately held. On February 9th at five o'clock Whitlock received from Lancken advice in sense of Gregory's telegram. Bruhn advised Gregory at identically the same hour that personnel could stay as before under present diplomatic relations without change save possibly in the imposition of some slight restrictions in use of automobiles. At six o'clock on the same day Gray was advised of same status, by Schlubach, who said that Rieth had so advised him. At same time Fritz Neuerbourg was advised by Wengersky, who had also attended the Berlin conference, that present composition of Commission would be maintained. We cannot clearly estimate influence exerted by Villalobar in the reduction of the staff to five Americans. We are, however, of opinion that a counter proposal offering conditions similar to those which obtain in Northern France regarding personnel might be acceptable. Recommend, however, that door be left open to future negotiations. Germans will not lay down working conditions possible in event of hostilities. Hope to arrange use of pouch with Van Vollenhoven or Villalobar but first sealing our packages. The members of the Commission are nearly unanimous in the wish to stay with the work under any conditions and they are willing to accept any terms whereby the continuation of the work will be ensured. If change comes the plan is to transfer the shipping department with same personnel to the Comité National, but Baetens desires orders from Hoover before leaving C.R.B. and expresses first allegiance to the Commission. Relief Commission."

LANGHORNE
Chargé d'Affaires

DOCUMENT NO. 471

Telegram,
PAGE TO DEPARTMENT OF STATE, advising immediate withdrawal of
Americans and liquidation of C.R.B.

LONDON, 12 February 1917

SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON:

Director Gregory at Brussels informs Commission for Relief in Belgium that von der Lancken, Civil Governor of Belgium, has reported to him that the German Government will no longer permit American members of Commission to exercise functions in Belgium and Northern France. Hoover and his American associates can in my judgment pursue only one course, namely, inform the German Government immediately that every American retires, get all American members out of Belgium and France in whatever way their exit can best be managed by Gregory, with whom Poland is conferring by telegraph, and close the Commission's business immediately in Belgium and France and liquidate it as soon as possible. We shall have to leave to the decision of the British, French, and German Governments the work for the future. Americans can now retire with clean record and make dignified exit without parley, leaving the onus on the German Government.

I regard it as of the very highest importance that Hoover announce retirement under German order emphatically and immediately. Further discussion may lose the present tactical advantage.

I await Department's instructions to me to retire as Patron of Commission which I hope will be given.

Please inform Hoover of the contents of this telegram and your instructions to me.

PAGE

DOCUMENT NO. 472

Telegram;
HOOVER TO C.R.B., LONDON, concerning re-establishment of the relief and
indicating that the Commission is completely at the service of the Allies to this end

NEW YORK, 14 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

I hope you have made it clear to British, French, and Belgian Governments that our sole desire is to secure the re-establishment of the relief and that despite any views we hold as to best methods and detail that we are absolutely at their service to this end and that we wish to strongly present fact that there is nothing which so dominates the heart of the American people and all of us, as the continued succor of these people, and there is nothing more important in maintaining the allegiance of America to the Allied cause than that no effort should be spared for its re-establishment.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 473

Telegram,
C.R.B., LONDON, TO C.R.B., BRUSSELS (VIA ROTTERDAM), stating that
German decision compels withdrawal of Americans of C.R.B. from Belgium

LONDON, 12 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Please communicate Whitlock, Gregory:

In accord with Mr. Hoover and Mr. Page, in view of communication from German Government to you through Lancken that Americans can no longer exercise their functions in Belgium and Northern France, please notify the German authorities and Comité National that as under these conditions the American members of the Commission can no longer carry out their responsibilities and undertakings with the other interested governments and toward the peoples of France and Belgium, the American members officially withdraw from participation in the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and from the relief work in France. Further inform German authorities that we have assured the Allied Governments on the basis of previous German communications to the Commission that our withdrawal from participation in the work of the Commission does not in any way affect the continued existence of the Commission. Consequently we have also informed the Allied Governments that no guarantees given to the Commission or its Patron Ministers by either of the belligerents are invalidated by our withdrawal. We assume that German authorities will be glad to confirm this understanding to the Patron Ministers. The British Government on their part have expressed their approval of continued importations through the Commission without interruption. We advise you arrange all men leave Belgium and France at once, except you, Gray, Neville, and perhaps one or two others of Commission staff needed to close up affairs and ensure no interruption relief pending reorganization. Important

papers and all accounting figures not required to carry on current business should immediately be sent out or if not possible stored with Legation papers under protection of Spanish Minister; close all books and accounts as between Commission Rotterdam, Commission Brussels, C.N., and C.F., as at February 15th midnight, including Rotterdam shipments same date. For annual report extremely important obtain all incomplete data, particularly distributions to communes Belgium, Northern France to October 31st and exact figures of Belgian-French provincial and general stocks as to October 31st, arranging to continue all similar data to February 15th.

Accounts: Complete all transactions as at close of 15th as for complete accounts so that C.N. and Commission are in agreement to enable balance sheet and accounts to be prepared at that date. Include all Rotterdam shipments to date stated. Object in view is to know exact position and to have full detailed records. Final accounts and schedules as at October 31st 1916, also required and should be sent as soon as possible. Jones advises accounts and records more important than audit. Inform Neville.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 474

Letter,
POLAND TO HYMANS, informing him of contemplated withdrawal of
Americans in Belgium

LONDON, 13 February 1917

His Excellency Paul Hymans([338](#))
Belgian Minister, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

Yesterday we received a number of telegrams which bring to a crisis our relations to the ravitaillement work in Belgium and France. We have the honor to hand you herewith a long telegram to New York, which was prepared yesterday and forwarded last night, embodying our complete information and outlining the action which was taken in accord with our Chairman, and the instructions sent to our Director and Mr. Whitlock in Brussels.

The notice to the German authorities is made necessary by their action.

As between the Allied Governments and the Commission you will of course understand that we shall take no action which will in any way jeopardize the food

supply to either the Belgian or the French people; our operations will continue uninterrupted as at present, in soliciting support, in diplomatic negotiations and shipping and purchasing, until such time as we may mutually have arrived at a new basis, made necessary by the withdrawal of our nationals from Belgium and France.

We hold ourselves subject to your convenience at any time when you would like to discuss future arrangements in detail.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND,
Director

2. Between Peace and War. February-March 1917

The Commission's announcement of its decision to withdraw from the relief work had immediate results. Representatives of the British and French Governments issued statements expressing their regret that the Americans were compelled to take this step and their appreciation of the service which the Commission had performed. On their part, the German authorities in Belgium, not wishing to be responsible for the discontinuance of relief, promptly reversed themselves and declared that the Americans might remain in the occupied territories, exercising the same privileges that they had hitherto enjoyed. On receipt of this information the Commission's previous instructions to its staff in Belgium were revoked and the Americans were asked to remain at their posts as long as possible. In the meantime Ambassador Merry del Val in London had notified the Allies that the Spaniards were prepared to take over the work of the Americans, while a representative of the Belgian Government had cabled Hoover to urge that American management of relief be continued as long as possible and in event that the delegates had to be withdrawn from Belgium that the Americans should continue to handle the finance purchasing, shipping, and other external matters.

DOCUMENT NO. 475

Statement, [\(339\)](#)
by LORD ROBERT CECIL, describing the work of the C.R.B.

LONDON, 14 February 1917

The withdrawal of the Americans from participation in the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the withdrawal of Mr. Page and Mr. Whitlock from their position as Patrons of the Commission, will be very sincerely regretted by the Allied Governments.

The Commission still goes on in the hands of its other neutral members, but you know how, in practice, the organization of the Relief Commission both here and at Rotterdam and in Belgium and Northern France was created by, and in practice, depended upon Mr. Hoover and his American colleagues, who for more than two years have sacrificed every personal interest to their great humanitarian enterprise. It is they who have dealt daily and hourly with the Foreign Office here, with the German authorities at Brussels and with the German Headquarters in Northern France. They have been the constant intermediaries in a series of most arduous international negotiations, and it is they who have built up the elaborate system of guarantees which has made the continuance of the work possible for twenty-eight months and which stands today as a bulwark between the Belgian people and their invaders.

Now, I am not going to pay any tribute to their business organization or their efficiency, wonderful as these things have been. The mere fact that for twenty-eight months they have kept alive ten millions of people without a single serious hitch in the machinery of purchase, transport, and distribution shows what their organization has been. But this any observer can judge as well as I. What I want to say is this:

When the first proposals were made in October 1914, for the importation of foodstuffs into Belgium after the fall of Antwerp, these proposals were directly counter to every dictate of military prudence. The natural feeling of people here was, and long continued to be, that the Germans were in complete control of Belgium, and how could a dozen or two neutrals safeguard the supplies imported? It was only with the greatest anxieties and misgivings that we consented to allow importations, and I sometimes doubt whether the proposals would ever have been made or our consent given if we had known how long the work would have to last, or the extent to which it would grow. Yet, in spite of this, the work has gone on uninterruptedly for twenty-eight months and has grown from small beginnings into an undertaking which may be literally called gigantic.

Now the only thing which has made this possible has been the absolute confidence which Mr. Hoover and his colleagues have inspired in all the Allied Governments. They have been in the most difficult position and have borne the heaviest responsibilities that could possibly fall to the lot of any neutral, but their absolute frankness in discussion and their energy in carrying out their undertakings have led us to rely absolutely upon their word and upon their ability. How high a tribute this is, no one can perhaps understand who has not had actual experience of war conditions, but the American people may be confident that these American citizens

leave behind them in Europe a reputation which, if I may say so, America may count on as a national possession in future years.

I do not speak of the financial help which the American people have given to the Relief, because this is a sort of farewell speech and I am sure that while we must say farewell to the American directors of the work, we need not do so to American interest in the work. On the contrary, I am sure that American interest will in the future be even keener than in the past and that the American people will take a pride in competing with the Allied nations in giving financial support to a great enterprise with which the name of America must forever remain associated.

DOCUMENT NO. 476

Statement, (340)

By BRIAND FOR THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, relating to the work of the C.R.B. and its continuation by the Spanish collaborators

[PARIS, 14 February 1917]

At this moment when the German Government is forcing the American representatives of the Spanish-American Commission of Relief to leave the invaded lands and to abandon the task to which they have dedicated themselves with so much devotion, I desire you to express to the Central Committee of the Commission in London, the recognition and gratitude of the Government of the Republic for the humanitarian work which the American representatives of the Commission, with the devoted collaboration of the Spanish representatives, have carried out, in saving the unfortunate French populations from famine. I do not overlook with what disinterestedness the Commission has successfully administered a most complicated and difficult work, which has necessitated constant and methodical efforts. The devotion of the Commission, of the bankers and contractors to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, who have refused all remuneration, is also known to us. It is to be hoped, for the sake of our unhappy compatriots of the North of France, that this great international work of benevolence may be able to continue to the end of the war. It is to this end that the generous efforts of the King of Spain, to whom the Government of the Republic has just appealed, are at present directed. If, as we like to hope, His Majesty Alphonse XIII succeeds in making the voice of humanity heard in Berlin, we are sure that the services of the Americans of the Commission for Relief will be continued in the same devoted way, in the work of purchase and transportation, thus still contributing, with the cooperation in the country of other neutral representatives who will come to replace the Americans, to the humanitarian task which they now perform.

Of all the acts of charity which now stand to the credit of the Americans and which earn our deepest gratitude, the work of the Commission for Relief is among those which are dearest to us, since they are working for the sake of those French people who add to all their other misfortunes that of temporary separation from their mother country, and who have to suffer bondage to the enemy.

(Signed) BRIAND

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 477

Telegram,
C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, TO C.R.B., LONDON, stating change in German attitude permitting Americans to perform their usual functions in Belgium

ROTTERDAM, 15 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Brussels advises:

Villalobar, "We have had today a meeting(341) at which assisted von der Lancken, Villalobar, Whitlock, Bruhn, Rieth, Francqui, and Gregory, and which was held concerning your telegram of the 12th instant. It has been agreed that our delegates may remain as heretofore and with the same privileges. However, it is possible that later it may be necessary to place delegates of other nationalities on military fronts. In consideration of this, the Protecting Ministers and Gregory suggest that we keep on our regular work as heretofore and consequently we will not close our accounts unless we receive other instructions from you."

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 478

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., LONDON, instructing Americans to remain in Belgium and commenting on German tactics

NEW YORK, 15 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Overriding my previous cables would like you instruct Belgian staff remain long as possible at their posts. The Germans are obviously trying by allowing Whitlock and few to remain to throw responsibility on to us and I have proposed to State Department that Whitlock should be instructed that he will only remain conditional upon his having full diplomatic privileges and upon whole of American staff being allowed remain and exercise their functions as hitherto; and if Germans not prepared for this, then entire Legation and Relief staff will withdraw. The object of this is obviously that we shall throw responsibility on to Germans and although I have no expectation that they will accept it, it is desirable that we should proceed carefully step by step. I do not assume that Allied Governments will consent to form of administration proposed by Germans, as such an administration would be absolutely inadequate for the protection of the people and food supplies; and that in failure to secure retention of our entire staff it is entirely desirable that they should together with Whitlock be withdrawn, in order to clear the decks for a re-established neutral body of some other nationality.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 479

Telegram,
C.R.B., LONDON, TO C.R.B., BRUSSELS (VIA ROTTERDAM), directing
postponement of liquidation

LONDON, 15 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Advise Brussels in view changed attitude of German authorities and overriding previous cables, liquidation not necessary. American staff requested to remain at their posts long as possible but notify German authorities this action taken solely on understanding that representatives' functions, activities, circulation, communication continued in full. Advise whether full diplomatic privileges restored Whitlock. Please be governed accordingly.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 480

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., LONDON, giving State Department instructions to
Whitlock and suggesting an arrangement for continuing functions of the C.R.B.

WASHINGTON, 15 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

State Department tonight emphatically directing Whitlock to demand immediate restoration of his own and our position to previous basis, alternative to which is his and our immediate withdrawal with the whole responsibility on German shoulders. We believe Germans proposed previous stultifying arrangements with intention of throwing on to Allied Governments or ourselves the responsibility of cutting off the relief. In case they refuse, instructions have been given Whitlock to inform Belgian people that this Government and Commission will do all in their power to secure re-establishment of the relief [in the] hands of some other neutral body. We must proceed in the whole matter with great circumspection, step by step. First is as above, and if any our men come into Holland they should remain there until the above issue is determined. If Germans give in to demand we must proceed as before, although I have little anticipation that it will last for long. Second step is in case we withdraw, we should support the creation of new neutral organizations to take charge distribution. Ideal organization would be one under patronage Queen of Holland and King of Spain, but comprised entirely Dutch personnel, preferably army officers or civil servants. New organization to control distribution in interior. Such arrangement is, I believe, in accord with wishes of Allied Governments. Third: after prolonged consideration I believe that if we withdraw will be most important interest the Belgian people that whole purchase shipment foodstuffs should be taken over by Belgian Lloyd. This would enable them build up proper efficient organization which would be inestimable benefit for ravitaillement Belgium after war, and in this matter they could take over our paid staff and officers if they so desired, we of course, removing the whole of our records and accounts. Fourth: The Commission should then retreat entirely to a local American organization for recruiting charity propaganda on behalf of the Belgian people, from which anticipate material results. Fifth: The least which the various governments can agree to in return for our services is that we should have the honor of liquidating our own business and obtaining a proper discharge from our personal liabilities and the retention of our name and organization for effective American use. The matter is not only sentimental but it is of practical importance, in view of legal responsibilities which I personally hold for outstanding liabilities and unsettled operations and the good-will here; when it comes to liquidation it should be undertaken by way of completion for our accounts of some particular cargo to be determined with a view to our stocks and financial position. Sixth: In case of our retirement the Comité National should extend its operations to include the Rotterdam Office, thus joining up with the Belgian Lloyd. In any event we must get a shipping lane open at the earliest moment and we anxiously await news regarding it.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO 481

Letter,

MERRY DEL VAL TO CAMBON, stating the intention of the Spanish members to carry on the work of the C.R.B. after American withdrawal

SPANISH EMBASSY, LONDON

15 February 1917

To His Excellency, Monsieur Paul Cambon Ambassador of France, London

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

The American members of the Commission for Relief in Belgium having signified to me their irrevocable decision to retire from the work, I have the honor to inform you, in my capacity of founder and President of the Commission, that it will be carried on under the administration of their Spanish colleagues.

Thus, Mr. José Roura, of 14 Seething Lane, E.C., will take the direction of the Commission. He will place himself at your disposal for the information which you will be good enough to give him, in the belief that the Commission will continue to receive in the future the same support as it has hitherto received from the Government of the French Republic, and that it will maintain with Your Excellency and your Government the same good reputation as it has had in the past, resolute, as is the Government of His Majesty the King my August Sovereign, to do all that is possible for the relief of the occupied territories of France.

I pray you to accept, my dear colleague, the assurance of my high consideration and my devoted sentiments.

(Signed) MERRY DEL VAL

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 482

Letter,

CAMBON TO MERRY DEL VAL, suggesting that the direction of relief be left provisionally in the hands of the present directors of the C.R.B.

FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON

15 February 1917

*His Excellency Merry del Val
Spanish Ambassador, London*

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

I thank you for your letter(342) of even date concerning the Commission for Relief in Belgium. I know what share you have had in the foundation of this institution and how you have never ceased to aid it. I wish here to express to you my appreciation.

The American members of the Commission for Relief had received from the German authorities the order to retire from Belgium and the Federal Government had to cease its patronage on the rupture of its diplomatic relations with Germany. But it is possible that the useful assistance of the Americans may be maintained to the Commission even in Belgium according to news which I have just received, and in London they will be able, at least for some time, to assure the purchasing and transportation services which are just now passing through a difficult period.

It is very important, as you know, that the ravitaillement operations proceed without interruption and to arrive at this result it seems to me advisable to leave the provisional direction to those who up to the present have carried on this mission. This is what the American members of the Commission have been informed this morning and it would be inopportune, in my opinion, to modify the London management of the Commission for Relief before certain financial questions, at present in suspense, have been settled.

(Signed) PAUL CAMBON

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 483

Telegram,
CARTON DE WIART TO HOOVER, urging the continued participation of
Americans in the relief of Belgium

LONDON, 17 FEBRUARY 1917

HOOVER, NEW YORK

Allow me to impress again how important I consider both American and Belgian points of view that management relief be continued up to end by Americans as far as physically possible. Even if you have to eventually abandon activity in Belgium the external activity is of essential importance diplomatically, charitably, and

materially. If external activity of relief were transformed in a purely business organization the character of whole work during past would be affected by it. I fervently hope the direct co-operation of our American friends will last as long as our trials, thus to remain forever closely associated with them in memory of Belgian people. Amitiés.

CARTON WIART

DOCUMENT NO. 484

Telegram,
CARTON DE WIART TO HOOVER, again urging in the name of the Belgian Government continued American participation in C.R.B.

LONDON, 23 February 1917

HOOVER, NEW YORK

Have communicated your cable to Van de Vyvere who asks me to assure you that Belgian Government counts more than ever on cooperation of our American friends and moreover hopes to associate very closely C.R.B. with economic reconstruction of Belgium and wishes to confer with you as soon as possible on the subject. Unable to communicate before some time your cable to Comité National but messages received from them indicate most positively their great desire and hope American co-operation to remain in as many features of relief as possible. This unanimous desire amongst us is based not only on Belgian interests but also on Belgian feeling for America.

CARTON WIART

DOCUMENT NO. 485

Extracts of letter,
MERRY DEL VAL TO POLAND, giving German attitude in favor of continued participation of Americans in the relief in the occupied territories despite severance of diplomatic relations

SPANISH EMBASSY, LONDON
23 February 1917

W. B. Poland, Esq.
Director, The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

SIR:

As I had the pleasure of informing you verbally last night I communicated by telegram to the Spanish Government the contents of the Memorandum attached to your letter of the 22nd inst., begging them to press the matter as vigorously as possible in Berlin.

The reply from the Imperial German Government is expressed in two communications. The first of these set forth the [route for relief steamers.]

In their second communication, dated February 18th, the German Government declare that in spite of having broken off diplomatic relations with the United States, the humanitarian work of the Relief of Belgium, founded on an agreement to which Spain is also a party, may continue and that the German Government consider it convenient that the present American members of the Commission should also continue provisionally at their post. This will not prevent the possibility of their replacement if necessary by other neutral agents being examined. There is no reason why some of these American citizens should not remain in Brussels at the head of the Commission until further notice.

Such are the contents of the German Government's replies. I hasten to transmit them to you and will be glad to communicate to the Spanish Government your impressions regarding the same.

I remain

Yours faithfully

(Signed) A. MERRY DEL VAL

DOCUMENT NO. 486

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., LONDON, delaying withdrawal of Americans in Belgium until absolutely necessary, and agreeing to formation of Allied Commission in an eventuality

NEW YORK, 27 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Regarding information from American Ambassador to State Department, we do not wish to withdraw our men until it becomes absolutely necessary and in fact would like to have them remain until they are ordered out by the Germans. Whitlock is

being instructed by State Department to remain in Belgium as long as the American members of Commission remain, and when situation arrives at point where he must withdraw either because of German request or from views of this Government on situation, he will be instructed by State Department to bring with him the Relief Commission. We do not wish you to take any action in the matter as we are extremely anxious that we shall leave Belgium either at the order of the Germans or alternatively upon the order of the United States Government, and would like you to convey this information to Brussels privately. With regard to arrangements in event withdrawal Americans we see no objection to the proposals made so far as they concern the control of the distribution from Rotterdam. As to arrangements for Allied Commission seems to us this covers entire matter, but as it does not press, we will advise you later. Do not commit us in any way without reference, as we must act in cooperation with Washington.

HOOVER

The change of front by the Germans in respect to the privileges of the C.R.B. delegates and the absence of any outstanding incident in the political sphere relaxed the tension on the Commission. The matter of reorganization was held in abeyance, while Hoover and the other members concentrated their efforts on the matter of shipping, which was in a very desperate situation as a result of the U-boat activities.⁽³⁴³⁾ There was, however, some discussion of an inter-Allied committee to take over the external functions of the C.R.B. in the event of a declaration of war by the United States; but no final decision was made.

Toward the end of February the political situation took a new turn. On the 28th the Associated Press published the Zimmermann Note, offering Mexico the states of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona if she would join Germany in the event of war with the United States. On the 25th a U-boat sank without warning the British liner "Laconia" with the loss of two American lives. The President, meanwhile, had asked Congress for authority to arm American merchant vessels, and though this authority had not been given because of the filibuster of the "little group of wilful men" in the Senate, Wilson announced on the 7th March that guns would be placed on the ships. These events brought the declaration of war appreciably nearer, and the question of the reorganization of relief became of more immediate concern.

In the new discussions the idea of the complete withdrawal of Americans from relief was abandoned in deference to the wishes of the Belgians and the other Allies, who were insistent that the Commission as constituted continue to carry on the external relief operations even if it became necessary to recall the American members from the occupied territories. This arrangement, moreover, avoided friction with the Spaniards, who had promptly offered to take over the work from the Americans and who would have been offended had their offer been declined by

the Allies and the contemplated inter-Allied committee been established to carry on the Commission's work.

DOCUMENT NO. 487

Telegram,

HOOVER TO C.R.B., LONDON, presenting alternate plan for continuation of the relief organization, the only change being the substitution of Spanish-Dutch members for the American delegates in the invaded territories

NEW YORK, 1 March 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

In event our retirement from Belgium and in such case the proposed substitution inter-allies committee and liquidation Commission, in view Belgian protests and changed conditions here, and after careful consideration and consultation with important men, have come to the view that despite the apparent reversal of previous attitude yet for national reasons in the main ---in order to maintain and augment American sentiment Allied cause and maintain the prestige of Commission before American charitable public---it is our duty despite sacrifice and many reasons to the contrary that if approved by the Allied Governments we should carry on the Commission under present direction with our terminal at Rotterdam. Wish you lay entire matter before Percy and secure frank opinion Allied officials. The administrative arrangements at Rotterdam terminal will require some consideration as to whether our contact should cease at out-turn ships into hands Dutch-Spanish group who in turn re-transfer to Comité National or whether we continue manage Rotterdam office and out-turn direct to Comité National as present. In the first case we should require an office Rotterdam in any event to make settlements with intermediate committee and would appear to us that the second case is the more practical. It is always possible that situation may develop to alter these views, making inter-allies committee desirable, and it might eventuate that such a committee would want to embrace joint American participation, as I have in view that if we join in war American Government might be induced join in support Belgian people and in any event we may yet be wanted to find loans or for other service. In any event, we feel strongly that nothing should be done by way of the erection of interallies committee and our liquidation until we have had a month or so to see clearly what is in the best interests of the Belgians, the Allies, and the Americans, and in any event so long as we remain in Belgium no changes of any kind are to be made from our present organization.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 488

Extract of letter,
HOOVER TO POLAND AND KELLOGG, summarizing the various proposals for
reorganization of the relief in the event that the United States should declare war

NEW YORK, 5 March 1917

W. B. Poland, Esq.
Vernon L. Kellogg, Esq.
London

DEAR FRIENDS:

With regard to our partial or entire withdrawal from the Relief, we have all of us of course---and myself in particular---altered our views from time to time as to precise organization, because of changing political situation.

It was our first conviction that it was only a question of hours after February 1st until the United States should openly declare war Ten days later we became convinced that this was not only improbable but that both Germany and this country were making every effort to avoid actual war, and the restoration of our men in Belgium and Northern France after being expelled seemed to us to present a new situation. Finally, during the last three days, as the result of the "Laconia" incident, the exposures of German intrigues here, and the action of the President and Congress, it now again looks like actual war sooner or later and consequently at least the retirement of our men from Belgium and Northern France.

Beyond these changing political situations there are the following principles which have dominated our minds:

1. We must assume that if we are compelled to retire from Belgium some other neutrals must at least take over the control of the distribution and under this head several alternatives seem to present themselves:

The first is that we should select a body of mixed volunteer neutrals who would simply replace the Americans and that we should continue the C.R.B. as at present.

A mere tyro in administrative experience must be convinced that this could only result in an ultimate breakdown. While we would have responsibility, we could have no real control over such a group; we are not in position to determine the character and loyalty of such men; there must certainly grow up intrigue with the Germans or the Belgians with some of such individuals; there must be internal friction amongst the body of mixed nationalities---therefore there could be no

discipline, no adequate control of distribution, and no guarantee in territorial allocation of justice in Belgium and Northern France. Sooner or later all confidence in the controls would be undermined. There are other difficulties in the Belgian problem well known to you, which I will not enter upon here, further than to mention that they would multiply under such an administration.

2. The second of these alternatives was for some one nationality to take over the separate patronage of internal control, and this operation could be performed either by a volunteer body or by agents of the government in question. I do not believe it is possible to secure sufficient volunteers of a high degree of idealism from any one of the nationalities available and that it would be better to place it under the control of either the army or some civil department of such a government, to be staffed by government agents.

Furthermore, such an organization as this would commit the government concerned to a strong support of the guarantees and of the Relief.

3. When we survey the available material, we have practically only the Spanish, Dutch, or Swiss to consider. . . . The Dutch enjoy a high reputation for integrity and efficiency and stand high in sentimental esteem, especially in the United States and would be well supported here. Of more importance than all this, the Dutch control a great measure of supplies which could be made available for Belgium, and the direct responsibility on their part for the distribution would lead them to further exertions by way of native supplies. They are able to command men of a wider experience in language and a greater knowledge of Belgian life than any other nation.

4. It is extremely desirable, from the point of view of moral support to the Allied cause and to the Belgian cause in particular, that the great organs of the National Committee(344) in the British Empire and of the Commission for Relief in the United States should be maintained in great activity in the direction of recruiting public charity and public opinion. This has come during the last few days to have even a higher value in the United States than may be apparent in Europe. We are probably faced with agitations for embargoes on food supplies owing to world shortage, and it is necessary to maintain here a strong organization in order that there may be no prejudice to Belgian supplies and which can insistently advocate strongly the necessity for a proper division of our abundant foodstuffs with the Allies themselves. There is no organ in the United States which stands in such high esteem and influence in the matters today as does the Commission, and it is of extreme importance to all these causes that there should be no break in its activities. These activities would be further enlarged if our men should be forced out of Belgium, because then the necessity for personal neutrality would have departed and we could carry even stronger conviction on all of these various phases if we were not under the present restraint which we are now compelled to maintain.

5. We believed that it would be of great value to the Belgian Government for them to take over themselves, as a governmental measure, the buying and shipping of the supplies, for not only would they be able to bring governmental pressure to bear to secure shipping and supplies, but, of more importance, they would have established a consequent organ through which they could carry on the ravitaillement of the Belgian people during the necessary period after peace. We thought from all that has taken place during the last year that they---so anxious for the increase in Belgian prestige and the demonstration of the self-sufficiency of the Belgian people---would be anxious to take over the providing of their own people, not only for its effect in Belgium itself, but for the great moral influence that it would have abroad, and we felt that they might like to embrace this opportunity of a general change with this objective in view. On the other hand, we have since received the positive and strong protest of the Belgian Government against such a course and their strong request to us to continue, so that we presume this possibility is eliminated.

6. We have no desire whatever to run away from the Relief. It represents an increasing sacrifice to us, but having set our hands to this plow, we are prepared to go on with it if it continues in a form which would have proper, weighty and important objectives that would make it worth while, that is, if the interests of the Belgian and French people were of necessity served by us and if it continues to have importance from American national point of view in the contribution of our national spirit and ideals.

We cannot allow any complexion to be put upon the matter that would suggest that we are running away from any service of this character. Our one desire is in effect to carry it out if it is desired by the Allied Governments that we should do so.

7. If, however, it is determined that we should not only retire from Belgium and Northern France but from the buying and shipping offices, it then becomes absolutely necessary to us that we should liquidate the C.R.B. as a business organization and maintain it only as a charitable recruiting agency in America. We have handled up to date over \$275,000,000;(345) we have outstanding liabilities of over \$20,000,000 and these latter are based on our personal credit and reputation. We have hundreds of unsettled accounts throughout the world, and if we deserve nothing else for these two and half years service, we at least deserve to have this business settled up in a proper and businesslike manner, a proper auditing and settlement of our accounts and liabilities, a proper relief to us of our financial responsibility, and a properly acknowledged discharge from all of the governments concerned, of our having conducted this work with integrity and with circumspection. This could only be accomplished by the liquidation of the C.R.B. and the initiation of a new organization to take over buying and shipping phases. There is also the sentimental fact that we, the present individuals, initiated the whole Belgian Relief. We made the C.R.B. into an institution of world-wide repute for integrity and efficiency and high ideals. For us to step out and allow some other

administration to come in is a risk to these principles and the reputation of this institution to which we do not deserve to be exposed.

8. It has been our view all along that we should remain at our posts in Belgium unless the Germans render our position intolerable thus securing to themselves the responsibility for any break. This is the strong desire of the State Department at Washington, as well as of ourselves. There is only one alternative and that is that should this Government determine to declare war, it would be obvious as a duty of the Government to recall Mr. Whitlock and the Commission coincidentally. We have been anxious that in case of a recall it should be done by the United States Government, based on the judgment of intolerable conditions of safety and not by ourselves. There is a responsibility attaching to breaking down this work which we do not wish ourselves to assume and there is a responsibility in leaving our men in Belgium and Northern France which is primarily a responsibility of the Government. They have agreed to assume both these responsibilities and it is therefore up to us to co-operate with them intimately.

In view of the above principles, we have in the voluminous cable correspondence with you argued from many points of view against the various suggestions of reorganization which have been set up in Europe. These proposals may be summarized as follows:

- a) The proposal that we should recruit a mixed body of other neutrals for Belgian and Northern France administration and continue as at present. The objections to this are in violation of the principles set out in paragraph 1 (Disorganization of mixed neutrals) above.
- b) The proposal of the Spanish Ambassador in London that Spanish gentlemen should step into the shoes of the Americans and continue the C.R.B. as at present. This violates the principles set out in paragraphs 3 (Exclusive Spanish control), 4 (Public support in America and England), 6 (Our abandonment of Relief), and (Liquidation of our financial responsibilities).
- c) The proposal that we should on February 15th have notified the Allied Governments that we are handing the whole Relief over to them and are withdrawing, violates the principles set out in paragraph 6 (Our abandonment of the Relief) and 8 (Throwing responsibility on the Germans).
- d) The proposal that a Spanish-Dutch Committee with predominant Dutch character should be set up under the aegis of the Dutch and Spanish Governments, to take over the control of distribution in Belgium and Northern France meets, we imagine, as far as the diplomatic situation permits, the objections set out above in case we must retire from Belgium, and with this we are in accord, although we would like to see an exclusively Dutch administration.

e) The proposal that an inter-Allied Committee should be set up to handle the purchase and transport of supplies of course meets our acquiescence if it be desired by the Allied Governments. On the other hand, having gotten to this position, it is our feeling that the C.R.B. could quite well continue as it stands today, under its present direction, with its terminal in Rotterdam, selling its supplies to the Comité National exactly as at present, the Dutch-Spanish Committee confining itself to distribution and control. The advantages of this appear to us at the present time to be manifold. It continues in a large way the American interest in the Belgian and the Allied cause; it gives the C.R.B. a stronger background upon which to continue its propaganda in America for charitable support, as it continues the sense of obligation of the American people, and having built up an efficient business organ for handling this enterprise it continues this organ without disturbance; it does not necessitate any liquidation of accounts until after the war is over, when it can be done properly and methodically.

We cannot of course anticipate all that may happen between now and the end of the war. It may be necessary for us to retire absolutely from the Relief, but in any event, the continuation on the basis of a Dutch-Spanish Committee in control of distribution and guarantees, the C.R.B. running to a Rotterdam terminal and there turning over the goods to the Comité National, would appear to us to be the proper thing to do for the present, in view of all the circumstances involved. We have therefore cabled you fully on this matter as we are anxious to learn the frank desires of the Allied Governments.

I regret intensely that I have not been in Europe during this crisis and will return as soon as I find I cannot be predominantly useful here.

I should be glad if you would furnish Lord Eustace Percy and Mr. Chevrillon with a copy of this letter.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 489

Letter,
SPRING RICE TO HOOVER, quoting attitude of British Foreign Office as strongly in favor of continued American control

BRITISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON
8 March 1917

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

The Foreign Office have telegraphed requesting me to communicate, confidentially, to yourself and to the State Department the following statement of the position in regard to Belgian Relief:

"At the time of the threatened withdrawal of Americans from Belgium, the Relief Commission stated emphatically that they must in that event liquidate and retire wholly from any participation in the work in London or Rotterdam. In view of this we have been endeavouring to sketch an inter-allies organisation in England and a Dutch organisation in Holland which would, to some extent, protect us from having to accept all the business of control in (here are two words lost in transmission). We have not communicated with Hoover or the United States Government as we understand that, though they were most anxious to continue American interest in the work so far as raising money was concerned, they wished to disclaim all responsibility for any organisation in London or Rotterdam designed to succeed them. Now Mr. Hoover has telegraphed to the Commission here that on consideration he has reversed his former view, and would be willing that Americans should remain in charge of the London and Rotterdam offices. Such a solution would be a great relief to us because the constitution of any competent new organisation at these two places would, we have found, inevitably create friction with the Spanish Government, owing to the ambiguous nominal constitution of the existing Commission. If Americans will remain in control we shall of course be glad to arrange for it to be made clear that their responsibilities after the withdrawal of their delegates from the occupied territories are fundamentally different from their previous responsibilities and that they are fully and finally discharged from those previous responsibilities.

If the American Commission finally decides to adopt this course with the approval of the United States Government we should be glad to be placed in a position at once to notify the Spanish and Netherlands Governments of the fact."

In addition to the above message, the Foreign Office have instructed me to discuss with you the financial situation of the Commission. It appears that, while the British Government can, to a certain extent, increase the subsidies which they are now giving, they cannot undertake to provide an increase up to the full amount which would be required if the present programme of imports is to be maintained. The British authorities feel in the circumstances that it should be possible for a sum of at least five hundred thousand pounds a month to be provided in the United States, more or less on the same lines as the French and British subsidies. Perhaps you could let me know your views on this aspect of the situation, so that I can cable your opinion to London.

Believe me,

Very sincerely yours

(Signed) CECIL SPRING RICE

[Fig. 16. Letter, 18 May 1915, Hoover to Young](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 490

Telegram,
C.R.B. LONDON TO HOOVER, quoting letter from Hymans expressing approval of the Belgian Government for Hoover's decision that the present organization be maintained

LONDON, 8 March 1917

HOOVER, NEW YORK

Following letter received: begins, "London March 7th. I have learned with deep satisfaction that Mr. Hoover and his colleagues have consented to maintain as far as is possible the present organization of the Commission for Relief. He himself and colleagues will continue to exercise their most useful functions at Rotterdam and at London even in case of complete rupture between the United States and Germany. I am charged by the Government of the King to inform the Commission that it approves this solution most earnestly. It seems to be the best solution to the efficient continuance of the work of ravitaillement since Mr. Hoover and the members of the Commission have directed this work since its inception with such noble devotion and wherein they have shown such remarkable capacities. It is once more an occasion for me to express to them the lively gratitude of the Government and the Belgian nation and I should be obliged if you will kindly forward these expressions to your most distinguished President. Hymans." Ends.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 491

Telegram,
BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, stating British Government's view of future of C.R.B.

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

22 March 1917

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PARIS

1. His Majesty's Government understand that the French Government would be glad to have a brief explanation of their precise view on the subject of the future Organisation of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France.

2. It is unnecessary to enter into any historical account of the organisation of the Relief Commission. It is sufficient to say that the continuance of its work has been made possible by the fact that its establishment has fulfilled two requirements. These are: First, a thoroughly efficient business organisation for the purchase, transport and distribution of supplies; and secondly, the presence in the Occupied territories of thoroughly reliable delegates in free and constant communication with the head office of the Commission and in a position to report fully on the machinery of distribution and on the action and attitude of the German authorities.

3. Any future organisation established to take over any part of the functions of the present American Commission must fulfil these two requirements. Provided that this is secured, the Allied Governments need not, and indeed ought not to trouble themselves as to the precise details of the Relief Commission's administrative arrangements.

4. His Majesty's Government, in agreement with the French and Belgian Governments, desire that the present business organisation of purchase and transport should remain unchanged in the hands of the present American managers. The offices of the Commission at Rotterdam, London and New York would thus undergo no alteration. If and when the United States enter the war, His Majesty's Government consider that it might be valuable to associate Englishmen, Frenchmen and Belgians with the American managers, in order clearly to show the interest of the Allied Governments in the work, but this need necessitate no actual administrative change in the machinery of the Commission.

5. On the other hand, the American managers will be unable to exercise personal control over conditions in occupied territory, and they will thus neither be able to guarantee a sound method of distribution nor will they be able themselves to ensure a constant flow of information from the delegates in the occupied territories to the offices at Rotterdam and London. It is therefore necessary that some supplementary organisation should be created with headquarters on neutral soil in Holland, to act as connecting link between the American managers on the one hand and the delegates and distributing agencies in Belgium and Northern France on the other.

6. His Majesty's Government believe that this function can best be discharged by a Dutch organisation. There are two possible forms which such an organisation can take.

7. It can either be a distinctly independent body capable of organising the machinery of distribution in the occupied territories and of accounting in detail to the Allied Governments for the disposal of the foodstuffs imported, or it can be merely a subsidiary organisation acting purely as the agent of the American managers and reporting and accounting directly to them. If the American managers are, in practice, prepared to make themselves in some measure responsible for the conduct and efficiency of the delegates in the occupied territories, whose activities they will not be able personally to inspect, the latter alternative would probably be preferable. It would obviate the necessity for a double system of accounts, and it would render less likely any conflict of authority or difference of opinion between the American Commission and its Dutch branch. It must rest mainly with the American managers of the Commission to say whether this solution will meet their views. If they feel that it entails too great responsibility upon them, it will be necessary to set up a more elaborate organisation in Holland and to appoint a Dutch business man on whose ability and sentiments the Allied Governments can rely, to assume definite responsibility for all matters beyond the Belgo-Dutch frontier.

8. In either event, it will be necessary to nominate some prominent neutral, preferably a Dutchman, with some experience of political business, who could carry out such part of the constant diplomatic business between the Relief Commission and the German authorities as cannot be adequately discharged by the Spanish Minister and the Dutch Chargé d'Affaires at Brussels. For it must be remembered that the diplomatic patrons of the Commission cannot, in view of their position and the policy of their Governments, go beyond a certain length in pressing the demands of the Relief Commission upon the Germans. In the past it has been Mr. Hoover's ability and energy which have enabled the Allied Governments to secure guarantees from the Germans which could never have been obtained by the ordinary methods of neutral diplomacy.

9. It must obviously be left to Mr. Hoover to select a man for this position with whom he feels that he can co-operate and on whose activity he can rely.

10. In general, it is desirable that the American managers of the Commission should keep in their own hands, so far as possible, the appointment of all delegates in the occupied territory and of all persons in Holland who are to form the nucleus of any neutral organisation which may be set up there. The diplomatic patrons of the Commission must not interfere with this function, but must confine themselves to matters of negotiation between the Governments.

11. In order to obtain the necessary diplomatic support it unfortunately seems necessary to associate more than one neutral Government in the protection of the

work. The Spanish and Netherlands Governments have already given their protection and it has been suggested that the Swiss Government should be associated with them. His Majesty's Government are perfectly ready to accept this latter proposal, but, while this species of "Condominium" between various neutral protecting powers is advisable from the point of view of negotiation, it seems essential that so far as possible the actual administrative personnel of the relief work in the occupied territories should be of one nationality.

DOCUMENT NO. 492

Letter,
VON DER LANCKEN TO VILLALOBAR, regarding safe-conducts for American delegates leaving Belgium

BRUSSELS, 12 March 1917

*To His Excellency the Marquis de Villalobar
Minister of His Majesty the King of Spain, Brussels*

MONSIEUR THE MINISTER:

Replying to the letter which Your Excellency was good enough to address to me on the 6th of March last, concerning the members of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, I have the honor to communicate that Monsieur the Governor General has consented that a safe-conduct should be granted to the American members(346) of the C.R.B. designated in the annex of your above-mentioned letter, whenever they should ask for them and whatever may be the position between Germany and the United States of America. In all cases a quarantine of not exceeding four weeks duration is necessary before their departure to satisfy military interests.

I beg Your Excellency to be good enough to bring the above to the attention of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and I profit by the occasion to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) LANCKEN

[Translation]

3. The American Declaration of War and the Reorganization of Relief. April-July 1917

While various plans were being discussed relative to the reorganization of the relief machinery inside and outside of the occupied territories, the period of America's "armed neutrality" came to an end. On the 18th March the news came that three American ships had been sunk by U-boats ---with a loss of fifteen lives. The President advanced the special session of Congress to the 2d April and on the evening of that day delivered his war message. The joint resolution declaring the existence of a state of war with the Imperial German Government passed the Senate on the 4th and the House on the 6th, and the President immediately issued his war proclamation.

The declaration of war by the United States meant that the withdrawal of the members of the Commission in Belgium and Northern France must be hastened and the new organization, which had been the subject of discussion since the beginning of February, promptly established. Hoover, who had now returned to London, worked out a plan in which the British concurred along the following lines: The Commission should continue its functions outside of the occupied territories, being responsible for the delivery of supplies to the Comité National and the Comité Français at the various terminals in Belgium and France. The Commission should also maintain a shipping and accounting office in Brussels, employing Belgian citizens of its appointment. In other words, it was to carry on as in the past all the operations relating to finance, purchase, oversea shipping, transshipment from Holland, and accounting. A new committee, provisionally named the "Comité Neutre de Protection du Secours" under the patronage of the sovereigns of Spain and Holland should be formed to maintain the guarantees of the belligerents and free communication in the districts receiving relief. All the governments concerned immediately accepted the proposal in so far as it applied to functions of the C.R.B., but various minor but troublesome difficulties were encountered in setting up the new neutral committee. There were objections to the name; the Swiss asked to be allowed to participate; and there were appointments which did not meet the approval of all concerned. Meanwhile matters were not going well in Belgium. All the Americans except Gray, C.R.B. Director in Brussels, and one or two others were now out of the country; the Spanish and Dutch delegates who were to take their places were still unappointed, and there were reports of violations of guarantees by the Germans. Before leaving for the United States where he had been summoned by President Wilson to direct the mobilization of America's food resources, Hoover wrote to the Spanish Ambassador in London and the Minister in Brussels, calling their attention to the unsatisfactory situation and urging them to expedite the establishment of the new committee.

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, outlining plans of reorganization agreed to
by British Government

LONDON, 4 April 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

In order to secure efficient neutral governmental support in the protection of the relief, following plan has been settled with British Government and will be proposed by Townley to Villalobar and Dutch, that is:

In first instance, C.R.B. will continue purchase and shipment, including management of Rotterdam office, and control of inland shipping to Belgium and Northern France lighter terminals as at present, delivering there to C.N. and C.F. Under no circumstances can Gray stay in Belgium and we propose that Baetens should act as representative of C.R.B. in Brussels, co-operating with C.N. in shipping, exchange of accounts, settlement of bills of lading, etc., as previously. A new committee to be created to be called the Comité Neutre pour la Protection du Ravitaillement, under the direct patronage of the Spanish and Dutch Governments or their Ministers and Ambassadors. This Committee to have two Chairmen resident in Brussels, one Dutch and one Spanish, and to have combined Dutch and Spanish delegates, the Dutch Chairman having the special charge of the Belgian Etapes and North of France while the Spanish Chairman to have special charge of Occupation Zone, the two to co-operate on general policy and themselves to settle the distribution of their subordinate staffs in conjunction with their Patron Ministers, they also to maintain a Dutch Director in Holland and a Spanish Director in London. The chairmen and directors to be selected by their respective Governments. The functions of the new committee will be to carry on the Bureau of Inspection and Control, to assist the local committees generally, to carry on the protection of the guarantees, procuring lighter passes, etc., in fact, all the negotiations with the German authorities in protection of the relief, but not to have anything to do with the commercial or distribution side of the work. The Dutch Director in Holland to be the go-between from you to the German authorities in Holland, and the Spanish Director in London to be go-between for us with London. In other words, the whole of the procuring, delivery and distribution of supplies will rest in the hands of the C.R.B., the C.N., and the C.F., whereas the whole of the protective measures under which the above Committees will operate will be carried on by the new Comité de Protection. Hope you will help get this carried through quickly.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 494

Letter,

BALFOUR TO MERRY DEL VAL, concerning plan for reorganization of the C.R.B.

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON

6 April, 1917

His Excellency Señor Don Alfonso Merry del Val

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

1. In view of certain unforeseen difficulties which have arisen in regard to the appointment of the neutral delegates who are to replace the Americans in Belgium and Northern France, I venture to suggest to Your Excellency the following proposals for the reorganisation of the Relief Commission, which I trust will meet with Your Excellency's approval.

2. I think we are all agreed that the economic work of the Relief organisation should be carried on by the present executive management without alteration. It therefore seems clear that the existing Commission for Relief in Belgium, under its present management, should remain responsible for delivering supplies to the various terminals in Belgium and Northern France, where they will be handed over to the Comité National and the Comité Français as at present. The accounting and other machinery of these committees would continue on their present basis without alteration. In order to facilitate this accounting and shipping, it is suggested that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should maintain a shipping and accounting office in Brussels, using Belgians or other staff of its own appointment. I understand that the present directors of the Commission anticipate no difficulty in continuing a Belgian staff at Brussels which will be able to carry out these duties and to correspond with the Commission's office at Rotterdam.

3. Your Excellency will observe that this only covers the purely economic activities of the organisation. For the purpose of protecting the Relief and discharging the responsible international work, which is the most difficult and vitally important part of the business, I would suggest that a new committee should be set up under some such name as the "Comité Neutre de Protection du Secours," under the patronage of the King of Spain and the Queen of Holland, the duties of patronage being discharged by the Ambassadors and Ministers of Spain and Holland in Brussels, London, Paris, and Berlin. The functions of this committee will be the maintenance of (1) all undertakings and guarantees given by the various belligerents, and (2) free communication.

4. The first function includes all the guarantees in force in the occupied territory, especially the protection of the Belgians and French employed in the Relief and the enforcement of the German undertakings not to commandeer or export native foodstuffs and to supply fixed quantities of certain commodities to the populations of the Belgian Etappengebiet and the North of France. The Committee would of course have to furnish information, as in the past, to the various governments as to the carrying out of these guarantees, and would have to manage for this purpose the large organisation in Belgium called the Department of Inspection and Control.

5. The second function will include adequate provision for the transmission of the reports of the local committees throughout Belgium, the enforcement of the agreements covering transportation, and the regular transmission of accounts and other documents both inside and outside the occupied territories. The Committee would also have to provide for the issue of safe-conducts for oversea shipping and also for the lighters, etc., in the occupied territories.

6. I would suggest that this neutral committee should be headed by two chairmen, one of Spanish and one of Dutch nationality. They might either work together in all matters, or they might each assume special responsibility for one part of the work. In the latter case, I would suggest that the Spanish Chairman might take responsibility for the Belgian "Zone of Occupation" under civil government, while the Dutch Chairman should supervise the Northern part of France and the Belgian Etappengebiet. In any case, they would naturally act jointly in all matters of general policy. It would also be advisable that the Committee should maintain a representative or director in Holland of Dutch nationality and one in England of Spanish nationality to attend to the protective measures. The Committee would also appoint representatives in the United States or other countries as the patrons may find necessary in order to provide adequately for the regular issue of safe-conducts, etc.

7. Your Excellency will, I think, agree that the staff of delegates in Belgium and Northern France should be of both nationalities and should be chosen by the chairmen. They will probably have to be salaried. As the managers of the Commission for Relief in Belgium have in the past set up the standard in their Belgian staff of having no men of mercantile training or affiliation and have chosen their entire staff from men of university, professional, or public service categories, with a view to avoid any possible questions of self-interest, it would seem desirable that the same type of men should be chosen by the chairmen of the new Committee. Indeed, the Dutch delegates already chosen for Northern France are men of this type. The men employed in Northern France must be able to speak German as well as French, and the men in Belgium must all speak French.

8. I feel that the above proposals form the simplest solution of the problems involved in the appointment of new delegates, more especially as, under these proposals, the neutral governments and representatives will be relieved of the very

heavy financial responsibilities entailed by the expenditure of the very large sums of money advanced by the Allied Governments. These responsibilities will continue to be borne by the old organisation of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

9. I am telegraphing these proposals to His Majesty's Minister at The Hague for discussion with the Netherland Government and the Marquis de Villalobar.

Believe me,

My dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) A. BALFOUR

DOCUMENT NO. 495

Note,

CAMBON TO POLAND, giving French observations on proposed reorganization

FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON

13 April 1917

On the whole, the project of reorganization arranged by Mr. Hoover with the British Government does not give rise to any objection on the part of the French Government.

Mr. Ribot, however, would prefer for the new Committee another title than the one indicated, for instance, "Comité neutre pour la protection du ravitaillement des pays envahis" [Neutral Committee for the Protection of the Ravitaillement in the Invaded Countries], or "Comité neutre pour la protection de l'oeuvre d'assistance aux pays envahis" [Neutral Committee for the Protection of the Relief Work in the Invaded Countries], the title of "secours" seeming improper. Further, it would seem preferable that the two presidents of the neutral Committee should work in common. It would be of great importance that their relation to the C.R.B. be specified, in order to avoid any misunderstanding in this respect. Also, will not Mr. Hoover's departure bring about a rearrangement of the C.R.B.? Who will be his successor? What has become of the plan of assigning Allied directors to be attached to the Director-General?

The French Government has no other observations to make in regard to the project of reorganization on which it has been approached by the British Government.

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 496

Letter,
SWISS MINISTER IN LONDON, TO HOOVER, Suggesting the appointment of
Swiss delegates in Belgium

SWISS LEGATION, LONDON
13 April 1917

The Commission for Relief in Belgium
London

MONSIEUR LE DIRECTEUR:

The philanthropic and eminently useful work created by the United States of America for the assistance of the civil population of Belgium and the occupied portions of France has continued, on the spot, since the departure of the American delegates, under a Spanish-Dutch Commission. Without wishing to interfere in the action undertaken by this latter Commission, Switzerland would, however, be very glad to be allowed to co-operate in its work and would attach some value to the fact if four or five delegates of Swiss nationality could be associated with them.

The Spanish Government, approached in this regard, has already replied that they would with pleasure accept this co-operation. The British Government for its part, through the medium of Lord Robert Cecil, whom I met today, expresses a similar opinion. Lord Robert Cecil, however, considers, and I share his opinion, that it would be necessary to obtain the consent of your Commission. I have therefore the honor to request you to inform me if the Commission for Relief in Belgium, for its part, would find any objection to Switzerland's being represented by some Swiss delegates in the membership of the Spanish-Dutch Commission [Commission Hispano-Néerlandaise] at present functioning in Brussels.

Thanking you in advance for an agreeable and if possible immediate reply on this subject, I beg to express, Monsieur le Directeur, the assurances of my most distinguished consideration.

(Signed) CARLIN
Swiss Minister

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 497

Letter,
HOOVER TO MINISTER CARLIN, replying to above

LONDON, 14 April 1917

His Excellency Monsieur Gaston Carlin
Swiss Minister, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I am in receipt of your letter of the 13th April. So far as the Commission is concerned I should be delighted to have the participation of the Swiss people in Belgium. The situation at the present moment is, however, somewhat obscure as we are endeavoring to create a new committee to be called the Comité Neutre de Protection du Secours, and have suggested that two chairmen should be chosen, to act jointly, one of Dutch nationality and the other of Spanish. As yet its form of organization has not been completed, but as quickly as it is on its feet I will communicate with you and recommend the kindly offer which you have made.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 498

Letter,
PERCY TO POLAND, quoting substance of telegram from British Minister at The Hague, regarding difficulties in organizing the Spanish-Dutch co-operation in Belgium

FOREIGN OFFICE, 14 April 1917

W. B. Poland, Esq.
London

DEAR MR. POLAND:

With reference to our conversation on the telephone this afternoon, I should like to communicate to you the substance of a telegram which we have received from The Hague. This telegram was dispatched on April 12th.

The French and Belgian Ministers foresee great difficulties in the smooth working of the proposed scheme for the reorganisation of the Relief Commission. It appears that when the Marquis de Villalobar was at The Hague, he told them that he would abandon the whole business if a Dutch director were appointed, and even showed a telegram from Madrid approving his determination to do so. The proposal that there should be a Spanish as well as a Dutch Chairman ---with which idea the Marquis expressed his concurrence to Sir Walter Townley whilst strongly urging the retention at Brussels of Mr. Gray---seems to have altered the situation.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs at The Hague has chosen a man to be Dutch Chairman who appears to be most unsuitable for the post, and the French Minister thinks it would be better to return to the idea of M. Van Vollenhoven, and suggests the appointment of a Spaniard in London.

I should be very glad to receive your views on this subject at the earliest possible moment.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) MARY ROBBERDS
(for Lord Eustace Percy)

DOCUMENT NO. 499

Letter,
HOOVER TO MERRY DEL VAL, Urging that the formation of the Spanish-Dutch Committee be expedited

LONDON, 17 April 1917

*His Excellency Señor Don Alfonso Merry del Val
Ambassador of Spain in London*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

As some time has now gone by since the protection of the Relief inside Belgium was handed over to the total responsibility of the Spanish and Dutch Governments, and as yet no organization has been initiated by these two Governments, I am filled with anxiety for the safety of the whole enterprise. You will recollect that by the communications between His Majesty the King of Spain and Her Majesty the Queen of Holland, it was determined that the two Governments should take over jointly the sponsorship for the Relief inside Belgium. Various plans of organization were projected, and ultimately you will recollect that on our representation all the Allied Governments accepted the principle of simple joint control between the two

neutral Governments without intervention from the Allies or from the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which has now become, in effect, a belligerent institution. The lack of restraint in Belgium has already resulted in the abstraction of vast quantities of cattle and in other disturbing factors which fill us with the utmost anxiety. I do feel that the total responsibility and arrangements for execution having been handed over to the two neutral Governments, the delay on their part in having arrived at the appointment of a proper staff, seriously jeopardizes the whole work, and knowing your own keen anxiety in it I take the liberty of again raising the whole question, in the hope that you may be again able to intercede to secure expedition. You will realize that we of the Commission are now entirely helpless in the matter of administration in Belgium and that the whole responsibility to the Belgian people of continuance of their supplies must rest on the Spanish and Dutch Governments, for we will not fail in delivering them to the frontier.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 500

Telegram,
HOOVER TO VILLALOBAR, urging the establishment of the Spanish-Dutch organization

LONDON, 19 April 1917

MARQUIS VILLALOBAR
SPANISH EMBASSY, THE HAGUE

I am directed to come to Washington and shall be leaving soon for that destination. It does appear to me that the critical thing in the Relief is to get Spanish-Dutch protective Committee erected and in operation at once, as the taking of cattle and other evidences of German encroachment on guarantees are causing greatest possible disturbance amongst Allied Governments and it appears to me that you should secure the appointment of a Spanish gentleman of importance and character as chairman, jointly with Dutch gentleman of same qualifications, who will between them select their various delegates and get the machine going in Belgium. We do not wish to impose our views, but think one chairman should deal with Étape and Northern France so as to hold all dealings with staff in one hand, and responsibility of other to deal with Occupation Zone matters of course both under your direction. Gray positively cannot remain beyond May 1st, and in any event negotiations between him and German authorities are wholly irregular, and not countenanced by our Government. I am asking our Rotterdam office to show you

copy of letter which I despatched to Ambassador Merry del Val. Generally if our ships are not torpedoed and if the interior guarantees are adhered to and an adequate protective organization is created in Belgium, there is no reason why the Relief Commission should not go on; in fact, its finance, food, and shipment possibilities are much improved by probable entrance of American Government into its financial affairs. It will be impossible for me to substantiate the Commission with the American Government who must in future furnish its finance, shipping, and foodstuffs, unless we can point to a sound and solid organization replacing C.R.B. inside Belgium. It seems to me that you, knowing the whole background of this work, are the only person who can solve the difficulties in present emergency, and that all negotiations with various parties outside your leadership are practically wasted owing to entire lack of understanding of the difficulties and requirements.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 501

Telegram,
VILLALOBAR TO HOOVER, replying to above and stating agreement with Hoover's proposals

THE HAGUE, 23 April 1917

HOOVER, LONDON

Thanks your telegram, with regrets not seeing you now. Deeply sorry Gray cannot remain, but after your manifestation and my conversation here with Sir Walter Townley give up hope keeping him in Brussels and have wired to Madrid asking His Majesty's Government send adequate Spanish Director, who I hope will be able to take up work with Dutch Director within ten days. Meanwhile I beg you leave in Brussels Gray for a few days longer only, as I think it most convenient for sake everything and your own advantage that he should personally show their duties to both new directors. Your statement United States Government to find finance, food, and shipment pleases me greatly and is the best assurance for new arrangement organization. I am fully convinced that we shall be able to continue and secure all present guarantees from German authorities. Rotterdam office has given me copy of your telegram and I beg to state that if directors have not yet been appointed by neutral Governments it is due to desire hold Gray in Brussels, as we considered that your own man was the most efficient person to continue work. I have handed to Sir Walter Townley for yourself and information Foreign Office copy of German answer to my plaint and your telegram to me in reference to last boat torpedoed in order that it reaches you sooner. Thanks for confidence you

kindly place my good-will and anxiety for this work of relief. You may heartily count upon it, but nothing can be accomplished without you. Therefore I am sure that you will never fail to maintain the relief of this unfortunate country of Belgium that feels so indebted to your genius, your activity, your constant attention and interest.

VILLALOBAR

By the end of April most of the details of the new neutral committee had been settled and the Spanish and Dutch delegates were taking up their duties in Belgium and Northern France. Poland, the Commission's Director in London, who carried on the negotiations after Hoover's departure for America, drew up a statement of the duties of the new organization (eventually named Comité Hispano-Néerlandais pour la Protection du Ravitaillement de la Belgique et du Nord de la France) vis-à-vis the Commission, the Comité National, and the Comité Français, and this was approved by the British, French, Belgian, and German Governments. Gray remained in Brussels long enough to instruct the Spanish and Dutch representatives in the work which they were to perform. By the first of May all the Americans were out of Belgium and the Commission's Brussels office in charge of Baetens was in full operation.

DOCUMENT NO. 502

Letter,
POLAND TO HYMANS, announcing the Spanish and Dutch officials of the new committee

LONDON, 28 April 1917

His Excellency Monsieur Paul Hymans
Belgian Legation, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

As you have undoubtedly been advised, Mr. J. E. Roura has been appointed Spanish Director of the new Comité de Protection du Ravitaillement, London. He will have offices at No. 3 London Wall Buildings.

We are just advised that Jhr E Michiels van Verduynen has been appointed Dutch Director Holland. He is Under Secretary at the Dutch Foreign Office and our Rotterdam office consider the choice most fortunate.

Señor Don Pedro Saura, formerly, I believe, in the Spanish consular service, Berlin, been appointed Spanish Chairman Brussels. He is assisted by Señor Buylla and several other Spanish subjects.

Herr Langenbergh, formerly attaché at the Dutch Legation in Brussels, has been appointed Dutch Chairman.

You have further already been advised that a number of Spanish and Dutch delegates have taken on their work in Belgium and France replacing the American representatives who have retired. It therefore appears that the new neutral committee is being placed on a satisfactory basis to take over the protection of the ravitaillement in the invaded territories.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

The full name of the new Committee is:
Comité Hispano-Hollandais pour la Protection du Ravitaillement de la Belgique et du Nord de la France.

Identical letters to:
Sir Hugh Daly, Foreign Office
M. Roger Cambon, French Embassy.

Copy to: H.E. Merry del Val

DOCUMENT NO. 503

Letter,
GRAY TO FRANQUI, outlining the functions of the various departments of the reorganized relief machinery

BRUSSELS, 25 April 1917

Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation
Brussels
Attention of Mr. Francqui

GENTLEMEN:

At your suggestion, and in order to place upon a firm footing the relation of the various committees occupied with the ravitaillement of Belgium, I beg to set forth

our ideas of the plan of reorganization which is made necessary by the recall of the Americans in Belgium

In order to secure efficient neutral governmental support of the relief in Belgium, a new committee has been formed called "Comité Neutre pour la Protection du Ravitaillement." This committee shall be under the direct patronage of the Spanish and Dutch Governments, or their Ambassadors and Ministers, and shall have two chairmen resident in Brussels, one Dutch and one Spanish, with Dutch and Spanish delegates in the provinces and districts.

The Dutch chairman shall have special charge of the Belgian Étape and Northern France, while the Spanish chairman shall have special charge of the General Government in Belgium. These two chairmen shall co-operate on general policy, and shall settle, in conjunction with their Patron Ministers, the distribution of their subordinate staffs. This committee shall also maintain a Dutch Director in the Rotterdam office of the C.R.B. and a Spanish Director in the London office of the C.R.B., who will act as intermediaries in all negotiations with the German Government.

The functions of the "Comité Neutre pour la Protection du Ravitaillement" shall be to carry on the Bureau of Inspection and Control; to insure the faithful carrying out of the guarantees given by the contracting governments upon which the relief in Belgium rests; and to assist the national, provincial, and local committees when requested to do so.

The Comité National and the Comité pour le Ravitaillement du Nord de la France shall have exclusive control over all questions of accounts, rations, and distribution of imported foodstuffs. The present departments of the C.R.B. of Milling Control, Clothing, Statistics, and Automobiles shall be conducted hereafter by the Comité National.

The Commission for Relief in Belgium will continue the purchase and shipment of foodstuffs for Belgium and Northern France. They will continue the management and control of the New York, London, and Rotterdam offices and the shipment of imported merchandise to lighter and rail terminals in the Belgian provinces and the French districts.

The C.R.B. will appoint a representative in Belgium who will be responsible to them for the proper conduct of these affairs. He shall receive from the provincial delegates of the C.N. or of the C.F. receipts for the delivery of merchandise at the above-mentioned terminals, whereupon the responsibility of the C.R.B. shall cease. These goods shall be delivered in such proportions and at such places as indicated by the C.N. The representative of the C.R.B. shall send the division lists, upon

which these deliveries are based and which he shall receive from the C.N., to the Rotterdam office of the C.R.B. He shall co-operate with the C.N. in all matters appertaining to his department, such as exchange of accounts, settlement of bills of lading, etc.

Carrying out this program the Commission for Relief in Belgium has today addressed a letter (copy attached) to Mr. Fernand Baetens, appointing him as their representative in Belgium, effective from May 1, 1917.

We have also addressed a similar communication to His Excellency the Marquis de Villalobar and to Mr. van Vollenhoven and have asked them, as well as yourself, to signify their approval.

Very sincerely yours

(Signed) P. N. GRAY
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 504

Letter,
POLAND TO CAMBON, with an outline of the functions of the C.R.B. and the Comité de Protection under the new arrangement

LONDON, 1 May 1917

Monsieur Roger Cambon French Embassy, London

DEAR MR. ROGER CAMBON:

In accordance with your request, I send you herewith a memorandum outlining what we conceive to be the functions in Holland and the occupied territories of the Commission for Relief under the new arrangement, also the operations of the new Comité de Protection and its relations to the various governments and the work of the Commission. We have purposely made this rather brief---possibly you will think not brief enough. Undoubtedly, much liberty should be left to the new neutral body. On the other hand, if some fairly definite plan is not presented as approved by the interested governments, we fear that the different ideas which the various important personages concerned will have may result in almost endless discussion and lack of immediate efficiency. It is therefore suggested that if this outline meets with the approval of the French Government, in accord with the British Government, to whom I am sending a similar draft, you will present same to the Belgian Minister as the plan approved by the Governments of France and Great Britain and request that same be forwarded for the information of the Comité

National. I would suggest that it also be sent to Minister Loudon, at The Hague, and to the Spanish Ambassador, London.

Will you keep us posted as to your action so that we may in turn send the necessary advice to our Director in Holland?

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director in Europe

PART I

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

The Rotterdam office of the C.R.B., following instructions transmitted by the London office from the interested governments, will determine the distribution of imports as between Belgium and the occupied territory of the North of France.

Commodities will be forwarded by the Rotterdam office of the C.R.B. consigned as heretofore to the C.N. or to the C.F., care of the C.N.

The Chief Representative of the C.R.B. in Brussels will continue, as at present, in accord with the C.N. and the C.F., to make reports through the Rotterdam office to the Director for Europe in London, concerning all matters in connection with the transportation and distribution of these commodities.

Financial accounts and statistics in connection with these shipments will be handled by the Brussels and Rotterdam offices of the C.R.B., and transactions will be reported as at present through the Rotterdam office to London.

The distribution of C.R.B. imports from the first unloading point within the occupied territory to final destination, will be handled, as at present, by the Provincial and District Committees of the C.N. and the C.F.

The responsibility for the protection of these imported goods, from the moment they cross the Belgian frontier, will rest with the Comité Hispano-Hollandais pour la Protection du Ravitaillement.

PART II

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE COMITÉ DE PROTECTION

A. Organization

1. The Comité Hispano-Hollandais pour la Protection du Ravitaillement (hereinafter designated the Comité de Protection) will have, within the occupied territories, two Chairmen---one Dutch and one Spanish---resident in Brussels, and a requisite number of representatives attached to the Brussels office and to the various provinces and districts.
2. There will be a Spanish Director resident in London and a Dutch Director resident in Holland.
3. A general Department of Inspection and Control will be maintained at Brussels, on the same basis as heretofore by the C.R.B.
4. The provincial and district representatives will be members of all provincial, district, regional, and local committees within their territory. Thus they will be in touch with the processes of distribution down to the ultimate consumer. They will report weekly to the Department of Inspection and Control on all cases of violations of the guarantees of the occupying authorities as to imported goods or native foodstuffs and also to the chairmen on other matters connected with the ravitaillement.
5. The expenses of the members of the Comité de Protection and its office expenses will be paid on vouchers submitted to the chief representatives of the C.R.B. in Brussels, or to the C.R.B. Director in Rotterdam, or to the C.R.B. Director for Europe in London, on the basis heretofore established for members of the C.R.B.

B. Responsibilities

1. The Comité de Protection is responsible for the safeguarding of the supplies forwarded by the C.R.B. at Rotterdam from the time they cross the Belgian frontier until they have been actually distributed to the civil populations of the occupied territories. It is responsible for the suppression of all illicit traffic in commodities imported under the guarantees. Together with its Patron Ministers it is in general responsible for the carrying out of the several guarantees and undertakings of the interested governments as regards the ravitaillement.
2. Should there occur any violation of the guarantees given by the occupying authorities, the Comité de Protection is responsible for calling the attention of the proper authority to the incident in question, either directly through its chairmen or through its Patron Ministers.
3. It is particularly expected that the Comité de Protection will act with the C.N. and the C.F . in all negotiations with the occupying authorities in regard to any matters which naturally concern the ravitaillement and secours.

C. Reports to Be Presented by the Comité de Protection

1. It will be the office of the chairmen of the Comité de Protection to prepare weekly reports as to the protection of imports, the distribution of native products, the faithful execution of the guarantees of the occupying authorities and any protests presented or negotiations entered into concerning them. These reports will be forwarded through the director of the Comité de Protection in Holland to its director in London. The director in London will present copies of these reports to the London office of the C.R.B., to the British Government, and to the diplomatic representatives of France and Belgium in London. The director in Holland will also furnish copies of these reports to the director at Rotterdam of the C.R.B.

2. It is also expected that the chairmen, being, with their Patron Ministers, the general protectors of the ravitaillement, will, from time to time, in accord with the C.N. and the C.F., furnish the C.R.B. and the governments interested, with their reports and recommendations as to the general conditions and needs of the people of the occupied territories.

DOCUMENT NO. 505

Letter,

SIR EYRE A. CROWE TO C.R.B., LONDON, regarding the approval of the outline given above

FOREIGN OFFICE, 19 May 1917

The Secretary

The Commission for Relief in Belgium

SIR:

With reference to your letter of the 1st instant, which enclosed a copy of a letter of the same date to the French Embassy, and of a memorandum outlining the functions of the new Committee at Brussels, I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to inform you that the memorandum has been transmitted to the Spanish Ambassador and the Netherland Minister, as accepted by the British, French, and Belgian Governments, and with a request that it may be communicated to the Spanish and Dutch Chairmen of the new Committee.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble,

Servant

(Signed) EYRE A. CROWE

DOCUMENT NO. 506

Letter,
ZIMMERMANN TO POLO DE BERNABÉ, SPANISH AMBASSADOR AT
BERLIN, stating the German Government's approval of the new arrangements for
relief

BERLIN, 15 June, 1917

*To His Excellency M. Polo de Bernabé
Spanish Ambassador at Berlin*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

In reply to the letter which Your Excellency was good enough to address to me on the 31st May last, Belgian Affairs No. Reg. 3198, I have the honor to inform you that the Governor-General in Belgium has given his assent to the propositions contained in the note concerning the organization of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the new "Comité Neutre pour la Protection du Ravitaillement," which Messieurs the Protecting Ministers addressed to the Baron von der Lancken Wakenitz on the 1st May last.

Please accept, Your Excellency, etc., etc

(Signed) ZIMMERMANN

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 507

Letter,
POLAND TO SIR HUGH DALY, regarding final decisions of governments
concerned in respect to the patrons of the new committee

LONDON, 12 July 1917

*Sir Hugh Daly
The Foreign Office, London*

DEAR SIR HUGH DALY:

Confirming my recent conversation with you, I beg to advise that the slight difficulty in regard to Patrons of the Committee for Protection has now been adjusted. You will recall that there was some objection on the part of the Dutch to having the Spanish Minister at The Hague a joint Patron with the Queen of Holland. However, this has all been adjusted by withdrawing the Spanish Minister as Patron and also withdrawing the Jonkheer de Weede at The Hague, leaving as Patrons the Spanish Minister and the Dutch Minister Resident in Brussels, and the Spanish Ambassador and the Dutch Minister in London as the only active Patrons of the Committee. We have been advised that the King of Spain and the Queen of Holland have accepted the patronage of the Committee, but we assume that this is in an honorary capacity and that they should not appear upon letterheads, et cetera.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

4. The C.R.B. and United States War Administration. January-October 1918

Once established, the Spanish-Dutch Committee performed with devotion and skill the duties which devolved upon it in respect to belligerent guarantees and negotiations with the Germans.⁽³⁴⁷⁾ On its part the Commission continued its established status and functions of finance, purchase and shipping at Rotterdam, London, and elsewhere without change, except that the Chairman was in Washington, where he was able to perform particularly valuable services for relief in meeting the problems of finance, shipping, and food.⁽³⁴⁸⁾ In the face of a world shortage of ships and food and the increasing demands growing out of America's military effort, there were repeated insistent suggestions that in order to save the cause of the Allies from disaster the program of relief should be curtailed. Thanks to Hoover's position and influence in the councils of the Allies and the American Government these suggestions were never carried out, and Belgian and French relief received equal priority with war requirements. The documents which follow indicate various means employed by Hoover to guard the interests of relief through this period which in the economic sphere was the most critical of the war.

DOCUMENT NO. 508

Letter,
HOOVER TO FRANCOU, describing certain food problems and the relation of the C.R.B. to the Food Administration

WASHINGTON, 24 January 1918

MY DEAR FRANCOIS:

I am greatly obliged for your letter of late November.

Our situation when we started the Relief, was one of anxiety only as to finance; later on we added the anxiety of shipping, and now we have to add another and even greater anxiety than either of the other two---and that is the food supply.

As to the first, the American Government, at my solicitation, agreed to raise the total advances for Belgium to \$9,000,000 a month, and to Northern France, to \$6,000,000 a month. This was made conditional upon certain sums provided by the French and English Governments. Some confusion has arisen as to the total sum of money to be raised, which I think can be cleared up. One has to bear in mind with regard to all these advances that they cannot be considered by the Governments as loans in a normal sense of probable repayment; they are practically absolute gifts to this great purpose. Furthermore, in these desperate times repayment at a thousand per cent could not compensate for the drain on national resources in furnishing such moneys.

In the matter of shipping, by one device or another we have managed, during the last few months, to get sufficient to keep the minimum ration moving. On the other hand, so many international interests supervene which delay the shipping, that it is impossible to calculate in advance any longer a precision in arrivals; nor is it possible to take an amount of shipping out of the world's total that would give a satisfactory margin of safety.

In the matter of foodstuffs, the exportable balance of wheat from America is exhausted. We have not the shipping to go to more remote markets, and all of the grain sent to Belgium is now the result of repression in consumption in the United States. You will be astonished to realize that I am now putting the American people on a practical rationing of many of the commodities most urgently needed in Europe, with a view to saving from our consumption a sufficiency to carry the Belgian Relief and to provide their essential foods.

As my department practically controls the despatch of foodstuffs from the United States, you may be assured that the Belgian Relief will have full priority in shipments. It is not possible that we can choose the exact character and condition in which foodstuffs will arrive. We must load whatever character of food we may have available at the time, and therefore you may expect to receive some shiploads of flour, some shiploads of corn, and some shiploads of wheat, but we will try to make up a total quantity sufficient for you to struggle through.

The Commission for Relief in Belgium has an office next door to mine in this department and is a matter of constant solicitude. You and I thought from time to time, in years gone by, that we had overcome almost overwhelming difficulties I am afraid the difficulties ahead of us are even greater, but I believe by virtue of the position which I now hold that solution will be found. I am confident that were it not for the influence I am able to exert from this position, the Relief would long since have broken down. The next six months are the most difficult period that we will have to face, because every indication promises enormously increased production from the United States both of food and ships, all of which will be realizable in the last half of this year.

I cannot speak too highly of the single-minded devotion which Messrs. Poland, Honnold, Brown, Gray, Rickard, and Shaler still give to the management of the Relief work after all these years. Positions much more attractive from a public point of view have been offered to these men, and the constancy with which they are giving this service without profit to themselves is beyond any experience that I have hitherto had in dealing with men.

I trust that you and your people may keep good courage. All that is humanly possible is being done for Belgium, and I believe that something near the present program will be carried out without failure.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 509

Letter,

HOOVER TO HEMPHILL, proposing the appointment of the Grain Corporation as agent for the C.R.B. in purchase and shipment of foodstuffs

WASHINGTON, 27 June 1918

*A. J. Hemphill, Esq., Chairman
Guaranty Trust Company, New York City*

MY DEAR MR. HEMPHILL:

We have, for a long time, been having a large amount of discussion leading to the formulation of plans for co-ordination of our port handling and railway traffic, together with overseas shipment of foodstuffs. As a step in this co-ordination we have decided that the Food Administration will undertake the purchase, and convey to seaboard and storage, all cereals and cereal foodstuffs from the United States. It

will thus become the sole dealer in foodstuffs for export and it will deal with exporters at the wharf and warehouse along the seaboard.

The effect of this will be a much better management of our storage and dock facilities, the ability to load ships from every source from stocks without necessity of any one shipper awaiting the arrival of special purchasers.

I am anxious that the Belgian Relief shall have a complete preference in this situation and I believe we could kill two or three birds with one stone if we constituted the Food Administration Grain Corporation as the agents of the Belgian Relief; that corporation to handle the Belgian Relief shipping and all export foodstuffs. The method would be for the Belgian Relief to make a deposit with the Grain Corporation to cover operations. The Grain Corporation would take charge of the loading and purchase and would furnish at periodic intervals an accounting to the Relief Commission. The Relief Commission would furnish to the Grain Corporation a program and place at its disposal the necessary shipping, and the Grain Corporation would practically do the rest. This would involve the transference of some departments of the Relief to the Grain Corporation.

In order to make matters smooth, I have had Honnold down and discussed the matter with him during the last day or two, and I would be glad if you and your colleagues would consider the whole project.

The Belgian Relief will be on practically an identical basis with other exporters of foodstuffs from the United States, and if we take this above step we make it absolutely sure that the Belgian Relief has priority not only on purchases but priority on berthing of ships, etc., etc., as it will be the spirit of the Food Administration to see to that end. What is more, I feel that it gives the Government a little further commitment to the Belgian Relief and I think it will ease up financial arrangements with the Treasury.

You understand of course that the Grain Corporation operates without profit and its large-scale operations will in the long run result in great economics for the Belgian Relief.

I have discussed the detailed arrangements with Honnold to show how it would work out from an organization point of view, and he will take it up with you.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

Letter,

HOOVER TO FRANQUI, reviewing measures taken to insure the continuation of the full Belgian program

WASHINGTON, 3 October 1918

Monsieur Emile Francqui Brussels

MY DEAR FRANQUI:

I was greatly pleased to receive your letter of early September. The situation of the Belgian Relief is a matter of anxiety at all times, but more particularly during the past six months. The movement of the gigantic American Army of three and one-half million men into Europe and the coincident necessity to feed the Allies from the United States has oftentimes introduced into the councils of all the governments the query as to whether the Belgian Relief should be sacrificed to the greater aim of the ultimate liberation of Belgium. I am happy to say that although decisions were taken adverse to us by practically all of the governments, [\(349\)](#) at one time, we did, by concerted action of all of the friends of Belgium, secure a reversal of this policy.

By the conditions which we succeeded in introducing through the American Government into the negotiations for Swedish tonnage, we have had assigned to us 200,000 tons of dead-weight shipping, not otherwise available in the war zone, thus placing us in a position of comparative security. In order to accomplish this, however, it was necessary for me to undertake the sacrifice of such imports as sugar and coffee into the United States in an amount that would equalize the situation. The effect of this has been loyally borne by the American population in the feeling that they were making a direct sacrifice to the Belgian people, and the small sugar and coffee allowances which the American people are receiving today are constant reminders to them of this sacrifice.

Except through such stipulations as I have made in negotiations with Holland as to the employment of their idle tonnage, there is but little hope of increasing our fleet at the present time. We have introduced every device that we could invent for the speedier operation of the boats and thus their greater aggregate carrying capacity. I have taken over the purchase of all Belgian Relief supplies and the loading of the boats by the Food Administration in order that we can give a very practical and effective priority to these ships over all other food ships, thus materially reducing delays in loading.

I have some hope that within five or six months the American ship-building program will have reached dimensions with regard to certain types of ships, that the negotiations we have instituted for the purchase of these ships from the American Government will bear fruit, and that the program will become a little more assured after that date.

The present cost of the Relief is running into huge sums, and we have, for the present at least, settled the financial necessities by the undertaking of the American Government to pay for the materials purchased in the United States on condition that the French and British Governments pay for the shipping charges of such foodstuffs as may be purchased in Europe. The food situation of the world is of course such that there is now but little hope of securing their foodstuffs otherwise than in the American market. Certain commodities obtained through England are no longer open, and it throws a rather larger load on our fleet to make the journey, than hitherto when we were obtaining some supplies from other sources.

While our harvests in North America this year are much better than last in the matter of wheat, they are much poorer in corn, and for that reason I am, for the present, substituting wheat for corn in the program, as I have the feeling that the greater food values will be obtained through wheat than through corn, despite the dislocation as to minor questions.

I am suggesting to the various governments that we directly import into Belgium oils from this country for the manufacture of soap.

I hope you will take opportunity to convey my sympathy and feeling to all those in Belgium and the devotion which the whole of the American people feel to their cause.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XIII

LIQUIDATION OF THE C.R.B.

1. Problems of Liquidation

The recovery by the Allied Armies in October and November 1918 of the French and Belgian territories so long held by the Germans did not end the Commission's service to the people of these regions.⁽³⁵⁰⁾ There were no agencies, public or private, then in a position to take over the Commission's functions, which were, at the request of the French and Belgian Governments, continued for several months after the Armistice. No beginning was made, therefore, with the liquidation of the Commission until the two Governments were ready to assume its responsibilities.

In the meantime, in order to hasten the rehabilitation of those people who had lived in destitution so long, the Commission delivered hundreds of thousands of tons of foodstuffs and clothing through the long-established relief channels. As rapidly as possible new channels that had been closed by the war were reopened. In January 1919 the Belgian port of Antwerp, so long in German hands, replaced Rotterdam as the C.R.B.'s main transshipping point for Belgium. For some time, also, the stream of supplies for Northern France necessarily flowed from the north (as during the war), for although the armies had moved on, a wide strip of devastation blocked the routes from the south. The situation in Belgium in the months immediately after the Armistice and the methods adopted by the Commission to meet this situation are indicated in the following document.(351)

DOCUMENT NO. 511

Extracts from letter,
POLAND TO GRAY, describing the post-Armistice situation in Belgium and the work undertaken by the Commission

LONDON, 3 January 1919

MY DEAR GRAY:

I have just gotten back from a continuous round in Belgium and liberated France, which began on the 5th of November. From that time on I have been only one day in London and I cannot remember spending more than three nights in succession in the same bed.

The situation following the evacuation was very bad indeed. Transport had almost completely broken down, and we none of us realized how completely the initiative of the people of the occupied territories had been crushed by four years of domination. Even those men whom we thought most resourceful and strong in standing against the Germans were for a long time almost helpless and are only now beginning to recover independence of thought and power to execute. It became absolutely necessary for the C.R.B. in Belgium to act in order that the distribution might be forced through. We were, in fact, urged by the individual members of the Government to assist their local committees in reorganization, but it was at the same time evident that they wished the impression to go out, for political purposes, that the entire feeding of the liberated region was due to the efforts of the Government. From the human point of view this was perfectly understandable, since it was evident that, unless they could win the high appreciation of the Belgian populace in such manner, they could not expect to retain office. A first natural reaction also caused the Belgians to feel that now they could act for themselves and

needed no outside assistance, and that it would not be in accordance with their self-respect to have Americans in direct control of their internal ravitaillement system.

This spirit still continues, although there is an enormous and continually growing feeling of appreciation of what we have done. Personally I respect the Belgians for their attitude in this matter and entirely sympathize with them, and think it proper that we should cease to intervene in their national affairs just as soon as it is physically possible for us to withdraw.

The situation concerning ravitaillement at the moment is this: The Minister of Ravitaillement, M. Wauters (a Socialist) has taken over on the part of the Government responsibility for the carrying on of the work. He is a man of intelligence, but not very well posted on the general subject of ravitaillement and inclined not to make a move unless he knows he is right. The result is that, while matters are becoming gradually better organized, action is being taken very slowly on questions which require immediate decision.

The Comité National has consented to continue the execution of the work of ravitaillement, the responsibility, however, resting with the Ministry of Ravitaillement

In connection with the Minister, Van Brée, Francqui, Brown, Baetens, and so forth, I went over the food situation and in accordance with the agreements with the British and French Governments prepared a new program which provides for about [3,000] calories per day, instead of the 2,000 we previously attempted to send in. This has to be modified slightly, cutting out maize for one thing, and latest corrected copy is now being forwarded to you. Our relation to the work will be that for the present we will, in accord with the Belgian Ministry of Ravitaillement, etc., determine the amount of the imports of main products to be furnished monthly. In doing this we will obtain approval of the Allied Governments and will take into account the amount of foodstuffs which drifts into the country through private initiative. We will receive from the Comité National (for the Belgian Government) such distribution statements as will enable us to know that the proper protection is being given to the various provinces. We will no longer ask for statements of distribution to communes. Goods will be held in the name of the C.R.B. until actually turned over by Antwerp or Rotterdam through the Comité National for distribution. We will supply the ships and make purchases as heretofore.

In regard to secours we will cease to intervene except in continuing to distribute the quantities of used clothing which your Red Cross campaign in the United States is providing.(352) After our present orders have been filled, we will cease to intervene in the new clothing situation in Belgium, leaving it to Belgian Government initiative. Meanwhile, however, it is absolutely essential that the used clothing be distributed, if the people are to be clothed, as the purchase of new

clothing runs into such enormous figures that I think it unlikely that the Government would be able to finance it.

On January 1st Fletcher and a small office staff were moved to Antwerp. The intention is gradually to transfer the Rotterdam office to that point, and Brown will take up residence in Antwerp about the 25th of January. The Belgians are crazy to get Antwerp put into service again and there is no reason why this should not be done as soon as the port is prepared to receive steamers, which it is not at present. The Germans had the entire place blocked with an enormous, quantity of dead freight such as coal, paving blocks, immense quantities of lumber, gravel, iron carts, various sorts of heavy munitions, which must be removed before there is room to handle cargoes. We expect that the food steamers will be handled about the 15th of January, but the port will have to be put into service slowly.

On the other hand, the Food Administration expects to turn over to the C.R.B. for storage at Rotterdam over one hundred thousand tons of cargo, which for political purposes will be held in the name of the C.R.B. to be distributed later. It will therefore be necessary to maintain our Dutch office organization unless conditions change which they are doing almost daily.

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Faithfully your friend

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

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In accordance with Hoover's plan to turn over the provisioning of the recently occupied districts to their Governments as soon as the latter were prepared to undertake it, the Commission began in May 1919 to hand over its relief vessels to a Belgian Government agency.(353) In Northern France, meanwhile, the transportation lines from the south had been repaired and the French Government was able to include these districts in its national program. These developments indicated that the Commission need no longer continue as the provisioning agency for the 9,000,000 Belgian and French people and might commence the formidable job of liquidation. The tables(354) which follow showing, first, the gross operations of the Provisioning and Benevolent Departments, and, secondly, the funds received and disbursed by the Commission, give an idea of the size of the enterprise and explain why liquidation was itself a very large undertaking. Practically all the currencies of the world entered into the financial accounting of the Commission. In order to simplify the bookkeeping the following exchange ratios were maintained during the active period of the Commission, realized differences being charged to an exchange account: \$4.85 =£1 = Frs. 25.40 = Fls. 12.03. For convenience the

accounting figures, originally in sterling, are converted to dollars at \$4.85 in the following tables.

TABLE I
BRIEF STATEMENT OF GROSS OPERATIONS OF THE PROVISIONING
AND BENEVOLENT DEPARTMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

A. Provisioning Department. This division of the organization operated as a business enterprise in the purchase, transportation, and sale of supplies for the provisioning of the population.

OPERATING ACCOUNT. PROVISIONING DEPARTMENT

Purchase value of provisions	\$642,451,917.81
Transport expense	165,239,023.32
Total provisions	\$807,690,294.13
Charges on 20,000,000 rations supplied in Belgium through British Army	\$ 4,377,650.26
Overhead and administration(355) (entire organization)	3,908,892.74
Total charges	\$815,977,484.13
Surplus on sales, including profits on transactions entirely outside Belgium and France (available for benevolence)	\$111,704,000.95
Total operations, Provisioning Department	\$927,681,485.08

B. Benevolent Department. The function of this department was the care of the destitute.

BENEVOLENT ACCOUNT. BENEVOLENT DEPARTMENT

World charity	\$ 52,290,835.51
Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation profits transferred to Commission for benevolence	23,933,542.26
Provisioning Department surplus transferred	111,704,000.95
Total available for benevolence	\$187,928,378.72

TABLE II.
SUMMARY OF FUNDS RECEIVED AND FUNDS DISBURSED BY THE COMMISSION

FUNDS RECEIVED BY COMMISSION

A. Government Subsidies (advanced as loans to Belgium and France)

1. Through United States Treasury	\$386,632,260.44	
2. Through British Treasury	109,045,328.73	
3. Through French Treasury	204,862,854.21	
Total Government Subsidies	\$700,540,443.38	78.4%

B. World Charity

1. From United States	\$34,521,026.99	
2. From British Empire	16,641,034.85	
3. From General Sources	1,128,773.67	
Total World Charity	\$52,290,835.51	5.8%

C. Commercial Exchange

Remittances to individuals in Belgium	\$ 6,328,328.30	0.7%
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D. Operating Surplus and Profit(356)

Available for benevolence	\$135,637,543.21	15.1%
Grand Total Funds Received	\$894,797,150.40	100.0%

FUNDS DISBURSED BY COMMISSION

I. BELGIUM

A. Goods supplied and expenditure incurred to the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation	\$557,201,132.57
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B. Cost of 20,000,000 rations supplied by the C.R.B. through the British War Office	4,377,650.26
C. Commercial exchange. Remittances to individuals in Belgium	6,328,328.30
D. C.R.B. benevolence. Gifts of cash and clothing	48,511,734.00
E. Refund of working capital to the United States Treasury as reduction of loans to Belgium (£383,013 at \$4.85. Current rate at repayment was \$3.95)	1,857,613.43
Total funds disbursed on Belgian account	\$618,276,458.56

II. FRANCE

A. Goods supplied and expenditure incurred	
1. To the Comité d'Alimentation	\$216,033,665.27

du Nord de la France	
2. To the Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées	16,017,195.20
B. C.R.B. benevolence. Gifts of cash and clothing	21,226,073.42
C. Refund of working capital to the United States Treasury. As reduction of loans to France (£4,366,200 at \$4.85. Current rate at repayment was \$3.95)	21,176,070.00
Total funds disbursed on French account	\$274,453,003.89

III. NORTHERN RELIEF

Clothing distributed through the American Relief Administration	\$ 2,067,687.95
Grand total funds disbursed	\$894,797,150.40

2. Procedure of Liquidation

Beginning with the first weeks of its life in 1914 and throughout the entire five years of its existence the Commission issued weekly and monthly financial statements and periodical reports concerning the relief work. These were submitted to its diplomatic sponsors, to the interested governments, and distributed widely to the public. As the following documents show, Hoover had, at an early date, secured precise definitions of the Commission's responsibilities and official approval of its accounting methods from the governments concerned. The conditions of war made it extremely difficult to present complete accounting statements of the vast enterprise at specific dates prior to the termination of relief shipments, but on the 10th May 1919 Hoover laid before the Belgian and French Governments his proposals for the liquidation of the Commission's financial accountability to these Governments. This was a restatement of principles that had already been agreed upon, and both Treasuries gave their formal assent.

DOCUMENT NO. 512

Memorandum,
by HOOVER FOR VAN BE VYVERE, regarding the financial responsibility(357)
of the C.R.B. for funds received for relief in Belgium

LONDON, 15 July 1916

1. The responsibility for moneys expended by public subscription and commercial exchange and their expenditure are exclusively upon the C.R.B. and C.N.
2. The Belgian Government accepts the principle that their monthly subsidy constitutes a remittance through the C.R.B. to the C.N. for expenditure on the "Secours Extraordinaire" for the purposes listed in the Provisional Accounts of May 31 (No. 57) and such additional purposes as may be authorized from time to time by the Belgian Government.
3. The Belgian Government accepts the principle that the C.R.B. is completely discharged of all responsibility to the Belgian Government by a certificate of Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, that the subsidies of the Belgian Government had been paid to the C.N. and any balances so unpaid to be refunded to the Belgian Government in cash by the C.R.B. or in goods at cost.
4. The Belgian Government to hold the C.N. responsible for the expenditure of the various departments of the "Secours Extraordinaire" until they have had an opportunity to satisfy themselves after the war.
5. The Belgian Government insists that the profits of the C.R.B. and the C.N., while in part the result of volunteer service, are also in part due to profit on exchange; and

the Belgian Government agrees that that part which is due to volunteer service may be expended by the C.R.B. and C.N. for any purpose to the benefit of the Belgian people upon which the C.R.B. and C.N. may agree.

6. The Belgian Government insists that that portion of the profits which is due to exchange shall be accounted for to the Belgian Government. In respect, however, of the profits made on exchange, these are to be calculated as being the difference between the standard rate of the C.R.B. and C.N. of Frs. 25.40 and the average rate month by month of the exchange of French currency in London, and to be determined by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, whose statement shall be final.

7. It is agreed that the C.R.B. and the C.N. may at once expend the profits from exchange upon "Secours Ordinaire" and may reserve the profits arising from volunteer service until after the profits from exchange have been so expended and that any balance which they may have so unexpended they may make use of as in (5) and that a certificate from Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, that such exchange profits have been so expended upon the "Secours, Ordinaire" shall be a final discharge of all responsibility of the C.R.B. and the C.N. any unexpended balance of the profits from exchange to be refunded to the Belgian Government in cash.

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DOCUMENT NO. 513

Extract of Memorandum([358](#))
of August (1916) conferences in Paris between Hoover and the representatives of the French and Belgian Governments regarding the financial responsibility of the C.R.B. for French relief

PARIS, 28 August 1916

.....

G. The Commission proposes to introduce certain laws in regard to accounts in the North of France, and to impose certain obligations as regards payments to be made by the communes or the municipalities; these rules and obligations shall have received the approval of the French Government.

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DOCUMENT NO. 514

Memorandum,
HOOVER TO BELGIAN AND FRENCH TREASURIES, describing the methods

by which the Commission was financed and requesting official approval of the form of the final financial accounts which he proposed to submit

PARIS, 10 May 1919

I

This Commission was founded in October 1914 as a voluntary agency for the relief of the civil populations of Belgium and Northern France. Its accounts have been kept from the beginning by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, of London, this firm furnishing the accounting or auditing personnel in London, New York, and Rotterdam.

It has been impossible to make complete accounting during the war, owing to the obvious difficulties of communication over belligerent lines, and it has been considered wise since the Armistice not to attempt to draw up a completed statement until the activities of the Commission have been brought to an end. All buying of foodstuffs ceased on May first and deliveries will be complete by June first, and within two or three months thereafter absolutely completed accounts can be presented. The benevolent activities of the Commission will continue.

The Commission was founded initially on the basis of public benevolence, but, with the accruing task, it has built up its resources from many different directions. That is:

a) Public Charity; free, or partially free, service of individuals, railways, shipping companies, etc.; profits realized on the sale of goods to others than Belgians and French---"external profits"; profits earned on goods sold to the populations of Belgium and Northern France---"internal profits."

b) Commercial exchange.

c) Advances made to the Belgian Government from the British, French, and American Treasuries for transmission to the Commission; advances made by the French Treasury to the Belgian Government for transmission to the Commission to be used in the support of the occupied French population; advances from the French Treasury to the Commission; advances from the United States Treasury to the French Treasury for the purpose of the Commission; advances from the Belgian Treasury to the Commission; advances from the British Treasury to the Commission.

II

The theory of our operations was set out in writing to the French and British Governments some three years ago and approved by them. It is as follows:

1. While most goods have been bought in common, they are capable of separation upon the books as between Belgium and France, as are also the special expenditures internally in Belgium for account of French refugees and local Belgian produce shipped to Northern France, etc.

2. The accounts have been in Sterling and all moneys remitted to England were taken into the books at the actually realized exchange. All inter-office accounting of non-remitted moneys was carried in the books at a fixed exchange, values were established of 25.40 francs and \$4.85 and guilders 12.03 equal to £1 Sterling, and any gains---or losses---in exchange were debited to "exchange account."

3. Benevolent contributions other than cash were taken into the books at valuation by the directors.

4. The cost of supplies was carried in the books as "purchase," "transport," and "administration," each cargo being accounted for separately and vouchers can be produced for each different shipment quantitatively and in expenditure.

5. On shipment of supplies from the ports of entry, they were debited to the interior committees at flat round prices, and their accepted quantitative bills of lading secured, thus enabling proof that supplies reached the interior committees.

Imports of supplies were during the occupation all virtually debited against the Comité National Belge for both Belgium and France, this committee in turn debiting the French portion against the Comité du Nord de la France and furnishing the C.R.B. acknowledgments thereof together with supplies and payments to French refugees in Belgium which the Comité National Belge was authorized by the C.R.B. to expend for the Comité Français. After the Armistice the Comité Français was reorganized into the Comité du Ravitaillement and debited direct by the C.R.B. The accounts of these interior committees were audited by the C.R.B. accountants.

6. The prices debited against the interior committees for food were calculated to show a small margin of "profit," and were carried at the same prices for long periods, adjustments being made occasionally to meet general trends of rising or falling costs. This "profit" margin was installed for several purposes:

a) To enable immediate accounting with interior committees without waiting months for full cost determinations of cargoes due to lag in accounts from North and South America, India, disputes on values, out-turns, etc.

b) To maintain steady food prices in the interior over long periods.

c) To interpret the free services received, the prices charged against interior committees being on average less than could have been secured by commercial means, by virtue of total elimination of middlemen and free service secured.

d) To create a fund to be used toward liquidation of exchange losses.

7. The benevolent receipts from the exterior world, together with "profits" were allotted by the directors to various interior committees from time to time for charitable purposes.

8. The Commission invited remittances to Belgium, investing the money in food and delivering to the payee the local currencies received in resales. Allocations of benevolence and profits to local committees were carried out practically as commercial exchange to the committee concerned.

III

The public and the different governments are vitally interested in the final accounting of the Commission, because:

a) The public must have evidence of faithful trusteeship.

b) The Belgian and French Governments have a right to know that the sums of money entrusted by them to the Commission have been duly expended in the purchase and delivery of foodstuffs and for the care of their nationals.

c) The American Government is interested because, as it has subsequently proved, the Commission has overdrawn from the American Treasury during the last few months, and stocks have accumulated which are now being liquidated into cash. This cash is, in accordance with the understanding of the American Government, returnable to the American Treasury. This accumulation of stocks has arisen from the necessity of the Commission to place shipping and foodstuffs in motion three months in advance, and during the last few months the infiltration of food from commercial and other sources into the liberated areas has reduced the call upon the Commission for supplies, thus building up balances.

The American Treasury has every right to a refund by the Commission of such balances, the amounts refunded to be applied, respectively, to the cancellation of Belgian and French obligations.

IV

In order to accomplish these various objectives, the Commission proposes (a) that the Treasuries should approve the basis set out below for the formulation of the accounts of the Commission, and (b) that the Belgian, French, and American

Treasuries should each agree to appoint a delegate to receive and approve the statement when presented. Mr. Keynes has stated that the British Treasury is not interested.

V

The principle of accepting the auditor's statements as final discharge of the Commission has already been accepted by the French and Belgian Governments. The following is the form in which it is proposed to present the final statement and liquidation.

The Commission should provide a statement of accounts from the auditors showing:

- a) The sums expended for the purchase, transportation and administration of the relief.
- b) The debits acknowledged by the different interior committees for the supplies and reserves delivered to those bodies and sums expended in Belgium for French refugees.
- c) Amount of advances received either directly or indirectly from the various governments.
- d) A statement showing the cash balances from government advances in the hands of the Commission and to whose credit (Belgian or French) such balances shall be refunded at the American Treasury.
- e) The amounts contributed for charity in cash or in kind; the profits from the sales of foodstuffs to other than the populations of Belgium and Northern France; the profits earned on the sale of foodstuffs to the interior committees; the whole of these being the charitable aspects of the Commission; to be accompanied by acknowledged statements as to the purposes to which these sums have been applied in charity. Further, the balance of such charitable sums which may be decided by the Commission as unappropriated and applicable to the subsequent charitable operations now being continued by the Commission.

It is, of course, proposed that such balances should be appropriated for the benefit of the populations in Belgium and Northern France as shall be determined by the Commission and the internal committees.

- f) Although overseas supplies were brought in as undivided cargoes for Belgium and Northern France, the costs and deliveries can be accurately separated except for administration, exchange, and a few items that must be pro-rated. The accounts will show that proportion of supplies provided by the particular government advances

was delivered, respectively, to the Belgian and the Northern France committees; this includes supplies to France from Belgium and the expenditures on refugees. It has not been possible under the conditions of non-communication to more than attune these streams of supplies and support of two different nationals to the two different sources of government finance. It is proposed to show in the statement how much money may be owed by Belgium to France or vice versa on balance, and that such statement will be binding upon the two Treasuries as a basis of settlement of accounts between them.

g) As the great volume of operations carried on government account entail a larger number of disputed accounts it may require six months for final liquidation. In order to get a major settlement at an early date it is proposed to set aside a sum estimated to cover the minor items that may be outstanding. The disposal of any final residuum of such a reserve can be determined by the representative of the three Treasuries.

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER,
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 515

Letter,
DELACROIX TO COMITÉ NATIONAL, agreeing on the part of the Belgian Government to Hoover's proposals relative to the form of final accounts and to the method of closing them

BRUSSELS, 16 July 1919

To the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brussels

Replying to yours of June 26 last, I have the honor to inform you that I agree to the proposals of Mr. Hoover, President of the C.R.B., relative to the form of the final accounts of this organization and the method of closing them.

According to your suggestion I appoint to verify these accounts in agreement with certified accountants chosen by the United States Government, Mr. Fortin, Councillor at the Court of Accounts.

Receive, I beg you, etc.

The Prime Minister

(Signed) LEON DELACROIX

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 516

Letter,

L. L. KLOTZ, FRENCH MINISTER OF FINANCE, TO POLAND, agreeing on the part of the French Treasury to Hoover's method of presenting the accounts of the Commission with comments on the balance of French advances and on allocation of profits

PARIS, 17 July 1919

W. B. Poland Director of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, Paris

DEAR SIR:

You were good enough to address to me a note by the President of the Commission for Relief in Belgium on the operations of the Commission as well as on the necessity of proceeding to the liquidation of accounts and their examination for approval by the interested governments. He asked me to inform you if the method of presentation of these accounts which was set out in this note had the approval of the French Government.

The operations of the Commission are coming to a close since all the purchases of foodstuffs stopped on the 1st of May, and all deliveries should have terminated by the 1st of June. Mr. Hoover therefore proposes to close the accounts and to designate delegates of the Belgian, French, and American Treasuries (the British Treasury having declared that they did not think it necessary to intervene) to receive and approve the accounts of the Commission.

The accounts will be presented in such a way as to show (1) the advances received by the Commission directly or indirectly by the various governments; (2) the expenses of purchase, transport, and administration; (3) the sums which the interior committees of Belgium and North of France recognize as owing for the delivery of merchandise; (4) the balance in cash remaining from these advances; (5) the operations in regard to the charitable side of this work, that is to say, (a) gifts in cash or in kind made to the Commission (b) the profits realized by the Commission on the sales either to the interior committees or to persons other than the populations of Belgium and the North of France (both these items constitute the resources on the charitable side of this work), (c) the use which has been made of these resources under the title of benevolence, (d) the balance not yet distributed of the sums received intended for this use; (6) the amounts which are owing one to the

other at the close of operations by the C.R.B., the French Government and the Belgian Government.

A sum will be set aside from the balance on hand for the liquidation of outstanding items. It may require six months for final liquidation.

Mr. Hoover proposes to determine immediately the allocation of the available balances remaining on the different accounts.

A distinction will be made in accordance with the origin of the available funds and according as these funds arise from advances by the governments or resources realized from charitable donations or profits.

1. The credit balances of the account on advances will be turned over to the American Treasury for the reduction of the debts of Belgium and France.
2. The unallocated funds arising also from the profits realized from gifts received by the Commission will remain at the disposal of the Commission to be distributed by them in the form of benevolence to the populations of Belgium and the North of France after agreement between the Commission and the internal committees of France and Belgium.

Before replying to the proposals contained in the note of the C.R.B., I make it my duty, and it is a particularly agreeable one, to express my gratitude to the Commission for its generous initiative, its inexhaustible labor, the inexpressible services rendered to the populations of the invaded territories and to France.

The settlement suggested by Mr. Hoover has been the subject of my most attentive examination, and I can only agree to the proposals of the Commission concerning the method of presenting the accounts and the constitution of the Commission composed of delegates from the various interested treasuries.

As regards the method of employment of the remaining balances available, I believe I should submit to you the following observations:

1. Allocation to the American Treasury of the balances on account of advances.

I agree that the unused balance of the sums placed at the disposal of the C.R.B. by the French Treasury should not be returned, but should on the contrary be paid to the French Treasury. However, I do not think it possible to decide at this time that only the advances granted by the American Government to the French Government should be reduced by the total value of this balance; in consequence of the participation of the British Government in the operations of the C.R.B., it may arise that the British Treasury may have the right to demand that a portion of this balance should be employed to reduce their own debt vis-à-vis the American Treasury,

unless, of course, the British Treasury wishes to reduce by that same amount, its credits to the French Government.

I can therefore only agree, for the moment, to the principle of turning in the balance to the American Treasury in reduction of its loans.

2. In regard to the free funds arising from gifts and profits realized both on the sales and on operations in exchange, I consider that a distinction should be made between gifts and profits.

I am entirely in agreement with the C.R.B. that the gifts should remain at the disposition of the C.R.B., which will employ them as far as the French share is concerned, in charitable works in the former occupied regions, after agreement between the Commission and the Comité du Nord de la France, under this reserve, however,; that for the Comité du Nord de la France might be substituted the organizations which have replaced it; on this point the Ministry of Liberated Regions can be usefully consulted.

On the other hand, it does not appear to me possible to make a similar decision as regards the profits realized by the C.R.B., as long as I do not know the exact amount of these profits. They should really normally be employed for the reduction of the budgetary charges which the French state will have to support, because of the insufficiency of the resources of the Comité du Nord de la France to cover the expenses of the ravitaillement. The French Treasury, before renouncing these profits to the benefit of the liberated regions, which would benefit from them in the form of charitable organizations, should obviously know beforehand the exact amount.

I should be obliged if you would submit these few remarks to Mr. Hoover and to inform me of the objections and difficulties which my proposals on these points may bring up, where they differ from those of the C.R.B.

I attach a particular value, in this precious work of collaboration with the C.R.B., that there should be a complete agreement between us.

Believe me, dear Sir,

(Signed) KLOTZ

[Translation]

Letter,
HOOVER TO KLOTZ, in answer to the preceding

PARIS, 19 July 1919

M. Klotz
Ministre de Finance, Paris

DEAR M. KLOTZ:

ACCOUNTING OF COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

In Mr. Poland's absence, I beg to reply to the observations in your letter of the 17th instant.

As to the first point, Mr. Keynes informed Mr. Norman Davis and myself that the British Government has no interest whatever in the settlement of C.R.B. accounts beyond payment for certain purchases in England which are in course of liquidation.

As to the second point, regarding any remaining "profits" on charges against North of France committees, you will, of course, realize that the great bulk of this item has already been allocated to the committees in the north for purposes approved by the various French authorities, and expended by them. The amounts remaining, which may develop in final accounts, will be comparatively a minor portion in the whole. The amount will be, of course, set out in the final accounts.

The other minor item of "profits" earned upon operations outside those to North of France Belgian committees, we propose to treat as gifts.

I wish to thank you for your kind expressions. The four years of so intimate association and co-operation with Frenchmen, under circumstances of unparalleled trial, have given us a high sense of appreciation of those great qualities of mind and character which so distinguish your countrymen. In retiring from this unique relationship, I wish to express again our feeling of unlimited admiration and the obligation that we feel for the privilege of its association.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

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No successful enterprise of huge dimensions can terminate its operations abruptly without leaving in the hands of its liquidators considerable assets. In the case of the C.R.B. these were mainly attributed to the necessarily large working capital. That

this condition would exist at the cessation of shipments had been realized by those concerned in the Commission's work, and the two Governments in approving Hoover's proposals of May 1919(359) were well aware of the nature of the sums involved. As far as the Governments were concerned, there would undoubtedly be a considerable balance of unused working capital to be returned to them in reduction of their subsidies to the Commission. The public at large was interested in the "benevolent" funds and the unexpended balance of these funds. This balance (to be determined by complete analysis of the accounts) belonged to the people of the invaded territories, and the method of returning it to them alone remained to be determined. The origin of these benevolent funds has been discussed in various documents,(360) but a summary here will perhaps clarify the settlement.

From its early days the Commission's administration of relief was divided into two departments, the Provisioning and the Benevolent. The Provisioning Department was in the nature of a business enterprise, which provided foodstuffs for that portion of the population which was able to pay for them. The Benevolent Department,(361) charged with the care of the destitute, saw to it that every individual was either furnished with the means to purchase food or received it through free canteens established for the purpose. The Benevolent Department was supported by public donations and by a fund which accrued to the Provisioning Department through a small marginal charge on all sales. Out of this fund the Provisioning Department made advances to the Benevolent Department from time to time. The balance of these profits still available for benevolence could not be determined until the complete closure of the business of the Provisioning Department.

By June 1920 the inevitably slow process of liquidation had reached the stage where the Commission was able to make a major settlement with both the French and the Belgian Governments. This settlement included in the first place the return of considerable sums of working capital not used by the Commission. As this money originated in United States Treasury loans to France and Belgium, it was returned to the Treasury and applied in reduction of these loans. The second part of the settlement related to the balance of benevolent funds, the so-called "profits" of the Provisioning Department. In the case of France there were comparatively small amounts available represented by the slight variation between the approximate cost prices of provisions set at the time of delivery and the precise cost to the Commission which final accounting brought out. This benevolent balance for France was sufficient, however, to make possible a substantial allocation to the French districts and to constitute an important contribution to the work of the Comité de Ravitaillement and the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées.(362) This allocation of benevolent funds was the final settlement of the Commission with the people of Northern France and the French Government. The documents which immediately follow cover the return of working capital to the United States Treasury for the account of the French and Belgian Governments as reduction of loans to these countries.

DOCUMENT NO. 518

Letter,

C.R.B. TO FRENCH MINISTER OF FINANCE, presenting the Commission's complete account to the French Government

NEW YORK, 25 June 1920

To the Honorable The French Minister of Finance Paris, France

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We have the honor to hand you herewith a statement of accounts between the French Government and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, showing the funds received and the disbursements which have been made by the Commission.

The balance of funds received by the Commission in excess of expenditures has been returned to the American Treasury to be credited to French Government account and your Embassy in Washington has been officially advised by the Treasury of this credit. This completes our accountability to the French Government.

The surcharges over the actual cost of supplies delivered, made by the Commission to provide against losses, equalization of prices, war destruction, and so forth, have amounted to £3,289,475. This sum has been returned to the French districts through allocations to the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, and to the Comité de Ravitaillements des Régions Libérées and by direct benevolent expenditures, thus closing our accountability to the people of the occupied regions.

With assurances of the highest consideration we beg to remain, dear Mr. Minister,

Faithfully yours

(Signed) EDGAR RICKARD, W.B. POLAND
Liquidators, Commission for Relief in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 519

Letter,

HOOVER TO UNITED STATES TREASURY, enclosing checks for \$17,246,490 and \$1,512,901.66, to be credited, respectively, to French and Belgian Government

accounts, and advising that \$1,000,000 has been reserved for liquidation, the residue of this to be paid eventually to the Treasury for Belgian account

NEW YORK, 19 June 1920

Hon. Nicholas Kelley
Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. KELLEY:

I confirm our agreement of yesterday that C.R.B. accounts with the Treasury are finally settled in accordance with the three statements of C.R.B. accounts which accompanied my letter to you of June 17, 1920. In accordance therewith I enclose check for \$17,246,490 return of excess monies paid to us for French relief, and a check for \$1,512,901.66 similar item for Belgian relief, it being the understanding that you will settle any technical questions arising with the French or Belgian Government respectively as to this direct payment to you from us.

I also confirm that the item of \$2,467,626.82 dollar reimbursement is to be paid from the funds amounting to \$37,431,270.30, recoveries from the resale of food as set out in the accounts furnished you, and that we hold this sum awaiting the direction of the Treasury as to the date when it shall be paid to the British Treasury, it being a part of the dollar reimbursements from C.R.B. accounts amounting to \$9,199,887.26 of which the Treasury has already undertaken to pay \$6,732,260.44 directly to the British Treasury for account of the Belgian Government.

I confirm our understanding that this completes all relations with the Treasury except that any residue we may have in hand after settlement of liabilities in the United States, out of the item of \$1,000,000 reserved for this purpose in the accounts above mentioned, will be paid to the United States Treasury further for account of the Belgian Government.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 520

Letter,
UNITED STATES TREASURY TO HOOVER, acknowledging the preceding

WASHINGTON, 21 June 1920

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Your letter of the 19th instant has been received enclosing a check of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, in the amount of \$17,246,490, which the Treasury understands to represent the balance of Treasury advances made to the French Government for relief expenditures through the Commission for Relief in Belgium and not required for that purpose, and also the check of the Commission for Relief in Belgium for \$1,512,901.66, which the Treasury understands to represent the balance of Treasury advances made to the Belgian Government for relief expenditures through the Commission for Relief in Belgium and not required for the purpose of the program. The Treasury will take up with the representatives of the French and Belgian Government, respectively, the disposition of these funds. I understand from our conversation of Friday that the three statements which accompanied your letter of the 17th instant set forth the final state of the account of the French Government with the Commission for Relief in Belgium and also the final state of the accounts of the C.R.B. On the basis of these statements, the Treasury understands from you that no further sums are due from the C.R.B. to either the French Government or the Belgian Government except that any residue remaining in the hands of the C.R.B. after the settlement of liabilities in the United States out of the item of \$1,000,000 reserved for this purpose in the above-mentioned accounts will be paid for account of the Belgian Government. Should it later be disclosed that any further funds are available on either French or Belgian account, the Treasury assumes that they will be dealt with in the same manner as the sums represented by the checks above referred to. It is also understood that the sum of \$2,467,626.82 is to be paid to the British Government out of funds to that amount held by the C.R.B. for the purpose of reimbursing the British Government for certain items mentioned in Mr. Rathbone's letter of September 4, 1919, to Mr. Rickard, and that this sum will be held by the C.R.B. awaiting the direction of the Treasury as to the date when it shall be paid to the British Treasury.

Yours very truly

(Signed) N. KELLEY

DOCUMENT NO. 521

Letter,
BELGIAN EMBASSY TO UNITED STATES TREASURY, approving on behalf of the Belgian Government that the sum of \$1,512,901.66 returned by the Commission be applied in reduction of United States Treasury loans to Belgium

WASHINGTON, 27 December 1920

Mr. N. Kelley
Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. KELLEY:

By your letter of June 21, 1920, you informed me that the Treasury had received from the Commission for Relief in Belgium, one million, five hundred twelve thousand, nine hundred one dollars and sixty-six cents (\$1,512,901.66), constituting the balance of the funds advanced by the Treasury to the Belgian Government for relief expenditure to be made through the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and which was not used or necessary for the purposes of the program. You added that the Treasury proposes to apply this sum in payment of a corresponding amount of the principal of obligations given by the Belgian Government for advances by the United States Treasury, for the purposes of relief.

After the recent interview I had with you, I have not failed to bring again your communication to the attention of my government.

I beg to inform you that I have now been advised by the Belgian Government that it agrees with the Treasury on the proposal as stated above.

I am, my dear Mr. Kelley,

Very sincerely yours

(Signed) C. SYMON
The Counselor of the Embassy

[Fig. 17. LETTER, 20 SEPTEMBER 1915, PRESIDENT WILSON TO HOOVER](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 522

Letter,
UNITED STATES TREASURY TO CASENAVE, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF
FRENCH SERVICES IN THE UNITED STATES, replying to objections on the
part of the French Government that the \$17,246,490 representing unused balance of
Commission's funds (French account) should be returned to the United States
Treasury

WASHINGTON, 9 August 1920

MY DEAR MR. CASENAVE:

Your letter of the 2nd instant (No. 2555) has been received transmitting observations of your Government regarding the sum of \$17,246,490 received by

the Treasury from the Commission for Relief in Belgium as being the balance of funds advanced by the United States Treasury to your Government for expenditures through the Commission for Relief in Northern France, but which was not used or necessary for that purpose.

Please convey to your Government assurances that it is my desire, to the full extent of the powers conferred upon me and within the principles heretofore established and followed by the Treasury, to co-operate with your Government and its Treasury no less sympathetically than my predecessors, the measure of whose friendly desire to exercise the powers of the American Treasury toward the assistance of your Government in accordance always, however, with sound principle and correct policy, is the course pursued by the United States Treasury, and the close and friendly co-operation between the Treasuries from the entry of the United States into the war to the present moment.

I do not altogether understand the force of the suggestion of your Government that if there were applied to the full extent the principle involved in the return of the sum of \$17,246,490 to the Treasury to be applied upon obligations of your Government held by the United States, it would mean substantially that your Government should be obliged to return to the Treasury the unused balance of all amounts advanced by the Treasury to your Government. It has been the policy of the Treasury since the beginning of its loans to foreign governments that funds advanced for a specific purpose might not be applied to a different purpose without the assent of the Treasury and might never be applied to a purpose for which the Treasury is not authorized to make a loan. In accordance with this policy, the unused balances of advances made for specific purposes have been repaid to the Treasury not only by other governments, but by the French Government. Your Government in January, March, and August, 1919, repaid an aggregate amount of \$12,147,000 in reduction of the advances of \$71,427,000 and \$81,050,800, respectively, made your Government by the Treasury to enable your Government to meet the maturity of the Two-year 5 1/2% Secured Loan Convertible Gold Notes of your Government on April 1, 1919, and the maturity of the Three-year 5% Collateral Gold Notes of the American Foreign Securities Company on August 1, 1919. It was never suggested that the unused balances in those cases should not be repaid to the United States. In the present instance the advances made by the United States Treasury to your Government for expenditures through the Commission for Relief in Northern France were made for the purpose of completing a specific program. Upon receiving from the Commission for Relief the sum of \$17,246,490, together with information that it was the unused balance of funds advanced by the United States Treasury, the Treasury has no reason to question the statement of the Commission for Relief in whose hands the expenditures of funds for relief purposes had been. The Treasury assumes that questions concerning the expenditures by the Commission for Relief of funds received from the French Government and arising either out of United States loans or otherwise, will be disposed of between your Government and the Commission for Relief.

Under the power conferred by the Liberty Bond Acts to establish, for the more effectual prosecution of the war, credits in favor of governments at war with enemies of the United States, I am without authority now to establish in favor of your Government a credit for the purpose of enabling your Government to meet its share of the Anglo-French loan. In these circumstances I cannot now make the above-mentioned sum available for that purpose for which the Treasury has not previously assured a credit to your Government.

I think I need scarcely add that nothing is more remote from the intention of the Treasury than to impose any hardship upon your Government in connection with its arrangements for dealing with the approaching maturity of the Anglo-French loan, and that on the contrary it is the earnest desire of the Treasury to co-operate to the full extent of its power and authority in all sound measures undertaken by your Government for dealing with the matter.

I am, my dear Mr. Casenave,

Sincerely yours

(Signed) D. F. HOUSTON

DOCUMENT NO. 523

Letter,

UNITED STATES TREASURY TO C.R.B. (IN LIQUIDATION), acknowledging receipt of statement showing status of \$1,000,000 liquidation reserve and accepting check for \$440,552.83 for Belgian Government account as part settlement([363](#))

WASHINGTON, 26 April 1922

DEAR SIRs:

On behalf of the Secretary, I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of April 14, 1922, transmitting a statement showing the status of the \$1,000,000 reserved by the Commission out of Belgian funds to meet further liabilities on behalf of Belgium Relief in the United States, together with a certified check drawn on the Chase National Bank of New York for \$440,552.83. The Treasury understands that the sum of. this check represents the balance due the Belgian Government after reserving a sum estimated as necessary to meet the dollar indebtedness still outstanding and which is not required or necessary for the purpose of the relief program.

Should it later be disclosed that any further funds are available on Belgian account out of the estimated sum reserved as being necessary to meet the dollar

indebtedness still outstanding, the Treasury assumes that they will be dealt with in the same manner as the sum represented by the check above referred to.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) ELIOT WADSWORTH,
Assistant Secretary

In July 1920 the Commission turned back to the districts of Northern France for charitable distribution the balance of "profits returnable" which a complete accounting of the Commission's operations revealed. In 1921 and 1922 additional gifts were made to the people of Northern France through the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées. These latter sums appeared in the settlement of the Commission's liquidation reserve and at its request were applied to the continuation of the welfare work among the children inaugurated by the Commission after the Armistice.⁽³⁶⁴⁾ The following documents record these final gifts which closed the benevolent aspects of the Commission's work in Northern France.

DOCUMENT NO. 524

Letter,
C.R.B. TO LABBÉ, enclosing statement of Commission's French account already submitted to French Government and allocating the balance of benevolent funds, i.e., £538,368, to the French districts through the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées

NEW YORK, 2 July 1920

Monsieur E. Labbé,
Comité de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées, Paris

DEAR MONSIEUR LABBÉ:

I take pleasure in sending you through the kindness of Monsieur Chevrillon copies of our statement of accounts which we have asked Monsieur Chevrillon to transmit to the French Minister of Finance.

Under date of 2nd of July we cabled you in regard to the balance due the French districts on profits returnable, which amount is £3,289,475 of which there has been already allotted to the districts, or expended on their behalf £2,751,107, leaving final balance due £538,368.

We hereby allocate this sum to you for the districts in final settlement of this account.

It is the desire of Mr. Hoover and his colleagues that you pay over this sum to the Comité d'Assistance, as we are all greatly interested in the work being accomplished by this Comité and hope to assist it further later on. We feel, however, that you will wish that any action of this kind on your part first have the approval of the French Minister of Finance. This approval we have no doubt you will obtain without difficulty.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) EDGAR RICKARD, W. B. POLAND
Joint Liquidators

DOCUMENT NO. 525

Letter,

C.R.B. TO CHEVRILLON, enclosing the sum of \$25,000 as a gift from the C.R.B. to the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées to be used on behalf of the children of Northern France

NEW YORK, 3 February 1921

*M. Louis Chevrillon,
Treasurer of Executive Committee,
Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées d'Accord de la C.R.B.
Paris*

MY DEAR M. CHEVRILLON:

Attached is check for Frs. 352,112.70, the proceeds at rate of the day (\$.0710) of a donation of \$25,000 made by the C.R.B. at the suggestion of our Chairman, Mr. Hoover, for the Comité d'Assistance through the A.R.A. European Children's Fund to be used on behalf of the children of the liberated regions of France.

Mr. Hoover is much in hopes that the European Relief Council may be able to contribute a further sum to the Comité d'Assistance. If so, we will cable you.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND,
Joint Liquidator

DOCUMENT NO. 526

Letter,

C.R.B. TO CHEVRILLON, advising him of a further and final sum of \$78,959.80 for child welfare work being carried on by the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées

NEW YORK, 1 August 1922

*Monsieur Louis Chevrillon, Treasurer
Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées, Paris*

MY DEAR M. CHEVRILLON:

In making the final distribution of funds which have been held in the "Benevolent Account" of the Commission for Relief in Belgium pending its final liquidation, the Chairman, Mr. Hoover, and the Directors of the C.R.B. have decided that a further sum of \$78,959.80, which at \$.0813 represents the equivalent of approximately Frs. 971,000±, may in justice be allocated to the liberated regions of Northern France.

We have, therefore, cabled our London office to deposit with the Bank Union Parisienne, Paris, subject to your draft as Treasurer of the "Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées d'Accord de la C.R.B.," the franc equivalent of this amount. Will you notify the Executive Committee of the Comité d'Assistance that this sum is to be distributed proportionally to all the districts of the liberated regions in which the C.R.B. and C.F. operated, and is given in trust for this purpose in further recognition of the admirable work of child welfare being carried on by the Comité and the satisfactory manner in which similar sums have been distributed for the benefit of the whole population of the liberated regions formerly supplied by the C.R.B.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) EDGAR RICKARD, W. B. POLAND
Joint Liquidators

3. The Belgian Educational Foundations

The larger benevolent balance due to the people of Belgium was destined for a more interesting application. As far back in the life of the Commission as 1916 Hoover had discussed with the Belgian authorities the question of the disposal of

this anticipated balance, and had suggested that after the demands of the destitute had been met, the residue be devoted to the advancement of education.(365) He recommended that a foundation be established, the income from which should be applied to the educational system of Belgium for the promotion of scientific study and industrial research. When in 1919 and 1920 the time for the final liquidation came, these tentative plans were elaborated and carried out. First, the Commission made cash advances of over \$18,000,000 to aid directly the universities and technical schools of Belgium. The funds which still remained were apportioned between two permanent foundations organized for the purpose: the C.R.B. Educational Foundation, with a total capital of close to \$8,000,000, and the Fondation Universitaire, with nearly \$7,000,000. The incomes from these two co-operating foundations---one in America and the other in Belgium---were to be expended to assist young Belgians to obtain university training, to aid by appropriate means the progress of science in Belgium, and to promote the exchange of ideas between Belgium and America.

DOCUMENT NO. 527

Letter,

HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, regarding probable unexpended balances in the hands of the C.R.B. at the end of the relief work, and proposing to turn these back to the Belgian people through the establishment of an educational foundation

LONDON, 18 July 1916

His Excellency, Monsieur A. Van de Vyvere
Ministre de Finance, Havre

DEAR MR. VAN DE VYVERE:

In respect to our conversation on Saturday last on the subject of my letter of May 9, I assume the following in the present position:

I understand from you that the Belgian Government does not wish to take any responsibility in the collection or administration of public subscriptions either by the C.R.B. or C.N. Furthermore, I understand that the Belgian Government does not insist on any financial liability of any kind against the members of the C.R.B. or C.N., but of course wishes to be satisfied that the accounting and commercial methods are carried out as efficiently as circumstances will permit.

As to the control which the Belgian Government at Havre maintains in the expenditure of the Belgian Government subsidies in Belgium and in the question as to whether any profits remaining at the end of the war are in the category of public

subscriptions or in that of Belgian government subsidies, all this seems to me to be more or less a domestic question and one in which the C.R.B. will be only remotely interested at the end of the work. The public subscriptions will have been exhausted and therefore any balance on hand will be either in the nature of Government balances or of profits, either one of which is absolutely the property of the Belgian people and, obviously, for their sole determination as to application after the work is finished.

In this matter of profits there is an apparent divergence of views between the relief organization and Your Excellency. These profits, according to Your Excellency's view, are earned by the use of Government capital, and, therefore, belong to the Government, or (alternatively) they are the profits by manipulation of exchange and in either case are accountable to the Government.

The contention of the relief organization is that these profits are the result of voluntary services, not only of the many volunteers, firms, and individuals whom the Commission uses abroad, but also of the 35,000 or 40,000 Belgians concerned in distribution in Belgium, whose combined efforts amount to a total elimination of wholesale and retail expense. Alternatively, the relief organization can contend that the profits were a tax imposed on the well-to-do in Belgium for the benefit of the destitute. Further, it can well be contended that the difference on exchange has already been largely given to the Belgian people, in that the price of food in Belgium, even after the profit is taken, is less than in other belligerent countries and has already been dissipated to the population, also that the capital employed is at least 25 per cent from other sources. As I said before, it appears to me that these contentions lie entirely with the Belgian people themselves and that there ought to be no difficulty in coming to an arrangement with regard to this matter satisfactory to all sides. As a matter of administration it is absolutely necessary, for many reasons, to maintain the present system of accounts and the earning of profits, and it is in the interests of the Belgian people that the relief organization should continue a free hand in their expenditure of these profits. This arrangement is a direct stimulation to the most minute economy and the maximum volunteer service and gives the organization latitude in meeting the problem of destitution not possible under the less flexible distribution of the subsidy money. Your Excellency will entirely appreciate that no government could conduct this enterprise at anything like the cost at which it is now being conducted, and I venture to say that Your Excellency would easily ascertain this by comparing the cost of goods, transport distribution, the relative realization from exchange, interest, and other items which the Belgian Government at Havre obtains with regard to its own purchases.

Entirely apart from this point, however, it must be obvious that, with the large quantity of goods which we have in transit, on the day of the evacuation of Belgium, the relief organization will be able to liquidate its position with a considerable sum of cash, consisting of unexpended balances on behalf of the

Government and of profits. The accumulation of profits and gifts will be a diminishing sum from now forward, as the public subscriptions are no longer able to care for the "Secours Ordinaire," but in any event some definite sum of money is bound to remain on hand on this "profits" account.

It is the desire of your countrymen in Belgium to establish some kind of an institution to commemorate the Relief; and it would appear to me, as being more or less an outside observer, that there is not only a great beneficent opportunity for such an institution, but that, after the war, with the keenness of competition, every help must be given to the Belgian people to enable them to weather the years of stress which must ensue. The injection of a new institution for the stimulation of scientific and industrial research directly in aid to national industry, would appear to be an extremely difficult matter for the Government itself to undertake at such a juncture as this, and it would look like an unique opportunity to deliberately provide that such an institution could be established on non-sectarian and nonpolitical lines for the most beneficent objectives. It is not proposed so far as I know to establish any teaching institution in competition with those existing, but simply to establish a foundation, the income from which would be injected into the present educational system for the stimulation of scientific and industrial research and the expansion of needed departments where the necessity is greatest and where funds could not otherwise be provided. Such foundations have been the greatest factor in the remarkable advancement of American higher education and research, during the last thirty years. Aside from its enormous value, a certain sentimental value would be accomplished in so grand a tribute of this character to the 40,000 Belgians who have shown such devotion to their own countrymen during the war and the truly remarkable organization they have perfected under the most extraordinary difficulties and with the resources so largely provided by the energy and devotion of Your Excellency. I do not assume that either the character or the nature of such an institution could be determined without elaborate consideration, but it is possible now to make it assured in some degree by an agreement as to the destination of any residue of profits. A committee representative of the various universities and other organizations involved should be able to formulate the detailed plan.

If the principle above outlined could be agreed upon, it does not seem to me that it would be difficult for Your Excellency and the Relief organization to arrive at a basis upon which the accounts should be formulated to this object.

I wish to repeat my statement with regard to Your Excellency's question made on Saturday, as to whether the Americans interested were anxious or insistent that this should be done, in which I endeavored to convey to Your Excellency that the Americans are not trying to impose anything upon the Belgian people or their representatives or make the slightest suggestion as to the conduct of their own affairs. Our constant attitude has been that we have devoted such resources as we could assemble and such service as we could command, to the support of the

destitute in Belgium, not as a matter of charity but as a matter of justice. This attitude gives us no consistent right or position in discussing anything of an internal Belgian character aside from the daily incidents of the present organization of relief. We can, however, consistently second any constructive program for the Belgian people and should obviously be pleased if out of our endeavors we should have contributed any small portion to that end.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 528

Letter,

HOOVER TO DELACROIX, indicating the manner in which the Commission proposed to appropriate the balance of its benevolent funds for extension of higher education in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 28 August 1919

To His Excellency

M. Delacroix, Prime Minister, Brussels

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

The Belgian Government on 16th July formally approved (as also have the other governments concerned) the method that I proposed for settling the accounts of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Section IV (*e*) of that memorandum provided as follows:

"The amounts contributed for charity in cash or in kind, the profits created by voluntary service in handling foodstuffs, being the free charitable aspects of the Commission to be shown by statements of amount and the purpose to which these sums have been applied in charity. Further the basis of such charitable sums which may be decided by the Commission as unexpended and applicable to the subsequent charitable operations now being continued by the Commission will also be shown. Such balances will be appropriated or invested for the benefit of the population in Belgium and Northern France as shall be determined by the Commission."

We have now made a preliminary inspection of the accounts, but owing to the volume of transactions---exceeding four milliards of francs---they will not be in final form for some months. In the mean time, it is evident that the sums that would

be realized for Belgium under the above paragraph amount to a minimum of Frs. 150,000,000. This sum includes the unexpended gifts and the profits of the Commission for Relief in Belgium applicable to Belgium in all its agencies, in America, England, Holland, and in Belgium through the operations carried on by Comité National as the agents of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

During these last four years of association with the Belgian people and from discussions with my colleagues in the Comité National, with the members of the Government and the universities, and the public, it has become evident that no more democratic service could be rendered to the Belgian people than that these funds should be applied to the extension of high education in Belgium. The war and the present economic situation have demonstrated the extreme importance of the widest distribution of high education amongst all classes, especially those of limited means. In order to compass this end, it is necessary:

1st. To undertake such measures as will open the institutions themselves so that they may not only render more efficient service to the community as a whole but also that they may undertake the additional burden of this increased attendance.

Therefore I propose that the funds mentioned above should be applied as follows:

a) As to the 37 per cent to the creation of a foundation, the income from which shall be applied in principle to enable the children of families who have not the means to otherwise secure such education, to obtain it, this may be accomplished by gifts, scholarships, or otherwise to obtain this general principle. I would propose that this foundation should be vested in a board of half each Belgian and American trustees, the American trustees to be selected by the Directors of the Commission for Relief in Belgium. Some minor proportion of this fund, as the trustees may consider advisable, could well be applied to the extension of such education as will look toward the protection of child life.

b) Direct payment of 63 per cent of the total funds available to the trustees of the following institutions, proportionally as under:

Brussels University	13 1/3 %
Louvain University	13 1/3 %
Ghent University	13 1/3 %
Liège University	13 1/3 %
Mons Mining	3 %

School
The Colonial School 6 2/3 %

These funds to be at the free disposition of these institutions but generally for the purpose of increasing their efficiency and ability to serve the community. The total of these sums, however, not to exceed 95,000,000 francs, any excess reverting to fund *a*.

If the above proposals should prove acceptable, I would propose to authorize the Comité National from the funds belonging to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, to make immediate payment of 20,000,000 francs to the proportions mentioned under *b*, in order to enable them to overcome immediately some of the disabilities imposed by the war. The arrangements under *a* to be set up as quickly as the organization can be perfected.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 529

Letter,
DELACROIX TO HOOVER, announcing the Belgian Government's approval of the projects outlined in the preceding letters and accepting the first payment for Belgian universities

BRUSSELS, 5 September 1919

Herbert Hoover, Esq., Paris

DEAR SIR:

The honor falls to me of addressing to you the thanks of the Belgian Government for the generous intentions expressed in your letter of the 28th August 1919.

How many times have you not justified the title of "Friend of the Belgian Nation." For five years you have consecrated your inexhaustible activity to victualling our populations in distress, and now you are about to give a new proof of the ties of profound sympathy which unite you to us, by showing your solicitude for higher education and for all the more advanced studies of our population so sorely tried, and also by assuring the future of the organizations for the protection of childhood founded during the war.

The Council of Ministers, at their sitting of the 5th September, accepted with thanks the project of which you have sketched the broad outlines. They will submit to the Legislation a project for a law granting a civil entity to the universities of Ghent and Liège, to permit these to receive the liberalities of the Commission for Relief, and they ask you---counting on your agreement in this matter---to let all the interested parties benefit by your generosity, in whatever language, French or Flemish, they wish to pursue their higher studies.

While awaiting the vote on this projected law the Government will accept willingly, for the universities of Ghent and Liège, the first sums which you place at their disposal to permit them to supply the most urgent necessities.

Yours very faithfully

(Signed) L. DELACROIX,
Prime Minister

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 530

Letter,
HOOVER TO DELACROIX, submitting the general plan for appropriating the balance of Commission's benevolent funds for educational purposes and announcing the proposed incorporation of the C.R.B. Educational Foundation for this purpose

NEW YORK, 10 December 1919

Monsieur Leon Delacroix
Prime Minister, Belgian Government, Brussels

DEAR MONSIEUR:

The Commission for Relief in Belgium is now engaged in adjusting and closing its accounts, in accordance with the memorandum which I submitted to you in June last, and it hopes to be able to close this matter in the near future, and to thus ascertain the amount of funds at the disposal of the Commission for the purpose of creating the proposed foundation, pursuant to my letter to you of August 28th, and your confirmation thereon on behalf of the Government.

It, therefore, seems desirable at this time to submit the general plan that I have settled for completing these arrangements so far as they concern the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

It is proposed that the funds now in Belgium applicable to this foundation should be transferred from the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which now holds title to them, to a corporation bearing a similar name to the Commission, which will be organized under the laws of one of the states of the United States, the state to be used for the incorporation to be the one most suitable by reason of its statutory law to accomplish the purpose desired. The charter of this corporation will set forth the purposes for which the foundation is created, and with its by-laws will provide for taking, holding, and investing the funds transferred to it by the present Commission, and will provide the necessary committees for its administration, including a committee or committees, to be composed of six members, three of whom shall be nominated by the Belgian Government, to supervise the corporation's investments in Belgium, and to carry out in Belgium the details of the educational features of the foundation.

The corporation will thus be a permanent institution with perpetual life, having the security of being founded under statutory law especially enacted for charitable institutions of this kind, and through its officers and committees, duly constituted, will be able to manage and conduct its affairs by established business methods.

At your early convenience, will you kindly propose the names of the three nominees of the Belgian Government who are to serve on the committee for supervising the Belgian investments of the corporation, and the committee which will have charge of the disbursements of the foundation in Belgium.

Very truly yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 531

Telegram,
C.R.B. NEW YORK TO BRUSSELS, summarizing Hoover's reasons for proposing to establish two educational foundations, an American and a Belgian

NEW YORK, 11 March 1920

SHALER, RELIEF COMMISSION, BRUSSELS

Following is subject matter of letter from Belgian Ambassador to Francqui:

"Hoover asks me to send you the following: He has no desire to proceed in the matter of the University Foundation otherwise than solely in Belgian interest and Belgian wishes. Suggests, however, that a return to the original idea is in the best Belgian interest, that is, to create one legal foundation in Belgium and another legal

foundation in the United States. The whole of the present franc resources to be transferred to the Belgian Foundation. Its directors to comprise two representatives from American Foundation and the entire distribution of income arising from the Belgian Foundation to be carried out by Directors of Belgian Foundation. That the Directors of American Foundation shall comprise the former Directors of the C.R.B. together with two representatives of Belgian Foundation one of whom to be the Belgian Ambassador and that the invested funds of the American Foundation to consist of the dollar residues of the C.R.B. These dollars can be invested either in the United States or, if desirable, invested by American Foundation in Belgium. Income from these funds to pass through Directors of American Foundation to Directors of Belgian Foundation to be expended with approval and sanction of Directors of American Foundation. It appears to him that this arrangement would be the most consonant with a desire for complete stability free from any national or political influence, and the American Foundation would later on attract to itself further support from American public and can be used as a continuous instrument of good feeling for Belgium in the United States. If the whole of the Foundation is set up under purely Belgian auspices the project will at once have lost all American interest. Essential motive of entire proposal is to build up a permanent bridge of fine and high relationship between the two countries to become a permanent force in both communities and is not a question to his mind of pure advantageous disposal of the residue of our common funds."

RICKARD

DOCUMENT NO. 532

Telegram,
C.R.B. BRUSSELS TO C.R.B. NEW YORK, advising of Francqui's agreement with the arrangement proposed in the preceding

BRUSSELS, 16 March 1920

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Francqui to whom have shown copy your cable March eleventh asked me to cable Hoover his entire agreement with arrangement proposed.

.....

SHALER,
Relief Commission

The following table is a recapitulation of the liquidation settlements of the Commission described in the preceding documents.

LIQUIDATION SETTLEMENTS

I. WORKING CAPITAL

Refunds to the United States Treasury as reductions of loans to Belgium and to France

- 1. For the account of the Belgian Government \$ 1,512,901.66
- 2. For the account of the French Government \$17,246,490.00

II. BENEVOLENT FUNDS IN LIQUIDATION

- 1. For Benevolence in Northern France
 - a) Final allocation from "profits" to the Districts of Northern France \$2,611,084.80
 - b) Through A.R.A. to Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées for child feeding in Northern France \$ 25,000.00
 - c) Gift to the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées \$ 78,959.80
- 2. Gifts for Educational Purposes(366) in Belgium
 - a) Gifts to Belgian educational institutions
 - To University of Brussels \$ 3,818,897.64

To University of Ghent	3,818,897.64
To University of Liège	3,818,897.64
To University of Louvain	3,818,897.64
To School of Mines, Mons	954,724.39
To Colonial School, Antwerp	1,909,448.84
To Ecole de Carillonneurs, Malines	3,000.00
Total	\$18,142,763.79
b) To Fondation on Universitaire	\$6,846,080.88
c) To C.R.B. Educational Foundation	\$7,686,065.17
3. Balance (May 1924) reserve against claims; liquidation expenses; residue to be paid to C.R.B. Educational Foundation	\$1,091,129.78

The establishment of the Fondation Universitaire([367](#)) and the C.R.B. Educational Foundation([368](#)) was the last step in the Commission's settlement with the Belgian Government and people. Since the French settlement had already been made, this represented the final closure of the Commission's accountability for its five years of service. The magnitude of the enterprise and the character of the C.R.B.'s financial responsibilities have been indicated by the summary tables, which are based on the statements of the auditors of the Commission's accounts. The letter from the auditors which follows brings out two points which had an important bearing on both the successful conduct and the successful liquidation of this great undertaking. These points are: first, the important services given by Mr. Hoover and his principal associates, without any remuneration, direct or indirect; and second, the sound and businesslike methods employed in the management of the Commission's affairs.

DOCUMENT NO. 533

Extract of letter,
DELOITTE, PLENDER, GRIFFITHS & CO. TO THE COMMISSION,
commenting on the character of the undertaking for which they were the auditors

NEW YORK, 3 February 1927

Mr. Edgar Rickard
Commission for Relief in Belgium,
in Liquidation New York

DEAR SIR:

.....

Our firm acted as auditors of the Commission from the inception of its active operations until the termination thereof, some five years later. In addition to our duties as auditors, at Mr. Herbert Hoover's request, we arranged a method of account-keeping and selected the accountants who supervised the handling of the funds and accounts in its principal offices. Thus the records covering expenditures by the Commission of nearly a billion dollars were under our scrutiny.

Now that those records are passing into history, we are glad to emphasize the thorough and consistent attention of the Commission's Managers to the business of the Commission, and their cooperation, which enabled the records to be so maintained that all the transactions of the Commission could be fully verified, thus preventing any charge being sustained against the integrity of the administration of the Commission's affairs.

The records are evidence of the important services rendered by the Commission's principal officials, which services were given without remuneration. In this connection, we would state that Mr. Hoover set an example by not accepting, directly or indirectly, any form of remuneration from the Commission and by refusing, throughout the period of the Commission's activities, to take from the funds of the Commission the cost of his traveling or other out-of-pocket expenses while engaged on the business of the Commission.

We consider it an honor to have been selected as auditors of the Commission and to have been able to make a contribution to so great a work. We did not charge for the time of any of our principals during the whole of the term of our service, and so far as our assistants were concerned, we added only a nominal percentage to the cost of their salaries. Therefore, no profit whatever accrued to our firm as a result of the arduous services rendered by our firm over a long term of years.

Yours very truly

(Signed) DELOITTE, PLENDER, GRIFFITHS & CO.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XIV

INTERGOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT OF RELIEF SUBSIDIES(369)

Almost 80 per cent of the funds utilized by the C.R.B. for relief work in occupied Belgium and France and for rehabilitation following the Armistice were advanced to the Commission by the treasuries of Great Britain, France, and the United States in the form of loans(370) to the Belgian and the French Governments. In liquidating its affairs the Commission accounted to the Belgian and French Governments(371) for its stewardship of these great sums and at this point the Commission's responsibility ended. Subsequent intergovernment loan settlements, since they include, among larger items, these same sums, have a connection, however indirect, with public relations of the Commission. Moreover, the Chairman of the C.R.B. was a member of the American World War Foreign Debt Commission, which negotiated the settlements with Belgium and France. The selected extracts of government agreements and of treaties which follow, though not from the C.R.B. archives, serve to conclude the financial history of the relief work.

In view of the fact that the Versailles Treaty and the United States Government recognized a distinction in the case of Belgium, between pre-Armistice and post-Armistice loans, which materially affected subsequent debt settlement arrangements, the documents here presented relating to the Belgian war debt and those relating to the post-Armistice loans to Belgium are placed in separate groups. A third group concerns the loans to France.

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1. The Belgian War Debt

The Belgian war debt, as considered in the Versailles Treaty,(372) includes all sums borrowed by Belgium from the Allied and Associated Governments up to the 11th November 1918. The total was nearly a billion dollars, of which the creditor governments(373) were France and Great Britain, in approximately equal amounts, to the extent of 82 per cent of the total, and the United States 18 per cent. These

totals include government advances to the C.R.B. for Belgian relief as follows:([374](#))

From	\$
French Treasury	94,181,410.78
From British Treasury	94,181,410.78
From United States Treasury	153,000,000.00

These figures indicate that approximately 90 per cent of United States loans to Belgium prior to the Armistice were utilized by the C.R.B. A much smaller percentage of the Belgian war debt to France and Great Britain was devoted to relief (about 24 per cent in each case).

As there were no further relief loans to Belgium (through the C.R.B.) by Great Britain([375](#)) or France after the 11th November 1918, the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles whereby Germany became responsible for the payment of this Belgian war debt settled, as far as Belgium was concerned, her indebtedness to Great Britain and France for relief subsidies. With such post-Armistice loans as Great Britain and France made to Belgium for reconstruction and other purposes, the C.R.B. had no concern. But with regard to American relief loans the situation was different. The United States did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles and could not look to Germany, as the Treaty provided, for reimbursement for the war loans to Belgium. Furthermore, after the 11th November 1918, Belgium received additional advances from the United States, part of which were turned over to the C.R.B. There were, therefore, war debts and post-Armistice debts, both involving relief funds advanced to the C.R.B. for settlement by direct negotiations between the Belgian and United States Governments. The following extract from a report of the World War Foreign Debt Commission describes the negotiations for the funding of the Belgian war debt.

DOCUMENT NO. 534

Extracts
from a REPORT OF THE WORLD WAR FOREIGN DEBT COMMISSION([376](#))
describing the negotiations respecting the Belgian pre-Armistice debt to the United States

OBLIGATIONS OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

The total principal amount of obligations of foreign governments originally held by the Treasury was \$10,338,058,352.20. Such obligations were acquired by the United States under the authority of the Liberty bond acts which authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, with the approval of the President, to establish credits in favor of foreign governments engaged in war with enemies of the United States against which cash advances were made for the purpose in general of enabling those governments to meet commitments made in the United States in connection with the prosecution of the war;

.....

WORLD WAR FOREIGN DEBT COMMISSION

The present members of the World War Foreign Debt Commission are:

Andrew W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, chairman
Frank B. Kellogg, Secretary of State
Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce
Reed Smoot, United States Senator
Theodore E. Burton, Member of the House of Representatives
Charles R. Crisp, Member of the House of Representatives
Richard Olney, formerly Member of the House of Representatives
Edward N. Hurley, formerly chairman of the United States Shipping Board
Garrard B. Winston, Undersecretary of the Treasury, is secretary of the commission

.....

While the integrity of international obligations must be maintained it is axiomatic that no nation can be required to pay to another government sums in excess of its capacity to pay. The commission in its settlement with Great Britain, made on June 19, 1923, and in subsequent negotiations or settlements has adhered to the principle that adjustments made with each government must be measured by the ability of the particular government to put aside and transfer to the United States the payments called for under the funding agreement. Nor does the principle of capacity to pay require the foreign debtor to pay to the full limit of its present or future capacity. It must be permitted to preserve and improve its economic position, to bring its budget into balance, and to place its finances and currency on a sound basis, and to maintain, and if possible, to improve the standard of living of its citizens. No settlement which is oppressive and retards the recovery and development of the foreign debtor is to the best interests of the United States or of Europe.

.....

BELGIUM

The Belgian Government notified the American ambassador at Brussels on June 7, 1925, that Belgium desired to open negotiations in Washington for a settlement of its debt.

On August 10, 1925, a Belgian commission consisting of Baron de Cartier de Marchienne, Belgian ambassador to the United States; Baron George Theunis, formerly Prime Minister of Belgium; Monsieur Emile Francqui, vice governor of the Société Générale de Belgique; and Monsieur Félicien Cattier, head of the Banque d'Outremer, appeared before the commission. The Belgian commission was accompanied by the following experts: Monsieur J. Boet, director of the Ministry of Finance; Monsieur J. B. Vincent, administrator of the Treasury; Monsieur J. Warland, director of the public debt; Monsieur André Terlinden, director of the Société Nationale de Crédit à l'Industrie. Monsieur Robert Silvercruys served as secretary general of the commission.

Meetings of the commission with the Belgian commission were held on August 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, 1925. The meetings were then adjourned to permit the chairman and Senator Smoot to submit the terms of a tentative settlement to the President at Plymouth, Vt. A final meeting was held on August 18, 1925, at which an agreement was reached. The debt-funding agreement was signed on August 18, 1925, and was later approved by the President. It will be submitted to Congress for its approval at its next session

In the settlement arrived at the Belgian debt was divided into two parts. It will be recalled that at the time of the Peace Conference at Paris in 1919, Belgium advanced a claim for war damages as a prior charge on reparations amounting to \$1,000,000,000 in gold; that she also claimed that Germany should be compelled to redeem in gold 6,200,000,000 paper marks forced into circulation in Belgium during the period of German occupation, which marks had been redeemed by the issuance of Belgian francs by Belgium; and that she also maintained that France, Great Britain, and the United States should cancel her war debts, representing sums advanced prior to November 11, 1918. During a critical period of the Peace Conference, largely at the instance of President Wilson, Belgium was induced to reduce her claim for war damages from \$1,000,000,000 to \$500,000,000, and to abandon her claim for 6,200,000,000 gold marks on the condition that France, Great Britain, and the United States would forgive her prearmistice debts and would look to Germany for repayment of the sums due. On June 16, 1919, M. Clemenceau, President Wilson, and Mr. Lloyd George signed a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium stating that each would recommend to the appropriate governmental agency of his Government that upon delivery to the Reparation Commission of bonds of Germany to be issued in reimbursement of all sums which Belgium had borrowed from the three Governments prior to the armistice, each Government would accept a proportionate share of the bonds on

account of Belgium's obligation to repay the loans, which obligation was thereupon to be cancelled. This arrangement was incorporated in article 232 of the treaty of Versailles. Although France and Great Britain ratified the treaty, it was not ratified by the United States. The question of the release of Belgium from her obligation to repay the prearmistice advances was separately submitted to Congress by President Wilson in a communication dated February 22, 1921, a few days before the close of his administration, but never came up for consideration. Although the representatives of Belgium at the Peace Conference understood that the action of President Wilson in negotiating the peace treaty and making the agreement was subject to ratification, it was not anticipated that he would experience any difficulty in securing ratification in the United States. The man in the street in Belgium always regarded the failure of the United States to confirm the agreement of President Wilson as a breach of faith.

While the commission was aware of the fact that no legal obligation rested upon the United States as a result of the assurances given Belgium at the time of the Peace Conference, it nevertheless felt that there continued a weighty moral obligation upon this Government, since as a result of the action taken by President Wilson Belgium had waived rights which otherwise it might have obtained. This differentiated the prearmistice debt of Belgium from all other debts due the United States from foreign countries.

The provisions of article 232 of the treaty of Versailles were not carried out by Germany. The failure of Germany to fulfill its reparation obligations finally resulted in the adoption of the Dawes plan of August, 1924. In an agreement of January 14, 1925, signed at Paris, apportioning the Dawes plan receipts among the several countries entitled to reparations it was provided that 5 per cent of the annual payments by Germany available for reparations (first deducting certain priorities, such as service of the German external loan of 1924, army costs, and the like) was set apart to provide repayment of the Belgian prearmistice debt. France and Great Britain agreed to accept their proportion of the amounts to be received, and Belgium has been relieved to this extent as a debtor of these two nations. The portion of these receipts which would have been payable to the United States if the treaty of Versailles had been ratified by this Government is being paid to Belgium by reason of her prearmistice debt to the United States, and Belgium agreed to pay over such amounts immediately to this country. The commission did not accept the Belgian proposal that amounts to be received from Germany be substituted by Belgium for repayment of the prearmistice debt. The commission, however, felt that under all the circumstances the United States should not ask Belgium to repay more than the principal of the prearmistice advances. A schedule of annual installment payments over a period of 62 years, without interest, the payments to be a direct obligation of Belgium irrespective of receipt of payments from Germany, was finally agreed upon by the two commissions. The amount of the annual installments increases until it reaches \$2,900,000 in the sixth year. . . .

DOCUMENT NO. 535

Extract

of TREATY OF VERSAILLES, Part VIII, Reparation; Articles 231, 232, 233

SECTION I.
GENERAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE 231

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

ARTICLE 232

The Allied and Associated Governments recognise that the resources of Germany are not adequate, after taking into account permanent diminutions of such resources which will result from other provisions of the present Treaty, to make complete reparation for all such loss and damage.

The Allied and Associated Governments, however, require, and Germany undertakes, that she will make compensation for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers and to their property during the period of the belligerency of each as an Allied or Associated Power against Germany by such aggression by land, by sea and from the air, and in general all damage as defined in Annex I hereto.

In accordance with Germany's pledges, already given, as to complete restoration for Belgium, Germany undertakes, in addition to the compensation for damage elsewhere in this Part provided for, as a consequence of the violation of the Treaty of 1839, to make reimbursement of all sums which Belgium has borrowed from the Allied and Associated Governments up to November 11, 1918, together with interest at the rate of five per cent. (5%) per annum on such sums. This amount shall be determined by the Reparation Commission, and the German Government undertakes thereupon forthwith to make a special issue of bearer bonds to an equivalent amount payable in marks gold, on May 1, 1926, or, at the option of the German Government, on the 1st of May in any year up to 1926.

Subject to the foregoing, the form of such bonds shall be determined by the Reparation Commission. Such bonds shall be handed over to the Reparation

Commission, which has authority to take and acknowledge receipt thereof on behalf of Belgium.

ARTICLE 233

The amount of the above damage for which compensation is to be made by Germany shall be determined by an Inter-Allied Commission, to be called the *Reparation Commission* and constituted in the form and with the powers set forth hereunder and in Annexes II to VII inclusive hereto.

This Commission shall consider the claims and give to the German Government a just opportunity to be heard.

The findings of the Commission as to the amount of damage defined as above shall be concluded and notified to the German Government on or before May 1, 1921, as representing the extent of that Government's obligations.

The Commission shall concurrently draw up a schedule of payments prescribing the time and manner for securing and discharging the entire obligation within a period of thirty years from May 1, 1921. If, however, within the period mentioned Germany fails to discharge her obligations, any balance remaining unpaid may, within the discretion of the Commission, be postponed for settlement in subsequent years, or may be handled otherwise in such manner as the Allied and Associated Governments, acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Part of the present Treaty, shall determine.

DOCUMENT NO. 536

Message([377](#))

from the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, February 22, 1921, to the SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES regarding pre-Armistice loans to Belgium

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I herewith call your attention to an agreement with Belgium made by the British and French Premiers and myself, which is embodied in the following letter:

June 16, 1919

M. Hymans,
Ministre des Affaires Etrangères,
Hotel Lotti, Paris

SIR:

The Reparation Clauses of the draft Treaty of Peace with Germany obligate Germany to make reimbursement of all sums which Belgium has borrowed from the Allied and Associated Governments up to November 11, 1918, on account of the violation by Germany of the Treaty of 1839. As evidence of such an obligation Germany is to make a special issue of bonds to be delivered to the Reparation Commission.

Each of the undersigned will recommend to the appropriate governmental agency of his Government that, upon the delivery to the Reparation Commission of such bonds, his Government accept an amount thereof corresponding to the sums which Belgium has borrowed from his Government since the war and up to November 11, 1918, together with interest at 5 per cent unless already included in such sums, in satisfaction of Belgium's obligation on account of such loans, which obligation of Belgium's shall thereupon be cancelled.

We are, dear Mr. Minister,

Very truly yours,

G. CLEMENCEAU
WOODROW WILSON
D. LLOYD GEORGE

In recommending to you that Congress take appropriate action with regard to this agreement, certain facts should be brought to your attention.

The neutrality of Belgium was guaranteed by the Treaty of London of 1839. In considering the reparation to be made by Germany it was agreed that the action of Germany, in grossly violating this treaty by an attack on Belgium, obligated the German Government under international law to repay to Belgium the costs of war. On this principle the Treaty of Versailles (Art. 232) provided that in accordance with Germany's pledges already given as to the complete restoration for Belgium, Germany should undertake, in addition to the compensation for material damage, to make reimbursement of all sums which Belgium had borrowed from the Allied and Associated Governments up to November 11, 1918, together with interest at 5 per cent per annum on such sums. This obligation was to be discharged by a special issue of bearer bonds to an equivalent amount payable in gold marks on May 1, 1926, or at the option of the German Government on the 1st of May in any year up to 1926.

For various reasons the undertaking defined in the above letter was not embodied in the Treaty. Belgium's obligations to the United States for advances made up to the date of the Armistice amounted to approximately \$171,000,000, and to England

and France they amounted, I am informed, to about £164,700,000. In view of the special circumstances in which Belgium became involved in the war and the attitude of this country toward Belgium, it was felt that the United States might well agree to make the same agreement respecting pre-Armistice loans to Belgium as England and France offered to do.

Advances made by the Treasury to the Belgian Government from the beginning of the war to the Armistice amounted to \$171,780,000. This principal sum, however, includes advances of \$499,400 made to enable the Belgians to pay the interest due November 15, 1917, and \$1,571,468.42 to enable the payment of the interest due May 15, 1918. The interest on the advances has been paid up to April 15, 1919, the interest due from May 15, 1918, to that date having been paid out of Treasury loans for which the United States holds Belgian obligations, which, however, were made after November 11, 1918, the date of the Armistice. This latter advance would not come within the terms of the Agreement above mentioned. If, therefore, the United States accepts payment of Belgian obligations given before the Armistice by receiving a corresponding amount of German obligations, it would seem that it should receive German obligations amounting to \$171,780,000 with interest from April 15, 1919.

Although it is understood that England and France will take their share of the German bonds when received by Belgium, I am informed that the Reparation Commission has not as yet finally determined the details of the issuance of the necessary bonds by the German Government. A recommendation at this time that suitable legislative action should be taken may appear somewhat premature, but in view of the approaching termination of my Administration I have brought this matter to your attention, hoping that suitable action may be taken at the appropriate time.

WOODROW WILSON

THE WHITE HOUSE
February 22, 1921

[Fig. 18. LETTER, 2 FEBRUARY 1915, WHITLOCK TO HOOVER](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 537

Extract
of REPARATION COMMISSION'S STATEMENT of Germany's obligation, 31

December 1922,(378) naming the amount for which Germany is obligated to issue bonds to Belgium on account of the Belgian war debt

CAPITAL DEBT

Allies Loans to Belgium [Belgian war debt] G.M 5,624,000,000

DOCUMENT NO. 538

Extract

of Agreement(379) between ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS, Paris, 14 January 1925, regarding the distribution of the Dawes Annuities. Article 4, Belgian War Debt

A) As from September 1, 1924, 5% of the total sum available in any year after meeting the charges for the service of the German external loan, 1924, and the charges for costs of commissions, costs of U.S. army of occupation, annuity for arrears of pre-May 1 army costs, prior charge for current army costs, and any other prior charges which may hereafter be agreed, shall be applied to the reimbursement of the Belgian war debt as defined in the last paragraph of Art. 232 of the treaty of Versailles.

B) The amounts so applied in any year shall be distributed between the powers concerned in proportion to the amount of the debts due to them respectively as at May 1, 1921. Pending the final settlement of the accounts, France shall receive 46%, Great Britain 42% and Belgium (by reason of her debt to U.S.A.) 12%.

2. Post-Armistice Loans to Belgium

The principal of obligations for cash advanced by the United States to Belgium after the Armistice was \$175,430,808.68, and of this total 60 per cent, or \$104,642,122.60,(380) was employed by the C.R.B. for relief and rehabilitation in Belgium. As before mentioned neither the British nor French treasuries furnished financial support to the Commission after the Armistice. Their respective Governments, however, did open credits or supply cash to the Belgian Government in the first few months after the war, though the amounts were not large in comparison to United States loans to Belgium. In January 1919 Great Britain opened a "Reconstruction Credit" of £9,000,000 for Belgium on a strictly commercial basis.(381) The terms of settlement of this debt are given as of interest in relation to the terms of the Belgian settlement with the United States.

French advances to Belgium after the Armistice are reflected in the budgets(382) of these two countries in the years following the war. This debt amounting to approximately 240,000,000 French francs had apparently been liquidated by 1927, when a note accounting for the disappearance of this Belgian debt in the budget of that year explains that it was offset by sums which were due Belgium as a result of the occupation of the Ruhr. There were, thus, no funding arrangements in this instance.

DOCUMENT NO. 539

Extract
from a Report of the WORLD WAR FOREIGN DEBT COMMISSION(383)
referring to Belgian post-Armistice debts to the United States

Repayment of the postarmistice debt, amounting as of June 15, 1925, including accrued interest, to \$246,000,000, was arranged on lines substantially similar to the settlements made with other countries. A detailed statement of the calculation of this portion of the debt is also set out in the agreement. Payments of principal are spread over a period of 62 years with interest in arbitrarily fixed amounts during the first 10 years, and interest at the rate of 3% per cent a year thereafter.

After the preliminary periods the total payments to be made by Belgium each year for the remaining 52 years of the debt-funding period will be approximately \$12,700,000 a year. The adjustment of the early payments on both the prearmistice and postarmistice debts was made to bring the total annual payments within Belgium's capacity and particularly to meet her present difficulties in obtaining foreign exchange because of the unfavorable balance of her commodity trade, the shrinkage in her income from foreign investments, and the lack of other invisible items in amounts sufficient to offset her unfavorable commodity trade balance, and further to aid her in her efforts to balance her budget and place her currency on a sound basis.

DOCUMENT NO. 540

Extracts
of Explanatory Statement presented to Chamber of Representatives of Belgium,
Session of the 9th February 1926, regarding the debts of Belgium and of the
Belgian Congo Colony to Great Britain

The discussions relating to the consolidation of the respective debts of Belgium and the Belgian Congo Colony to Great Britain have resulted in Accords which were signed at London on December 31, 1925.

As you will see below, the basis of the arrangements concluded is the same for both debts; but the principle of the financial separation of Belgium and of the Colony, which is laid down in the colonial Charter, rendered necessary the conclusion of two distinct Accords.

The present proposed law is for the purpose of ratifying these two conventions, of which the text in the English language and a translation are annexed hereto.

The Belgian debt to be funded amounts to 9,000,000 Pounds sterling. It represents the amount of the credit, called *Reconstruction Credit*, which Great Britain opened to Belgium by virtue of a convention of the 31st of January, 1919, regarding which detailed information was furnished to Parliament in the annex to the statement of the situation of the Public Treasury on January 1, 1923 (pp. 153 to 156).

According to the terms of the said convention, this credit was destined to "facilitate the task of the Belgian Government and its nationals in the placing of orders for products and articles manufactured in Great Britain necessary for the restoration of Belgium until such time as she shall have been indemnified by the enemy Powers."

This credit, which has been completely utilized, has been "carried on a special account at the Bank of England in consideration of the periodical discount, at 5%, of Treasury bonds of the Belgian Government, drawn up in sterling at three months, to the nominal value of 9,000,000 pounds sterling, these bonds to be renewed until the receipt of the indemnity to be furnished by the enemy Powers permits of the Belgian Government's paying this off.

"The first sums received by the Belgian Government as a result of compensation or indemnity by enemy Powers" stated this convention further, "will be devoted to the liquidation of the above-mentioned Treasury bonds, *pari passu* with the liquidation of all similar advances received from any one of the associated Governments."

The English reconstruction credits therefore constituted a distinctly commercial post-war debt, entailing a kind of privilege on Belgian priority, which has become exigible in fact by reason of the payments of Germany to Belgium.

England, however, did not exact repayment on the proceeds of German reparations; already in 1922, on the contrary, she admitted the principle of the funding of this debt.

The negotiations begun at that time remained in suspense so long as the capital question of German reparations was not settled; they were taken up again shortly

after the conclusion of the Washington Accord of August 18, 1925, and, on the initiative of the British Treasury, were from that time onwards conducted jointly for the Belgian and Congolese debts.

The debt of the Belgian Congo to England has quite a different origin from that of Belgium.

During the course of the year 1916, the Government of the Colony, the metropolitan services of which were functioning in London and Havre, found itself obliged to have recourse to a loan to meet the disbursements which could not be covered by the regular advances which the Allies granted, for war necessities, to Belgium.

These disbursements, which were estimated for the years 1916, 1917 and 1918 at 3,500,000 pounds sterling

.....

The essential terms of the two Accords, Belgian and Congolese, are as follows:

INTEREST

5% per annum from 1st of January 1926 onwards, payable semiannually on June 30 and December 31 of each year; the interest already paid by Belgium on the Treasury bonds for the period subsequent to December 31, 1925, as well as that incurred to that date and remaining due by the Colony, form the subject of appropriate adjustments.

REDEMPTION

In twenty-five years as from the sixth year, by successive repayments on the 31st of December of the years 1931 to 1955, in accordance with the redemption tables annexed to the Accords; during this period, the annuities required for interest and redemption combined remain fairly constant.

[Translation]

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3. Loans to France

Government subsidies to the C.R.B. for relief purposes in Northern France came from Great Britain, France, and the United States. The amounts were as follows:([384](#))

British	\$14,863,917.95
Treasury	
United	127,000,000.00
States	
Treasury	
French	110,681,443.43
Treasury	

The sums are small compared with the total war loans to France by the United States and Great Britain, which amounted to about \$4,000,000,000 and \$3,000,000,000, respectively. The two debt settlement agreements between the United States and France, and Great Britain and France, extracts of the terms of which follow, have not as yet([385](#)) been ratified by the French Chamber of Deputies.

DOCUMENT NO. 541

Extracts

from a Report of the WORLD WAR FOREIGN DEBT COMMISSION([386](#)) describing the debt funding negotiations with the French Debt Commission headed by M. JOSEPH CAILLAUX

A French debt commission, headed by M. Joseph Caillaux, finance minister of France, appeared before the commission on September 24, 1925, to negotiate a settlement of the French debt to the United States. The following were the members of the French commission which accompanied M. Caillaux: M. Emile Daeschner, French Ambassador at Washington; Senator Henry Berenger; Senator Louis Dausset; Senator Fernand Chapsal; Senator Paul Dupuy; Deputy Vincent Auriol; Deputy Lucien Lamoreux; Deputy Maurice Bokanowski; Deputy Pierre de Chambrun; M. Joseph Simon; M. Moreau-Neret, Ministry of Finance; M. Haguenin, Inspector of Finances; M. Lacour-Gayet, financial attaché of the French Embassy at Washington.

Joint meetings with the French representatives were held on September 24, 25, 28, and October 1, 1925. The two commissions were unable to reach an agreement before the departure of the French commission from Washington on October 2, 1925. The negotiations have not been suspended, however. It is expected that they will be continued either through regular diplomatic channels or through special representatives of the French Government coming to this country to confer with the commission.

In order that the public might be fully informed as to the attitude of the commission in its discussions with M. Caillaux and his associates it was decided at the conclusion of the negotiations to release to the press the essential proposals made by the commission.

The following statement and proposal was handed M. Caillaux on September 28, 1925:

"We have had the privilege of considering your statement of this morning. We understand this to be a reaffirmation of your proposal to us of the 24th instant; that is, that you should pay \$25,000,000 annually for the first 5 years, \$30,000,000 annually for the following 5 years, \$60,000,000 annually for the following 10 years, and \$90,000,000 annually for the last 42 years, this sum completely to extinguish the indebtedness. We have stated the reasons why this sum in our opinion is inadequate.

It seems to us that you consider the above proposed annuities are an application to your indebtedness to us of the principles discussed between France and England as applicable to the war debt of France to England. But we wish to point out that an examination of the existing settlements and tentative agreement between France and England discloses an entire difference. We find that the principles of these arrangements, if applied to the debt of the United States, would imply a larger obligation upon the part of France to the United States than that contained in our proposal below.

.....

The net result of the application of the principles [British-French] to the American debt would bring about that France should pay to the United States an annual amount of \$161,000,000 for the first 20 years, and \$61,000,000 thereafter for 42 years. These payments would be altered if the annuity of \$61,000,000 were deferred for the first seven years and added to the subsequent period, as discussed in London. It seems to us that those principles of repayment are infeasible to France in the application of its indebtedness to us.

.....

You have requested that we should be more specific and we have now the pleasure of laying before you a definite proposal:

(1) We propose to consolidate the entire indebtedness into one total sum. The amount of this indebtedness as of June 15, 1925, with accrued interest at the rate of the existing French obligations, is about \$4,227,000,000. We propose, however, that interest should be calculated upon the most favorable basis of our previous settlements, under which the principal, with accrued interest would as of June 15,

1925, amount to about \$4,025,000,000, being a concession of over \$200,000,000 in accrued interest.

(2) We propose that the French Government should undertake to pay the principal of the debt in annual installments graduated upward during the period of 62 years, as is the case of the other settlements made by the United States. This would require at the first year the sum of \$20,000,000 on account of the principal, being approximately one-half of 1 per cent of the total principal, the payments on principal increasing gradually over the entire period of 62 years. You will recognize that in the arrangement of this schedule it has been the desire of the American commission to so arrange the payments as to meet the economic and fiscal necessities of France.

(3) There therefore remains the question of the rate of interest to be paid upon the debt. In our desire to meet the difficulties of the French Government, and at the same time to provide that the American people may secure some return by participation in the increased strength and productivity to be expected in France, we propose that interest the first year shall be at the rate of one-half of 1 per cent per annum, and that this rate shall increase each year by one-fourth of 1 per cent. This would bring an interest rate up to 3% per cent at the thirteenth year, and this to remain as the maximum for the balance of the period."

DOCUMENT NO. 542

Extract

from a Report of the WORLD WAR FOREIGN DEBT COMMISSION(387) describing further negotiations (1925-1926) for funding the French debt to the United States

After the Caillaux commission returned to France negotiations for the settlement of the debt were informally continued through the French Embassy at Washington.

On December 1, 1925, the commission received and considered an unofficial proposal of settlement. The proposal was further considered at a meeting of the commission on December 3, 1925, when it was decided that it did not furnish a satisfactory basis for discussion.

On January 23, 1926, Senator Henry Berenger, the newly appointed French ambassador at Washington, called on the chairman of the commission and indicated that he desired to reopen negotiations for the settlement of the debt. Further informal conferences were held from time to time with representatives of the commission. Settlement of the debt was authorized at a meeting of the commission on April 29, 1926. The funding agreement was signed and approved

by the President the same day. It has been approved by the House of Representatives, but has not yet been approved by the Senate. It has not yet been ratified by France. Copies of the statement issued to the press and of the agreement appear, respectively, as Exhibits 90 and 93, pages 254 and 257.

The amount of the debt funded was calculated on the same basis as in previous settlements; that is, with interest at 4 1/4 per cent to December 15, 1922, and 3 per cent thereafter to June 15, 1925, the date of the agreement. After deducting a cash payment of \$386,686.89 made upon execution of the agreement, the total indebtedness funded into bonds was \$4,025,000,000. This amount is to be paid in annuities commencing with \$30,000,000 in the first year and rising to \$125,000,000 in the seventeenth year, continuing at this figure until the sixty-second year, when the amount will be \$117,674,104.17. A statement of the amounts payable annually to the United States appears as Exhibit 94, page 262. Under these annuities the total principal funded will be repaid in full with interest thereon as follows: after the first 5 years and for the next 10 years, 1 per cent per annum; for the next 10 years, 2 per cent per annum; for the next 8 years, 2% per cent per annum; for the next 7 years, 3 per cent per annum; and for the remaining 22 years, 3% per cent per annum. Over the entire period the United States will receive \$6,847,674,104.17.

DOCUMENT NO. 543

Agreement

for the settlement of the War Debt of France to Great Britain([388](#))

The British and French Governments, having arrived at a definite settlement of the debts due by France to Great Britain arising out of the Great War,

The undersigned, duly authorised by their respective Governments, subject to such ratification as may be required, have agreed as follows:

1. France agrees to pay, and Great Britain to accept, the following annuities in full and final settlement (subject to the provisions of Article 7 of this Agreement) of the War Debt due by France to Great Britain, in respect of which Great Britain holds French sterling Treasury Bills to the value of 9653,127,900, viz:--

	£ millions
During the financial year 1926- 27	4
During the financial year 1927-	6

28

During the financial year 1928-29	8
During the financial year 1929-30	10
During the financial years 1930-31 to 1956-57 inclusive	12 1/2%
During the financial years 1957-58 to 1987-88 inclusive	14

The above payments will be made in sterling at the Bank of England, London, in equal half-yearly instalments on the 15th September and 15th March of each year so that the first instalment shall be paid on the 15th September, 1926, and the last instalment on the 15th March, 1988.

2. France will issue and deliver to the British Treasury on or before the 15th September, 1926, a bond in respect of each of the instalments provided for in Article 1 of this Agreement.

3. The payments due under all bonds issued in accordance with this Agreement shall be made without deduction for, and shall be exempt from, any and all taxes and other public dues present or future imposed by or under authority of France or any political or local taxing authority within France.

4. France, at her option, upon not less than ninety days' notice to Great Britain, may postpone payment of a part not exceeding one-half of any of the half-yearly instalments due under Article 1 to any subsequent 15th September or 15th March not more than three years distant from its due date, but only on condition that in case France shall at any time exercise this option as to the payment of any instalment, the instalments, falling due in the third succeeding year cannot be postponed at all unless and until the instalments due three years, two years and one year previous thereto shall actually have been paid in full. All such postponed payments shall bear interest at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum, payable half-yearly.

5. If at any time it appears that the aggregate payments effectively received by Great Britain under Allied War Debt Funding Agreements and on account of Reparations or of Liberation Bonds exceed the aggregate payments effectively made by Great Britain to the Government of the United States of America in respect of war debts, an account shall be drawn up by the British Treasury, interest at 5 per cent. being allowed on both sides of the account; and if that account shows that the receipts exceed the payments, Great Britain will credit France against the payments next due by France under Article 1 of this Agreement with such

proportion of that excess as the payments effectively made by France under Article 1 of this Agreement bear to the aggregate sums effectively received by Great Britain under all Allied War Debt Funding Agreements. Thereafter a similar account will be drawn up by the British Treasury each year, and any further excess of the receipts over the payments shall each year give rise to a credit to France of a proportion of such excess calculated in the manner indicated above. On the other hand, any deficit shall be made good by an increase in the payments next due by France up to a similar proportion of such deficit within the limit of the total amount of the credits already allowed to France under this Article.

For the purpose of this Article any capital sums which may hereafter be realised by Great Britain in respect of Reparations or of Liberations Bonds will be taken at their annual value, taking account of amortisation.

6. The accounts relating to the war debt of France to Great Britain shall be finally closed, and the British Treasury shall be entitled to retain any sums credited or to be credited to France in respect of such accounts. Save as provided in this Agreement, the contracting parties and their agents reciprocally renounce all claim or counterclaims against the other contracting party or their agent in respect of the above-mentioned accounts or the services and supplies to which they relate.

7. The sum of £53,500,000 shall remain as a non-interest-bearing debt of France to Great Britain, the repayment of which will be settled by a further Agreement. Meanwhile, the British Government will retain (without interest) against this debt the gold remitted to London by the French Government during the war under the Calais Agreement.

8. Upon the execution of this Agreement and the delivery to Great Britain of the bonds of France to be issued hereunder, duly executed, the British Treasury will cancel and surrender to France the French Treasury Bills at present held by Great Britain.

Done in duplicate both in English and in French, the original English text being authentic in case of difference.

London, this twelfth day of July, 1926

For the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland:

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL
Chancellor of the Exchequer

For the French Republic:

J. CAILLAUX
Minister of Finance

LETTER FROM M. CAILLAUX TO THE CHANCELLOR OF THE
EXCHEQUER DATED THE 12TH JULY, 1926

12th July, 1926

DEAR MR. CHURCHILL,

In assuming the responsibility of signing the agreement for the settlement of the French war debt to Great Britain and thereby accepting the payment of the annuities fixed on the sole credit of France, I feel bound to explain that in the opinion of the French Government, the future possibility of making payments and transfers across the exchange of the amounts required to assure the fulfilment of the debt settlements with the United States and Great Britain inevitably depends largely on the continued transfer of receipts from Germany under the Dawes Plan. If, therefore, for reasons outside the control of France, such receipts should cease completely or to an extent greater than one half, a new situation would be created and the French Government reserves the right in such an event of asking the British Government to reconsider the question in the light of all the circumstances then prevailing.

It is subject to this express reservation that I am ready to sign the agreement which we have drawn up.

J. CAILLAUX

[Translation]

REPLY OF THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER TO M. CAILLAUX

TREASURY CHAMBERS

12th July, 1926

DEAR MONSIEUR CAILLAUX,

I have received your letter of the 12th July. As I have explained His Majesty's Government must maintain the position that the settlement which we have arrived at of the French war debt to this country depends, like that debt itself, on the sole credit of France. You will realise that in the hypothetical circumstances that you mention, Great Britain would already have suffered a diminution of the receipts from the Dawes Scheme, which we have taken into account in arriving at the various debt settlements and this is one of the factors which would have to be borne in mind in the event of any reconsideration of the question being desired by the French Government. Subject to this I do not object to the statement that you make.

In the event of any modification being made, I should expect, in, order to secure equal treatment among creditors, that other creditors of France would take into consideration a corresponding modification of debts due to them.

Believe me my dear M. Caillaux,

Yours sincerely,

WINSTON CHURCHILL

4. Relief Subsidies and United States Debt Settlement Concessions

The sums advanced by the United States to the Allies during the war were raised by the Government through the issue of Liberty Loans, the current interest (up to 4 1/4 per cent) and other charges on which have to be borne by the American taxpayer. In obtaining cash advances from the United States Treasury, the Allied Governments signed certificates of indebtedness bearing in general an interest rate of 5 per cent.(389) In funding the war debts the United States did not hold the borrowers to these terms, but on the contrary, as the preceding documents show, the debt settlements with Belgium and with France not only reduce the interest charges prior to the date of funding but arrange a schedule of payments in amounts and over such a long period of time as to effect considerable cancellations. It may not be out of place to compare these concessions, which must be borne by the American taxpayer, with the United States' advances to the C.R.B. for relief to Belgium and Northern France.

Belgium is relieved of her pre-Armistice debts to the Allied and Associated Governments by the Treaty of Versailles. Furthermore, the Paris agreement of the 14th January 1925(390) which regulates the distribution of the Dawes Plan annuities, stipulates that Belgium shall receive that portion of the annuities due by reason of the Belgian pre-Armistice debt to the United States. The subsequent direct United States-Belgium settlement covered the total Belgian indebtedness to the United States the amount of which, prior to funding, was \$483,426,000.(391) The principal of this total Belgian indebtedness as funded, after the elimination or reduction of interest charges was, however, \$417,780,000. This amount is funded over a period of 62 years(392) by means of annual Payments, the present value of which, at 4 1/4 per cent interest payable semiannually, is \$225,000,000. Concessions to Belgium thus indicated amount to over \$258,000,000, or somewhat more than the United States advances to the C.R.B. for Belgian relief.(393) Moreover, as mentioned above, the United States waived in Belgium's favor the German annuities on account of the pre-Armistice portion of the debt.

In the case of France and the United States, the French debt prior to funding was \$4,230,777,000, whereas the principal of total indebtedness as funded was \$4,025,000,000. The present value of the annual payments at 4 1/4 per cent interest payable semiannually over the 62 years period is \$1,996,509,000, or 47.2 per cent of the debt prior to funding. The amount of United States Treasury advances (\$109,753,510) actually utilized by the C.R.B. for relief in Northern France is of small matter compared to the concessions(394) thus indicated.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XV

THE MOBILIZATION OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

In the preceding chapters there have been only incidental references to that phase of Belgian relief which at the time was most widely known---the world-wide campaign for public support of the relief enterprise, and the donation of funds, food, and clothing. The various institutions and groups co-operating with or organized by the Commission collected over \$52,000,000, an unprecedented accomplishment in the mobilization of charitable contributions. This very considerable sum, though it constituted only a little over five per cent of the total expenditures of the Commission, represented an exceedingly important contribution to the success of the work. It provided invaluable support before government subsidies were granted and indicated the strength of the world-wide moral support of the undertaking, which was an important factor in securing government assistance. This public support, which was of the utmost value to Hoover in his difficult negotiations with the belligerent governments, had its foundation in the knowledge of the conditions in Belgium and the Commission's objectives, broadcast through the newspaper and periodical press. It was greatly strengthened by the actual participation, in the relief campaign, of thousands of individuals identified in one way or another with over 4,000 committees associated in the Commission's appeal for Belgium.

In the organization of this appeal for general support of relief Hoover established certain general policies which were followed by the Commission throughout its life, and later by the American Relief Administration during the post-war reconstruction period. First, a definite program was announced based on the needs as reported by competent investigators, and in relation to resources available locally or from other sources. When conditions in respect to needs or resources changed, a new program was formulated on the basis of a resurvey of the situation.(395)

Second, the Commission's appeals through the press and the co-operating committees consisted of statements of the ascertained need of relief, free from hysterical exaggeration; of the program to be undertaken; of what had been accomplished and the methods employed. In its public statements, as in its work in Belgium, the Commission observed the strictest neutrality except in this, that it steadfastly championed the interests of the Belgians who were the innocent victims of the war.

Third, the Commission made no attempt to dictate to the co-operating committees the methods they should employ in their solicitation of support. There were, altogether, over a hundred principal committees dealing directly with the Commission, with nearly 4,000 regional subcommittees. Seventy-five thousand persons as members of these committees or of the Commission itself were actively engaged in the mobilization of public support of relief. These collaborators represented many nations and races. In the British Empire the National Committee for Relief in Belgium, founded in April 1915, co-operated with existing committees or organized new ones in various parts of the Empire and turned over its receipts to the Commission. There were national or regional committees in the Argentine, in Italy, Spain, China, and elsewhere, having a similar relation to the C.R.B. In the United States, in addition to independent groups and institutions, the Commission secured the organization of committees in each state which maintained a direct contact with the New York office of the C.R.B.

Fourth, the Commission asked for and received volunteer service which constituted an enormous contribution to the relief, the value of which cannot be computed. This contribution included not only the services of men of wide experience and ability in the various departments of the Commission's activities, from the Chairmanship down and on the committees, but also the concessions and special privileges granted to the Commission by railway, steamship, telegraph, insurance, brokerage, and other business firms all over the world. The distinguished services which the Commission was able to command in all the spheres of its activity are in a great measure responsible for the success of its operations, and specifically they are responsible for the fact that overhead and administrative expenses were less than one-half of one per cent.

Fifth, the Commission employed the economic and efficient methods of large-scale business operations with careful and detailed accounting for all contributions for relief from every source.[\(396\)](#)

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1. The First Appeals for Belgium. August-October 1914

In August, as soon as the outside world became aware of the first tragic effects of the invasion on the Belgian people, many movements were started to bring aid to

the refugees driven before the German advance. Thousands of these helpless people were received with solicitude in Holland, France, and the United Kingdom,(397) and the news of their plight stimulated charitable contributions from all over the world. Belgian diplomatic and consular officers encouraged the work of committees organized for this first phase of Belgian relief. Count de Lalaing and M. Havenith, the Ministers at London and Washington respectively, were particularly active; and energetic committees, principally in the British Empire and America, contributed substantial sums to the central committee, the Belgian Relief Fund, which had been founded under Belgian diplomatic auspices and was supported by the Belgian Government. In the early months of the war many refugee and emergency problems were met through sums supplied by the Belgian Government out of this fund, but until the formation of the Commission in October 1914 no recognized channel existed through which the growing distress in Belgium within the German lines could be alleviated. The Commission for Relief in Belgium thus came on to the scene in the midst of considerable though unco-ordinated charitable activity for Belgians. In organizing the solicitation of support during the first few months of its existence the Commission sought to direct the Belgian relief efforts already under way toward the distress inside the German lines; to co-ordinate relief enterprises whose objectives already were the mitigation of suffering among the poor in Belgium; and to stimulate the organization of new agencies of appeal toward this end.

Distinct from the activities centralized in the Belgian Relief Fund a few individuals and groups, principally in North America, made an early start in the collection of funds and food which eventually reached Belgium through the Commission's organization. Among these was "The Millers' Belgian Relief Movement." As early as August 1914 Mr. W. C. Edgar, editor of the *Northwestern Miller*, began a campaign to secure gifts in kind or money to send a cargo of flour to Belgium.(398) In September 1914 the *Christian Herald* of New York established the "Christian Herald Fund" for the benefit of the "widows and orphans of the war in Europe" and in October contributed the funds so collected toward the purchase of food for Belgium.(399) The first gift cargo(400) actually to reach Belgium from overseas sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, and reached Rotterdam on the S.S. "Tremorvah" on the 15th November 1914. The publicity and appeals incident to the formation of the Commission spurred the efforts of existing committees in the United States, and leaders in philanthropy established new committees. The Belgian Relief Fund in New York began an energetic campaign for food and money, and other communities formed similar organizations. On the 1st November the Rockefeller Foundation announced its intention of engaging in war relief work in Europe and of immediately sending shipments of food to Belgium. The Foundation proceeded to buy food, charter ships, and dispatch cargoes, arranging also to furnish warehouse space and transportation for the Belgian Relief Fund of New York.

While these many appeals were being made, Hoover and his associates in London and the American diplomatic representatives in Great Britain, Belgium, and

Germany were securing from the belligerents the guarantees which made relief in Belgium possible. The issues involved in these transactions and the position of the Commission as the sole channel through which supplies could be sent into the occupied territories were not, of course, generally understood, and the impression prevailed in America that the Commission was merely a London committee under Page's direction to forward supplies to Belgium. The American committees naturally did not send their contributions to the new Commission, but shipped their supplies to the American Embassy in London, the Legation at The Hague, or the Consulate at Rotterdam. The early public statements of the Commission were designed to clear up this confusion first by bringing pressure on the State Department to authorize American sponsorship of the enterprise, and second to make known the purpose of the Commission, and its position vis-à-vis the belligerent authorities, the Belgian distributing organization, and the American diplomatic officers.

DOCUMENT NO. 544

Dispatch(401)

TO THE AMERICAN PRESS entitled "Feeding Brussels Depends on U.S."

LONDON, 6 October 1914

It has been put up to the State Department at Washington to decide whether 1,500 tons of provisions shall be shipped from England to Brussels for the scores of thousands of needy persons there.

Millard K. Shaler, an American, representing the Brussels Relief Committee, of which Brand Whitlock, the United States Minister, is the leader, is now here with funds to make the purchase. But the British Government is unwilling to permit the exportation unless it obtains some assurance that the provisions will not fall into the hands of the Germans.

Accordingly, the Government there states that if America assumes full responsibility and the goods are shipped from the American Embassy in London to the American Minister at Brussels, each package being clearly marked, the exportation will be permitted.

The Belgian Legation here so informed Ambassador Page today. Mr. Page communicated the facts to Washington, and is now awaiting a reply.

Mr. Shaler, who has been pressing the matter for more than a week, says the situation in Brussels is genuinely desperate, thousands of citizens needing food.

Mr. Whitlock, who is taking the keenest interest in the matter, is the honorary president of the relief committee.

DOCUMENT NO. 545

Statement,

HOOVER TO THE AMERICAN PRESS, recommending that all American committees raising funds for Belgian relief should combine into one Commission

LONDON, 14 October 1914

Mr. Herbert C. Hoover, Chairman of the Relief Committee, interviewed today concerning the generous American efforts to alleviate the distress among the Belgians, expressed the opinion that unless the application of funds thus raised be under the direction of persons familiar with existing conditions in Belgium there will be inevitably an overlapping and a great waste of energy and money.

"All the American relief workers should combine into one Commission," he said, "which should embrace all the American committees already established in Belgium and in London."[\(402\)](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 546

Statement[\(403\)](#)

TO THE AMERICAN PRESS outlining the plan of organization of the proposed Commission

LONDON, 17 October 1914

There has been initiated here and referred to the Government at Washington a comprehensive scheme for the organization of an American Committee with the purpose of taking over the entire task of furnishing food and other supplies to the civil population of Belgium, so far as American relief measures are concerned, under the official supervision of the American Government.

Ambassador Page has referred the proposal to President Wilson and also to Brand Whitlock, Minister to Belgium, who, with Mr. Page, would head the committee.

It is believed that such a committee would furnish a solution of the exceedingly important and difficult problem of getting supplies to Brussels, for Washington could undoubtedly get sanction from all governments concerned, thus arranging for the best facilities for shipments. If supplies were shipped under the official

protection of America, trouble from belligerents who might fear diversion of the supplies to other belligerents' armies would be obviated.

The further great problem of getting the Belgian refugees to return to Belgium would be simplified. Under the present circumstances thousands of refugees fear to return to cities held by the Germans. If they could go back under American protection they would doubtless gladly do so.

The committee would also systematize the expenditure of the Belgian relief funds now being gathered in America.

Mr. Page has consulted H. C. Hoover, head of the American Relief Committee here, which has done such valuable work. Mr. Hoover would be one of the leading members of the committee, which would so include prominent Americans in Brussels.

Under official auspices the supplies, which Belgium sorely needs, could be shipped direct from America to Belgium, avoiding the necessity of obtaining export permits from London, and thus saving much time.

The need of some such organization, having official support, is amply illustrated by the fate of the plan of the Relief Committee in Brussels, which Mr. Whitlock heads, for the purchase of supplies here for shipment to Brussels. A month ago M. K. Shaler left Brussels to purchase 1,500 tons of food. He has been here for three weeks waiting for permission to make shipments, which the British Government refuses unless the supplies go under an American diplomatic guarantee. It is understood here that Washington has referred the matter to Berlin, which fails to give an answer.

In the meantime the situation in Brussels grows desperate, while Mr. Shaler, with plenty of funds for purchases, waits for authority to make shipments.

It is considered here vitally necessary that Washington press Berlin for a guarantee of immunity of shipments against seizure.

DOCUMENT NO. 547

Statement, [\(404\)](#)

HOOVER TO THE AMERICAN PRESS, describing the organization of the C.R.B., its co-operation with the Belgian committee, and the immediate need of emergency relief

LONDON, 22 October 1914

At a meeting at the American Embassy today of all who are concerned in Belgian relief, including Emile Francqui and Baron Lambert of the Belgian committee, the organization of the American commission was completed. In addition to Ambassador Page and the American Ambassadors at Brussels and The Hague the Spanish Ambassadors at Brussels and London joined the commission as honorary chairmen.

The commission consists of Herbert C. Hoover, who was head of the American refugees' committee in London, chairman; Daniel Heineman of Brussels, vice-chairman; Mr. Graff of the American relief committee, treasurer; Millard K. Shaler, who came to London as representative of Minister Brand Whitlock, and Mr. Hulse of Brussels, secretaries. J. B. White is to have charge of the purchase and exportation of foodstuffs. Captain Lucey will have charge of the Rotterdam office.

Other members of the committee are Messrs. Hunsiker [of London] and Gibson of the American Legation at Brussels, Mr. Rickard, and the American Consuls at London, Antwerp, Brussels, Ostend, Liège, and Ghent. The commission will have an office in each of these cities, as it is intended to assist in provisioning all Belgium. It will co-operate fully with the Belgian committee.

Food to the value of \$250,000 already has been bought in the name of Ambassador Page and Minister Whitlock, and arrangements have been made to begin its distribution to the local Belgian branches on October 26. The commission has received considerable sums in addition to the various Belgian funds.

Operations in the market today revealed that owing to Great Britain's demands the food stocks here may not be depleted. Because of the restrictions on the exportation of food it is extremely difficult to find even emergency provisions here, and supplies from America are even more imperatively needed than was originally expected. The difficulties become more embarrassing in view of the insistent requests received by the commission today for the expeditious despatch of the supplies already obtained.

The supplies available at the relief stations in Brussels Monday were believed to be sufficient to last until Saturday, and these were available only because a certain quantity of wheat was received from Antwerp. That source is now exhausted. The commission learns that the food supply at Charleroi is exhausted and that the people are subsisting entirely on potato soup.

A representative of the relief committee at Liège arrived here today to make representations of the urgency there in consequence of the non-arrival of supplies. It is obvious that with the scarcity of foodstuffs in Holland it is impossible to get supplies on that side for more than emergency service. A stream of supplies must be started from America if the Belgians are to be saved from famine.

The commission emphasizes that it is essential that supplies be sent by neutral ships, arrangements having been made with Great Britain that such shipments will not be interfered with in entering the ports designated by the commission. Germany has given ample assurance to the American Legation at Brussels that the importation and distribution of food to the civilians in Belgium will not be interrupted.

DOCUMENT NO. 548

Telegram,
AMBASSADOR PAGE TO SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON,
announcing for the guidance of American committees that the Commission is the
only agency for Belgian relief

AMERICAN EMBASSY,
LONDON, 26 October 1914

To the Secretary of State, Washington

Your 389, October 24. The Commission of Belgian Relief working under diplomatic guidance of Spanish Ambassador here and myself has written assurance of the German military commander of Belgian territory held by the Germans that food sent them by this Commission will not be confiscated. So far as I know this assurance has not been given to anyone else who may send food., No food can be exported from England or Holland, but the Netherlands Government has given this Commission permission to distribute food, landed at Rotterdam through our agents, to people in Belgian territory. Since food cannot be bought on this side of the world, American committees should not send money but should confer with Hoover, Chairman of this Commission, care of this Embassy, regarding what kind of food to send and how to ship it. Commission has agents in every neighborhood in Belgium. It has in fact taken charge of practically all grocery stores. Money sent will be of no use. Food sent except through Commission may never reach Belgium or be confiscated.

PAGE

2. The Organization of American Support. October 1914-February 1915

Having secured the basic diplomatic guarantees, the Commission began at once to broaden and intensify the appeal for public support of relief by encouraging the

creation of new committees and by collaboration with and co-ordination of the work of existing groups through an office of the Commission established in New York in November 1914. In order to bring new committees into activity Hoover urged friends in America and elsewhere to take the lead in their localities in the mobilization of support for relief. Telegrams were sent to state governors asking them to appoint committees or otherwise aid the campaign. Committees independently organized in October 1914 in Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Nebraska promptly associated themselves with the Commission. In November the states of California, Kansas, Louisiana, New Hampshire, and Oregon completed their organizations; Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina followed in December, and early in 1915 other states---Delaware, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington. Up to the middle of January thirty-six states had contributed through state organizations. By way of stimulating the state campaigns, the Commission arranged to preserve the identity of these contributions by "state" ships, the cargoes of which were entirely or largely contributed by a state or groups of states.(405)

Year	Month	Ship	State
1914	December	S.S. "Camino"	California
	December	S.S. "St. Kentigern"	New York
1915	January	S.S. "Industry"	Pennsylvania
	January	S.S. "Hannah"	Kansas
	January	S.S. "Harpalyce"	New England
	January	S.S. "John Hardie"	Maryland
	January	S.S. "Lynorta"	Virginia <i>Literary Digest</i>
	January	S.S. "Washington"	Washington Oregon
	February	S.S. "Wabana"	Louisiana
	February	S.S. "Cranley"	California Oregon

	February	S.S. "Helena"	Georgia North Carolina South Carolina
	March	S.S. "Harpalyce"	New York
	March	S.S. "Strathfillan"	Maine
	March	S.S. "Lynorta"	New England
	March	S.S. "Gienshiel"	Missouri
	April	S.S. "St. Kentigern"	Pennsylvania
	April	S.S. "Strathgyle"	New England
	May	S.S. "St. Cecilia"	Canada
	October	S.S. "Pontoporos"	Connecticut
1916	January	S.S. "Celebes"	Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania
	February	S.S. "Lindenhall"	Indiana

With the spread of the relief campaign in the United States the Commission's New York office, set up in November 1914, rapidly became a very busy and important establishment. The fact that the Commission was the only agency authorized by the belligerent powers to deliver relief to Belgium, and Hoover's announcement that the Commission would pay all freight charges on food contributed in America (406) made the New York office responsible for arranging the transportation(407) of all gifts in kind and for the purchase and forwarding of supplies made possible by cash contributions. The extent of these operations necessitated the establishment of agencies in the principal markets and ports of America.

Another important function performed by the New York office was the preparation and distribution, to the press and co-operating organizations, of information relative

to Belgian conditions and the progress of relief. The first public statements of this character issued by Hoover in London, notably his appeal of the 31st October(408) quoting King Albert's message asking for support of the Commission, were fully and prominently carried in the press. Requests for copy came from all parts of the United States from editors who were eager to aid the cause of relief and who recognized the news value of the Commission's activities. The Press Department of the New York office, under the direction of Will Irwin,(409) instituted daily and weekly news releases to papers and press associations and prepared pamphlets and handbooks for the use of the committees in the field. Weekly and monthly publications(410) carried articles on Belgian relief, and both magazines and newspapers donated advertising space for appeals for contributions for which the Press Department furnished the copy. The primary purpose of the campaign through the press was to bring in contributions to the numerous collecting committees. A secondary purpose was the mobilization of general support of the whole relief enterprise.

One of the most effective appeals for Belgian relief was the "Famous Authors' Service" conceived and instituted by Irwin in co-operation with Goode in the New York and London offices of the Commission. Stories contributed by well-known authors(411) were syndicated and for over three months these stories formed a serial appeal in the leading papers of America.

Effective not only from the point of view of general publicity but in actual contributions were the campaigns carried on, in collaboration with the Commission, by individual publications. Among these were the "Queen of the Belgians Fund" and the "Belgian Flour Fund" organized and managed throughout by magazines which turned the proceeds into the channels of Belgian relief through the Commission. The first mentioned was an appeal to the women of America through the columns of the *Ladies' Home Journal* running for the months of January to March 1915, featuring a signed letter(412) from Queen Elisabeth. The "Belgian Flour Fund" was instituted by Mr. R. J. Cuddihy of the *Literary Digest* on the 28th November 1914. Contributions(413) by the readers of the *Literary Digest* were prompt and generous and from all over the world.

DOCUMENT NO. 549

Telegram,
HOOVER TO MRS. HOOVER, CALIFORNIA, giving information regarding Belgian needs and urging her to interest prominent people in their home state and on the Pacific Coast in sending state relief ships

LONDON, 26 October 1914

Mrs. Herbert Hoover
Alaska Commercial Building
San Francisco

Over one million people on bread line in Belgium at present moment with supplies estimated to last from one to three weeks. While we are securing some supplies here for emergency purposes real situation cannot be met without direct exports from states and we shall require upwards of twenty thousand tons foodstuffs monthly. Can you interest Anderson, Newhall, Hopkins, Lindley, Crocker, Grant, other prominent San Franciscans to present shipload food from California. If California will give us the foodstuffs we will pay freight and insurance. We should like five portions wheat, three portions beans, two portions peas, with bacon if obtainable. Must be shipped in neutral bottom consigned to us Rotterdam. Believe McNear would arrange shipping. Edgar has cabled him. If there is Belgian Relief Committee in California should co-operate. We want food not clothes as this is question starvation and Belgians can clothe themselves for the present. I can think of no greater contribution to this occasion of world's stress than a food ship from California and if possible one from Oregon and another from Washington. It might be pointed out that our Commission is largely Californian and that we should have support of our own state. Could also make same claim as to Oregon in my connection.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 550

Telegram,
HOOVER TO W. J. CHALMERS, CHICAGO, urging him to stimulate collections
in Chicago

LONDON, 27 October 1914

Chalmers
Care Ashland, Chicago

The Belgian National Relief Committee in Belgium in desperation securing food supplies for their people have appealed to America procure and arrange for transportation and guardianship of foodstuffs in Belgium. American authorities have arranged for the necessary protection of various combatant powers and it has been put to us to organize this relief. We have at the request of the American Ambassadors in Europe formed a Commission for this work and are anxious to secure the co-operation of local committee in the principal centers of the United States. I would be glad to know if you would associate yourself with this effort and

surround yourself with men of standing in Chicago as a branch of this committee who could undertake our work in that center. An English friend of ours has cabled to Samuel Insull, Edison Buildings, Chicago, asking his assistance and would suggest you ask him co-operate with you also secure cooperation of any local Belgian relief committees. There are one million persons at present on bread line in Belgium and what we need is absolute food, not clothing. It is our feeling that the grain market of Chicago should present us, in the name of Chicago, with one or more cargoes, these to be composed of wheat, beans, peas, and as much bacon as possible. Shipments must be in neutral bottoms consigned to us in Rotterdam. We should like to be able to announce to world that Chicago is contributing the first cargo. Would like immediate reply as to whether you can personally interest yourself in this effort.

HERBERT HOOVER

Chairman American Commission for Relief in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 551

Telegram,

HOOVER TO LINDON W. BATES, NEW YORK, requesting him to help in the formation of the New York section of the Commission and outlining his proposals to set up subcommittees throughout the United States

LONDON, 28 October 1914

Lindon W. Bates

New York

Will you help me Belgian Relief New York section. See Sidney Ball. . . . I am proposing to set up subcommittees principal points in States to collect and ship food. I believe we will be able to raise necessary money from relief funds in Europe to pay for freight and insurance. If you will interest yourself I will send you any, necessary cables of authority.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 552

Telegram,

HOOVER TO BATES, stating the desirability of working through existing committees if possible but also stating the impossibility of refusing the direct aid of friends

LONDON, 30 October 1914

Lindon W. Bates
New York

We are having very considerable amounts of money from various parts of the United States. Although we do not wish to conflict with existing Belgian relief committees the position we are confronted with is so critical that we cannot refuse to accept offers of local friends and others to work on our behalf. Think it probable work through existing machinery so far as possible. Would like you to see the principal Belgian relief committees in the States and ask them if they will agree to receive deposits which may be sent by our friends, such deposits to be held by them to our order and which we will devote to the absolute purchase of food in the United States. Matter is urgent.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 553

Statement, [\(414\)](#)

HOOVER TO THE AMERICAN PRESS, in which he quotes a message from King Albert and asks the American newspapers to open subscriptions. He states the needs as 80,000 tons each month and sets the charitable funds necessary as \$2,500,000 monthly

LONDON, 31 October 1914

Albert, King of the Belgians, has asked the American people through the American Commission for Relief in Belgium to help feed his starving people during the coming winter.

The King's message, written under fire in the battle in Belgium, follows:

"I am informed that American officials and citizens in Belgium and England are working to save my people from the horrors of the famine which now threaten them. It is a great comfort to me in this hour of sorrow and misfortune to feel that your great-hearted, disinterested people is directing its efforts to relieving the distress of the unoffending civilian population of my country.

"Despite all that can be done, the suffering in the coming winter will be terrible, but the burden we must bear will be lightened if my people can be spared the pangs of hunger with its frightful consequences of disease and violence.

"I confidently hope that the appeal of the American Commission will meet with a generous response. The whole hearted friendship of America shown my people at this time always will be a precious memory.

"ALBERT"

The American Commission for Relief in Belgium is an official body recognized by the various Governments for the transmission of foodstuffs into Belgium. It is the only channel through which food can be introduced into Belgium, and by its association with a committee in Belgium, has the only efficient agency for the distribution of food within that country. H. C. Hoover, Chairman of the Commission, which has headquarters in London, makes the following appeal to all American newspapers:

7,000,000 TO FEED

"We have received reports from members of this Commission who were sent into Belgium. They have the assistance of the National Committee of Relief and its branches throughout Belgium, together with the help of the American Ministers and Consuls and local officials. Their reports show that there are still some 7,000,000 people in Belgium. In many centres the people are receiving an allowance of a little more than three ounces of flour per capita daily.

"This is not a question of charity or relief to the chronic poor; it is a question of feeding an entire population. The situation affects the wealthy and well-to-do as well as the poor. It touches every home in Belgium. Our experts calculate that in order to avoid actual starvation Belgium must have every month a minimum of 60,000 tons of wheat, 15,000 tons of corn, 5,000 tons of peas or beans, and a limited amount of bacon or lard.

"This will allow rations of ten ounces per capita daily, which is about half the usual soldier's ration. All this will cost \$4,000,000 or \$5,000,000 monthly. There is no money in Belgium. The whole credit machinery has ceased. Eighty per cent of the people are unemployed.

NEED \$2,500,000 A MONTH

"A plan may be devised whereby such Belgians as possess property may give obligations to pay when the war ends, but even if we could realize on these obligations we must still have at least \$2,500,000 monthly in food or money with which to buy it. That these figures are no exaggeration is proved by the fact that Belgian imports in normal times average 230,000 tons of cereals monthly; this, together with its own production, which, with accumulations, is now exhausted.

"During the past week we have received and expended in emergency food \$600,000, and yet this is only four days' supply. The problem is immediate. The Belgians are helping themselves, but they can do little. The British and French are under such strain that they also can do little. Besides, these nations, together with the Dutch, have a million refugees on their hands. Americans must feed Belgium this winter. There never was such a call on American charity, and there never was a famine emergency so great.

"This committee and its distributing agency, The Belgian Committee, is composed entirely of volunteers, and every dollar represents actual food, without any organization expenses. It is our earnest hope that all funds raised for Belgium relief in the United States will be translated into actual food and shipped through the Commission.

"Will you, therefore, in the interests of humanity, open a subscription among your readers, ear-marked, 'For the Sole Purpose of Purchasing and Transporting Food.' Every dollar so raised will be used to purchase food in the United States. Information as to what centres and what relief agencies in the United States will undertake the purchase and dispatch will be cabled later."

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DOCUMENT NO. 554

Message,

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELISABETH TO THE WOMANHOOD OF AMERICA

BELGIAN ARMY HEADQUARTERS

29 October 1914

I have learned with gratification of the noble and effective work being done by American citizens and officials on behalf of my stricken people. I confidently hope that their efforts will receive that ungrudging support which we have learned to expect from the generous womanhood of America.

We mothers of Belgium no less than the mothers of America have for generations instilled in our children the instincts and the love of peace. We asked no greater boon than to live in peace and friendship with all the world. We have provoked no war, yet in defence of our hearthstones, our country has been laid waste from end to end.

The flow of commerce has ceased and my people are faced with famine. The terrors of starvation with its consequences of disease and violence menace the unoffending civilian population---the aged, the infirm, the women, and the children.

American officials and citizens in Belgium and England, alive to their country's traditions, have created an organization under the protection of their Government and are already sending food to my people. I hope that they may receive the fullest sympathy and aid from every side.

I need not say that I and my people shall always hold in grateful remembrance the proven friendship of America in this hour of need

(Signed) ELISABETH

DOCUMENT NO. 555

Telegram,
HOOVER TO MRS. LINDON BATES, NEW YORK, asking her to undertake the formation of a women's organization in America

LONDON, 31 October 1914

Mrs. Lindon Bates
New York

The American Commission for Relief in Belgium which has been set up officially by the American Ambassadors to execute their international agreements for the provisioning of Belgium and which embraces American Ambassadors as honorary chairmen, the American Consuls and American residents of England and Belgium as members, would like to have you undertake the formation of a great group of American women who would support us in securing food or money for the Belgian people. It is certain that the entire population of seven million are on the verge of famine and that eight thousand tons of cereals per month is the absolute minimum upon which body and soul can be kept together and this provides a ratio of but ten ounces per capita per diem. The situation is one of the greatest gravity. We have sent an appeal to the American press to open subscriptions for our purposes all of which subscriptions we want translated into actual foodstuffs from the United States. We would be grateful for the help of yourself and all those women who rightly should come to your support.

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 556

Telegram,
HOOVER TO STATE GOVERNORS,(415) asking them to interest themselves in the collection of food for Belgium and suggesting the possibility of furnishing state ships

LONDON, 2 November 1914

The Governor of Kansas

Would you be good enough to interest yourself in the critical situation which exists amongst the people in Belgium to the extent of either through official agencies or through the creation of some committee for the purpose to collect foodstuffs or money within your State on behalf of these people, such foodstuffs to consist of cereals, bacon or ham. It would be a matter of great gratification if the people of your State could furnish one or more shiploads of foodstuffs to be known as the Kansas ships. If you could see your way to take in hand this beneficent work we will use every influence we can bring to bear to have handed over to you all the funds subscribed within your State for Belgian relief that they may be translated entirely into foodstuffs. We can arrange for the reception of such food on the Atlantic seaboard and its transportation and distribution in Belgium.

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 557

Telegram,
HOOVER TO W. C. EDGAR, regarding the latter's plan for collecting a shipload of flour

LONDON, 3 November 1914

William C. Edgar
Northwestern Miller
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Your letter of October twenty-first to Mr. Page has been handed to us. There is no more practical and humane effort which could be undertaken than the provision shipload food for the Belgian people in this hour of their misery. This Commission will be delighted to take charge of such ship and distribute its cargo into hands of the most efficiently organized local relief committees in Belgium which are operating under the protection of members of this Commission. Before arrival of your letter we had cabled the Governor of Minnesota asking him secure the

organization of such an effort within that State. Would you kindly communicate with him so that such beneficent efforts may not overlap.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 558

Telegram,(416)

HOOVER TO STATE GOVERNORS, asking them to assist in the collection of money for Belgium

LONDON, 9 November 1914

Would you be good enough to interest yourself in the critical situation which exists amongst the civil population of Belgium to the extent either through official channels or through the creation or stimulation of some existing channel, of making collection in your State on behalf of these people. All such monies will be devoted by this Commission to the purchase of foodstuffs in the United States and this Commission has been endowed with a fund for the sole purpose of paying for the transport of such foodstuffs to the people of Belgium so that every dollar secured will be represented by actual food.

HERBERT HOOVER

Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 559

Telegram,

HOOVER TO BELGIAN MINISTER, WASHINGTON, suggesting procedure to make effective the desire of the Belgian Government that gifts collected by committees, with which the Minister was associated, should be forwarded through the Commission

LONDON, 3 November 1914

His Excellency, The Belgian Minister Washington, D.C.

We are advised from the Belgian Minister of Finance that his Government had expressed the wish to you that all funds collected by the committee with which you are associated in the United States should be devoted exclusively to the purchase of foodstuffs through and in co-operation with this Commission, we in turn delivering such foodstuffs in the hands of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

We have direct offers of foodstuffs and money from many committees and local bodies throughout United States. It is our desire to prevent overlapping and we should like to suggest to you that as a matter of practical work you should hold the funds at your disposal subject to our recommendation as to their application so that they can be used to supplement various local funds and supplies thus enabling us to concentrate upon complete cargoes and thus facilitate clearance and delivery. We should be glad if you could advise us of the approximate amount of the funds which you have available. The New York Belgian Relief Committee has undertaken to contribute 150,000 dollars towards a cargo costing approximately 300,000 dollars. We would be glad if you could appropriate 150,000 dollars to complete this cargo, in which case would you kindly remit it to Messrs. DeForest and Ryan, Purchasing Subcommittee of that organization, New York. Also we have other instances of same character now developing. Address

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 560

Telegram,
BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TO THE BELGIAN MINISTER, WASHINGTON,
instructing him to forward gifts collected by committees with which he is
associated through the Commission

LONDON, 19 November 1914

His Excellency, The Belgian Minister Washington

Comité National Secours in Belgium, very important Belgian body in Brussels, agreed to and subsidized by me, has as executive agent The Commission for Relief in Belgium---President, Hoover---organized with great efficiency and devotedness under protection of neutral states, purchases and transports for the Comité. This Commission chosen by American and Spanish Ambassadors is strongly supported by them. Think desirable that whilst respecting initiative try have transport and distribution Belgium centralized as much as possible through Commission and Comité National specially organized for that. Each American group, especially Rockefeller, should purchase with their funds, leaving care transport into district depots of Comité National to Commission Hoover which disposes funds for transport and has obtained from German authorities guarantees for free passage and nonrequisition. Only means of securing methodical adequate distribution for needs different districts which meet with enormous administrative and material difficulties. Understand a modus vivendi arranged between Rockefeller Foundation and Bates representing Commission. Encourage all efforts in view of combined

action being indispensable. Have appointed Chevalier Carton de Wiart to represent me on London Commission. If necessary communicate with him care Legation London.

BERRYER([417](#))

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 561

Telegram,
PAGE TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT, requesting that the Governor of Iowa be informed that the Commission is the only agency for forwarding and distribution of relief

LONDON, 6 November 1914

Secretary of State
Washington

1015. Please telegraph following to Governor of Iowa. At Chamberlain's([418](#)) request I give you following information.

The Commission for Relief in Belgium is the only agency that has machinery for distribution of food in Belgium. It has the benefit of complete diplomatic arrangements made with all belligerent governments by American Ambassador and Ministers and Consuls in Holland and Belgium and written guarantee of German military governor of Belgium that food will be permitted to pass all boundaries and will not be confiscated. The Commission distributes all contributions made by governments and food sent from all neutral countries. It works with the only committee in Belgium for local distribution in every community. No cargo safe unless properly shipped and consigned. All shipping directions given by Hoover, London Chairman of Commission, three London Wall Buildings. Commission commands me to express heartfelt thanks.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

DOCUMENT NO. 562

Telegram,
WM. H. CROCKER TO HOOVER, regarding proposed gift cargo from California

SAN FRANCISCO, 7 November 1914

Herbert C. Hoover
London

Large public meeting today Merchants' Exchange. Speakers Bishop Hanna, Bishop Nichols, Mayor Rolph, and others. Over one hundred thousand dollars cash and produce pledged. Entire State enthusiastically working. A shipload of food supplies assured from California early shipment . . .

WM. H. CROCKER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 563

Telegram,
HOOVER TO BATES, instructing him to organize a New York office of the Commission to handle shipping and transport questions, and to co-operate with existing charitable committees

LONDON, 11 November 1914

Lindon Bates
New York

We have definite assurances ample funds payment transport all foodstuffs offered us any center in world to Belgium. Will you, McCarter, Will Irwin and, if agreeable, J. B. White, open for us office New York to handle shipping and transport questions from that end much on lines laid down your cable. We wish avoid overlapping existing committees in soliciting money but offer all agencies free transport for any foodstuffs they provide and stimulate collection actual foodstuffs all centers. It is most desirable have express railway companies agree collect deliver free seaboard. If desirable can get American Express officials this side put it up strongly their organization. We propose put on regular weekly steamers and for your confidential information we have large funds with which supplement any failure of charity. You need engage competent staff arrange warehousing and we will mutually arrange shipping. If you agree we propose to announce it is not our policy to enter field for collection moneys already covered by local organizations, our one desire being place our machinery for free transport foodstuffs in close cooperation all existing organizations and persons desirous presenting food and have opened office New York this purpose. We consider our press propaganda is doing fine service in stimulating results to all Belgian relief organizations. Have no desire whatever to manage their business or take their

credit. Have single idea delivering food into Belgium merely and not dream about it. November second on Ambassador's approval we telegraphed every governor asking him create or stimulate local organizations collect food transportation of which we undertake free. Ships to be named after various states. This appeal created most gratifying responses. One critical fact evident from every quarter is that West and Middle West will not be dominated by or filter through the Red Cross, the New York Relief Committee, or Rockefeller Foundation. If these organizations wish to co-operate closely with us we shall be delighted. They cannot enter Belgium without us. Psychologically we can produce more food by strong punch of cable from scene of action than any amount appeals New York. We wish keenly co-operate with the New York Committee and we especially wish co-operate Rockefeller Foundation. Have offered them right nominate member Commission at this end and in New York. Am informed will have no difficulty coming to co-operative arrangements on arrival of their representative here. Do not mention our large resources as it would dry rills of charity. Will Irwin will devote entire time our propaganda. Is best press agent in world. He will communicate with you and would attach himself New York office and should go to work stimulating our Governor and newspaper funds for collecting actual food. We would propose you add other useful persons to your members New York to be mutually agreed by us. All of you to be actual members this Commission appointed by the American Ambassadors Europe.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 564

Telegram,
BERT, POTTER & HUGHES, LONDON, TO NORTON, LILLY & COMPANY,
NEW YORK, contributing their services to the Commission without remuneration

LONDON, 13 November 1914

Norton, Lilly & Company
New York

We have informed American Commission for Relief in Belgium that you will act as their shipping agents in New York without remuneration.(419) We are undertaking same duties in London.

HUGHES

DOCUMENT NO. 565

Extract of letter, (420)

HOOVER TO FRANCOIS, giving a résumé of the position in America

LONDON, 14 November 1914

Emile Francois, Esq.
Brussels

MY DEAR FRANCOIS:

.....

The following résumé of the position in America may interest you.

We have carried on, with the assistance of practically the whole of the American press, an enormous propaganda on the subject the Belgian people. We have cabled to all associations of whom we could hear, stimulating them as to position. We have cabled to the governors of every state asking them to see that such an association was set up in their territory and we have so far the following results:

The Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco, at the instance of my wife who happened to be there, has collected money with which they have purchased actual foodstuffs to the amount of 5,000 ton and have chartered the ship "Camino" which sails November 30th for Rotterdam.

The Seattle Chamber of Commerce are in progress with the provision of a cargo, and as friends of ours were raising a fund in the state of Idaho we have asked these people to combine to ensure large ship full.

In the state of Oregon we have a good friend at work but at present can report no definite results.

In the state of Kansas, Ex-Governor Stubbs has inaugurated an active campaign for the collection of foodstuffs and is organizing an efficient committee for taking the matter in hand.

In the state of Iowa Mr. Chamberlain is organizing a complete cargo of maize which is the chief product of that state.

In the state of Minnesota Mr. Edgar, the editor of a trade journal called the *Northwestern Miller* has got the millers in the northern part of the Mississippi Valley all hard at work and he assures us that he will secure at least 9,000 tons of flour and is making the first shipment from Philadelphia about the end of November.

The Philadelphia Belgian Relief Committee in co-operation with the *Ladies' Home Journal* (for which paper we obtained an autograph letter from the Queen of the Belgians to further the appeal) have already despatched on the 11th November to us the S.S. "Thelma" carrying 2,900 tons of cereals.

The Rockefeller Foundation has despatched the S.S. "Massapequa" carrying 4,000 tons on November 4th and we have bought a cargo of 4,000 tons which is being shipped on the S.S. "Terschelling" which sailed from New York on the 11th November.

The people of Nova Scotia have already landed in Rotterdam the steamer "Tremorvah" carrying about 2,100 tons of foodstuffs and a lot of clothes. They have now despatched the S.S. "Bankadra" which sailed from Halifax on the 13th instant with 3,000 tons.

The people of Ottawa, Canada, are despatching approximately 4,000 tons at an early date.

The New York Relief Committee are presumably despatching a cargo at an early date, and we have organizations getting on definitely in Spain, Italy, British Columbia, North Carolina, Maine, and Virginia.

We have opened an office in New York and have advised the American public generally that our New York office will undertake the free transportation of foodstuffs into Belgium.

We are taking some steamers on time charter for regular trips across the Atlantic, and we are expecting to supplement the irregular supplies of gift food by purchases to keep these steamers employed.

We have organized a Women's Division of the American Commission in New York and have the co-operation of all of the women's clubs and societies in the United States, and tomorrow they are issuing an appeal to all of these club members to get on pushing food into the hands of the local organizations.

In our London office we are conducting three Commissions: i.e., the American Commission the Spanish Commission, and the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation; and we expect to have the Italian Commission launched next week. We combine representatives of all of these Commissions into the general organization which we style simply "The Commission for Relief in Belgium," which is dealing with all of the minor points of international complexity.

We have secured the assistance of the two largest shipping firms in England, and they have agreed to handle the whole of our shipping problems for absolutely no cost whatever for commissions or agency charges or anything of that nature, and

they have placed one of their most expert men in our office and at our elbow. In like manner we have secured the voluntary services of one of the largest food firms dealing on the Baltic, who are giving us their services on exactly the same terms. We have thought it much better that we should not only take the expert advice and the responsible management of such agencies as this but also it affords some measure of protection to us which might not exist if we endeavored by our own individual effort to arrange such matters as charters and food purchases. These gentlemen have taken the greatest possible interest in the work which we are endeavoring to do and are giving us most extraordinary services.

As an indication of such services you will realize that under the terms of the London Shipping, Food, and Insurance Exchanges these people cannot operate without charging commissions, but they are in this case making subscriptions to our funds of amounts equivalent to such commissions.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 566

Telegram,
HOOVER TO THE "LITERARY DIGEST," regarding the "Belgian Flour Fund."

LONDON, 9 January 1915

The "Literary Digest"
New York

Have noticed splendid response of your readers to appeal enormous sufferings of Belgians. I earnestly urge you to continue your efforts. If you could send one hundred thousand barrels instead of twenty thousand it would be infinitely welcome. The situation is an appalling one.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 567

Telegram,
HOOVER TO EX-GOVERNOR W. R. STUBBS, conveying the gratitude of Belgium for the gift relief cargo from Kansas.([421](#))

LONDON, 6 February 1915

W. R. Stubbs
Topeka, Kansas

I am asked to convey to the people of the State of Kansas and to yourself the heartfelt gratitude of Belgium for the magnificent generosity they have displayed to a suffering nation. The Kansas cargo of relief, which arrived in the nick of time, has already been distributed in the Provinces of Antwerp, Brabant, East and West Flanders, Hainaut, Liège, Limbourg and Namur. Ex-Congressman Scott accompanied some of the flour to Brussels. The situation remains acute and if the supply of food is diminished Belgium will starve. We know that Kansas never turned a deaf ear to a people in distress.

HOOVER
Chairman, Commission for Relief

3. Public Support from the British Empire and Elsewhere. 1914-1918

It was not until the spring of 1915 that Hoover took steps to organize a central committee for the mobilization of support of Belgian relief in the British Empire. In the meantime, however, the facts of the situation in Belgium and the formation of the Commission under the auspices of the American and Spanish Ambassadors in London were given wide publicity in the British press, and British citizens, despite the many calls of local charities, contributed considerable sums to the Commission. At the outset the British Government gave £100,000, and this official indication of approval of the neutral committee for Belgian relief encouraged the public to follow suit. In November the Belgian Government handed over to the Commission £100,000 drawn from the Belgian Relief Fund, whose resources were largely contributions from the British Empire and America. As has been mentioned, the first gift cargo to arrive in Rotterdam came from Nova Scotia and others shortly followed(422) the results of widespread activity throughout Canada. In December 1914 the Belgian Minister in London turned over to Hoover a check for £60,000, the first substantial contribution for the Commission from Australia and New Zealand and the forerunner of a series of generous gifts from Australasia which continued during the war. By April 1915 the Commission had received over £750,000 in charity from British Empire sources and in addition committees, both self-constituted and inspired through cables from the Commission's London office, were sending in contributions from Holland, Italy, Argentina, Brazil, Spain, China, and elsewhere.

To centralize the appeals throughout the British Empire the Commission in April 1915 decided to ask a number of men prominent in English public life to raise funds for the charitable side of its work, and the National Committee for Relief in Belgium(423) was the result. This Committee took over from the Commission the stimulation and collection of charity from British Empire sources. Differing from the policy adopted in America, donations of cash(424) were requested and the response throughout the British Empire was magnificent.(425)

DOCUMENT NO. 568

Telegram,
HOOVER TO GELASIO CAETANI, requesting him to aid in the formation of an Italian Belgian relief committee(426)

LONDON, 6 November 1914

Signor Gelasio Caetani Rome

We have now decided make Commission to Belgium international. Spanish Ambassador has joined as one of our Honorary Chairmen and is giving us active diplomatic and financial assistance from Spain. I would like to have a meeting to discuss with you question of joining Italians to this effort which has now reached gigantic proportions as it is going to be a problem of feeding entire population.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 569

Telegram,
HOOVER TO HALIFAX "MORNING CHRONICLE," describing Belgian situation and appealing for continued Canadian contributions

LONDON, 2 December 1914

The "Morning Chronicle" Halifax, Nova Scotia

Commission for Relief in Belgium composed of representatives United States, Italy, Spain acting under authority all belligerent Governments desire express their appreciation Canada's magnificent response to Belgium's cry of distress.... Thousands of tons of supplies, including those brought by the "Tremorvah" have already been distributed, but every mail brings pitiful requests for assistance from small and large Belgian villages where the misery of the people is accentuated by

the shortage of food, the lack of fuel and the spectre of famine. To supply the actual necessities of the seven million people remaining in Belgium reliable authorities estimate that eighty thousand tons of foodstuffs a month will be required throughout the winter. What most needed are wheat, flour, corn, corn meal, beans, peas, potatoes, biscuits, bacon and money. The freight and all shipping expenses on every cargo of such supplies will gladly be paid by the Commission for Relief who will also pay all expenses incurred in the actual distribution of the supplies in Belgium. Canada with her great resources is in a splendid position to help She as a already done much but we do not hesitate in these appalling circumstances to ask her to do more.

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 570

Letter,
DE LALAING TO HOOVER, enclosing £60,000 from New South Wales,
Queensland, and New Zealand

LÉGATION BE BELGIQUE [LONDON]
21 December 1914

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have very great pleasure in enclosing a cheque for £60,000---representing contributions from New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand to the Belgian Relief fund.

The donors expressed the wish, through the Agent General for New South Wales, Hon. Sir T. A. Coghlan, that this sum should be employed to alleviate distress in Belgium through the medium of the United States Embassy, so I forward it to you as Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) LALAING

DOCUMENT NO. 571

Telegram,
HOOVER TO DE BRUYN, requesting assistance in forming Argentine
committee(427) for Belgian relief

LONDON, 19 January 1915

Casimiro de Bruyn
Buenos Aires
Argentine Republic

This Commission ... was formed to carry out an international agreement with the belligerent powers, permitting the supply of food to the seven million people still in Belgium, who are absolutely destitute of foodstuffs except through the efforts of this Commission. ... We have had most generous support from American, Spanish, Canadian, Australian and Belgian peoples but we fear we have taxed these sources to their uttermost limit. Furthermore the supply of foodstuffs from these quarters now being rapidly exhausted. We are therefore compelled to turn to Argentine in hope that from their bountiful harvest they will help. We have been recommended to consult you as to best manner this work could be undertaken, and we have in mind the creation of strong Argentine Committee who would be represented this Commission.... We earnestly ask your advice and counsel. Cable Hoover, Chairman Commission for Relief in Belgium.

DOCUMENT NO. 572

Extracts
of Appeal(428) C.R.B. TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND, for continued
support to Belgian relief

LONDON, 19 February 1915

TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

In the name of seven million Belgians, still in Belgium and unable to help themselves, we appeal for help to Australia and New Zealand. Faced with a situation from which there is no escape, deprived of liberty and freedom, the Belgians only ask for enough bread to keep themselves alive.

.....

The people of Australia and New Zealand have set the world a magnificent example by the aid which they have already contributed. But more, much more is needed. To keep the body and soul of the Belgian nation together £1,125,000 must be provided every month.

.....

In the midst of patriotic support of Empire, in the turmoil of war, the people of Australia and New Zealand have magnanimously proved that their eyes and hearts are open to the misery of Belgium. With the chivalry of a virile young nation they have spontaneously come to the support of the little race that has almost been wiped from its historic place on the map of Europe. Had it been otherwise we should not have ventured to make this appeal. Now we are emboldened to ask for still greater efforts, still more organised assistance, because we believe that Australia and New Zealand only measure their activities by the emergency which confronts them and are able to overcome difficulties which might well shock an older people into tragic inactivity.

.....

Will the people of Australia and New Zealand give £75,000 a month or food equivalent to that amount? We appeal in confidence to a people who have so lately proved that bravery in war is not inconsistent with a tender, grateful heart.

(Signed)

ERNEST SOLVAY,
Chairman, Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brussels

EMILE FRANCOIS,
Chairman, Comité National, Brussels

HERBERT HOOVER,
Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DOCUMENT NO. 573

Extracts

of Report of the NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM BY SIR WILLIAM GOODE, K.B.E.

On April 27th, 1915, the first direct appeal was made to the United Kingdom through the medium of the National Committee for Relief in Belgium, which, at the suggestion of Mr. Hoover and with the approval of His Majesty's Government, I had the honour to organise, The Lord Mayor of London, as Chairman, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Bourne, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the President of the Free Church Council, the Chief Rabbi, the Duke of Norfolk, Lords Lansdowne, Rosebery, and Bryce, Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., and Mr. John Redmond, M.P., with Mr. A. Shirley Benn, M.P., as Hon. Treasurer, and

myself as Hon. Secretary, signed the first call issued for help in England. The Belgian Minister in London was an honorary member of the National Committee, which was formed not only to provide money then required desperately by the C.R.B., but to act as a central depository for all benevolent contributions from the British Empire and to co-ordinate activities already existing. Those who signed the first appeal nominated the following representatives to act on their behalf as an Executive Council:

THE DUKE OF NORFOLK, K.G., *Chairman*
MR. A. SHIRLEY BENN, M.P., *Deputy Chairman*
THE RT. REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER
THE RT. REV. MONSIGNOR M. E. CARTON DE WIART
THE HON. SIR PETER MCBRIDE
SIR JOHN KNILL, *Bart.*
SIR ERNEST HATCH, *Bart.*
MR. PERCY ALDEN, M.P.
MR. W. HUDSON, M.P.
MR. PATRICK O'BRIEN, M.P.
MR. W. A. M. GOODE, *Hon. Secretary*

.....

His Majesty King George inaugurated the National Committee's fund with a donation of 9500 on April 27th, 1915, and subsequently duplicated this amount. The Queen, Queen Alexandra, and other members of the British Royal Family also gave generous support. The total collected from April 27th, 1915, to June 1st, 1917, solely from the British Empire, was £2,411,222 18s. 2d. To this must be added £52,203 collected in New Zealand and now held by the New Zealand High Commissioner to await requirements; £44,000, collected on behalf of the National Committee in New South Wales, but handed to the King of the Belgians by the Premier of New South Wales after June 1st, 1917; and £25,308 12s. 10d. collected for the National Committee by the Canadian Committee, and held to purchase foodstuffs in that Dominion at such time as the Commission may need them. The total, therefore, raised by the National Committee for Relief in Belgium, solely from British sources, during the twenty-five months of its active existence was £2,532,734 11s., or an average of over £100,000 per month.

4. The Reorganization of American Support. May-August 1915

During the autumn and winter months of 1914-1915 while the appeals for public support were being made, Hoover was engaged in the negotiations by which in the spring of 1915 he secured monthly subsidies for relief from the Allied

Governments.(429) The sums thus received assured a financial foundation for the relief and the Commission could look ahead with some confidence toward supplying a portion of the needs of Belgium. The sums advanced, however, were not only inadequate to cover the full requirements but were in the nature of exchange, in that the relief organization had to turn back, to specified channels, equivalent fund within Belgium. In order to accomplish this, food bought with subsidies in gold was sold in Belgium to those who were able to pay, and the paper money thus accumulated was applied through the relief organization to liquidate state indebtedness such as pensions, doles to state railway workers, etc. support of state institutions, separation allowances, etc. To be sure a vast number of individuals who would otherwise have been completely destitute were thus enabled to pay for their rations, but there existed a large and growing number of destitute who were entirely outside this circle. These were entirely dependent upon the charity of the world and it was for them that the Commission continued to appeal.

The situation was misunderstood in America(430) largely through the unfortunate wording of some independent announcements in the American press which led the public to believe that the entire responsibility for Belgian relief had been shouldered by the Allied Governments.

There were, moreover, other reasons for a slackening in public interest in relief. Independent committees and magazines which had set definite objectives in their campaigns either relaxed their efforts or terminated their activities on a closing date previously announced. The torpedoing of the "Lusitania"(431) and the consequent crisis in relations between Germany and the United States completely absorbed the interest of the American public. In the circumstances there was no opening for arousing interest in Belgian relief, and the Commission, whose existence as a neutral organization hung in the balance during the diplomatic crisis,(432) adopted a passive policy as far as benevolence in America was concerned. With the settlement of the "Lusitania" incident the Commission set about to strengthen its position in America by establishing on a permanent basis a country-wide organization comprised of state committees with subcommittees in counties and towns. As a result of this reorganization dormant or overlapping committees were replaced by a permanent, decentralized C.R.B. structure through which the entire public could be reached.

DOCUMENT NO. 574

Telegram,
BATES TO HOOVER, suggesting that since Allied Governments had subsidized the Commission the time had come to discontinue appeals for charity

NEW YORK, 19 April 1915

Hoover London

Having regard to statement on authority of Consul to publication yesterday of large orders by the Belgian Government, to Foundation decision,(433) and to vastness of food problem, believe time near or has come in behalf of all whose generosity has been invoked and which has enabled the situation to be bridged to put the future responsibility squarely up to all the warring nations. The question imminent is how far it is fair and proper to continue appeals in this and other neutral countries. The fall and winter conditions warranted and demanded world humanity; such may properly continue to be invoked only if, and as long as such conditions endure, but as these disappear or governments assume or become capable of carrying the burden, such appeals should cease through appreciative announcement ending them considerately and wisely in few weeks, say June 1st; but keeping what is a noble nation-wide organization intact as possible against the hour of future emergency to this country or another. The Commission's mechanism of course must continue to be the purchasing and forwarding and distributing medium.

BATES

[Fig 19. LETTER, 4 NOVEMBER 1915, FRANKLIN LANE TO HOOVER](#)

DOCUMENT NO. 575

Telegram,
HOOVER TO BATES, agreeing to suspend appeals in America only temporarily and planning a vigorous campaign for charity in the autumn

LONDON, 20 April 1915

Lindon Bates New York

Many reasons why cannot abandon benevolent side. Must bear in mind governmental support only operates as matter of exchange and therefore does not provide for the destitute. We hope for sufficient benevolent support for the present from appeals to be made here next week also my feeling is present results America not commensurate with cost and effort of ourselves and friends and feel that if we simply suspend effort in America without any public announcement of any kind thus giving a period of quiescence in our demands it will allow recuperation and arm us most strongly for renewed vigorous campaign next autumn if situation unchanged. Obviously cannot close appeal way you suggest while appealing other countries. In any event destitute always with us.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 576

Letter,

HOOVER TO A. J. HEMPHILL, describing the methods of operation of the Commission's provisioning department, the misunderstanding of which in America had depressed the results of charitable appeals

LONDON, 1 June 1915

A. J. Hemphill, Esq.

Commission for Relief in Belgium, New York

DEAR MR. HEMPHILL:

Many thanks for your letter of May 21st.

I quite sympathize with the feeling that our publicity may develop conflicting results.

The articles which you sent me did not originate from our publicity department here but apparently were compiled by one of the American press agencies in London, from a speech which I delivered at the Mansion House, together with some data from our fortnightly reports.

I entirely recognize the difficulty of deriving any simple explanation of the facts--- first that we ... make a profit upon our Provisioning Department. The fact, however, does remain that this method of organization has been the salvation of Belgium and that every concession which we can obtain on the purchase of foodstuffs which we resell increases our profits, and that these profits go direct to the support of the destitute, so that every atom of concession given us by transportation and other commercial bodies is a direct contribution by them to the support of the destitute, by virtue of increasing the profit which we make on the sale of foodstuffs to those who can still pay. As great as the benevolence of the world has been, the people of Belgium would have starved before this had it not been for the success which we have had in rehabilitating the currency in Belgium, in effecting exchange on Belgium, and in the profits that we have made, which went over to the destitute end. The whole of this organization has been no less a measure of benevolence, and in fact of more intelligent charity than the actual support (itself) of the destitute.

I regret intensely that any misconstruction should have been put on the matter in America, and apparently nothing of the kind originated here, as is evidenced by the great support we have had from England and her Colonies as a result of these

explanations. This support now amounts to a larger sum than that contributed from the whole of the United States, and this in addition to something over £1,600,000 found by the English people for Belgian Relief in other quarters. In other words we believe that, complicated as our system is, it is capable of intelligent representation and that a frank and open statement of the whole of our methods commands the most intelligent support. We have had no difficulty in obtaining concessions from shipping companies, shipping agents, and insurance and transport organizations in other quarters of the globe by virtue of the appeal which we made to them as business people that we were conducting an eminently charitable institution absolutely on sound financial lines.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 577

Letter,
HOOVER TO BATES, discussing the future policy of the Commission in America in connection with charity, recommending a decentralized organization, and limiting appeals to the care of the destitute

LONDON, 31 August 1915

Lindon W. Bates, Esq.
New York

DEAR BATES:

I should like you to take up with White(434) the whole question of publicity and organization of the charitable side in America, as he knows our experience here and can keep before you our actual psychological changes in tenor at this end.

It appears to me, from the considerable experience which we have now had in all phases of this work, that certain features have developed. We initially appealed for foodstuffs for a starving nation, but we have since built up an economic machine by which this is no longer a legitimate undercurrent of appeal and we long since abandoned it everywhere except that these phases of the matter seem to crop up in the American mind. The only legitimate, honest appeal which we have the right to make to the public now is for food, money, or clothing for the *destitute* in Belgium. Any other basis of appeal is subject to refutation at once as dishonest, and must lead us into criticism. Furthermore, in the initial stages in order to bring vividly before the world the right of the Belgians to import foodstuffs, we engaged in a

wide propaganda of newspaper publicity. This material had great news value and was freely used and in the main served to create a public opinion in support of the Commission's objects. This phase is now firmly established, and the material no longer has news value and is no longer received by the press. Practically, the era of publicity in the daily prodding of the newspaper is entirely over and is degenerating into personal puffs. It is a useless waste of money, time, and energy to pursue it, and lacks dignity apropos the position we have arrived at. Announcements of importance must be made from London. The political phases which surround the Commission are so delicate and only to be balanced by the London office. The Germans greatly resent direct publicity from us and it embarrasses our relations with them. It should be accomplished by committees locally.

Our experience of actual results in soliciting benevolence proves that beyond all question of doubt the only real fruitful method of securing what we want is through strong decentralized committee organization. The thing which produces money and material is the personal interest and solicitation of people of standing in each community. Practically our most successful field to date has been the Australasian Colonies where we have issued but one document and that was originally an appeal from the London office. The whole of the work has been done by closely knit and able local committees and has produced so far practically as much money out of the five millions of people as has been produced out of the whole ninety million in the United States. Likewise the organization in England of a special general committee with subcommittees in every locality has produced extraordinarily gratifying results with the use of scarcely any newspaper publicity, and even this has been accomplished in competition with a thousand other funds which are in the field. If we review the American position we shall find some interesting lessons to be had out of it. In the first place, the contributions to the Rockefeller Foundation and *Northwestern Miller* were inspired directly from the American Ambassador in London. The New York Belgian Relief Fund, of course, operated on its own initiative. After these we may select the States of California, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Ohio, Colorado, Illinois, and Iowa. In these cases the committees were organized on inspiration directly from the London office, and the results of these committees would have been practically the same without any daily newspaper dope. Their results were founded on the personal appeal of the gentlemen who organized them. If we eliminate all these items from the totals obtained in the United States, the whole amount degenerates down to only \$1,000,000 which could be attributed to the vast amount of propaganda carried on from all offices and a large part was due to the personal work of these committees which you set up, as distinguished from the publicity. In other words, the whole of this is to show that the effective result is obtained from capable decentralization and publicity must be obtained practically by supplying material to the committees only, at least from now on. When one comes to the question of committee organization we immediately come to the question of personal *amour propre*. In order to gain the best results, one has got to elevate the efforts of the individuals in these committees to as high a point as is possible in order to give them a

stimulating interest which is absolutely necessary. My own idea would be, subject always to better considered opinion, to set up the chairmen of all state committees and have them co-operate with us in forming a national body in support of this Commission; that these gentlemen should be asked to elect from their members an executive body; that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should undertake to pay the whole of the out-of-pocket expenses of the central organization. I would have this Committee called something like "National Committee in Support of the Commission for Relief in Belgium"; its sole function to be to collect money and material and hand them on to us.

In the matter of a campaign this autumn, our necessities come practically to the fact that we should be able to take care of the destitute in Belgium out of other resources than those from the United States, except as to the one item, and that is clothing. It seems to me that it would attract the imagination of the American people better to have the job of clothing the destitute in Belgium and Northern France assigned them and to work on this theme; but, above all things, the American campaign has got to be gotten off the basis of "saving a famishing nation" and gotten on to the support of the destitute.

Of all the people we have got engaged on this organization work in many countries, far and away the most successful man has been Goode, and I think it is well to consider whether we should not send him to America to help with this new campaign on the above lines. As you know, he is half an American.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XV. THE MOBILIZATION OF PUBLIC SUPPORT, cont'd

5. Warm Clothing for the Belgians. September 1915-April 1916

In the autumn of 1915 it was possible for the Commission to renew its appeal for aid to the destitute of the occupied regions. The tension in American and German relations had relaxed, and there was no likelihood of changes in the military situation which would seriously affect the relief problem. Government subsidies provided in general for the current food needs, but there were no funds available to

furnish clothing needed by thousands of Belgians and French as the winter approached. The solicitation of gift clothing was the task set for the reorganized C.R.B. committees in the United States.

In preparation for this renewed activity Hoover returned to America and discussed Belgian relief with the Washington authorities.(435) As a result of these discussions the President publicly stated his confidence in the C.R.B. and his approval of its work. Further, at Hoover's suggestion, President Wilson asked a number of men of affairs to join the committee representing the Commission in the United States. The Presidential support and this appointment of what was known as the New York Committee greatly strengthened the Commission's position in America.

The first action of the newly constituted New York Committee of the Commission was to appeal throughout America for clothing, shoes, and blankets for Belgium. The appeal, based upon Hoover's vivid story(436) of the necessities, was launched in November 1915. Not only were the activities of the state and subcommittees revived but numerous independent committees sprang into being for this campaign. The call was for gifts of clothing primarily but the response was generous in cash donations(437) with which the Commission purchased large quantities of materials. The Rockefeller Foundation, which had played such an important part in the first months of the relief work, appropriated \$200,000(438) to the Commission for clothing purchases. The success of this appeal indicated very clearly that the Commission's countrywide organization not only could be depended upon to furnish continuous support but would respond to emergency calls with enthusiasm.

The appeal for clothing ended with the spring of 1916 and the coming of warm weather, but two special efforts in the spring of 1916 resulted in generous support to the increasing number of destitute under the care of the Commission. The first of these activities was the Daughters of the American Revolution "Flag Day" collection held on King Albert's birthday. In conjunction with this the New York Committee made a direct appeal to a large number of individuals, with gratifying results. The second effort was the "Allied Bazaar" which took place in June 1916, in which the Commission was one of the participating organizations. In the same month the Commission entered into an arrangement with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America whereby the Commission's appeal was included in the Council's War Relief appeal. This successful co-operation continued until America entered the war.

DOCUMENT NO. 578

Telegram,
HOOVER TO C.R.B., NEW YORK, pointing out the necessity for clothing during

the coming winter and proposing that a national campaign for used clothing be organized in America

LONDON, 7 September 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

The necessity for extremely large quantity of substantial secondhand clothing and new material for remaking it, including boots, has become most imperative throughout Northern France as well as Belgium. In a general way we can see resource for food supply for a few months ahead, but we have no resources which we can apply to clothing and there are some five million people who must be clothed during the winter, of which eighty per cent are women and children. Would like your advice looking toward organizing national campaign for this purpose, it being assigned as Americans' main job for this year. I would suggest that the chairman or most active men of each of our State Committees should be asked to join Commission as members of the Advisory Committee ... and it may be that a few cables from here direct to State Committees would give a useful punch to their exertions. We do not want rubbish, and all material should be sorted and baled before shipment. Want substantial and clean stuff capable of being remade. Should like to have your local committees employ their cash funds in buying new materials such as would be normally required to remake these second-hand garments in our workshops. All such gifts will be transported into Belgium entirely free of cost to donors. I believe you would find it highly advantageous if Goode came over as sort of organizing secretary to relieve you of detail work of this campaign. Kindly let me have your views.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 579

Statement([439](#))

issued from the White House regarding the work of the Commission

THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON

3 November 1915

The President and Secretary of State this morning had brief interviews with Mr. Hoover, the Chairman of the Belgian Relief Commission, and it was learned in connection with his visit that the Administration is highly pleased with the way in which the work of the Commission has been done, and with the results accomplished. It has not only kept millions of Belgians alive but has carried its work on to the entire satisfaction of all the belligerent governments concerned and

with their approval and co-operation. It has not only not been the source of international complications but has, on the contrary, been a source of international good will and disinterested service and has won the confidence of everyone with whom it had occasion to deal.

DOCUMENT NO. 580

Letter,

PRESIDENT WILSON TO HOOVER, enclosing letters to men whom Hoover had suggested for the Presidential Committee of the Commission in America

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON

3 November 1915

Mr. Herbert Hoover

The New Willard, Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am taking great pleasure in sending you the enclosed letters for the several gentlemen about whom you spoke today, and take this occasion again to bid you Godspeed in the splendid work you are doing.

Cordially and sincerely yours

(Signed) WOODROW WILSON

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON

3 November 1915

Mr. Herbert S. Eldridge

c/o Mr. Herbert C. Hoover Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. ELDRIDGE:

Mr. Hoover, the Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, has approached me with regard to difficulties which have arisen in the conduct of that great humanitarian work, in which he feels he needs the support of an enlarged committee of gentlemen of large experience to co-operate with him in settling and conducting the administration of the branch of the Commission in the United States.

I am so much impressed with the importance of this institution, on which the lives of so many people are dependent, that I venture to say to you that I would

personally be very much gratified if you could see your way to join such a Committee.

The other gentlemen with whom I am communicating in this particular are Messrs. Alexander Hemphill, Otto T. Bannard, S. R. Bertron, Oscar Straus, Melville E. Stone, and John Beaver White. Of course, you may wish to add others to your number, either from the officers of the Commission or otherwise.(440)

Cordially and sincerely yours

(Signed) WOODROW WILSON

DOCUMENT NO. 581

Letter,
HOOVER TO THE NEW YORK COMMITTEE OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, recommending that the Commission ask the American people to clothe the destitute in Belgium and Northern France during the coming winter

NEW YORK, 6 November 1915

The New York Committee of the Commission for Relief in Belgium
New York

DEAR SIRs:

CLOTHING NECESSITIES IN BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

It appears to me that it is necessary for us to go frankly to the American people and ask them to clothe the destitute in the occupied areas of Belgium and Northern France during the coming winter.

There are nine million people in these areas and of these over one-third are now either wholly or partially destitute and are today receiving their food either wholly or partially without payment.

As you know we have set up economic measures based on the ability of a portion of the population to pay for its food, which, with the contributions of other countries, enable us for the present to find the bare minimum of food supplies for the whole nine million people, but we have no reserves with which to provide clothing for the destitute. We now plead for help on their behalf.

Even if these nine million people had money they could not import clothes, or the raw materials with which to manufacture them, through the blockade into an area under military occupation. While the better classes have some clothing with which they can get along, the destitute are composed of the working classes which naturally had little reserves of clothing when the war broke out. The only additions they have received since then have been the generous contributions from America, Canada, and elsewhere. By Christmas time all the clothing which we have in our various establishments will be exhausted.

It is a certainty that the undue exposure of underclad men, women, and children to the bitter winter will greatly increase mortality. The clothing for these people can be provided only if we receive gift supplies for the purpose. We must depend upon the American people.

We have arranged that the cost of transportation of clothes from any central point in the United States to Belgium and Northern France and of the distribution will be paid for out of funds which have been especially provided so that the whole American contributions will reach the destitute without one cent of deduction.

In the matter of the character of clothing for these people, we are surrounded with a multitude of difficulties. In the first instance the drastic sanitary arrangements made by the governments through whose territory we must pass make the introduction of second-hand clothing, especially in the areas of the operating armies where the want will be greatest, practically impossible.

We therefore must ask frankly for new clothing and more particularly for unmade material. Not that the destitute in Belgium and Northern France are not intensely grateful for second-hand clothing, but as a matter of necessity, we are forced to ask only for unworn stuffs.

It must be borne in mind that those for whom we appeal are living under almost total industrial paralysis; that many millions of them are idle, and that the cry we have from them daily is, "Give us something to do, give us something to work on so that we may contribute to our own support." Therefore if we can provide them with materials they will make up their own clothing. Furthermore the poor of Belgium and Northern France can devise an extraordinary amount of clothing out of a given piece of cloth and can work in such materials to patch up their own clothing. For this reason we are anxious to secure piece goods as far as possible, or alternatively, unworn made-up clothing.

We have established workrooms in all the leading Belgian cities. The one in Brussels alone gives employment to over 15,000 people. This clothing is all distributed free through our local communal committees after they have made a careful investigation of the necessities of each recipient. There are today between thirty and forty thousand of the noblest and best Belgian and French people giving

their whole services in the volunteer conduct of these local committees, endeavoring with the greatest possible devotion and under the greatest strain, to eke out to their utmost usefulness the meager supplies which we are able to furnish.

What we urgently need is woolen clothes for women and girls and boys, woolen and cotton materials for babies' clothing, shawls, stockings, jerseys, sweaters, blankets, boots and shoes, underclothing, overcoats, petticoats, suits of all descriptions, and in fact every article in the gamut of warm clothing.

It seems to us that there must be on the shelves of the stores and in the houses of the United States a large amount of remnant cloth materials and new ready-made clothing which would be contributed or could be purchased by the various committees interested in our work on terms of the greatest possible economy.

It seems to me that with the generosity of the American merchant and manufacturer our local committees from monies that may be subscribed to them for this purpose can purchase such materials at far more advantageous rates than can be obtained in any commercial transaction.

It is our hope that we may have large consignments arriving by Christmas and we do not believe that there is any manner in which the American people can better show their inherent instinct of philanthropy and kindness than by answering this appeal from millions of helpless, destitute people.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

[DOCUMENT NO. 582](#)

Letter,
ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION TO THE COMMISSION, donating \$200,000
for the purchase of clothing

NEW YORK, 6 December 1915

Commission for Relief in Belgium
New York

GENTLEMEN:

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Rockefeller Foundation held on December 3, it was unanimously voted to appropriate \$200,000 to your Commission "for the purchase of material for clothing, the same to be imported by

the Commission into Belgium and there manufactured by Belgian labor." I take pleasure in handing you herewith the check of the Rockefeller Foundation for Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) for expenditure under the conditions named.

In transmitting this contribution, I take the liberty of saying that your present appeal to the American public would, in my opinion, be strengthened if the basis on which the money needed for clothing was calculated to be \$4,000,000. That figure may well be a conservative one in view of the enormous scale of relief operations in Belgium, but I think a circumstantial exhibit of the needs reported from the different sections, and examples showing how you arrived at the total estimate, would impress the public favorably and increase their response.

Very truly yours

(Signed) JEROME D. GREENE

DOCUMENT NO. 583

Telegram,
QUEEN ELISABETH TO DAUGHTERS OF AMERICAN REVOLUTION,
expressing appreciation of the proposed plan of commemorating King Albert's
birthday in America by the collection of donations for the destitute of Belgium

[LA PANNE, BELGIUM]
30 March 1916

*To the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution
Mrs. William Cumming Story, President-General New York*

I am delighted with your idea of commemorating April eighth throughout the United States. Nothing could touch me more than to see the King's, my Husband's, birthday celebrated by a manifestation of charity through the distribution of ten million Belgian flags in return for an offering for the destitute in Belgium. I express my grateful appreciation to the Daughters of the American Revolution for this attention, which shows once more the generous and delicate feelings of American women.

To all who will wear the Belgian flags on April eighth and ninth I send, in the name of the Belgian mothers, my heartfelt thanks.

(Signed) ELISABETH

6. The Commission's Appeal for Belgian Children. 1916-1917

Month by month in 1916 the Commission found it increasingly difficult to meet the requirements of the people in the occupied territory. The production of supplies of all sorts had diminished and the consequent necessity of broadening the program of importations, coupled with the phenomenal increase in food and transportation costs, was more than the Commission's income from all sources could bear. From time to time Hoover had succeeded in securing increased government subsidies,⁽⁴⁴¹⁾ but the Commission was rarely free from financial worries, and for this reason and because of shipping problems⁽⁴⁴²⁾ imports fell short of the theoretical program. The fact remains that the people did not starve but the insufficiency made itself felt in a gradually increasing death rate and a greater prevalence of the diseases of undernutrition particularly among children. Investigation of this situation conducted in the spring and summer of 1916⁽⁴⁴³⁾, led the Commission again to appeal for public support in order to provide supplementary rations for the children. Throughout 1916-1917 children's relief formed the basis of the Commission's appeal.

One of the most valuable aids in this campaign was a letter supporting the Commission's appeal sent by Pope Benedict XV to Cardinal Gibbons asking the co-operation of the bishops and clergy of the Catholic Church in America.⁽⁴⁴⁴⁾

DOCUMENT NO. 584

Letter,
POPE BENEDICT XV TO CARDINAL GIBBONS, approving the Commission's
appeal for Belgian children

THE VATICAN, 28 October 1916

*To His Eminence
James Cardinal Gibbons
Archbishop of Baltimore*

MY LORD CARDINAL:

Profound compassion of a father has again moved Our heart, when We read an important letter recently sent to Us by the distinguished Chairman of the praiseworthy "Commission for Relief in Belgium," describing in few words, yet showing proof of most terrible reality, the pitiable situation of numerous Belgian children who, during two sad years, have been suffering from the lack of that proper nourishment necessary to sustain the tender existence of budding childhood.

In most moving terms the Chairman has described how so many desolate families, after having given everything humanly possible to give, now find themselves with nothing left with which to appease the hunger of their little ones.

He has made Us see, almost as if they were passing before these very eyes, dimmed with tears, the long file, continuously increasing, of Belgian infants waiting for their daily distribution of bread; unhappy little ones whose bodies, emaciated by lack of proper nutrition, bear not infrequently the impress of some deadly sickness brought about by their failure to receive the food which children of their age require.

In his letter the Chairman has told Us how, in order to ward off so much illness, his Commission, displaying the very best of good will and stopping at no sacrifice, has arranged for the distribution to the children of a daily supplementary meal. He sorrowfully adds, however, that unhappily owing to insufficient means, the Commission has found itself unable to prepare and supply such extra food to all the babies who have need of it.

In this emergency the most worthy Chairman has turned his thought and his heart to the millions of children of your happy, noble America, who, in the abundance with which they are now surrounded, could they be given an exact idea of the pitiable and unfortunate condition of their little fellow-creatures in Belgium---more especially if an appealing and encouraging word might reach them from Us---would not hesitate a moment to co-operate heartily, in accordance with some prearranged plan, to come promptly to the relief of these needy Belgian babies.

In view of this condition of affairs, We have considered the work indicated so humanitarian and so holy that, in prompt compliance with the appeal addressed to Us by those who are directing the work of the Commission, We have decided to approve and recommend it, as We hereby do endorse it most heartily by these words to you, My Lord Cardinal, and through you, to the illustrious members of the American Episcopate, to the Clergy, and to every generous heart; but particularly to those children of America upon whom is based every hope of success for the plan devised by this beneficent institution.

Neither do We doubt, in truth, but that the happy children of America, without distinction of faith or of class, at this approach of another winter which it is announced will be even more severe and painful than the, two preceding years, will vie, in their innocent pride, with each other to be able to extend to their little brothers and sisters of the Belgian nation, even though across the immense ocean, the helping hand and the offerings of that charity which knows no distance.

The words of our Divine Redeemer: "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew xxv: 40), so appropriately brought to mind in these circumstances, are a sure pledge of heavenly pleasure and reward; while We

feel likewise, how greatly, in this period of atrocious fratricidal carnage, even in the eyes of the world, are ennobled the people of more fortunate lands by the performance of true and loving deeds and by the pouring of a little balm upon the wounds of those less fortunate.

In the full faith that Your Eminence, efficaciously aided by all, according to their means and strength, will do as much as may be in your power to favor this initiative, in proof of the loving interest which We have for its successful outcome, We send to you enclosed Our contribution of Ten Thousand Lire, which gift, if it be inadequate to the needs of the occasion and appears slight in itself, is not, however, such, when one considers the condition of this Apostolic See in the present unhappy moment.

At the same time, while being particularly happy to represent upon this earth that Jesus who was the Divine Friend of little children, We invoke from Our heart upon all those who shall second and aid this noble and delicate undertaking an abundance of blessings and heavenly rewards, of which is a pledge the Apostolic Benediction, which, with very special affection, We impart to you, My Lord Cardinal, to your two Colleagues in the Sacred College, to the Bishops, Clergy, and to all the Faithful of the United States.

(Signed) BENEDICTUS P. P. XV

[Translation]

DOCUMENT NO. 585

Letter,
CARDINAL GIBBONS TO THE CATHOLIC CLERGY IN THE UNITED STATES, enclosing the Pope's letter and offering to forward the proceeds of collections to the Commission

CARDINAL'S RESIDENCE, BALTIMORE
4 December 1916

RIGHT REVEREND AND DEAR BISHOP:

I am sending you, herewith enclosed, a translation of an autograph letter addressed to me by His Holiness the Pope, through which He makes a most earnest appeal for the little suffering children of Belgium.

The Holy Father has written this letter at the solicitation of Mr. Herbert C. Hoover, Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which is the only regular

channel by which relief can enter Belgium, and which enjoys the full confidence of His Holiness.

I have no doubt that the extraordinary and touching appeal of His Holiness will be honored by generous contributions, which will cheer His paternal heart and bring seasonable joy and comfort to the little sufferers of Belgium.

Arrangements have been made by which the money collected or its value in food will be distributed by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

If I may presume to make a suggestion, I respectfully propose that the most efficient and prompt way to relieve the afflicted little ones would be obtained by a general collection in your jurisdiction or by any other means your prudence would suggest.

I will be most happy to forward to the proper authorities the offerings of your Diocese sent to me, and later on, to have published a list of such donations.

With sentiments of the highest esteem, I am

Faithfully Yours in Xto.,

(Signed) J. CARD. GIBBONS
Archbishop of Baltimore

An extremely effective method of appeal for children was the communal support plan, whereby the Commission asked communities, committees, and individuals in America to assume responsibility for children's aid in specific communes in Belgium. This campaign, which was greatly aided by an interesting map prepared and circulated by the Commission, was first started in New York(445) and vicinity, but other sections of the country(446) soon "adopted" the children of areas in Belgium.

Early in 1917 Mr. R. J. Cuddihy started the second *Literary Digest* campaign for Belgian relief on behalf, in this instance, of the children of Belgium. The appeal was carried in each number of the *Literary Digest* for several months, and as a result, newspapers opened their column for subscriptions and various committees were formed all over the United States. The total of over \$500,000 of direct receipts does not represent the full services of the *Literary Digest* in this second appeal, for that publication conducted an energetic campaign of national publicity which was of great value to all the C.R.B. committees in every state.

Two institutions with which Hoover was personally connected employed interesting methods of increasing their donations. The American Institute of Mining

Engineer organized a campaign to sell shares in "Belgian Kiddies, Ltd."(447) The entire amount of "preferred stock" \$120,000 was soon pledged. Under the leadership of John Hays Hammond and W. B. Thompson, the Rocky Mountain Club, composed largely of mining engineers, set up the "Rocky Mountain Club-Hoover Fund for Belgian Relief" and in view of the need in Belgium deferred the erection of a clubhouse for which plans were well advanced. At a complimentary dinner to Hoover on the 20th January 1917 the Fund was open with an anonymous \$100,000 donation. Former President Roosevelt acted as Honorary Chairman of the Fund and his characteristic letter to the club members and to men and women of the West(448) was given wide publicity. The New York Chamber of Commerce carried out among its membership a successful campaign which was launched with an address and an appeal made by Hoover on the 1st February 1917.

The "Dollar Christmas Fund"(449) entered wholeheartedly into this 1916 campaign as it did on every other occasion when the Commission asked its help. This was of the nature of a special fund which the Commission applied according to the wishes of the committee. Of like character was the "Forbes Fund"(450) begun in 1916 and continued to the end of relief work and applied by the Commission to the relief of special cases of distress not accessible through general donations.

In the latter part of 1916 and the beginning of 1917, a number of Allied Bazaars were held in Chicago, Boston, and Baltimore patterned after the New York Bazaar held earlier in the year. The Commission's head office and local committees co-operated and received a proportion of the proceeds. At this time, in addition to these special events and to the continued efforts of the country-wide C.R.B. organization, the Commission was recipient of large individual donations. Early in 1917 an anonymous donor gave \$60,000. There were many donations of \$5,000 and \$10,000. Edward S. Harkness gave \$100,000 in his own name and \$200,000 in his mother's name, adding later \$20,000 in both names.

During the same period the appeals of the National Committee for Relief in Belgium to the British Empire had objectives similar to those in the United States. In 1916 the call was for funds to enable the Commission to supply a supplementary meal for school children, and the public responded most generously. During the life of the National Committee an average of almost \$500,000 each month was turned over to the Commission for the care of the destitute, and contributions came "from collections of loyal and willing helpers from parts of the Empire so far separated as Birmingham and Auckland, the Seychelles and British Honduras, Wei-hai-wei and Montreal."(451)

Extract
from Prospectus of Belgian Kiddies, Ltd.

[NEW YORK, 9 December 1916]

- I. The object of this stock issue is to provide one meal per day for ten thousand Belgian children for the year 1917. Each share sold means 365 square meals for one child.
- II. Our business is constantly growing and no estimate can be made of the requirements of 1918.
- III. Security of the principal is absolutely assured by the personal management of H. C. Hoover and associates.
- IV. That no cash dividends will ever be paid is absolutely guaranteed.
- V. The stock is probably only part paid and is fully assessable.
- VI. The stock is preferred as to holders, the subscribers being preferably taken from the members of the mining and metallurgical professions, and their wives and sisters.
- VII. The demand value of the shares shall be \$12, preferably payable in advance, but installments will be welcome if more convenient to the subscriber.

The legality of this issue has been passed upon by no one, but the committee can convince anyone of its necessity.

DOCUMENT NO. 587

Letter,
THEODORE ROOSEVELT TO MEMBERS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN
CLUB AND MEN AND WOMEN OF THE WEST, appealing for the children of
Belgium

OYSTER BAY, NEW YORK
12 March 1917

MY FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CLUB AND MEN
AND WOMEN OF THE WEST:

The action of the Rocky Mountain Club in devoting its energies to the relief of the suffering children of Belgium rang true to the Western spirit, as all of us who have

lived in the mountains and the plains have come to know that spirit. I have gladly joined in the movement to do what I can for a gallant little nation which has been cruelly trampled under foot, for no fault of its own, and now lies prostrate, threatened with the loss of its spiritual as well as its physical being. It is the literal truth that rarely since the days of Herod has child life been so menaced as today in Belgium.

I shall not deal with the material side of this question, or tell how 1,250,000 children are compelled to go hungry, and are threatened with disease and slow starvation. All this is being told in the West in speeches, in letters, in literature, in cartoons and in personal pleas. Suffice it to say that Belgium today stands in mortal danger of losing both its bodily life and its soul.

But what of us? What of our soul if like the Levite and the Priest we pass on our business with averted eyes? The nation that turns a deaf ear to the sufferings of ten million people, including a million and a quarter children, is committing moral suicide. Diseases born of want and hunger are spreading with dreadful rapidity among these 1,250,000 children of Belgium. Shall we look idly on while these children die? Other nations do not sit idle. War-torn England and France have given largely. Brave little Holland has cared within her own borders for hundreds of thousands of refugees. The rest of the world has spent \$250,000,000 for Belgium. We have contributed only nine millions. Is this enough to make us think that we have done our duty? We say with unctuous self-satisfaction that we have been "kept out of war." We chuckle because in 1916 we sold five billions' worth of products to Europe. Are our souls rotted? Can we see only the dollar sign in the sky? What of our souls if we continue deaf to the crying need of a gallant nation, threatened with extinction through the loss of its first born? Can any man of high and generous nature, having been told the facts, continue to be indifferent?

The West has done much, but it has not done enough. I appeal to the men of the West to follow the Rocky Mountain Club. I appeal to the women of the West to take the thought of wrecked and tormented Belgium to their hearts.

I should like to see every school house in the West a collection agency for the Rocky Mountain Club-Hoover Fund.

I should like to see every Sunday School interested.

I should like to know that every pulpit in the West was ringing with the story.

I should like to see in every city and village a central agency collecting and forwarding relief to Mr. William B. Thompson, the treasurer of the fund, No. 65 West 44th Street.

I should like to see every cattle range a Rocky Mountain Club Fund.

I should like to know that every mining superintendent had addressed his men telling them the story and asking them to contribute each pay day a regular sum, following the example of the miners in South Africa, who are giving ten per cent of their wages.

I should like to see every newspaper open its columns to the cause.

I should like to see every social gathering wind up with a Belgian collection.

I should like to see the West on fire over Belgium's wrongs and Belgium's needs.

I cannot say more. I should be ashamed to say less.

(Signed) THEODORE ROOSEVELT

DOCUMENT NO. 588

Letter,

ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION TO THE COMMISSION, donating the sum of \$100,000 toward providing an extra ration for Belgian children

NEW YORK, 4 April 1917

Mr. W. L. Honnold

*Director in America of the Commission for Relief in Belgium
New York City*

MY DEAR MR. HONNOLD:

The Executive Committee of the Rockefeller Foundation appropriated yesterday the sum of \$100,000 to be made immediately available for the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

The Foundation has complete confidence in the efficiency of the work which you are doing and is impressed with its vital importance. To provide an extra ration for Belgian children is so important a work that it cannot fail to appeal to the American public.

While our committee took no formal action yesterday, it was understood that from month to month you will report your success in securing funds and that in the light of the results which are obtained, the Foundation will consider additional contributions to the Commission.

At a time when so few agencies can guarantee the distribution of aid to war sufferers, the American public will undoubtedly appreciate the opportunity which your organization offers for the expression of sympathy and the giving of assistance.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) GEORGE E. VINCENT

7. Clothing and Special Charities. 1917-1918

Hoover's presence in America in the early months of 1917 added as has been shown, a considerable impetus to the campaign for children's relief. The primary object of his trip, however, was to complete the details of a proposed relief loan to the Commission to be floated in America, the preliminaries having been already arranged with bankers in New York by cable from London.⁽⁴⁵²⁾ Before the project could be put into effect the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare blocked temporarily the movement of the Commission's ships and put a complete stop to all endeavors except the major one of securing a "safe lane for relief cargoes."⁽⁴⁵³⁾ Since relief supplies could not be moved, Allied subsidies to the Commission, though inadequate to finance the Commission's theoretical program of imports, were more than sufficient to fill the ships which were then available. By the time relief vessels began to move again, important events had occurred directly affecting the Commission.

On the 3d February the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, and on the 6th April declared war. As has been described elsewhere⁽⁴⁵⁴⁾ the end of American neutrality did not, as had been anticipated, necessitate a withdrawal of Americans from further participation in the direction of Belgian relief. Outside of occupied regions the Commission's organization remained much the same, but there were important changes in financing relief. America became the source of Allied finance and in the large credits established in favor of the Powers at war with Germany specific provision was made for Belgian and French relief. Each month the Commission received from the United States Treasury \$7,500,000 for Belgian and \$5,000,000 for French relief. The assumption by the Government of the financial responsibility, which, as Hoover pointed out in his letter of 14th May 1917⁽⁴⁵⁵⁾ to his associates, was in no inconsiderable measure due to the campaigns conducted in behalf of the Belgian and French people, made it no longer necessary to appeal for general public support. The majority of collecting committees in America settled their accounts and disbanded after Hoover's announcement in May 1917. A few committees,⁽⁴⁵⁶⁾ however, remained inactive for a short time and then resumed their work in the interest of special charities in Belgium.

During the last year of the war the only appeals by the Commission were for used clothing.(457) Two country-wide drives in which the American Red Cross loaned its organization took place, the first during the week of the 18th to 25th March and the second on the 23rd to 30th September 1918. Red Cross chapters everywhere took up the work of collecting, working with the C.R.B. committees where they still existed. Clothing poured into the C.R.B. warehouses where it was unpacked, sorted, and baled for shipment. This campaign in America was accompanied by a similar activity in the United Kingdom under the auspices of the National Committee for Relief in Belgium, whose organization was revived for this purpose. The appeal was for clothing only, but as usual there were large contributions in cash for the purchase of new cloth and shoes. The results of these clothing appeals were beyond expectations. Of gift clothing alone in 1918 the Commission shipped 2,300 tons and in the first few months after the Armistice an additional 7,600 tons.(458)

Except for used clothing and special funds the Commission's appeals for gifts described in this chapter were for the relief of destitution in occupied Belgium only. The Commission shouldered the responsibility of provisioning the people in invaded Northern France(459) five months after the Belgian relief had started, and when it was assured of sufficient government funds to supply each individual regardless of his means with food. Government subsidies, however, were insufficient to meet the increasing demand for warm clothing, and as the years passed the Commission found that the requirements of special relief in the devastated areas, primarily among the children, demanded attention. The people of Northern France participated in the distribution of used clothing secured by the various appeals, and in the last years of the war at Hoover's suggestion generous donors made it possible for the Commission to provide extra meals for French children and to establish child clinics.

DOCUMENT NO. 589

Letter,
HOOVER TO HIS ASSOCIATES OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, stating that the relief work had now become a responsibility of the whole American nation through subsidies from the American Government, and advising that thereafter no appeals for contributions for general relief would be made

NEW YORK, 14 May 1917

TO MY ASSOCIATES OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM:

We are sure that the whole American people will be glad to know that through the sympathetic arrangements made by the President and the Secretary of Treasury, the cost of the Belgian and Northern France relief, so far as it is feasible under present shipping conditions, will be borne for the next six months by the American Government. This has been made possible by a loan of \$75,000,000 from the United States to the Governments of Belgium and France. The money will be advanced by the Treasury in installments of \$12,500,000 per month, of which \$7,500,000 will be available for Belgian relief and \$5,000,000 for the relief in Northern France. The way is open so that at the termination of the six months thus provided for, application may be made to the Government for further loans. We desire to state that although the Commission has endeavored for many months to secure this gratifying result, we feel that the appeals that have been made by you have largely influenced the Government in finally granting the request of the Belgian and French Governments. Therefore the time, energy, and money expended in your campaign have done more than to bring in immediate contributions; they have helped to insure the relief of Belgium and Northern France throughout the war.

The Commission has long desired Government recognition in order that its work should be more firmly established as a distinctly American undertaking, and we feel that you will join with us in intense satisfaction that the work has now become a responsibility and a duty shared by the whole American nation.

Realizing that each committee and community has adopted its own method of making appeals and collecting funds, we do not purpose suggesting the specific action which you will take in meeting the changed conditions resulting from this gratifying action of our Government, but we outline below, in a few paragraphs, answers to certain general questions that may arise.

1. It will be noted that \$12,500,000 per month is much less than the amount which we have stated as necessary to supply the imports required for the limited ration we have endeavored to provide. The explanation lies in that this amount will now cover all of the foodstuffs that we can hope to ship owing to the recent swiftly developed shortage of the world's shipping. Our statements in regard to the amount necessary have been correct and the balance between the \$12,500,000 and the former estimate required to give the limited ration will now of necessity be supplied by encroaching upon the country's stock of milk cattle which had been reserved to maintain a supply of fresh milk for the children and to serve as a nucleus from which to restock the country after the war. The importation of meat, particularly fats, has always been one of the most expensive items in our program.

2. *It must be clearly understood that the Commission for Relief in Belgium will continue to assume the entire charge of purchasing and transporting all food into Belgium and Northern France. The Commission also will continue to be the only*

fully regularized vehicle by which money, food, and clothing can be sent into Belgium.

3. The Commercial Exchange Department will continue as heretofore to effect transfers of money into Belgium. By depositing dollars in our New York office or pounds sterling in London, the equivalent in francs will be paid to any person in Belgium provided the name and correct address be supplied. This service extends over practically all of Belgium except for a small restricted portion under military control. Individuals or Committees outside of Belgium can send money to relatives or friends, or support by direct money contributions any of the specially deserving internal charities which use local currency to advantage in payment of wages or in purchasing home-grown products. Over \$5,000,000 has been transferred in this way since the belligerent governments gave their official sanction to the operations of this department.

4. The Government payments will commence on June 1st; and we shall be glad to have remittances up to that date, but we make no appeal for contributions thereafter.

5. We suggest that you offer to cancel all pledges made to you for future payments and offer to return any moneys which have been paid in advance on account of maturing pledges.

6. The children of Belgium will have the first call upon all food which is imported, and every effort will be made to maintain the supplementary meal which has been so important a factor up to the present in sustaining the health of millions of children.

7. Naturally, having built up such an effective organization you will desire to keep it alive as far as possible, and we venture to suggest that, although the general relief of the countries involved will now be met by the Government appropriations, emergencies and special conditions may arise which could only be met by private donations. In such circumstances your organization will afford a ready means of meeting the demands of the situation, whatever they may be. Should any of your contributors desire to continue their gifts, notwithstanding the present position, they may be assured that their contributions will be expended sooner or later to great advantage, since in any event relief in many forms will doubtless be required after the war.

8. Finally I wish for myself and my colleagues of the Administration of the Commission to express my sincere appreciation of all the untiring, faithful, and truly beautiful work you have done as organizers and managers, and of the generous response which your long lists of donors have made. My association with you has been to me an inspiring revelation of the great heart of America.

To you as individuals and as organized groups I express my heartfelt thanks.

HERBERT HOOVER

Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium

The Commission suggests that you give the above letter from Mr. Hoover as wide publicity as possible.

DOCUMENT NO. 590

Telegram, (460)

HOOVER To NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, expressing appreciation of the work of the Committee in support of the Commission throughout the British Empire

WASHINGTON, 9 June 1917

National Committee for Relief in Belgium London

I should like to express not only my appreciation of the magnificent work of the National Committee during those years of our intimate association but also my gratitude for their resolute and continuous personal support to myself and colleagues of the C.R.B. The vision of great Englishmen in their fidelity to the succor of the people of Belgium in their dreadful suffering and peril has been daily proof to the American people of the rightness of the Allied cause and has contributed in no mean measure to the final conviction of our people that we must enter the struggle to defend civilization from military domination, the character of which the Germans have so effectively demonstrated in Belgium.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 591

Letter,

SECRETARY NEWTON D. BAKER TO HOOVER, agreeing to Hoover's proposal that the newly drafted men at cantonments be given an opportunity to turn over their discarded civilian clothing for Belgium

WASHINGTON, 4 October 1917

Mr. Herbert C. Hoover

United States Food Administration Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am just in receipt of your letter of October 3rd on the subject of securing the cast-off civilian clothing of the drafted men now entering the Cantonments for use by the Commission for Relief in Belgium in response to a pathetic appeal from Belgium for clothing which that Commission has received.

I think that your suggestion is a most excellent one and shall do all that I can to assist you in carrying it out. I enclose herewith copy of a telegram which I have directed to be sent to all commanding generals of the National Army Cantonments.

Very sincerely yours

(Signed) NEWTON D. BAKER
Secretary of War

DOCUMENT NO. 592

Letter,
HOOVER TO HENRY P. DAVISON, describing the exhaustion of clothing in occupied Belgium and Northern France and asking for the cooperation of the American Red Cross in the collection of used clothing

WASHINGTON, 1 March 1918

Henry P. Davison, Esquire
Chairman of the Red Cross War Council
The American Red Cross, Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. DAVISON:

The practical entire exhaustion of cloths, clothing, shoes, and leather in occupied Belgium and Northern France, and the shortage of these necessities in the world's markets, are making it increasingly difficult for the Commission for Relief in Belgium to keep clothed and shod the unfortunate people of these occupied territories. In addition to new material we need gifts of used and surplus clothing and shoes, blankets, flannel, cloth, etc., in large quantities from the people of the United States.

As the Commission has allowed most of its local committees scattered over the United States to disband because of the financial arrangement made last June with our Government, it occurs to me that the Red Cross, with its existing elaborate system of local organizations, would be in excellent situation to conduct this clothing campaign for us. Will you lend the machinery of this organization to

collect for the Commission from the people of the country the articles needed by it in its relief work?

Where our own local committees are still intact, we should prefer to give them the choice of carrying on the campaign in their own localities, or of working in co-operation with the Red Cross, or of turning it over entirely to the Red Cross.

From your repeated cordial offers of the co-operation of the American Red Cross in any of the charitable work of our Commission, I have no doubt of the answer you will make to our present request.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 593

Letter,
DAVISON To HOOVER, in answer to the preceding

WASHINGTON, 4 March 1918

Mr. Herbert Hoover
The Commission for Relief in Belgium
Washington

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

In response to your request on behalf of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the Red Cross will be glad to undertake the collection of used and surplus clothing and other articles for the use of the Commission in its relief work in occupied territories in France and Belgium.

We have set aside the week of March 18th to March 25th for a special campaign for this purpose. We feel certain that the people of the United States will respond generously, and that we will be able to collect for the Commission such quantities of clothing and other articles as it requires to satisfactorily carry on its work of relief. We will send out your appeal to all our Chapters through our Divisional organization. Where your local committees still exist, we trust that this work may be done by such committees in co-operation with our local Chapters in order that the Chapters may feel that they too have a part in this great work.

Cordially yours

(Signed) H. P. DAVISON
Chairman, Red Cross War Council

DOCUMENT NO. 594

Letter, (461)

W. B. POLAND TO SIR WILLIAM GOODE, Proposing that the National Committee's organization take charge of the proposed campaign for used clothing in the United Kingdom

LONDON, 7 March 1918

*The Honorary Secretary
The National Committee for Relief in Belgium
London*

DEAR SIR WILLIAM:

The National Committee is undoubtedly aware of the very distressing need for clothing in the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France. Whatever clothing these countries have received since the beginning of the war has been sent in under the auspices of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and has been entirely inadequate to supply the population. They have been forced to rely almost entirely upon their personal possessions at the beginning of the war, which have now been exhausted. It has been found impossible to obtain the necessary money for the purchase of the *new* clothing needed and world conditions make it impossible for us to secure this new clothing, even were the money available. We have therefore organized an old-clothing campaign and are appealing to the people in the United States on behalf of the people of the occupied territories. We are anxious that a similar appeal be made in the United Kingdom. The necessary authority has been received from the British Government and we should like the National Committee, through its organization, to take charge of such a campaign. We wish to appeal for old clothing for men, women, and children.

Will you be kind enough to bring this subject before your Executive Committee and advise us whether you are willing to undertake this benevolent work on behalf of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

In the summer of 1918 requests came to the Commission for further aid to the special charities in Belgium, and Hoover sent out one more appeal for this purpose in July of that year. The response to Hoover's letter was particularly gratifying. Not only did a number of committees take upon themselves the responsibility of supporting special charities but many individuals made gifts([462](#)) of generous amounts.

DOCUMENT NO. 595

Letter,

HOOVER TO His ASSOCIATES OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, requesting continued contributions for special charities in Belgium not provided for under general relief

NEW YORK, 8 July 1918

TO MY ASSOCIATES OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM:

On May 14th, 1917, I advised you of the financial arrangement with the United States Government whereby funds were provided for the general rationing of the civilian population of Belgium and occupied France. At the end of six months, because of the further exhaustion of the Belgian and French people and the heightened cost of food and shipping, we were obliged to request an increase in the loans.

In my circular I stated my hope that the various committees of the Commission for Relief in Belgium that had already accomplished so much would hold together despite the new financial arrangement in order to support certain needed special charities and be in position to meet any large emergency. We have had many concrete evidences through such support of the continued interest of our committees in the welfare of the civilian population in the occupied regions; and, over and above the general rationing of these people, the Commission itself has helped to maintain certain internal charities, such as The Little Bees (children's canteens), Assistance to Young Mothers, Discreet Assistance (aid to impoverished persons and families of certain character), Assistance to Artists, War Orphans, Old-Clothing Workshops, Lace Workers, Anti-Tuberculosis League, etc.

In this way these special charities have been maintained, without making a general public appeal for their support, the miscellaneous gifts of money being remitted directly to the charities through our Commercial Exchange Department. The managers of these charities have been in this way supplied with funds for the purchase of local products and to meet special needs. All our information from the "inside" shows how urgently these gifts have been needed and how greatly they

have been appreciated. I may quote a few sentences from a late letter from Brussels to our London Office:

Please do not forget when you write to New York to beg all our devoted friends on the other side to continue their campaign to get money for our charity funds. You cannot imagine the good that we are doing. I have told you so several times already but I want to repeat it over and over again. For the moment we are well provided, but in two or three months many of our important gifts will be exhausted, and if by that time we do not get more we will have to give up lots of families who look upon us as their only hope.

It can be readily understood that in providing a general ration for an entire nation the rigorous system necessary to handle such a great project can make little provision for special cases and special needs. These cases, running into hundreds of thousands, of sick and defective children, of infirm old men and women, of the many and increasing victims of tuberculosis, and the host of other individuals requiring special food and care, cannot be taken care of by the general funds. Nor can these general funds be used to provide the small pittances which might justifiably be given to various people in order to keep them off of the soup-lines and allow them to maintain the last shreds of home life and self-respect.

It is for all these cases that the funds provided for the special charities named and others like them are used. There is an increasing need for funds for these cases. The gifts are running low, and our last reports show that the soup-lines of Belgium have increased from one and a half to two and a half million persons. This means that more and more unfortunates have had to give up their last bit of independence.

For three and a half years, these special charities have been maintained by the voluntary services of thousands of splendid men and women in Belgium, who have given unsparingly of their time and energy to carry them on. In all this time they have always looked to the Commission for Relief in Belgium as a definite source of financial aid in times of emergency. We have never refused this aid and cannot now. I should like to see these special charities not only continued, but enabled to expand their usefulness.

Through this memorandum, therefore, I wish not only to convey my appreciation of the assistance already given by the many generous people of America, but to express the hope that this assistance will be continued and increased. I wish particularly to remove any doubt as to the acceptability of contributions to the Commission for Relief in Belgium for the special purposes above indicated.

I, therefore, again announce that any funds donated for these special charities will be gladly received by the C.R.B. and promptly transmitted by it directly to Belgium. This transmission of money is absolutely safeguarded by virtue of an

agreement between the belligerent governments, the C.R.B., and the neutral (Spanish and Dutch) protecting Ministers in Brussels.

HERBERT HOOVER

Chairman, The Commission for Relief in Belgium

The following telegram dispatched to all committees and friends of the Commission terminated the Commission's appeals for financial aid in America and in April 1919 the charitable accounts of the Commission were closed.

DOCUMENT NO. 596

Telegram,
COMMISSION TO ITS SUBSCRIBERS, quoting Hoover's report on the conditions in Belgium and Northern France and terminating benevolent financial assistance

NEW YORK, 20 December 1918

Mr. Hoover has cabled that together with Mr. Poland, Director for Europe, a survey of the entire Belgian situation has now been completed. It is a matter of great satisfaction to know that the work of the C.R.B. during the past four years in supplying general sustenance to the entire population and in granting financial aid to various internal charities with the additional assistance rendered since the evacuation has prevented actual starvation in Belgium. It can be positively stated that the whole population has passed through this ordeal without irreparable damage to the national health except for certain classes where there has been undernutrition and where tuberculosis has developed. The Belgians are now prepared to remedy these conditions themselves. The most cheering factor in the condition of the population is the health of the two million Belgian children who have been the object of our utmost solicitude during the past four years of occupation. It can be said without reserve that the health of the children in Belgium today is perhaps even better than under normal conditions as the result of the special measures in feeding applied to them through your generosity. The Belgians have naturally been anxious that external charity should cease the moment their own Government and their private resources were restored and they themselves placed in a position to handle the situation. Mr. Hoover now informs us that this fortunate condition for which we have long been working has arrived and the Belgians would be embarrassed by adding further to the obligations for which they are already deeply grateful. He assures us that all Belgian officials and heads of committees are in agreement that Belgium does not desire further charity from the

world except immediate supplies of second-hand clothing. In view of this direct and positive assurance that no further benevolent financial assistance is required we desire to advise you that we cannot solicit further funds for Belgium. We propose to issue Mr. Hoover's message to the press within the next few days but are anxious that you should have this advice before information is given to the public. We shall of course, continue to ship food and clothing as heretofore, purchased with funds provided by the Belgian and French Governments, and we shall solicit used clothing in large amounts.

EDGAR RICKARD

Acting Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XV. THE MOBILIZATION OF PUBLIC SUPPORT, cont'd

8. Summary of Cash Donations and Gifts in Kind. 1914-1919

The tables which follow are the total charitable contributions to the Commission 1914-1919. Documents 597, 598, and 599 show the value of gifts in cash and kind forwarded to the Commission by regional and local committees all over the world. These tables give an indication of the individual and collective effort of the groups supporting Belgian relief. The full record of the work of these numerous bodies is in the reports which they prepared when their activities ended.

CASH DONATIONS AND GIFTS IN KIND 1914-1919

Cash Donations	\$20,490,321.80
Gifts in Kind	31,800,513.71
<i>Total Charitable Contributions</i> Cash, Food, and Clothing	\$52,290,835.51

ANALYSIS BY COUNTRIES

<i>United States of America</i>		
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States, cities, and possessions		\$32,109,863.69
<i>British Empire</i>		
Australia	\$6,210,288.08	
British West Indies	36,209.98	
Canada	4,153,723.87	
India	197,692.22	
New Zealand	2,462,272.07	
South Africa	175,294.84	
United Kingdom	5,739,349.10	
Sundry Colonies	77,367.99	19,052,198.15
<i>Other Countries</i>		
Argentine Republic	\$ 200,608.77	
Belgian Relief Fund*	485,000.00	
Belgian Orphans' Fund*	65,475.00	
Belgium	56,390.89	
Brazil	16,233.33	
China	20,724.13	
Holland	168,662.63	
Italy	34,993.66	
Katanga. (Belgian Congo)	32,980.00	
Spain	39,455.13	

Sundry	8,250.13	1,128,773.67
Total charitable contributions		\$52,290,835.51

*Chiefly American and British contributors.

1. Mobilized through the Commission's London Office	
<i>a</i>) Received direct from independent committees, institutions, and individuals by the London Office (see Document 597)	\$ 6,625,386.74
<i>b</i>) Received through the National Committee for Relief in Belgium (see Document 598)	11,144,421.78
II. Mobilized through the Commission's New York Office (see Document 599)	34,521,026.99
Grand total, charity	\$52,290,835.51

Analysis

of Contributions in cash and in kind direct to the London office of the Commission in 1914-1919. Abstract of Commission's annual reports and, specifically, "The Commission for Relief in Belgium. Balance Sheet and Accounts," Oct. 1914-30th Sept. 1920.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN CASH AND IN KIND DIRECT TO LONDON OFFICE OF THE COMMISSION, 1914-1919

<i>Committees, Institutions, and Individuals</i>	<i>Food and Clothing</i>	<i>Cash</i>	<i>Committee Total</i>	<i>State Total</i>
<i>Argentine Republic</i>	190,656.87	9,951.90	200,608.77	200,608.77
<i>Australia</i>				
New South Wales	50,642.25	742,010.01	792,652.26	
Queensland	.....	50,784.02	50,784.02	
South Australia	.....	97,727.50	97,727.50	
Tasmania	.....	6,305.00	6,305.00	
Victoria	1,571.40	423,162.50	424,733.90	
Western Australia	.....	11,640.00	11,640.00	1,393,842.68
<i>Belgium</i>				
Antwerp	8,545.70	.....	8,545.70	
Belgium	22,800.90	.....	22,800.90	
Ghent	18,545.29	.....	18,545.29	
Ostend	6,499.00		6,499.00	56,390.89
<i>Belgian Relief Fund</i>	.....	485,000.00	485,000.00	485,000.00
<i>Belgian Orphans' Fund</i>	.....	65,475.00	65,475.00	65,475.00
<i>Brazil</i>	16,233.33	.....	16,233.33	16,233.33
<i>Canada</i>	1,518,664.11	.....	1,518,564.11	1,518,564.11

<i>China</i>	.....	20,724.13	20,724.13	20,724.13
<i>Holland</i>	.....	168,662.63	168,662.63	168,662.63
<i>India</i>	727.50	.....	727.50	727.50
<i>Italy</i>	.....	34,993.66	34,993.66	34,993.66
<i>Katanga</i>	.....	32,980.00	32,980.00	32,980.00
<i>New Zealand</i>	1,139.75	7,760.00	8,899.75	8,899.75
<i>Spain</i>	.....	39,455.13	39,455.13	39,455.13
<i>United Kingdom</i>				
England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland	1,493,640.93*	1,090,938.10	2,584,579.03	2,584,579.03
<i>Sundry</i>	1,779.51	6,470.62	8,250.13	8,250.13
<i>Totals</i>	\$3,331,346.54	\$3,294,040.20	\$6,625,386.74	\$6,625,386.74

*This figure includes the value of gift clothing collected in 1918 through the National Committee for Relief in Belgium organization, which was revived for this purpose.

DOCUMENT NO. 598

Analysis
of Contributions in cash to the London office of the Commission collected by the National Committee for Relief in Belgium from British Empire sources 1915-1919. Abstract from "The Commission for Relief in Belgium. Balance Sheet and Accounts," Oct. 1914-30th Sept. 1920 and, specifically, "The National Committee for Relief in Belgium," by Sir William Goode, K.B.E.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN CASH COLLECTED BY THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, 1915-1919

<i>Committees, Institutions, and Individuals</i>	<i>Committee Total</i>	<i>State Total</i>
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<i>Australia</i>		
Commonwealth	\$13,710.32	
New South Wales	2,250,484.83	
Queensland	728,993.38	
South Australia	409,880.35	
Tasmania	230,986.84	
Victoria	1,072,663.12	
Western Australia	119,727.06	\$4,826,445.40
<i>British West Indies</i>	36,209.98	36,209.98
<i>Canada</i>	223,996.46	223,996.46
<i>India</i>	196,964.72	196,964.72
<i>New Zealand</i>	2,453,372.32	2,453,372.32
<i>South Africa</i>	175,294.84	175,294.84
<i>United Kingdom</i>	3,154,770.07*	3,154,770.07
<i>Sundry Colonies</i> Including twenty-six separate colonies, all over the world	77,367.99	77,367.99
<i>Totals</i>	\$11,144,421.78	\$11,144,421.78

*Exclusive of the value of gift clothing collected in the United Kingdom by the Commission through the organization of the National Committee in 1918. See [Document 597](#).

DOCUMENT NO. 599

Analysis
of Contributions in cash and in kind mobilized through the New York office of the Commission 1914-1919. Abstract of Commission's annual reports; "The

Commission for Relief in Belgium. Balance Sheet and Accounts," Oct. 1914-30th Sept. 1920; and specifically, "Commission for Relief in Belgium, Benevolence--- New York office," by Anne Osterberg.

BENEVOLENT CONTRIBUTIONS IN CASH AND IN KIND RECEIVED
THROUGH THE NEW YORK OFFICE, 1914-1919

Committees, Institutions, and Individuals	Food	Clothing	Cash	Committee Total	State Total
<i>Alabama</i>					
Alabama Belgian Relief Fund	\$ 14,504.10	\$ 5,863.50	\$ 158.78	\$ 20,026.38	\$ 20,026.38
<i>California</i>					
Claremont Committee	.....	.....	4,952.83	4,952.83	
Los Angeles Belgian Relief Committee	.....	143.00	1,850.00	1,993.00	
Belgian Relief Fund, Oakland	.....	.....	550.00	550.00	
Stanford University Belgian Relief Committee	.....	573.00	9,354.75	9,927.75	
Pasadena Committee C.R.B	.....	.....	4,388.10	4,388.10	
Redlands War Relief Association	.....	.....	337.50	337.50	
Church Federation, San Diego	.....	.....	912.98	912.98	
Belgian Relief Committee, San Francisco	261,307.5 2	.....	.....	261,307.5 2	
California Committee C.R.B., San Francisco	28,905.70	29,918.00	255,096.5 6	313,915.2 6	
Montecito War Relief Association, Santa Barbara	.....	.....	200.00	200.00	598,484.9 4
<i>Canada</i>					

Relief Work for Victims of the War In Belgium, Montreal	2,287,248 .80	37,314.50	86,600.00	2,411,163. 30	2,411,163. 30
<i>Colorado</i>					
War Sufferers Relief Committee, Colorado Springs	.....	.....	1,071.05	1,071.05	
Delta Gamma War Relief Committee, Boulder	.....	.....	2,500.00	2,500.00	3,571.05
<i>Connecticut</i>					
Children's Tin Box Fund, Bridgeport	.....	.....	818.90	818.90	
War Relief Committee, Darien	.....	.....	66.52	66.52	
Connecticut Belgian Relief Committee, Hartford	117,615.0 1	1,465.00	51,685.89	170,765 90	
Salisbury-Lakeville Community Fund	.....	.....	758.11	758.11	
Auxiliary No. 3, New Canaan	.....	.....	1,154.00	1,154.00	
Yale Belgian Relief Fund, New Haven	.....	.....	1,420.00	1,420.00	174,983.4 3
<i>Cuba</i>					
Commission Organizadora para Arbitrar Fondos para los Belgas Indigentes, Santiago	.....	.....	757.66	757.66	757.66
<i>Delaware</i>					
Delaware Committee C.R.B., Wilmington	24,315.00	540.00	10,593.10	35,448.10	35,448.10
<i>District of Columbia</i>					
District of Columbia Belgian Relief Committee	2,173.90	2,851.50	4,583.85	9,609.25	9,609.25

<i>Florida</i>					
Belgian Relief Committee, Miami	.....	.....	129.00	129.00	129.00
<i>Georgia</i>					
Children's Tin Box Fund	.....	.....	166.28	166.28	166.28
<i>Hawaii</i>					
War Relief Committee, Honolulu	.....	10,704.00	39,216.66	49,920.66	49,920.66
<i>Idaho</i>					
Idaho Committee C.R.B., Stanley A. Easton	.....	.....	200.00	200.00	200.00
<i>Illinois</i>					
Chicago Bazaar	.....	.....	11,675.02	11,675.02	
Illinois Committee C.R.B., Chicago	342,977.86	27,127.70	.....	370,105.56	
Commission for Relief, Danville, and Westville	.....	.....	104.50	104.50	
General Mission Board, Church of the Brethren, Elgin	.....	.....	1,250.04	1,250.04	
<i>Moline Daily Despatch</i> , Moline	.....	.....	120.50	120.50	
University of Illinois, Urbana	.....	.....	1,563.38	1,563.38	384,819.00
<i>Indiana</i>					
University of Indiana, Bloomington	.....	.....	873.20	873.20	
Belgian Relief Fund, Frankfort	.....	.....	816.55	816.55	
Indiana Committee C.R.B., Indianapolis	73,304.72	8,919.00	152.83	82,376.55	
American Fund for French Wounded, Indianapolis	.....	.....	136.21	136.21	84,202.51

<i>Iowa</i>					
Children's Tin Box Fund, Burlington	.....	.....	15.60	15.60	
<i>Evening Gazette</i> , Cedar Rapids	.....	.....	3,189.05	3,189.05	
Starving Children's Fund, Conrad		.....	110.00	110.00	
Belgian Relief Association of Iowa, Des Moines	123,217.90	.....	83.65	123,301.55	
People of the Diocese of Dubuque	.....	.....	7,100.00	7,100.00	
Faculty and Students of Grinnell College and Citizens of Grinnell		.....	850.06	850.06	
Belgian Relief Fund, Keokuk	.....	.....	391.52	391.52	
Relief Fund, Marshalltown	.....	.....	28.17	28.17	
People of Parkersburg	.....	.....	175.00	175.00	135,160.95
<i>Kansas</i>					
War Relief Association, Salina	.....	.....	140.00	140.00	
Kansas Belgian Relief Fund, Topeka	240,449.14	147.50	12,961.15	253,557.79	253,697.79
<i>Kentucky</i>					
Belgian Relief Fund, Louisville	8,833.75	2,215.50	1,017.00	12,066.25	
Victor Bogaert, Lexington	.....	.....	3,991.04	3,991.04	16,057.29
<i>Louisiana</i>					
Louisiana Committee C.R.B., New Orleans	20,291.90	2,088.50	.....	22,380.40	22,380.40
<i>Maine</i>					
Maine State Committee	169.79	.....	207.09	376.88	

C.R.B., Augusta					
Children's Tin Box Fund, Bangor	.....	.....	376.41	376.41	
People of Waterville	.....	.....	300.00	300.00	
People of Westbrook	.....	.....	162.34	162.34	
Belgian Relief Committee, Wilton	.....	.....	32.00	32.00	1,247.63
<i>Maryland</i>					
Committee for Belgian Relief, Baltimore	173,988.60	28,227.50	14,760.40	216,985.50	
Cardinal Gibbons Fund, Baltimore	.....	.....	70,000.00	70,000.00	286,985.50
<i>Massachusetts</i>					
Belgian Relief Committee, Amherst	.....	.....	815.00	815.00	
Congregationalist War Relief Fund, Boston	.....	.....	3,498.08	3,498.08	
Children's Tin Box Fund, Boston	.....	.....	6,824.44	6,824.44	
New England Belgian Relief Fund, Boston	469,722.80	307,714.85	208,952.19	986,389.84	
W. Cameron Forbes and Family	.....	.....	49,549.03	49,549.03	
Belgian Relief Fund, Fall River	.....	.....	47.00	47.00	
Holyoke Belgian Relief Fund	458.10	5,356.20	.....	5,814.30	
Citizens of Munson	.....	.....	80.00	80.00	
Northampton Belgian Relief Committee	.....	.....	3,024.61	3,024.61	
Springfield Committee for Belgian Relief	.....	.....	3,666.93	3,666.93	
Belgian Relief Committee, Westfield	.....	.....	338.00	338.00	1,060,047.23
<i>Michigan</i>					

<i>Adrian Daily Telegram,</i> Adrian	.....	.....	204.95	204.95	
Dollar-a-Month Club for Belgian Children, Ann Arbor	.....	.....	20,063.93	20,063.93	
Michigan Committee C.R.B., Detroit	41,672.00	33,152.00	888.46	75,712.46	
Needlework Guild of America, Detroit	.....	.....	2,382.00	2,382.00	
Delta City War Relief Association, Escanaba	.....	.....	50.00	50.00	
War Relief Society, Grand Rapids	.....	.....	595.45	595.45	
War Relief Association of Dickinson County, Iron Mountain	.....	.....	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Traverse City	.....	.....	310.88	310.88	100,319.6 7
<i>Minnesota</i>					
Minnesota Committee C.R.B., Minneapolis	65,934.40	720.00	492.34	67,146.74	
<i>Northwestern</i> <i>Miller</i> Belgian Relief Fund, Minneapolis	510,233.4 2	.....	11,028.12	521,261.5 4	
Women's Committee of the St. Paul Committee C.R.B	.....	.....	29,095.60	29,095.60	
Waseca County Committee, Waseca	.....	.....	120.00	120.00	617,623. 88
<i>Mississippi</i>					
Mississippi Committee for Relief in Belgium, Jackson	.....	.....	94.19	94.19	
Relief Committee of Moorhead	.....	.....	6.78	6.78	100.97

<i>Missouri</i>					
Missouri Belgian Relief Fund, St. Louis	14,913.22	4,967.50	145.07	20,025.79	20,025.79
<i>Montana</i>					
Citizens of Armstead	.....	.....	46.25	46.25	96.25
Citizens of Dillon	.....	.....	50.00	50.00	
<i>Nebraska</i>					
Citizens of Center	.....	.....	7.00	7.00	
Citizens of Cherry County	.....	.....	429.75	429.75	
Belgian Relief Fund, Hastings	.....	.....	22.75	22.75	
Nebraska Committee C.R.B., Lincoln	41,627.20	.....	3,278.57	44,905.77	45,365.27
<i>Nevada</i>					
Nevada Commission Relief Belgium and France, Reno	.....	.....	2,669.66	2,669.66	2,669.66
<i>New Hampshire</i>					
Children's Tin Box Fund, Concord	.....	.....	87.54	87.54	
Citizens of Portsmouth	.....	.....	101.78	101.78	189.32
<i>New Jersey</i>					
Hillsdale-Westwood Branch C.R.B	.....	.....	236.40	286.40	
Citizens of Lambertville	.....	.....	25.00	25.00	
Metuchen Fund for Belgian Children	.....	.....	50.00	50.00	
Moorestown Association for Relief of War Sufferers	.....	.....	16.00	16.00	
Children's Tin Box Fund, Morristown	.....	.....	115.35	115.35	
New Jersey Committee	.....	20.00	2,909.49	2,929.49	

C.R.B., Newark					
Citizens of Nutley	.....	.....	23.75	23.75	
Committee of the Oranges for Relief of Children of Belgium, Orange	.....	.....	28,020.65	28,020.65	
Plainfield Belgian Relief Society	7,500. 00	10,000.00	7,638.73	25,138.73	
New Jersey Committee C.R.B., Princeton	.....	.....	1,706.02	1,706.02	
Summit Committee C.R.B	.....	.....	6,413.66	6,413.66	
War Sufferers Aid Society, Upper Montclair	.....	.....	23.35	23.35	
War Relief Circle, West Milford	.....	.....	15.00	15.00	64,713.40
<i>New York State</i>					
Belgian Relief Fund, Albany	31,611.51	.....	1,855.83	33,467.34	
Albany War Chest	.....	.....	7,500.00	7,500.00	
Mrs. William Gorham Rice, Albany	.....	.....	4,809.67	4,809.67	
Commission for Relief in Belgium, Amsterdam	.....	.....	697.07	697.07	
War Chest Fund, Amsterdam	.....	.....	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Belgian and Poles Protest Meeting, Batavia	.....	.....	108.17	108.17	
Bronxville Fund for Belgian Relief	.....	.....	3,410.00	3,410.00	
Auxiliary No. 5 (Mrs. Alexander M. White), Brooklyn	.....	.....	10,687.79	10,687.79	
Buffalo Belgian Relief	46,520.09	.....	3,200.00	49,720.09	

Fund					
Belgian Relief Fund, Clinton	.....	.....	175.80	175.80	
Belgian Relief Fund, Cortland	.....	.....	22.25	22.25	
Flushing Committee for Belgian Relief	.....	.....	3,464.33	3,464.33	
Belgian Relief Committee, Glens Falls	.....	.....	180.00	180.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Groton	.....	.....	90.61	90.61	
Belgian Relief Committee, Hempstead	.....	.....	710.00	710.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Highland Falls	.....	.....	121.57	121.57	
Huntington and Cold Spring Harbor C.R.B	.....	.....	4,550.00	4,550.00	
Ilion-Mohawk War Chest, Ilion	.....	.....	100.00	100.00	
Tompkins County Branch C.R.B., Ithaca	.....	.....	2,600.00	2,600.00	
Tompkins County War Chest Association, Ithaca	.....	.....	1,540.00	1,540.00	
Commission for Relief in Belgium, Jamestown	.....	.....	3.00	3.00	
Auxiliary No. 2, Lake George	.....	.....	1,261.95	1,261.95	
Citizens of Leroy	.....	.....	833.25	833.25	
Mechanicsville War Chest	.....	.....	500.00	500.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Moore's Mills	.....	.....	232.00	232.00	
Westchester County	.....	.....	8,116.69	8,116.69	

Committee C.R.B., Mt. Kisco					
People of New Hartford	.....	.....	225.00	225.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Oneonta	.....	.....	210.53	210.53	
City of Oswego	.....	.....	21.00	21.00	
Oyster Bay Committee	.....	.....	3,731.00	3,731.00	
Phelps War Chest Association	.....	.....	200.00	200.00	
Clinton County Branch Belgian Relief, Plattsburg	.....	.....	321.20	321.20	
Orange County Committee Relief in Belgium, Port Jervis	.....	.....	83.32	83.32	
Belgian Relief Committee, Richfield Springs	.....	.....	87.37	87.37	
Riverdale-Spuyten Duyvil Joint Committee Belgian Relief	.....	.....	6,297.24	6,297.24	
Belgian Relief Committee, Rochester	10,096.40	.....	693.95	10,790.35	
Rockaway Peninsula Committee, Rockaway	.....	.....	4,160.20	4,160.20	
Belgian Relief Committee, Scarsdale	.....	.....	2,126.25	2,126.25	
War Relief League, Schuyler Lake	.....	.....	15.00	15.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Syracuse	9,184.00	12,117.00	17,048.00	38,349.00	
Syracuse War Chest	.....	.....	5,000.00	5,000.00	
Citizens of Ticonderoga	.....	.....	208.61	208.61	
Central New York War	.....	.....	228.00	228.00	

Relief Committee, Utica					
Utica War Chest Association	.....	.....	5,000.00	5,000.00	
People of Victor	.....	.....	17.86	17.86	
Commission Belgian Relief, Walton	.....	.....	253.53	253.53	
Alleghany County Committee, Wellsville	.....	.....	43.00	43.00	
Auxiliary No. 4, White Plains	.....	.....	232.20	232.20	213,502.2 4
<i>New York City</i>					
Allied Bazaar	.....	.....	119,422.2 9	119,422.2 9	
American Fund Association	.....	.....	5,000.00	5,000.00	
Women's Auxiliary- American Institute Mining Engineers	.....	.....	2,226.24	2,220.24	
American Metal Market War Relief Fund	.....	.....	5,457.73	5,457.73	
Auxiliary No. 1, Mrs. William Emerson	.....	.....	21,066.21	21,066.21	
Auxiliary No, 4, Mrs. George E. O'Dell	.....	.....	1,254.95	1,254.95	
Belgian Kiddies--- American Institute Mining Engineers	.....	.....	98,234.74	98,234.74	
Belgian Relief Fund	911,461.6 7	.....	.....	911,461.6 7	
British American War Relief Fund	.....	.....	500.00	500.00	
Century Association	.....	.....	10,868.50	10,868.50	
Chamber of Commerce	.....	.....	72,630.00	72,630.00	
<i>Christian Herald</i> Relief F	2.40	156.00	42,500.00	42,658.40	

und					
Coffee House Club	.....	.....	1,438.50	1,438.50	
Committee of Mercy	.....	.....	1,558.46	1,558.46	
Cosmopolitan Club	.....	.....	2,871.00	2,871.00	
Daughters of the American Revolution	.....	.....	152,937.5 3	152,937.5 3	
Dollar Christmas Fund	.....	.....	212,067.9 1	212,057.9 1	
Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society	.....	.....	207.75	207.75	
Executive Committee C.R.B	.....	.....	1,285.10	1,285.10	
Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America	.....	.....	941.79	941.79	
John A. Gade	.....	.....	45,504.25	45,504.25	
Greater New York Committee C.R.B	20.00	19,071.25	58,063.46	77,154.71	
Readers of <i>Life</i>	.....	.....	300.91	300.91	
<i>Literary Digest</i>	100,000.0 0	.....	565,715.9 4	665,715.9 4*	
Miss Ethel McLean	.....	.....	5,129.00	5,129.00	
Memorial Fund Association	.....	.....	10,000.00	10,000.00	
Physicians Relief Fund	16,174.60	.....	.....	16,174.60	
National Allied Relief Committee and French Heroes Lafayette Memorial Fund	.....	.....	22,041.88	22,041.88	
Refugees Relief Fund	.....	.....	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Rockefeller Foundation	986,038.9 4	.....	300,000.0 0	1,286,038. 94	
Rocky Mountain Club	.....	.....	281,351.6 5	281,351.6 5	
Children's Tin Box	.....	.....	2,978.82	2,978.82	

Fund					
Union Belge Société de Secours Mutuels	.....	.....	1,345.25	1,345.25	
Washington Square District Committee	.....	.....	7,754.64	7,754.64	
Women's Section C.R.B	82,600.10	1,239.60	18,022.33	101,862.03	4,188,430.89
<i>North Carolina</i>					
Children's Tin Box Fund, Asheville	.....	.....	182.01	182.01	
North Carolina Committee C.R.B., Asheville	.....	209.00	895.00	1,104.00	1,286.01
<i>North Dakota</i>					
Belgian Relief Fund, Fargo	.....	.....	882.23	882.23	882.23
<i>Ohio</i>					
Logan County Relief Committee, Bellefontaine	.....	.....	95.80	95.80	
Children's Tin Box Fund, Cleveland	.....	.....	400.00	400.00	
The <i>ChristianStandard</i> , Cincinnati	.....	.....	1,153.84	1,153.84	
Ohio Committee C.R.B., Cincinnati	.....	25.00	34,630.10	34,655.10	
Belgian Relief Committee, Cleveland	.....	.....	7,088.00	7,088.00	
War Council of Cuyahoga County, Cleveland	.....	.....	7,500.00	7,500.00	
Miami Belgian Relief Committee, Cleves	...	.....	16.30	16.30	
Ohio Commission for Relief European War Sufferers, Columbus	215,699.09	102.75	5,180.16	220,982.00	

War Relief Association of Coshocton	.....	.....	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Community War Chest Association, Dayton	.....	.....	3,000.00	3,000.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Fostoria	.....	.....	100.12	100.12	
Milton Brown Fund for Relief of War Sufferers, Glendale	.....	.....	230.00	230.00	
Hocking County War Relief Association, Logan	.....	.....	300.00	300.00	
Citizens of Medina County, Medina	.....	.....	31.58	31.58	
Licking County War Chest, Newark	.....	.....	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Citizens of Sidney	.....	.....	77.00	77.00	
Steubenville Gazette	.....	.....	182.50	182.50	
Toledo War Chest	.....	.....	10,000.00	10,000.00	
Mahoning War Chest, Youngstown	.....	.....	5,000.00	5,000.00	292,812.24
<i>Oklahoma</i>					
Citizens of Beggs	.....	.....	31.80	31.80	
Alfalfa County Committee, Cherokee	.....	.....	181.05	181.05	
Oklahoma Committee Relief of the Belgians, Oklahoma City	117.30	2,615.00	4,777.67	7,509.97	
Belgian Children's Fund, Tulsa	.....	.....	3,929.70	3,929.70	11,662.52
<i>Oregon</i>					
Belgian Relief Fund, Dufur	.....	.....	102.00	102.00	
Belgian Children's Fund, Portland	.....	.....	14,081.38	14,081.38	

Oregon Belgian Relief Committee, Portland	83,299.20	65,404.50	470.98	149,174.68	
Portland War Relief Fund, Portland	.....	.....	500.00	500.00	
Commission for Relief in Belgium, Salem	.....	.....	750.00	750.00	
People of Westport	.....	.....	183.00	183.00	164,791.06
<i>Pennsylvania</i>					
Beaver County War Service Association, Beaver Falls	.....	.....	10,000.00	10,000.00	
Bryn Mawr College Committee	.....	.....	3,868.77	3,368.77	
Société de Secours Mutuel Espoir, Charleroi	.....	.....	298.35	298.35	
Franklin Belgian Relief Fund, Franklin	.....	.....	7.90	7.90	
Belgian Relief Committee, Lancaster	.....	.....	78.91	78.91	
Belgian Children's Relief Committee of Pennsylvania	.....	.....	224,000.00	224,000.00	
Belgian Relief Fund, John Wanamaker Newspaper Men's Committee and the <i>Ladies Home Journal</i>	229,890.00	100.00	.....	229,990.00	
Pennsylvania Committee of Women C.R.B., Philadelphia Belgian Relief Committee of the Emergency Aid, Philadelphia	.....	173,836.00	164,575.94	339,411.94	
Pennsylvania	186,956.7	22,026.00	118.00	209,100.7	

Committee C.R.B., Philadelphia	7			7	
Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania Committee C.R.B.	1,651.90	.....	178,066.0 6	179,717.9 6	
Pottstown Committee	.....	.....	689.50	689.50	
Schuylkill County Committee Belgian Relief, Pottsville	.....	.....	2,708.85	2,708.85	
Berks County Committee C.R.B., Reading	4,033.00	1,033.60	65,188.60	70,255.20	1,268,628. 15
<i>Philippine Islands</i>					
Philippine Islands Children's Fund, Manila	.....	.....	7,500.00	7,500.00	7,500.00
<i>Rhode Island</i>					
Children's Tin Box Fund, Bristol	.....	.....	4,192.87	4,192.87	
War Relief Society, East Greenwich	.....	.....	22.75	22.75	
Providence <i>Journal</i> Com pany	.....	.....	5,425.13	5,425.13	9,640.75
<i>South Carolina</i>					
South Carolina Committee C.R.B., Columbia	18,442.70	1,164.00	1,849.53	21,456.23	
Belgian Relief Committee, Georgetown	.....	.....	7.26	7.26	
Citizens of Lancaster	.....	.....	25.00	25.00	
Belgian Relief Fund of Spartansburg	.....	.....	42.87	42.87	21,531.36
<i>South Dakota</i>					
Citizens of Dell Rapids	.....	.....	45.00	45.00	
Daily and	.....	.....	328.06	128.05	

Weekly <i>Sentinel</i> , Madison					
Mennonite Community of Marion	.....	.....	4,350.00	4,350.00	
Dr. Henry K. Warren, Yankton	.....	.....	448.00	4-48.00	4,971.05
<i>Tennessee</i>					
Gaston C. Raoul, Chattanooga	.....	.....	2,208.75	2,208.75	
The <i>Gospel Advocate</i> , Nashville	.....	.....	695.68	695.68	
Tennessee Committee Belgian Relief, Nashville	.....	.....	9,594.55	9,594.55	12,498.98
<i>Texas</i>					
Belgian Relief Fund, Amarillo	.....	.....	232.16	232.16	
Texas Committee C.R.B., Dallas	.....	.....	1,697.72	1,697.72	
El Paso <i>Herald</i>	.....	.....	42.35	42.35	
National Patriotic League, Houston	.....	.....	7,500.00	7,500.00	
People of Mertzon	.....	.....	25.67	25.67	
People of the City of Port O'Connor	.....	.....	176.37	176.37	
Texas Belgian Relief Committee, San Antonio	.....	.....	20.00	20.00	
Mrs. Arthur Temple, Texarkana	.....	.....	339.69	339.69	10,033.96
<i>Utah</i>					
Women's Auxiliary American Institute Mining Engineers, Salt Lake City	.....	.....	900.00	900.00	
<i>Deseret News</i> , Salt Lake	.....	.....	50.00	50.00	950.00

City					
<i>Vermont</i>					
Vermont Committee C.R.B	.....	6,001.00	1,197.94	7,198.94	7,198.94
<i>Virginia</i>					
Virginia Commission on Belgian Relief, Richmond	243,387.0 7	.....	9,608.93	252,996.0 0	
Sweet Briar College	.....	.....	539.00	539.00	253,535.0 0
<i>Washington</i>					
Washington State Committee for Relief in Belgium, Seattle	25,616.00	5,540.00	12,217.60	43,373.60	
Belgian Relief Committee, Spokane	.....	.....	4,110.55	4,110.55	
Belgian Relief Fund, Tacoma	.....	.....	289.07	289.07	47,773.22
<i>West Virginia</i>					
Kanawha War Relief Association, Charleston	.....	.....	635.00	635.00	
Pennsboro Belgian Relief Committee	.....	.....	600.00	600.00	1,235.00
<i>Wisconsin</i>					
Miss Rosie Tristral, Darlington	.....	.....	951.57	951.57	
Citizens of Deer Park	.....	.....	37.50	37.50	
Wisconsin Advancement Association, Grand Rapids	.....	.....	533.44	533.44	
Committee for Relief of the Belgians, Green Bay	.....	.....	567.75	567.75	
Citizens of Hudson	.....	.....	186.05	186.05	
Patriots Fund	.....	.....	1,000.00	1,000.00	

Committee, Kenosha					
Women's Committee, LaCrosse	.....	.....	80.00	80.00	
Madison Allies Relief Fund	.....	.....	4,144.00	4,144.00	
Belgian Relief Committee, Milwaukee	3,693.60	5,710.00	4,250.27	13,653.87	
Citizens of New Richmond	.....	.....	397.59	397.59	
Citizens of Superior	.....	.....	1,031.75	1,031.75	
Mrs. Edwin B. Frost, Williams Bay	.....	.....	3,000.00	3,000.00	25,583.52
<i>Clothing Campaigns</i>					
Cantonments Clothing Campaign	.....	105,946.0 0	.....	105,946.0 0	105,946.0 0
First and Second Red Cross Clothing Campaigns	.....	18,994,26 0.30	16,074.67	19,010,33 4.97	19,010,33 4.97
<i>Individual Donations</i>					
Food, Clothing, and Cash Received by New York Office	.....	455,225.2 5	2,004,921 .09	2,460,146. 34	2,460,146. 34
GRAND TOTAL					
Benevolent Contributions Received through the New York Office	\$8,077,86 1.17	\$20,391,3 06.00	\$6,051,85 9.82	\$34,521,0 26.99	\$34,521,0 26.99

*Includes over \$114,500 contributed to the "Belgian Flour Fund," *Literary Digest*, between the 28th November 1914 and the 17th April 1915. Early in 1917 Mr. R. J. Cuddihy started the second *Literary Digest* campaign for Belgian Relief on behalf of the children of Belgium and the total direct contributions by the readers of the *Literary Digest* was increased to the splendid amount shown above. The opportunity is here taken in this connection to correct the implication in a previous publication (Gay, *Commission for Relief in Belgium, Statistical Review*, table, p. 67) that "in addition to its [*Literary Digest*] enormous publicity support throughout the war," only the sum \$114,522.08 resulted. In the table referred to, the contributions through the second appeal by the *Literary Digest* were grouped under

the donations of "State Committees," as were the donations of hundreds of other organizations and institutions not specifically named.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XVI

THE CARE OF THE DESTITUTE

Like other prosperous, industrialized states, pre-war Belgium had her problems of poverty and poor relief, which she met with a fine spirit of generosity and solicitude. The destruction of property, the paralysis of economic life, the mobilization of breadwinners, and the general displacement of population which followed the German invasion enormously increased destitution, and the number of persons dependent in greater or less degree on charitable aid rose ultimately to over seventy-five per cent of the population. It fell to the relief organization, therefore, not merely to organize and administer the revictualment of the entire Belgian population but to make special provision for that part of the population deprived of the means of self-support. In order to perform these complementary functions, the Commission and the Comité National very early set up two administrative departments: a Provisioning Department with the task(463) of providing food for the entire civil population and a Benevolent Department to secure the means for the care of the destitute. The administrative structure of the Commission is described later in this book(464) but a brief account of the relationship of these two departments is necessary for an understanding of the manner by which the care of the destitute was supported.

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1. Sources of Support

The Provisioning Department, with the funds placed in the Commission's hands, bought, transported, and delivered in Belgium, provisions which were sold through the internal organization to that part of the population able to buy them. The Provisioning Department became possessed, in this manner, of an accumulation of local paper currency(465) the greater part of which was immediately disbursed in the support of the destitute through the Benevolent Department.

Subventions to the Benevolent Department were of two general classifications according to the source from which they were derived, i.e., public charity and state aid. Public charity included the results of the world-wide campaign for gifts which has been described in the preceding chapter as well as the "profits" of the

Provisioning Department. These "profits" resulted in part from a marginal charge on sales(466) of goods to the well-to-do in Belgium as well as profits of the Commission on transactions(467) outside of Belgium and Northern France. Of quite a different origin but serving the same purpose were state aid subventions comprising the equivalent of sums turned over to the Commission by the Belgian Government for the purpose of meeting obligations of the absent Government to citizens and institutions with which it had been deprived of direct contact. These obligations included support of benevolent institutions, pensions, separation allowances, salaries of civil servants, etcetera. This constituted in reality an exchange operation with food the implement of exchange, but it was also an extremely important contribution to the handling of the problem of destitution, since it provided in part at least for certain categories of the population which had been deprived of the means of self-support. From all these sources the relief organization expended over \$558,000,000 in one way or another for the care of the destitute in Belgium.

As is shown later in this chapter, the administration of benevolence in Belgium was complicated because the extent of destitution steadily grew, and the degree of destitution of various groups increased, necessitating a frequent revision of the Benevolent Department's program.

In Northern France the administration was less complex. The occupied regions of France resembled a huge internment camp, where practically all economic activity and all movement of population were suspended and where measures of self-help such as were instituted in Belgium were out of the question. As is stated below the problem of relief was to provide a ration for every man, woman, and child, to insure a just distribution, and to employ a system of accounting by which at least some part of the funds advanced by the French Government as subsidies to the Commission might be recoverable by that Government after the war. Under the system of accounting set up, the Provisioning Department accepted the acknowledgment in terms of value of the French districts for the supplies imported. For this purpose prices were fixed periodically by the Commission sufficiently above the cost of the goods to create a reserve, safeguarding the people against loss in transportation and the Commission against fluctuations in the exchange. As this reserve accumulated, advances were made from time to time to the internal committees to meet special problems in the care of the destitute. This reserve, therefore, was the only source from which the Commission derived benevolent funds for Northern France,(468) since there was no general appeal for charitable contributions for this area. Unlike the system employed in Belgium, where the degree of dependency of beneficiaries was determined from day to day, in France rich and poor, partially and wholly dependent, were all provided with a ration by the Commission from the subsidies of the French Government. The obligation of the individual beneficiary to repay the Government according to his means was left for settlement after the war.

Although destitution was more general in Northern France than in Belgium (though it was never universal), the Commission's benevolent expenditures here because of this system were less, in relation to the total sums disbursed for general revictualment, than in Belgium. In the case of the latter approximately \$558,000,000 was expended for benevolence as compared with the total of nearly \$619,000,000 secured. In the case of France the corresponding figures were approximately \$55,000,000 and \$274,000,000. The total disbursements for benevolent purposes of one sort or another in both Belgium and Northern France during the Commission's operations were over \$615,000,000 as indicated in the following tabulation:

*I. Benevolent Account of
the Commission*

a) Public subscriptions(469) in cash and in kind	\$ 52,290,835.51
b) Surplus of the Provisioning Department	
1. Surplus on sales within Belgium and France and profits of the C.R.B. outside Belgium	\$111,704,000.95
2. Profits earned inside Belgium transferred to the C.R.B. by the C.N .	23,933,542.26
Total surplus of the Provisioning Department	135,637,543.21
Total Benevolent Account of the Commission	\$187,928,378.72

II. State Aid

Derived from government subsidies and dispensed in charity and financial and economic relief	427,308,768.75
Total Benevolent Expenditures	\$615,237,147.47

DIVISION OF BENEVOLENT EXPENDITURE BY COUNTRY

Belgium	\$558,386,857.67
Northern France	54,782,601.85
Northern Relief (Clothing)	2,067,687.95
	\$615,237,147.47

The organization necessary to meet the complex problems of destitution was the product of evolution from certain fundamental principles established by Hoover before the first imports were delivered.(470) Rather than attempt to illustrate with separate documents the step-by-step development of the system by which the care of the destitute was administered, it seems advisable to present extracts from the Commission's reports on benevolent operations written while the work was in full swing.

2. Care of the Destitute in Belgium. 1914-1917

DOCUMENT NO. 600

Extract

from report by PROFESSOR FRANK ANGELL(471) on the effect of the invasion on institutions of benevolence in Belgium

November 1916

After the wave of invasion in August 1914 had rolled over Belgium and the people had so far recovered as to be able to look around to see what was to be done and could be done, they found a most extraordinary and crushing number of demands for relief and assistance, both of a general and special nature, which called for instant action. All business and industries had ceased and all the ordinary avenues of benevolence and charity had been blocked or submerged. At Mons, for example, the charitable organizations were called on to provide for an overwhelming number of individuals without wages, resources, or hope of employment. The State Insane Asylum for Women had been burned, and the inmates were roaming over the arrondissement to be cared for as best could be done in private families. The large and well-equipped city hospital had been seized by the Germans, and the Belgian sick and wounded had to be transferred to some place or any place that might give

shelter. Not only in the Hainaut but in all the great industrial centers of Liège, Flanders, and Brabant the needs of the workmen thrown out of employment became crying; the usual channels for the supply and distribution of food were cut off and the necessitous part of the population was threatened with starvation. In the industrial city of Charleroi, with scanty municipal resources, fourteen hundred houses had been burned and the problem of sheltering the homeless was added to the tremendous task of providing for the unemployed. Visé, Dinant, and many other medium-sized towns had gone up in flames. Most of the villages in the agricultural portion of Luxembourg had their quota of burnt houses and barns, whilst throughout Belgium the number of buildings destroyed by incendiary flames ran into tens of thousands. Theaters and concert halls had closed; painters and sculptors were without patrons; teachers without pupils; lawyers and engineers without clients; doctors were overworked and unpaid; and, in general, classes of people peculiarly sensitive to hardship became destitute and dependent.

But beside this large number of the extraordinarily destitute of all ranks and conditions of men, there still remained the ordinary institutions of charity and benevolence of normal times---the orphanages, retreats, homes, hospitals, departments of charity, themselves overcrowded and choked by the flotsam and jetsam of the invasion and themselves calling for the succor and help which was their normal function to give. Under these circumstances there sprang into existence throughout Belgium, with extraordinary quickness all manner of self-appointed relief organizations to meet those needs which locally seemed the most pressing---committees for benefiting the unemployed, soldiers' families, and the necessitous in general; committees for furnishing milk for babes and food for nursing mothers; committees for providing temporary shelter, for supplying clothing, medical attendance, and medicines, and for caring for orphans of the war. Consequently, when the National Committee of Secours, representing all Belgium, came into existence it found a large number of committees, provincial, cantonal, communal, already in the field and the task of the relief organizations was to supplement some and suppress others and to reconstruct, standardize, and correlate all that it officially recognized.

Fig. 20 . LETTER, 14 AUGUST 1917, CARDINAL MERCIER TO HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 601

Extracts of Report,(472)

April 1917, by HOOVER on the distribution of benevolence in Belgium and in Northern France

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE INVASION

The invasion began on the 6th August 1914, and reached practically its present lines by the 15th October. It set in action three prime causes of increased destitution:

- a) The displacement of people due to the destruction of their homes.
- b) The loss of breadwinners through death or through military mobilization.
- c) The paralysis of industry and consequent unemployment.

There has been a considerable amount of home destruction throughout Belgium as the result of invasion and battle. This destruction has, proportionally, been greater in the smaller towns and villages, and the result has been that the consequent refugees have either overcrowded the houses of their immediate vicinity or migrated into the larger towns. The poorer members of this class are dependent almost wholly upon charity, not only for food but also for clothing and housing. It is difficult to estimate the number of such refugees, although the increase in population of the larger towns and the number of destroyed homes would indicate from 200,000 to 300,000.

The Belgian authorities at one time or another have mobilized probably 250,000 soldiers, and in addition considerable loss of civilian life has resulted from the invasion. Obviously many of these men had families relying on them which are now dependent upon charity.

The major source of destitution due to the war, however, arises under the third heading. Belgium, with its pre-war population of 8,000,000, comprised the most highly industrialized area in the world, and in peace times constituted a beehive of human activity.

Directly or indirectly, more than half the population is, in normal times, dependent on the conversion of raw material into manufactures for export abroad. The stagnation of industry induced by military occupation and the rigid blockade necessarily resulted in the total cessation of manufacturing dependent upon imports and exports. Furthermore, the manufactures for home consumption were diminished through the prevention of imports of raw material and, again, these interferences reacted on the purchasing power of the people and diminished the amount of employment in those enterprises in which raw material and manufactures are of local origin and consumption. A few statistics will emphasize the situation. The normal population of Belgium is 652 persons per square mile. The gross value of exports and imports per capita in 1912 was \$209. These figures may be compared with Germany, for example, with a population of 310 per square mile and exports and imports of \$77 per capita, or, again, with the United States ,

with a population of 31 per square mile and exports and imports per capita in 1913 of \$44. It is also of interest to note that the gross tonnage of imports (foodstuffs excluded) into Belgium for 1912 was nearly 27,000,000 tons, and the tonnage of exports was nearly 19,000,000 tons.

Initially, the railways were entirely taken over by the invading army for military use, and telegraphs, posts, etc., were suspended, the population being largely interdicted from movement. The railways are now partially open to commercial traffic, and more movement is allowed in the occupation zone. Nevertheless, the total cessation of import and export activities has brought the industrial clock practically to a stop, and has induced among the industrial population an extraordinary percentage of unemployment, and among the intermediate classes a gradual exhaustion of resources.

PRE-WAR BELGIAN BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS

In order to gain a clear understanding of the organization required to meet the conditions imposed by destitution arising out of the war, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the character of the normal Belgian institutions for dealing with pauperism in its various phases, because, in creating an organization to mitigate the present situation, it has been the policy to support existing institutions, and only to inject new ones in so far as they have been rendered necessary.

Unfortunately, the sharp political and religious divisions existing among the people before the war prevented that co-ordination, centralization, and control of institutions essential to effectiveness and economy. In developing the existing war-emergency organization such centralization has had to be imposed, embracing all elements of the community and devoid of political and religious control .

The pre-war institutions dealing with destitution may be divided into four classes:

1. State institutions
2. Religious and lay foundations
3. La Commission des Hospices
4. Les Bureaux de Bienfaisance

It should be noted that the number of institutions engaged in the care and support of the destitute, feeble-minded, orphans, and various forms of pauperism and vagabondage is larger in Belgium in proportion to the population than in any other country.

The most important institutions directly under the State are the two great labor colonies at Merxplas and Hoogstraeten. The colony at Merxplas is distinctly a

penal colony, while the one at Hoogstraeten is chiefly for old and infirm persons. In Belgium vagrancy is a penal offense and persons guilty of such offense are sent to one or other of these colonies, so that very little vagabondage exists in normal times. The State also supports, in some measure, through subventions, the Bureaux de Bienfaisance described later.

A great number of religious and lay foundations exist in Belgium for various conditions arising out of indigence. These have independent incomes from property and public benevolence and, furthermore, many of them undertake the care of orphans and the infirm on behalf of the Bureaux de Bienfaisance for stipulated payments per annum. Some idea may be gained of their importance by reference to the fact that there are six hundred such institutions engaged in the care of orphans alone.

La Commission des Hospices administers the established almshouses, dispensing what in England is known as "Indoor Relief"; these exist in approximately 330 communes. They are distinctly communal institutions and are financed from private charity, income from conferred property, communal subventions, and, in a minor degree, from the "Common Fund" referred to later on.

Les Bureaux de Bienfaisance exist in every one of the 2,700 communes into which Belgium is divided, and have the duty of providing for all poverty otherwise unrelieved. They are managed by a committee appointed by the communal council, are the recipients of public charity, and, in many cases, are possessed of property and incomes. If the revenue from these sources is insufficient, the deficiency is met from the exchequer of the commune concerned. The handling of individual cases of indigence or pauperism is extremely complicated. The bureaux may give direct assistance in cash or in kind, or may give subsidies in respect of special cases to any of the other institutions mentioned above, or they may enlist the assistance of such other institutions in their own activities. In general, these agencies form a catchall to deal with any cases not cared for by the other charitable and official foundations in the country.

In order to distribute the burden of the care of the blind, the deaf and dumb, the lunatics, etc., more fairly between the rich and poor communes, a "Common Fund" has been established in each province to which all the communes must contribute sums, varying according to their population and income, and to which the National Government adds a quarterly subvention.

Altogether these institutions comprise an extraordinary network of charitable effort covering the entire country and normally providing for the infinite variety of indigents to which all countries are subject. The total number of organizations in respect of all classes of institutional effort probably exceeds 4,000, caring for about 300,000 persons.

There are 2,770 communes and hameaux in the occupied portion of Belgium, having an average population of about 650 families each. Therefore, the number under each committee is not large. Furthermore, certain characteristics of Belgian social and economic life aid in determining the precise position of each inhabitant. Chief among these is fixture of residence. This condition has been made possible in Belgium by the enormous development of local or vicinal tramways interconnecting the towns and villages throughout the country with a fine network of narrow-gauge railroads operated at low rates of fare. In addition, the standard-gauge railroads give tickets to laborers at remarkably low rates, a commutation ticket over a distance of 20 kilometers good for six round trips a week costing 1.50 francs, or about one-fifth of a cent a mile. The outcome is that the workman, unable to find employment in his own town, seeks it in adjoining districts without giving up his local residence, to which he returns each night or week-end. Many of the coal miners in the vicinity of Charleroi come from various districts of Flanders, and about 40 per cent of the workmen living in Louvain find employment in places from three to twenty-five miles distant from that town. The local stability of the labor in Belgium therefore makes possible a detailed knowledge of individual circumstances that would be impossible with a constantly shifting working population.

The notable pre-war development of charitable institutions, both public and private, and the great numbers of co-operative associations of one kind or another, together with the highly developed communal organization in Belgium, have supplied means and personnel for meeting the present conditions to an extent that probably could not be realized by any other civilized people. The possible effect of all this charity in developing pauperism, even in normal times, or in sapping the spirit of independence, is a question aside from the intent of this report. The point to be emphasized here is that when this unparalleled increase in the number of unemployed and impoverished men and women and helpless children arose in Belgium, there was at hand an army of helpers versed in the organization of relief work and skilled in the economic distribution of alms.

RELIEF CLASSIFICATION OF THE POPULATION

From the relief point of view, the present population of about 7,400,000 may be divided into the following classes:

- a) The commercial, professional, and better-to-do classes generally, including that part of the community which derives support directly from them. Roughly estimated, this section comprises 2,000,000 persons.
- b) The agricultural class, estimated at 1,000,000 persons.
- c) Those whose breadwinners are at the front or have been lost during the various phases of the war, estimated at approximately 350,000 persons; also internal

refugees, probably 200,000, partially coming under this category and partially under *d*.

d) The industrial and semi-professional workers and that portion of the population in turn dependent upon them, estimated total roughly 3,500,000.

e) The normal pauper class comprising the infirm, orphans, etc., probably 300,000 persons.

The commercial, professional, and better-to-do classes generally have reserves of credit upon which they can, in the main, support themselves, given that food supplies are available for purchase. The problem of their relief, however, does not end at this point, because the local issues of paper currency are not convertible for the purchase of foodstuffs abroad, except in so far as they can be converted by a limited amount of permitted commercial exchange or, with the assistance of foreign governments, be interpreted into gold. As time goes on even this class shows signs of exhaustion and it has been necessary to evolve measures for its support in certain directions.

The agricultural class embraces about 1,000,000 people; these are in a state of greater economic security than any other class of the community, largely because the habit of the European peasant is to maintain himself directly out of the production of his fields. From the 1915 and 1916 harvests the intensive cultivation in Belgium resulted in the production of a surplus of foodstuffs beyond the requirements of the agricultural class and, as these foodstuffs have been saleable at considerably more than normal prices, this section of the population is probably in a better economic situation than before the war.

Those who have lost their breadwinners through mobilization and death might or might not have fallen into destitution had the breadwinner remained behind, since he might have been unable to find employment; but be that as it may, there can be no question about their total dependence on charity in the present situation.

As stated above, the industrial population provides the most difficult problems of destitution. This population falls into two classes, one including those without any resources whatever, and another somewhat smaller class composed of those who from time to time are able to contribute to their own support. A considerable number of manufacturing concerns, whose pre-war stocks of raw material escaped military requisition, were able for some time to give a measure of employment to their workmen. These stocks, however, are now long since exhausted. In February 1917 the occupying authorities took measures to close all establishments employing more than twelve men, save public utilities and a certain few exceptions. Industry in Belgium is therefore at a standstill.

There is, of course, some surviving activity in the country, through small commerce, maintenance of public officials, operation of tram lines and municipal services, the partial operation of coal mines, etc. During the planting and harvest seasons a certain amount of temporary work is afforded on farms. Many families also have small fields or garden plots, from which they contribute something to their upkeep, and many of the working population possessed accumulated savings, out of which they have been able to support themselves in diminishing measure.

Extent of destitution.---It will be appreciated that any exact census of "destitute" or "partially destitute" is wholly impossible. Were communications not under such complete restriction it might be possible to determine at a given day the number wholly dependent on the benevolent relief that particular day, and those partially dependent. The number would obviously be different the next day. Moreover, the number might be the same but the individuals different. An approximation, however, of the number who receive help in some form, directly or indirectly, from the Relief Organization can be made from the data presented in the following pages. To review the facts given:

Under the Communal Committees the number on the bread line, men, women, and children without work and dependent entirely on public charity because of industrial stagnation, is, approximately, 1,700,000. The families who are without their breadwinners owing to the war amount to about 350,000 individuals. Those unemployed receiving supplemental allowances amount to about 1,600,000. The apparent totals on this division are therefore about 3,650,000. There is, however, a considerable overlap for the supplemental allowances, which are more often than not given to those who are assisted at the canteens. On the other hand, some thousands of people are supported by work in the clothing establishments, and many others not otherwise in receipt of relief receive clothing and shelter. However, an approximate elimination for overlap indicates that at least 2,700,000 different individuals are being helped by the Communal Committees.

Under the Special Committees and established institutions the numbers not included above are approximately as follows. Children under special care total about 31,000. The number of pre-war orphans, blind, insane, infirm, etc., under the Bureaux de Bienfaisance and pre-war charity organization generally is probably 300,000. The officers' families, school teachers, artists, doctors, foreigners, laceworkers, etc., comprise approximately 160,000 individuals. The constantly increasing number of refugees arriving in Belgium from the North of France at this date has attained a total of 200,000. This division in all, therefore, covers approximately 700,000 persons not otherwise provided for.

Under the help given to the loan institutions, and through the operation of special remittances, a large number are saved from falling into actual destitution. The number thus assisted now averages about 600,000 persons. Altogether it seems that, on a conservative basis, the number of persons receiving help in some form

through the organization approximates nearly 4,000,000 individuals, or over 50 per cent of the entire population.

It will at once be realized that the efficient distribution of benevolence depends upon the thoroughly competent assessment of the economic position of every claimant to charity, and the adjustment of help to the minimum absolutely required to supplement his own resources. To accomplish this a large measure of local autonomy as to details is required, with local administrators of high character and ability who are familiar with individual needs, as well as a careful supervision of the local authorities by a superstructure of inspecting and accounting officials.

Every social worker will recognize that such discrimination is vitally necessary in order to prevent waste and the demoralization due to imposition and unnecessary idleness. The determination of actual needs calls for inquiries into the manner of life and circumstances of each applicant, almost inquisitorial in their intimacy, and demands the co-operation of a great number of people of local knowledge, skilled in treating the problem of unemployment and pauperism.

RELIEF ORGANIZATION FOR BENEVOLENCE

Distributing agencies.---In order to meet the various requirements of distribution two classes of agency have been created, and close co-operation established with a third:

- a) Communal Charity Committees
- b) Special charity committees
- c) Support of public services and state institutions.

Communal Charity Committees.---In developing the organization the first consideration has been to act through established institutions and only to inject new organisms when the old could not be applied to the conditions imposed by the present situation. Moreover, the fitting of necessary new organisms to the old has required a great deal of local autonomy, so that the details of procedure are by no means uniform in the various provinces and districts. The extension of war-charity organization beyond the old established institutions has been accomplished in the main by the creation of new local Charity Committees in each commune. These committees are not to be confounded with the constitutionally elected communal councils nor with the Bureau de Bienfaisance, but, like the Provisioning Committees, they are a new injection into the situation. They are non-partisan--- i.e., made up of equal representation from each of the political parties---Liberal, Clerical, and Socialist. They also contain representatives from the ranks of employers and employees. The secretary of the local Bureau de Bienfaisance is usually secretary of the new Charity Committee, which, in addition, contains members of the communal council, often the burgomaster, and representatives of the various trades. The committees, therefore, represent a considerable collection of

information applicable in determining the probable condition of the petitioners for relief and assistance. The control and direction of these committees is secured through the implements of subvention and inspection.

The Communal Charity Committees are the keystone of the charitable distribution. While certain departmental controls have been set up by the central organization and a good many regulations laid down, when all is said and done it is the 2,770 communal committees who distribute about 75 per cent of the charity and on whom rests the primal responsibility of maintaining the ideals of the Relief Organization and preserving it free from the taint of corruption or incompetence. Blemishes of this kind, however, have been of extraordinary rarity; on the contrary, the self-denial with which all classes in Belgium have devoted themselves to the work with increasing efficiency ever since its initiation merits a tribute greater than words can convey.

The controlling factor in the whole vast scheme of relief is the "state of need" of the individual, and it is only by intimate investigation and local knowledge that this can be determined. In the correctness of this determination lies the organization's security against leakage and wastage, whether through carelessness or ignorance or fraud, whether deliberate or induced by necessity. Moreover, it is a determination calling for the greatest judgment, tact, and sympathy on the part of the committees. No excuse is needed for setting out in some detail the considerations and precautions that enter into these inquiries, and for this purpose a description of the procedure in such a representative commune as that of Mons is given. When an applicant presents himself at the office of the Communal Charity Committee to ask for assistance, he is required to have with him all the documents in his possession bearing on his civic status and means of subsistence (*carte d'identité*, age, residence, photograph, etc.), certificates of pension (old age, sickness, and accident), certificates of assistance from the Bureau de Bienfaisance, a list of his holdings of property such as his house, land, calves, heifers, pigs, chickens, etc., together (if married) with his marriage certificate and the names and ages of his wife and children (if any). These documents are checked by records in possession of the communal committee, consisting of employers' lists of workmen (showing period of employment and wages), lists of benevolent societies, particularly the Bureaux de Bienfaisance, pension lists, and other records of the commune, including those of the police. The committee at Mons has the assistance of a force of twenty-six citizens forming a local Commission de Surveillance, the greater part of which is representative of the different trades and employers. When the committee desires more information as to an applicant than is given by the recorded documents, a member of this commission is sent specially to report. This particular commission, through its membership, reports according to trades and industries. On the other hand, in the neighboring town of Jemappes the commission reports by districts. Above this "Commission de Surveillance" comes a controller (paid 3 to 4 francs a day) appointed by the Communal Charity Committee and reporting directly to it. He takes up difficult cases and superintends the work of the

volunteer members. The communal committee itself forms a sort of interlocking directorate. The secretary at Mons, for instance, is also secretary of the local Bureau de Bienfaisance and, as such, is the man in the community best acquainted with the class from which the unemployed come. One of the members is also a member of the regular communal council, well acquainted with the communal records, and he assists in checking up the applicants' financial status. Above the communal committee and its inspectors comes a hierarchy of controllers representing the superior committees arrondissemental, provincial, Comité National, and the Commission for Relief in Belgium---who travel through the commune checking up the work of subordinate committees.

Up till September last the assistance was never in cash, except where a family had lost its breadwinner by the war, but always in the form of "bons" (orders good for certain amounts of merchandise). The "bons" could be presented either at the C.R.B. food-stores or at the Communal Co-operative stores (where native foodstuffs are sold). In some villages and towns the "bons" were accepted by the trade and became current money within the town. Namur Province, to avoid this monetary confusion and as a result of experience, in place of the "bons" adopted a book in which were entered all grants of assistance. To further simplify the system, however, and to obviate the necessity of accounting for "bons" the Comité National decided, September 1st, 1916, to allow the charity payments in the form of cash.

The communal committees do not receive their entire resources from the central organization, particularly in the matters of general assistance, clothing, and shelter, the aim of the central organization being to supplement the resources of local charity only so far as is absolutely necessary, just as the communal committees supplement the resources of the individual.

Special charity committees.---In addition to the Communal Charity Committees a wide class of special committees devoted to the special problems created by war conditions has been formed. These special committees may or may not work in co-operation with the communal committees, or with the pre-war institutions, as the need may be.

They are given subventions from the central administration to supplement other resources obtained by direct public benevolence, or, in some cases, by remunerative production. They expend their assistance either directly or through the agency of special subcommittees, the communal committees, or the pre-war benevolent institutions.

Support of public services and special institutions.---Under this head are grouped a widely extended series of operations in the nature of loans which can be liquidated after the war, but which in the present emergency have none the less a benevolent aspect.

DIVISION OF RELIEF MEASURES BETWEEN PUBLIC CHARITY AND GOVERNMENTAL SUBSIDY

At the outset it was hoped that the need for relief would continue for only a few months. The period, however, has extended beyond all expectations, and, in consequence, three special conditions have developed. First, the amount of destitution has increased, and the rise in the prices of foodstuffs and transport has further augmented its volume. Second, generous as the world's charity has been, the required measure of relief could not be continued without substantial regular assistance of a volume only to be compassed by governmental subvention. Third, the problem of converting receipts from food sales into external credit outran the available commercial exchange. It was therefore agreed in February, 1915, that the British and French Governments would advance monthly in the form of a loan £500,000 and 12,500,000 francs respectively to the Belgian Government at Havre for the service of the Commission for Relief in Belgium. These advances have been made regularly through 1915 and 1916. In the early part of 1917 they were slightly increased to cover larger expenditures made by the Commission. Beginning 1st June the advances to the Belgian Government are to be made by the United States.

As a result of the spread of destitution, the rapid extension of special relief measures and the increasing preponderance of governmental subsidies in the Commission's income, it has been necessary to establish a sharp division between those measures undertaken with public subscriptions and those undertaken with government assistance. The soup kitchen, free bread tickets, feeding of children, clothing and shelter for the destitute and homeless, were the instinctive and first-applied measures of relief. These were established with the public gifts and have been continued on this basis throughout the period covered by this report. The new measures, many of them in the nature of state service which affords economic and financial rather than benevolent relief, have been carried out with government subsidies.

The various committees set up to execute detailed relief may, therefore, receive resources from two fundamentally different funds.

Services maintained by public charity.---The following represent the services initiated or maintained in the past by public charity from abroad:

- a) Public Provisioning (the bread lines, canteens, etc.), administered by the Communal Committees.
- b) Clothing of the destitute-distribution effected through the Communal Committees.
- c) Provision of temporary shelters-administered through the Communal Committees.

d) Special Committees as follows:

Assistance to Children
Assistance to Lace-Workers
Assistance to Refugees
Assistance to Foreigners
Assistance to Artists
Assistance to Doctors and Pharmacists
Restoration of Churches
Assistance to Destitute Young Mothers
Assistance to Belgian Prisoners of War
Assistance to War Cripples
Assistance to Dispossessed
Assistance to Antwerp Workrooms
League for Prevention of Tuberculosis
Restoration of Churches
Cardinal Mercier's Clergymen's Fund
And some twenty others

State aid.---The services maintained by government subsidy are:

- a) Allowance to families whose breadwinners have been lost owing to the war
- b) Supplementary allowances to the destitute
- c) Advances to Bureau of families of officers and non-commissioned officers
- d) Advances to the Société coopérative d'Advances et de Prêts (Loan Society)
- e) Assistance to the Communal via the Provincial Governments
- f) Advances to the Caisse d'Epargne (Savings Bank)
- g) Advances to the Auxiliaire des Sociétés d'Habitations ouvrières (Building and Loan Societies)
- h) Advances to the Bureau de Bienfaisance
- i) Advances to the Educational Institutions
- j) Assistance (in part) for children and for war orphans

PUBLIC CHARITY DISTRIBUTION THROUGH COMMUNAL CHARITY
COMMITTEES

Public provisioning and general assistance ("Bread Line Division")---This comprehensive branch of charity distribution is the outcome of the initial emergency effort made at the inception of relief organizations. It now consists, in the main, of the support given the canteen-system of bread and soup distribution. Bread and soup are alone insufficient to maintain life over a prolonged period and must be supplemented by other articles, so that other resources are presupposed. From time to time, however, with the growth of destitution, special classes or divisions of the population have had to be differentiated from the general mass and provided with supplemental support. Some departments even render their clientele independent of the bread line, but most of them simply supplement it. The bread line therefore is, as a rule, necessary as a foundation, even for the differentiated groups: there is always a class to be fed that does not fall within such special provisions and that has to be cared for in respect of its extra necessities by the communal committees. The principal expenditure under this heading, however, arises out of the support of the public canteens now established in all congested areas. These enterprises were started at the outbreak of war, partially by the communes and municipalities themselves and partially by private effort. They have been added to in numbers by the Communal Charity Committees, all being now, to some extent, financially assisted through this division.

The supplies for the canteens comprise in part overseas imports of the Commission for Relief in Belgium purchased from the Communal Provisioning Committees, and in part native supplies purchased in the open market, the canteen managers standing in relation to the Provisioning Department precisely as would any other customer. The canteens must not be confused with the stores conducted by the Communal Provisioning Committees, as they are absolutely separate establishments. The former provide the method of furnishing public meals for the more needy class of the population. The latter furnish food (in an unprepared state) to all classes, according to their relative necessity.

All canteen relief is issued upon tickets distributed by the Communal Charity Committees. The cost of these tickets is borne generally in one of the two following ways: (a) by the recipient out of his personal resources, or (b) by the recipient out of the charity allowance made to him in part by the Committee, in part by the communal authorities.

The participation of the communal authorities in the cost of the ration is the essential condition to which the Committee subordinates its intervention. This principle has been adopted with the object of avoiding an unnecessary increase in the number of rations and of interesting the communes in the observance of the conditions imposed by the central organization. In Brussels, for instance, the various communes of the Agglomération are divided into a number of Provisioning Committees, each having its canteen. At the head of each canteen area is the Communal Committee, or a subcommittee drawn from the inhabitants of the quarter. These committees are seconded in their task by devoted women who attend

to the distribution of rations with admirable tact and solicitude. Nearly 400,000 rations are distributed daily in the Agglomération. The ration consists of a pint of soup and the standard ration of 330 grammes of brown whole wheat bread. In addition, a second issue of soup may be served at night if the organization of the canteen permits. When this second issue of soup is not provided there is (or at least was until the recent shortage of imported foodstuffs in Belgium)([473](#)) an equivalent distribution of foodstuffs which can be prepared at home, such as rice, peas, beans, bacon, and lard, or of tickets which can be issued against the foodstuffs procurable from the tradespeople of the commune, or the warehouses of the Communal Provisioning Committee.

The average cost of the soup at the canteens throughout Belgium is 20 centimes the quart, or 10 centimes for the regular pint ration. In those places where the daily bread ration is served at the same time as the soup, the former costs an additional 15 centimes, making a total of 25 centimes per day. Under the present arrangement the communal authorities in most Belgian towns and villages do not intervene directly in making their part of the payment for the soup furnished the needy population. Their financial help is more often given as a subsidy to the Communal Charity Committee, which in turn, after selecting those worthy of assistance, distributes the soup tickets.

The feeding of the children in Belgium is a great special work aside from that of the "general canteens," and one of equal importance. Children's canteens are now established universally throughout the country. This particular subject will be dealt with more fully a little farther on.

In some centers "economic" restaurants have been established by the communal committees or by benevolent groups for the middle classes of straitened means. Good meals are served at from 15 to 25 centimes, a portion of the operating cost being borne by the communal authorities or the communal committees and some initial expense directly by the central organization.

The funds allotted to this department are also used to supplement the bread line ration where other funds do not intervene or are insufficient; for instance, where unemployed casual laborers, seamstresses, charwomen, clerks, messengers, etc., are excluded from the section devoted to skilled unemployed and must have supplemental income if they are wholly destitute of resources.

The original function of the canteens was to supply a meager ration of bread and soup, supplemental to the remaining individual resources. With the lapse of time four conditions developed, by reason of which the canteen system required reinforcement: (a) the excessive growth of the number of destitute; (b) the complete exhaustion of all resources of a large proportion of the necessitous, owing to long unemployment, especially in the skilled trades; (c) the decreasing local resources of the communal committees; (d) the inadequacy of the canteen food to support life

properly. To meet the growing exhaustion of individual resources, various articles were gradually added to the canteen supplies, such as potatoes, coffee, soup, lard, peas, beans, rice, etc. This expansion of necessary commodities and of numbers dependent threatened to disorganize the canteen system by overwork and, furthermore, to displace much small commerce which it was highly desirable to preserve. Potatoes, salt, sugar, soap, fuel, etc., being, in the main, drawn from the country itself, their distribution by the canteens not only entailed an uncalled-for overtaxing of their abilities but also a dislocation of economic machinery. In consequence, other branches of relief were developed to relieve pressure upon the soup-kitchens and to provide supplemental resources to certain classes. The number of people served at the canteens during 1916, therefore, remained about stationary, and the "Soupes" underwent no further development in this period. The extremely difficult winter of 1916-17 and the past spring, however, have given an enormous impetus to the "Soupes." During a pinch such as Belgium has suffered since the declaration of the German blockade, the C.R.B. and Comité National in Belgium wished to use their limited food stocks in giving the maximum aid to the poor. This was done in cutting down the food rations of the generality of the population to a very low point, so as to conserve a large part of the food stocks for the canteens. In order to avail themselves of this benefit, over 2,000,000 people were taking their daily soup ration in April 1917. The "Soupe Populaire" has well proved its utility, particularly in this last critical period, as an inestimable boon to the industrial and heavily populated regions, such as Liège, Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi, and Mons, where upward of 35 per cent of the inhabitants go to the canteens.

Theory of the "People's Canteen."---The "Soupe Populaire" as a means of relief for the poor has shown itself such an efficient institution that it will be of value to take a passing glance at the objects which the Commission and the Comité National have had in mind in favoring its promotion. In a country where the amount of foodstuff, native and imported, is fixed, and where these foodstuffs are not sufficient comfortably to feed the entire population, the poor are bound to suffer from the economic result. The principle is this: the wealthier class by their demand force food prices to a point outside the reach of the man of limited means. It is extremely difficult (and in the case of Belgium under German rule, impossible) to lay hands on all foodstuffs within the country, and report on these at fixed prices to all inhabitants on the same basis. The Government can control, however, the employment of imported foods in such a way as specially to help the poor who cannot buy their share of high-priced native food products. This is what the Commission, with its imported food monopoly, has done in Belgium.

The great problem which arises in making this distinction between the needy and the well off is not easy of solution. There are many shades of need between the two extremes. Furthermore, to examine individually the status of every person in a country of 7,000,000, and to accord the same relative treatment throughout the country, is practically impossible. The "Soupe Populaire" has solved this question in automatically separating the population into two great divisions, those who do

and do not go to the canteens. The farmer, the man of means, the town man with a small garden; in fact, all those who still have some resources or provision, do not go to the "Soupes." It is the poor man, the laborer, and oftentimes the man of the middle class whose economies have been exhausted by the long drain of the war, who frequent the canteen.

In the Province of Hainaut, for instance, the first division includes 700,000 people, the second 400,000, who take home their daily cooked rations from the canteens. The Provincial Committee therefore focuses its aid as far as possible on the needy 400,000. This division benefits not only in receiving its pint of soup each day at the canteen, but the fact that its members indicate their need in being obliged to go to the canteen has led the Committee to accord these people certain supplementary rations of uncooked food. In April 1917, for example, those of the first division received the general monthly ration of 400 grams of rice, peas, and beans, and 400 grams of bacon and lard. Those of the second division received: (1) the general ration of 400 grams of rice, peas, beans, and 400 grams of lard and bacon; (2) a special supplementary ration of the same size; and (3) the 1,200 grams of peas, beans, rice, and 400 grams of bacon and lard used in preparing the soup during the course of a month.

Those of the second division, therefore, received five times as much in rice, peas, beans, and three times as much in bacon and lard as the first division. Bread, which is entirely controlled by the Relief Commission and which is lacking to all alike, is rationed equally to everyone. In certain places, as at Brussels, however, a small supplement taken at the expense of the mass of the population is allowed for those who go to the canteens.

Last of all, the Commission, foreseeing the difficult situation of Belgium, whose native resources of foodstuffs were fast approaching exhaustion, planned to put into effect a scale of very substantial supplementary uncooked rations (rice, peas, beans, herrings, coffee, bacon, lard) for the clientele of the canteens. The system was just under way when the German blockade was declared, and in order to conserve stocks within the country it unfortunately had to be abandoned in large part. These rations were to have been forwarded free to the poor, or against a light payment to those who had some small resources, the losses thus incurred to be borne by the Commission's Provisioning Department, fortified by subsidies from the Belgian Government. The expenditure in this division up to 31st October 1915, was \$24,552,426.53.

Clothing department.---Obviously the working and lower classes possess in no community much reserve of clothing, and the suspension of income must, sooner or later, reduce them to the position of being underclad and their health being thereby seriously endangered. Moreover, newborn babies and young children require a start in life's affairs and frequent renewals. A central clothing establishment was therefore set up in Brussels at the initiation of relief measures, and similar, though

less extensive, establishments have been created in the leading provincial centers, and all the clothing from these is issued free of charge. The sources of clothing to the central establishment have been of four orders:

1. Local gifts from individuals and institutions throughout Belgium
2. Gifts in kind, from abroad, either made clothing or materials
3. Purchase of local material and its manufacture on behalf of the central establishment
4. Purchase and importation of cloth and material abroad, which is made up into garments by the workshops in Belgium

Belgium in normal times imports the great bulk of its textile materials, and as there have been no imports since the invasion, with the lapse of time the supplies obtainable from the first two sources have gradually diminished until the establishment has become practically entirely dependent upon gifts from abroad or purchases by the Commission for Relief in Belgium. The great importance of the operations conducted by the central establishment may be appreciated by the fact that to the end of January 1917, a total of 9,123,874 garments had been distributed.⁽⁴⁷⁴⁾ The made-up new clothing was sent directly to the central warehouse for classification. All secondhand clothing is sent to a repairs department, where the articles are disinfected, overhauled, washed, remade, and generally placed in a serviceable condition. This department employs a large number of workpeople at a sufficient wage to enable them to live. The new material is collected in a central workroom where garments are sent and assembled in packages containing all the necessary adjuncts for making up, and these packages are delivered to sewing women throughout the cities, payment for their labor being made against return of completed articles. Furthermore, considerable quantities of material have been handed for completion to various mutual trade associations in order that skilled workpeople, i.e., tailors, boot- and hat-makers, etc., could be given controlled employment, which would provide them with subsistence. Altogether an average of upward of 20,000 people are employed by the central establishment in Brussels alone. Similar establishments, on a smaller scale, exist in certain other large cities, and are, in the main, supported by local charity and provisioning committees, but receive some cash help from the central organization. Moreover, material and clothing are supplied to them by the central establishment. Distribution of all clothing is carried out through the communal committees, these committees being required to send to the central establishment (through their provincial committees) an indent showing the precise garments needed and the name and condition of the individual for whom they are intended. The clothing is then selected in the central warehouse, made into special packages, and dispatched to the commune concerned. This arrangement has avoided the necessity of carrying any clothing stocks in the communes, and has been found efficacious and

economical. One result is that it is possible for the Central Clothing Establishment to state exactly the individual to whom any garment passing through the hands of the central establishment has been delivered.

One branch of peculiar solicitude has been the provision for newborn babies. For this purpose special packages are prepared containing the entire equipment for the first year of the new arrival's life, and every destitute mother in Belgium is entitled to this service. The children generally are the objects of solicitous attention, for their power of resistance if underclad is much below that of adults.

The total expenditure of the central establishment to 31st March 1917, was \$9,625,431.21. This does not, of course, include the value of all the clothing distributed to the destitute throughout Belgium, since it covers only the operations of the Central Clothing Establishment. The large cities and towns in Belgium all contain their own workrooms, and it is probable that it will be found, when time can be applied to the study of the matter, that the operations of these subsidiary establishments have also been on a very considerable scale.

Temporary shelter.---The widespread home destruction during the invasion produced a large body of homeless classes, the poorer members of which, owing to the economic stagnation, have been unable to make any effort toward home restoration. The result has been that considerable numbers were initially forced into open fields or cow-sheds, or overcrowded in the remainder of the undestroyed villages or the larger centers. Therefore, one of the earliest activities of the Communal Charity Committees in those localities where destruction has been considerable was the provision of some temporary shelter. The communal committees, as usual, have been allowed a great deal of autonomy in the methods by which they accomplish the end. In certain provinces the committees have supplied tarred felt, glass, and other temporary building materials, have stimulated the repair of buildings the ruins of which could be utilized with the least construction, etc. Advances in the shape of loans have been made to householders with which to engage labor and, in certain districts, rows of barracks, etc., have been erected. Subventions made from the Relief Organization have amounted to \$539,419.30 although as in other features of relief this does not represent the total expenditure, but only the addition of the Relief Organization to the funds recruited from all sources by the communal, regional, or provincial committees or local municipal authorities, it being at present impossible to determine the grand totals expended.

PUBLIC CHARITY DISTRIBUTION THROUGH SPECIAL COMMITTEES(475)

As relief necessities have developed, it has been found of crucial importance not only that the established pre-war institutions be supported but also that special organizations be created to deal with specific problems. Many organizations have

sprung up through individual and mutual effort among the Belgians since the outbreak of war, and many have been initiated by the central administration, all intent upon the solution of particular and special difficulties that have arisen. As before stated, it has been the policy of the central administration at all times to support all worthy, well-conducted efforts of the kind, and subventions have been used as a means to maintain efficient administration and prevent overlapping of their manifold activities. There is no particular uniformity of organization or method in these special arrangements. Some of the committees have been set up simply for the purpose of securing effective co-ordination among already existing organizations in a position to deal with the problems arising. Others have been set up directly to effect the object aimed at; for instance, the financial relief of special classes and professions, as a consequence of which the individuals concerned have been considerably removed from direct dependence on the communal and other distribution agencies. The problem in Belgium is the practical one of maintaining the population in life and health during a sustained emergency. This can be accomplished only by utilizing, in large measure, the volunteer services of thousands of self-denying citizens, and in such circumstances rigid systematization and exacting discipline is not permissible. All the special committees recruit support from public benevolence in Belgium, and practically all have some income outside the subventions of the Relief Organization. Some committees have independent income from foreign sources, although specialized appeals abroad have been strongly discouraged by the Commission as tending to confuse and minimize its more vitally important campaign of balanced and orderly solicitation as well as to interfere with its authoritative position in Belgium. The following paragraphs treat of the principal special committees and pre-war institutions which have received subventions from public subscriptions.

Children.---From the start, the children have been the object of universal solicitude and have received care and sustenance through a multitude of organizations, embracing not only the communal and special committees of the Relief Organization, but also the many already established children's institutions of the country. In order better to co-ordinate all effort and to insure that the entire field would be effectually covered, a special committee was organized in February 1915, devoted to child problems exclusively, under the title of "Aide et Protection Aux Œuvres de l'Enfance." The object of this section is not so much to intervene directly in special case as to control, stimulate, and assist the multitude of existing institutions organized in Belgium on behalf of the children. In July 1916, the feeding of children was placed in the hands of another committee.

Belgium has approximately 2,250,000 children under 16 years of age, of whom, in round numbers, 600,000 belong to poor families. In normal times the majority of these children are maintained by their parents, although even then a considerable proportion are dependent upon charity. As a result of the war, the proportion of children dependent upon charity has, directly or indirectly, greatly increased.

There are, throughout the whole of Belgium, more than 600 orphanages, caring for from 50 to 400 charges each, or a total of over 135,000 children, even in normal times. Due directly to war causes, some 11,000 additional orphans have been brought into being, and through family disorganization a further 20,000 absolutely homeless children have been turned adrift. There are thus not only the prewar orphans to be cared for, but also a very serious accretion of war orphans to be dealt with.

The Belgians have felt strongly not only that these children were their own particular charge, but that they should be preserved to Belgium; therefore they have consistently discouraged all suggestions to take them abroad, no matter how tender and attractive have been the many proposals made.

The pre-war public institutions, supported in normal times by subsidies from public authorities, by gifts and by revenue from charitable foundations, have found themselves with reduced incomes in face of much enlarged demands, and have, needless to say, received most sympathetic help from the Relief Organization. But since the pre-war institutions were overtaxed, the orphans and homeless children due to war causes have called for special care, and it has been necessary to make special provisions in their behalf. The reduction or total loss of income among the poorer social strata has borne hardly upon the children, and, therefore, measures have had to be taken to guarantee proper sustenance and care for many children still in charge of their parents.

Thus the assistance to children has taken two principal directions:

- a) The direct feeding of the children of the poor through special canteens under special committees, through arrangements made by the communal committees, or through the schools, supplemented generally by medical superintendence, advice to mothers, etc.
- b) The support of institutions for orphans and the homeless.

At the outbreak of the war several institutions were already in the field, including "Les Petites Abeilles," "Goutte de Lait," "Abri Maternel," "Institut pour Consultations aux Nourrissons," and others. All have expanded their efforts to meet new emergencies. The following three institutions are the main agencies for the care and relief of children:

1. The Children's Canteen, known as the "Soupe Scolaire."
2. Canteens for weakly children ("Enfants Débiles").
3. Baby Canteens ("Goutte de Lait") for the infants of the poor.

The school-children's canteen (*Soupe Scolaire*) is organized throughout the country for boys and girls from three to fourteen. Practically every school in Belgium is now associated with a children's canteen, the school buildings themselves often being used as the serving stations. The children (in contrast to the method of the "*Soupe Scolaire*," where the soup is taken home) eat their meal at the canteen. The diet is more substantial generally than that of the *Soupe Scolaire*, consisting of soup with a slice of bread, often followed by rice, potatoes, or some other vegetable dish. Inasmuch as children can benefit both from General and School Canteens, it will be seen that sound measures have been taken for the protection of juvenile health. At the present time half a million children attend the School Canteens. The expense of the meal given is borne in part by the central organization of the *Comité National* and partly by local subscription. The former allows a subsidy of eight centimes per ration, provided that at least four centimes is raised locally. The cost of the children's meal runs about 20 centimes, and is furnished entirely free to all the children of the poor.

For weakly children (*enfants débiles*) special canteens have been established. Here a nourishing and general diet consisting of such native rarities as meat, eggs, and milk is provided.

Infants under three years are taken care of by the Local Committee of the "*Goutte de Lait*" ("*Drop of Milk*"), which exists in practically every important town and village. Babies of poor mothers are furnished with fresh, pure milk daily free of charge. In these canteens parents are required to bring their children for periodical medical inspection, in order that the food may be prepared suitable to the different stages of the babies' progress. This organization, one of the most useful and important in Belgium, receives heavy subsidies from the *Comité National*. With the "*Goutte de Lait*" is also associated the work of aiding mothers without means. Pregnant mothers and those nursing babies are the object of special attention, and receive without charge a wholesome, sustaining food diet.

Of all the work carried on in Belgium, that for the children is perhaps the most interesting. If any one of the thousands of donors throughout the world who so generously gave to the special fund last year for School Canteens could have had the opportunity to take a glance at one of the canteens in operation, he would have known his gift many times requited. On the closing of school at 4 o'clock, the small boys and girls form in line and march to the nearest canteen (as in one of the six canteens at Tournai, for instance). In one end of the room the 200 little girls take their place at long tables; an equal number of boys jubilantly make a rush for their places at the other end. Each table is decked with an American flag. The flags of the Allies cover the walls of the room. In one corner two industrious, good-natured cooks are stirring immense cauldrons of soup and rice, each holding 400 quarts, or enough for two shifts of children of 400 each. Young lady volunteers (there are thousands of them engaged in every sort of charitable work in Belgium), gowned in white, at a given signal, when the children are all ready, start busily serving the

soup. There is no limit placed on the quantity---one, two, or three bowls, according to the appetite of the partaker, as this in many cases is the only "square meal" the children have during the day. Then follows the rice, and exceptionally on this one day, there is brown sugar to go with it. From the welcome shout that goes up, it is evident that sugar in Belgium, as elsewhere, is a much appreciated rarity. At the end of half an hour, 400 little girls and boys troop out and go to their own homes, where in many cases the kitchen larder is practically empty. A twopence or four cents given by some thoughtful person in England or America, however, has provided, for all, the meal which will keep them strong and safeguard their health in supplementing the scant home diet.

The war orphans and the children rendered homeless through family disorganization consequent on the war have been provided for in a multitude of ways. Aside from direct subsidies to established orphanages and indirect aid to orphans through the Bureaux de Bienfaisance, the Communal Charity Committees have made allowances to families which take in and provide for such children, the established orphanages have been assisted to extend the number of their charges, etc., until the war orphans and other homeless children have been temporarily settled in some manner. Clothing has had to be provided for the newly-born and for the destitute, and for this purpose special arrangements, already mentioned, exist in the Central Clothing Establishment.

Up to the 31st March, 1917, the total subsidies of the organizations engaged in the relief and feeding of children were \$2,541,183.59. This represents but a tithe of the total expenditure on children, for not only do other branches of the Commission care for children, but even their subsidies do not include the very large expenditure through the various agencies of this nature with which this general committee co-operates. Altogether, the work of the Belgian people on behalf of the children is so notable as to provide constant stimulation to the whole Relief Organization.

The Section Agricole.---So great was the pressure upon the provincial provisioning committees in distributing the necessities of life to the population, that there was danger, during the early months of the work, that the provision of fodder for all forms of livestock would be neglected, which would result not only in immediate suffering to the beasts themselves, but would ultimately jeopardize an important source of food for the people. There was therefore organized an agricultural section, composed of agricultural representatives and specialists from the various sections of the country, whose duty it was to control and distribute the large quantities of imported maize and its by-products to the farming population and owners of horses in the cities. As the provincial committees became organized, they took over this function from the Section Agricole, which, however, continued to advise the Relief Organization in all agricultural matters, and formed the nucleus of the Special Crop Committee when the central organization took over the native harvests of cereals in 1915, as also in 1916.

Up to the 31st March, 1917, there had been allotted to this section \$333,198.81, chiefly for the purchase of seed and fodder for destitute peasants and for the reconstruction of farms and villages.

Lace-workers.---The economic paralysis following invasion was bound to hurt first the industries of luxury, and its disastrous effects made themselves soonest felt in the places where these industries constitute the principal activity, as in the lace-making districts.

This industry was taken in hand by two principal committees of Belgian women, the Union Patriotique des Femmes Belges and the Comité de la Dentelle, which set to work to organize the distribution of work to lace-makers. The Comité de la Dentelle especially looks after "real" lace, while the Union Patriotique des Femmes Belges takes care of "lacet" and imitation work. This industry, in that it requires a minimum of raw materials (which have been imported by the Commission for Relief in Belgium), lends itself to a system of deferred self-support, in accordance with which the lace committees, with the assistance of the Relief Organization, have arranged systematic advances to the lace-workers against their production.

Some lace has been exported, but in the main it is held for realization after the war; therefore, although the support of the workers requires a considerable present investment, it should be largely recoverable. The funds which otherwise would have been required to support these workers in unemployment are thus diverted to this end and on much the same allowances. By the extension of this system some 40,000 lace-workers, who formerly figured in the lists of unemployed, have been made self-supporting, and upon realization of the lace some further remuneration to the workers may be available.

Subcommittees have been constituted in the following lace centers: --- Alost, Antwerp, Audernarde, Beernem, Bruges, Courtrai, Eecloo, Gand, Herzele, Grammont, Lokeren, Louvain, Malines, Marche, Namur, Ninove, Saint-Nicolas, Sotteghem, Termonde, Thielt, and Turnhout. These subcommittees have the duty of grouping under their direction the lace-workers over sixteen years of age--- unemployed and necessitous---living in their area, and of serving as intermediaries between the factories and the workwomen to see that the latter receive at least each week the minimum allocation of three francs in exchange for thirty hours of work.

The control committees are comprised of persons perfectly acquainted with the lace industry, and among their functions is the control of patterns manufactured. Thus, while accomplishing a work of unification, the committees contribute to the amelioration of the national art of lace-making by supervising the choice of patterns and the perfection of the execution. The Comité de la Dentelle and the Union Patriotique des Femmes Belges also serve as central committees for the reception of lace and for perfecting the technical part of the organization.

Assistance has also been granted to enable the reopening of lace schools in a number of localities throughout Flanders and the province of Brabant. The laces manufactured in the apprentice schools remain the property of the Relief Organization. They represent a commercial value greater than the salaries paid.

Much lace has been exported by the Commission for Relief in Belgium. Consignments for sale, representing a value of over 3,000,000 francs, have been made up to the 31st March, 1917, to England and the United States.

The sum placed at the disposal of the lace committees up to the 31st March, 1917, less realization on sales was \$322,692.59.

Assistance to refugees.---The displacement of population resulting from invasion created a large number of internal refugees. Generally speaking, these persons have now settled down in one place or another or have fallen under various branches of relief. At first they were largely cared for by the communal authorities and the relief, canteens, but in order to relieve the overtaxed resources of these organizations and to obtain a more permanent solution the above committee was formed. It has for its chief objects: (a) to determine the best solution for special refugee problems; (b) to give temporary assistance when necessary; (c) to secure local shelter for those not provided for otherwise.

The refugees are mainly cared for out of other funds, the function of the committee being to secure their proper classification and substantiate their right to such funds. A number of refugees have been settled in various parts of the country and twenty general shelters have been erected. Some of these establishments are for special purposes, such as maternity homes.

The total subventions of the Relief Organization to this committee amount to \$480,777.44.

Refugees from Northern France.---In addition to the internal refugees mentioned above (persons obliged to go in search of shelter from one part of Belgium to another), the Commission has had to face a new problem this spring in the handling of French refugees. The German retreat in March caused the evacuation of great numbers (125,000 up to May 1st) of civilians from France into Belgium. The refugees are quartered by the Belgians in their homes, and receive their food from the local C.R.B. Provisioning Store. Unfortunately, the German authorities have placed them in large part in industrial regions, such as Charleroi and Mons, where native products of the soil are very rare. This has not only aggravated the difficult situation of the poorer Belgians in forcing up the price of native foodstuffs, but has also rendered more complicated the problem of relieving the French.

The refugees from France arrived with little notice. During the first weeks, and pending a definite arrangement, the Belgian Committees were furnished free food

to give the French. All Belgian institutions, such as the canteens, medical assistance, etc., have been extended to them. An arrangement has now been concluded whereby the refugees are to receive the same charity allowance in Belgium as they formerly did in France, this assistance to be furnished out of the French funds of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Assistance to destitute foreigners.---There were a large number of foreigners residing in Belgium at the outbreak of war, who participated in the general distress due to economic stagnation. Moreover, the internment of resident breadwinners of belligerent nationalities resulted in difficulty in many families. A committee was organized to look after these people without regard to nationality. This committee procures them tickets on the canteens, makes advances in the way of loans, and resorts to other methods of support.

Special subcommittees have been organized to take care of French, Russian, and British subjects, including in their membership persons of these nationalities, and finding support partly in public charity and partly through subventions from the Relief Organization. The total advances to the 31st March, 1917, amount to \$510,991.47.

Assistance to doctors and pharmacists.---This very active committee, "Secours aux Médecins et Pharmaciens Belges Sinistrés," was founded in January 1915, to accord assistance to doctors and pharmacists who have suffered during the war. It maintains branches in each of the provinces.

A peculiar hardship to doctors and pharmacists lies in the fact that the destitution of the people prevents them from making current payments for medical service, and the doctors must therefore be otherwise maintained in order that the population in general may be cared for. This committee has opened relations, through the Commission for Relief in Belgium, with the British Fund for Belgian Physicians and with the American Fund for Belgian Physicians. These two foreign organizations have contributed largely not only in funds but in medical supplies, instruments, and alimentary products for the sick. The better-to-do doctors and other members of the Belgian community have also contributed largely to this committee, and the actual subventions given by the Relief Organization, \$442,636.06, have formed but a part of its resources.

Assistance to artists.---This section of the community, as with all professions dependent upon luxury, has been peculiarly hard hit by the war. A committee was organized in January 1915, with a special mission to take care of necessitous members. A definite system of monthly assistance was established on the basis of 30 francs per month to married men with families, 20 francs to married men without families, and 15 francs to bachelors. These allowances take the form of loans, and upward of 3,000 artists and families of artists have been helped. The

total subvention from the Relief Organization to the end of October amounts to \$312,638.54.

Assistance to the dispossessed.---A committee was originally organized by the Brussels bar for the legal protection of families rendered homeless by failure to meet their rent engagements. It has now embraced a wider field, and interests itself not only in legal protection, but in obtaining concessions from landlords, credit, reductions in rent, exemption from taxes, rates, and lighting, as well as numerous other concessions, especially for the middle-class destitute. In the first year alone of its work over 12,000 cases were examined, a large number of concessions secured, and actual shelter provided for many who would otherwise have suffered. This committee, like all others, has its own resources from public charity, but subventions have been added by the Relief Organization amounting to \$108,626.42.

Assistance to Belgian soldier and civilian prisoners of war.---This Committee has undertaken to secure information and transmit brief correspondence to and from prisoners of war and civilians interned abroad and to remit money and parcels to such prisoners. Upward of thirty branches have been established throughout the country and have been recognized by the German General Government. Something over 1,300,000 requests for information have been received, and 60,000 small remittances and over 800,000 parcels have been transmitted. Subventions have been given to this organization as well as to three other committees engaged in somewhat similar work in connection with Belgian prisoners, the total to all these committees being \$75,358.41.

Belgian National League against Tuberculosis.---This old established institution has numerous dispensaries and open-air cure institutions throughout the country. Owing to the stagnation produced by the war it has been greatly in need of assistance to carry on its beneficent work. Furthermore, the demand for its services has greatly increased because of the extension of tuberculosis in Belgium, particularly during the past year. A network of dispensaries is in operation throughout the country. All persons examined at these dispensaries, and showing symptoms of the disease, are provided with special cards which permit them to have important supplementary rations of food at the Provisioning Committee Stores.

Great care is taken to protect children from contracting tuberculosis. Those of poor families where parents are stricken are placed in "homes," where they may receive good care and live under healthy conditions. Subventions to the amount of \$304,079.72 have been given to this organization.

Restoration of damaged churches.---A committee was formed in December 1914, with the object of providing damaged churches with sufficient equipment to carry on public worship. Subventions to the amount of \$40,212.49 have been given.

Fuel relief.---The winter 1916-17 was the coldest and most protracted known in Belgium for twenty-five years. The consequent suffering among the poor because of the scarcity and high price of coal was great. In order to alleviate this situation to a certain extent the central organization furnished funds to its subcommittees for the purpose of providing all poor families (who were going to the canteens) with 100 k. of coal per household and per month. The money furnished out of relief funds for this purpose amounted to \$475,978.19.

Free supplementary rations.---As a part of the programme dealing with the giving of supplementary rations to those who frequent the "Soupe Populaire," the sum of \$404,613.03 has been paid out of relief funds up to the present time for this purpose.

Distribution to Belgians outside the occupation area.---A certain amount of clothing has been set aside from time to time for distribution to Belgian refugees in Holland, in France, and the unoccupied portion of Belgium. Some provisions, chiefly flour and condensed milk, have from time to time been contributed to the destitute Belgian civilian population outside the occupation area. The total value of these gifts-clothing and provisions-is estimated at \$1,304,462.92.

Sundry subventions.---Subventions have been granted to a number of other committees and institutions to assist them in their work at one time or another. They embrace Cardinal Mercier's Fund for Distressed Clergymen, \$76,774.20; the Economic Restaurants, which have already been mentioned, \$96,236.22; clothing workrooms for the destitute in the city of Antwerp, \$248,228.35; a committee formed to assist destitute young mothers, \$12,984.26; gifts of foodstuffs given directly to certain municipalities by the donors, which have been carried through the relief books and appear among the receipts and *pro et contra* among gifts, amounting to \$57,172.06; financial aid, \$126,045.09; assistance to wives of officers and non-commissioned officers, \$61,675.20; also other minor subventions for various purposes to over twenty-five different organizations, amounting to \$130,129.87.

RELIEF AND FINANCIAL MEASURES CONDUCTED WITH BELGIAN GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

Economic and financial relief measures, as well as charity, made possible by government subsidies are conducted through the Communal Charity Committees under the following groups:

Families deprived of their breadwinners by the war.---Among the numerous classes of the Belgian population to whom differentiated assistance is now extended are those families which the war has deprived of their breadwinners. This amounts practically to the war separation allowance paid by European Governments generally, although the field covered is, for benevolent reasons, widened to cover

rather broader ground than is usual in such measures. The process of selection of these families was not a matter of extraordinary difficulty: the lists of those who had joined the colors, or who had fallen in the invasion, or had become mutilated or wounded, were obtainable. A general difficulty, common to all classes, lay in assigning the amount of assistance to be extended, in view of the number of cases, the general condition of living, and the disposable funds. For instance, one difficulty lay in determining the allowance to be made in view of the various kinds of families to be assisted. Several categories of these were determined, as illustrative of which and of the allowances made, the following examples are probably sufficient: In the case of a family consisting of wife and children, the wife gets 75 centimes per diem and each child 25 centimes; if the soldier is a widower or divorcé with children, the custodian of the children gets 50 centimes per diem for each child. In the case of illegitimate children recognized by the father, the custodian gets 50 centimes a day for each child up to the third, the third and succeeding children being allowed 25 centimes.

The distribution of this form of assistance is the easiest of the six great sections of communal charity, for several reasons. As stated above, the lists of those entitled to the allowance were made up without great difficulty. Furthermore the lists were fairly permanent, not undergoing the weekly changes of the other sections.

The average number of persons receiving relief in various provinces on the 31st March, 1917, was 3,032,089 individuals, and the total expenditure to this date was \$37,429,862.45.

Supplementary allowances to destitute.---The large proportion of destitution due to unemployment, and the insufficiency of the Committee's imported food ration, including canteen food, led to the organization of a special effort to deal directly with this problem. Moreover, the ease with which the position of workers could be determined, through employers and trade-unions, pointed them out for special selection and separate organization. Prior to the creation of this special division such persons were dependent upon the public canteens and, as pointed out above, their shrinking resources either required expansion of the canteen activities, or, alternately, the provision of supplemental or substituted support.

To give a definite meaning to the term "unemployment," and to adapt this meaning to such a scale as is necessary in distributing aid and assistance to a nation at large, are matters of very great complication and difficulty. Questions arise as to the distinction of partial from total unemployment, and even as to the constitution of unemployment itself; for instance, is a man who is not earning wages, but spending his time working in his garden, to be classed as unemployed? It was, however, a condition, and not an economic theory, with which Belgium had to do, and the solution of the problem was, necessarily, wholly practical. In the first place, it was determine that the term, "unemployed," was to be limited to workmen, artisans, or employees in trades, industries, and public utilities; that is, practically skilled

workers, a class whose normal positions are more or less fixed in large industries, and whose individual condition is easily determinable through employers and trade-unions. Excluded from this class, consequently, were agricultural laborers, domestic servants or domiciliary workers, such as washerwomen or seamstresses, and, of course, employers of all kinds, large or small, whether tenants or proprietors. All of these and many other unattached classes, such as pedlars, and messengers of the body economic, together with the representatives of the learned or artistic professions, were assisted when necessary either from the general assistance fund, or from special committees created to deal with particular problems.

Excluded absolutely from assistance are workmen owning house dogs (*chiens de luxe*), or ten carrier pigeons, or fighting-cocks; workmen, any members of whose families frequent archery matches or places of amusement like cinematographs; workmen who gamble or drink to excess, or refuse to work according to the extent of their powers. The workman out of employment who maintains a cabaret is also excluded. The basis of this *Index Expurgatorius*, most of which has now ceased to have reason for existence, is perhaps more moral than economic, though the possession of carrier pigeons and the frequenting of archery contests would hardly seem to be demoralizing practices. The list, however, indicates some of the economic and moral problems of Belgium. A big dog would eat as much as a small child, and a large idle dog is, therefore, a luxury in Belgium today, but the big working dog is a necessity for the poor classes in Belgium, as, for example, for the delivery of milk. The matching of carrier pigeons, and the betting on them, had run to extreme heights in Belgium, and the betting on cock-fights and archery contests had also become excessive.

The edict against the sale of spirituous drinks affected a large number of the population, for in Belgium the number of drinking places is greater than in any civilized country of the world---one for every thirty-five inhabitants approximately. On the other hand, the Belgian *estaminet* is in no way to be confused with the American saloon. It is generally only a room set aside for the serving of beer and coffee in homes situated along well-traveled roads. It is rarely a "haunt of vice," but rather a resting-place or sociable meeting center for friends within the community. The profits of many of these places are extremely small, frequently not more than five or six francs a week. In many cases they represent the effort of a hardworking artisan, or thrifty tenant, to make both ends meet.

But while this measure narrowed the extent of the term "unemployment," the question of determining its meaning still remained. The problem was settled, not through computation of hours or kind of work, but on the basis of need or want, which is the fundamental social, if not the logical, import of the term. It was determined that a workman whose income from any source---wages, property, investments, pensions---did not amount to a certain sum (during 1916, four francs a week), was in a state of want or need, and was, therefore, entitled to assistance. To

prevent the idle or the thriftless from taking advantage of the situation, it was determined that only those who could show certificates of employment for at least fifteen days of June and July, 1914, should be entitled to assistance, taking into account, of course, those cases where the state of unemployment at that time could be shown to be involuntary.

Granting then that the financial status of an unemployed laborer or artisan has been satisfactorily determined, he is, in the simplest case of complete unemployment and no resources, entitled to the following:

Head of household	3 francs per week
Housekeeper (usually wife)	1.50 francs per week
Children under 16	50 centimes per week
Children over 16, formerly employed or at school	3 francs per week

According to the plan adopted in the various regions, the actual income is delivered in cash, or in "bons," that is, orders for a ration at the communal Provisioning Committee or upon accredited tradesmen for native supplies; or a portion may be made by tickets on the canteens. The money payment then enables a person to buy the native foodstuffs necessary to complete the insufficient C.R.B. ration.

The question at once arises as to whether body and soul can be kept together upon the foregoing allowance, and it is of interest to compare it with the pre-war cost of living in Belgium. Rowntree's calculations (*Land and Labour in Belgium*), based on the investigation of 57 communes (probably in 1909), show that, even under normal conditions, the minimum sum with which the food necessary to maintain the physical forces in a satisfactory condition can be purchased in Belgium is:

Man	3.25 francs per week
Woman	2.60 francs per week
Child	1.75 francs per week

This table would indicate that the allowances above would be insufficient, even in peace times, to maintain a family in strength and health; and under present conditions of 200 to 500 per cent increase in prices, it is assuredly highly inadequate. In fact, the town of Charleroi, with its small charitable endowment in a

large population of workmen, found a long time ago that it was necessary to raise the critical point of need from 4 to 5 francs. Somehow or other, either by direct charity or through employment, at least the 5 francs a week must be got to maintain life, if not full strength. In many districts this supplement is found in the fund for general assistance, in which case, if in an urban district, the additional help takes the form of a ticket on canteens either partly or wholly gratuitous.

In view of the increasingly difficult situation during the past winter, and dearness of native foodstuffs, the central organization has recently granted an additional allowance of 2.50 francs per month to each person completely depending on public assistance. This was done to replace the supplementary uncooked food rations of those going to the "Soupes," which, unfortunately, the Commission has not been able to furnish, due to diminished importations. In addition to this aid in food and money, the central organization also provides free medical assistance to families of soldiers and officers, as well as to all those of the needy class. This help is particularly essential at the present time when health conditions are failing, due to an insufficient diet for the people.

Besides those wholly without employment, a second category exists of the partially unemployed, and the problem of the just allotment of assistance to these cases is the most difficult of all the perplexing questions faced by the Communal Charity Committees, and is the one which calls for the greatest amount of caution, inspection, and control. Under the conditions of work existing in the zone of occupation, almost all kinds of employment were exceedingly precarious as well as scanty. A workman might be employed the whole of one week and be idle the next, or he might work the whole or part of one day, or the whole or part of several days of the week; and it was the duty of the Communal Charity Committee concerned, to ascertain each week, or perhaps several times a week, the amount of wages the workman had received, before the amount of assistance he was entitled to was determined under the rulings adopted by the Relief Organization.

The Relief Organization, in order to stimulate labor, exempted five francs of wages from the deductions applied to the benefit of applicants for assistance. In other words, a worker is considered unemployed so long as his income does not exceed five francs a week, as the "premium on work." If above that amount, then a series of deductions come into play. The complexity of this problem is indicated by the following reproduction of the valuations in daily income of certain types of property, and consequently their deducible value from the allowance:

I. Property

1. House, 0 to 4 francs per week, according to value; owners of houses above 7,000 francs excluded. Owner can get through mortgage enough to cover theoretical need.
2. Land, 50 centimes per week per 10 ares (about 0.25 acre).

3. Cows, 50 centimes per day.
4. Hogs, 25 centimes per day.
5. Calves, 25 centimes per day.
6. Heifers, 25 centimes per day.
7. Hens, .02 centimes per day.
8. Savings books-weekly tax of 50 per cent for face value above 500 francs.

II. Public assistance

1. Bureau de Bienfaisance---amount granted.
2. Old-age pensions---amount granted.

III. Private assistance

1. Accident pensions---amount granted.
2. Pension of benevolent society---amount granted.

The "theoretical need" of a family of five would be 20 francs per week. If such a family had 2 cows, a house (in the 2-franc class), 4 acres of land, and received 75 centimes per week from the Bureau de Bienfaisance, it would receive nothing from the General Assistance Fund. The family or individual condition was determined at regular intervals. In fixing house-value the Hainaut Commission took the amount of fire insurance and deducted 25 per cent.

Each receiver of relief is furnished with an identity card, upon which such relief as may be granted him must be mentioned. Any changes that may happen to the unemployed person's position, and his family, are also specified. This card must be produced on any request made by the delegates of any of the committee. Payment is made at least once fortnightly, and the unemployed person must call personally, furnished with the identity card.

The numbers receiving assistance in this branch are difficult of accurate determination, owing to all the variables of partial employment and irregularity of need. The original lists prepared in April, 1915, showed 646,199 necessitous unemployed, skilled workers of both sexes, with 227,096 dependent adults, and 474,627 dependent children under 16, a total of 1,347,922 persons. In May the lists had increased to 741,494 necessitous workers, 255,370 dependent adults, and 558,722 dependent children, a total of 1,555,586. In midsummer the lists had further increased to 764,222 necessitous workers, 269,380 dependent adults and

630,998 children, a total of 1,664,600. This represents the high-water mark. The numbers fluctuate with seasonal employment, and various measures have been taken to reduce the lists by eliminations, establishments of adults and children on to other funds, and, in the case of 40,000 lace-workers, to put them in a position of self-support, and thus reduce the ultimate burden on this division. The result of all these measures has been to reduce the totals by February, 1916, to 685,849 necessitous skilled workers, 318,149 dependent adults and 503,678 dependent children, or a total of 1,507,676. The latest available figures (September, 1916) give the numbers respectively as 701,451, 304,015, 634,144, or a total of 1,639,610. This latter figure shows the trend of increasingly difficult conditions, and the growing lack of employment during 1916. These numbers, however, cannot be taken as absolute, since some communes do not return the number of those who receive partial assistance in their lists. In any event, these figures comprise over 40 per cent of the total skilled labor in Belgium.

The expenditure upon this division from its initiation in February, 1915, to the 31st March 1917, was \$49,678,781.07.

The labor question in Belgium.---A question may arise in the reader's mind---has the aid which is being given to the unemployed had a tendency toward creating a desire for idleness? The Committee's allowance has been fixed at such a low figure that only by rarest exception would a man be satisfied to live on the scant subsistence which it affords. Furthermore, for every position in Belgium there are three men anxious and willing to fill the place. For this reason it has always been a great concern to the Commission and to the central Belgian organization to provide work for the great mass of the unemployed. If profitable employment could be created the people could live better, would be independent of public assistance, and would conserve thus their self-respect and their former habits of thrift and industry. This has been a most perplexing problem, a solution of which has not been found up to the present time.

In the early months of her occupation of Belgium, Germany requisitioned the larger part of all raw materials in the country. Manufacturing was therefore greatly reduced. The Allied Governments refused to replace this requisitioned material by permitting new importations of iron, copper, cotton, etc., into Belgium, which step they felt would only serve to lengthen the war by adding to Germany's economic resources, except on one express condition, that the raw material imported into Belgium be re-exported in toto, and that the money so realized be deposited in England until the end of the war. The financial and monetary systems of Belgium and Germany are so closely bound up, that Belgian exports and the return flow of money into the country would serve in bracing Germany's exchange on foreign markets. Furthermore, the building up of funds in Belgium would permit the occupying authorities to bleed the country and towns of even greater sums than those demanded at present. The Belgian Government at Havre and her Allies, rather than offer such aid to Germany, preferred to pay any amount in charity to support

the inhabitants of Belgium. Germany acquiesced to the re-exportation of the finished products from raw materials, but insisted that the revenue from this source be deposited in Belgium. As a result the plan(476) fell through.

The Commission through its representatives has tried on different occasions to revive special industries. As a typical case, last winter in Hainaut the representative at Mons made efforts to re-establish the manufacture of simile-marble at Basècles. This town, of 4,500 inhabitants, practically lived from this trade before the war, making large exports to America. After two years of conflict the population had fallen into a lamentable condition of need through lack of employment. Happily, the Commission was able to secure permission from the Allies to export the marble pieces which were to have been shipped to America in returning empty C.R.B. ships. The plan was held up, however, by the Germans, who claimed a shortage of transportation facilities for the shipment of the necessary lime from Northern France into Belgium.

The insolvable complications which thus arise each time have effectively blocked all projects of exportation from Belgium. Within the country itself, therefore, the only work to be created is that of making public improvements and of building roads. Men placed at this work, however, would require more than their 40 centimes assistance per day. Large additional sums of money for the maintenance of such undertakings would be required, and up to the present time it has not been possible to finance Belgium for more than the bare living needs of her inhabitants' demand. The question might be raised: Why not make each man who received his 3 francs per week do at least a day's or half-day's work in seven on roads as a return for this grant? In the first place, road construction is precluded in many districts because of lack of materials, and inability to secure same by the ordinary means of transportation. In the second place, work of this kind, done by a large number of men each working only a portion of the week, would be difficult of efficient organization. Its possibility, however---even its advisability is not to be denied.

In spite of adversity, many towns and regions have attempted to afford regular employment to their workingmen at living wages by the construction and repair of roads. Practically all such work, however, was stopped last fall by the occupying authorities, who asserted that the municipalities were thus employing their able-bodied men so that the latter might not be requisitioned for German service. As soon as the men were forced into idleness, Germany has tried by force, with considerable lack of success up to the present time, to incorporate them into her industrial army.(477)

In brief, then, it will be seen that the labor question in Belgium is one of extreme complexity, which from day to day is growing farther from, rather than nearer to its solution.

Bureaux de Bienfaisance.---These institutions, established in each commune, have the care in normal times of all classes of poverty not otherwise looked after. Consequently they perform, in very large measure, either singly or in combination, the duty of providing for the insane, weak-minded, orphans, infirm, etc. Their resources are obtained not only by receipts from charity and private endowment, but also by communal taxation and by subventions from what is known as the "Common Fund." Through this latter fund the load is more or less equalized between the richer and the poorer communes, it being contributed to by all the communes in each province and also receiving a proportional subvention from the National Government. As the subventions of the National Government ceased with the outbreak of war, the *Bureaux de Bienfaisance* were then plunged into financial difficulties, and the central organization had to come to their assistance. This has been done by means of advances to the "Common Fund" equal to those normally contributed by the National Government. These advances up to the 31st March 1917, amounted to \$1,122,510.96.

It is difficult, under the present circumstances, to determine the number of individuals supported by these official bureaux. The destitute, insane, infirm, aged, orphans, etc., in normal times, aggregate probably 300,000 persons, but the probable tendency of war relief has been to decrease their burden, especially because of the substituted provision for the unemployed. On the other hand, the normal flow of local charity has been toward the war relief organizations, and their resources are thus curtailed.

Advances to educational institutions.---To a considerable extent the educational system of Belgium is, in normal times, in receipt of subsidies from the National Government in addition to the resources from local taxation and private endowment. The suspension of the National Government subsidies threatened not only the public schools but also a number of other institutions with closure or restriction of activities, and it was, therefore, determined to make advances in such amounts as would tide them over; up to the 31st March 1917, a total of \$2,009,821.69 had been so advanced by the central organization.

Assistance to officers' families.---This committee was formed to provide assistance to the families of army officers and non-commissioned officers deprived of their support through the war. The families thus assisted embrace not only those of regular soldiers, but also those of the gendarmes and the civilian militia, whether deceased or absent on military duty. This committee maintains its head office in Brussels, and has subcommittees in the principal localities which forward all information and requests to the central office for action. The allowances are based on the actual need of the families. The total number of such families averages about 3,500, and the total allowance up to the 31st March, 1917, was \$1,674,053.89.

Assistance to children and to war orphans in charitable institutions.---In order to provide for the care of war orphans and to subsidize the important work being done for destitute children in Belgium, grants totaling \$213,953.90 have been made.

Co-operative loan society.---This society, entitled the Société Coopérative d'Avances et de Prêts, was organized early in the war for the purpose of furnishing loans directly to individuals and to institutions of a public and semi-public character. All loans are made on security at the rate of 3 per cent per annum and are based not only on the amount of security, but on the needs of the borrower. Individual borrowers are required to set out a request in writing, accompanied with documentary evidence, which is at once investigated by the society. The process has been simplified in every manner possible in order that the service may be rapid and efficient. Loans to individuals are granted on all varieties of security, such as stocks and shares; income, payment of which has been suspended either through business stagnation or prohibition of the belligerent governments; deposits in suspended institutions; outstanding post-office money-orders; executable judgments; arrears of pensions; arrears of salary to civil service employees; life insurance policies; requisition receipts; land, property, and chattels; in short, all varieties of security and to all classes of the community in possession of tangible or intangible property rendered unrealizable by the war. Furthermore, loans are made to institutions such as orphan asylums, convents, private schools, etc. The total of the advances to the society by the central organization up to the end of March 1917 was \$24,161,321.95. There can be no question of the beneficent work of this institution in stemming the distress of classes to whom such misfortune comes with peculiar poignancy.

National Savings Bank.---This institution, La Caisse d'Epargne, owing to the removal of its securities abroad prior to invasion, ultimately found itself unable to meet payment due to its depositors. Advances have, therefore, been made to the institution under the restriction that no payments are to be made to depositors beyond their minimum living necessities, and that such payments be made from month to month. A total of \$3,246,062.98 has so far been advanced by the Relief Organization.

Building and loan institutions.---There exist a great number of institutions of this character throughout Belgium which have been largely engaged in the erection of workmen's houses. Many are faced with difficulty through default of their members, and, alternately, the members are faced with difficulties through the inability of the institutions to carry on their functions. There was, therefore, set up a mutual institution, entitled Auxiliaire des Sociétés d'Habitations Ouvrières, the capital of which was subscribed partly by public-spirited individuals and partly by some thirty different building and loan societies, the central organization in turn making substantial loans to the mutual society thus created. The new society did not at first deal with private individuals directly, but only through its component building and loan associations; latterly, some loans have been made to individuals

who are not directly affiliated with the building and loan associations. The moneys provided by the central organization are advanced at the rate of 21 per cent, and are in turn reloaned by the associations at the same rate. The loans are used for the completion of partly constructed houses, for the repair of destroyed buildings, and for making monthly advances to building and loan society members in personal difficulties. The total advances on this account to the 31st March, 1917, were \$508,660.97.

Advances to provincial governments.---Considerable sums of money were due to the provincial governments by the National Government at the time of the evacuation. These sums were in turn due to the communes, and were necessary to enable them to maintain their regular services, and especially to continue their subsidies to the Bureaux de Bienfaisance, and their contributions to the support of the bread line. In order to enable these obligations to be met the Relief Organization has advanced the sums which were thus due, amounting at the 31st March, 1917, to a total of \$2,496,005.09.

Sundries.---Advances in the nature of relief loans have been made to various other institutions throughout the country, amounting to a total of \$952,675.09. Expenses of General Committees have been incurred to the extent of \$14,987.83.

[Fig. 21. LETTER, 12 APRIL 1918, WHITLOCK TO HOOVER](#)

3. Care of the Destitute in Northern France, 1915-1917

POPULATION

The occupied Provinces of Northern France comprise an area somewhat over half that of Belgium, and have a normal population of about 3,000,000 people. Owing to mobilization, flight, and other causes, the civil population on the 1st January of this year had been reduced to approximately 2,150,000 individuals. A special incidence of this reduction of population is the extraction of the able-bodied men and consequent large preponderance of women, children, and aged in the population. Recent changes in the front have further reduced its population to 2,000,000, large numbers of French refugees having been evacuated into Belgium.

Over one-half of this population is concentrated in the intensely developed industrial districts in the neighborhood of Lille and Valenciennes, which comprise less than one-eighth of the total occupied area and even now have a population of over 1,000 per square mile. The other half of the population is largely agricultural in character and averages at present about 145 per square mile.

Army Zone.---This area lies completely within the zone of active operations of the German army. The population is entirely interdicted from movement, there is no post or telegraph nor communication of any character; the whole transportation machinery is devoted to military activities. Except for some trivial commodities brought from Holland, there are no imports except relief supplies and no exports whatever. In consequence, the whole of the great industrial population is reduced to total unemployment.

The agricultural activity is greatly reduced, due to the mobilization of the men, the great shortage of draft cattle, fertilizers, and other necessities. The gradual exhaustion of stocks contained in the mercantile establishments throughout the country has in the end resulted in empty shelves and closed doors, so that the "small commerce" of the country has now come practically to a standstill.

All banking operations have ceased and all metallic money and standard currency have disappeared, the only medium of exchange being local notes issued by each commune and accepted only within the limits of each such commune. The imports of the Commission, confined as they are by transportation and purchase difficulties practically to cereals and fats alone, compose but the bare minimum necessity to support human existence. In the winter and spring of 1916 the meager local supplies of potatoes, vegetables, and meat were finally exhausted.

Extent of destitution.---It is obvious that there must be an enormous percentage of destitution, and, in fact, a discussion as to what proportion of the population is destitute becomes merely a definition of what constitutes destitution. Less than half the population have no means with which to pay for their ration, and this class depend very largely on loans made to them by the communal governments. To another class, food is advanced "on credit" until the end of the war. To the third class, all relief and food rations are given free. In the district of Charleville, one of the more agricultural and least destitute regions in Northern France, at the end of September, 1916, the three above-mentioned classes constituted respectively 48, 38, and 14 per cent of the population. In a word, either by loans from the communes, by food advances, or by gifts, practically the whole population is dependent.

Curiously enough, in these circumstances, the relief of destitution becomes a simpler problem than in Belgium. In Northern France the Relief Organization could not make any attempt to maintain the economic machinery of the country, or to organize effective measures of self-help by supplementing individual resources, as in the case of Belgium. In a broad way the whole area is an internment camp, and all the population is on a ration and to all present purposes is destitute. The entire organization is reduced to the simple problem of placing a ration, adapted so far as may be to local needs, justly in the hands of every man, woman, and child, and to provide a system of accounting by which at least some part of the cost may be recoverable after the war.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE RELIEF

The communes in Northern France have been grouped into six principal districts, each under a district committee. An American representative of the Commission is attached to each committee. These six district committees act under the instructions of and in coordination with the Commission for Relief's head office in Brussels. A central committee exists termed the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, but its functions except as an accounting agency are nominal. The district committees deal directly with the communal and municipal authorities, there being the 1st January 2,133 such communes. Since that time the number has been reduced to about 1,800.

Financial organization.---The imported foodstuffs are debited to the district committees. The district committees in turn debit the foodstuffs to the communes at a small advance sufficient to cover local expenses. At this point in the cycle an involved transaction is necessary owing to the practical disappearance of normal circulating medium from the country, and in order to provide for the subsequent recovery of some of the outlay on provisioning the population from those members of the community who have property and resources at present unrealizable.

Each commune prints its own notes from 5 centimes up to 50 francs, and this currency is being put into circulation by (a) payment for communal services; (b) loans to individuals against property; (c) benevolence to the destitute.

The ration provided by the Commission for Relief is then sold in return for this currency, and it serves as well to enable the holder to purchase such supplementary native foodstuffs as may still exist outside the imports of the Commission. Thus between the loans and benevolence the whole population is enabled to secure its food supply. The local money, therefore, amounts practically to a food ticket, and in last analysis is but a facile method of accounting. The communes enter into an obligation to pay for the foodstuffs delivered to them three months after peace, and the French Government makes advances to the Commission for Relief in Belgium against these obligations. Thus, after the war, the communes will be able to collect some portion of the loans which they have made to individuals, and will be able thus to pay some portion of the obligations which they in turn have taken to the institutions through the Commission for Relief. The whole arrangement is one which, so far as food supply is concerned, calls for no present public charity, but it is a situation which will yet demand the benevolence of the French people when the period of liquidation arrives.

General relief.---Public canteens ("Soupes Populaires") are organized here in many towns as in Belgium. The system, however, has not had such a wide application in the former territory because of the fact that in France all classes are more or less reduced to the same level of need.

Butter, milk, meat, and other foodstuffs are quite as unavailable to the well off and middle class as to the poor in Northern France, because of the fact that nearly all cattle have either been requisitioned by the German army or already consumed by the population. There is therefore not the same necessity of specializing in the aid of the poor which exists in Belgium, where the more well-to-do class can purchase native foodstuffs. The entire population in France, save the farmers, is classed as "needy."

Baby canteens are established in a large number of communes, and furnish condensed milk where a supply of natural milk is not available.

Loan banks, similar to the institutions in Belgium, advance money to temporarily embarrassed persons whose credit is reliable. Monthly allocations in money are paid to the families of mobilized men or of French prisoners interned in Germany.

CLOTHING

The foregoing arrangement provides a barely sufficient food supply, but is not available for clothing. For this the Commission has appealed to the charitable world in conjunction with the appeal for Belgium. A further amount of clothing has been purchased out of the small margin retained on foodstuffs from the debits of the regional committees. Of all clothing materials obtained by the Commission through benevolence, roughly one-third is sent to Northern France and two-thirds to Belgium. While the mathematical ratio would be about one-quarter and three-quarters, the more bitter necessities of the French people had determined this division. Work rooms for making up new materials and the revision and repairs of old clothing have been opened in each district.

4. After 1917 and Summary

After the spring of 1917, when the foregoing report was written, there was no fundamental change in the organization or methods of caring for the destitute until the Armistice.

Destitution in Belgium steadily increased with the passing months and in October 1918, of a total population of approximately 5,500,000 in the General Government Zone, 4,263,735 applied for and received assistance at the various institutions of relief.⁽⁴⁷⁸⁾ The inevitable undernourishment, particularly during the period of the U-boat blockade, was reflected in an increase in sickness which filled the hospitals and required special measures. An extensive program of supplementary rations was formulated by the Commission but was limited in its fulfilment, as was the general program, by the difficulties of importation. The successful endeavors of the

Commission in these years to provide special aid to children have been already described.

After the Armistice, during the winter of 1918-19, the benevolent operations of the Commission were continued and extended to new fields where necessary. Large stocks of food and clothing were poured into the previously occupied territories,(479) temporary housing was provided for the returning populations of the devastated regions, and special support was given to hospitals, children's clinics, and a general child health program.(480)

During the whole period of relief operations the total expenditure for the general benevolent program was \$615,237,147.47. The following tables show how this sum was applied in the relief of destitution through the co-operating relief organizations-the Commission, the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France (till 1918), the Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées, the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées, and the various subsidiary provincial, communal, and special committees.

ANALYSIS OF BENEVOLENT EXPENDITURES BY COUNTRY, 1914-1919

BELGIUM

I. Benevolent Account of the commission

Gift Clothing In Belgium		
Through Comité National	\$12,110,164.66	
Direct	844.71	\$ 12,111,009.37
Provisions and Clothing to Belgian Refugees		
At Havre	\$ 341,257.18	
In Holland	1,022,619.26	1,363,876.44
Cash Donations to Sundry Funds		
Belgian		232,584.01

children at The Hague, evacuées, refugees, and supplementary donation to special funds, etc.		
Special Funds		
Brussels' Office Relief Fund	\$ 988,675.53	
Forbes' Fund	49,549.03	1,038,224.56
Educational Purposes (chap. xiii, Documents 527-532)		33,766,039.62
Allocations from Benevolent Account of Commission to Central Committees for Benevolence (distribution included below)	(\$115,441,314.26)	
Direct Benevolent Expenditures by the Commission		\$48,511,734.00

II. Benevolent Expenditure through Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation

Canteens and Soup Kitchens		\$125,948,596.40
Clothing		28,045,642.20
Aid to		

Families of Soldiers		
Relief of families without support	\$84,924,536.53	
Supplementary aid	183,603.31	
Expert medical advice	895,029.83	
Families of officers	8,300,528-60	
Invalids and mutilated	1,808,518.90	
Widows of soldiers	111,384.83	96,223,602.00
Patronized Institutions		
Government employees	\$54,345,422.90	
Children and war orphans	26,183,136.20	
Belgian évacuées	15,106,105.60	
Anti-Tuberculosis League	4,708,284.90	
Medical aid	7,686,862.76	
Cheap restaurants	5,280,400.44	
Refugees	1,686,833.90	
Aid to artists	857,122.50	
Aid to foreigners	1,300,279.50	
Assistance to dispossessed	344,110.20	

Churches, Assistance Discrète, Journalists, National Commission of Arts and Letters, prisoners, etc	6,848,062.60	124,346,621.50
Suspended Aid		
Subsidies to provinces for soup kitchens	\$31,243,349.05	
Subsidies to provinces for providing shelter	553,740.15	
Gifts of fuel	3,374,837.13	
Supplementary rations	9,082,791.08	
Relief to provinces	2,266,871.24	
Aid to unemployed	61,382,787.49	
Charitable Institutions	997,603.83	
Schools	2,371,332.43	111,273,312.40
Pension Service		971,602.35
Aid in the Form of Moral Guarantees		
Building and loan institutions	\$ 670,227.87	
Agricultural loans	102,781.80	

Loans to foreigners	1,930.93	
Anti-Tuberculosis League	572,834.64	
National Savings Bank	3,246,062.90	
Sundry loans	306,787.96	4,900,626.10
Lace Industry		\$ 1,535,026.00
Provisions and Cash Donations to Special Committees: (Cardinal Mercier's fund, Belgian Bishop fund, workrooms, Brussels, Antwerp, etc., Bureaux de Bienfaisance, Belgian Red Cross, sick funds, apprentice studios, labor exchanges, assistance discrète, gifts of food to cities of Ghent, Ostend, etc.; gifts to various communes and many others)		8,926,850.47
Salaries, General Expenses,		7,703,244.25

Interest		
Total Benevolent Expenditure through Comité National		\$509,875,123.67
Total Benevolent Expenditure in Belgium		\$558,386,857.67

NORTHERN FRANCE

I. Benevolent Account of Commission

Gift Clothing in Northern France		
Through Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France	\$ 42,379.32	
Through Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées	4,881,170.60	\$ 4,923,549.92
Gift Clothing---To French refugees in Holland		39,598.19
Provisions and Clothing---Child welfare in Lille		2,012.75
Cash Donations to Sundry Funds		
Lille Benevolent Fund	\$ 204,097.47	
Child welfare	679.00	
Refugees at Evian	381.88	205,158.35

Benevolence through Paris Office of Commission		
Executive Committee, C.R.B. Benevolent Fund	816,015.71	
French Red Cross for child welfare	20,297.45	
Child welfare in Thoulis	477.36	
Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées	669,165.74	1,505,956.26
Special Allocation for Benevolence		
Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France:		
Food, lodging, clothes, etc .	\$ 1,524,058.98	
Overshoes, meat, etc .	221,860.81	
Rice (reduction in selling price)	308,946.16	
Charitable restaurants	160,408.04	
Miscellaneous	457,954.37	2,673,228.36
Special Allocation for Benevolence		
Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées		
Reduction of prices of provisions and clothing	\$ 5,537,401.56	

Subsidy to maintain bread prices	763,779.53	
Rebates to districts for benevolent expenditure	2,611,084.80	
Supplementary food for children. Free distribution	2,577,755.92	11,490,021.81
French Refugees in Holland and elsewhere		
Refugees and évacuées in Holland	\$ 224,002.36	
French children in Holland	21,849.03	
French prisoners of war in Holland	6,940.25	
Miscellaneous relief, Havre, Lille, Evian, etc	29,796.34	282,587.98
Gifts to Northern France (see Chapter XIII, Documents 525 and 526)		
To Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées	\$ 78,959.80	
To American Relief Administration for Child Feeding in Northern France	25,000.00	103,959.86
Allocations from Benevolent Account of	(681,569.09)	

Commission to Central Committees for Benevolence (distribution included below)		
Total for Northern France from Benevolent Account of Commission		\$21,226,073.42

II. Benevolent Expenditure through Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France

Assistance to French Citizens in Belgium		
Provisions	\$ 6,365,476.89	
Coal and fuel	96,026.52	
Soup	2,415,533.72	
Medical aid	517,785.27	
Supplementary food	125,943.55	
Cheap restaurants	91,541.78	
Sundry aid	64,473.90	
Central committee	40,098.42	
Child feeding	398,728.45	
Children's aid societies	18,711.81	
Interest allowed provincial committees	28,493.87	\$10,162,814.18
Assistance to Evacuées in		

Belgium		
French evacuated	\$12,248,738.23	
Foreign evacuated	351,606.28	
Temporary evacuated	1,848,926.79	
Teaching personnel	16,392.02	
General expense	1,775.22	
Clothing	177,220.00	
Repatriation cost	46,911.15	
Interest allowed provincial committees	1,061,180.14	15,752,749.83
Subsidies to French Organizations		
Benevolent Society in Maubeuge	\$ 3,341.53	
Benevolent Society in Cousolre	3,341.53	
Savings Bank, Givet, etc	64,939.47	71,622.53
Clothing		5,230,231.80
Sundry Benevolence		
Assistance In cash	\$ 1,241,409.47	
Liberated prisoners	86,937.39	

Clothing and general expenses	140,203.51	1,468,550.37
Total Benevolence of Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France		\$32,685,968.71
Balance in Liquidation Distributed in Benevolence		
Credits to districts	\$ 190,944.88	
Aid to unemployed	185,299.95	
Gifts of chocolate	197,005.53	
Coal	106,076.06	
Shoes	85,980.20	
Biscuits, clothing expenses, etc	105,253.10	870,559.72
Grand Total Expenditure through Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France		\$33,556,528.43
Total Benevolent Expenditures In Northern France		\$54,782,601.85

NORTHERN RELIEF

I. Benevolent Account of the Commission

As a result of an appeal made in the United States by the Commission, there became available for distribution during the year 1918-19 over 15,000 tons of gift secondhand clothing. The requirements of the people of Belgium and of Northern France were met by the distribution of 10,000 tons throughout Belgium and 4,000 tons throughout Northern France. A quantity of 938 tons of secondhand clothing consisting of 2,130,813 garments and 114,883 pairs of shoes, valued at \$2,067,687.95, was turned over to the American Relief Administration for distribution, principally in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XVII

GERMAN GUARANTEES AND DECLARATIONS

The purpose of the present chapter is to bring together letters, notes, memoranda, and decrees of German origin which indicate significant aspects of German policy respecting the conduct of relief. Documents in preceding chapters have shown how the entire relief undertaking rested on guarantees secured from the belligerents by the Commission directly or through the diplomatic patrons. It has also been indicated how the actual conduct of relief was circumscribed by official decrees, orders, and various regulations. In the case of the Allies these regulations were relatively few and the important ones have already been given. Because relief was delivered in territories under German control, guarantees and regulations of German origin are much more numerous. The more important of these official declarations have also been included in earlier chapters, but they are insufficient for a full view of the Imperial Government's relief policy. Supplementary documents are therefore given in this chapter accompanied either by descriptive titles or reproductions in the original language of those documents included in earlier pages.[\(481\)](#)

The guarantees and declarations noted here and likewise those given by the Allies relate to one of the most important features of the Commission's public relations. They represent a series of conventions on the matter of relief between the belligerents, but both belligerents relied on the Commission as the medium through which the "conventions" were negotiated and as the agency to insure their execution. The reason for this dependence on the Commission is shown in a statement by the British Foreign Office made at a time when it became necessary for the Commission to resign some of its functions because of the American diplomatic break with Germany. The British Foreign Office wrote ". . . it must be

remembered that the diplomatic patrons of the Commission cannot, in view of their position and the policy of their Governments, go beyond a certain length in pressing the demands of the Relief Commission upon the Germans. In the past it has been Mr. Hoover's ability and energy which have enabled the Allied Governments to secure guarantees from the Germans, which could never have been obtained by the ordinary methods of neutral diplomacy.⁽⁴⁸²⁾ The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs could have made a similar declaration.

In the matter of restrictions on the conduct of relief, the regulations of the belligerents were often in conflict or unacceptable to one side or the other and it fell to the Commission to secure such modification or adjustment as would permit the work to go on. Having secured the minimum restrictions, the Commission became responsible to the belligerents for their observance. There were, of course, a great many declarations, decrees, and orders issued by the Germans with which the Commission had no direct concern. The documents which follow are selected from those which bear in some way on the Commission's public relations. It will be observed that the number of undertakings and declarations fell off after the first year, for by that time the basic policy and technic of relief had become established. New guarantees were required only as new situations arose in the changing course of the war.

The documents of this chapter and the titles of those given elsewhere are arranged chronologically in three groups:

1. Those affecting relief as a whole.
2. Those relating to operations in the territory under the German General Government in Belgium.
3. Those relating to operations in the Army Zones of Belgium and Northern France.

1. Guarantees Affecting the Relief as a Whole. 1914-1918

The documents in this group include the Berlin Government assurances of approval of the general principle of relief⁽⁴⁸³⁾ and its subsequent confirmation of agreements and undertakings of the General Government in Belgium and Army Headquarters in Northern France. Here also are the important guarantees and orders covering the movement of the Commission's ships, safe-conduct passes, routes, and markings for relief vessels. The Commission secured practically all these agreements from the Berlin Foreign Office through the American Ambassador and later through Spanish diplomatic channels.

[1]

"Note Verbale,"

16 October 1914, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMBASSADOR GERARD, stating the German Government's approval of Belgian relief ([Document 10](#), chapter I, is an English translation of this note)

[2]

DOCUMENT NO. 602

"Note Verbale,"

14 November 1914, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, stating that the Governor General in Belgium has been requested to aid the American Relief Commission for Belgium as far as military interests permit

Auswärtiges Amt

Nr. 111b. 20140

89382

VERBALNOTE

Das Auswärtige Amt beehrt sich, der Botschaft der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika auf die Verbalnote vom 31. v. M.---F. 0. 958---mitzuteilen, dass der Verwaltungschef bei dem Kaiserlichen Generalgouverneur in Belgien ersucht worden ist, den Wünschen wegen Förderung der Amerikanischen Hilfskommission für Belgien zu entsprechen, soweit es die militärischen Interessen gestatten.

BERLIN, den 14. November 1914

An die Botschaft

der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika

[3]

"Note Verbale,"

23 November 1914, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, giving official approval to the C.R.B. and guaranteeing freedom from seizure to non-neutral vessels carrying supplies of the C.R.B. to Dutch ports ([Document 22](#), chapter 1, is an English translation of the following)

Abschrift

11 W K Belg. 179 (Angabe)

92810

VERBALNOTE

Das Auswärtige Amt beehrt sich, der Botschaft der Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika auf die Verbalnote vom 14. November 1914---F.O. 1105---zu erwidern, dass die Kaiserliche Regierung den dankenswerten Bemühungen der amerikanischen Kommission in Belgien, die dortige Bevölkerung mit Lebensmitteln zu versorgen, durchaus sympathisch gegenübersteht. Sie ist deshalb bis auf weiteres und vorbehaltlich etwa notwendig werdenden jederzeitigen Widerrufs gern damit einverstanden, dass die Beförderung der fraglichen Lebensmittel nach niederländischen Häfen auch in anderen als neutralen Schiffen stattfindet, und wird auch in diesem Falle die gleiche Garantie für die bestimmungsmässige Verwendung der Lebensmittel gewähren, wie wenn die Beförderung in neutralen Schiffen erfolgt wäre. Um der Beschlagnahme durch deutsche Kriegsschiffe auf See vorzubeugen, empfiehlt es sich, dass solche nicht neutralen Schiffe mit einem Ausweis einer zuständigen amerikanischen Behörde versehen werden, in welchem gesagt ist, dass das Schiff Lebensmittel führt, welche durch die amerikanische Hilfskommission mit Zustimmung der Deutschen Regierung über niederländische Häfen nach Belgien zur Ernährung der dortigen Bevölkerung gebracht werden sollen und dass ausserdem die nicht neutralen Schiffe einen auf Grund des genannten Ausweises vom Kaiserlich Deutschen Botschafter in Washington auszustellenden Pass mit sich führen.

Berlin, den 23. November 1914

*An die Botschaft der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika
Está conforme*

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[4]

"Note Verbale,"

24 December 1914, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Stating certificates required for non-neutral ships carrying C.R.B. cargoes ([Document 196](#), chapter V, is an English translation of the following)

Abschrift

11 W.K. Be. 306 (Angabe)

104892

VERBALNOTE

Das Auswärtige Amt beehrt sich der Botschaft der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika im Anschluss an die Verbalnote vom 23. v.M/, 11 W K Be. 179,

betreffend die Zufuhr von Lebensmitteln für die Belgische Bevölkerung, mitzuteilen, dass es erwünscht erscheint, in die Ausweise, mit denen nicht neutrale Schiffe zu versehen sind, folgende Angaben aufzunehmen:

a. die ausdrückliche Erklärung:

(1) dass das Schiff nur Lebensmittel (und Kleidungsstücke) für die belgische Bevölkerung zur Ausschiffung in einem niederländischen Hafen enthält.

(2) die ehrenwörtliche Verpflichtung des Schiffsführers, sich auf Hin- und Rückfahrt aller Handlungen zu enthalten, die eine Unterstützung unserer Gegner in sich schliessen.

b. es ist ferner erwünscht, dass folgende Hinweise darin enthalten sind:

(3) dass Ausweis und Pass nur für die einmalige Hinfahrt gelten und nach Ankunft im niederländischen Bestimmungshafen dem dortigen Deutschen Konsul und, wenn ein solcher nicht vorhanden ist, dem Deutschen Gesandten im Haag zuzustellen sind. Für die Rückfahrt werden entsprechende Papiere wie für die Hinfahrt durch die Kaiserlich Deutsche Gesandtschaft im Haag ausgestellt werden.

(4) dass die Papiere eine Durchsuchung des Schiffes nicht ausschliessen und die Ladung so gestaut sein muss, dass die Durchsuchung schnell und leicht vor sich gehen kann.

(5) dass der Zeitpunkt der Abfahrt aus den Vereinigten Staaten dem Kaiserlich Deutschen Botschafter in Washington, der Zeitpunkt der Rückfahrt aus den Niederlanden dem Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandten im Haag mitzuteilen ist.

(6) dass ein Verstoss gegen diese Vorschriften sowie gegen die übernommenen Verpflichtungen jedes Recht auf die Vorzugsbehandlung verwirkt.

Das Auswärtige Amt darf die Botschaft ergebenst bitten, das Erforderliche zu veranlassen, damit die Ausweise entsprechend den vorstehenden Ausführungen abgefasst werden.

BERLIN, den 24. Dezember 1914

*An die Botschaft der Vereinigten Staaten
von Amerika*

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[5]

Letter, [\(484\)](#)

31 December 1914, ZIMMERMANN To GERARD, stating that the Governor-General in Belgium will issue an order prohibiting the troops from requisitioning food or forage which would have to be replaced by importations by the C.R.B. ([Document 321](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of this letter)

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[6]

German safe-conduct pass,

6 February 1915, issued to ships used by the C.R.B. ([Document 197](#), chapter V, is an English translation of this type of safe-conduct pass)

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[7]

Letter,

15 February 1915, GERMAN EMBASSY WASHINGTON TO C.R.B. NEW YORK, recommending that in view of the German "war zone" declaration C.R.B. ships take the northern route to Rotterdam ([Document 198](#), chapter V, gives the text of this letter)

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[8]

DOCUMENT NO. 603

"Note Verbale,"

5 March 1915, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, refusing to issue passes for C.R.B. ships from Rotterdam to England, but stating that German submarines have been instructed to permit the undisturbed passage through the English channel of distinctly marked C.R.B. vessels (A letter of the same date and of similar content from VON JAGOW to GERARD appears in translation as [Document 202](#), chapter V)

Auswärtiges Amt

Abschrift (Aug. 2)

Nr. III a 4960

28800

VERBALNOTE

Der Vorsitzende der Relief Commission für Belgien, Herr Hoover, hat angeregt, den Schiffen der Commission für ihre Fahrten von Rotterdam nach England und zurück deutsche Geleitscheine auszustellen.

Wegen der im Kriegsgebiet bestehenden Minengefahr ist die Deutsche Regierung zu ihrem lebhaften Bedauern ausser Stande, dieser Anregung zu entsprechen. Im Hinblick auf das menschenfreundliche Werk der Relief Commission sind indessen die deutschen Unterseeboote angewiesen worden, die Schiffe der Commission auch auf dem Wege durch den englischen Kanal ungestört fahren zu lassen, falls diese an den üblichen Abzeichen---in grossen Buchstaben auf den Schiffsseiten aufgemalte Bezeichnung und weisse Flagge mit gleicher Bezeichnung in roten Buchstaben---erkennbar und die Abzeichen auch bei Nacht deutlich sichtbar beleuchtet sind. Die Deutsche Regierung muss dabei selbstverständlich voraussetzen, dass alle Mittel angewendet werden, um einen Missbrauch der Abzeichen der Relief Commission auszuschliessen.

Das Auswärtige Amt beehrt sich hiernach die Vermittelung der Botschaft der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika in Anspruch zu nehmen, um eine Erklärung von seiten der Britischen Regierung herbeizuführen, die sicherstellt, dass nur diejenigen Schiffe die Abzeichen der Relief Commission führen dürfen, die tatsächlich im Dienste der Commission stehen.

BERLIN, den 5. März 1915

*An die Botschaft der Vereinigten
Staaten von Amerika*

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[9]

Letter,
18 April 1915, VON JAGOW TO GERARD, stating that safe-conduct passes will be issued to C.R.B. vessels to return to English ports ([Document 206](#), chapter V, is an English translation of this letter)

.

[10] [DOCUMENT NO 604](#)

Letter,
19 April 1915, GERMAN LEGATION AT THE HAGUE TO C.R.B.
ROTTERDAM, stating that authorization has been given to assure the safe return of C.R.B. ships to English ports

Kaiserlich Deutsche Gesandtschaft in
den Niederlanden
J. No. 2502

HAAG, den 19. April, 1915

Der Commission for Relief in Belgium beehrt sich der unterzeichnete Kaiserliche Gesandte mitzuteilen, dass er ermächtigt worden ist, ihren Schiffen unter den bisher üblichen Bedingungen und in der bisher üblichen Form sichere Rückfahrt nach englischen Häfen zuzusichern, vorausgesetzt dass ihr Charter dies verlangt und dass sie keine Ladung für England nehmen.

Er gestattet sich nochmals darauf hinzuweisen, dass im Interesse der Sicherheit der Schiffe bei Tage und bei Nacht klar erkennbare Abzeichen dringend nötig sind.

DER KAISERLICHE GESANDTE
(s) v. KÜHLMANN

*An die Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Rotterdam*

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[11] [DOCUMENT NO. 605](#)

Letter,
1 May 1915, VON JAGOW TO GERARD, consenting to the issuance of safe-conduct passes to cargoes bought afloat by the C.R.B.

Auswärtiges Amt
Nr. II. W. K. Be. 663
58762

BERLIN, 1. Mai 1915

Der Unterzeichnete beehrt sich, Seiner Exzellenz dem Botschafter der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika Herrn James W. Gerard auf das Schreiben vom 21. v.M.---F..0.Nr.3127---zu erwidern, dass die Kaiserliche Regierung gern bereit ist, den Schiffen, die von der Hilfskommission schwimmend gekaufte Ladung führen, für die Fahrt von Falmouth nach Rotterdam jedesmal einen Geleitschein zu erteilen, wenn diese Schiffe lediglich Ladung für die Hilfskommission an Bord haben und mit bei Tag und Nacht klar erkennbaren Abzeichen der Kommission versehen sind.

Die Geleitscheine würden von der von hier aus verständigten Kaiserlichen Gesandtschaft im Haag auszustellen und dem Rotterdamer Vertreter der Hilfskommission zur Weiterleitung zu übergeben sein.

Der Unterzeichnete benutzt den Anlass, um Seiner Exzellenz dem Herrn Botschafter den Ausdruck seiner ausgezeichnetsten Hochachtung zu erneuern.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

*Seiner Exzellenz
dem Botschafter der Vereinigten
Staaten von Amerika
Herrn James W. Gerard*

[12]

DOCUMENT NO. 606

"Note Verbale,"

9 December 1916, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, regarding negotiations for securing safe-conducts for Commission vessels from the Argentine

Auswärtiges Amt
11 U 5507
207894

VERBALNOTE

Das Auswärtige Amt beehrt sich, der Botschaft der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika auf die gefälligen Verbalnoten vom 31. Oktober d.J---F.O. 13987---und 23. v.M.---F.O.. 14460 folgendes zu erwidern:

1. Zu Ziffer 1 des mit der gefälligen Verbalnote vom 23.v.M. übersandten Memorandums erklärt sich die Kaiserliche Regierung damit einverstanden, dass für Ladungen von Argentinien nach Rotterdam, die angekauft sind, *bevor* das Schiff in See geht, nur die Amerikanische Botschaft in Buenos Aires dem Kaiserlichen Gesandten daselbst die Unterlagen für die Ausstellung des Geleitscheines liefert. Dabei würde in diesem Falle kein Unterschied zu machen sein zwischen neutralen und nicht neutralen Schiffen. Die Argentinische Regierung hat nach einer der Kaiserlichen Gesandtschaft im Haag von dem Leiter der Commission for Relief in Belgium in Rotterdam gemachten Mitteilung die Ausstellung der bisher ausserdem geforderten Garantieerklärung trotz der Befürwortung seitens der Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten verweigert. Nach der dortseitigen Verbalnote vom 31. Oktober d.J. hat aber auch die Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika sich ausser Stande erklärt, die Amerikanische Botschaft in Buenos Aires zur Ausstellung der erforderlichen Garantieerklärung zu ermächtigen.

Es darf daher zunächst um eine gefällige Äusserung gebeten werden, ob die Amerikanische Regierung unter den vorliegenden Umständen bereit ist, ihre vorbezeichnete Haltung im Sinne der Anregung der Commission for Relief in Belgium zu ändern.

2. Der Vorschlag zu 2 des vorbezeichneten Memorandums, Schiffen, deren Ladung *nach* Verlassen des argentinischen Hafens gekauft ist, in St. Vincent einen Passierschein auszustellen, lässt sich nicht verwirklichen, da in St. Vincent, einer feindlichen Kolonie, zurzeit kein deutscher Konsul vorhanden ist, und unter keinen Umständen darauf verzichtet werden kann, dass der Geleitschein von einer *deutschen* Behörde ausgestellt wird. Die Kaiserliche Regierung beehrt sich aber, den Gegenvorschlag zu machen, solche Schiffe Las Palmas anlaufen zu lassen und ihnen dort durch den Kaiserlichen Konsul einen Geleitschein geben zu lassen. Die Unterlagen für den Geleitschein könnten, wie in Buenos Aires, auch nach Las Palmas durch amerikanische Vermittlung gegeben werden.

Sicherheit *vor* dem Erreichen von Las Palmas kann den Schiffen, deren Ladung unterwegs angekauft wird, nicht gewährleistet werden. Sie würden selbstverständlich von Las Palmas ab die vorgeschriebenen Abzeichen der Kommission zu führen haben.

3. Die Ausstellung von Geleitscheinen für leer zurückkehrende Schiffe im Sinne der Ziffer 3 des mehrerwähnten Memorandums kann nur in Frage kommen für solche Schiffe, die für lange Zeit, d.h. unter allen Umständen noch über die Rückreise hinaus, im Dienste der Commission for Relief in Belgium stehen. Voraussetzung wäre die Garantie, dass die Schiffe tatsächlich *ohne* Ladung dahin gehen, wo sie ihre neue Ladung nehmen sollen.

Zum Schluss darf darauf hingewiesen werden, dass sich die Kaiserliche Regierung den jederzeitigen Widerruf jeder Garantie aus militärischen Gründen vorbehalten muss.

BERLIN, den 9. Dezember 1916

*An die Botschaft der Vereinigten Staaten
von Amerika*

[13]

DOCUMENT NO. 607

Instructions,
1 February 1917, GENERAL GOVERNMENT IN BELGIUM TO C.R.B. AND
PROTECTING MINISTERS, regarding danger to C.R.B. vessels in view of
unrestricted submarine warfare

ROTTERDAM, 1 February 1917

*Relief Commission
London*

This morning the governing authorities called in conference the Protecting Ministers and ourselves and gave us following message:

"It goes without saying that the Imperial Government has no intention whatsoever of standing in the way of the humanitarian work of the ravitaillement of Belgium, but the Imperial Government must insist that the C.R.B. will send its ships outside of the forbidden zone. It is understood that ships which find themselves on the first of February in the forbidden zone can leave the zone by taking the most direct route without fearing unlooked-for attacks and that the ships which find themselves in English ports can leave them, up to the evening of February 4th and can traverse forbidden zone by the most direct route. Nevertheless the C.R.B. is instructed in the most pressing manner to turn by immediate advice, all ships on route toward the routes situated outside of the forbidden zone. The ships which do not follow such instructions will navigate at their own risk and peril."

Ministers have sent urgent appeals to their respective governments, but you must give immediate notice ships on route as above outlined. Shall remain in Rotterdam until Sunday.

(Signed) GREGORY
Relief Commission

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[14]

Memorandum,
2 February 1917, GERMAN EMBASSY AT WASHINGTON TO THE C.R.B.
NEW YORK, stating regulations affecting C.R.B. shipping under the German unrestricted submarine policy ([Document 227](#), chapter V, gives the text of this memorandum)

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[15]

[DOCUMENT NO. 608](#)

Note,
4 February 1917, GERMAN LEGATION AT THE HAGUE TO C.R.B.
ROTTERDAM, closing English ports to C.R.B. ships and limiting access to Rotterdam to the northern route

NOTE FROM BARON VON STUMM([485](#))

1. Relief Schiffe welche hier sind können nicht in Barry Docks kohlen.
2. Schiffe die in England sind sollen heute sofort abfahren.

3. Alle Schiffe die in diesen Tagen abfahren dürfen nicht mehr durch das Sperrgebiet.

4. Relief Commission Schiffe können nicht mehr nach England fahren nur noch Holland Raddampfer.

[16]

DOCUMENT NO. 609

Letter,

18 February 1917, ZIMMERMANN TO SPANISH AMBASSADOR IN BERLIN, expressing the desire that relief work be continued, that the American delegates remain and stating that guarantees will in any case be continued

Auswärtiges Amt

Nr. 11 U 657

26466

BERLIN, le 18 février 1917

MONSIEUR L'AMBASSADEUR,

En réponse à la lettre du 8 de ce mois---No. Reg. 2326---que Votre Excellence a bien voulu m'adresser, j'ai l'honneur de vous communiquer ce qui suit:

Comme j'ai déjà eu l'honneur de Vous exprimer par ma lettre du 18 de ce mois---II U 642---le Gouvernement Impérial est également animé du vif désir que l'oeuvre humanitaire de la Commission de Secours aux Belges soit maintenue. Quoique le Gouvernement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique ait rompu les relations diplomatiques avec l'Allemagne, l'oeuvre du ravitaillement, basée sur les Conventions conclues en même temps avec le Gouvernement d'Espagne et avec celui des Pays-Bas, pourra continuer évidemment son activité bienfaisante. Le Gouvernement Impérial n'a nullement l'intention d'engager les membres de la Commission à suspendre leurs travaux et à quitter les territoires occupés. Il croit au contraire qu'il serait utile que ces Messieurs restent provisoirement à leurs postes, tout en considérant la possibilité de leur remplacement, le cas échéant par d'autres agents neutres propres à ces fonctions. De plus rien ne s'oppose à ce que quelques-uns des membres américains restent à Bruxelles à la direction de la Commission.

En vue de régler la question, des négociations ont été entamées par le Gouvernement Général en Belgique directement avec les Ministres Protecteurs de la Commission. Ces négociations ont eu pour résultat que les Américains resteront en fonction jusqu'à nouvel ordre, la question de l'entrée d'autres agents neutres dans la Commission, pour les assister d'abord et les remplacer dans la suite, étant toutefois réservée.

Le Ministre des Etats-Unis M. Whitlock et le Secrétaire de la Légation M. Ruddock se sont déjà déclarés prêts à continuer leur activité à Bruxelles comme personnes privées.

Dans l'espoir que ces mesures assureront la continuation de l'oeuvre de Secours sans entrave, je saisis cette occasion pour Vous renouveler, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, les assurances de ma très haute considération.

(Signé) ZIMMERMANN

Está conforme

*A Son Excellence Monsieur Luis Polo de Bernabé
Ambassadeur d'Espagne*

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[17]

Letter,

18 February 1917, ZIMMERMANN TO SPANISH AMBASSADOR IN BERLIN, limiting safe-conducts for C.R.B. steamers from America to those taking the northern route to Rotterdam and prohibiting shipments from England except by the paddle-wheel boats ([Document 232](#), chapter V, is an English translation of the following)

Auswärtiges Amt
Nr. II U 642 I
26061

BERLIN, le 18 février 1917

MONSIEUR L'AMBASSADEUR:

En réponse aux lettres du 8 et 13 de ce mois Nr. Reg. 2328, 2368 et 2369---que Votre Excellence a bien voulu m'adresser, j'ai l'honneur de Vous assurer que le Gouvernement Impérial est profondément reconnaissant du grand intérêt que Sa Majesté le Roi daigne témoigner à l'oeuvre humanitaire de la Commission de Secours aux Belges et ne manque pas d'apprécier la haute valeur de Son précieux appui. Aussi le Gouvernement attache-t-il une importance particulière à ce que l'oeuvre du ravitaillement de la Belgique et du territoire français occupé ne soit pas interrompue.

Or cette continuation désirée de toute part n'est nullement entravée par la Proclamation de la zone de guerre du 31 janvier dernier.

1. En effet à coté de cette proclamation un répit s'étendant jusqu'au 13 février avait été fixé pour les bateaux neutres traversant la zone de guerre de l'Atlantique et du canal de la Manche. Les navires de la Commission se trouvant en route auront eu par conséquent assez de temps pour arriver aux ports de destination, ou bien ils auront eu connaissance de la Proclamation de la zone de guerre avant leur départ. Les navires se trouvant encore en haute mer seront obligés de prendre leurs cours au nord des îles Shetland en dehors de la zone de guerre. Le libre transit à travers cette zone, spécialement par le canal de la Manche, ne saurait être concédé, à mon vif regret, pour des raisons militaires, d'autant plus que les Alliés pourraient abuser de cette faveur pour leurs propres fins.

2. Quant aux navires se trouvant encore dans des ports anglais, il leur aurait été possible de quitter les ports jusqu'au répit du 5 février, s'ils n'en avaient pas été empêchés par le Gouvernement Britannique. Cependant le Gouvernement Impérial Vous prie de lui fournir un relevé détaillé des navires dont il s'agit et des ports où ils se trouvent à présent.

3. Des sauf-conduits ne pourront être délivrés à l'avenir qu'à la condition que les bateaux prennent leurs cours au nord des îles Shetland en dehors de la zone de guerre où aucun danger des opérations de la marine allemande ne les menace.

4. Les vivres achetés par la Commission en Angleterre ne pourront être expédiés qu'à Vlissingen par les bateaux à roues hollandais auxquels une licence spéciale a été accordée.

5. Pour rendre le charbonnage possible aux bateaux de la Commission, de l'houille belge leur sera fournie à Rotterdam.

Le Gouvernement Impérial est persuadé qu'il n'échappera pas à la perspicacité du Gouvernement Royal que d'autres concessions aux désirs du comité de secours seraient incompatibles avec les mesures militaires allemandes dictées par les circonstances actuelles. Il se remet surtout à l'éminent jugement militaire de Sa Majesté le Roi qui certainement ne refusera pas de connaître la justice des vues exprimées plus haut. Le Gouvernement Impérial espère par conséquent que Votre Auguste Souverain et Son Gouvernement continueront à prêter leurs secours efficaces à l'oeuvre humanitaire dans les conditions créées par l'état de guerre.

Je saisis aussi cette occasion pour Vous renouveler, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, les assurances de ma très haute considération.

(Signé) ZIMMERMANN

Está conforme

A Son Excellence Monsieur Luis Polo de Bernabé
Ambassadeur d'Espagne

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[18]

Letter,

12 March 1917, VON DER LANCKEN TO VILLALOBAR, consenting to safe-conducts to American representatives whenever applied for, whatsoever the situation may be between Germany and the United States ([Document 492](#), chapter XII, is an English translation of the following)

Abschrift

Politische Abteilung

bei dem

Generalgouverneur in Belgien

V. 2770

BRUXELLES, le 12 mars 1917

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

Répondant à la lettre que Votre Excellence a bien voulu m'adresser le 6 mars dernier, concernant les membres de la Commission for Relief in Belgium, j'ai l'honneur de lui faire savoir que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général a consenti à ce qu'un sauf-conduit soit en tous cas délivré aux membres américains de la C.R.B. désignés dans l'annexe de la susdite lettre lorsque ceux-ci en feraient la demande et quelle que soit la situation dans laquelle se trouvent à ce moment vis-à-vis l'une de l'autre l'Allemagne et les Etats-Unis d'Amérique. Toutefois une quarantaine d'une durée n'excédant pas quatre semaines sera nécessaire avant leur départ pour satisfaire aux intérêts militaires.

Je prie Votre Excellence de bien vouloir porter ce qui précède à la connaissance de la Commission for Relief in Belgium et je profite de l'occasion pour renouveler à Votre Excellence les assurances de ma haute considération.

(gez.) LANCKEN

*A Son Excellence le Marquis de Villalobar
Ministre de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Espagne
Bruxelles*

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[19]

DOCUMENT NO. 610

Letter,
12 March 1917, GERMAN LEGATION AT THE HAGUE TO C.R.B.
ROTTERDAM, stating that the lane between the danger zones for access to
Rotterdam can be considered absolutely safe from submarines after the 15th March

Kaiserlich
Deutsche Gesandtschaft
B 1551

HAAG, den 12. März 1917

Ich beehre mich, mitzuteilen, dass vom 15. d. M. ab die von der Deutschen
Regierung durch Veränderung des Sperrgebiets vom 4. Februar d. J. freigegebene
Fahrrinne in der Nordsee als absolut sicher bezüglich der Angriffe von
Unterseebooten zu betrachten ist.

DER KAISERLICHE GESANDTE
Im Auftrage

(S.) VON STUMM

*An die Commission for Relief in Belgium
Rotterdam*

[20]

DOCUMENT NO. 611

Letter,
13 March 1917, GERMAN LEGATION AT THE HAGUE TO C.R.B.
ROTTERDAM, stating all submarines at sea after the 15th March will be fully
instructed regarding the safety of the North Sea channel to Rotterdam

Kaiserlich
Deutsche Gesandtschaft
B 1620
3 Anlagen

HAAG, den 13. März 1917

Alle nach dem 15. März in See befindlichen Unterseeboote haben die Instruktion
wegen der Sicherheit der Fahrstrasse in der Nordsee.

Da damit die Lage *ausserhalb* des Sperrgebiets genau dieselbe ist, wie vor dem 1.
Februar d.J. ist auch eine weitere Erklärung auf den Geleitscheinen nicht

notwendig, zu der übrigens die Kaiserliche Gesandtschaft eventuell auch erst einer Ermächtigung aus Berlin bedürfte.

DER KAISERLICHE GESANDTE
Im Auftrage

(S) VON STUMM

*An die Commission for Relief in Belgium
Rotterdam*

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[21] [DOCUMENT NO. 612](#)

Letter,
20 March 1,917, Swiss LEGATION LONDON TO C.R.B., announcing that the German Government has consented that the Swiss Legation at Washington and the Consul General at Montreal may issue safe-conducts for C.R.B. ships

Swiss LEGATION, LONDON,
March 20th 1917

DEAR MR. POLAND:

The Swiss Minister desires me to inform you that according to telegraphic information from the Swiss Government, the German Government have given their consent to safe conducts to be issued by the Swiss Legation at Washington and by the Consul General at Montreal to the supply ships of your Commission. These ships ining from America must sail north the Schettlands Islands and must avoid the Channel and all the areas lying within the German blockade limit.

M. Carlin has brought this to the knowledge of the Foreign Office.

Believe me, dear Mr. Poland,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) C. R. PARAVICINI

.

[22] [DOCUMENT NO. 613](#)

Telegram,
22 March 1917, C.R.B. ROTTERDAM TO C.R.B. LONDON, quoting agreement

of Germans that C.R.B. cargoes in English ports may leave on the 1st May but with conditions([486](#))

ROTTERDAM, 22 March 1917

Relief Commission
London

Brussels wires: Wednesday. Received today following letter from governing authorities:

"With reference to our letter No. 10853 February 24th, 1917, you are respectfully informed that the Imperial Government agrees to let all steamers of the Belgian Relief Commission being in English ports leave on May 1st, 1917, and pass the blockaded waters secure against attacks on ways which are still to be determined and this under the following conditions:

1. The Relief Commission must inform by April 10th in a binding manner:

a) whether England agrees with the departure on May 1st of ships with cargoes;

b) what are the ships (name and sign of distinction) which are willing to make use of the offer of departure and where the ships are located.

2. The routes which will have to be followed by the ships shall be indicated by the German Government as soon as an answer to 1 will be given. The attention is called to the fact that security against danger of mines may not be given even on May 1st.

It is suggested that the above be transmitted to the knowledge of C.R.B. London, and that the desired declarations be asked for as soon as possible so that the relief ships being in English ports may soon be given the opportunity to proceed on their return journey with security."

German authorities would appreciate any light that can be thrown upon the reason which compelled "Storstad" to apparently be in forbidden zone when she was torpedoed. Suggest to take up immediately question of ships in English ports so that plan can be fully settled before April 10th.

RELIEF COMMISSION

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Verbal Note,
31 March 1917, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO SPANISH EMBASSY
BERLIN, agreeing to provide safe-conducts for C.R.B. cargoes from the Argentine
and inclosing instructions to German representatives in Buenos Aires and Las
Palmas

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
31 March 1917

VERBAL NOTE

In answer to the note of February 27, ultimo---No. Reg. 2477. Belgian Affairs---
which has crossed the verbal note of this Department of February 28th, ultimo---
No. II U 728, treating the same matter, the Department of Foreign Affairs has the
honor to inform the Royal Embassy that the Imperial Government consents to its
propositions concerning safe-conducts for the boats of the Commission for Relief
to Belgians coming from Argentine or touching Las Palmas with a cargo bought
during the traveling.

As to the particulars, the Imperial Department has the honor to refer to the
memorandum annexed to its verbal note of February 28th ultimo II U 728---and to
the instructions to the Imperial Legation at Buenos Aires and to the Imperial Vice
Consulate at Las Palmas, of which copies are attached hereafter.

The Foreign Office especially calls attention to the fact that for the ships which
have on board cargoes bought en route, no security before their arrival at Las
Palmas can be guaranteed.

In view of the present postal difficulties, the Imperial Department would be grateful
to the Royal Government to transmit the letters with enclosed annexes, to their
destination at Buenos Aires and at Las Palmas.

[Translation]

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[24]

Letter,
15 June 1917, ZIMMERMANN To BERNABÉ, stating the German Government's
approval of the new arrangements for relief ([Document 506](#), chapter XII, is an
English translation of the following)

Auswärtiges Amt
Nr. II U 1928
86543

BERLIN, le 15 juin, 1917

*A Son Excellence
M. Polo de Bernabé
Ambassadeur d'Espagne*

MONSIEUR L'AMBASSADEUR,

En réponse à la lettre que Votre Excellence a bien voulu m'adresser le 31 mai dernier, Affaires Belges, No: Reg. L3198, j'ai l'honneur de Vous informer que M. le Gouverneur Général de Belgique a donné son assentiment aux propositions contenues dans la note concernant l'organisation de la "Commission for Relief in Belgium" et du nouveau "Comité Neutre pour la Protection du Ravitaillement" que Messieurs les Ministres Protecteurs ont adressée à Monsieur le Baron von der Lancken Wakenitz le 1^{er} mai. dr.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, l'assurance de ma très haute considération.

(Signé) ZIMMERMANN

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[25] [DOCUMENT NO. 615](#)

Conference,
29 August 1917, between GENERAL GOVERNMENT, C.R.B., AND DUTCH
COAL MERCHANTS, concerning arrangements for furnishing Belgian coal in
Rotterdam for C.R.B. ships

Der Delegierte
des
General-Gouverneurs in Belgien
bei der
Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandtschaft
in den Niederlanden
Tagebuch B/D Nr. 10935
B Anlage

HAAG, den 29. August 1917

Betr. Bunkerkohle für die C.R.B.

Unter Bezugnahme auf die Besprechung von heute Morgen wir anbei die vereinbarte Aufzeichnung überreicht mit der Bitte, sie morgen Herrn Direktor

Frowein, wie verabredet, zwecks Gegenzeichnung zu unterbreiten und freundlichst hierher zurückzugeben.

(gez.) DR. BEHRENS

HAAG, den 29. August 1917

Besprechung über deutsche Bunkerkohle für die C.R.B.---Dampfer im Büro von Dr. Behrens am 29. August 1917.

Teilnehmer:

HERREN	Handelsbeirat der
GEHEIMRAT	Kaiserlich
GNEIST,	Deutschen
	Gesandtschaft

DR. MELCHIOR,
DR. BEHRENS, Delegierter des General-Gouverneurs in Belgien,
J. W. VAN BEUNINGEN, Steenkolen-Handelsvereinigung,
J. VAN DER SLUIS, Commission for Relief,
DE BABY, bei dem Delegierten
DR. MOLTSMANN, bei dem Handelsbeirat.

Es besteht Einverständnis über die folgenden Punkte:

1. Die Kohlenausfuhrstelle West erteilt dem Rheinisch-Westfälischen Kohlsyndikat ab 1. September 1917 monatlich Ausfuhrbewilligungen bis zu 12.000 tons Bunkerkohlen zur Lieferung an die Commission for Relief, Rotterdam.
2. Die für die C.R.B. angeführten Kohlen werden unabhängig von dem holländischen Kohlenkontingent geliefert.
3. Die C.R.B. hat durch Vermittlung der Steenkolen-Handelsvereinigung hier für ihre Schiffe einen Bestand von Bunkerkohle angelegt, der gegenwärtig rund 9.000 t beträgt. Sie ist berechtigt, aus den monatlichen Zufuhren diesen Bestand bis auf 12.000 Tonnen aufzufüllen und in dieser Höhe zu halten.
4. Die Rijkskolendistributie erkennt grundsätzlich an, dass mit deutschem Einverständnis über die unter dieser Abmachung gelieferte Kohle nur die C.R.B. Rotterdam für ihrem Gebrauch verfügen kann.

Sollte indessen die Rijkskolendistributie den Wunsch haben, in dringenden Ausnahmefällen über Einzelpartien zu verfügen, so soll dies einverstanden sein, sofern gleichwertiger Ersatz unverzüglich gestellt wird.

5. Es ist einverstanden, dass der von der Steenkolenhandelsvereinigung unter Beitritt der Rijkskolendistributie mit der Commission for Relief, Brüssel, am 14. April 1917 geschlossene Vertrag erloschen ist.

Die Kontrolle über die richtige Ausführung der vorstehenden Abmachung wird von dem Delegierten des General-Gouverneurs etc. ausgeübt werden.

[26]

DOCUMENT NO. 616

Letter,

17 May 1918, GENERAL GOVERNMENT IN BELGIUM TO C.R.B. BRUSSELS, stating that the German Government have agreed to furnish safeconducts at Bergen for cargoes bought afloat by the C.R.B.

Abschrift

Politische Abteilung

beim

Generalgouverneur in Belgien

J. No. V. 5197

BRÜSSEL, den 17. Mai 1918

Mit Rücksicht auf die Bestrebungen der Commission for Relief in Belgium, dem jetzigen Getreidemangel dadurch abzuhelpen, dass nach anderen Häfen unterwegs befindliche Schiffe mit Lebensmitteln auf telegraphischem Wege durch die C.R.B. gechartert und über Bergen nach Rotterdam abgelenkt werden sollen, ist die Kaiserliche Regierung von hier aus gebeten worden, ihre Zustimmung hierzu zu erteilen und die entsprechenden Massnahmen für die Ausstellung von Geleitscheinen an solche Schiffe zu treffen.

Nach einem telegraphischen Bescheide hat sich die Kaiserliche Regierung mit vorstehendem Antrage einverstanden erklärt. Die Erteilung der Geleitscheine wird durch den Marine-Attaché bei der Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandtschaft in Kristiania erfolgen. Die Einzelheiten über die in Betracht kommenden Schiffe würden in jedem Falle seitens der Kaiserlichen Gesandtschaft im Haag, welche seitens der C.R.B. in Rotterdam entsprechend zu unterrichten wäre, an die Kaiserliche Gesandtschaft in Kristiania mitzuteilen sein.

Da die Instruktionen der deutschen Seestreitkräfte diesen Fall der Geleitscheinerteilung nicht enthalten, kann eine unbedingte Sicherheit für die freie Fahrt nicht vor Ablauf von drei Monaten übernommen werden.

Es darf gebeten werden, Vorstehendes der C.R.B. in Rotterdam zur Kenntnis bringen zu wollen.

(gez.) RIETH

*An die Commission for Relief in Belgium
Brüssel*

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[27]

DOCUMENT NO. 617

Declaration,
18 October 1918, GERMAN LEGATION AT THE HAGUE TO DUTCH
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, that safe-conduct passes are valid also for
refugee supplies

Kaiserlich Deutsche
Gesandtschaft

DEN HAAG, den 18. Oktober 1918

ERKLAERUNG

Die Kaiserlich Deutsche Gesandtschaft beehrt sich, das Koeniglich Niederlaendische Ministerium der Auswaertigen Angelegenheiten dahin zu benachrichtigen, dass die deutscherseits fuer Dampfer der Commission for Relief in Belgium ausgefertigten Geleitscheine auch fuer diejenigen Waren Gueltigkeit haben sollen, welche nach Loeschung in Rotterdam fuer die Versorgung der neuerdings in Holland erwarteten Fluechtlinge aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich hier im Lande verbraucht werden.

DER KAISERLICHE GESANDTE
IM AUFTRAGE

(Z.) MALTZAN

**THE COMMISSION
FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM**

CHAPTER XVII.
GERMAN GUARANTEES AND DECLARATIONS, cont'd

2. Guarantees in the General Government Zone in Belgium. 1914-1918

A majority of the documents in this group relate to the privileged status of the supplies for relief. The most important are the guarantees of the immunity of imported supplies and the local harvest from military requisition or for any purpose except for the benefit of the Belgian people. Besides these fundamental undertakings there are others relating to various details of handling and distribution---customs duties, the use of canal boats and tugs, freight charges, the privileges of C.R.B. delegates and local relief officials to make inspection trips in certain zones. These are by no means all the guarantees of this general category issued by the Germans, but they include the most important and illustrate the variety of matters which were affected.

The guarantees varied in origin as in subject matter; some were formal statements by the Governor-General; some were decrees and others letters or memoranda from department officials. They were addressed to the Patron Ministers, to the Comité National, and to the C.R.B. After April 1916 when the Governor-General established the Vermittlungsstelle([487](#)) as a special department of the German Government in Belgium to handle relief matters, much of the confusion and competition among German departments for authority in relief affairs disappeared. The Vermittlungsstelle became the channel through which the relief organizations secured new German undertakings. The more important questions, however, were handled as before by formal communications between the Governor-General and the Patron Ministers.

.

[28] DOCUMENT NO. 618

Letter,
19 September 1914, VON LÜTTWITZ TO SHALER, agreeing to furnish passes for imported relief provisions

Militär-Gouverneur von Brüssel
den 19ten September 1914

*Herrn Millard King Shaler
Hochwohlgeboren Brüssel*

Der Transport von Lebensmitteln, die für die Verpflegung der armen Brüsseler Bevölkerung dienen sollen, wird hierdurch grundsätzlich genehmigt. Ich mache

aber darauf aufmerksam, dass während der Dauer militärischer Operationen innerhalb Belgiens die Benutzung der Kanäle ausgeschlossen, die Benutzung von Autos gefährlich und der Transport mittels Eisenbahn unter Umständen nur mit Verzögerung möglich ist.

Ich bin bereit, Ihnen Bescheinigungen, die als Ausweise für Ihre Lebensmitteltransporte dienen sollen, in der vorgeschlagenen Form zu unterstempeln. Sie wollen deshalb gefälligst sich derartige Formulare in der erforderlichen Zahl drucken lassen und zur Abstempelung hierher reichen.

(Sgd.) VON LÜTTWITZ
General-Major

.

[29]

Letter,

17 September 1914, VON DER GOLTZ TO WHITLOCK, agreeing that the German Government will not requisition supplies destined for Belgian civil population ([Document 1](#), chapter I, is an English translation of this letter)

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[30]

Letter,

16 October 1914, VON DER GOLTZ TO THE COMITÉ CENTRAL, guaranteeing freedom from requisition of imported foodstuffs of all kinds ([Document 7](#), chapter I, is an English translation of the following)

General-Gouvernement in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 16. Oktober 1914

Auf die sehr gefällige Zuschrift vom heutigen Tage beehre ich mich ganz ergebenst zu erwidern, dass ich das Unternehmen des Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation mit lebhafter Genugtuung begrüße und kein Bedenken trage, hiermit ausdrücklich und förmlich die Versicherung zu geben, dass die zur Ernährung der Zivilbevölkerung von Belgien seitens des Komitees eingeführten Lebensmittel aller Art ausschliesslich für die Bedürfnisse der Bevölkerung Belgiens vorbehalten sind, dass diesselben demnach von der Requisition seitens der Militärbehörden frei sein sollen und endlich, dass dieselben zur ausschliesslichen Verfügung des Komitees verbleiben.

FRH. v. D. GOLTZ,
Generalfeldmarschall

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[31] [DOCUMENT NO. 619](#)

Certificate,
29 October 1914, from General Government, protecting relief provisions and canal boats transporting them from requisition

BESCHEINIGUNG

BRÜSSEL, den 29. Oktober 1914

Die Gesandtschaft der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika in Brüssel ist berechtigt Lebensmittel von Holland nach Brüssel auf dem Wasserweg via Antwerpen befördern zu lassen.

Lebensmittel sowie die Fahrzeuge sind vor Requisitionen zu schützen.

Gültig bis Ende November 1914.

GENERAL-GOUVERNEMENT IN BELGIEN
Der Oberquartiermeister

(S.) SCHERENBERG

.

[32] [DOCUMENT NO. 620](#)

Letter,
5 November 1914, COMMISSIONER FOR BANKS TO THE SOCIÉTÉ GÉNÉRALE, authorizing the use of its London funds to finance food imports

BRUSSELS, 5 November 1914

*To the Société Générale
of Belgium
Brussels*

GENTLEMEN:

In reply to your verbal request I inform you that you can be authorized to draw on your credit in the banks of London, but exclusively for the purposes of assuring the financial service of the importations of foodstuffs into Belgium.

Your drafts should be issued in such a way that you will place the necessary sums in pounds at the disposal of the Spanish-American Committee constituted for the importation of the foodstuffs. Each individual draft, to be valid, must be countersigned by one of the commissioners delegated for your institution.

(Signed) VON LUMM
Commissioner for Banks in Belgium

[Translation]

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[33]

Letter,

14 November 1914, VON DER GOLTZ TO WHITLOCK, declaring that imported relief supplies will be devoted exclusively to the civil population and that the army will discontinue requisitions of local produce ([Document 316](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of this letter)

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[34]

DOCUMENT NO. 621

Statement,

16 November 1914, by the GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE PROVINCIAL AND ETAPE AUTHORITIES, describing the relief organization and confirming the guarantees against requisition of imported supplies

Der

Verwaltungschef bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

Geschäftsnummer 5 à 212

BRÜSSEL, den 16. November 1914

Auf Wunsch des Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brüssel, rue de Naples 48, Telephon No. 140, das wie bekannt damit betraut ist, die belgische Zivilbevölkerung mit Brotfrucht, Salz und anderen Lebensmitteln, Kleidungsstücken sowie später vielleicht auch mit Petroleum zu versorgen, beehre ich mich, folgendes mitzuteilen:

1. Das Zentralkomitee steht unter dem Ehrenschatz des hiesigen spanischen und amerikanischen Gesandten. Die englische Regierung hat auf deren Intervention zugelassen, dass für das Zentralkomitee Brotgetreide aus England und Amerika auf neutralen Schiffen nach neutralen Häfen (und zwar zunächst nach Rotterdam) befördert werden unter der Bedingung, dass die Sendungen an den amerikanischen Gesandten in Brüssel gerichtet, und dass die Getreidevorräte lediglich zur Versorgung der belgischen Zivilbevölkerung verwendet werden.

Diese Zusicherung und die aus ihr folgende Befreiung der in den Mühlen und den Depots des Comités sowie auf dem Transport (Wasser- Schienenweg und Landweg) befindlichen und durch eine Abschrift kenntlichen Vorräte von jeglicher militärischer Requisition hat der Herr General-Gouverneur dem amerikanischen und spanischen Gesandten ausdrücklich und förmlich gegeben. Diese Zusicherung ist sinngemäss auch auf alle zur Linderung der Not der belgischen Zivilbevölkerung eingeführten Sachen zu erstrecken.

2. Die Heranführung der in Rotterdam eintreffenden Getreidemengen erfolgt auf Anweisung eines in Rotterdam bestehenden Zweiges des von dem amerikanischen Kapitän Lucey geleiteten Komitees, das die Getreidemengen entweder unter Benutzung der Schifffahrt nach Antwerpen und von dort entweder mit der Eisenbahn oder auf dem Kanalwege in die belgischen Mühlen und Depots, oder unter Benutzung der holländischen Bahnlinien und unter Weiterführung auf den angrenzenden belgischen Linien abführt. Die Depots stehen unter amerikanischem Schutze und werden von einem amerikanischen Staatsangehörigen verwaltet. Die Zuführung des Getreides von Rotterdam seitens aller in Betracht kommenden Verkehrsbehörden wird in jeder Weise zu fördern sein. Ich bitte daher den in Betracht kommenden Verkehrsbehörden entsprechende Anweisungen zugehen lassen zu wollen. Ebenfalls möchte den Depotsverwaltern tunlichstes Entgegenkommen zu zeigen sein.

3. In jeder Provinz Belgiens hat das Zentralkomitee Unterkomitees eingesetzt, welche beauftragt sind die Bedürfnisse der Provinzen im Einvernehmen mit dem zuständigen Präsidenten der Zivilverwaltung festzustellen und durch dessen Vermittlung brieflich, oder soweit erforderlich, telegraphisch, hierher behufs Weitergabe an das Zentralkomitee in Brüssel, zu übermitteln. Weiterhin haben die Provinzkomitees die Aufgabe, für die Verteilung der Vorräte in die einzelnen Gemeinden ihres Bezirkes Sorge zu tragen. Es erscheint dringend erwünscht, dass die Vorsitzenden der Provinzkomitees im Verkehr mit den einzelnen Gemeinden der Provinz hinsichtlich der Passerteilung sowie besonders hinsichtlich der Beförderungsmittel von seiten der zuständigen Militär- und Zivilbehörden möglichstes Entgegenkommen finden.

Das Zentralkomitee besteht aus 18 sämtlich in Brüssel wohnenden Mitgliedern, von denen je 2 aus den einzelnen 9 belgischen Provinzen stammen. Das Zentralkomitee wird demnächst 4 Personen bezeichnen, welche beauftragt sind die

Tätigkeit der Provinzkomitees zu kontrollieren, weil ohne die Kontrolle die begründete Befürchtung besteht, dass ungerechtfertigte Ansprüche von einzelnen Provinzen dem Zentralkomitee gegenüber erhoben werden, die eine gleichmässige Verteilung der Vorräte für ganz Belgien in Frage stellen würden.

Die Namen der Vorsitzenden der Provinzial-Komitees sind folgende:

Ch. Janssen	Provinz Brabant
Louis Franck	Provinz Antwerpen
Constant Hendrickx	Provinz Ostflandern
Fulgence Masson	Provinz Hennegau
Paul Van Hoegaerden	Provinz Lüttich
le Baron Goffinet, Auguste	Provinz Luxemburg
le Baron A. d'Huart	Provinz Namur

4. Die Befreiung von Requisitionen bezieht sich gleichmässig auf diejenigen Vorräte, welche seitens der Armee-Intendantur in Mengen von je 5.000 Tonnen aus den in Antwerpen vorgefundenen Vorräten dem Zentralkomitee verteilt und von diesem in den 5 Mühlen in Brüssel, 3 Mühlen in Löwen und einer Mühle in Vilvorde zum Vermahlen gebracht und von dort zum Teil bereits in die Depots nach Brüssel, Mons, Charleroi, Lüttich und Verviers überführt worden sind.

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[35] [DOCUMENT NO. 622](#)

Letter,
10 December 1914, BELGIAN RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION TO C.R.B.,
confirming the reduction in freight rates on imported relief supplies

BRUSSELS, 10 December 1914

*The Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Brussels*

As we informed your representative on the 7th of this month we are willing to grant, from the 16th of December, a reduction in the loading tariff for foodstuffs (wheat, flour, rice, maize, and dried leguminous plants) imported by rail by the Comité de Secours for the relief of the Belgian population, on the basis of 5 cents per 1,000 Kgs. (1 ton) at a minimum freight rate of 10 francs per waggon. This represents a reduction of 50 per cent of the existing freight rate. The consignment must be sent with a certificate signed by the delegate of the Brussels Central Committee or of the Provincial Committee. The certificate is to have the following wording:

"We certify that it is consignment of foodstuffs of the Comité de Secours in Brussels, for the relief of the Belgian civilian population."

In order to notify the respective authorities, we should be glad to know, as soon as possible, which committees are authorized to give those certificates. At the same time we must make it a condition that the sender and the consignee be instructed to give, whenever required to do so, a proof to the railway authorities of the origin and destination of the merchandise.

Up to the 15th of December, we are willing to grant the same reduction on the receipt of a claim for restitution which must be addressed to us together with the respective certificates and bills of lading.

(Signed) LEO
Belgian Railroad Administration

[Translation]

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[Fig. 22. GERMAN GUARANTEE, 16 OCTOBER 1917, SIGNED BY GOVERNOR GENERAL VON DER GOLTZ](#)

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[36] DOCUMENT NO. 623

Letter,
12 December 1914, VON SANDT TO VILLALOBAR, guaranteeing from requisition imported wearing apparel as well as clothing collected in Belgium for charitable purposes

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 12. Dezember 1914

Auf das sehr gefällige Schreiben vom 22. v. M. beehre ich mich Euerer Exzellenz ganz ergebenst mitzuteilen, dass der Herr General-gouverneur auch die Kleidungsstücke, die das Comité National einführt, sowie die zum Zwecken der Wohltätigkeit angefertigten und aufbewahrten Bekleidungsgegenstände in den belgischen Arbeitsstätten und Dépôts unter den Schutz gegen militärische Requisitionen gestellt hat.

Ich darf Euere Exzellenz bitten, den Interessenten hiervon Kenntnis geben zu wollen.

Mit dem Ausdruck vollkommenster Hochachtung habe ich die Ehre zu verbleiben,

Euerer Exzellenz sehr ergebener

(S.) VON SANDT

*An Seine Exzellenz dem Königlich Spanischen Minister
Herrn Marquis de Villalobar,
Hier*

.

[37]

DOCUMENT NO. 624

Letter,

24 December 1914, MINISTER OF FINANCE TO THE C.R.B., stating that the Governor-General had granted exemption of customs-duty on imported flour

Ministère des Finances

BRUXELLES, le 24 décembre 1914

MONSIEUR,

Sous confirmation de la lettre qui vous a été adressée le 22 décembre courant par M. l'Administrateur Directeur Général Janssens, j'ai l'honneur de vous faire savoir qu'un arrêté de M. le Gouverneur Général en date du 17 de ce mois, dont je viens de recevoir connaissance, accorde l'exemption des droits d'entrée pour les farines étrangères livrées au Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

En conséquence, les instructions nécessaires ont été données à la douane de Loozen en vue de la restitution de la somme de 8.000 fr. qui a été consignée pour les farines chargées à bord du bateau "Emanuel," auquel se rapporte votre requête du 22 de ce mois, n° 25.

Agréez, Monsieur, l'assurance de ma considération la plus distinguée.

Pour l'Administrateur-Directeur Général des
contributions directes, douanes et accises:

LE DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL

The Commission for Relief in Belgium
48 Rue de Naples
Bruxelles

.

[38] [DOCUMENT NO. 625](#)

[Label](#),

1 January 1915, authorized by GENERAL GOVERNMENT, protecting shipments of relief supplies from requisitions.

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[39] [DOCUMENT NO. 626](#)

Letter,

13 January 1915, VON SANDT TO WHITLOCK, informing him of the extension of the guarantees to exempt imported fodder from military requisition

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

Geschäftsnummer VII-450 II

BRÜSSEL, den 13. Januar 1915

Euer Exzellenz beehre ich mich sehr ergebenst mitzuteilen, dass der Herr General-Gouverneur nach einer Verordnung vom 5. d. M. die Befreiung der vom Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation für die Zivilbevölkerung in Belgien aus dem Auslande eingeführten Lebensmittel u.s.w. von jeder militärischen Requisition auch auf Futtermittel und Vieh ausgedehnt hat, welche das Comité einführen wird.

Es sind ferner, wie aus der beifolgenden Verordnung des Herrn General-Gouverneurs vom 26. Dezember v. J. hervorgeht, bestimmte Tierarten vor militärischem Zugriff geschützt. Somit ist den von dem Comité National, section agricole, vorgetragenen Wünschen weitgehende Rechnung getragen worden.

Mit dem Ausdruck vollkommenster Hochachtung habe ich die Ehre zu verbleiben,
Euerer Exzellenz sehr ergebener

(S.) DR. VON SANDT

*An Seine Exzellenz
den Minister der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika,
Herrn Brand Whitlock,
Brüssel*

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[40] [DOCUMENT NO. 627](#)

Letter,
19 January 1915, VON SANDT TO THE C.R.B., stating that importations of all relief supplies are duty free

BRUSSELS, 19 January 1915

*The Commission for Relief in Belgium, B
russels*

GENTLEMEN:

In response to your favor of December 31st, I have the honor to inform you that bacon, ham, and apples are in accordance with the Belgian tariff already duty-free. The same thing will probably prove to be the case with the other articles of food which you import, since most articles of food are duty-free in Belgium. Consequently no further measures are necessary in order to secure the duty-free importation of such articles of food.

(Signed) DR. SANDT
GENERAL GOVERNMENT IN BELGIUM

[Translation]

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[41]

Decree,
21 January 1915, by VON BISSING, prohibiting the requisition, by the military, of foodstuffs and fodder of any kind replacement of which must be effected by

importation ([Document 322](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

General-Gouvernement
in
Belgien

IV a No. 533/1.IIa

BRÜSSEL, den 21. 1. 1915

Mit meiner Zustimmung ist durch Vermittlung des Auswärtigen Amtes dem Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation die Zusicherung gemacht worden, dass *sämtlichen mir unterstellten Truppen* verboten wird, Nahrungs- oder künstliche Futtermittel irgend welcher Art, deren Ersatz durch Einfuhr seitens des Comités zu erfolgen hat, zu requirieren.

Indem ich im Anschlusse an den Erlass vom 24. 11. 14. IVa. IIb. Nr. 727/II. II dieses Verbot ergehen lasse, bemerke ich, dass es sich bei den vom Comité eingeführten Vorräten bisher um Mehl und Brot getreide, Reis, Erbsen, Bohnen, Salz, Mais und Zucker gehandelt hat, dass aber in nächster Zeit voraussichtlich auch Futterkuchen und andere künstliche Futtermittel werden eingeführt werden.

Vorräte dieser Art dürfen deshalb von den mir unterstellten Truppen überhaupt nicht mehr ---also auch nicht gegen Bezahlung---requiriert werden.

Die in Ziffer 6 meines Erlasses vom 29. 12. 14. IVa 1628/12 I bezüglich der in Antwerpen pp. festgehaltenen Massengüter gemachten Ausnahme gilt auch im vorliegenden Falle.

(gez.) FRHR. VON BISSING
Für die Richtigkeit:

(gez.) KRITZLER
Feld-Intendanturrat

.

[42]

[DOCUMENT NO. 628](#)

Letter,
21 January 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO WHITLOCK, exempting
pharmaceutical articles from requisition

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 21. Januar 1915

EUER EXZELLENZ

Beehre ich mich auf die Note vom 28. Dezember 1914, sehr ergebenst zu erwidern, dass der Herr Generalgouverneur auch die vom Comité National aus dem Auslande eingeführten pharmazeutischen Artikel von jeder Requisition im Gebiet des Generalgouvernements befreit hat. Ich bitte ergebenst um Benachrichtigung des Comité National.

Mit dem Ausdrucke vorzüglicher Hochachtung, habe ich die Ehre zu verbleiben
Euer Exzellenz

Sehr ergebener
Im Auftrage:

(S.) KAUFMANN

*An Seine Exzellenz
den Minister der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika
Herrn Brand Whitlock, Brüssel*

.

[43] [DOCUMENT NO. 629](#)

Letter,
24 January 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO COMITÉ NATIONAL,
exempting relief supplies from canal tolls in the Occupation Zone

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 24. Januar 1915

Auf das Schreiben vom 31 v. Mts. u. Js.

Ihrem Antrag auf Gewährung von Abgabefreiheit für Ihre Transporte auf den Kanälen habe ich für das Okkupationsgebiet, soweit dem Staate Einnahmen aus den Kanalgebühren erwachsen, stattgegeben und das Finanzministerium mit der entsprechenden Weisung versehen.

*An
das Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation
Hier
rue des Colonies 66 III*

.

[44] [DOCUMENT NO. 630](#)

Declaration,
25 January 1915, by the GENERAL GOVERNMENT, freeing benzine and
automobile tires imported for the relief organization from requisition

General-Gouvernement in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 25ten Januar 1915

Das General-Gouvernement gibt die Erklärung ab, dass das von der Gesandtschaft
der Vereinigten Staaten aus Holland einzuführende Benzin, sowie Automobilreifen
von deutschen Truppen oder Behörden keinesfalls requiriert wird.

VON SEITEN DES GENERAL-GOUVERNEMENTS
DER OBERQUARTIERMEISTER

(signature illegible)
Oberstlieutenant

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[45]

Letter,
20 February 1915, VON BISSING TO HEINEMAN (FOR HOOVER), stating the
regulations and limitations laid down for the American representatives ([Document
32](#), chapter II, is an English translation of this letter)

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[46] [DOCUMENT NO. 631](#)

Letter,
8 April 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., permitting the
American flag to be hoisted over the central warehouse in Brussels and white flags
of the Comité National over the smaller stores

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

Geschäftsnummer VII. 1293

BRÜSSEL, den 8. April 1915

Auf das gefl. Schreiben vom 23. März d. J.

Der Herr Generalgouverneur hat sich, dem dortigen Wunsche entsprechend, damit einverstanden erklärt, dass zur Kennzeichnung des neutralen Characters der dem Comité National gehörigen, unter amerikanischem Schutze stehenden Warenlager an dem Zentrallager des Comités in Brüssel sowie an den Hauptlagern in jeder Provinz am Sitze des Gouverneurs die amerikanische Flagge angebracht wird. Dagegen sollen an allen anderen Lagern des Comités nur weisse Fahnen mit der roten Aufschrift "Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation" Verwendung finden. Die Truppen sind darauf hingewiesen worden, dass alle Lager des Comités, welche eine amerikanische oder die Flagge des Comités tragen, vor jeglicher Requisition geschützt sind. Vorstehendes bezieht sich, wie ich ausdrücklich bemerke, nur auf das Gebiet des General-Gouvernements.

Ich ersuche ergebenst, das Comité National zu veranlassen, die Orte und Stellen, an welchen sich die einzelnen Lager befinden, alsbald den zuständigen Herren Militärgouverneuren mitzuteilen.

(gez.) D. v. SANDT

*An die
Commission for Relief in Belgium,
66 rue des Colonies,
Brüssel*

.

[47]

DOCUMENT NO. 632

Letter,
2 May 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., limiting importation
of drugs from foreign countries to those not procurable in Germany

The Administrative Head
to the
Governor-General in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 2 May 1915

*To the Commission for Relief in Belgium
Brussels*

GENTLEMEN:

It has come to my attention that considerable quantities of drugs of all sorts have been imported into Belgium from foreign countries by the Commission for Relief in Belgium. In order to guard against injury to a German industry, since Germany has heretofore supplied the major part of Belgium's drugs, I must insist that only those wares shall be imported by the Commission as can at present not be supplied from Germany (for example-castor-oil, ipecacuanha, senega, bolygala, glycerine, vaseline, camphor, bismuth, as well as opium, morphine, and codeine in small quantities). Any other drugs than those mentioned I must request that you do not import from other countries, but secure from Germany if you need them,

Kindly acknowledge receipt of this communication.

For the Administrative Head

(Signed) KAUFMANN

[Translation]

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[48] [DOCUMENT NO. 633](#)

Letter,
7 June 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., limiting exports from
Belgium to Northern France

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
General gouverneur in Belgien

VII 2486

BRUSSELS, 7 June 1915

*The Commission for Relief in Belgium
Brussels*

Your favor of May 26, 1915, to the Governor General

DEAR SIRs:

Through an agreement under date of April 13, with the Supreme Command the Commission have undertaken the revictualling of the population of the occupied territory by means of foodstuffs to be imported from abroad.

The exportation of foodstuffs from Belgium to Northern France was not thought of. However, at a special request of the Commission, and in view of the urgency, I have already issued the following export permits:

On June 2nd: 25,000 Kg. sugar; 25,000 Kg. coffee.

On June 5th: 100,000 Kg. salt, 10,000 Kg. vinegar, 13,000 Kg. edible oils, 500 Kg. maize, 300 Kg. pepper, 25,000 Kg. crystallized sugar, 25,000 Kg. coffee, 25,000 Kg. soft soap, 25,000 Kg. chicory.

Departing from the above principle, the Commission, by their letter of the 26th of May to the Governor General, have now asked for a general authorization to export monthly large quantities of goods from Belgium to Northern France. To my regret, however, I cannot see my way to give such a general authorization. On the other hand, I am prepared to issue export permits in occasional cases, keeping in view the following points:

As long as there is an ample supply in Belgium, and part of this supply can be removed without endangering the victualling of the Belgian population, I will accord permit, for example, for salt, vinegar, roasted chicory, soft soap (the latter being under the competence of the Commissar des Kriegsministeriums). I will also issue permits for such goods as are imported from abroad by the Comité National, and which are intended for reforwarding to France, such goods having been stored for a limited time only in their warehouses in Belgium. Proof of this would have to be given with the export requests for edible oils, condensed milk, macaroni, etc. The export of sugar would only be allowed in small quantities as the supply of crystallized and refined sugar is not large in Belgium.

As it appears from the enclosed documents, which please return to me, I have before me several requests for exportation of yeast. But as the production of yeast in Belgium is much smaller now than in time of peace, according to information from the Belgian Ministère des Finance, and is scarcely sufficient for the needs of the country, I can only allow the exportation of yeast if the Commission undertake to furnish the yeast producers in Belgium with the necessary raw materials for the increase in the production of yeast (as put forth in the letter from the Comité d'Alimentation de Lille).

I shall be glad to receive a prompt reply and to know the position you take up regarding the three enclosed requests for importation, which please return to me after perusal.

(Signed)_____

[Translation]

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[49]

Letter,

26 June 1915, VON BISSING TO WHITLOCK, objecting to extension of the activities of the relief organization, particularly the help given to the unemployed ([Document 36](#), chapter II, is an English translation of the following)

General-Gouvernement in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, 26 juin 1915

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai l'honneur de porter à la connaissance de Votre Excellence quelques mesures, que j'ai cru devoir prendre concernant le Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

La protection et les faveurs que je n'ai jamais cessé d'accorder à cette institution, font preuve de l'intérêt que je porte au Comité et à son action bienfaisante en faveur de la population belge.

Il est toutefois apparu que la sphère d'activité du Comité a pris une étendue qui n'avait pas été prévue lors de sa création. En conséquence j'ai estimé nécessaire que l'activité du Comité soit clairement délimitée et que les rapports mutuels de l'administration sous mes ordres et des sousorganes du Comité soient réglés de façon à éviter que des frictions ne se produisent, qui entraveraient nécessairement les travaux du dit Comité.

Pour ce motif et pour qu'une connaissance plus approfondie de la manière de travailler du Comité permette aux autorités du pays de faciliter la tâche de ce dernier, tout en empêchant des transgressions de pouvoir éventuelles de ses sousorganes, j'ai donné aux Gouverneurs sous mes ordres les instructions dont j'ai l'honneur ci-après de communiquer à Votre Excellence la teneur en substance:

Les autorités dans les provinces auront à tâche de se tenir informées de l'activité des nombreuses sous-organisations du Comité National dans leur district. Les présidents de l'administration civile des provinces s'efforceront de maintenir un contact permanent avec les dirigeants des comités dans leurs chefs-lieux. Ce contact s'établirait de la façon la plus utile, si les présidents assistaient aux séances régulières de ces comités, comme cela s'est d'ailleurs fait depuis des mois dans la province de Hainaut. Il est à souhaiter que les commissaires civils allemands près

les "Kreischefs" agissent de façon similaire vis-à-vis des comités régionaux de leurs districts.

La censure des correspondances des comités sera à l'avenir exercée par les autorités civiles (présidents et commissaires civils allemands) en lieu et place des autorités militaires qui l'ont exercée jusqu'à présent.

Les comités ne pourront pas donner directement des instructions aux communes; ils ne pourront pas organiser des enquêtes, envoyer des questionnaires ou circulaires aux communes, ni faire dresser par celles-ci des listes ou des statistiques quelconques sans avoir au préalable consulté le président ou le commissaire civil allemand. Les comités ne pourront pas agir auprès des communes en vue de l'obtention d'arrêtés ou de règlements en leur faveur; toutes mesures de cette espèce devront être proposées au président ou commissaire allemand compétent.

Toute entrave à la liberté personnelle ou à la liberté du commerce étant défendue, il y a lieu de ne permettre aucune menace verbale ou par écrit prononcée ou exécutée envers une personne ou une commune, soit d'arrêter la fourniture de vivres, soit d'exiger pour ces vivres un prix plus élevé, soit de lui refuser des secours. D'une manière générale il doit être défendu aux comités de faire usage de n'importe quel moyen de pression pour obtenir tant des communes que des particuliers l'obéissance à ses instructions. Toutes mesures à prendre vis-à-vis de ces derniers doivent être proposées par le comité aux autorités compétentes qui leur donneront la suite qu'elles jugeront utile.

Les relevés des prévisions de recettes et de dépenses établis mensuellement par les comités provinciaux doivent être communiqués aux présidents de l'administration civile allemande. Ceux-ci seront ainsi mis à même de rester informés au sujet du mouvement des fonds de ces comités.

En dehors des règles générales ci-dessus énumérées, j'ai encore donné pour un certain nombre de cas particuliers, les instructions suivantes:

Concernant les secours à accorder aux chômeurs, les présidents veilleront à ce que ceux-ci n'entravent pas la reprise du travail par la population ouvrière. En outre, des secours ne peuvent être remis à des ouvriers ayant refusé un travail rémunérateur.

Ayant moi-même fait procéder à des estimations des dégâts occasionnés par la guerre, toute enquête du comité à ce sujet ainsi qu'au sujet de réquisitions des troupes allemandes ne peut être autorisée.

Le Comité ayant obtenu des communes la remise de pouvoirs de police à ses inspecteurs vis-à-vis des meuniers, boulangers, etc., et les communes ayant souscrit l'obligation de faire exécuter les sanctions édictées par les inspecteurs, toutes mesures de cette espèce devront être rapportées, l'administration sous mes ordres

ayant seule qualité pour édicter ces mesures. Les surveillants du Comité ou de la Commission for Relief in Belgium ont le droit de faire des constatations concernant les abus commis par les meuniers, boulangers, etc., mais leur droit se borne à faire à ces constatations. Il leur est loisible ensuite de les communiquer aux autorités compétentes avec prière de leur donner la suite qu'elles comportent.

Toutes mesures de coercition exercées vis-à-vis des communes ou des particuliers pour l'obtention de fonds destinés à la constitution d'un capital de roulement ou à tout autre usage ne peuvent être autorisées.

Les présidents de l'administration civile s'entendront avec les dirigeants des comités pour réduire dans la mesure du possible les prix de vente des denrées alimentaires.

Toute tendance de la part du comité à monopoliser la distribution des secours en Belgique doit être empêchée. Le principe doit être maintenu que toutes autres organisations de bienfaisance, avant tout la croix rouge belge, ont le droit de fonctionner à côté et en dehors du comité.

Je ne doute pas que ces mesures prises par moi ne soient conformes aux intentions de Votre Excellence. J'en doute d'autant moins que j'ai toujours eu à coeur de respecter scrupuleusement les arrangements conclus avec le Gouvernement représenté par Votre Excellence concernant l'alimentation de la population belge. Votre Excellence se sera rendu compte que toutes les dispositions énoncées ne visent qu'au maintien des droits qui, conformément aux conventions internationales, reviennent à l'occupant du pays.

Je me flatte de l'espoir que Votre Excellence partagera ma conviction que la ligne de conduite ainsi tracée à mon administration servira à garantir un travail commun et utile, fondé sur une confiance réciproque pour le bien-être de la population belge.

Je prie Votre Excellence de bien vouloir communiquer ce qui précède au Comité National, et je saisis l'occasion pour renouveler à Votre Excellence les assurances de ma haute considération.

(S.) FRHRR. VON BISSING

A
Son Excellence
Monsieur Brand Whitlock,
Ministre des Etats-Unis d'Amérique à Bruxelles

Decree,

30 June 1915, issued by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, regarding the seizure of cereals of the harvest of 1915 in the Occupation Zone (Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens, No. 91. [Document 342](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

VERORDNUNG

über die Beschlagnahme des Brotgetreides, der Gerste und des Mehls aus dem Erntejahr 1915

Ich habe mich entschlossen, die Brotgetreideernte und die anderen unter No. 1. angeführten Erzeugnisse der Landwirtschaft dieses Jahres dem ausschliesslichen Verbrauch der Zivilbevölkerung im Bereich des Generalgouvernements zu überlassen. Zu diesem Zwecke ordne ich zunächst die Beschlagnahme der unten bezeichneten Erntevorräte nach Massgabe der nachstehenden Bestimmungen an. Durch die Beschlagnahme sollen Preistreibereien verhindert werden, die eine Verteuerung des Brotes zur Folge haben könnten; zugeleich ermöglicht die Beschlagnahme eine gerechte und den allseitigen Bedürfnissen des Landes Rechnung tragende Verteilung der Getreidevorräte und des Mehls. Ich erwarte bestimmt, dass die belgische Bevölkerung, insbesondere die landwirtschaftlichen Unternehmer, im Hinblick auf die dem Lande ausschliesslich zugute kommenden Massnahmen bei deren Durchführung willig mitarbeiten werden.

1.

Das in Belgien im Bereich des Generalgouvernements angebaute Brotgetreide aller Art, wie: Roggen, Weizen, Spelz, ebenso auch Gerste (Futter- und Braugerste) wird, gleichviel ob ungemengt oder mit anderen Getreiden gemengt, mit der Trennung vom Boden zu Gunsten der Zivilbevölkerung im Bereich des Generalgouvernements hiermit beschlagnahmt. Die Beschlagnahme erstreckt sich auch auf den Halm und das aus beschlagnahmtem Brotgetreide ermahlene Mehl (einschliesslich Dunst). Mit dem Ausdreschen wird das Stroh von dieser Beschlagnahme frei.

2.

An den beschlagnahmten Vorräten dürfen, sowie sich nicht aus den folgenden Bestimmungen etwas anderes ergibt, weder Veränderungen vorgenommen werden, noch darf durch Vereinbarung oder Vertrag über sie verfügt werden.

3.

Der Besitzer beschlagnahmter Vorräte ist berechtigt und verpflichtet, alle zur Erhaltung der Vorräte erforderlichen Handlungen vorzunehmen, er ist berechtigt und verpflichtet auszudreschen.

4.

Nimmt der Besitzer beschlagnahmter Vorräte eine zur Erhaltung derselben erforderliche Handlung innerhalb einer ihm von dem Kreischef gesetzten Frist nicht vor, so kann dieser die Handlung auf Kosten des Besitzers durch einen Dritten vornehmen lassen. Das Gleiche gilt, wenn der Besitzer das Brotgetreide nicht innerhalb einer ihm von dem Kreischef gesetzten Frist ausdrischt.

5.

Mit Gefängnis bis zu fünf Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bis zu 20.000 Mark wird bestraft:

a) wer beschlagnahmte Vorräte unbefugt bei Seite schafft, oder aus der Gemeinde, in der sie beschlagnahmt sind, unbefugt entfernt, wer sie beschädigt, zerstört, unbefugt verarbeitet oder verbraucht;

b) wer beschlagnahmte Vorräte unbefugt verkauft, kauft oder ein anderes Veräußerungs- oder Erwerbsgeschäft über sie abschliesst;

c) wer die zur Erhaltung der Vorräte erforderlichen Handlungen widerrechtlich unterlässt oder das Brotgetreide nicht binnen der ihm gesetzten Frist ausdrischt.

Als Gerichte sind die deutschen Militärgerichte zuständig.

6.

Das beschlagnahmte Getreide wird gegen Barzahlung---bei Uebernahme---durch eine von mir einzusetzende Erntekommission angekauft und der Bevölkerung im Bereiche des Generalgouvernements zugeführt werden.

7.

Der Erlass von Ausführungsvorschriften bleibt vorbehalten.

BRÜSSEL, den 30. Juni 1915

DER GENERALGOUVERNEUR IN BELGIEN
FREIHERR VON BISSING,
Generaloberst

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Letter,
3 July 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., giving provisional
exemption from requisition for C.R.B. horses

BRUSSELS, 3 July 1915

*To the Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Brussels*

In response to your favor of the 28th of June of this year, I have the honor to inform you that for the present presumably your horses are not being reduced in number by requisition, since the necessary horses for army purposes are being obtained by purchase in open market.

We are not, however, able to assure you of a freedom from requisition of horses which shall apply in all cases in the future.

Very respectfully,

for the Governor General
(Signed) MUELLER

[Translation]

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[52]

Letter,
4 July 1915, VON BISSING TO WHITLOCK, stating that the 1915 harvest of wheat will be reserved for the civil population ([Document 340](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

Der General Gouverneur
in Belgien
P.A.
J. Nr. V. 61

BRÜSSEL, den le 4 juillet 1915

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai été heureux d'apprendre par la lettre que Votre Excellence a bien voulu m'envoyer en date du 3 juillet dernier que Votre Excellence, ainsi que Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Espagne et Monsieur le Chargé d'Affaires des Pays-Bas sont d'accord avec le mémorandum que, sur mes

ordres, Monsieur le Baron von der Lancken a eu l'honneur de leur transmettre au sujet des différents arrangements à intervenir pour le Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation de la Belgique, en vue de la prochaine récolte et de la continuation du ravitaillement.

Je m'empresse de confirmer ci-après à Votre Excellence le texte de ce mémorandum:

"Le Gouverneur Général en Belgique tiendra à la disposition de la population civile belge du territoire placé sous ses ordres le produit de la récolte de blé de 1915 servant à la fabrication du pain (froment et seigle). De son côté, le Comité National (et la Commission for Relief in Belgium) sous le patronage de MM. les Ministres d'Espagne, des Etats-Unis d'Amérique et des Pays-Bas, continuera à importer en Belgique, en quantités mensuelles à peu près égales, jusqu'à la récolte de 1916, les denrées nécessaires à l'alimentation de la population civile dans le territoire occupé sous les ordres du Gouverneur Général en Belgique.

"Aussitôt que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général aura pris une décision au sujet de la répartition de la récolte de 1915 du blé désigné ci-dessus, cette décision sera portée à la connaissance de MM. les Protecteurs."

Après avoir reçu la lettre de Votre Excellence je constate à nouveau avec satisfaction que l'oeuvre du ravitaillement, placée sous le patronage des dignes représentants des trois puissances neutres, continuera jusqu'à la récolte de 1916, sous les auspices de leurs gouvernements, à assurer l'alimentation de la population belge.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Ministre, les assurances de ma haute considération.

(S.) FRHRR. v. BISSING

*Son Excellence Monsieur Brand Whitlock
Ministre des Etats-Unis d'Amérique
à Bruxelles*

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[53]

Decree,
23 July 1915, by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning methods of handling the 1915 crop of bread grains in the General Government Zone (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens, No. 102. [Document 343](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

VERORDNUNG

betreffend Brotgetreideernte 1915 im Gebiet des General-Gouvernements

Die Ziffer 6 der Verordnung vom 30. Juni 1915---Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für Belgien Seite 747 ff---bestimmt:

"Das beschlagnahmte Getreide wird gegen Barzahlung---bei Uebernahme---durch eine von mir einzusetzende Erntekommission angekauft und der Bevölkerung im Bereiche des General-Gouvernements zugeführt werden."

Teilweise abändernd verordne ich hierzu:

1. Ich erteile dem Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation das alleinige Recht zum Ankauf der beschlagnahmten Vorräte und etwaiger Restbestände an Brotgetreide gegen Barzahlung zu einem Einheitspreis, den ich festsetzen werde.

Die Beschlagnahme wird durch diesen Ankauf nicht aufgehoben.

2. Als mir unterstellte Behörden werden eingesetzt in Brüssel eine Zentral-Ernte-Kommission und in jeder Provinz-Hauptstadt eine Ernte-Kommission für die betreffende Provinz.

3. Die Zentral-Ernte-Kommission ist eine mir unmittelbar unterstellte Behörde, deren Vorsitzenden, Mitglieder und deren ständige Stellvertreter ich ernennen werde. Den Vorsitz führt ein Vertreter des General-Gouvernements.

Als Mitglieder werde ich in die Kommission berufen je einen Vertreter:

- a) der Zivilverwaltung, welcher zugleich stellvertretender Vorsitzender ist,
- b) der Politischen Abteilung,
- c) des Generalkommissars für die Banken,
- d) der Armee-Intendantur des General-Gouvernements,
- e) des Comité National,
- f) der Commission for Relief

Bei Stimmengleichheit gibt der Vorsitzende den Ausschlag. Der Vorsitzende hat das Recht, Sachverständige mit beratender Stimme zu den Sitzungen heranzuziehen.

Die Verhandlungssprache ist deutsch.

4. Die Erntekommission für jede Provinz setzt sich zusammen aus:

- a) dem Präsidenten der Zivilverwaltung bzw. dessen Vertreter als Vorsitzenden,
- b) zwei Offizieren oder Beamten, Mitgliedern des Wirtschaftsausschusses der Provinz,
- c) einem Mitglied der Députation Permanente,
- d) einem Vertreter des Getreidehandels der Provinz,
- e) einem Vertreter der Landwirtschaft der Provinz.

Die Mitglieder unter *c)* bis *e)* sollen in der Regel nicht zugleich Mitglieder des Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation sein.

Die Mitglieder der Kommission, sowie für jedes Mitglied einen ständigen Stellvertreter beruft der Gouverneur der Provinz.

Bei Stimmgleichheit gibt der Vorsitzende den Ausschlag.

Der Vorsitzende ist befugt, Sachverständige mit beratender Stimme zu den Sitzungen hinzuzuziehen. Der Vorsitzende hat das Recht, Beschlüsse der Kommission zu beanstanden und dagegen durch Vermittlung des Verwaltungschefs und der Zentral-Ernte-Kommission meine Entscheidung anzurufen.

5. Die Zentral-Ernte-Kommission hat zu bestimmen, welche Mengen jeweils von der Beschlagnahme freigegeben werden und der Bevölkerung zugeführt werden dürfen.

Sie überwacht die Brotversorgung der belgischen Bevölkerung und hat insbesondere dafür zu sorgen, dass von der gesamten belgischen Brotgetreideernte 1915 nach Zurückstellung des erforderlichen Saatgutes nicht mehr als 1/12 monatlich verbraucht wird.

Sie hat mir ausserdem Vorschläge über die Einheitssätze des Verbrauchs für den Kopf der Bevölkerung, über die Einkaufspreise des erdroschenen Brotgetreides, über die Ausmahlung und über die Höchstpreise für den Verkauf von erdroschenem Brotgetreide, von Mehl, Kleie und Brot zu machen.

Die Zentral-Ernte-Kommission versieht die Provinz-Ernte-Kommissionen durch Vermittlung des Verwaltungschefs mit Anweisung---bei Fragen grundsätzlicher Bedeutung, nachdem sie vorher meine Entscheidung eingeholt hat---und überwacht deren Ausführung.

6. Der Ernte-Kommission jeder einzelnen Provinz liegt die monatliche Freigabe des Brotgetreides an das Comité National ob. Die Freigabe erfolgt auf Grund des durch sie zu sammelnden und dauernd auf dem Laufenden zu haltenden statistischen

Materials. Sie beaufsichtigt die eigenen und aus anderen Provinzen etwa zugeführten Vorräte, die Einhaltung der festgesetzten Kaufpreise sowie im Allgemeinen alle Geschäftshandlungen der von dem Comité National in jeder Provinz zum Zwecke des Ankaufs und der Verteilung des einheimischen Brotgetreides zu errichtenden besonderen Geschäftsstelle.

Sie hat die Befugnis, die belgischen Gemeinden zu diesem Zweck mit Anweisungen zu versehen. Die Rechte und Obliegenheiten des ständigen Ausschusses gemäss Art. 121, 133 und 147 des Gemeindegesetzes gehen in diesem Falle auf den Präsidenten der Provinzial-Ernte-Kommission über.

7. Wer den zur Ausführung dieser Verordnung erlassenen Anordnungen und Anweisungen nicht Folge leistet, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 5 Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bis zu 20.000 M. bestraft; auch kann auf Gefängnis neben der Geldstrafe erkannt werden.

Als Gerichte sind die deutschen Militärgerichte zuständig.

Die Strafbestimmungen des Artikels 5 der Verordnung vom 30. Juni 1915 (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens Seite 747/55) bleiben unberührt.

8. Diese Verordnung bezieht sich nicht auf die Gerste.

9. Den Erlass von Ausführungsbestimmungen behalte ich mir vor.

BRÜSSEL, den 23. Juli 1915

DER GENERALGOUVERNEUR IN BELGIEN
FREIHERR VON BISSING
Generaloberst

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[54]

Decree,
27 July 1915, by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning the seizure of the oat crop of 1915 in the Occupation Zone (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens, No. 103. [Document 346](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

VERORDNUNG

über die Beschlagnahme des Hafers aus dem Erntejahr 1915 in den belgischen Gebietsteilen des Generalgouvernements in Belgien

ART. 1

Die Haferernte des Erntejahres 1915 wird im Bereich des Generalgouvernements mit der Trennung vom Boden für die Heeresverwaltung beschlagnahmt. Die Beschlagnahme erstreckt sich auch auf den Halm. Das Stroh wird mit dem Ausdreschen von der Beschlagnahme frei.

Jeder Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebes und jeder Käufer von Hafer auf dem Halm ist verpflichtet, für ordnungsmässige Aberntung des Hafers zu sorgen.

ART. 2

Soweit nachfolgend nicht anders bestimmt ist, darf an dem beschlagnahmten Hafer

- a) keine Veränderung vorgenommen werden,
- b) durch Vereinbarung oder Vertrag über ihn zu Gunsten dritter Personen keine Verfügung getroffen werden.

Als solche Verfügungen kommen unter anderem in Betracht: Ankauf, Verkauf, Verpfändung, Verschenken, Beleihung.

ART. 3

Jeder Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebes im Bereich des General-Gouvernements in Belgien, in dem im Erntejahr 1915 Hafer erzeugt wurde, oder jeder sonstige Besitzer von Hafer aus dem Erntejahr 1915 ist verpflichtet, alle zur Erhaltung der beschlagnahmten Vorräte erforderlichen Handlungen einschliesslich des Dreschens vorzunehmen und den Hafer mit der Sorgfalt eines ordentlichen Hausvaters zu behandeln.

Er hat:

- a) der Heeresverwaltung auf Anfordern allen Hafer mit alleiniger Ausnahme des in Ziffer 6a und 6b bezeichneten Saathafers und Futterhafers käuflich zu überlassen, ihn rechtzeitig anzufahren, zu liefern und zu verladen;
- b) den Beauftragten der Heeresverwaltung den Zutritt zu allen Räumen seines Anwesens zum Zweck der Erfüllung ihrer Dienstaufgabe zu gestatten, ihnen etwa vorhandene Geschäftsbücher vorzulegen und ihnen den Nachweis über den Verbleib des in seinem Betrieb geernteten Hafers zu erbringen.

ART. 4

Jedem Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebes oder sonstigem Besitzer von Hafer aus dem Erntejahr 1915 ist verboten

a) das Verfüttern von Hafersaatgut,

b) jeder Transport von Hafer ohne Begleitschein der Heeresverwaltung mit Ausnahme des Transportes vom Feld zum Anwesen, vom Anwesen zur Dreschmaschine und von der Dreschmaschine zurück zum Anwesen.

ART. 5

Nimmt ein Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebes oder ein sonstiger Besitzer von Hafer aus dem Erntejahr 1915 eine der in Art. 3. Abs. 1 und IIa vorgeschriebenen Handlungen innerhalb einer von der Heeresverwaltung oder in ihrem Auftrage festgesetzten Frist nicht vor, so lässt diese die Handlungen durch Dritte auf Koste Unternehmers oder Besitzers vornehmen.

ART. 6

Von der Beschlagnahme werden zu Gunsten des Besitzers landwirtschaftlicher Betriebe frei:

a) mit der Aussaat, für jedes Hektar der von ihm im Jahre 1915 bebauten Fläche, je 170 kg Saathafer bester Beschaffenheit und eigener Erzeugung,

b) mit dem Verfüttern, für jeden Tag und für jedes Pferd im Besitz des Unternehmers, je 2500 Gramm Hafer, gleich rund 920 Kilogramm Hafer für jedes Jahr und jedes Pferd.

Unter "Jahr" ist die Zeit vom 1. September 1915 bis 31. August 1916 zu verstehen.

Die Heeresverwaltung wird für jedes Pferd, das sich nicht im Besitze eines Unternehmers eines landwirtschaftlichen, im Jahre 1915 Hafer erzeugenden Betriebes befindet, als Jahresanteil je rund 920 kg Hafer zum Ankauf von Produzenten freigeben. Auf Antrag des Kreischefs können in dringenden Fällen, und zwar in erster Linie für die in den Bergwerken verwendeten Pferde, durch die Heeresverwaltung höhere als die vorbezeichneten Sätze zugelassen werden.

ART. 7

Die Heeresverwaltung vergütet für jede 100 kg von ihr übernommenen und rechtzeitig an die von ihr bestimmte Stelle gelieferten Hafers guter marktgängiger Qualität im Mindestgewicht von 44 kg per Hectoliter 33 Franken. Den Preis für minderwertigen Hafer bestimmt die Heeresverwaltung auf Grund von ihr eingeholten Sachverständigen-Gutachtens.

ART. 8

Wer den Art. 1, 2. Abs., Art. 2, 3 oder 4 dieser Verordnung zuwiderhandelt, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 5 Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bis zu 20.000 Franken bestraft. Auf beide Strafarten kann nebeneinander erkannt werden. Zugleich kann in den Fällen der Art. 2, 3a oder 4b auf Einziehung des Hafers zu Gunsten der Heeresverwaltung erkannt werden.

ART. 9

Zuständig zur Aburteilung sind die deutschen Militärgerichte.

ART. 10

Der Erlass von Ausführungsvorschriften bleibt vorbehalten.

BRÜSSEL, den 27. Juli 1915

GENERALGOUVERNEUR IN BELGIEN
FREIHERR VON BISSING
Generaloberst

G. G. VII 3745

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[55]

Letter,
29 July 1915, VON DER LANCKEN TO WHITLOCK, reaffirming various guarantees and agreements respecting the conduct of relief ([Document 40](#), chapter II, is an English translation of the following)

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

J. Nr. V. 121

BRÜSSEL, le 29 juillet 1915

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai eu l'honneur de recevoir la lettre que Votre Excellence a bien voulu me remettre à la date du 16 juillet dernier concernant le ravitaillement de la Belgique par le Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

J'ai été heureux d'apprendre qu'à la suite des démarches que Votre Excellence, ainsi que Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre d'Espagne avaient bien voulu faire, le Gouvernement Britannique a pris l'engagement de faciliter jusqu'à la récolte de 1916 l'importation en Belgique des produits nécessaires à l'alimentation de la population civile belge dans des conditions sur le principe desquelles j'ai déjà eu le plaisir de me mettre d'accord avec Votre Excellence.

J'ai déjà eu l'occasion de faire savoir à Votre Excellence, que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général s'est déclaré d'accord en principe, que l'œuvre du ravitaillement de la Belgique continue exactement, pour le bien de la population de ce pays, dans les conditions qui ont été formulées par les accords intervenus entre le Gouverneur Général et les représentants des puissances neutres.

Quant aux détails de ces accords, je suis heureux de pouvoir faire savoir à Votre Excellence, que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général admet les principes suivants, qui, j'en suis sur, sont les mêmes que ceux admis par Votre Excellence, à savoir:

que l'alimentation et l'entretien de la population civile belge doivent continuer à être séparés de l'alimentation et de l'entretien de l'armée allemande et que les décisions prises en ce sens par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général, d'accord avec Messieurs les Protecteurs seront en tous points exécutées;

que la population belge tirera seule avantage des secours qui sont distribués par le Comité National;

que le Comité National et la Commission for Relief in Belgium pourront jouir de toute la liberté d'action qui leur est nécessaire pour être à même de remplir la mission qui leur est dévolue par les accords intervenus entre le Gouverneur Général et les représentants des puissances neutres; que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général ne se servira jamais du Comité National pour forcer la population belge à s'employer au service de l'armée allemande contrairement aux stipulations des conventions de La Haye;

que le Comité National interviendra dans l'achat de la récolte des blés dans le territoire placé sous les ordres de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général en Belgique et que la distribution de ces blés se fera par les soins du dit Comité de la même manière que la distribution des denrées importées---que de même le Comité continuera à distribuer des secours en nature aux nécessiteux dans les conditions déterminées par les accords antérieurs passés entre le Gouverneur Général et Messieurs les Protecteurs.

J'ai pris note de la communication de Votre Excellence, que le Gouvernement Britannique facilitera en dehors de l'importation des blés, l'importation également de pois, de lard, de haricots, de riz, de saindoux et de maïs pour la consommation humaine, aussi longtemps que l'importation de ces articles ne représente pas le

remplacement d'autres articles réquisitionnés par ordre de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général.

J'ai également pris note que Votre Excellence fera communiquer au Gouvernement Britannique les modifications qui pourraient être apportées par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général à l'ensemble du régime déterminé par les accords intervenus entre le Gouverneur Général et Messieurs les Protecteurs.

Conformément à la demande que Votre Excellence veut bien me faire dans Sa lettre, j'ai l'honneur, au nom de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général, de Lui confirmer les assurances et garanties données précédemment et qui sont précisées par les stipulations qui précèdent.

J'ai communiqué à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général l'assurance que Votre Excellence a bien voulu me donner, que l'œuvre patronnée par Elle continuera à exercer son action bienfaisante dans des conditions de stricte neutralité justifiant l'aide et la protection que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général et les autorités placées sous ses ordres n'ont cessé d'apporter à cette institution depuis sa création.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général est heureux de constater que l'assurance renouvelée que Votre Excellence a bien voulu donner à cet effet constitue pour Lui une garantie que le but humanitaire de cette oeuvre pourra être poursuivi sans porter atteinte aux droits qui reviennent à l'occupant du pays et aux intérêts dont il a la charge.

Je saisis cette occasion pour renouveler à Votre Excellence les assurances de ma haute considération.

(S.) LANCKEN

*A Son Excellence
Monsieur Brand Whitlock
Ministre des Etats-Unis d'Amérique
à Bruxelles*

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[56]

Orders,
6 August 1915, by GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning the requisitioning of the hay crop of 1915 in the Occupation Zone (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens, No. 104. [Document 347](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

VERORDNUNG

*über die Beschlagnahme des Heues aus dem Erntejahr 1915 in den belgischen
Gebietsteilen des General-Gouvernements in Belgien*

ART. 1

Die gesamte Ernte von Wiesen- und Kleeheu des Erntejahres 1915, und zwar sowohl die vom ersten Schnitt wie auch die Nachmahd, wird im Bereiche des General-Gouvernements mit der Trennung vom Boden für die Heeresverwaltung beschlagnahmt.

Jeder Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebs und jeder Käufer von Gras oder Klee auf dem Halm ist verpflichtet, für ordnungsmässige Aberntung zu sorgen.

ART. 2

Soweit nachfolgend nicht anders bestimmt ist, darf durch Vereinbarung oder Vertrag über das beschlagnahmte Heu zu Gunsten dritter Personen keine Verfügung getroffen werden.

Als solche Verfügungen kommen unter anderen in Betracht: Ankauf, Verkauf, Verpfändung, Verschenken, Beleihung.

Ausnahmen von diesem Verbot können die Gouvernements und die Kreischefs bewilligen.

ART. 3

Jeder Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebes im Bereiche des General-Gouvernements in Belgien, in dem im Erntejahr 1915 Heu erzeugt wurde, oder jeder sonstige Besitzer von Heu aus dem Erntejahr 1915 ist verpflichtet, die zur Erhaltung der beschlagnahmten Vorräte erforderlichen Handlungen vorzunehmen und das Heu mit der Sorgfalt eines ordentlichen Hausvaters zu behandeln.

Er hat:

a) der Heeresverwaltung auf Anfordern sein Heu mit alleiniger Ausnahme des in Art. 6 bezeichneten käuflich zu überlassen, es rechtzeitig anzufahren, zu liefern und zu verladen;

b) den Beauftragten der Heeresverwaltung den Zutritt zu allen Räumen seines Anwesens zum Zweck der Erfüllung ihrer Dienstaufgabe zu gestatten, ihnen etwa vorhandene Geschäftsbücher vorzulegen und ihnen den Nachweis über den Verbleib des in seinem Betrieb geernteten Heus zu erbringen.

ART. 4

Jedem Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebes oder sonstigem Besitzer von Heu aus dem Erntejahr 1915 ist jeder Transport von Heu ohne Begleitschein der Heeresverwaltung mit Ausnahme des Transportes vom Feld zum Anwesen verboten.

ART. 5

Nimmt ein Unternehmer eines landwirtschaftlichen Betriebes oder ein sonstiger Besitzer von Heu aus dem Erntejahr 1915 eine der in Art. 1 Abs. II und Art. 3. Abs. I und IIa vorgeschriebenen Handlungen innerhalb einer von der Heeresverwaltung oder in ihrem Auftrage festgesetzten Frist nicht vor, so lässt diese die Handlungen durch Dritte auf Kosten des Unternehmers oder Besitzers vornehmen.

ART. 6

Von der Beschlagnahme bleiben zu Gunsten des Besitzers landwirtschaftlicher Betriebe die zum Füttern seines eigenen Viehstandes erforderlichen Mengen frei.

ART. 7

Die Heeresverwaltung vergütet das von ihr übernommene und rechtzeitig an die von ihr bestimmte Stelle gelieferte Heu je nach Qualität in Grenzen der für die einzelnen Provinzen festgesetzten Höchstpreise.

ART. 8

Wer den Art. 1, II. Abs., Art. 2, 3 oder 4 dieser Verordnung zuwiderhandelt, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 5 Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bis zu 20.000 Franken bestraft. Auf beide Strafarten kann nebeneinander erkannt werden. Zugleich kann in den Fällen der Art. 2, 3a oder 4 auf Einziehung des Heues zu Gunsten der Heeresverwaltung erkannt werden.

ART. 9

Zuständig zur Aburteilung sind die deutschen Militärgerichte.

ART. 10

Der Erlass von Ausführungsvorschriften bleibt vorbehalten.

BRÜSSEL, den 6. August 1915

DER GENERALGOUVERNEUR IN BELGIEN
FREIHERR von BISSING,
Generaloberst

A. J. Gen. Gouv. 230/811

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[57]

DOCUMENT NO. 635

Letter,

4 September 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., refusing permission to the delegates of the Commission to traverse the Frontier Zones by automobile

BRUSSELS, 4 September 1915

To the Director,

The Commission for Relief in Belgium

DEAR SIR:

In response to your request of the 31st of August, I must inform you that we cannot change the decision of which you were acquainted in response to your request of the 24th of August. The Grenzzonengebiet can be traversed by train or carriage, but not by auto or cycle. It is in the interest of the petitioner himself that we refuse to allow an exemption, since in view of the very strict instructions he would run the risk of being shot by the sentries and patrols.

For the General Government,

(Signed) SCHERENBERG

Oberstleutnant

Approved:

For the Administrative Head

For the General Government in Belgium

(Signed) *[Signature illegible]*

[Translation]

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[58]

DOCUMENT NO. 636

Letter,

29 October 1915, VON BISSING TO THE C.R.B., protecting canal boats chartered

by the Commission from requisition and agreeing to facilitate the Commission's lighter transportation problem

BRUSSELS, 29 October 1915

CONCERNING BOATS OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

In answer to the communication from the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which was submitted for discussion with Section 1 B on October 26, 1915, I have to reply as follows:

To Item 1---Belgian boats making trips for the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall not be requisitioned for military purposes in the territory of the General Government. An attempt will be made to secure a similar agreement from the Etappen-Inspektion of the Fourth Army.

To Item 2---I shall not request a change in the procedure now in force. According to this arrangement, Belgian ships which were in Holland before October 9th, 1914 may in the case of trips for the Commission for Relief in Belgium return to Holland on the basis of a certificate issued by the German authorities in Holland who are specified in article 38B of the Harbor Office Instructions.

To Item 3---A specific request of one or two gentlemen should be submitted and I will make a decision.

To Item 4---It would probably not be to the interest of Belgium for Belgian boats to be sold to foreigners.

To Item 5---A general bond, the amount to be settled later, must be required from the Commission for Relief in Belgium for all Belgian ships which go to Holland. The details of this bond shall correspond with those arranged with the Kohlenzentrale in Belgium.

To Items 6 and 7---I shall approve any simplification of the method of passing the frontier which is consistent with military interests, and I shall welcome proposals to this end from the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL
(Signed) FREIHERR VON BISSING
Generaloberst

[Translation]

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Memorandum,
24 December 1915, by the GENERAL GOVERNMENT, confirming that
exportation of bacon and lard from Belgium is forbidden

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

V/945

MÉMORANDUM

Le Département Politique a eu l'honneur de recevoir la lettre du 17 courant que la Légation des Etats-Unis d'Amérique a bien voulu lui adresser au sujet des importations de lard et de saindoux par la Commission for Relief in Belgium. Celle-ci s'est adressée entretemps aux autorités allemandes concernant l'exportation de ces articles vers l'Allemagne et a pu se convaincre qu'en effet cette exportation de la Belgique vers l'Allemagne est défendue. Les autorités allemandes ont chargé le service de surveillance à la frontière à ce que cette défense d'exportation soit strictement observée pour éviter toute violation.

Le Département Politique est heureux de pouvoir donner à la Légation des Etats-Unis d'Amérique la confirmation de ces faits qui sont de nature à permettre à Monsieur Hoover de soutenir ses démarches auprès du Gouvernement Britannique.

BRUXELLES, le 24 décembre 1915

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[60] [DOCUMENT NO. 638](#)

Letter,
16 February 1916, VON DER LANCKEN TO WHITLOCK, summarizing and
amplifying the guarantees against export and requisition of relief supplies

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

No V. 1152

BRÜSSEL, den 16 février 1916

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai l'honneur de faire savoir à Votre Excellence que j'ai communiqué à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général la note que Votre Excellence a bien voulu me faire parvenir en date du 23 janvier 1916, concernant le ravitaillement de la Belgique par le Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général a constaté avec beaucoup de satisfaction que Votre Excellence rend justice aux efforts qu'il a faits pour assurer le bien-être de la population belge. Il a également noté avec plaisir que Votre Excellence apprécie justement les mesures qu'il a prises pour répondre aux engagements contractés par lui dans le but d'assurer le ravitaillement de la Belgique.

Votre Excellence exprime en outre le désir de voir évitées à l'avenir certaines erreurs qui auraient été commises par l'un ou l'autre agent trop zélé ignorant peut-être les intentions et les ordres de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général. Son Excellence est bien décidée à prendre des mesures énergiques pour couper court à des faits de ce genre.

En conséquence et dans le but de créer une situation absolument nette, tout en supprimant toute possibilité de méprises, Monsieur le Gouverneur Général s'est déclaré d'accord à résumer et à élargir ses dispositions précédemment prises en ce sens:

qu'il défendra l'exportation hors du territoire du Gouvernement Général des vivres (y compris les bestiaux), denrées et fourrages servant à l'alimentation humaine et à celle du bétail. Il défendra de même l'exportation hors dudit territoire des semences et des engrais.

Cette défense devra cependant, dans l'intérêt même de la population, subir une limitation pour certains produits du sol belge, constituant pour la plupart des articles de luxe et ayant déjà par le passé été produits en quantités dépassant de beaucoup les besoins de la consommation, tels que chicorées, légumes-primeurs, fruits; l'exportation de ces quantités des produits susvisés restera autorisée à l'avenir.

Votre Excellence, qui connaît bien la Belgique, admettra le bien fondé de cette limitation, d'autant plus que ces denrées existent toujours en quantités abondantes dans le pays, malgré l'exportation qui en a été faite, et que d'autre part la population rurale et le commerce local ont retiré des bénéfices considérables de cette exportation. Cette situation favorable est due en première ligne aux sages mesures prises par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général dans l'intérêt de l'agriculture belge, mesures dont le succès est illustré, entre autres, par les résultats satisfaisants du recensement du bétail effectué récemment par les Administrations Communales de Belgique.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général doit également se réserver le droit découlant de l'article 52 de la Convention de La Haye, à savoir que les provisions de la Belgique doivent pouvoir être mises à contribution pour l'alimentation de l'armée d'occupation placée sous ses ordres dans le territoire belge occupé, et ce "en proportion des ressources du pays." Monsieur le Gouverneur Général se contentera toutefois de faire acheter ces vivres par libres transactions sans contrainte et aux prix courants, contre paiement au comptant, et il tiendra évidemment compte de toutes les concessions, faites antérieurement par lui au sujet de la totalité du blé indigène servant à la panification et de toutes les denrées importées par le Comité National, qui serviront exclusivement à l'alimentation de la population belge.

Concernant le désir que Votre Excellence exprime au sujet des effets d'habillement destinés aux nécessiteux, M. le Gouverneur Général renouvelle les assurances données à Messieurs les Protecteurs dans la lettre du 12 décembre 1914, à savoir que les effets d'habillement importés par le Comité National, ainsi que ceux faits et conservés, dans un but de bienfaisance, dans les ateliers et dépôts belges de ce Comité, restent à l'abri des réquisitions militaires. Il est bien entendu que les tissus, chaussures et les matières premières que le Comité National importera seront couverts par ces mêmes garanties.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général est évidemment toujours prêt à concéder à Messieurs les Protecteurs tout contrôle matériellement nécessaire. Comme par le passé, Son Excellence facilitera autant que possible l'accomplissement des mesures que Messieurs les Protecteurs jugeront opportun de prendre pour exercer ce contrôle, et dans ce but il renouvellera aux organes placés sous ses ordres les instructions qu'il a déjà données.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général est persuadé, en donnant ces nouvelles assurances, d'avoir fait tout ce qu'exige l'intérêt de la population civile belge. Dans l'esprit de Son Excellence la convention proposée doit toutefois avoir pour base nécessaire la condition, d'ailleurs prévue dans la note de Votre Excellence, que Messieurs les Protecteurs donnent à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général, au nom des Gouvernements qu'ils représentent, l'assurance que l'Angleterre n'entravera pas le ravitaillement de la Belgique en denrées destinées à l'alimentation humaine ainsi qu'à celle du bétail, et ce pendant toute la durée de l'occupation allemande et dans une mesure à déterminer par le Comité National conformément aux besoins du pays. A cet effet il est nécessaire notamment que l'Angleterre prenne l'engagement de ne plus réquisitionner les navires affrétés par la Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général insiste d'autant plus sur cette condition indispensable qu'une crise dans l'importation des vivres mettrait gravement en danger les intérêts vitaux de la population belge, intérêts dont la sauvegarde décide Monsieur le Gouverneur Général à accorder les garanties précitées.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général éprouvera une sincère satisfaction, si grâce aux efforts de Votre Excellence la convention ci-dessus proposée pouvait entrer en vigueur et contribuer à alléger pour la population de la Belgique le poids des souffrances de la guerre.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Ministre, les assurances de ma haute considération.

(s.) LANCKEN

*Son Excellence
Monsieur Brand Whitlock
Ministre des Etats-Unis d'Amérique
Bruxelles*

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[61]

DOCUMENT NO. 639

Letter,

7 March 1916, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., granting permission to C.R.B. delegates to make inspection trips in the Frontier Zones when accompanied by a German officer

BRUSSELS, 7 March 1916

*To the Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Brussels*

According to a decree of the Governor General concerning the regulation of the traffic of the C.R.B. members to the "Grenzzonengebiet" it is possible for the delegates of the C.R.B. of the provinces in question to undertake, accompanied by an officer or an official of the province in question, the necessary inspection trips to the "Grenzzonengebiet."

You are requested to instruct your delegates that they report themselves to the Governor before they wish to make the trip to the "Grenzzonengebiet," if possible one day before the intended trip, in order that from there an accompanying officer or official may be designated.

You are respectfully requested to limit the trips to the "Grenzzonengebiet" to the necessary minimum.

For the General Government,

(Signed) MERTON

[Translation]

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[62]

DOCUMENT NO. 640

Letter,

8 March 1916, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO WHITLOCK, permitting delegates of the C.R.B. and C.N. to circulate in the Frontier Zones in automobiles if accompanied by a German official

BRUSSELS, 8 March 1916

To His Excellency

Mr. Brand Whitlock,

Minister of the United States of America,

Brussels

DEAR SIR:

I had the honor to receive the letter which you were so kind as to address me under date of February 19th, with regard to the special situation in which the Regional and Local Committees are placed in the Frontier Zone, in that, as a result of arrangements made by the military authorities, they have been prevented from remaining in constant touch with the Provincial Committee of Luxembourg,

I immediately took the necessary steps with the competent authorities, but I am sorry to be compelled to inform you that the military authorities are not as yet able to allow the inhabitants of the Frontier Zone permission to pass from there into the territory of the General Government. It seems probable, however, that such freedom will be allowed them in a short time. In the meantime, in order to aid the Comité National as far as possible in the humanitarian object which it has in view, I have succeeded in obtaining such freedom for the members of the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, providing they are residing in the territory of the General Government and are provided with passports allowing them to circulate in automobiles. In cases of absolute necessity they may enter the Frontier Zone in automobile, under condition that they are accompanied by an officer or a civil functionary. When such occasion arises, the members of the Comité National and the C.R.B. are requested to apply to the Military Governor of the appropriate province, who will detail for the purpose mentioned either an officer or a civil functionary.

It has, however, not been possible to obtain permission to carry documents or letters, culinary recipes or relief funds, in these trips through the Frontier Zone. In view, however, of the great difficulties which would ensue for the humanitarian

work of the Comité National, the competent authorities have been so kind as to accede to my request that the Civil Commissary of the competent arrondissement undertake the transmission of the correspondence and funds in question.

I take the liberty of suggesting to you that you kindly inform the Comité National of this arrangement.

I take this occasion to renew the assurance of my high esteem.

(Signed) LANCKEN
GENERAL GOVERNMENT IN BELGIUM

[Translation]

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[63] DOCUMENT NO. 641

Letter,
20 March 1916, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., granting protection to herds of milch-cows which it was proposed to establish

BRUSSELS, 20 March 1916

*To the Commission for Relief in Belgium,
For Mr. W. B. Poland,
Brussels*

In the conversation which I had the pleasure of having with you on March 7th, and of which you sent me a memorandum under date of March 9th, you asked me to request of the General Government in your behalf that the Governor General decree freedom from requisition for the herds of milch-cows which you propose to establish in considerable numbers throughout the entire country.

The General Government, to whom this request of yours has been presented, has decided that it is willing to grant the principle of your request, provided the number of animals you propose remains within reasonable bounds. You are requested to apply for exemption from requisition in each individual case.

With the assurance of my highest respect

(Signed) MERTON
For the General Government

[Translation]

[64]

Letter,

14 April 1916, VON DER LANCKEN TO WHITLOCK, stating that the Governor-General has forbidden the export of all foodstuffs (including animal), produce, and fodder ([Document 83](#), chapter III, is an English translation of the following)

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

J. No V. 1432

BRÜSSEL, den 14 avril 1916

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai l'honneur de faire savoir à Votre Excellence que j'ai communiqué à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général la note que Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre d'Espagne a bien voulu me faire parvenir en date du 7 avril 1916, tant au Nom de Votre Excellence et de M. le Chargé d'Affaires des Pays-Bas qu'au sien propre, concernant le ravitaillement de la Belgique par le Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général m'a chargé d'exprimer à Votre Excellence les sentiments de gratitude qu'il éprouve pour la sollicitude incessante qu'Elle n'a pas cessé de témoigner depuis bientôt 20 mois à l'oeuvre humanitaire dont Elle a bien voulu accepter le Patronage de concert avec Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre d'Espagne, et Monsieur le Chargé d'Affaires des Pays-Bas. Monsieur le Gouverneur Général est persuadé que la population belge toute entière partage ces sentiments.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général a constaté avec beaucoup de plaisir que les démarches entreprises par Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre d'Espagne, tant au Nom de Votre Excellence et de Monsieur le Chargé d'Affaires des Pays-Bas qu'au sien propre, ont eu pour effet d'amener le Gouvernement Anglais à ne pas arrêter le ravitaillement de la population civile en Belgique. Son Excellence s'est montrée d'autant plus satisfaite de ce résultat que les exigences nouvelles formulées récemment par le Gouvernement Anglais et qui constituaient une menace sérieuse pour la continuation de ce ravitaillement, avaient pour point de départ des renseignements erronés suivant lesquels les autorités dans le territoire administré par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général n'auraient pas respecté les engagements pris par Son Excellence vis-à-vis des puissances neutres. Votre Excellence est à même de constater et de réfuter sans plus l'inexactitude de cette assertion. Monsieur le

Gouverneur Général se rappelle en effet avec satisfaction que Votre Excellence, ainsi que Ses Honorés Collègues, a bien voulu reconnaître maintes fois et en dernier lieu dans Sa note du 23 janvier 1916 l'attitude correcte observée par les autorités sous ses ordres dans l'exécution des conventions conclues par lui.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général s'étant encore montré récemment disposé, au mépris de certains intérêts allemands, à renoncer au droit, découlant incontestablement pour lui de la Convention de La Haye, d'alimenter l'armée d'occupation au moyen des provisions belges, Votre Excellence voudra bien se rendre compte par ce fait de l'intérêt que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général porte au bien-être de la population du pays qu'il administre.

Comme suite aux négociations du mois de février écoulé et contrairement aux informations du Gouvernement Anglais, Monsieur le Gouverneur Général a déjà formulé, à la date du premier mars une défense d'exportation pour les vivres et les fourrages. Conformément à l'ensemble des assurances données en dernier lieu au Gouvernement que Votre Excellence représente, Monsieur le Gouverneur Général résumera et complètera les mesures déjà prises en ce sens par des instructions nouvelles *défendant l'exportation hors du territoire du Gouvernement Général des vivres (y compris les bestiaux) denrées et fourrages servant à l'alimentation humaine et à celle du bétail. Il défendra de même l'exportation hors dudit territoires des semences, des engrais et des approvisionnements agricoles.* Cette défense ne s'appliquera qu'aux produits d'origine belge, étant entendu notamment que les produits d'origine allemande se trouvant actuellement dans les dépôts de l'administration militaire pourront être exportés. En dehors des autorisations qui pourront être accordées à la Commission for Relief in Belgium pour l'exportation hors du territoire du Gouvernement Général vers le Nord de la France de vivres, bétail et fourrages dont il y aurait un excédent sur les besoins de la consommation, la défense précitée ne souffrira pas d'exceptions; la réserve convenue par Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre d'Espagne avec le Gouvernement Anglais étant toutefois ici faite pour les quantités de certains produits du sol belge dépassant les besoins de la population du territoire occupé de la Belgique.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général donnera également à l'Intendance Militaire du Gouvernement Général pour les effets conséquents l'ordre de ne plus ni réquisitionner ni acheter par libres transactions, dans le territoire occupé de la Belgique, pour les besoins de l'armée d'occupation, aucun des produits ci-dessus mentionnés. Comme Votre Excellence a pu se convaincre au cours des négociations ayant eu lieu dernièrement, Monsieur le Gouverneur Général attache la plus grande importance à ce qu'une situation définitive et nette soit créée. C'est donc avec une vive satisfaction que j'ai déduit de la note que Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre d'Espagne a bien voulu me faire parvenir que Votre Excellence, en Sa qualité de Représentant de Son Gouvernement, ne considérera pas des achats occasionnels de ces produits faits individuellement par des personnes appartenant à l'armée comme étant contraires à l'engagement pris par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général, pour

autant que ces achats ne soient aucunement systématiques ni effectués pour compte de l'Intendance Militaire.

Ayant ainsi élargi les obligations contractées précédemment par lui envers les trois puissances neutres concernant le territoire qu'il administre, Monsieur le Gouverneur Général est persuadé que de son côté le Gouvernement que Votre Excellence représente assume vis-à-vis de lui la garantie que dorénavant le Gouvernement Britannique renonce définitivement à entraver par des réquisitions de navires ou de toute autre manière le ravitaillement de la population civile en Belgique. Je prie Votre Excellence de bien vouloir se faire autoriser par Son Gouvernement à confirmer le bien fondé de cette manière de voir.

Votre Excellence est à même de se rendre compte que les stipulations de cette convention et de toutes celles conclues précédemment avec le Gouvernement représenté par Votre Excellence sont consciencieusement observées par les autorités et les troupes sous les ordres de Son Excellence. Monsieur le Gouverneur Général est toujours prêt à aider Votre Excellence de toutes les manières possibles dans l'accomplissement de cette tâche. Il croit pouvoir exprimer l'espoir que Votre Excellence voudra bien faire connaître dans les pays neutres et belligérants les constatations qu'Elle a déjà faites et qu'Elle pourra encore faire à ce sujet pour réfuter les insinuations tendancieuses qui apparaissent constamment dans ces pays et qui ne peuvent que nuire à l'oeuvre dont Elle a bien voulu assumer le Protectorat. Soucieux d'écartier de cette oeuvre toute ingérence non justifiable des puissances en guerre avec l'Allemagne et désirant éviter tout rapport avec celles-ci, Monsieur le Gouverneur Général continuera à s'adresser à Votre Excellence dans toutes les questions y relatives.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général a noté avec satisfaction que Votre Excellence veillera à ce que l'oeuvre de secours et d'alimentation placés sous Son Patronage soit maintenue strictement endéans les limites tracées à son activité. Ceci permettra à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général d'accorder comme par le passé toute son aide et toute sa protection au Comité National et à la Commission for Relief in Belgium que Votre Excellence patronne, pour permettre aux Membres de ces deux organisations de continuer les efforts qu'ils ont accomplis jusqu'ici avec tant de dévouement dans leur oeuvre humanitaire et bienfaisante, destinée à alléger, pour la population de la Belgique le poids des souffrances de la guerre.

Je saisis cette occasion pour renouveler à Votre Excellence les assurances de ma haute considération.

(S.) LANCKEN

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Proclamation,
22 April 1916, by VON BISSING, forbidding the exportation from Belgium of native foodstuffs, fodder, animals for slaughter, seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural machinery

AVIS

En vue d'assurer l'alimentation de la population et de compléter les mesures que j'ai déjà prises à cette fin, j'ai décidé d'interdire désormais dans le territoire placé sous mon autorité, l'exportation de tous les produits alimentaires et fourrages, y compris les bêtes de boucherie et, en outre, des semences de tout genre, des engrais ainsi que de l'outillage agricole. Tous ces produits, à la condition qu'ils soient de provenance belge, seront donc réservés à la consommation de la population du territoire dépendant de mon administration. Il ne sera fait exception à cette interdiction que pour les quantités superflues de produits belges provenant du sol. Je ne permets cette seule exception que pour ne pas porter préjudice à l'agriculture, à la culture maraîchère et au commerce intérieur qui pratiquait déjà l'exportation avant la guerre. Afin de ménager plus encore les approvisionnements du territoire occupé, j'ai ordonné à l'intendance militaire de n'effectuer, dans le territoire placé sous mon autorité, ni réquisitions, ni achats de gré à gré de produits rentrant dans les catégories susmentionnées et destinés à assurer la subsistance de l'armée d'occupation, bien que l'art. 52 de la Convention de la Haye me confère incontestablement le droit de nourrir les troupes de l'armée d'occupation au moyen des vivres existant en Belgique. Les troupes d'occupation étant réparties sur tout le pays, je n'ai pas l'intention d'interdire les achats individuels des personnes appartenant à l'armée; je ne désire pas priver le commerce local des bénéfices qui en résultent pour lui.

En portant les présentes dispositions à la connaissance du public je tiens à faire observer que toutes les mesures déjà prises et celles que je jugerai bon de prendre encore, ont et auront pour but principal d'obtenir une répartition équitable de tous les produits alimentaires et fourrages, afin que l'alimentation du peuple belge soit assurée quoi qu'il arrive, notamment si, à l'avenir, l'importation des denrées alimentaires rencontrait des difficultés ou était entravées.

(S.) VON BISSING

BRUXELLES, le 22 Avril 1916

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Letter,
10 May 1916, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., stating regulation
regarding chartering of tugs

BRUSSELS, 10 May 1916

*To the Commission for Relief in Belgium
Brussels*

In order in the future to avoid conflicts, in the matter of Belgian tugs, between your interests and those of the various military authorities, you are requested, before you time-charter Belgian tugs, to inform us of your intention, in order that the proper authorities may be given opportunity to declare whether they renounce the right of seizure of the vessel in question for a shorter or a longer period.

When the time-charter for Belgian tugs agreed to by us expires, you are requested in each case, before renewing a contract, to inform us, in order to again give the proper authorities opportunity to agree to a further time-chartering of the vessel in question.

In this connection we wish to say that the proper authorities will, of course, continue to exert themselves to assist you at all points, as far as is consistent with military interests.

In order to clear the matter up, you are requested to submit to us a list of the Belgian tugs now time-chartered by you, indicating the dates at which the charter-contracts expire.

We are of course referring only to such Belgian tugs as are domiciled in Belgium. Belgian tugs which are domiciled in Holland and which have not deposited a security and which you time-charter from there for your transport-service, which therefore receive a green return-certificate, are in accordance with the agreement exempted from seizure in every case.

(Signed) BRUHN
GENERAL GOVERNMENT IN BELGIUM

[Translation]

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[67]

Decree,
8 July 1916, by GOVERNOR-GENERAL, concerning the bread-grains harvest
of 1916 in the Occupation Zone (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten

Gebiete Belgiens, No. 235. [Document 350](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

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2

VERORDNUNG

über die Beschlagnahme des Brotgetreides

§ 1

Das im Bereich des Generalgouvernements im Erntejahr 1916 angebaute Brotgetreide aller Art wie: Roggen, Weizen, Spelz wird, gleich viel ob ungemengt oder mit anderen Getreiden vermennt mit der Trennung vom Boden zugunsten der Zivilbevölkerung im Bereich des Generalgouvernements hiermit beschlagnahmt. Die Beschlagnahme erstreckt sich auch auf das aus beschlagnahmtem Brotgetreide ermahlene Mehl und die daraus hergestellten Backwaren. Mit dem Ausdreschen wird das Stroh, mit der Ausmahlung die Kleie von dieser Beschlagnahme frei.

Die Beschlagnahme erstreckt sich auf das Getreide und Mahl früherer Erntejahre, auch soweit dieses zur Selbsternährung oder Verfütterung bestimmt war, aber diesem Zwecke nicht zugeführt ist.

§ 2

An den beschlagnahmten Vorräten dürfen, soweit sich aus den folgenden Bestimmungen nicht etwas anderes ergibt, weder Veränderungen vorgenommen werden, noch darf durch Vereinbarung oder Vertrag über sie verfügt werden.

§ 3

Der Besitzer beschlagnahmter Vorräte ist berechtigt und verpflichtet, alle zur Erhaltung der Vorräte erforderlichen Handlungen vorzunehmen, er ist berechtigt und verpflichtet auszudreschen. Er ist verpflichtet, wahrheitsgetreue Angaben über seine Brotgetreidevorräte zu machen.

§ 4

Nimmt der Besitzer beschlagnahmter Vorräte eine zur Erhaltung derselben erforderliche Handlung innerhalb einer ihm von der zuständigen Behörde gesetzten Frist nicht vor, so kann diese die Handlung auf Kosten des Besitzers durch einen Dritten vornehmen lassen. Das Gleiche gilt, wenn der Besitzer das Brotgetreide nicht innerhalb einer ihm von der zuständigen Provinzial-Ernte-Kommission gesetzten Frist ausdrischt.

§ 5

- a) Wer beschlagnahmte Vorräte unbefugt beiseite schafft oder aus der Gemeinde, in der sie beschlagnahmt sind, unbefugt entfernt, wer sie beschädigt, zerstört, verheimlicht, unbefugt verarbeitet oder verbraucht,
- b) wer beschlagnahmte Vorräte unbefugt verkauft, kauft oder ein anderes Veräußerungs- oder Erwerbsgeschäft über sie abschliesst,
- c) wer den Verpflichtungen des §3 dieser Verordnung zuwiderhandelt, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 5 Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bis zu 20.000 Mark bestraft; auch kann auf Einziehung der zu strafbaren Handlungen gebrauchten Vorräte erkannt werden.

Zuständig sind die deutschen Militärbefehlshaber und die Militärgerichte.

§ 6

Das beschlagnahmte Getreide wird gegen Barzahlung angekauft und der Bevölkerung im Bereiche des Generalgouvernements in Form von Brot, Mehl und Kleie zugeführt werden. Die Verwendung von freigegebenem Brotgetreide zu anderen Zwecken, als zur Herstellung von Brot ist von Fall zu Fall von der Zustimmung der Zentral-Ernte-Kommission abhängig.

§ 7

Ich erteile dem Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation das alleinige Recht zum Ankauf der beschlagnahmten Vorräte auch aus der Brotgetreideernte 1916 und etwaiger Restbestände an Brotgetreide aus früheren Erntejahren zu einem Einheitspreise, den ich festsetzen werde. Die Beschlagnahme wird durch diesen Ankauf nicht aufgehoben.

§ 8

Ich behalte mir vor, im Bedarfsfalle bis zu 10.000 To des beschlagnahmten Getreides anteilmässig an die von mir zu bestimmenden Stellen zwecks Verarbeitung zu Malzkaffee zu überweisen.

§ 9

Der Erlass von Ausführungsbestimmungen bleibt vorbehalten.

DER GENERALGOUVERNEUR IN BELGIEN

FREIHERR VON BISSING

Generaloberst

BRÜSSEL, den 8. Juli 1916

Z.E.K. 3765b

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[68]

DOCUMENT NO. 644

Letter,

7 August 1916, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., granting permission to the Commission's representatives to travel in the Frontier Zones without being accompanied by a German officer

General-Gouvernement
in Belgien
Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N.

Geschäftsnummer 5562

BRÜSSEL, den 7. August 1916

Es wird hierdurch mitgeteilt, dass den Mitgliedern der Commission for Relief in Belgium bis auf weiteres gestattet wird, die Grenzzonen-Gebiete ohne die Begleitung eines deutschen Offiziers zu befahren. Die Einfahrt in die Grenzzonen-Gebiete darf jedoch nur auf den für den allgemeinen Verkehr zugelassenen Durchlässen erfolgen, und es darf nicht der an der belgischen Grenze befindliche Drahtzaun passiert werden.

(Signed) BRUHN

*An die
Commission for Relief in Belgium
Brüssel*

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[69]

DOCUMENT NO. 645

Letter,

21 August 1916, VON DER LANCKEN TO WHITLOCK, enclosing final agreement in regard to fertilizers and confirming reservations pertaining thereto

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

J.No.V 2119

BRÜSSEL, den 21 août 1916

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai l'honneur d'accuser réception à Votre Excellence de la lettre qu'Elle a bien voulu m'adresser le 16 de ce mois, sous le No 3350, et je constate avec plaisir qu'à présent un accord définitif concernant les conventions relatives aux engrais a été obtenu. Dans le texte définitif des conventions susdites, dont un exemplaire est joint à cette lettre, j'ai pris la liberté d'insérer le 25 août 1916 comme date où les conventions entrent en vigueur.

En outre, j'ai l'honneur de confirmer que Votre Excellence comme moi-même, s'est réservé le droit de dénoncer les conventions susvisées, étant entendu qu'une dénonciation entre en vigueur après le délai d'un mois. Dans le cas où les conventions sont dénoncées par une des parties contractantes, il va sans dire que les accords conclus en avril 1916 entre Son Excellence Monsieur le Gouverneur Général et Messieurs les Ministres protecteurs du Comité National concernant l'exportation des produits indigènes seront à nouveau appliqués aux engrais.

Je saisis cette occasion pour renouveler à Votre Excellence les assurances de ma haute considération.

(S.) LANCKEN

*Son Excellence
Monsieur Brand Whitlock
Ministre des Etats-Unis d'Amérique
Bruxelles*

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

CONVENTIONS RELATIVES AUX MATIÈRES PREMIÈRES QUI PEUVENT
SERVIR À LA FABRICATION DES ENGRAIS

Les arrangements intervenus le 17 avril entre le Gouvernement Général et les Ministres des Puissances neutres stipulent notamment: "Que son Excellence Monsieur le Gouverneur Général défendra l'exportation hors du territoire du Gouvernement Général des semences, des engrais et des approvisionnements agricoles. Cette défense ne s'appliquera qu'aux produits d'origine belge, étant entendu notamment que les produits d'origine allemande se trouvant actuellement dans les dépôts de l'administration militaire pourront être exportés.

"La réserve convenue par Son Excellence Monsieur le Ministre d'Espagne avec le Gouvernement anglais étant toutefois ici faite pour les quantités de certains produits du sol belge dépassant les besoins de la population du territoire occupé de la Belgique."

L'acide sulfurique qui est indispensable pour la fabrication des engrais devant être fourni par les autorités occupantes et en majeure partie importé d'Allemagne, il a été jugé utile dans l'intérêt de l'agriculture et de l'industrie belges, de préciser les arrangements ci-dessus de la façon suivante:

Art. I. Phosphate brut. Les quantités de phosphates bruts existant en Belgique étant considérables et l'emploi de ce produit comme engrais étant limité en Belgique, il en existe un excédent.

En conséquence, les phosphates bruts pourront être exportés vers l'Allemagne en quantités ne dépassant pas 10.000 tonnes par mois et après que la consommation de l'agriculture belge et des fabricants belges aura été entièrement satisfaite.

Par contre, l'importation de sels de potasse d'Allemagne en Belgique continuera à être facilitée comme par le passé (en 1915 on en a importé 50.000 tonnes, en 1916, 40.000 tonnes).

Art. II. Sulfate d'ammoniaque. Les autorités occupantes mettront mensuellement à la disposition des usines à gaz et des fours à coke 1.100 tonnes d'acide sulfurique à 60° Baumé.

Les 1.100 tonnes de sulfate d'ammoniaque produites au moyen de ces 1.100 tonnes d'acide seront réparties à raison de 600 tonnes pour la Belgique et 500 tonnes pour l'Allemagne.

Toutes les eaux ammoniacales produites en Belgique seront traitées sur place pour la fabrication des engrais; à cet effet, sur le contingent total d'acide mis à la disposition des fabricants belges d'ammoniaque, les 1.100 tonnes ci-dessus seront prélevées en première part.

Si les quantités d'acide pour la fabrication du sulfate ou les quantités de sulfate produites étaient plus importantes ou moins importantes que 1.100 tonnes, le sulfate serait partagé à raison de 6/11 pour la Belgique et 5/11 pour l'Allemagne.

Art. III. Superphosphate. Les autorités occupantes mettront mensuellement à la disposition des fabricants de superphosphates 2.500 tonnes d'acide à 60° (ou l'équivalent de ces quantités si le titre de l'acide est plus élevé ou moins élevé que 60°, le minimum du titre de l'acide étant de 50°).

Les produits fabriqués seront répartis comme suit:

3.000 tonnes de superphosphate pour la Belgique.

12.000 tonnes de superphosphate double pour l'Allemagne.

Si les fournitures d'acide sont plus importantes ou moins importantes que 2.500 tonnes, les contingents belges et allemands de produits fabriqués seront augmentés ou diminués proportionnellement.

Art. IV. Poudre d'os calcinés. Les os calcinés des abattoirs militaires seront envoyés en Allemagne et les os calcinés provenant des abattoirs civils resteront en Belgique.

Art. V. En ce qui concerne les *phosphates Rhénania* qui sont fabriqués au moyen de matières premières importées d'Allemagne et de la partie occupée de la France, ainsi que des résidus belges, sur le contingent total fabriqué, on tiendra à la disposition de l'agriculture belge: 1.100 tonnes par mois.

Art. VI. La convention entrera en vigueur le 25 août 1916 étant entendu que les contingents d'engrais (sulfate d'ammoniaque et super) fabriqués jusqu'au 25 août et ceux existant à cette date seront répartis conformément au mode de répartition antérieur.

Art. VII. L'acide sulfurique sera de bonne qualité et apte à la fabrication d'engrais de qualité marchande. Le prix de cet acide sera tel qu'il permette la fabrication des engrais sous des conditions économiques.

Art. VIII. Toutes les quantités de phosphates basiques produites par les aciéries belges seront réservées à l'agriculture belge.

Art. IX. La répartition des engrais fabriqués qui sont destinés à l'agriculture belge se fera, jusqu'à nouvel avis par les soins de la section agricole du C.N. comme cela se fait déjà actuellement pour la répartition du sulfate.

Art. X. Le Département Politique transmettra aux Ministres Protecteurs un rapport trimestriel relatif à l'exécution de la présente convention.

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[70]

[DOCUMENT NO. 646](#)

Letter,
10 November 1916, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., relating to possible seizure of newly added lighters

BRUSSELS, 10 November 1916

*To the Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Brussels*

RE: BOUGHT OR HIRED LIGHTERS

Referring to our letter of November 5th, No. 7936, we wish to point out that the charter of lighters which have been further taken on since the 5th inst., has not been objected to. This does, however, not preclude the possibility that under certain circumstances the General Government will requisition these newly added lighters, since they do not come under the earlier promise that lighters of the C.R.B. shall be exempt from requisition.

(Signed) SCHLUBACH
Rittmeister
GENERAL GOVERNMENT IN BELGIUM

[Translation]

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[71] [DOCUMENT NO. 647](#)

Letter,
20 December 1916, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., exempting from requisition 2,225 horses required by the relief organization but limiting them to those unsuited for war service and marked with the brand "C.R.B."

BRUSSELS, 20 December 1916

Commission for Relief in Belgium,

RE: REQUISITION OF HORSES

According to the understanding arrived at with the competent authorities the stock of approximately 2,225 horses within the territory of the General Government, which are being used for the services of the C.R.B. and C.N., will be exempt from requisition, if the following conditions are filled:

1. In the different branches of labor only such horses can be made use of which are not suited for war purposes. It is therefore necessary that all horses fit for war purposes must in due course of time be changed for such as are unfit. The requisition commission always has an owner of a horse which is fit for war purposes and is to be requisitioned notified about four weeks before the time of the requisition, so that sufficient time is given for the change.

2. The horses unfit for war service and used by the C.R.B., i.e. the C.N., will be marked with a brand, probably the mark "C.R.B. No. ---," and besides entered in a list of the authorities.

3. Inasmuch as a misuse of the brand cannot be prevented it will be necessary that these horses, declared unfit for war purposes, shall be brought every time to the mustering when one is to take place. They shall, however, be the first taken for mustering and compared with the list in the hands of the authorities. Should everything be found to be in order then a further examination shall not be made, so that the whole mustering of the horses of the C.R.B., i.e. the C.N., will be finished in the least possible time.

According to the information which has reached the V.C.N. there are a sufficient number of horses in the territory of the General Government which are unfit for the war purposes but which would really be very serviceable for the work of the C.R.B. and the C.N. The authorities will also not make any difficulties if horses after being purchased are taken from one district for work in another district, provided that the prescribed permission be obtained first.

Before the brand suggested in paragraph No. 2 can be made use of it will be necessary that an appropriate order be obtained from the General Government for the entire territory of the General Government so that, the use of it by others will be prohibited.

(Signed) BRUHN
For the General Government

[Translation]

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[72] [DOCUMENT NO. 648](#)

Letter,
25 January 1917, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., granting
permission for the importation of Dutch foodstuffs

Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N.

No. 9981

BRÜSSEL, den 25. Januar 1917

Unter Bezugnahme auf die Herrn Professor Dr. Kellogg bereits mündlich gemachte Mitteilung, wird die C.R.B. hierdurch ergebenst davon in Kenntnis gesetzt, dass nach neuerlicher Entscheidung der für den Aussenhandel zuständigen Behörden die

Einfuhr durch die C.R.B. auch für Erzeugnisse holländischen Ursprungs bis auf weiteres grundsätzlich zugelassen ist. Entsprechende Anträge sind bei dem Delegierten des Generalgouvernements in Belgien bei der Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandtschaft im Haag beziehungsweise dessen Beauftragten in Rotterdam einzureichen. Seine Anweisungen bezüglich des Einkaufs und des Ursprungsnachweises der Waren sind zu befolgen.

Hinsichtlich der Verteilung solcher Lebens- und Futtermittel, die innerhalb der besetzten Gebiete einer behördlichen Bewirtschaftung unterliegen, bleibt Vereinbarung vorbehalten.

(gez.) BRUHN

*An die Commission for Relief in Belgium
Brüssel*

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[73]

DOCUMENT NO. 649

Letter,

12 May 1917, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., binding itself to requisition lighters from Holland and agreeing to permit the Belgian crews to return to Holland

General-Gouvernement
in Belgien
Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N.

Geschäftsnummer 13231

BRÜSSEL, den 12. Mai 1917

Das General-Gouvernement in Belgien (Sektion I b Nr.2413) verpflichtet sich unterm 9. Mai 1917,

1) dass die in der Liste der C.R.B. genannten, in Sluis liegenden 55 Leichter, falls sie für die C.R.B. in das besetzte Gebiet einfahren, nicht beschlagnahmt werden und jederzeit nach Holland zurückkehren können;

2) dass ebenfalls die belgischen Besatzungen dieser Fahrzeuge, auch wenn sie im militärpflichtigen Alter stehen jederzeit nach Holland zurückkehren können, sofern sie sich den deutschen Behörden gegenüber nicht straffällig machen.

Der Generalquartiermeister im Grossen-Hauptquartier hat die gleiche Zusage für die Etappeninspektionen gegeben.

Es wird gebeten, die auf Grund dieser Zusage von der C.R.B. gemieteten Schiffe der eingesandten Liste sowie ihre Besatzungen von Fall zu Fall der V.C.N. aufzugeben.

I. A.
(gez.) ANDERSEN
Rittmeister

*An die
Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Brüssel*

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[74] DOCUMENT NO. 650

Letter,
17 May 1917, VON DER LANCKEN TO THE DUTCH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
stating conditions for the import and distribution of Dutch seed potatoes in Belgium

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

J.No V. 3176

BRUXELLES, le 17 Mai 1917

MONSIEUR LE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES,

J'ai l'honneur de me référer aux entretiens qui ont lieu récemment avec vous ainsi qu'avec des membres de la C.R.B. et du C.N. au sujet de l'importation et de la répartition dans le territoire du Gouvernement Général de plants de pommes de terre de provenance hollandaise. Me référant en même temps à la lettre adressée par la "Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N." à la Commission for Relief in Belgium le 25 janvier dernier, dont copie est jointe à la présente, j'ai l'honneur de porter ci-après à Votre connaissance le résultat de ces entretiens en Vous priant de bien vouloir me communiquer Votre accord avec celui-ci.

1) La C.R.B. fera parvenir, conformément à la lettre ci-annexée, les demandes respectives pour l'importation de plants de pommes de terre au Délégué du Gouverneur Général en Belgique près la Légation Impériale à la Haye et suivra ses instructions quant à l'achat et la preuve d'origine.

2) La Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N. se mettra d'accord avec la C.R.B. vers quelles gares les plants de pommes de terre seront transportés, dans le territoire du

Gouvernement Général ainsi que dans les régions d'étapes et d'opérations. A cette fin, la C.R.B. fera parvenir à V.C.N. une liste contenant les noms des gares proposées par elle ainsi que les quantités à y être transportées.

La V.C.N. s'entendra ensuite, les cas échéant, avec la C.R.B. au sujet de modifications éventuelles à y apporter.

3) La Ligue du Coin de Terre indiquera au Commissaire Civil compétent les Oeuvres locales auxquelles les pommes de terre seront remises pour la plantation ainsi que les communes, où celle-ci aura lieu. Elle renseignera les quantités qui reviendront à chacune d'elles ainsi que les quantités qui seront plantées dans chaque commune à indiquer.

4) La C.R.B. et le C.N. ne feront valoir aucun droit sur la récolte provenant des plants de pommes de terre en question. Les pommes de terre produites sont soumises aux arrêtés ayant trait à la récolte des pommes de terre indigènes. Les autorités compétentes s'engagent cependant à mettre à la disposition des sous-organisations désignées par le C.N. une quantité de pommes de terre de la récolte indigène, rentrée en même temps que celle des pommes de terre hollandaises, représentant huit fois la quantité de ces dernières. Les pommes de terre provenant de plants importés laissées aux colons de la Ligue du Coin de Terre, conformément aux arrêtés, doivent être préalablement déduites de la quantité mise à la disposition de la manière susdite. Le C.N. veillera à ce que ses sous-organisations n'emploient les pommes de terre ainsi mises à leur disposition que pour l'Oeuvre de la Soupe Communale endéans des communes indiquées.

Si le C.N. a besoin, pour sa Soupe Communale et ses Oeuvres de Bienfaisance, d'une quantité de pommes de terre plus grande que celle libérée il indiquera aux Autorités compétentes les quantités nécessaires.

5) Les conventions énumérées au 3) et 4) ont trait au territoire du Gouvernement Général; celles indiquées aux 1) et 2) se rapportent aussi aux régions d'étapes et d'opérations.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Chargé d'Affaires, les assurances de ma haute considération.

(S.) LANCKEN

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[75]

[DOCUMENT NO. 651](#)

Letter,
4 June 1917, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE SPANISH LEGATION,

freeing from requisition wine, incense-wax, and sanctuary-oil imported by the C.R.B. to fulfill the needs of the Catholic Church

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

J.No V.2906

BRUXELLES, le 4 juin 1917

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai l'honneur d'accuser réception à Votre Excellence de la lettre qu'Elle a bien voulu m'adresser le 29 mars dernier, concernant la libération de réquisition pour le vin de messe, la cire d'encens et l'huile de Sanctuaire importés par la Commission for Relief.

Monsieur le Gouverneur Général auquel j'ai soumis le désir exprimé par Votre Excellence a décidé que les produits susmentionnés importés par la C.R.B. et destinés à être employés pour les besoins du culte catholique dans le territoire placé sous ses ordres seront exonérés de toute réquisition.

Je profite de l'occasion pour renouveler à Votre Excellence les assurances de ma haute considération.

(S.) LANCKEN

*Son Excellence le Marquis de Villalobar,
Ministre de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Espagne,
Bruxelles*

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[76]

Order,
13 November 1917, by VON FALKENHAUSEN, covering the 1917 crop in Belgium ([Document 351](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

Briefnummer V. 4278

BRUXELLES, le 13 novembre 1917

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS,

Je me permets de Vous envoyer en suite à notre conversation d'hier une note résumant le contenu d'un ordre de service que Monsieur le Gouverneur Général a envoyé à toutes les autorités tant à Bruxelles que dans les provinces pour rappeler à nouveau les conventions existantes et insister sur leur stricte observation. Cette mesure a été prise pour parer notamment aux inconvénients que présentent, pour l'observation des ces conventions, les déplacements assez fréquents des officiers et fonctionnaires dans les provinces. Elle répond, je pense, à Vos intentions.

En même temps et en application de cet ordre, les divers services centraux intéressés ont renouvelé à leurs sous-ordres en province des instructions détaillées au sujet de l'application des diverses clauses des conventions et des mesures à prendre pour éviter que des contreventions éventuellement constatées ne se reproduisent.

J'espère que ces mesures contribueront à faire disparaître les appréhensions que Vous auriez pu éprouver au sujet de la volonté très ferme de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de faire respecter par les autorités sous ses ordres les engagements qu'il a contractés.

Veillez agréer, etc., etc., etc.

(Signed) RIETH

*A Son Excellence le Marquis de Villalobar,
Ministre de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Espagne*

NOTICE

Un nouvel ordre de service de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général se rapportant à l'Oeuvre de Ravitaillement vient d'être envoyé à toutes les autorités tant militaires que civiles du territoire placé sous ses ordres. Cet ordre résume à nouveau les engagements pris par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général vis-à-vis de Messieurs les Ministres Protecteurs.

Dans cet ordre Monsieur le Gouverneur Général exige à nouveau catégoriquement que les conventions conclues soient respectées à la lettre et dit être décidé à frapper avec la plus grande rigueur ceux qui manqueraient aux commandements y relatifs. Il ordonne que toutes les communications de Messieurs les Ministres ou du C.H.N. agissant dans leur nom soient examinées soigneusement et sans perte de temps, que le résultat des enquêtes et---si la preuve d'une contravention a pu être apportée---la punition qui aurait été infligée soient immédiatement portés à la connaissance de la

V.C.N. Enfin Monsieur le Gouverneur Général ordonne que des mesures propices à empêcher le retour de pareils faits soient prises le cas échéant.

En plus, Monsieur le Gouverneur Général attend de la part des autorités sous ses ordres que toute action ou mesure pouvant être interprétées comme un manquement à sa parole, soient préalablement soumises à sa décision.

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[77]

Declaration,

8 March 1918, by VON FALKENHAUSEN, regarding the guarantees ([Document 352](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

J'ai déjà ordonné l'examen minutieux des points spéciaux en question. Les recherches ont été achevées pour une partie et j'ai chargé le chef de mon département politique d'informer Vos Excellences du résultat. En quelques points peu nombreux les recherches continuent encore. Mais je suis à même de déclarer en général dès à présent---et je suis bien aise d'en avoir l'occasion,---que j'aurai soin de veiller sévèrement à l'accomplissement strict des engagements qu'ont pris mes prédécesseurs vis-à-vis des Ministres des Etats Neutres.

BRUXELLES, le 8 mars 1918

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[78]

[DOCUMENT NO. 652](#)

Declaration,

27 April 1918, by VON FALKENHAUSEN, exempting from requisition clothing in possession of private individuals in the Occupation Zone

DÉCLARATION DU GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL

Il résulte d'informations reçues que la C.R.B. se propose d'importer, d'ici peu, des quantités importantes de vêtements, étoffes, chaussures, etc., destinées aux populations civiles de la Belgique et du Nord de la France.

Ayant appris que l'inventaire des stocks de vêtements dans les maisons privées, tel qu'il a été ordonné par l'Inspection des Etapes à Mons pourrait mettre obstacle à l'importation des marchandises ci-dessus, je déclare par la présente que j'ai pas l'intention de réquisitionner les vêtements maintenant en possession de personnes privées dans le territoire du Gouvernement Général et qui est de leur usage personnel.

Si ces intentions devaient être modifiées, je donnerais à la Commission un préavis d'au moins trois mois avant d'effectuer les réquisitions projetées.

BRUXELLES, le 27 avril 1918

LE GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL
(S.) VON FALKENHAUSEN
Général Commandant

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[79]

DOCUMENT NO. 653

Letter,
6 May 1918, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE COMITÉ NATIONAL,
regarding the requisition of clothing

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

J.No.V.5157

BRÜSSEL, den 6. Mai 1918

In der Anlage werden in Abschrift die von der Politischen Abteilung an die neutralen Gesandten, Protektoren des belgischen Ernährungskomitees, gerichteten Noten nebst Erklärungen, betreffend die Beschlagnahme von Kleidungsgegenständen, zur gefl. Kenntnisnahme ergebenst übersandt.

Als ein Teil der in dieser Angelegenheit geschlossenen Uebereinkunft ist vereinbart worden:

a) Das Comité National wird, sobald es hierzu imstande ist, die ihm zur Verfügung stehenden Kleidungsstücke proportional an die Bevölkerung des Generalgouvernements und der Etappen verteilen.

b) Diese Verteilung wird gemäss eines noch auszuarbeitenden Reglements erfolgen, die der bedürftigen Bevölkerung, sowie den beschäftigten Arbeitern erlaubt, gleichmässig aus der Verteilung Nutzen zu ziehen

Um Bestätigung des Einverständnisses mit Vorstehendem wird ergebenst gebeten.

(S.) RIETH

*An das Comité National de Secours et d' Alimentation,
Brüssel*

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[80] [DOCUMENT NO. 654](#)

Letter,

17 July 1918, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., advising that clothing from private individuals would not be requisitioned as long as the relief organizations are in a position to supply imported clothing to the poorer classes

General-Gouvernement in Belgien
Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N.

Geschäftsnummer 26766

BRÜSSEL, den 17. Juli 1918

*An die Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Brüssel*

In Erwiderung des Schreibens vom 12.d.Mts. No. 123, betreffend Einfuhr von Bekleidungsgegenständen, nehme ich ergebenst Bezug auf die Ausführungen der Deutschen Vermittlungsstelle C.N. vom 30. Mai d. J. No. 25500, in denen diesseitigen Erachtens die Frage des Herrn Poland bereits vorweg beantwortet wurde. Da hierüber jedoch immer noch keine Klarheit zu bestehen scheint, stehe ich nicht an, erneut das Folgende festzustellen:

Aus den Besprechungen mit den militärischen Stellen ging hervor, dass diese nicht beabsichtigen, Bekleidungsgegenstände bei Privaten zu requirieren, sofern das Comité National die minderbemittelte Bevölkerung in ausreichendem Masse mit solchen Gegenständen aus eingeführten Beständen versorgt. Wenn das Comité National aber nicht in der Lage ist, dies zu tun, so würden die Militärbehörden diese Versorgung selbst in die Hand nehmen müssen, und wäre dies wohl nicht ohne Requisitionsmaßnahmen möglich. Sollen solche also vermieden werden, so wäre es erforderlich, dass die C.R.B. mit tunlichster Beschleunigung eine unzweideutige Erklärung der englischen Regierung erlangt und hierher mitteilt, dass die Einfuhr in vollem Umfange gestattet und eine ausreichende Versorgung sichergestellt wird.

(gez.) RIETH

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[81] [DOCUMENT NO. 655](#)

Decree,
30 July 1918, by VON FALKENHAUSEN, covering canal transport contracts

VERORDNUNG

betreffend Genehmigungspflicht von Wassertransportverträgen

ARTIKEL I

Verträge über Vermietung von Privatschiffen oder zur Übernahme von Gütertransporten auf dem Wasserwege (Miet- Fracht- & Schleppverträge) bedürfen der Genehmigung des Generalgouvernements Abteilung I b (Wassertransporte) oder eines der dem General gouvernement unterstehenden Hafenämtern.

Jede Vertragspartei ist für die Vorlage der Verträge zur Genehmigung bei einer der bezeichneten Dienststellen verantwortlich.

ARTIKEL II

Dienststellen des Generalgouvernements oder einzelnen Transportunternehmungen kann eine allgemeine Genehmigung zum Abschluss derartiger Verträge erteilt werden und zwar ausschliesslich durch das Gouvernement.

ARTIKEL III

Eine Genehmigung zum Abschluss von Verträgen über den Transport von Stückgütern ist nicht erforderlich.

ARTIKEL IV

Wer der Vorschrift des Artikels I zuwiderhandelt, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 6 Monaten oder Geldstrafe bis zu M. 50.000 bestraft; beide Strafarten können auch nebeneinander erkannt werden.

ARTIKEL V

Zuständig sind die Deutsche Militärgerichte und Militärbefehlshaber.

BRÜSSEL, den 30. Juli 1918

DER GENERALGOUVERNEUR IN BELGIEN
FREIHERR VON FALKENHAUSEN
Generaloberst

Letter,

1 August 1918, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE C.R.B., protecting belting used in the flour mills of the relief organization from requisition

General-Gouvernement in Belgien,
Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N.

Geschäftsnummer 27173

BRÜSSEL, den 1. August 1918

Nach hier eingegangenen Mitteilungen der massgebenden Behörden besteht zur Zeit nicht die Absicht, die jetzt in Betrieb befindlichen Treibriemen der ausschliesslich für das Comité National arbeitenden Firmen in irgendwelcher Weise zu erfassen, sofern eine Liste dieser Betriebe und eine Aufstellung der darin befindlichen Treibriemen hier eingereicht und von hier bewilligt wird.

i.A. S. ROESSINGH

*An die Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Hier*

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER XVII. GERMAN GUARANTEES AND DECLARATIONS, cont'd

3. Guarantees in the Army Zones of Belgium and the North of France. 1914-1918

In the Army Zones the guarantees and declarations of the German authorities dealt in general with matters similar to those which arose in the zone of the General Government, but the methods by which these guarantees were obtained and issued were different. The military authorities were the complete masters in the Army Zones. They tolerated no civilian, and especially no foreign civilian, intervention in the affairs of these areas. There were no neutral diplomatic representatives to serve as channels for formal communications and representatives(488) of the Commission dealt directly with the officers responsible for civilian affairs. This relationship is responsible for two characteristics of the guarantees in the Army Zones. First, many were given orally by the responsible German officers and

appear in writing only in the reports of the representatives of the Commission to the Director in Brussels. These oral guarantees proved to be wholly satisfactory, since the military authorities scrupulously kept their agreements. For the C.R.B. to have pressed for written contracts under these conditions would have produced nothing but a less accommodating attitude on the part of the army commands.

The second characteristic is that many of the guarantees appear to have been made on the initiative of the military, whereas in fact they originated in requests or suggestions of the Commission. This was sometimes a bit disconcerting to the C.R.B. representatives, but results were obtained and the suggestion was avoided that the army commands were subject to foreign pressure or advice in their regulation of civilian affairs.

When the Commission began its operations in Northern France, it had had five months' relief experience in Belgium. This experience enabled the C.R.B. to secure in the agreement of April 1915(489) a much more comprehensive guarantee than had been possible in Belgium where, naturally, it had been impossible to foresee all the matters on which guarantees would be needed. This April 1915 agreement covered a majority of the issues upon which guarantees were necessary, except the matter of the distribution of native crops, which was covered by a later understanding and revised in certain details each year to meet changed conditions.

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[83]

DOCUMENT NO. 657

Decree,

19 December 1914, by the GENERAL GOVERNMENT, concerning the extension of relief operations to the Belgian Army Zone and protecting imported breadstuffs from requisition

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 19. Dezember 1914

Beifolgend übersende ich ergebenst in Abschrift eine Anordnung der zuständigen Militärbehörde vom 6. d. M. und vom 16. d. M. zur gefälligen Kenntnisnahme. Es geht daraus hervor, dass das Brotgetreide des Comités im Operations- und Etappengebiet geschützt ist und dass die Arbeit des Comités die volle Unterstützung der dortigen Behörden findet.

(S.) VON SANDT

[6 December 1914]

Es ist ein Komitee gebildet worden, das für die belgische Bevölkerung englisches und amerikanisches Brotgetreide einführen wird.

Die Generalkommandos haben sich von den Gemeinden ihres im Operationsgebiet liegenden Bezirks den notwendigsten Bedarf an Brotgetreide---für einen nicht zu langen Zeitraum berechnet---anmelden zu lassen. Die Bedarfsanmeldungen sind der Etappen-Inspektion unmittelbar zuzusenden, die sie an das Komitee weitergeben wird.

Es ist unbedingt zu vermeiden, dass die Truppen von dem auf diese Weise den Gemeinden zugeführten Brotgetreide etwas entnehmen, da England sich zur Getreide-Einfuhr nur unter der Bedingung bereit erklärt hat, dass nichts davon zur Verpflegung deutscher Truppen verwendet wird.

[16 December 1914]

Der Verwaltungschef bei dem Generalgouverneur in Belgien ist unter dem. 8. 12. 14. Va 377 beim General-Gouvernement dahin vorstellig geworden, den durch den Krieg besonders stark in Anspruch genommenen Gemeinden der Provinzen Ost- und Westflandern beim Bezuge von Nahrungs- und Bedarfsartikeln nach Möglichkeit entgegenzukommen.

Im Anschluss an den Tagesbefehl vom. 6. 12. 14. No. 169, wonach die General-Kommandos sich von den Gemeinden ihres im Operationsgebiet liegenden Bezirks den notwendigsten Bedarf an Brotgetreide---für einen nicht zu langen Zeitraum berechnet---anmelden zu lassen und die Bedarfsanmeldungen unmittelbar der Etappen-Inspektion zuzusenden haben, wird daher ersucht, hinsichtlich des übrigen Bedarfs der Gemeinden an Nahrungs- und Bedarfsartikeln in gleicher Weise die Etappen-Kommandanturen in ihrem Bezirk zu verfahren, jedoch nur insoweit, als diese von selbst vorstellig werden und die vorgenommene Prüfung die Notwendigkeit ergibt.

Die Etappen-Inspektion wird diese Anträge alsbald dem Verwaltungschef bei dem Generalgouverneur in Belgien zur Weitergabe an das Comité National de Secours in Brüssel übermitteln.

Dem Vertreter dieses Komitees in Gent ist anheimgegeben worden, sich zum Zwecke der Weiterbeförderung der vom Brüsseler Komitee dem Depot in Gent zugeführten Nahrungs- und Bedarfsartikeln an die Gemeinden mit der Etappen-Inspektion jeweilig in unmittelbares Einvernehmen zu setzen. Diese wird den

Transport in ähnlicher Weise wie den Kohlentransport durch Vermittlung des Verwaltungsrates der belgischen Eisenbahnen regeln.

Fig. 23. GERMAN SAFE CONDUCT PASS, 10 JANUARY 1918, FOR C.R.B. STEAMER "FRIDLAND"

[84] DOCUMENT NO. 658

Letter,
5 January 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO WHITLOCK, extending protection for imported foodstuffs to the French territory about Maubeuge

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 5. Januar 1915

EUERER EXZELLENZ

Beehre ich mich auf die Note vom 18. v. M. sehr ergebenst mitzuteilen, dass der Herr Generalgouverneur gemäss Verfügung vom 31. v. M. bestimmt hat, dass seine Verordnung vom 24. November v. J. betreffend den Schutz der vom Comité National eingeführten Lebensmittel u.s.w. auch auf die Lebensmittelversorgung der notleidenden Einwohner des Gebietes von Maubeuge Anwendung zu finden hat.

Mit dem Ausdruck vollkommener Hochachtung habe ich die Ehre zu verbleiben

Eurer Exzellenz sehr ergebener

(S.) VON SANDT

*An Seine Exzellenz den Minister
der Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika,
Herrn Brand Whitlock,
Hier*

[85] DOCUMENT NO. 659

Letter,
15 January 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO WHITLOCK, extending
protection for imported foodstuffs to the French territory of Givet and Fumay

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

Geschäftsnummer VII
65611

BRÜSSEL, den 15ten Januar 1915

Euerer Excellenz beehre ich mich sehr ergebenst mitzuteilen, dass der Herr
Generalgouverneur den Schutz vor Requisitionen, den das Comité National de
Secours et d'Alimentation in Belgien genießt, auch auf die Lebensmittelversorgung
der französischen Gebietsteile von Givet und Fumay bis zur Maas ausgedehnt hat.

Mit dem Ausdruck vollkommenster Hochachtung verbleibe ich

Euerer Excellenz sehr ergebener

DR. V. SANDT

*An Seine Excellenz den Minister der
Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika
Herrn Brand Whitlock*

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[86]

DOCUMENT NO. 660

Letter,
8 February 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO COMITÉ NATIONAL, stating
that the military authorities in Ghent have granted exemption to the relief
organization for canal tolls in Flanders

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

Geschäftsnummer VII. b/841

BRÜSSEL, den 8. Februar 1915

Die zuständige Behörde in Gent hat, wie sie mir telegraphisch mitteilt, dem Comité National Gebührenfreiheit auf Kanälen in ihrem an das Occupationsgebiet angrenzenden Bezirk, das u.a. Ostflandern umfasst, eingeräumt und zwar in dem gleichen Umfange, wie sie das Comité im Occupationsgebiet genießt.

Im Auftrage:

(gez.) KAUFMANN

*Am das Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation
Rue des Colonies, 66, III,
Hier*

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[87]

DOCUMENT NO. 661

Letter,
9 February 1915, MILITARY COMMANDER AT NAMUR TO WHITLOCK,
confirming protection from requisition of relief supplies in the French territory
about Givet, Fumay, and Sedan

Kaiserliches Militaer-Gouvernement
der
Provinz Namur

NAMUR, den 9. Februar 1915

Euer Exzellenz beehre ich mich sehr ergebenst mitzuteilen, dass der Herr
Gouverneur der Provinz Namur den Schutz vor Requisitionen, den das Comité
National de Secours et d'Alimentation in Belgien genießt, auch auf die
Lebensmittelversorgung der franzoesischen Gebietsteile von Givet und Fumay bis
Maas- und Semoistal, sowie bis Sedan, ausgedehnt hat.

Mit dem Ausdruck vollkommenster Hochachtung verbleibe ich Euerer Exzellenz
sehr ergebener

(S.) VON LONGCHAMP
Generalmajor

*An Seine Exzellenz den Minister der
Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika
Herrn Brand Whitlock,
Hier*

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[88]

DOCUMENT NO. 662

Letter,

11 February 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO COMITÉ NATIONAL,
confirming that the military authorities in Flanders have agreed to exempt imported
breadstuffs and drugs from requisition

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

Geschäftsnummer VII b 826

BRÜSSEL, den 11. Februar [1915]

Die zuständige Militärbehörde teilt mir mit, dass sie für Ostflandern und den
nördlichen Teil von Westflandern Anordnung dahin getroffen hat, dass die vom
Comité eingeführten *Vorräte an Mehl und Brotgetreide sowie pharmazeutischen
Gegenständen* in keinem Falle von den Truppen in Anspruch genommen werden
dürfen. Dagegen bittet die Militärbehörde zur Vermeidung von Unzuträglichkeiten
von einer Einführung von Nahrungs- und Futtermitteln aller Art, auch künstlichen,
sowie von Vieh in das bezeichnete Gebiet abzusehen, zumal von diesen
Nahrungsmitteln noch genügende Vorräte zur Ernährung der Bevölkerung
vorhanden sind.

(S.) VON SANDT

An das Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation
Hier

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[89]

DOCUMENT NO. 663

Letter,

17 February 1915, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO COMITÉ NATIONAL,
advising that the military authorities in Flanders have extended the guarantees
against requisition to include imported fodder

Der Verwaltungschef
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

BRÜSSEL, den 17ten Februar [1915]

Im Verfolg meines Schreibens vom 11. ds VII b 826, teile ich ergebenst mit, dass die zuständige Militärbehörde für Ostflandern und den nördlichen Teil von Westflandern nunmehr auch die vom Comité National eingeführten Futtermittel aller Art, besonders Maiz und Oelkuchen, gegen Requisitionen schützt. Ich bitte die Section Agricole zu verständigen.

(gez.) VON SANDT

*An das
Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation
Hier*

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[90] [DOCUMENT NO. 664](#)

Declaration,
8 March 1915, by MILITARY COMMAND AT REVIN, that requisition of foodstuffs imported by the American Commission is forbidden

8 March 1915

DECLARATION

At the desire of the Representative of the American Relief Commission it is herewith explicitly certified that any requisition for the needs of the German Army of the foodstuffs delivered to the Commune of Revin by the American Relief Commission is completely excluded.

(Signed) PUSCHER
Colonel and Commandant

[Translation]

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[91]

Letter,
21 March 1915, VON JAGOW TO GERARD, stating that there would be no objection to neutral civilian delegates in the French districts ([Document 280](#), chapter VI, is an English translation of the following)

Auswärtiges Amt

BERLIN, den 21. März 1915

VEREHRTESTE EXZELLENZ,

Auf Ihre gefällige Anfrage vom 17. März darf ich Ihnen nach eingezogener Erkundigung ganz ergebenst erwidern, dass deutscherseits nicht gefordert wird, die Verteilung von Nahrungsmitteln an die Bevölkerung der von den deutschen Truppen besetzten französischen Gebietsteile müsse unter der Aufsicht neutraler *Offiziere in Uniform* erfolgen. Nach den in Belgien gemachten Erfahrungen würden wir auch in den französischen Gebietsteilen neutrale Kommissare in Zivil zulassen. Sofern indessen amerikanischerseits Wert darauf gelegt werden sollte, im Falle der Übernahme der Versorgung der genannten Gebietsteile durch zwei oder drei amerikanische uniformierte Offiziere vertreten zu sein, so würde deutscherseits kein Einwand erhoben werden. Nur würde man Wert darauf legen, zuvor die Namen der Herren zu erfahren, deren Zulassung gewünscht wird.

Gern benutze ich diesen Anlass um Euerer Exzellenz die Versicherung meiner ausgezeichnetsten Hochachtung zu erneuern.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

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[92]

[DOCUMENT NO. 665](#)

Letter,

27 March 1915, VON JAGOW TO GERARD, inclosing communication from von Bissing giving his observations on the proposed relief in Northern France in connection with the work in Belgium ([Document 279](#) chapter VI, is an English translation of an extract of the inclosure)

Auswärtiges Amt

BERLIN, den 27. März 1915

VEREHRTE EXZELLENZ,

Gestatten Sie mir, dass ich Ihnen im Anschluss an meine vorläufige Mitteilung vom 15. d.M. anbei Abschrift eines Schreibens des Kaiserlichen General-Gouverneurs in Belgien zur geneigten Kenntnisnahme und mit der Bitte um Bescheidung des Herrn Hoover, übersende.

Mit der Versicherung meiner ausgezeichnetsten Hochachtung verbleibe ich

Euerer Exzellenz ergebenster

(Signed) VON JAGOW

Abschrift II W.K.V. 1824
Der General-Gouverneur in Belgien
J. Nr. Ia 1090

BRÜSSEL, den 21. März 1915

Zu der mir mitgeteilten Note des amerikanischen Botschafters Herrn Gerard vom 10. d. M. möchte ich meinerseits folgendes bemerken:

Was die Ernährung der französischen Bevölkerung südlich der belgischen Grenze angeht, so wird meinerseits die ausdrückliche und förmliche Erklärung abgegeben, dass die Nahrungsmittel, welche die "Kommission for Relief in Belgium" im Zusammenhange mit dem Comité National in Belgien aus dem neutralen Auslande durch das Okkupationsgebiet nach Frankreich hereinbringt, von jeder militärischen Requisition freibleiben.

Sollten diese Waren durch das Gebiet der Etappe oder der Operationsarmee in Ost- und West-Flandern durchgeführt werden, so würden die dortigen zuständigen militärischen Instanzen, wie ich glauben möchte, auch ihrerseits die erforderlichen Versicherungen abzugeben bereit sein.

Da es meine ernsteste Sorge ist, die Ernährung der belgischen Bevölkerung auf eine gewisse Zeitdauer im Voraus zu sichern, ist es mir durch entsprechende Einwirkungen auf das Comité National gelungen, die Nahrungsmitteldepots des letzteren mit Vorräten gefüllt zu sehen, welche die Versorgung der Bevölkerung für die jedesmalige Dauer von etwa 3 Wochen ermöglichen. Ich muss Wert darauf legen, dass die Ernährung der nordfranzösischen Gebietsteile nicht aus diesen für Belgien bestimmten Reserven erfolgt, und bringe daher in Vorschlag, dass Vorkehrungen etwa durch Kennzeichnung der Säcke usw. dahin getroffen werden, dass die für Frankreich bestimmten, in die hiesigen Depots vorübergehend einzulagernden Vorräte streng von den für Belgien bestimmten abgesondert werden.

Hinsichtlich der Pässe ist es irrtümlich, wenn Herr Hoover behauptet, dass "diese nur unter grossen Einschränkungen offenbar nur durch Vermittlung des Herrn Heinemann (des amerikanischen Mitgliedes der Kommission) zu erhalten seien." Vielmehr werden die Pässe--ohne Mitwirkung des Herrn Heinemann---von der Passzentrale an die von dem amerikanischen Gesandten Herrn Whitlock bezeichneten und verbürgten Personen ausgestellt.

Was die Angaben des Herrn Hoover über die Verringerung der Zahl der in Belgien anwesenden amerikanischen Mitglieder der Kommission betrifft, so hat Herr Heinemann selbst die Berechtigung meiner Forderung, die Zahl der im Dienste des Comités und der Kommission tätigen Herren möglichst einzuschränken, anerkannt

und deren Erfüllung, als in seinem eigenen Wunsche liegend, bestimmt in Aussicht gestellt.

Infolgedessen habe ich in einem an Herrn Heinemann gerichteten Schreiben vom 20. v. M. in voller Uebereinstimmung mit den Wünschen des genannten Mitgliedes festgestellt, dass die Zahl der amerikanischen Mitglieder bis zum 15. April auf ca. 25 eingeschränkt werden sollte.

Wenn entgegen den damaligen Anschauungen nunmehr die Kommission eine Erhöhung dieser Zahl für notwendig hält, so will ich entgegenkommenderweise keine Einwendungen dagegen erheben, dass etwa 10 Personen mehr nach dem 15. April für die Kommission in Belgien tätig werden. Dagegen muss ich aber entschiedene Verwahrung einlegen, als ob ich die Zahl der amerikanischen Mitglieder etwa deshalb reduziert hätte, um die Kontrolle zu erschweren. Die von meinem Vorgänger und mir gemachten Zusicherungen hinsichtlich der Requisitionsfreiheit sind und werden auf das peinlichste und allerbestimmteste meinerseits eingehalten und bedarf es in dieser Hinsicht einer Ueberwachung durch amerikanische Mitglieder durchaus nicht.

Das Verlangen des Herrn Hoover, die Zahl der in Belgien tätigen amerikanischen Mitglieder lediglich aus eigenem Ermessen der Kommission bestimmen zu lassen, kann nicht anerkannt werden; vielmehr wird sich diese Zahl nach dem auch von mir zu prüfenden Bedürfnis richten müssen.

(Signed) FREIHERR VON BISSING

*An das
Auswärtige Amt*

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[93]

Memorandum,
21 March 1915, of conference between MAJOR GENERAL ZOELLNER AND CONNETT, regarding the extension of relief to Northern France ([Document 281](#), chapter VI, is an English translation of the following)

BESPRECHUNG

*im Grossen Hauptquartier am 21. März 1915 Vormittags. Anwesend:
Generalmajor Zoellner, Vertreter der Obersten Heeresleitung und Mr. A. N.
Connett, Vertreter der C.R.B. (Committee Relief Belgium)*

1. Das Telegramm von Mr. Hoover, London, 18. März 1915, mit Bezug auf die Überwachung der Verteilung von Nahrungsmitteln an die Zivilbevölkerung des von

der Deutschen Armee okkupierten Gebietes Nordfrankreichs wurde vorgelegt und sein Inhalt besprochen.

2. Die Deutsche Heeresleitung ist im Prinzip damit einverstanden, dass amerikanische Offiziere in Uniform in der vorgeschlagenen Weise als Überwacher für die Tätigkeit des C.R.B. handeln.

3. Die Deutsche Heeresleitung gibt die Zusicherung, dass die Waren nie für die Bedürfnisse der Armee in Anspruch genommen werden, sondern allein für die Zivilbevölkerung der okkupierten Teile Frankreichs verwendet werden.

4. Die Deutsche Heeresleitung hat die in Nordfrankreich befindlichen Nahrungsmittel für Mensch und Tier gegen Quittung mit Beschlag belegt, sodass alle Bestände in den Besitz der Deutschen Heeresverwaltung übergegangen sind. Somit sind Vorräte, die der französischen Bevölkerung gehören, überhaupt nicht mehr vorhanden, abgesehen von Geflügel und Gemüse im Garten. Es muss also zur Ausschliessung von Missverständnissen festgestellt werden, dass die Inanspruchnahme der jetzt bereits beschlagnahmten Bestände für Heereszwecke nicht als neue Beitreibung angesehen werden darf. Die unentbehrlichsten Nahrungsmittel für Mensch und Vieh sind der Bevölkerung bisher in bestimmt vorgeschriebenen Sätzen deutscherseits verabfolgt worden.

5. Bezüglich der Verwendung der neuen Ernte hat die deutsche Heeresleitung freie Hand, weil sie durch Lieferung von Saatgetreide, Gestellung von Arbeitskräften, Gespannen, Motorpflügen usw. das Wesentlichste zur Gewinnung der Ernte selbst bewerkstelligt und für die Benutzung des Landes und französischer Arbeitskräfte Vergütung leistet.

6. Die Deutsche Heeresverwaltung sichert den C.R.B. in Bezug auf Frachtkosten grösstes Entgegenkommen zu, und wird mindestens die gleichen Vergünstigungen gewähren, wie für die Versorgung Belgiens.

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[94]

Agreements,

13 April 1915, between the SUPREME COMMAND OF THE GERMAN ARMY AND THE C.R.B., regarding the provisioning of the population in the occupied French territory ([Document 283](#), chapter VI, is an English translation of the following)

HAUPT-ÜBEREINKOMMEN

Zwischen der deutschen Obersten Heeresleitung (im Auftrage des General-Quartiermeisters, vertreten durch Major v. Kessler, Generalstabsoffizier beim

Generalintendanten des Feldheeres [] und der Commission for Relief in Belgium, vertreten durch Herrn O. T. Crosby, Vertreter der C.R.B. in Brüssel (der allein zeichnet) und durch Herrn A. N. Connett

1. Die deutsche Oberste Heeresleitung stimmt zu, dass die C.R.B. die Versorgung der Bevölkerung des besetzten französischen Gebietes mit Lebensmitteln übernimmt.

2. Die deutsche Oberste Heeresleitung versichert, dass die zu diesem Behufe eingeführten Waren niemals für Zwecke des deutschen Heeres in Anspruch genommen, sondern allein für die französische Zivilbevölkerung des besetzten Gebietes verwendet werden. Sie wird an alle nachgeordneten Stellen strengen Befehl erlassen, dass diese Waren niemals beschlagnahmt werden dürfen. Etwa noch nicht verteilte Waren bleiben zur ausschlieslichen Verfügung der C.R.B.

3. Der C.R.B. wird gestattet, in den besetzten Gebieten Nordfrankreichs amerikanische Staatsbürger als Beauftragte einzusetzen, die sich nach dem besondern Nebenübereinkommen No. 1 von der Durchführung der unter 2 gegebenen Zusicherung überzeugen können.

4. Die Anforderung und Verteilung der Waren erfolgt gemäss den Anordnungen der C.R.B. unter Mitwirkung der deutschen Militärbehörden durch französische Vertrauensmänner. Diese werden von den französischen Gemeinden bezeichnet und unterliegen der Zustimmung der deutschen Militärbehörden und der C.R.B.

Sie vertreten die französischen Gemeinden in deren Verkehr mit den Beauftragten der C.R.B. besonders auch hinsichtlich Abrechnung und Bezahlung.

5. Für den Transport der Waren bis an den Bestimmungsort sichert die deutsche Oberste Heeresleitung jede Unterstützung zu. Die Waren sollen zollfrei eingeführt und die Frachten nach gleichen Grundsätzen berechnet werden, die jeweils für die Versorgung Belgiens massgebend sind. Für den Transport gilt das besondere Nebenübereinkommen No. 2.

6. Zur Ausschliessung von Zweifeln über Herkunft und Bestimmung der gelieferten Waren werden alle für sie benutzten Transportmittel und Lagerräume militärischerseits mit dienstlicher Aufschrift versehen. Diese macht kenntlich, dass der Inhalt unter den Schutz der Bestimmungen der Ziffer 2 fällt.

7. Wenn militärische Rücksichten es erfordern, kann dieser Vertrag seitens der deutschen Obersten Heeresleitung jederzeit ohne Angabe von Gründen durch entsprechende Mitteilung an die C.R.B. aufgehoben werden. Jedoch sollen alle dann bereits von der C.R.B. eingeführten und im besetzten französischen Gebiet befindlichen Waren entsprechend den Bestimmungen dieses Vertrages verwendet werden. Den Beauftragten der C.R.B. wird gestattet, in diesem Falle zur

Abwicklung ihrer Geschäfte solange im besetzten Gebiet zu bleiben, als dies militärseits für durchführbar erachtet wird.

8. Das Recht der deutschen Militärbehörden, die im Lande noch vorhandenen Nahrungsmittel für Mensch und Tier gegen Gutschein zum militärischen Verbrauch zu beschlagnahmen, wird durch diesen Vertrag nicht berührt. Ebenso behalten sich die deutschen Militärbehörden bezüglich der neuen Ernte alle Rechte vor.

BRÜSSEL, den 13. April 1915

(gez.) VON KESSLER, *Major*
(S.) OSCAR T. CROSBY

NEBENÜBEREINKOMMEN No. 1

über die Stellung der Beauftragten der C.R.B. im besetzten französischen Gebiet

1. Den Beauftragten der C.R.B. wird die Berechtigung zuerkannt, sich von der zugesicherten Verwendung der von der C.R.B. gelieferten Waren zu überzeugen.
2. Die deutschen Militärbehörden werden ihnen bei Erfüllung dieser Aufgabe jede mögliche Unterstützung zuteil werden lassen. Demgegenüber muss aus militärischen Gründen gefordert werden, dass die Beauftragten sich lediglich mit den Fragen beschäftigen, die durch ihre Tätigkeit bedingt sind.
3. Die Beauftragten sind sich bewusst, dass ihre Tätigkeit im Gebiet des Feldheeres bestimmten Einschränkungen unterworfen werden muss. Diese werden von der Militärbehörde lediglich mit Rücksicht auf die jeweilige militärische Lage bindend festgesetzt werden.
4. Im besetzten Gebiet werden errichtet: eine Hauptstelle; fünf Verpflegungs-Bezirke.
5. An jeder Stelle werden 2 Herren amerikanischer Staatsangehörigkeit nach Wahl der C.R.B. zugelassen.

Auf Verlangen erhalten sie unentgeltlich Quartier, die dem Offizier zustehende Feldverpflegung und die erforderliche Bedienung. Für die durch ihre Tätigkeit bedingten Fahrten wird ihnen ein Heereskraftwagen zur Verfügung gestellt. Jedem Herrn wird ein seine persönliche Sicherheit verbürgender Ausweis ausgehändigt.

6. An der Hauptstelle wird anstatt des zweiten amerikanischen Mitgliedes der C.R.B. ein Beauftragter des Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, das von der C.R.B. mit der Buchführung betraut ist, zugelassen. Die Wahl dieser Persönlichkeit unterliegt der Genehmigung der Obersten Heeresleitung.

7. Jeder Stelle wird ein englisch und französisch sprechender Offizier zugeteilt, der ausschliesslich für diesen Dienst kommandiert ist. Er hat sie zu ihrer persönlichen Sicherheit auf ihren Fahrten zu begleiten und wird ihnen überhaupt in jeder möglichen Weise behülflich sein.

8. Die nach Ziffer 4 errichteten Verpflegungsbezirke werden in Unterbezirke zerlegt. Für jeden Unterbezirk werden ein Hauptort und an diesem Vertrauensleute französischer Staatsangehörigkeit nach Ziffer 4 des Hauptübereinkommens bestimmt.

9. Den Beauftragten wird die Berechtigung zugestanden, diese Vertrauensleute zu Zwecken der Überwachung und der Abrechnung in den Vororten aufzusuchen und dort die Gemeindevertreter der Unterbezirke persönlich zu empfangen. Diese Berechtigung kann, wenn die militärische Lage es erfordert, vorübergehend von der zuständigen Militärbehörde eingeschränkt werden. Doch soll es in diesem Falle den Beauftragten unbenommen sein, sich die Gemeindevertreter durch Vermittelung der Militärbehörde zur Rücksprache an seinen Wohnsitz zu bescheiden.

10. Jede, auch die persönliche Korrespondenz der Beauftragten ist offen dem zugeteilten Offizier zu übermitteln, der sie auf schnellstem Wege und im Gebiet der Reichspost unentgeltlich weiter befördert. Die Benutzung des Militärtelegraphen und Fernsprechers durch Vermittelung des Offiziers ist gestattet und gebührenfrei.

11. Jeder Beauftragte hat bei Übernahme seiner Stellung durch Namensunterschrift zu bescheinigen, dass ihm die vorstehenden Bestimmungen bekannt gegeben sind. Er übernimmt damit zugleich die Verpflichtung, seinen Dienst so zu versehen, wie von einem ehrenwerten Bürger eines neutralen Staates erwartet werden muss.

BRÜSSEL, den 13. April 1915

(Unterschrift) VON KESSLER, *Major*
(S.) OSCAR T. CROSBY

NEBENÜBEREINKOMMEN No. 2

über den Transport der von der C.R.B. gelieferten Güter

1. Der Transport soll nach Möglichkeit auf dem Wasserweg erfolgen. Die Benutzung der Wasserstrassen ist gebührenfrei. Die Regelung der Frachten mit den Schiffen bleibt der C.R.B. überlassen. Die Ausstellung von Pässen für die Schiffer wird durch besondere Vorschriften geregelt.

2. Für den Eisenbahn-Transport von Nahrungsmitteln für Mensch und Tier werden vom deutschen Eisenbahn-Verwaltungsrat in Brüssel nicht mehr als 50 p.c. der regelrechten Fracht erhoben. Die gleiche Frachtermässigung geniessen leer

zurücklaufende Säcke. Für nicht rechtzeitig be- oder entladene Eisenbahnwagen ist das volle Standgeld nach den Tarifvorschriften zu zahlen.

3. Die den Eisenbahn-Sendungen beizugebenden Frachtbriefe müssen nach Festsetzung des deutschen Eisenbahn-Verwaltungsrates eine ordnungsmässige Bescheinigung tragen, dass die zu transportierenden Güter für Versorgung der französischen Zivilbevölkerung dienen.

4. Die zum Transport benutzten Eisenbahnwagen sind mit Zetteln zu versehen, die den Inhalt als Eigentum der C.R.B. kenntlich machen.

5. Alle zur äusserlichen Kenntlichmachung der Güter dienenden Zeichen, wie Zettel u.s.w. sind durch die C.R.B. nach übereinkommen mit dem deutschen Eisenbahn-Verwaltungsrat herzustellen.

6. Die beladenen Eisenbahnwagen werden plombiert ihrem Bestimmungsort zugeführt. Eine Begleitung von Wagen oder Zügen durch Abgeordnete der C.R.B. ist unzulässig.

7. Die erforderlichen Eisenbahnwagen sind mindestens 2-3 Tage vor Bereitstellung bei der Versandstation anzufordern. Eine Verpflichtung zur Gestellung von Wagen kann die deutsche Eisenbahnverwaltung nicht übernehmen, jedoch soll den Anforderungen der C.R.B. nach Möglichkeit Rechnung getragen werden.

BRÜSSEL, den 13. April 1915

(Unterschrift) VON KESSLER, *Major*
(S.) OSCAR T. CROSBY

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[95] [DOCUMENT NO. 666](#)

[Label](#),

26 April 1915, issued by GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, protecting shipments of relief supplies in the North of France

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[96] [DOCUMENT NO. 667](#)

[Agreement](#),

6 July 1915, between the ARMY COMMAND AND THE C.R.B., covering the relief work in the Army Zone in Belgium

[GHENT, 6 July 1915]

1. The Etappen-Inspektion gives the assurance that the goods imported for the said purpose will never be called upon for the use of the German Army, but shall be used solely for the Belgian civil population of the occupied territory. The Etappen-Inspektion will issue strict orders to all the respective subordinate authorities to the effect that these goods must never be seized. Any goods which may not have been distributed at any time will remain at the exclusive disposal of the C.R.B.
2. The Etappen-Inspektion will afford every facility for the carriage of the goods to the place of destination. The goods will be admitted free of duty and freight will be charged according to similar principles as may, from time to time, be in force for the supply of Belgium.
3. In order to eliminate doubts as to origin and destination of the goods supplied, all means of transport and storing-rooms will be labelled officially by the German military authorities in such a manner as to make the goods recognizable as those covered by the stipulation of paragraph 1.
4. If military exigencies should so require, this agreement may be cancelled by the Etappen-Inspektion at any time without giving any reasons, by a notice to that effect to the C.R.B. However, all goods imported by the C.R.B. then being already within the occupied Belgian territory shall be disposed of in accordance with the stipulation of this agreement. In this case the American delegates will be permitted to remain long enough to discharge their duties in so far as this is considered practicable for military reasons.
5. The right of the German military authorities to requisition for military purposes against the foodstuffs for men and animals still existing in the country is in no way affected by this agreement. Likewise, the German military authorities reserve to themselves all rights in respect to the new crop.
6. The delegates of the C.R.B. are authorized to satisfy themselves that the goods supplied by the C.R.B. are being used in accordance with the guarantees given.
7. The German military authorities will afford them every possible assistance in the carrying out of this duty. On the other hand, for military reasons, they will be expected to limit themselves to such matters as are within the scope of their duties.
8. The delegates are aware that their activities in the zone of the field-army will have to be subjected to certain restrictions. These will be fixed as binding by the military authorities in respect of the military situation at the time being.
9. There will be established in the territory occupied by the Fourth Army

A central office (Ghent)

Three sub-districts with stores (Beernem, Thielt, Courtrai)

10. At the central office two gentlemen of American nationality will be admitted, as selected by the C.R.B. A military motor car will be placed at the disposal of these gentlemen for the journeys necessitated by their duties in the zone of the Fourth Army; for the journeys to Brussels a car of their own with the corresponding passes can be used. Every gentleman will be granted a passport guaranteeing his personal safety and a car-permit.

11. To the central office, an officer speaking English and French will be detailed exclusively for this duty. He has to accompany the delegates on their journeys for their personal safety and will generally assist them in every possible way.

12. All correspondence of the C.R.B. relative to ravitaillement has to be handed open to the attached officer who will forward it on by the quickest means, and in the zone of the Imperial Post, free of postage. The use of the military telegraphs and telephones will be allowed through the medium of the said officer. No fees will be charged.

13. On entering upon his position, every delegate will certify by his signature that he has been made acquainted with the above stipulations. At the same time he takes upon himself the obligation to carry out his duties in such a manner as may be expected from an honorable citizen of a neutral state.

14. As far as possible, the transportation shall take place by water. No tolls have to be paid for the use of the waterways. The payment of the freight to the lightermen is a matter of the C.R.B. Special regulations will be fixed for the granting of passes for the lightermen by the Etappen-Bau-Inspektion and the Hafenkommanturen.

15. For the shipment by rail of foodstuffs for man and beast, the German Railway Administration in Brussels will demand no more than 50 per cent of normal freight rates. The same reduction of rates will apply to the return of empty bags. For cars which are delayed during the loading or unloading, the full demurrage, as specified by the tariffs, must be paid.

16. The waybills accompanying the rail-shipments must contain a regular attestation made in accordance with the decision of the German Railway Administration and stating that the goods are destined for the Belgian civil population.

17. The railway cars used for the transportation must be provided with labels which show that the contents are the property of the C.R.B.

18. All means of distinguishing the goods, as labels, etc., have to be supplied by the C.R.B. in agreement with the German Railway Administration at Brussels.

19. The loaded cars will be delivered sealed at destination. Delegates of the C.R.B. will not be allowed to accompany cars or trains in transit.

20. Applications for the necessary cars must reach the station master at least two or three days beforehand. The German Railway Administration do not guarantee the supply of the cars. However, they will as far as possible attend to the needs of the C.R.B.

[97]

DOCUMENT NO. 668

Letter,

18 August 1915, ARMY COMMAND IN BELGIUM TO THE C.R.B., confirming the continued co-operation of the German Army in the task of relief

Etappen-Inspektion of the 4th Army
Ing. No. 3091

GHENT, 18 August 1915

Oscar T. Crosby Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium
Brussels

DEAR SIR:

In answer to your letter of July 10th, addressed to Major Adler, the Etappen-Inspektion informs you that it fully recognises the difficult and delicate task undertaken by the C.R.B. The EtappenInspektion welcomes the C.R.B. as it would welcome any other undertaking created or to be created for the sake of humanity and which seems appropriate to relieve the hardships arising from this war, from which the Belgian population in particular is suffering. For this reason, the Etappen-Inspektion will give the C.R.B. every possible assistance, as far as military exigencies permit. The Etappen-Inspektion therefore attaches great value to the continuance, in general as heretofore, of the ravitaillement of Belgium.

The Inspektion has noted with interest the report on the evolution of the C.R.B. as far as same was not already known to it.

The authorities of the Etappen-Inspektion have been informed as to the working of the *raison d'être* and the aim of the C.R.B. The authorities specially interested have received copies of your letter.

The Inspektion considers that it should take up some points of your letter:

The necessary protection for the merchandise and ships of the C.R.B. is given by the respective orders and notices to the relative military authorities in all the Operation and Etappen Zones. In case of erroneous actions, the authorities in power will stop it.

The German military authorities have, as a matter of course, made use of the rights of war to requisition in the country itself for the provisioning and general means of the army. They will do so also in the future within the limits which assure, if only in a moderate way, the feeding of the populations of the occupied territory. Moreover it may be said that payment is made by bonds given for provisions, cattle-food, cattle and horses.

As to a possible annulment of the conventions with the C.R.B. and the further treatment, in such cases, of their provisions, i.e. goods, it has only been agreed that in such cases the goods imported and existing in Belgian occupied territory should be further used for their purpose, viz: in favor of the Belgian population. Should, however, the C.R.B. consider it more convenient to withdraw and reship such goods, the Etappen-Inspektion will not oppose such action.

As to the question of guarantee for Belgian boats and boatmen leaving Belgium, such guarantee has not been asked for from the C.R.B. direct, just as such boats and men are not engaged direct by the C.R.B. On the contrary, it was intended that the contractors employed by the C.R.B. should be made by the latter to deposit the sums mentioned. You will understand that for military reasons the German authorities cannot allow that people of military age should leave the country or that we should possibly be deprived of valuable boats. As you yourself say quite rightly, the C.R.B. has no power over these people, and it is for this reason that the deposit of the said amounts was proposed.

Moreover, the C.R.B. is free to make use of Dutch boats and crews for its transports, no security whatsoever having to be deposited for these and the German authorities imposing no restrictions on same as long as the published orders are observed.

The German military authorities thank you for information that you intend to give in case of difficulties occurring in the future and in view of the hitherto harmonious co-operation with all stations of the C.R.B. it hardly calls for our special assurances that, in so far as military hindrances do not prevent, everything will be done to remove at once any justified grounds for complaint.

With the expression of high esteem on behalf of the Etappen-Inspektion,

THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF

(Signed) OSTERTAG
Oberstleutnant

[Translation]

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[98]

Agreement,
23 August 1915, between GENERAL HEADQUARTERS AND THE C.R.B.,
regarding bread cereals, whereby the Germans agree to issue 100 grams of flour per
capita per day from the native crops and the Commission 150 grams of imported
flour ([Document 362](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

Generalintendant des Feldheeres
Nr. 1634/8.15

Versorgung der französischen
Bevölkerung mit Brotfrucht

Vorgang: Sitzung vom 16.7.15.
Punkt4

GR. H. Qu., den 23.8.1915

1. Spätestens mit dem 11. September beginnend ist der Bevölkerung des besetzten
französischen Gebietes aus der hier gewonnenen Ernte zur Verfügung zu stellen:

für den Kopf und den Tag nach Wunsch der Gemeinden bis zu 100 g Mehl.

2. Das spanisch-amerikanische Hilfskomitee hat sich unter dieser Voraussetzung
bereit erklärt, bis auf weiteres als Ergänzung hierzu zu liefern:

für den Kopf und Tag mindestens 150 g Mehl.

3. Somit erhält die Bevölkerung für Kopf und Tag 250 g Mehl, d.s. rund 345 g
Brot. Mit Rücksicht auf den Mangel an anderweitigen Nahrungsmitteln ist dieser
Satz als nicht zu hoch bemessen zu erachten.

4. Die Abgabe erfolgt entweder in Korn, wo die Möglichkeit der Vermahlung
durch die Bevölkerung gegeben ist, oder, wo dies nicht der Fall ist, in Mehl.

5. Mit Rücksicht auf Schonung der Roggenbestände ist bis auf weiteres nur Weizen
oder Weizenmehl zu verausgaben.

6. Die Verausgabung hat auf Grund der Statistiken zu erfolgen, die von den Begleitoffizieren der Beauftragten der C.R.B. geführt werden. Die hiernach erforderlichen Mengen sind durch Vermittelung dieser Offiziere möglichst für je einen Monat im voraus den Gemeinden zuzuleiten.

Einmal verausgabte Bestände unterliegen dem gleichen Schutz wie die von der C.R.B. eingeführten Lebensmittel. Ihre Verwaltung ist Sache der Gemeinden. Die portionsmässige Verteilung auf die Gemeindemitglieder wird durch die Begleitoffiziere überwacht.

Engstes Zusammenarbeiten der Etappen-Intendanten mit den Begleitoffizieren ist geboten.

7. Für die Bezahlung ist der Requisitionspreis zu Grunde zu legen. Danach sind von den empfangenen Gemeinden für je 100 kg Mehl frei Abnahme-Bahnhof 30.0 frcs. oder 24.0 M zu entrichten.

8. Die Bezahlung hat in kursfähigem Gelde zu erfolgen. Stadtscheine usw. sind nur im Notfalle und insoweit anzunehmen, als sie der hierüber besonders ergehenden Verfügung entsprechen. Wo es möglich ist, den Kaufpreis gegen Leistungen der Gemeinden auf zurechnen, ist diese Verrechnung vorzuziehen.

Sollte eine Gemeinde keinerlei Zahlungsmöglichkeit mehr besitzen, so ist über weitere Abgabe von Mehl die Entscheidung des Generalintendanten einzuholen.

9. In den Gebietstellen, in denen aus militärischen Gründen seitens der C.R.B. nicht geliefert werden kann, ist die gesamte Portion nach Wunsch der Gemeinden bis zu 250 g Mehl aus den im Land gewonnenen Beständen zu verausgaben.

Bezahlung nach Ziffer 7 und 8.

(gez.) VON SCHOELER

<i>Verteilungsplan:</i>		
Armeeoberkommandos 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, v. Strantz, Falkenhausen	je 3.	Abdr
Etappen-Inspektion desgl.	je 3	"
Begleitoffiziere C.R.B. Gr. H.Q., Etappe 2, 3, 5, 6, 7	je 2	"
Generalquartiermeister	je 1	"

Armeeoberkommando 4 Etappen-Inspektion 4 Gouvernement Lille Gouvernement Metz Kriegsministerium (B 1, B 2) Reichsamt des Innern Armeeintendant beim General- Gouvernement Belgien	nachrichtl. je 2	"
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[99]

Decree,
3 September 1915, by GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, respecting the distribution of the potato crop in Northern France ([Document 363](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

Generalintendant des Feldheeres
Nr. 126/9. 15

Verwendung der Kartoffelernte

Vorgang: Gen. Qu. Mstr. 1.a.
Nr. 5933 v. 12.3.15

GR.H.Q., den 3.9. 1915

Aus den im besetzten französischen Gebiet geernteten Kartoffelbeständen ist zunächst der Bedarf für die Bevölkerung zu decken. Die danach verbleibenden Mengen sind für die Truppenverpflegung zu verwenden. Saatgut wird später aus belgischen oder heimischen Beständen überwiesen werden.

A. Bedarf für die Bevölkerung.

1. Der Bedarf ist mit 200 g für Kopf und Tag anzusetzen. Zu Grunde zu legen sind die Einwohnerzahlen für die Versorgung mit Brotfrucht. (Gen. Int. 1634/8. 15)

2. Der Bedarf ist zunächst von der Ernte ab auf 6 Monate sicherzustellen.

3. Die Ueberweisung der hiernach zuständigen Mengen erfolgt durch Vermittelung der Verpflegungs-Offiziere für die Zivilbevölkerung (Begleitoffiziere der

Beauftragten der C.R.B.) an die Gemeinden, möglichst für je einen Monat im voraus.

Einmal verausgabte Bestände unterliegen dem gleichen Schutz wie die von der C.R.B. eingeführten Lebensmittel.

4. Auf die zu überweisenden Beträge sind die Mengen anzurechnen, die von den Gemeindemitgliedern etwa aus Gartenland und dergl. gewonnen werden und nicht beschlagnahmt sind.

5. Die Verrechnung des Wertes der überwiesenen Mengen erfolgt nach folgenden Grundsätzen:

(a) Wird ein Gutschein über die Ablieferung der Kartoffelernte gegeben, so sind die der Bevölkerung überwiesenen Mengen auf ihm abzusetzen. Erfolgt die Lieferung aus anderen Gemeindebezirken, so ist auf deren Gutscheinen ersichtlich zu machen, welche Mengen und an welche Gemeinden diese abgegeben worden sind.

(b) Werden Kartoffeln an die Bevölkerung abgegeben, die auf Grund eines Pachtverhältnisses gewonnen sind, so hat Bezahlung zu erfolgen.

Wo sich die Möglichkeit bietet, ist der Wert der gelieferten Kartoffeln gegen Arbeitsleistungen der empfangenden Gemeinden aufzurechnen.

Als Preis ist der Requisitionspreis von 10 Frs. für je 100 kg. zu Grunde zu legen. Soweit Kartoffeln, die als Speisekartoffeln nicht verwendbar sind, auch an die Bevölkerung als Futterkartoffeln abgegeben werden, was der Regelung innerhalb der Armeen überlassen wird, regeln die Armeen die Preisbemessung unter Zugrundelegung des vorerwähnten Requisitionspreises für Speisekartoffeln.

6. Verladung, Entladung und etwa erforderlicher Landtransport ist den beteiligten Gemeinden zu übertragen, soweit dies möglich ist.

B. Bedarf für die Truppenverpflegung.

1. Die übrig bleibenden Mengen stehen völlig für die Truppenverpflegung zur Verfügung.

2. Es ist überschläglich zu berechnen, auf welche Zeit die Armee mit diesen Beständen versorgt werden kann.

3. Reicht nach dieser Berechnung die verfügbare Menge nicht von der Ernte über die Wintermonate bis etwa Mitte März kommenden Jahres so sind die Landesbestände in erster Linie für die Wintermonate zurückzuhalten, während deren der Eisenbahntransport von Kartoffeln wegen Frostgefahr unmöglich ist.

Fehlmengen sind zunächst aus belgischen Beständen zu decken. Anforderungen bei der Etappen-Intendantur der 4. Armee, weiterhin bei der Armee-Intendantur des General-Gouvernements in Brüssel. Heimische Bestände sind erst in Anspruch zu nehmen, wenn aus Belgien nicht geliefert werden kann.

C. Lieferung von Saatgut für die Frühjahrsbestellung.

Ueber die Lieferung von Saatgut erfolgt weitere Bestimmung.

(gez.) VON SCHOELER

<i>Verteilungsplan:</i>		
Armeeoberkommandos 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, v. Strantz, Falkenhausen	je 3.	Abdr
Etappen-Inspektion desgl.	je 3	"
Begleitoffiziere C.R.B. Gr. H.Q., Etappe 2, 3, 5, 6, 7	je 2	"
Generalquartiermeister	je 1	"
Armeeoberkommando 4 Etappen-Inspektion 4 Gouvernement Lille Gouvernement Metz Kriegsministerium (B 1, B 2) Reichsamt des Innern Armeeintendant beim General- Gouvernement Belgien	nachrichtl. je 2	"

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[100]

DOCUMENT NO. 669

Order,

3 September 1915, by GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, covering the rationing of native flour in amount 100 grams per capita per diem, the C.R.B. to import and distribute 150 grams per capita per diem

[CHARLEVILLE, 3 September 1915]

The Administration of the German Army has made special arrangements for the purpose of making possible the delivery of a ration of flour greater than 190 grams to the French population beginning September 11. The C.R.B. will furnish at least 150 grams of this; the Administration up to 100 grams. This latter quantity will be delivered in the form of wheat flour and is to be distributed to the population or used in its interest in equal rations like the flour of the C.R.B. The flour delivered by the Military Administration is to be paid by the Communes in ready money (au comptant); the price is fixed at 30 francs per 100 kg. delivered at the station of the district. For the transportation to the Regions and to the Communes as well as for the charges due to distribution and bookkeeping the District and the Region are authorised to make a slight augmentation in price. Payment is to be made in gold or in German bank notes or bank notes of the Banque de France; only in absolute lack of specie, in paper (state bonds, government annuities, shares, titres d'Etat, rentes, actions) whose acceptance and current price shall be fixed through the Intermediary of Banks.

The right to repurchase this paper later is reserved on request.

The Communes are to pay to the Regions, these to the District, and the Delegate of the District will turn over the sum to the officer attached to the C.R.B.

The District receives from the officer a bill which is payable fifteen days after the receipt of the goods.

The delivery will be made once each month.

The order is to be made each 15th of the month by the Delegate of the District in one amount.

The whole quantity asked for is sent to the Delegate of the District and the distribution to the Regions and Communes is to be made in the same manner as that of goods of the C.R.B.

Statistics and reports regarding consumption are to be made only for flour of the C.R.B. Extreme care must be taken that no quantity delivered by the Military Administration be entered in these statistics and reports.

Beginning with the distribution of the flour delivered by the Military Administration the supplements which the Inspection of Etapes has granted to the rations of ravitaillement of the French civil workmen will be abolished.

(Signed) LIEUTENANT COLONEL HUEBNER

In communicating to you the above instructions, I have the honor to request that you please consult as a matter of urgency with your communes for the purpose of

knowing what maximum quantity could be concentrated in the district to permit us to take advantage of the offer of the German authorities which is so interesting.

[Above P.S. was added to the original in pencil, without signature.]

[Translation]

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[101]

Letter,
7 October 1915, CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF, FOURTH ARMY, TO THE COMMISSION, stating the regulations which had been put into force concerning the harvest in Flanders ([Document 357](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of this letter)

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[102]

DOCUMENT NO. 670

Letter,
4 February 1916, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO THE C.R.B., declaring that empty tins will be preserved and kept at the disposal of the C.R.B.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, 4 February 1916

*W. B. Poland, Esq.,
Brussels*

MY DEAR MR. POLAND:

Referring to the conversation I had with you the other day regarding the various tin boxes, I beg to say that I have given instructions to all the Districts that all tins which may be shipped by you to the French Committees, no matter what their content has been, are to be preserved and kept at your disposal.

I hope that this will satisfy the British Government.

With kindest regards I am,

Yours truly,

(Signed) COUNT WENGENSKY

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[103]

DOCUMENT NO. 671

Letter,

6 February 1916, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO C.R.B., advising that German authorities agree to distribute 100 grams of flour per capita per day to the French population after the 31st March provided the Commission imports 150 grams

GROSSES HAUPTQUARTIER, February 6, 1916

*W. B. Poland, Esq.,
Bruessel*

MY DEAR MR. POLAND,

Referring to our conversation the other day I herewith beg to tell you that the 100 gramms of flour are also going to be given by the German authorities to the French population after March 31st provided that the "Commission for Relief" brings in at least 150 gramms of flour per day and capita.

With kindest regards I am

Yours very truly,

(signed) COUNT WENGERSKY

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[104]

Letter,

15 February 1916, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO C.R.B., stating that the German Army will deliver 100 grams of flour per head per day to the civil population until next harvest (See [Document 366](#), chapter VIII)

.

[105]

DOCUMENT NO. 672

Letter,

19 February 1916, WHITNEY TO W. B. POLAND, reporting a meeting with Major von Kessler, concerning the conduct of the relief in Northern France and giving the German decisions on the many points raised

BRUSSELS, 19 February 1916

*W. B. Poland, Esq.,
Director Commission for Relief in Belgium,
Brussels*

MY DEAR POLAND:

I beg to report a meeting with Major von Kessler at Charleville last Tuesday, February 15th, at which the following subjects were discussed at length:

1. The intention of the German authorities as to the length of time they propose delivering the 100 grams per diem per capita of native wheat or flour (125 grs. of wheat or 100 grs. of flour).
2. The circulation of C.R.B. representatives within their district in discharge of their duties, and their attendance of the regular weekly meetings in Brussels for the same purpose.
3. The requisitioning of animals actually necessary for the transportation of C.R.B. foodstuffs.
4. The shipping of carbide from Switzerland direct to districts in the North of France.
5. Our need of a third representative in Flanders.

In addition to Major von Kessler there were present at this meeting Captain zur Strassen, Officer of the Charleville district, Captain Bahr, Officer of the Lille district, and Oberleutnant Schall, formerly of the Charleville district but now stationed at Warsaw, Poland.

1. *Native Wheat.* Major von Kessler declared the intention of the German authorities to be an uninterrupted delivery of the native wheat or flour---125 grs. of wheat or 100 grs. of flour per capita per diem---until the next native crop, on the understanding that the C.R.B. also distribute 150 grs. per diem per capita throughout the same period.

He gave me a written undertaking to that effect which I hand you herewith.

2. *Circulation of Representatives.* That there might arise no misunderstanding between officers and representatives in the future, I called the Major's attention to the general principle underlying all of our work---as expressed in the accord with the German authorities under which we are operating in Northern France---viz. that the C.R.B. flag, so to say, follows the C.R.B. flour. That, in a word, no C.R.B. foodstuffs will be delivered into any section where a C.R.B. representative may not go, except where and when for military reasons the line is closed for a temporary period; and that during such period the officer must visit such closed region and

render a satisfactory accounting to the representative. I pointed out that the St. Mihiel situation exists as a favor to them and is recognized by the C.R.B. neither as a German right under our agreement nor as establishing a precedent, as was plainly stated by us in our letter at the time we agreed to permit the novel arrangement, but it is to be accepted simply as evidence of our disposition to co-operate with them in meeting an unusual and difficult condition.

I made it clear to the Major that the weekly meetings in Brussels are essential to an intelligent and effective co-operation between the executive department and the representatives and that the attendance of the latter is in discharge of their duties and should not be interfered with.

Also I emphasized the fact that we consider it highly important to the contentment of the representatives and therefore in the interest of efficient work, that they have a change of atmosphere regularly and the opportunity of the social relations with their countrymen of which they are deprived at their respective posts; and that the C.R.B. on both these grounds required the presence of the representatives in Brussels for the regular weekly meetings as part and parcel of our working agreement in Northern France. The Major agreed to the right of free circulation by the representatives in their districts, except during the temporary periods as provided for in our agreement, and to the importance to the work of their attendance at the Brussels meetings. He assured me that only exceptional occasions of a temporary nature would interfere with this program.

3. *Requisitioning Horses.* The Major agreed that the requisitioning of animals necessary for the delivery of C.R.B. foodstuffs was not in accord with our working agreement and would not be tolerated by Headquarters. He said that where or when animals so used were required by the German local authorities, the delivery of the C.R.B. foodstuffs would be provided for either by rail or motor without cessation or hindrance of service.

I told him that it was immaterial how the foodstuffs were delivered so long as they reached the people without delay.

(In a word, and to make this paragraph clearer, the Germans do not declare they will not requisition horses, but they promise that if they find it necessary to do so, they will provide other transportation so that the delivery of foodstuffs will be continued without hindrance.) [P.S. added by Mr. Whitney on March 7th.]

4. *Carbide.* The Major declared that carbide bought in Switzerland may be shipped direct over the German roads to the purchasing district in Northern France.

5. *Representative in Flanders.* I informed the Major that the local authorities in Flanders had denied our request for passport for a third representative in that section; that we had found, after a considerable experience and much hard effort

and patience, two men unequal to the task assigned them; that the district is too large for two men and we need another to satisfactorily cover the territory and thereby enable us to live up to the guarantees exacted of us by the Allies.

The Major promised to take up the matter with Headquarters and report.

I may add that we discussed also the potato situation which is not especially cheerful at the moment and promises to grow worse rather than better in the immediate future.

The Major says there are plenty of potatoes buried in East Prussia and other sections under German ownership or control, but they cannot be dug up or transported until the freezing weather has come to an end. He thinks that by the end of March or the early part of April there will be potatoes enough to supply everyone with the 200 grs. daily ration, which now reaches only a proportion of the people of Northern France.

Longwy, Valenciennes, and Lille are the sections where a supply is most needed; Longwy has some, but the need of Lille especially is dire and present. If you can import potatoes from Holland to help out Lille it will be a great service.

Sincerely,

(Signed) CASPAR WHITNEY

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[106]

DOCUMENT NO. 673

Letter,

25 February 1916, WHITNEY TO W. B. POLAND, describing the intentions of the German military authorities with regard to seeds for vegetables and the 1916 harvest of wheat, rye, and potatoes in Northern France

CHARLEVILLE, 25 February 1916

*W. B. Poland, Esq.,
Director C.R.B.
Brussels*

MY DEAR POLAND:

Count Wengersky tells me this morning that Headquarters has decided to supply to the people of Northern France vegetable garden seeds, as far as possible, as well as wheat, rye, and potato seeds. The cost of the wheat, rye, and potato seeds will be deducted from such money allowance or price as is given the people when the

crops are taken over by the military authorities; the vegetable garden seeds will be sold the people probably against local *bons de ville*---although no definite decision has yet been reached on that point.

As in 1915, the product of the people's vegetable gardens will not be requisitioned by the military; on the other hand the Germans assume no obligation against the owners of such vegetable gardens selling their produce of their own free will to whomsoever they wish, either to the military authorities or to individuals, soldiers, or civilians, it being understood that the product of such gardens belongs to the owners to dispose of as they desire and at such price as they can secure, whether the seeds come to them through the Germans or the C.R.B.

The Count informs me also that the intention of the German authorities this year is to requisition the entire wheat and rye crops as in 1915, but to pay cash---i.e., *bons de ville*, or marks or francs for the *entire* crop---requiring from the people the same character of money for the wheat or flour delivered to the people from the crop so requisitioned. It may be that the Germans may decide to deduct the price of the deliveries subsequently to be made from the price fixed and given at the time the crop is requisitioned.

Sincerely,

(Signed) CASPER WHITNEY

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[107]

[DOCUMENT NO. 674](#)

Letter,
10 May 1916, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO C.R.B. REPRESENTATIVE,
granting protection from requisition to herds of milch-cows which the C.R.B.
proposed to introduce from Belgium

GREAT HEADQUARTERS, 10 May 1916

*Gardner Richardson, Esq.,
C.R.B. Representative,
Charleville*

DEAR MR. RICHARDSON:

Referring to the conversation I had with you the other day, I would like to state that herds of milk-cows which the C.R.B. might introduce for the civil population will be treated in exactly the same way as all C.R.B. foodstuffs. They will not be requisitioned but kept at the disposal of the civil population. We propose that you should send these milk-cows to the respective communes and that the local C.R.B.

committees distribute milk, butter, or cheese receiving cards to those people whom they think mostly in need. The milk, etc., would of course be free of requisitioning or official buying by the troops.

You will readily see that it is impossible for us to guarantee that no single individual of the military forces occasionally might buy some of the stuffs from individuals.

We think it is necessary that the cows have a brand mark on the horns, this branding to be executed in Belgium before sending the cows to Northern France in order to prevent misuse of the branding iron.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) WENGERSKY

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[108]

Memorandum,

26 August 1916, of a conference and agreement between MAJOR VON KESSLER AND KELLOGG of the C.R.B., regarding reservations of food in Northern France and the Belgian Operations Zone and increase in rations to the civil population (See [Document 377](#), chapter VIII)

.

[109]

[DOCUMENT NO. 675](#)

Declaration,

21 February 1917, by GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, that imported seeds and the resulting vegetables will not be requisitioned in Northern France

Verpflegungsoffizier
für die Zivilbevölkerung
im besetzten Gebiete von
Nordfrankreich & Flandern

W. Nr. 15/317

H.Qu., Mézières-Charleville, den 21. Februar 1917

Es wird der Commission for Relief in Belgium, Brüssel, hiermit bestätigt, dass weder die von ihr in das besetzte Gebiet von Nordfrankreich eingeführten Gemüsesämereien zur Bestellung der Gärten seitens der Zivilbevölkerung, noch die

aus diesen Sämereien gezogenen Gemüse, von Seiten der Heeresverwaltung requiriert werden werden.

*Hauptmann
beim Stabe des Generalintendanten
des Feldheeres*

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[110]

Letter,
30 July 1917, GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO THE SPANISH-DUTCH COMMITTEE, stating that the General Staff had agreed to reserve the total crops of the Army Zone for the civil population ([Document 384](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Generalgouverneur in Belgien

1 No V. 3711

BRÜSSEL, den 30. Juli 1917

Dem Comité Hispano Néerlandais teile ich ergebenst mit, dass laut telegraphischer Mitteilung des Grafen Wengersky die gesammte Ernte im besetzten Gebiet von Nordfrankreich und der Etappe Flandern in Brotfrucht, Roggen und Weizen, für die Zivilbevölkerung reserviert werden wird. Da die Ernte aber erheblich kleiner als die vorjährige ausfallen wird, würde es angezeigt sein schon vom 1. September ab auf 150 gr. Mehl pro Tag herunterzugehen. über die Kartoffelernte kann noch nichts Bestimmtes gesagt werden; Graf Wengersky hofft jedoch, dass die Ration auf etwa 200 gr. pro Tag und Kopf wird festgesetzt werden können.

I. A.
(gez.) RIETH

*An das
Comité Hispano-Néerlandais pour la Protection du Ravitaillement
Brüssel*

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[111]

DOCUMENT NO. 676

Telegram,

8 August 1917, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO THE C.R.B., guaranteeing restitution of skins, hoofs, and horns of live cattle imported by the Commission

Télégramme du 8 août 1917 de Mézières:

Für Relief Commission zu dortigem Telegramm Nummer 426 vom 4. dieses. Falls lebendes Vieh für Zivilbevölkerung Nordfrankreichs und Flandern aus Holland eingeführt wird garantieren wir Rückgabe der Häute Hufe und Hörner an Comité National Brüssel,---i. V. HAUPTMANN GRAF WENGENSKY, HAUPTMANN ZUR STRASSEN.

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[112]

DOCUMENT NO. 677

Letter,

10 January 1918, VON DER LANCKEN TO VILLALOBAR, announcing the transfer of the Givet-Fumay region to the Army Zone, involving changes in feeding measures

Politische Abteilung
bei dem
Gouverneur in Belgien

V. 4624

BRUXELLES, le 10 janvier 1918

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

J'ai l'honneur de porter à la connaissance de Votre Excellence que pour des motifs d'ordre militaire la région de Givet-Fumay faisant partie du territoire placé sous les ordres de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général en Belgique sera transférée à l'étape de la première armée. La frontière franco-belge de Fumay jusqu'à Hautes Rivières formera la nouvelle limite entre le territoire administré par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général et celui cédé à l'étape de la première armée.

Le transfert entrera en vigueur le 15 janvier 1918.

Votre Excellence voudra bien se rappeler à cette occasion que les garanties accordées par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général que j'ai eu l'honneur de Lui communiquer par ma note du 14 avril 1916 ne s'appliquent qu'aux produits d'origine belge. Elles n'étaient donc pas applicables aux produits originaires de la région de Givet, pas plus que de celle de Maubeuge transférée antérieurement au territoire d'étapes de la 2^{me} armée.

Je prie Votre Excellence de bien vouloir communiquer ce qui précède au Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation et au Comité Hispano-Néerlandais et de suggérer à ces organismes de prendre les dispositions nécessaires pour que le ravitaillement de la population civile de la région susdite soit assuré dorénavant par le Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France. Le Comité National pourrait alors soit reprendre les stocks de vivres qu'il a en magasin dans le territoire de Givet-Fumay, soit les céder au Comité Français. Si des vivres de provenance belge devaient se trouver actuellement dans des magasins de cette région ils seraient ramenés dans le territoire administré par Monsieur le Gouverneur Général pour y être utilisés dans l'intérêt de la population civile.

Je saisis l'occasion pour renouveler à Votre Excellence les assurances de ma haute considération.

(s.) LANCKEN

[113] [DOCUMENT NO. 678](#)

Telegram,
5 March 1918, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO SPANISH-DUTCH
COMMITTEE, extending the seed guarantee to Flanders

DEUTSCHE VERMITTLUNGSSTELLE C.N.,
BRUXELLES

SS Hqu. Mézières 3138 5/3
9/50 M.

Für Direktor Langenbergh beginnt zu dortiger a 4195

Garantie für Sämereien wird auf Etappe Flandern ausgedehnt werden---GRAF
WENGERSKY. W 58/1258

[114] [DOCUMENT NO. 679](#)

Declaration,
15 March 1918, by GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, regarding seed imports and
resulting crops in Northern France and in Belgian Army Zone

Abschrift
Verpflegungsoffizier
für die Zivilbevölkerung

im besetzten Gebiete von
Nordfrankreich & Flandern

W. No 59/1276

CHARLEVILLE, den 15. März 1918

An das

*Comité Hispano-Néerlandais pour la protection du Ravitaillement
Bruessel*

In Beantwortung des dortigen Schreibens A-4150 vom 21.2.18 uebersende ich Ihnen in der Anlage die vom dem Herrn General intendanten des Feldheeres persoendlich gefertigte Erklærung ueber Beschlagnahmefreiheit der einzufuehrenden Saemereien und der ans denselben zu erntenden Erzeugnisse sowohl im franzoesischen wie im belgischen Etappengebiet.

(S.) WENGERSKY

Hauptmann

1 Anlage

ERKLAERUNG

Auf Wunsch des Comité Hispano-Néerlandais pour la protection du Ravitaillement en Belgique et dans le Nord de la France, gibt hiermit die Deutsche Oberste Heeresleitung, vertreten durch den Generalintendanten des Feldheeres die Zusicherung, dass die Sämereien irgend welcher Art, die, sei es von der "Commission for Relief in Belgium" oder von dem Comité d'alimentation du Nord de la France in das besetzte Gebiet von Nordfrankreich und belgische Etappengebiet eingeführt werden, von jeder Beschlagnahme befreit sind.

Die gleiche Zusicherung wird für die aus diesen Sämereien geernteten Erzeugnissen gegeben---Die Zivilbevölkerung des besetzten Gebietes hat freie Verfügung darüber und diese Ernteerzeugnisse geniessen den gleichen Schutz, wie alle von der C.R.B. eingeführten Lebensmittel.

Das Comité Hispano-Néerlandais wird das Recht haben, sich im Rahmen der zwischen der deutschen Obersten Heeresleitung und dem Comité hierüber vereinbarten allgemeinen Grundsätze durch seine Delegierten davon zu überzeugen, dass die Bestimmungen, die durch die gegenwärtige Erklärung getroffen sind, beachtet werden.

(S.) _____

Generalmajor und Generalintendant des Feldheeres

[115]

DOCUMENT NO. 680

Declaration,

24 April 1918, by GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, exempting privately owned clothing from requisition in the Army Zone

DÉCLARATION DU COMMANDANT EN CHEF DE L'ARMÉE

Il résulte d'informations reçues que la C.R.B. se propose d'importer d'ici peu des quantités importantes de vêtements, étoffes, chaussures, etc., ... destinées aux populations civiles de la Belgique et du Nord de la France.

Ayant appris que l'inventaire des stocks de vêtements dans les maisons privées, tel qu'il a été ordonné par l'Inspection des Etapes à Mons, pourrait mettre obstacles à l'importation des marchandises ci-dessus, le Commandement de l'Armée déclare par la présente qu'il n'a pas l'intention de réquisitionner les vêtements maintenant en possession de personnes privées dans le territoire des Etapes et des opérations militaires, et qui sont de leur usage personnel.

Si ces intentions devaient être modifiées, le Commandement de l'Armée donnerait un préavis d'au moins trois mois, avant d'effectuer les réquisitions projetées.

Quartier général, 24 avril 1918.

(S.) NAHNDORFF

Le Quartier-Maître général

[116]

Letter,

2 September 1918, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO SPANISH-DUTCH COMMITTEE, relative to the prospects of the 1918 harvest and the measures adopted to increase the food supply in the Army Zone ([Document 385](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

Verpflegungsoffizier
für die Zivilbevölkerung im
besetzten Gebiete von
Nordfrankreich und Flandern

W. Nr. 25/1782

Mézières-Charleville, H.Q. den 2. September 1918

LIEBER HERR LANGENBERGH,

Bezugnehmend auf unsere verschiedentlichen mündlichen Besprechungen und Ihr Schreiben vom 8. August, möchte ich Ihnen im Nachstehenden einige Angaben über die Verwendung der vorjährigen Ernte und die Aussichten für das kommende Wirtschaftsjahr mitteilen:

Die Ernte des Jahres 1916/17 hat ungefähr einen Ertrag von 140.000 Tonnen Brotgetreide gebracht.---Hiervon ist für die Neubestellung des Jahres 1917/18 der Betrag von ca 12.000 Tonnen als Saatgut zurückgestellt worden: es ergibt sich also, dass 128.000 Tonnen Brotgetreide, oder zu 97% Ausmahlung: 124.000 Tonnen Mehl zur Verfügung standen.---Wir haben an die Einwohner 132.800 Tonnen Mehl ausgegeben, sodass, um diese Zahl zu erreichen, von deutschen Erzeugnissen 8.800 Tonnen Mehl zu der hier gemachten Ernte hinzugeliefert worden sind.

Bei den Erträgen müssen Sie berücksichtigen, dass bei dem völligen Mangel an Kunstdünger in dem besetzten Gebiet und den verhältnismässig geringen Möglichkeiten Natur-Dünger zu haben, die Ertragsfähigkeit der Aecker naturgemäss sehr herunter geht. Es wird also von uns die Politik getrieben, nach Möglichkeit nur die wirklich noch ertragsfähigen Aecker zu bestellen, damit keine unnötige Verschwendung an Saatgut eintritt; hieraus ergibt sich auch, dass die Anbauflächen immer geringer werden. In dem Erntejahr 1917/18 ist infolgedessen wiederum eine Einschränkung der Anbauflächen um 55.000 Hektar eingetreten; der Ernteertrag wird dementsprechend geringer sein; genaue Zahlen über die Ernte 1917/18 sind natürlich noch nicht zur Verfügung; ich habe mich jedoch bemüht, von Seiten der landwirtschaftlichen Sachverständigen eine möglichst genaue Ertragsziffer zu erhalten und kann sagen, dass die Ernte ein Ergebnis von 110.000 Tonnen nicht überschreiten wird. Wir müssen von diesem Betrag mindestens 10.000 Tonnen als Saatgut für das kommende Wirtschaftsjahr zurück stellen; wenn wir also im kommenden Jahre durchschnittlich auf den Kopf und Tag 75 Gramm Mehl rechnen, so wird die deutsche Verwaltung voraussichtlich circa 5.000 Tonnen Mehl wieder aus deutschen Beständen als Zuschuss für die Zivilbevölkerung zuschiessen müssen. Sie sehen also, mein lieber Herr Langenbergh, dass eine Erhöhung der zu gebenden Mehlportion nicht wird eintreten können. Nach Mitteilung des Herrn Generalintendanten des Feldheeres ist es noch nicht zu übersehen, ob es möglich sein wird, in den ersten Monaten vielleicht eine Erhöhung der Mehl portion auf 100 Gramm zu ermöglichen; sollte dies vielleicht doch dass noch möglich sein, so möchte ich ganz besonders hervorheben da in den späteren Monaten eine Reduzierung unter 75 Gramm eintrete müsste, da wie gesagt, schon die Portion von 75 Gramm eine Zuschuss aus deutschen Mitteln erfordert.

Was nun die Versorgung der Bevölkerung mit Gemüse anlangt, so ist bereits seit zwei oder drei Jahren in den Bezirken Charleville, Vervins vollkommen, im Bezirk Hautmont teilweise, die Ihnen von mir mitgeteilte Bewirtschaftung des Landes durch die Verpflegungsoffiziere durchgeführt worden. Diese Bewirtschaftung besteht darin dass jedem Landes-Einwohner zwei Aar Land zu seiner Bewirtschaftung überlassen werden; die Felder werden von den Landeseinwohnern bestellt, sie werden mit Schildern versehen und unbedingt gegen jede Art von Requisition geschützt. Die Verpflegungsoffiziere wachen darüber, dass diese Bestimmungen, welche von allen Militärbehörden anerkannt sind, innegehalten werden. Die Erzeugnisse dieser Felder stehen den Einwohnern uneingeschränkt zur Verfügung. Hierdurch ist erreicht worden dass die Einwohner in denjenigen Distrikten, welche diese Massnahme bereits durchgeführt hatten, in sehr reichlicher Weise mit Gemüse, Kartoffeln, Steckrüben, Kohl, etc. versorgt worden sind. Leider konnten sich vor zwei oder drei Jahren, als ich diesen Vorschlag machte, einige der Distrikte nicht entschliessen, dieses System des Feldanbaus einzuführen, und infolgedessen ist bisher die Gemüseversorgung in den nördlichen Distrikten nicht so ausreichend gewesen, wie ich gewünscht hatte.

Es ist mir nunmehr gelungen, alle Distrikte dahin zu bringen, dass sie dieses System anwenden wollen; da aber die vorhergehenden Jahre in diesem Sinne nicht gearbeitet worden ist, stehen denjenigen Distrikten, welche die Einrichtung jetzt erst anfangen, das nötige Saatgut, besonders an Kartoffeln etc. nicht zur Verfügung, welches in Charleville, Vervins und Hautmont (in den beiden ersten in reichlichem Masse, in dem letzten aber auch genügend) aus ihren vorhergehenden Ernten mit Leichtigkeit zurückgestellt werden konnte.

Ich erwähne noch, das [für] die grösseren Städte, wo der einzelne Einwohner sich nicht so in der Landwirtschaft betätigen kann, die Einrichtung getroffen wird, dass die Landgemeinden die Bestellung des Landes für die mit übernehmen.

In Ihrem Schreiben über die Beschaffung von Sämereien ist insofern ein Irrtum unterlaufen, dass Sie schreiben, wir hätten für 12 Millionen Sämereien beschafft; dies ist natürlich nicht richtig; die Beschaffung von Sämereien durch uns, grösstenteils aus Deutschland, betrug etwa 1 1/2 Million Mark; dabei haben wir darauf gesehen, der Bevölkerung nach Möglichkeit Samen für den Kohl-Anbau zu besorgen und diesen hauptsächlich demjenigen Teil der Distrikte gegeben, wo die Bepflanzung von Kartoffeln nicht möglich war. Es besteht also die Aussicht, dass in diesem Jahre die Bevölkerung in ausgiebigster Masse mit Gemüse versorgt sein wird. Es wird naturgemäss mein Bestreben sein, denjenigen Teilen, wo der Ertrag der Einwohner-Felder nicht besonders gut ist, anzustreben, denselben aus beständen Kartoffeln oder Steckrüben zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Sobald die Preise für die Belieferung der Bevölkerung mit Getreide oder Mehl feststehen, werde ich Ihnen dieselben sofort mitteilen, so dass Sie darüber vollkommen orientiert sein werden.

Ich hoffe, das Sie aus dem Vorstehenden ersehen werden, dass von Seiten der deutschen Heeresverwaltung bzw. den Verpflegungsoffizieren Alles geschehen wird, um der Bevölkerung möglichst viel zuzuführen.

Mit dem Ausdruck meiner vorzüglichsten Hochachtung.

Ihr sehr ergebener

(gez.) GRAF WENGERSKY

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[117]

Minutes,

10 September 1918, of a meeting of representatives of the German General Staff and the relief organizations, relative to the 1918 harvest and the rations for 1918-19 ([Document 386](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

COMITÉ HISPANO-NÉERLANDAIS
POUR LA PROTECTION DU RAVITAILLEMENT

Réunion du 10 septembre 1918

Présents:

M. M. LE COMTE WENGERSKY
LE CAPITAINE SCHROEDER
LANGENBERGH
BAETENS
VAN BRÉE

La séance est ouverte à 11 h.

Récolte 1918-1919.

Le Comte Wengersky confirme, en ce qui concerne les prévisions pour la prochaine récolte dans les Etapes et le territoire du Nord de la France, les indications qu'il a données à M. Langenbergh dans sa lettre datée du 2 septembre courant. Il peut, dès à présent, dire que les arrangements nécessaires ont été pris pour que, pendant le mois d'octobre, il soit distribué 100 grs. de farine indigène par tête d'habitant; pour le mois de novembre, l'on espère qu'il en sera de même. Cependant comme la ration moyenne est évaluée, pour toute l'année, à 75 grammes par tête d'habitant et par jour, il sera nécessaire, pour les subséquents de réduire cette ration de façon à garder la moyenne générale de 75 grammes. Il ajoute qu'il est absolument impossible de faire plus que cela.

En ce qui concerne les *légumes indigènes*, en dehors des dispositions qui ont été prises dans certains groupes d'armées par les officiers du ravitaillement, pour assurer au moyen des cultures indigènes, des vivres à la population, il espère pouvoir importer pour les grosses agglomérations de Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing et Valenciennes des pommes de terre qui seront expédiées d'Allemagne par la voie de Nuremonde. Le Comte Wengersky n'est cependant pas encore en mesure d'affirmer que ses démarches réussiront.

Il est fait remarquer au Comte Wengersky que ces conditions sont très peu favorables et qu'il est regrettable qu'elles soient en régression sur celles de l'année dernière. En effet, pendant l'année 1917-1918, la moyenne des distributions journalières de farine indigène a atteint 94.3 grammes par tête d'habitant, alors que la moyenne pour l'exercice prochain tomberait à 75 grammes. En outre, l'année dernière, il avait été promis un minimum de 200 grammes de pommes de terre, alors que cette année, aucune promesse de ce genre n'est faite.

M. le Comte Wengersky fait remarquer qu'une diminution dans la production des céréales est inévitable; la lettre qu'il a écrite à M. Langenbergh en donne les motifs.

En ce qui concerne les pommes de terre, le Comte Wengersky fait observer qu'en fait, les arrangements de cette année sont beaucoup plus satisfaisants que ceux de l'année dernière. En effet, l'année dernière, sauf dans les Flandres où la ration entière de pommes de terre a été distribuée et même largement dépassée, des quantités peu importantes ont été réellement fournies. Avec les arrangements actuels, les districts français seront mieux ravitaillés qu'ils ne l'ont été l'année dernière.

En effet, les districts qui ont fait des cultures, tels que les districts de Charleville, St-Quentin et Vervins, recevront des quantités importantes de pommes de terre. Dans les Flandres également, la ration sera plus importante que 200 grammes par tête et par jour; pour Lille et Valenciennes, il espère, au moyen de pommes de terre d'Allemagne, fournir des contingents importants à ces localités.

Il est demandé au Comte Wengersky que les céréales indigènes soient effectivement utilisées sur place et qu'elles ne soient pas remplacées par de la farine allemande.

Le Comte Wengersky dit, qu'à ce sujet, il est dans l'impossibilité de donner une garantie formelle. En effet, les besoins des troupes nécessitent quelquefois l'utilisation des stocks se trouvant sur place, ceux-ci étant remplacés par des farines venant d'Allemagne. Néanmoins, il peut donner l'assurance, en ce qui concerne les régions des Flandres, Lille et Valenciennes et une partie de Hautmont, que la majeure partie des farines indigènes y consommées proviendra de la récolte indigène.

Il est demandé au Comte Wengersky de bien vouloir adresser une lettre officielle au Comité Hispano-Néerlandais au sujet de la question des récoltes indigènes et de faire une communication similaire par l'intermédiaire de la V.C.N. au Comité National, spécialement en ce qui concerne la région des Flandres.

Il reste donc entendu que pour le mois d'octobre il sera délivré 100 grammes de farine indigène comme aussi probablement, pour le mois de novembre. La ration générale de farine pourra ainsi être augmentée de 25 grammes.

De son côté M. Langenbergh demandera à la C.R.B. de bien vouloir, à partir du mois de décembre, allouer un contingent de farine importée de 175 grammes au lieu de 150 grammes, de façon à pouvoir maintenir la ration générale à 250 grammes. Le supplément de farine indigène réparti pendant les mois d'octobre et novembre sera réduit sur les fournitures du second semestre c'est-à-dire à partir d'avril 1919. Dans ces conditions, il sera fourni aux habitants du N.F. et du territoire des étapes belges, comme farine indigène pendant le mois de septembre une ration journalière de 75 grammes, pendant les mois d'octobre et si possible novembre 100 grammes, pendant les mois de décembre, janvier et février 75 grammes et les six mois suivants, environ 65 grammes.

Comité Exécutif du C.F.

Il est demandé au Comte Wengersky quelle suite a pu être réservée à la lettre lui adressée par M. Langenbergh au sujet de la réunion des membres du Comité Exécutif du C.F.

Le Comte Wengersky répond qu'il est actuellement en négociations avec le Quartier Général pour faire adopter les mesures préconisées par le Comité Hispano-Néerlandais et qu'il espère bien pouvoir aboutir. En attendant, il s'arrangera pour que le passeport de M. Blondet soit délivré en même temps qu'un passeport au délégué de Valenciennes, de façon à ce que ces délégués puissent discuter ensemble la question du ravitaillement de leurs districts qui sont voisins.

En ce qui concerne M. Labbé la question du passeport est sur le point d'être arrangée. Il sera cependant impossible d'obtenir un passeport pour Madame Labbé. Le passeport de M. Labbé lui permettra de résider à Bruxelles pendant un certain temps sans permettre cependant des voyages hebdomadaires réguliers entre Lille et Bruxelles.

Fabrication de Biscuits.

Le Comte Wengersky signale qu'il a entrepris une série de démarches à Bruxelles en vue d'obtenir la reprise de la fabrication des biscuits.

Quoique l'opposition de la part du Président de la Central des récoltes soit très vive, il espère qu'il arrivera à une solution donnant en partie satisfaction au Comité et qui lui permettra de fabriquer un genre de couque scolaire, se rapprochant des biscuits.

Sel.

Le Comte Wengersky signale qu'il a reçu des demandes très nombreuses pour augmenter les expéditions de sel vers les territoires du Nord de la France et des Etapes. Comme il a appris d'autre part que la consommation de sel n'était plus réglementée ni limitée en Allemagne, il fait des démarches auprès du Reichskommissär, pour savoir si actuellement le contingent de sel du Nord de la France et des Etapes est encore limité à 2.000T. par mois, ainsi que cela a été décidé fin 1917.

Douai.

Il est demandé au Comte Wengersky s'il n'est pas possible de prendre des mesures spéciales pour essayer de sauver une partie des approvisionnements de la C.R.B. qui se trouvent dans les magasins de Douai. Le Comte Wengersky dit que le Rittmeister Neuerbourg s'occupe de cette question et fera l'impossible pour essayer de sauver le plus de marchandises possibles, mais qu'il craint néanmoins, qu'une grosse partie des produits ne soit définitivement perdue.

La séance est levée à midi et quart.

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[118]

Telegram,

13 September 1918, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TO SPANISH-DUTCH COMMITTEE, stating that the daily ration from local bread grains would be about 75 grams during 1918-19 ([Document 387](#), chapter VIII, is an English translation of the following)

General-Gouvernement
in Belgien

Deutsche Vermittlungsstelle C.N.
Nr. C.28696

BRÜSSEL, den 13. September 1918

EILT: Soeben traf von der V.C.N. vom Grafen Wengersky folgendes Telegramm ein welches zur dortigen Kenntnisnahme ergebnst übermittelt wird:

"Bitte Herrn Direktor Langenbergh mitteilen:

"Wie im Vorjahre wird auch in diesem Erntejahre das gesamte Erträgnis der Ernte an Brotfrucht, Roggen und Weizen für die Bevölkerung reserviert bleiben; nach Abzug des nötigen Saatgutes für das kommende Jahr wird dies die Ausgabe einer Ration pro Kopf und Tag von etwa fünfundsiebzig Gramm Mehl möglich machen. Für die Versorgung mit Kartoffeln oder Gemüse ist sämtlichen Einwohnern in Nordfrankreich je ein Feld von zweihundert Quadratmeter Grösse zur Verfügung gestellt, welches unter Aufsicht des Verpflegungsoffiziers steht und dessen Ertrag gegen jede Requisition geschützt der Zivilbevölkerung frei zur Verfügung steht. Sämereien hierfür sind von mir in ausgiebigem Masse beschafft. Ausserdem bemühe ich mich, in der nördlichen Teilen, wo aus Mangel an Saatkartoffeln die Kartoffelernte voraussichtlich klein sein wird, von Deutschland Kartoffeln heranzutransportieren."

(gez.) GRAF WENGERSKY
(S.) RIETH

*An das Comité Hispano-Néerlandais
z. H. des Herrn Direktor Langenbergh Hier*

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

APPENDIX I

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE C.R.B.

The administrative structure of the C.R.B. was determined in both scope and detail by the nature of the problem of relief in Belgium and Northern France. That problem, as an earlier chapter has shown, was, briefly, the provisioning of a population of over 9,000,000, deprived of their means of income, cut off from the source of their supplies, and concentrated in a territory of 20,000 square miles occupied by the forces of an enemy power. Immediately after the invasion voluntary relief committees, caring first for refugees and homeless, sprang up, especially in the cities. These independent and widely separated committees soon secured the small stocks of food still remaining in the country. Their efforts could, however, but postpone the crisis, for famine threatened the whole population, rich and poor, unless importation of over 100,000 tons each month was assured. Into this emergency came the Commission for Relief in Belgium, to which the belligerents granted permission, under stringent conditions, to penetrate the blockade and distribute relief. By this means a way was found through neutral Holland for the passage of supplies from the west to the Belgians and French

within the German lines. The relief organization by no means came into the field full grown, but its growth, in the emergency, was rapid. The summary of its administrative structure as outlined here takes it at its full development.

1. Relief Organizations

Three collaborating organizations were responsible for the control and administration of relief in the occupied regions of Belgium and Northern France. These organizations were:

The Commission for Relief in Belgium (C.R.B.), directed by Americans and under the patronage of the American Ambassadors and Ministers in London, Brussels, The Hague, Berlin, and Paris, and the Spanish Ambassador and Minister, respectively, in London and Brussels, and the Netherlands Minister at Havre, had full responsibility for all the phases of collection of finance and transportation of relief outside the occupied territory. Through its representatives on the Belgian and French committees it was responsible for the strict fulfillment of the guarantees and stipulations of the belligerent governments in respect to relief distribution within the occupied territories.

The *Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation* (Comité National), under the patronage of the Spanish and American Ministers in Brussels, was composed principally of Belgians, but it included in its membership American representatives of the C.R.B. This Belgian central committee through its provincial, regional, and communal subcommittees was responsible for the distribution of relief throughout Belgium.

The *Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France* (Comité Français), a French committee with headquarters in Brussels, included in its membership representatives of the C.R.B. and the Comité National. In Northern France, district, regional, and communal committees were responsible for the distribution of relief and over these the C.R.B. exercised control through its representatives in the field.

Aside from these three principal organizations there were three others of later origin engaged in administration:

The *Comité Hispano-Néerlandais pour la Protection du Ravitaillement en Belgique et dans le Nord de la France*, established in 1917, was composed of neutral Dutch and Spanish citizens under the patronage of the Spanish Ambassador in London, the Spanish Consul-General in London, the Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Spanish and Netherlands Ministers in Brussels, and the Netherlands Minister at Havre. Upon America's entry into the war, C.R.B. representatives in Belgium and Northern France were withdrawn, and Spanish and Dutch

representatives of the committee, which was organized for this purpose, performed the duties of the Americans in Belgium in respect to belligerent guarantees and negotiations with the Germans.

The *Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées*, a French committee with headquarters at Lille, was organized after the Armistice to replace the *Comité Français* in the administration of relief in Northern France, pending the assumption of these responsibilities by the French Government.

The *Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées avec le Concours de la C.R.B.* organized in 1919 with French and American membership to continue the charitable work in Northern France after the dissolution of the *Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées*.

Ranged under the three principal committees, the C.R.B., *Comité National* and *Comité Français*, were a number of emergency bodies. Nearly 2,000 committees, scattered throughout the world, were engaged under the leadership of the C.R.B. in the collection of contributions for relief in money and kind. Within Belgium and Northern France, under the three principal committees in co-operation, there were nearly 5,000 separate committees dealing with food supplies, and an almost equal number dispensing charity.

The following table shows the approximate membership of the relief organization:

Administration	
1. The Commission for Relief in Belgium. American personnel and supervising staff. Average membership	55
Appeal Committees	
1. The Commission for Relief in Belgium	
2. State, city, and special committees in the United States, Hawaii, and Philippine Islands. Approximate membership	50,000
3. Associated committees in the British Empire, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa, etc.; in Argentine, in Holland, in Italy, and elsewhere.	26,500

Approximate membership	
Distributing Committees	
1. Belgium. The Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation and its subsidiary provincial, regional, and communal committees. Approximate membership	40,000
2. Northern France. The Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France (after 1918 the Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées) and its subsidiary district, regional, and communal committees. Approximate membership	15,000
Total approximate membership of relief organization	131,555

2. Organization outside the Occupied Territories

The fundamental functions of relief administration outside the German lines were the mobilization of finances, i.e. charity and government subventions, and the purchase and transportation of supplies. These were the responsibilities solely of the Commission for Relief in Belgium. To discharge these responsibilities the C.R.B. established its central office in London, with main branch offices in New York and in Rotterdam. For the collection of funds and gifts in kind it promoted the establishment of allied and associated committees in the centers of population throughout the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa, Holland, Italy, Spain, Argentine, Hawaii, Philippine Islands, and elsewhere. In the management of purchase and transportation of supplies the C.R.B. set up business offices or secured agency representatives in the principal purchasing centers and ports of the world, and it maintained large technical staffs in New York and in Rotterdam. These offices and committees all over the world, engaged in the diversified operations of assembling relief, communicated by cable or post direct, or through New York, to the central office of the C.R.B. in London. By especially privileged telegraph and courier service the London office maintained rapid communication through the belligerent lines with the Brussels office of the C.R.B.

3. Organization within Belgium and Northern France

The admirable organizing and administrative abilities of the Belgians and French promptly created a structure for relief distribution which rapidly developed into an efficient country-wide system, despite the presence of an occupying army. The fundamental policy was decentralization based on the normal political administrative divisions of Belgium and France. Thus under the Comité National and Comité Français came provincial and district committees, and under these, regional committees, and finally, communal committees. These communal committees, headed by the burgomasters in Belgium and *maires* in Northern France, included both communal officials and volunteers. The provincial committees in Belgium were composed of representatives of all sections of the province and two local delegates of the Comité National. The district committees in Northern France were of similar character, but their contact with the Comité Français in Brussels was obtained through representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, two or more of whom collaborated with each provincial and district committee. In local matters the provincial and district committees had wide autonomy. Questions affecting the country as a whole were, in Belgium, decided at regular meetings of delegates, from the provincial committees, with the executives of the Comité National and the C.R.B. Due to restrictions on movement of civilians in Northern France the district committees of that area were represented in Brussels by American C.R.B. delegates. In addition to a central Brussels office the C.R.B. set up offices in each of the eleven provinces of Belgium and in the six districts of Northern France. The following table shows the administrative divisions, with the area and population and the number of communes and warehouses in each:

BELGIUM

	Provincial Committees	Regional Warehouses	Communes	Area Sq. Miles	Population October, 1917
1.	Antwerp	3	168	1,093	1,004,854
2.	Brabant	23	344	1,148	722,632
3.	Brussels	1	18	120	786,211
4.	East Flanders	26	316	1,600	1,206,456
5.	S. West Flanders (N)	6	56	365	224,227
6.	West	4	67	424	272,431

	Flanders (S)				
7.	Hainaut	9	446	1,437	1,248,911
8.	Liege	6	344	1,117	907,733
9.	Limbourg	14	210	931	285,741
10.	Luxembourg	21	234	1,706	249,945
11.	Namur	21	395	1,414	380,53
	Totals	134	2,598	11,355	7,289,994

NORTHERN FRANCE

	District Committees	Regional Warehouses	Communes	Area Sq.Miles	Population October, 1917
1.	Lille	6	107	345	560,002
2.	Valenciennes	6	339	890	493,775
3.	St. Quentin	21	511	1,652	291,977
4.	Vervins	30	431	1,758	187,204
5.	Charleville	21	339	1,847	152,000
6.	Longwy	22	406	1,608	109,548
	Totals	106	2,133	8,100	1,794,506

BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

	Provincial and District Committees	Regional Warehouses	Communes	Area Sq. Miles	Population October 1917
Totals	17	240	4,731	19,455	9,084,500

4. Volunteer Service

Because of the universal sympathy for Belgium it was possible for the C.R.B. to rely in a large measure on volunteer service and to secure the active participation, in the various departments of its work, of persons of wide experience and special training. The executive work was carried on by volunteers of broad experience in commercial and public affairs, and most of the department heads and many

assistants were volunteers, paid men being employed only in specialized branches for which no experienced volunteer service was available. This policy of volunteer service extended far beyond the personnel of the relief organization. Governments, commercial firms, banks, transportation companies, gave invaluable advice and special services. Most of the firms engaged in commercial operations on behalf of the C.R.B. either returned their fees or made no charges. In the United States, Canada, and the Argentine the C.R.B. secured concessions in rates in rail transportation and a large amount of free transport in addition to general favors in extra facilities in handling and delivery of goods. Banks gave their exchange services and paid the full rate of interest on deposits; insurance was facilitated by the British Government; and the firms which placed insurance subscribed the equivalent of their fees. In Holland the C.R.B. was exempted from harbor dues, and the Netherlands Government granted free telegraphic service as well as free rail transport to Belgium. The German military authorities in Belgium abolished customs and canal dues on all C.R.B. imports and reduced railway rates one-half. The measure of the value of these free services and concessions was not only the minimum administrative costs(\$490) of the organization but the low price at which foodstuffs were delivered to the consumer in Belgium and Northern France.

5. Operating Divisions

The two principal forms of activity of the relief organization were the provisioning of the entire population of Belgium and Northern France, and the care of the destitute. The two distinct divisions of the organization responsible for these operations were the Provisioning Department and the Benevolent Department, and this separation existed not only in the C.R.B., but in the co-operating bodies and in subcommittees wherever their activities extended to more than one function.

The Provisioning Department purchased, transported, and distributed relief supplies for the entire 9,000,000 population. All these goods were sold through the 4,731 communal stores established for this purpose. In the sale of these goods a small charge above actual cost was applied, and the surplus so raised created a reserve against losses and destruction of goods and became a source of support to the Benevolent Department.

The Benevolent Department was the agency through which the charity of the world was mobilized and distributed. Charitable funds as collected were applied, through the Provisioning Department, to the purchase of supplies, and these, with gifts in kind, were resold to the people. The entire receipts due to these transactions were turned over to the distributing side of the Benevolent Department. With these sums supplemented by the advances from the Provisioning Department out of its reserve, the Benevolent Department supplied the needy with means to purchase at the

communal stores or made the purchases for them. Thus the poor became customers of the Provisioning Department as well as those who had their own resources.

6. Financial Methods

To understand the financial methods one must bear in mind that purchases of foodstuffs outside the occupied territories were necessarily made with gold, and that these foodstuffs when resold were paid for in local paper currency issue, all metal money and gold reserves having disappeared, and most of the Pre-war currency having been supplanted by local banking issues which were obviously not convertible into gold. Moreover, the export of these notes to Allied countries, and, in fact, of any form of securities, was prohibited by the German authorities. If there had been no economic or legal restrictions on exchange, the Provisioning Department, with a moderate working capital, would have revolved on itself. As it stood, however, it could only revolve in so far as the local currency could be interpreted into gold. With a view to solving this problem to some extent and to effecting other beneficial results, the C.R.B. obtained some slight relaxation of restrictions imposed by the belligerent governments, so that persons or institutions abroad who wished to make payments in Belgium could hand to the C.R.B. gold values abroad, and the organization undertook to make payments of corresponding sums in Belgium. These payments at a fixed rate of exchange were made in paper currency received from the sale of foodstuffs. In this form of commercial exchange no actual money or securities of any kind passed over the frontier, as the foodstuffs imported served as the implement of exchange.

The financial methods as applied in Belgium differed from those in Northern France for a number of reasons. The following represent the operations in Belgium:

Foodstuffs were acquired with gold abroad by:

- a) Purchases with gift money, or gifts received in kind.
- b) Purchases with gold from commercial exchange.
- c) Purchases with governmental subsidies.

The foodstuffs were sold in Belgium for local currency, and provided:

- a) Subsidies to the benevolent committees and benevolent institutions.
- b) Liquidation of exchange described above.
- c) Advances to savings and loan institutions, etc.

The expense of caring for the destitute was then partially covered by gifts from the public of money and food from abroad and partially by the surplus of the Provisioning Department. The amount available from these sources was by no means sufficient, and the Provisioning Department supplied out of its resources in local currency the additional amounts as required. These additional advances to the Benevolent Department were debited against the government subsidies. In the later stages when the amount of gifts became small proportionally to the total cost of relief, the Benevolent Department's requirements were largely provided through government subsidies.

In Northern France economic life was so disorganized and the restriction of the occupying army so rigid that the administration of relief consisted in placing a ration adapted to local needs in the hands of every man, woman, and child. The C.R.B. made no general appeal for charitable funds(#491) for the people of Northern France. All the inhabitants were considered as destitute, and rich and poor alike were dependent on provisions imported by the C.R.B. through the use of subsidies granted by the French Government. The C.R.B. charged the whole of the imported foodstuffs to the district committees, at fixed prices. The district committees, in turn, sold the foodstuffs to the communal committees at a small advance sufficient to cover the cost of local redistribution. The communes, in turn, resold the foodstuffs, without profit, to the population. Since the normal currency had disappeared each communal government printed its own notes of from 20 centimes up to 50 francs. This currency was put into circulation by the communes in payment for communal services, in loans to individuals against property, and in benevolence to the destitute. Under the latter two classes sufficient advances were made to enable the population to live. Communal committees, in accepting this local currency in payment for the ration of foodstuffs, became possessed of local communal currency representing the value of the foodstuffs issued. The committee then surrendered these notes to the communal authorities against obligation of the commune to pay an equivalent sum after the war. The district committees accepted these communal obligations, and in turn handed them to the C.R.B. against deliveries of food. In the hands of the C.R.B. these obligations, guaranteed by the individual members of the district committees, represented a form of acknowledgment for provisions purchased with government subsidies. The final liquidation of the pledged obligations of the communes, as well as the communal loans to individuals, both involving wide benevolent complications, became a matter for after-war consideration of the French Government.

As stated above, the C.R.B. fixed the price at which foodstuffs were debited to the district committees, at a rate slightly above the cost. The margin thus secured was a reserve against losses in transportation, by destruction, or deterioration, and a protection against fluctuations in exchange and food prices. As this reserve accumulated the Commission made rebates to the districts, which devoted the sums rebated to benevolent purposes. At the termination of relief operations the balance of reserve was employed for benevolence in Northern France in the same manner.

7. Sources of Funds

Funds secured by the C.R.B. for financing the provisioning and benevolent sides of the relief enterprise fall into four classifications according to their origin:

- a) Government subsidies
- b) Commercial exchange
- c) World charity
- d) Operating surplus

Government subsidies advanced to the C.R.B. by the United States, British, and French Governments in the form of loans to Belgium and to France reached the total of \$700,540,443.38. The following tables segregate this total according to source and application:

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

Period	French Francs	Sterling	Florins	Dollars	Total Equivalent Dollars
"First Year" Nov., 1914- Oct., 1915	227,500,000	7,100,000	.....	.....	\$ 75,586,648
"Second Year" Nov., 1915- Oct., 1916	307,500,000	6,500,000	.....	.....	101,985,364
"Third Year" Nov., 1916- Oct., 1917	376,250,000	5,250,000	.....	70,000,000	161,442,048
"Fourth Year"	.....	.....	.....	180,000,000	180,000,000

Nov., 1917- Oct., 1918					
"Fifth Year" Nov., 1918- Aug., 1919	.....	.....	.....	136,632,260	136,632,260
European Advances Credits, etc .	.....	8,689,876	5,750,000	.....	44,894,123
Totals	911,250,000	27,539,876	5,750,000	\$386,632,260	\$700,540,443

NOTE: Dollar subsidies from U.S. Treasury began with the month of June, 1917. at which date monthly subsidies from British and French treasuries ceased. European expenditures of the Commission from June, 1917, onward were liquidated through credits established through the British Treasury and periodic cash advances by both British and French treasuries.

ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

Monthly Advances as Loans to Belgium and France	For Belgian Account	For French Account	Total Subsidies
From United States Treasury	\$259,632,260	\$127,000,000	\$386,632,260
From British Treasury	94,181,411	14,863,918	109,045,329
From French Treasury	94,181,411	110,681,443	204,862,854

Totals	\$447,995,082	\$252,545,361	\$700,540,443
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Under the classification of Commercial Exchange the C.R.B secured a total of \$6,328,328.50 represented by more than 100,000 remittances by individuals and institutions all over the world to friends in Belgium.

World charity in cash and gifts in kind amounted to a total of \$52,290,835.51 as shown below:

Summary of World Charity (#492)

I. Cash donations	\$20,490,322
II. Value of gifts in kind	31,800,513
Total world charity	\$52,290,835

Analysis according to Country of Origin

From the United States	\$34,521,027	66.0%
From the British Empire	16,641,035	31.8%
From general sources	1,128,773	2.2%
	\$52,290,835	100.0%

These moneys derived from these three sources constituted the basic capital of the Commission and were applied to the purchase and transportation of relief goods, for the general support of the relief organization, for remittances, and for support of the destitute. Through the financial methods previously described additional sums became available for the support of the destitute. These sums were the operating surplus and profits of the Provisioning Department and were derived in a large

measure through the original sale of goods to the Comité National and the Comité Français. The margin on secondary sales by the Comité National to its subcommittees also contributed a substantial sum, as did incidental operations of the Provisioning Department outside the occupied territories. As will be seen, the level of prices to those who could pay, in the occupied territories, was the lowest in Europe during the war, yet the surplus and profits of the Provisioning Department amounted to \$135,637,543.21. In this figure are reflected the voluntary service of members of the C.R.B. and the concessions and special privileges granted to the relief by individuals and by railways, steamships, telegraph, insurance, and brokerage companies all over the world. The following table shows the amount and origin of these funds:

I. Operation Surplus of Provisioning Department Includes surplus on sales within Belgium and France and profits of the C.R.B. outside the occupied territories	\$111,704,000
II. Profits earned inside Belgium Profits transferred to the C.R.B. by the Comité National..	23,933,543
Total	\$135,637,543

Funds secured from the four sources described above and disbursed by the Commission amounted to \$894,797,150.40. (#493) From the first moment of its existence the officers of the Commission realized their responsibility in the stewardship of this great enterprise. At once, therefore, they placed the actual record of accounting as well as auditing of every department in the hands of an internationally known firm of accountants. Furthermore, complete statistical commodity records were maintained paralleling and expanding the accounting in all phases.

8. Foodstuff Purchases and Gifts

Excluding the native products of Belgium and Northern France which were controlled by the relief organization, the C.R.B. transported to the occupied territories over five million tons of relief supplies from 1914 to 1919. The program of importations of over 100,000 tons each month consisted chiefly of bread grains,

cereals, and fats, which, for reasons of economy, were purchased in large quantities in primary markets. At certain times, however, some of the centers of production were inaccessible because of war conditions, and after 1917 the C.R.B. was forced to conform to the Allied policy which concentrated shipping, in the service of supplies, in the Atlantic. The following table shows the country of origin of imported relief supplies, including purchases as well as gifts:

	Metric Tons	
United States	3,116,271	60.2%
Canada	1,000,666	19.4%
Argentine	418,046	8.1%
United Kingdom	198,047	3.8%
Other countries	441,401	8.5%
Total	5,174,431	100.0%,

The amount of imports(#494) each year and the costs were:

	Metric Tons	Total Cost
First	983,808	\$ 68,924,922.1
Second	1,300,322	116,055,602
Third	724,175	115,297,780
Fourth	1,091,178	244,781,219
Fifth	1,074,948	261,150,491
Warehousing, insurance of Stocks	.....	1,481,628
Totals	5,174,431	\$807,690,941

In addition to the quantities shown above, the C.R.B. purchased over 200,000 metric tons of supplies which never reached Belgium and Northern France. Cargoes damaged or sunk accounted for 114,000 metric tons; and 95,000 metric tons of relief supplies in warehouses in England and France, at the outbreak of the

unrestricted submarine warfare, were sold by the C.R.B. on government orders to avoid complete loss by deterioration.(#495)

Imports included large amounts of food and clothing donated in response to the appeals of the various relief committees. In the early days many of these gifts in kind, which originated in North America, were turned over to the C.R.B. in shipload lots, but for the most part committees throughout the United States and Canada collected small parcels. The C.R.B. freely undertook the transportation of these gifts in food and clothing from all inland points, thus further increasing the labors of the transportation departments of its main branches.

After the first year of operation, the administrative burden of distributing innumerable classes of gift foods forced the C.R.B. to ask that gifts in kind be limited to the staples which comprised its program, eliminating the so-called luxuries, such as tinned foods. Appeal committees and the public throughout the world co-operated wholeheartedly in this policy, with the result that their support became mainly financial, except in the fourth and fifth years when the immensely valuable contribution of used clothing was made.

GIFTS IN KIND
(Metric tons)

Year	Food	Clothing	Total	Value
First	91,296	2,077	93,373	\$ 9,047,807
Second	12,893	356	13,249	1,015,816
Third	4,598	66	4,664	460,941
Fourth	124	2,341	2,465	1,031,592
Fifth	135	7,569	7,704	20,210,644
Totals	109,046	12,409	121,455	\$31,766,800

As all supplies imported into Belgium and Northern France were issued in quantity below the normal human demand, it was obvious that the introduction of inferior articles would inflict peculiar hardship. The ordinary safeguard of quality, namely, the inability of the retail merchant to dispose of inferior goods, did not exist, and it was essential to employ every means to maintain the very highest quality obtainable. Merchants throughout the world co-operated in furnishing only first-class products, and the result was a remarkable freedom from complaint. As additional safeguards the New York and Rotterdam offices each maintained a staff of inspectors, and every shipment underwent closest scrutiny.

9. Oversea Shipping

The ships of the C.R.B. always enjoyed the promise of immunity but since to reach Rotterdam they had to pass through the Allied blockade and through seas where the naval conflict, largely under water, was most intense, this immunity was never secured without compliance with restrictions laid down by both belligerents. The first charters were neutral steamers, but the C.R.B. at an early date obtained German guarantees of immunity to any vessel carrying relief for Belgium and flying the C.R.B. flag. At the outset charters were readily obtained at a price, but it was not long before the C.R.B. found itself competing with Allied and neutral governments who were pressed for ships to transport supplies for civilian and military needs. The food program of the C.R.B. was 110,000 tons each month, representing over 133,000 dead weight ships tonnage. Since the average round trip occupied over two months for each vessel, the C.R.B. required a continuously operating fleet of almost 290,000 dead weight tons or 58 steamers of 5,000 tons. The vessels it actually secured were smaller than this, and for long periods the C.R.B. was managing a fleet numbering between 60 and 70 vessels. The following table indicates the shipping accomplishments of the C.R.B. during the five years of relief:

Loaded Voyages

Year	Overseas	Cross-Channel	Net Cargo (Metric tons)
First	150	344	983,808
Second	240	485	1,300,322
Third	144	226	724,175
Fourth	223	128	1,091,178
Fifth	236	137	1,074,948
Totals	993	1,320	5,174,431

The C.R.B. adopted the usual commercial practice regarding insurance of vessels and cargoes, marine risks being placed with Lloyd's and with New York underwriters, and war risk with the British war risk bureaus. In 1917 however, at the request of the Belgian and French Governments, the C.R.B. carried its own insurance setting up an insurance reserve for this purpose.

In a marine transportation operation of this magnitude losses were bound to occur even in normal times; in time of war the hazards were much more numerous.

Actually C.R.B. vessels to the number of 52 met with accidents as shown in the following summary:

Vessels torpedoed	17
Vessels mined	14
Vessels torpedoed or mined	3
Vessels fired on by submarine	3
Collisions and miscellaneous accidents	15
Total accidents	52
Vessels lost	38
Vessels or cargoes damaged	14
Cargo lost	114,000 tons

10. Port Operations

The purchase of food in the primary markets of the world, trans-shipment by rail to loading ports, and loading on C.R.B. ships for overseas demanded extensive organization. The New York office Of the C.R.B. was responsible for goods assembled in the United States and Canada, from which over 60 per cent of relief provisions came. The London office handled cargoes from the Argentine, India, and elsewhere and was responsible also for the purchase and transshipment of provisions from the United Kingdom.

The continuous stream of cargoes dispatched from many ports by these two C.R.B. offices converged at the port of Rotterdam. This neutral port, with its excellent harbor, modern cargo handling, and warehouse facilities and direct canal and rail connection with Belgium and Northern France was the C.R.B. transshipment port for most of the relief period. Twenty or thirty deep-water relief cargoes were unloaded each month in addition to many smaller cross-channel boats. The C.R.B. Rotterdam office was a busy organization with a variety of duties which included the management of grain elevators and other discharging equipment, renting of warehouses, chartering of lighters and tugs and arranging rail shipment for the interior, and the purchase of Holland produce. There was no relaxation of careful

business methods. On the arrival of the oversea carrier, lighters were immediately brought alongside and discharge commenced under the supervision of Dutch customs and C.R.B. inspectors.

After the Armistice the C.R.B. used the French port of Dunkirk for a short time, but as soon as possible after the German evacuation the Belgian port of Antwerp became the C.R.B.'s principal transshipment port. The quantities of relief provisions passing through these three ports and Lille are given below:

	Metric Tons
Rotterdam, November, 1914, to August, 1919	4,686,359
Dunkirk, December, 1918, to April, 1919	15,826
Antwerp, January, 1919, to August, 1919	462,502
Lille, November, 1918, to May, 1919	9,744
Total relief supplies	5,174,431

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11. Transshipment of Relief Supplies

Belgium and, in fact, Northern France are traversed by a network of canals, railways, and tram lines and, as can be seen on the accompanying map, this network is readily accessible from the C.R.B.'s base port of Rotterdam. At the outset of relief the canals in many places had been blocked, locks blown up, bridges dropped into canals, ships and lighters sunk, and railway bridges and track demolished. Lighters and rolling stock remaining in Belgium were requisitioned by the Germans. It required months to put the transportation in shape to handle the great quantities of relief supplies crossing the frontier into Belgium. Some main canals never came into service.

[Fig. 24. Map of Belgium and Northern France showing Geographic Divisions and Distribution System during Relief Period](#)

By far the greater portion of relief the C.R.B. transshipped in lighters through the canal system. Some few centers were inaccessible, and to these rail shipments were

necessary. Three main canal arteries lead from Holland into Belgium. The first from Terneuzen to Ghent carried 1,200-ton lighters. The second artery follows the Zeeland waters and the Scheldt to Antwerp, Brussels, and Louvain and the third from Rotterdam via Dordrecht into Limbourg and beyond. Canals and railways led to milling centers and to regional warehouses from whence subsidiary canals and tram lines distributed goods in smaller quantities to communal stores throughout the entire relief area. In order to handle the inland waterway transportation the relief organization created a ship-owning department which at the height of its development owned or leased on long-time charter 80 per cent of its requirements, i.e. a fleet of 495 lighters and 36 tugs. Transshipment of provisions from ports during the five years required 14,000 lighter loads of 400 tons to 1,200 tons and over 8,000 train shipments comprising 30,000 truck loads. Aside from the importation of oversea supplies, the relief organization was responsible for the movement of native crops and local produce throughout the interior and in addition handled the transport of coal from mines to the relief flour mills and delivered bunker coal to Rotterdam for C.R.B. ships.

As far as relief importations were concerned the C.R.B. Brussels office directed the shipments from transshipment ports except in case of goods for Belgian and French refugees or other purposes outside the occupied areas. The following table shows the distribution of goods from C.R.B. transshipment ports:

SHIPMENTS OF RELIEF SUPPLIES
(Metric tons)

Port	Belgium	Northern France	Other Destinations	Total
Rotterdam	3,517,467	1,031,727	137,165	4,686,359
Antwerp	376,774	34,983	50,745	462,502
Dunkirk	.....	15,826	.....	15,826
Lille	700	9,044	.....	9,744
Totals	3,894,941	1,091,680	187,910	5,174,431

12. Delivery to the Consumer

The first interior destinations for imports were the central and regional warehouses, some 200 in number, and the flour mills. From these allocations were made to the 4,731 communal stores presided over by communal committees. Until the Germans withdrew in October 1918 the relief organization maintained an elaborate statistical stock control not only to insure equitable distribution but as a constant check

against leakages. Imports and local produce together were never more than sufficient, and all supplies were therefore jealously guarded by the civilian inhabitants for their own consumption. The following figures summarize the food consumption on in the communes for the four years of German occupation and include both C.R.B. importations and native wheat flour and produce controlled and distributed by the relief organization:

FOOD SUPPLIES CONSUMED IN FOUR YEARS
NOVEMBER, 1914-OCTOBER, 1918
(Metric tons)

	Belgium	Northern France
Flour	2,387,548	398,671
Maize	266,756	20,822
Rice	144,658	69,006
Beans and peas	79,890	32,969
Bacon and meat	59,432	51,369
Lard	88,929	50,638
Milk	9,809	33,242
Sugar		24,983
Coffee	7,324	20,845
Soap	....	14,175
Sundries	104,413	51,102

Bread was rationed in both Belgium and Northern France as were all other food commodities in the latter region. Belgian rural districts were largely self-supporting except for bread, and therefore other relief imports were reserved for and rationed only in the Belgian cities. The initial control of bread-rationing began with the relief flour mills. Since over 65 per cent of C.R.B. imports were breadstuffs in the form of wheat and maize, it was obviously necessary for the relief organization to exercise complete control over mills and milling. Milling rates were fixed and the percentage of mixture of native flour and maize flour strictly controlled. The milling of wheat for the first year was 82 per cent and the second year 82 per cent and 90 per cent, while during a large part of the third and fourth years, the milling was 97 per cent owing to the very restricted supply of wheat. (#496)

The milled flour was allocated according to requirements throughout the country, and shipments were made from the mills to the regional depots and to the communes on a pro rata basis. All the milling for Northern France was done in Belgium whence shipments were made to French centers of distribution.

The method of detailed distribution of breadstuffs varied in the different provinces and districts. Originally, the communal committees issued the flour from their communal warehouses to accredited bakers, who were required to submit lists of customers for approval to the communal committee, which then issued supplies on a ration per capita of baker's customers. The allowance of flour was usually at the rate of 250 grams per customer, and from this amount the baker in turn normally produced 335 grams of bread, a differential being made to the baker between the charge made to him for the flour and price at which he sold the bread sufficient to cover the necessary cost of the other ingredients and of labor. (#497) Each individual or family received a bread card, which had to be produced to procure bread on the delivery days, usually every third day.

Whereas bread was distributed to the population on a two- or three-day ration, the other commodities were issued on a weekly ration. In Belgium these other commodities, such as rice, peas and beans, bacon and lard, were chiefly intended for the destitute and for those least able to pay the high prices prevailing for such native foodstuffs as were available. The control was as rigid as for flour and bread, in order that no one might receive more than his share. An individual received a ration card entitling him to these commodities only after determination of his position and need. The prices at which imported and rationed foodstuffs were sold to the consumer varied directly with the cost to the Commission. There were three stages in the transaction: (a) cost price to the Commission, (b) selling price by the Commission to the Comité National, and (c) retail prices to the consumer. The margin between successive prices, as has been mentioned, was established to create a reserve against losses or deterioration and to build up a fund for benevolent expenditure. Prices in Belgium were not controlled in the sense of being subsidized---as, for instance, bread was in England ---but were varied from time to time to meet changing cost conditions, and thus the general trend of prices necessarily followed that of world prices.

The price of bread was fixed periodically according to the cost of ingredients. The cost of imported wheat and flour, of native flour, and imported maize and rice, were all factors in the bread prices.

As wheat became scarce milling rates were increased, and considerable quantities of both maize and rice flour were mixed with the wheat flour, producing a cheaper bread. The loaf was generally cheaper in Northern France than in Belgium, owing to higher milling in the flour and a greater percentage of flour substitute in the form of maize resulting in a black but nourishing bread. Taken over the four years the

Belgian paid less than 41/2 cents per pound of bread, which was considerably the lowest average price of unsubsidized war-bread in the world.

[Fig. 25. Bread prices: Belgium, Northern France and Other Countries](#)

13. The Care of the Destitute

Second only to the procurement of food for the entire population was the task of insuring just distribution to rich and poor alike. The organization structure of the Benevolent Department, whose duty this was, paralleled that of the Provisioning Department, and, as with the latter, the communal committees were the principal agencies. These communal charity committees, side by side with the communal committees concerned with provisioning, were responsible for the general problem of destitution. Supplementing their efforts there were a great number of special committees created to care for particular phases of distress not reached by the communal committee. Both groups of committees were controlled by the central organization through subvention and inspection. In addition to this committee organization for the care of the destitute, public services and state institutions supported by funds of the Benevolent Department performed similar functions. Some of this support was for economic and financial relief carried out with government subsidies. Although these advances were to be liquidated after the war, yet during the occupation they had a benevolent aspect.

The committee organization as outlined above applied to both Belgium and Northern France, but in the latter country the obligations of individual beneficiaries to repay the French Government were left for settlement after the war. In Belgium the system employed was much more complex, as it required that the degree of dependency of beneficiaries be determined from day to day, and except in the case of economic relief in which the Belgian Government was interested, the relief organization left little for subsequent settlement.

Services maintained by the Benevolent Department out of public charity included: breadlines, canteens, clothing for the destitute, provision of temporary shelters, all of which were administered by the communal charity committees. From the same source of funds special committees provided assistance to children, refugees, laceworkers, foreigners, young mothers, persons dispossessed, and many others. From funds drawn against government subsidies the public services and institutions paid separation allowances, pensions, supplementary allowances to the destitute, advances to loan societies and savings banks, and advances to educational institutions.

The principal benevolent outlay was for the support of canteens, soup kitchens, and cheap restaurants, of which one or more were established in every commune

supplying meals, free or at nominal cost, directly to the people. Next in amount were cash advances to individuals and to classes, and subsidies to institutions whereby additional numbers were enabled to purchase their requirements from the communal stores. To furnish assistance of a different character the relief organization established and maintained central and subsidiary factories and workrooms for renovating great quantities of clothing and making new garments for free distribution, or at nominal cost.

Of the special benevolent activities the care of children was perhaps the most important, and the organization for this purpose reached a high degree of excellence. Not only were supplementary meals served in all schools, but the younger children, babies, and nursing mothers were supplied with milk through canteens established in every commune.

The co-operating organizations expended over \$615,000,000 on their programs of benevolence in Belgium and Northern France. As the years of German occupation passed, the people became more dependent on soup kitchens and canteens for their food, and charitable expenditures of the central committees increased. The peak of distress was reached in 1918, as the annual expenditures(#498) in Belgium of the Comité National show:

GENERAL BENEVOLENT EXPENDITURE THROUGH THE COMITÉ NATIONAL, BELGIUM, 1914 TO 1919

	Annual Disbursement	Average Monthly Expenditure during Year
1914-2 months	\$ 1,169,135	\$ 584,568
1915-12 months	63,262,118	5,273,510
1916-12 months	76,711,991	6,392,665
1917-12 months	100,196,325	8,349,694
1918-12	181,572,040	15,131,033

months		
1919-8 months	86,963,515	10,857,939
Total	\$509,875,124	

14. Accounts and Statistics

I. FUNDS RECEIVED BY THE C.R.B.

U.S. Treasury. Subsidies	\$386,632,260.44
American Charity	34,521,026.99
Total American Sources	\$421,153,287.43
British Treasury. Subsidies	\$109,045,328.73
British Empire Charity	16,641,034.85
Total British Empire Sources	125,686,363.58
French Treasury. Subsidies	204,862,854.21
General Charity	1,128,773.67
Remittances. Commercial Exchange	6,328,328.30
Operating Surplus	135,637,543.21
Grand Total Funds Received by the C.R.B	\$894,797,150.40

II. OPERATING ACCOUNT. PROVISIONING DEPARTMENT

A. PROVISIONS SECURED

Value of Provisions. 5,174,431 metric tons	\$642,451,917.81
Transport Expense	165,239,023.32
Charges on 20,000,000 Rations (British War Office)	4,377,650.26
Total Provisions	\$812,068,591.39
.....	
Overhead and Administration. 0.43 per cent	3,908,892.74
Total Charges	\$815,977,484.13
Surplus on Sales (including profits on transactions entirely outside Belgium and France) Available for Benevolence	111,704,000.95
Total Operations. Provisioning Department	\$927,681,485.08

B. PROVISIONS DISTRIBUTED

Belgian Account		
To Occupied Belgium	3,894,941 tons	\$639,692,817.25
To Belgian	1,239	1,363,876.44

Refugees in Holland and Havre	tons	
Total Belgian Account	3,896,180 tons	\$641,066,693.69
Northern France Account		
To Invaded Northern France	1,091,580 tons	\$220,203,521.62
To French Refugees in Holland	299 tons	80,028.90
Total French Account	1,091,879 tons	\$220,283,550.52
Other Destinations		
To German Government (1919)	134,980 tons	\$ 44,350,9810.47
To U.S. Grain Corporation and American Relief Administration	5,086 tons	4,486,570.10
To Dutch Government (returned)	16,903 tons	.....
Miscellaneous Sales and Transshipment Losses	1,601 tons	2,429.77
Bunker Coal and Damaged Goods (sales credited to provisions)	27,802 tons	.....
Total Other	186,372	\$ 48,839,810.34

Destinations	tons	
20,000,000 Rations (British War Office)		\$ 4,377,650.26
Sundry Credit Balances		
Foodstuffs Sunk En Route (114,000 tons)		\$ 7,634,673.21
Foodstuffs Sold En Route (95,096 tons)		2,913,076.27
Sundry Operations		686,601.21
Interest and Exchange		1,889,429.58
Total Sundry Credit Balances		\$ 13,123,780.27
Total Operations Provisioning Department		\$927,681,485.08

III. BENEVOLENT ACCOUNT. BENEVOLENT DEPARTMENT

A. FUNDS AVAILABLE

World Charity	\$ 52,290,83
Provisioning Department Surplus (C.R.B.)	111,704,000.95
Provisioning Department Surplus (Comité National)	23,933,542.26
Benevolent Account of C.R.B .	\$187,928,378.72

State Aid (derived from Government Subsidies and dispensed in charity, and financial and economic relief)	427,308,768. 75
Grand Total Benevolent Account	\$615,237,147.47

B. FUNDS DISBURSED(#499)

Belgium	
General Benevolent Program (during relief period)	\$524,620,818.05
Gifts to Belgian Universities and Educational tions(#500)	33,766,039.629.62
Northern France	
General Benevolent Program	54,782,601.85
Northern Relief	
Clothing (distributed by the American Relief Administration in Poland and Czechoslovakia)	2,067,687.95
Grand Total Benevolent Account	\$615,237,147.47

IV. COMMODITIES IMPORTED BY THE C.R.B. OCTOBER 1914-AUGUST 1919

(Metric tons)

PROVISIONS SECURED					PROVISIONS DISTRIBUTED				
Commodity	Purchased	Donated	Total	To Occupied Belgium	To Belgian Refugees Holland Havre	To Invaded France	To French Refugees	To Other Destinations	Total
Wheat, Barley, Rye	2,895,339	27,852	2,923,191	2,397,456	....	466,027	150	59,558	2,923,191
Flour	380,110	47,994	428,104	335,608	....	75,788	25	16,683	428,104
Bacon	151,035	683	151,718	75,438	54	51,067	12	25,147	151,718
Lard	226,340	....	226,340	148,709	3	72,372	8	5,248	226,340
Maize	438,234	139550	451,784	404,431	....	42,834		4,519	451,784
Rice	337,249	2,426	339,675	215,411	....	102,030	14	22,220	339,675
Beans, Peas	188,881	3,618	192,499	122,105	....	49,312	17	21,065	192,499
Yeast Materials	11,662	....	11,662	10,920	....	691		51	11,662
Butter, Cheese	6,803	....	6,803	3,632	....	3,165		6	6,803
Cocoa	13,131	....	13,131	5,882	....	6,988		261	13,131
Coffee	41,975	....	41,975	11,911	....	29,994	4	66	41,975
Fish	21,964	....	21,964	16,777	....	6,186	1	....	21,964
Meat	37,708	....	37,708	18,313	....	13,941	9	5,445	37,708
Milk	81,677	....	81,677	26,890	279	53,731	21	756	81,677
Soap	39,140	....	39,140	14,490	....	24,621	18	11	39,140
Sugar	51,244	....	51,244	1,517	....	49,505	2	220	51,244
Sundry Foodstuffs	79,619	12,123	91,742	65,018	....	25,973	751		91,742
Clothing	11,360	12,409	23,769	15,870	284	6,630	18	958	23,769

Miscellaneous	37,851	800	38,651	3,005	619	11,716		23,311	38,651
Benzine, Oil, Grease	1,654	....	1,654	1,558	....	....	96		1,654
Totals	5,052,976	121,455	5,174,431	3,894,941	1,239	1,091,580	299	186,372	5,174,431

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

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