

Chapter 5

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS MISSION IN RUSSIA — 1917

Poor Mr. Billings believed he was in charge of a scientific mission for the relief of Russia He was in reality nothing but a mask — the Red Cross complexion of the mission was nothing but a mask.

Cornelius Kelleher, assistant to William Boyce Thompson (in George F. Kennan, Russia Leaves the War)

The Wall Street project in Russia in 1917 used the Red Cross Mission as its operational vehicle. Both Guaranty Trust and National City Bank had representatives in Russia at the time of the revolution. Frederick M. Corse of the National City Bank branch in Petrograd was attached to the American Red Cross Mission, of which a great deal will be said later. Guaranty Trust was represented by Henry Crosby Emery. Emery was temporarily held by the Germans in 1918 and then moved on to represent Guaranty Trust 'in China.

Up to about 1915 the most influential person in the American Red Cross National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. was Miss Mabel Boardman. An active and energetic promoter, Miss Boardman had been the moving force behind the Red Cross enterprise, although its endowment came from wealthy and prominent persons including J. P. Morgan, Mrs. E. H. Harriman, Cleveland H. Dodge, and Mrs. Russell Sage. The 1910 fund-raising campaign for \$2 million, for example, was successful only because it was supported by these wealthy residents of New York City. In fact, most of the money came from New York City. J.P. Morgan himself contributed \$100,000 and seven other contributors in New York City amassed \$300,000. Only one person outside New York City contributed over \$10,000 and that was William J. Boardman, Miss Boardman's father. Henry P. Davison was chairman of the 1910 New York Fund-

Raising Committee and later became chairman of the War Council of the American Red Cross. In other words, in World War I the Red Cross depended heavily on Wall Street, and specifically on the Morgan firm.

The Red Cross was unable to cope with the demands of World War I and in effect was taken over by these New York bankers. According to John Foster Dulles, these businessmen "viewed the American Red Cross as a virtual arm of government, they envisaged making an incalculable contribution to the winning of the war."¹ In so doing they made a mockery of the Red Cross motto: "Neutrality and Humanity."

In exchange for raising funds, Wall Street asked for the Red Cross War Council; and on the recommendation of Cleveland H. Dodge, one of Woodrow Wilson's financial backers, Henry P. Davison, a partner in J.P. Morgan Company, became chairman. The list of administrators of the Red Cross then began to take on the appearance of the New York Directory of Directors: John D. Ryan, president of Anaconda Copper Company (see frontispiece); George W. Hill, president of the American Tobacco Company; Grayson M.P. Murphy, vice president of the Guaranty Trust Company; and Ivy Lee, public relations expert for the Rockefellers. Harry Hopkins, later to achieve fame under President Roosevelt, became assistant to the general manager of the Red Cross in Washington, D.C.

The question of a Red Cross Mission to Russia came before the third meeting of this reconstructed War Council, which was held in the Red Cross Building, Washington, D.C., on Friday, May 29, 1917, at 11:00 A.M. Chairman Davison was deputed to explore the idea with Alexander Legge of the International Harvester Company. Subsequently International Harvester, which had considerable interests in Russia, provided \$200,000 to assist financing the Russian mission. At a later meeting it was made known that William Boyce Thompson, director of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, had "offered to pay the entire expense of the commission"; this offer was accepted in a telegram: "Your desire to pay expenses of commission to Russia is very much appreciated and from our point of view very important."²

The members of the mission received no pay. All expenses were paid by William Boyce Thompson and the \$200,000 from International Harvester was apparently used in Russia for political subsidies. We

know from the files of the U.S. embassy in Petrograd that the U.S. Red Cross gave 4,000 rubles to Prince Lvoff, president of the Council of Ministers, for "relief of revolutionists" and 10,000 rubles in two payments to Kerensky for "relief of political refugees."

AMERICAN RED CROSS MISSION TO RUSSIA, 1917

In August 1917 the American Red Cross Mission to Russia had only a nominal relationship with the American Red Cross, and must truly have been the most unusual Red Cross Mission in history. All expenses, including those of the uniforms — the members were all colonels, majors, captains, or lieutenants — were paid out of the pocket of William Boyce Thompson. One contemporary observer dubbed the all-officer group an "Haytian Army":

The American Red Cross delegation, about forty Colonels, Majors, Captains and Lieutenants, arrived yesterday. It is headed by Colonel (Doctor) Billings of Chicago, and includes Colonel William B. Thompson and many doctors and civilians, all with military titles; we dubbed the outfit the "Haytian Army" because there were no privates. They have come to fill no clearly defined mission, as far as I can find out, in fact Gov. Francis told me some time ago that he had urged they not be allowed to come, as there were already too many missions from the various allies in Russia. Apparently, this Commission imagined there was urgent call for doctors and nurses in Russia; as a matter of fact there is at present a surplus of medical talent and nurses, native and foreign in the country and many half-empty hospitals in the large cities.³

The mission actually comprised only twenty-four (not forty), having military rank from lieutenant colonel down to lieutenant, and was supplemented by three orderlies, two motion-picture photographers, and two interpreters, without rank. Only five (out of twenty-four) were doctors; in addition, there were two medical researchers. The mission arrived by train in Petrograd via Siberia in August 1917. The five doctors and orderlies stayed one month, returning to the United States on September 11. Dr. Frank Billings, nominal head of the mission and professor of medicine at the University of Chicago, was reported to be

disgusted with the overtly political activities of the majority of the mission. The other medical men were William S. Thayer, professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University; D. J. McCarthy, Fellow of Phipps Institute for Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, at Philadelphia; Henry C. Sherman, professor of food chemistry at Columbia University; C. E. A. Winslow, professor of bacteriology and hygiene at Yale Medical School; Wilbur E. Post, professor of medicine at Rush Medical College; Dr. Malcolm Grow, of the Medical Officers Reserve Corps of the U.S. Army; and Orrin Wightman, professor of clinical medicine, New York Polyclinic Hospital. George C. Whipple was listed as professor of sanitary engineering at Harvard University but in fact was partner of the New York firm of Hazen, Whipple & Fuller, engineering consultants. This is significant because Malcolm Pirnie — of whom more later — was listed as an assistant sanitary engineer and employed as an engineer by Hazen, Whipple & Fuller.

The majority of the mission, as seen from the table, was made up of lawyers, financiers, and their assistants, from the New York financial district. The mission was financed by William B. Thompson, described in the official Red Cross circular as "Commissioner and Business Manager; Director United States Federal Bank of New York." Thompson brought along Cornelius Kelleher, described as an attache to the mission but actually secretary to Thompson and with the same address — 14 Wall Street, New York City. Publicity for the mission was handled by Henry S. Brown, of the same address. Thomas Day Thacher was an attorney with Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett, a firm founded by his father, Thomas Thacher, in 1884 and prominently involved in railroad reorganization and mergers. Thomas as junior first worked for the family firm, became assistant U.S. attorney under Henry L. Stimson, and returned to the family firm in 1909. The young Thacher was a close friend of Felix Frankfurter and later became assistant to Raymond Robins, also on the Red Cross Mission. In 1925 he was appointed district judge under President Coolidge, became solicitor general under Herbert Hoover, and was a director of the William Boyce Thompson Institute.

THE 1917 AMERICAN RED CROSS MISSION TO RUSSIA

*Members from Wall
Street financial
community and their*

Medical

*Orderlies,
interpreters,*

<i>affiliations</i>	<i>doctors</i>	<i>etc.</i>
Andrews (Liggett & Myers Tobacco)	Billings (doctor)	Brooks (orderly)
Barr (Chase National Bank)	Grow (doctor)	Clark (orderly)
Brown (c/o William B. Thompson)	McCarthy (medical research; doctor)	Rocchia (orderly)
Cochran (McCann Co.)	Post (doctor)	
Kelleher (c/o William B. Thompson)	Sherman (food chemistry)	Travis (movies)
Nicholson (Swirl & Co.)	Thayer (doctor)	Wyckoff (movies)
Pirnie (Hazen, Whipple & Fuller)		
Redfield (Stetson, Jennings & Russell)	Wightman (medicine)	Hardy (justice)
Robins (mining promoter)	Winslow (hygiene)	Horn (transportation)
Swift (Swift & Co.)		
Thacher (Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett)		
Thompson (Federal Reserve Bank of N.Y.)		

Wardwell (Stetson,
Jennings & Russell)

Whipple (Hazen,
Whipple & Fuller)

Corse (National City
Bank)

Magnuson
(recommended by
confidential agent of
Colonel Thompson)

Alan Wardwell, also a deputy commissioner and secretary to the chairman, was a lawyer with the law firm of Stetson, Jennings & Russell of 15 Broad Street, New York City, and H. B. Redfield was law secretary to Wardwell. Major Wardwell was the son of William Thomas Wardwell, long-time treasurer of Standard Oil of New Jersey and Standard Oil of New York. The elder Wardwell was one of the signers of the famous Standard Oil trust agreement, a member of the committee to organize Red Cross activities in the Spanish American War, and a director of the Greenwich Savings Bank. His son Alan was a director not only of Greenwich Savings, but also of Bank of New York and Trust Co. and the Georgian Manganese Company (along with W. Averell Harriman, a director of Guaranty Trust). In 1917 Alan Wardwell was affiliated with Stetson, Jennings & Russell and later joined Davis, Polk, Wardwell, Gardner & Read (Frank L. Polk was acting secretary of state during the Bolshevik Revolution period). The Senate Overman Committee noted that Wardwell was favorable to the Soviet regime although Poole, the State Department official on the spot, noted that "Major Wardwell has of all Americans the widest personal knowledge of the terror" (316-23-1449). In the 1920s Wardwell became active with the Russian-American Chamber of Commerce in promoting Soviet trade objectives.

The treasurer of the mission was James W. Andrews, auditor of Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company of

St. Louis. Robert I. Barr, another member, was listed as a deputy commissioner; he was a vice president of Chase Securities Company (120 Broadway) and of the Chase National Bank. Listed as being in charge of advertising was William Cochran of 61 Broadway, New York City. Raymond Robins, a mining promoter, was included as a deputy commissioner and described as "a social economist." Finally, the mission included two members of Swift & Company of Union Stockyards, Chicago. The Swifts have been previously mentioned as being connected with German espionage in the United States during World War I. Harold H. Swift, deputy commissioner, was assistant to the vice president of Swift & Company; William G. Nicholson was also with Swift & Company, Union Stockyards.

Two persons were unofficially added to the mission after it arrived in Petrograd: Frederick M. Corse, representative of the National City Bank in Petrograd; and Herbert A. Magnuson, who was "very highly recommended by John W. Finch, the confidential agent in China of Colonel William B. Thompson."⁴

The Pirnie papers, deposited at the Hoover Institution, contain primary material on the mission. Malcolm Pirnie was an engineer employed by the firm of Hazen, Whipple & Fuller, consulting engineers, of 42 Street, New York City. Pirnie was a member of the mission, listed on a manifest as an assistant sanitary engineer. George C. Whipple, a partner in the firm, was also included in the group. The Pirnie papers include an original telegram from William B. Thompson, inviting assistant sanitary engineer Pirnie to meet with him and Henry P. Davison, chairman of the Red Cross War Council and partner in the J.P. Morgan firm, before leaving for Russia. The telegram reads as follows:

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM New York, June 21, 1917

To Malcolm Pirnie

I should very much like to have you dine with me at the Metropolitan Club, Sixteenth Street and Fifth Avenue New York City at eight o'clock tomorrow Friday evening to meet Mr. H. P. Davison.

W. B. Thompson, 14 Wall Street

The files do not elucidate why Morgan partner Davison and Thompson, director of the Federal Reserve Bank — two of the most prominent financial men in New York — wished to have dinner with an assistant sanitary engineer about to leave for Russia. Neither do the files explain why Davison was subsequently unable to meet Dr. Billings and the commission itself, nor why it was necessary to advise Pirnie of his inability to do so. But we may surmise that the official cover of the mission — Red Cross activities — was of significantly less interest than the Thompson-Pirnie activities, whatever they may have been. We do know that Davison wrote to Dr. Billings on June 25, 1917:

Dear Doctor Billings:

It is a disappointment to me and to my associates on the War Council not have been able to meet in a body the members of your Commission

A copy of this letter was also mailed to assistant sanitary engineer Pirnie with a personal letter from Morgan banker Henry P. Davison, which read:

My dear Mr. Pirnie:

You will, I am sure, entirely understand the reason for the letter to Dr. Billings, copy of which is enclosed, and accept it in the spirit in which it is sent

The purpose of Davison's letter to Dr. Billings was to apologize to the commission and Billings for being unable to meet with them. We may then be justified in supposing that some deeper arrangements were made by Davison and Pirnie concerning the activities of the mission in Russia and that these arrangements were known to Thompson. The probable nature of these activities will be described later.⁵

The American Red Cross Mission (or perhaps we should call it the Wall Street Mission to Russia) also employed three Russian-English interpreters: Captain Ilovaisky, a Russian Bolshevik; Boris Reinstein, a Russian-American, later secretary to Lenin, and the head of Karl Radek's Bureau of International Revolutionary Propaganda, which also employed John Reed and Albert Rhys Williams; and Alexander

Gumberg (alias Berg, real name Michael Gruzenberg), who was a brother of Zorin, a Bolshevik minister. Gumberg was also the chief Bolshevik agent in Scandinavia. He later became a confidential assistant to Floyd Odlum of Atlas Corporation in the United States as well as an adviser to Reeve Schley, a vice president of the Chase Bank.

It should be asked in passing: How useful were the translations supplied by these interpreters? On September 13, 1918, H. A. Doolittle, American vice consul at Stockholm, reported to the secretary of state on a conversation with Captain Ilovaisky (who was a "close personal friend" of Colonel Robins of the Red Cross Mission) concerning a meeting of the Murman Soviet and the Allies. The question of inviting the Allies to land at Murman was under discussion at the Soviet, with Major Thacher of the Red Cross Mission acting for the Allies. Ilovaisky interpreted Thacher's views for the Soviet. "Ilovaisky spoke at some length in Russian, supposedly translating for Thacher, but in reality for Trotsky "to the effect that "the United States would never permit such a landing to occur and urging the speedy recognition of the Soviets and their politics."⁶ Apparently Thacher suspected he was being mistranslated and expressed his indignation. However, "Ilovaisky immediately telegraphed the substance to Bolshevik headquarters and through their press bureau had it appear in all the papers as emanating from the remarks of Major Thacher and as the general opinion of all truly accredited American representatives."⁷

Ilovaisky recounted to Maddin Summers, U.S. consul general in Moscow, several instances where he (Ilovaisky) and Raymond Robins of the Red Cross Mission had manipulated the Bolshevik press, especially "in regard to the recall of the Ambassador, Mr. Francis." He admitted that they had not been scrupulous, "but had acted according to their ideas of right, regardless of how they might have conflicted with the politics of the accredited American representatives."⁸

This then was the American Red Cross Mission to Russia in 1917.

AMERICAN RED CROSS MISSION TO RUMANIA

In 1917 the American Red Cross also sent a medical assistance mission to Rumania, then fighting the

Central Powers as an ally of Russia. A comparison of the American Red Cross Mission to Russia with that sent to Rumania suggests that the Red Cross Mission based in Petrograd had very little official connection with the Red Cross and even less connection with medical assistance. Whereas the Red Cross Mission to Rumania valiantly upheld the Red Cross twin principles of "humanity" and "neutrality," the Red Cross Mission in Petrograd flagrantly abused both.

The American Red Cross Mission to Rumania left the United States in July 1917 and located itself at Jassy. The mission consisted of thirty persons under Chairman Henry W. Anderson, a lawyer from Virginia. Of the thirty, sixteen were either doctors or surgeons. By comparison, out of twenty-nine individuals with the Red Cross Mission to Russia, only three were doctors, although another four members were from universities and specialized in medically related fields. At the most, seven could be classified as doctors with the mission to Russia compared with sixteen with the mission to Rumania. There was about the same number of orderlies and nurses with both missions. The significant comparison, however, is that the Rumanian mission had only two lawyers, one treasurer, and one engineer. The Russian mission had fifteen lawyers and businessmen. None of the Rumanian mission lawyers or doctors came from anywhere near the New York area but all, except one (an "observer" from the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.), of the lawyers and businessmen with the Russian mission came from that area. Which is to say that more than half the total of the Russian mission came from the New York financial district. In other words, the relative composition of these missions confirms that the mission to Rumania had a legitimate purpose — to practice medicine — while the Russian mission had a non-medical and strictly political objective. From its personnel, it could be classified as a commercial or financial mission, but from its actions it was a subversive political action group.

PERSONNEL WITH THE AMERICAN RED CROSS MISSIONS TO RUSSIA AND RUMANIA, 1917

AMERICAN RED CROSS MISSION TO

Personnel

Russia

Rumania

Medical (doctors and surgeons)	7	16
Orderlies, nurses	7	10
Lawyers and businessmen	<u>15</u>	<u>4</u>
TOTAL	29	30

SOURCES:

American Red Cross, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of State, Petrograd embassy, Red Cross file, 1917.

The Red Cross Mission to Rumania remained at its post in Jassy for the remainder of 1917 and into 1918. The medical staff of the American Red Cross Mission in Russia — the seven doctors — quit in disgust in August 1917, protested the political activities of Colonel Thompson, and returned to the United States. Consequently, in September 1917, when the Rumanian mission appealed to Petrograd for American doctors and nurses to help out in the near crisis conditions in Jassy, there were no American doctors or nurses in Russia available to go to Rumania.

Whereas the bulk of the mission in Russia occupied its time in internal political maneuvering, the mission in Rumania threw itself into relief work as soon as it arrived. On September 17, 1917, a confidential cable from Henry W. Anderson, chairman of the Rumania mission, to the American ambassador Francis in Petrograd requested immediate and urgent help in the form of \$5 million to meet an impending catastrophe in Rumania. Then followed a series of letters, cables, and communications from Anderson to Francis appealing, unsuccessfully, for help.

On September 28, 1917, Vopicka, American minister in Rumania, cabled Francis at length, for relay to

Washington, and repeated Anderson's analysis of the Rumanian crisis and the danger of epidemics — and worse — as winter closed in:

Considerable money and heroic measures required prevent far reaching disaster Useless try handle situation without someone with authority and access to government . . . With proper organization to look after transport receive and distribute supplies.

The hands of Vopicka and Anderson were tied as all Rumanian supplies and financial transactions were handled by the Red Cross Mission in Petrograd — and Thompson and his staff of fifteen Wall Street lawyers and businessmen apparently had matters of greater concern than Rumanian Red Cross affairs. There is no indication in the Petrograd embassy files at the U.S. State Department that Thompson, Robins, or Thacher concerned himself at any time in 1917 or 1918 with the urgent situation in Rumania. Communications from Rumania went to Ambassador Francis or to one of his embassy staff, and occasionally through the consulate in Moscow.

By October 1917 the Rumanian situation reached the crisis point. Vopicka cabled Davison in New York (via Petrograd) on October 5:

Most urgent problem here Disastrous effect feared Could you possibly arrange special shipment Must rush or too late.

Then on November 5 Anderson cabled the Petrograd embassy saying that delays in sending help had already "cost several thousand lives." On November 13 Anderson cabled Ambassador Francis concerning Thompson's lack of interest in Rumanian conditions:

Requested Thompson furnish details all shipments as received but have not obtained same Also requested him keep me posted as to transport conditions but received very little information.

Anderson then requested that Ambassador Francis intercede on his behalf in order to have funds for the Rumanian Red Cross handled in a separate account in London, directly under Anderson and removed

from the control of Thompson's mission.

THOMPSON IN KERENSKY'S RUSSIA

What then was the Red Cross Mission doing? Thompson certainly acquired a reputation for opulent living in Petrograd, but apparently he undertook only two major projects in Kerensky's Russia: support for an American propaganda program and support for the Russian Liberty Loan. Soon after arriving in Russia Thompson met with Madame Breshko-Breshkovskaya and David Soskice, Kerensky's secretary, and agreed to contribute \$2 million to a committee of popular education so that it could "have its own press and... engage a staff of lecturers, with cinematograph illustrations" (861.00/ 1032); this was for the propaganda purpose of urging Russia to continue in the war against Germany. According to Soskice, "a packet of 50,000 rubles" was given to Breshko-Breshkovskaya with the statement, "This is for you to expend according to your best judgment." A further 2,100,000 rubles was deposited into a current bank account. A letter from J. P. Morgan to the State Department (861.51/190) confirms that Morgan cabled 425,000 rubles to Thompson at his request for the Russian Liberty Loan; J. P. also conveyed the interest of the Morgan firm regarding "the wisdom of making an individual subscription through Mr. Thompson" to the Russian Liberty Loan. These sums were transmitted through the National City Bank branch in Petrograd.

THOMPSON GIVES THE BOLSHEVIKS \$1 MILLION

Of greater historical significance, however, was the assistance given to the Bolsheviks first by Thompson, then, after December 4, 1917, by Raymond Robins.

Thompson's contribution to the Bolshevik cause was recorded in the contemporary American press. The *Washington Post* of February 2, 1918, carried the following paragraphs:

GIVES BOLSHEVIKI A MILLION

W. B. Thompson, Red Cross Donor, Believes Party Misrepresented. New York, Feb. 2 (1918). William B. Thompson, who was in Petrograd from July until November last, has made a personal contribution of \$1,000,000 to the Bolsheviki for the purpose of spreading their doctrine in Germany and Austria.

Mr. Thompson had an opportunity to study Russian conditions as head of the American Red Cross Mission, expenses of which also were largely defrayed by his personal contributions. He believes that the Bolsheviki constitute the greatest power against Pro-Germanism in Russia and that their propaganda has been undermining the militarist regimes of the General Empires.

Mr. Thompson deprecates American criticism of the Bolsheviki. He believes they have been misrepresented and has made the financial contribution to the cause in the belief that it will be money well spent for the future of Russia as well as for the Allied cause.

Hermann Hagedorn's biography *The Magnate: William Boyce Thompson and His Time (1869-1930)* reproduces a photograph of a cablegram from J.P. Morgan in New York to W. B. Thompson, "Care American Red Cross, Hotel Europe, Petrograd." The cable is date-stamped, showing it was received at Petrograd "8-Dek 1917" (8 December 1917), and reads:

New York Y757/5 24W5 Nil — Your cable second received. We have paid National City Bank one million dollars as instructed — Morgan.

The National City Bank branch in Petrograd had been exempted from the Bolshevik nationalization decree — the only foreign or domestic Russian bank to have been so exempted. Hagedorn says that this million dollars paid into Thompson's NCB account was used for "political purposes."

SOCIALIST MINING PROMOTER RAYMOND ROBINS⁹

William B. Thompson left Russia in early December 1917 to return home. He traveled via London, where, in company with Thomas Lamont of the J.P. Morgan firm, he visited Prime Minister Lloyd George, an episode we pick up in the next chapter. His deputy, Raymond Robins, was left in charge of the Red Cross Mission to Russia. The general impression that Colonel Robins presented in the subsequent months was not overlooked by the press. In the words of the Russian newspaper *Russkoe Slovo*, Robins "on the one hand represents American labor and on the other hand American capital, which is endeavoring through the Soviets to gain their Russian markets."¹⁰

Raymond Robins started life as the manager of a Florida phosphate company commissary. From this base he developed a kaolin deposit, then prospected Texas and the Indian territories in the late nineteenth century. Moving north to Alaska, Robins made a fortune in the Klondike gold rush. Then, for no observable reason, he switched to socialism and the reform movement. By 1912 he was an active member of Roosevelt's Progressive Party. He joined the 1917 American Red Cross Mission to Russia as a "social economist."

There is considerable evidence, including Robins' own statements, that his reformist social-good appeals were little more than covers for the acquisition of further power and wealth, reminiscent of Frederick Howe's suggestions in *Confessions of a Monopolist*. For example, in February 1918 Arthur Bullard was in Petrograd with the U.S. Committee on Public Information and engaged in writing a long memorandum for Colonel Edward House. This memorandum was given to Robins by Bullard for comments and criticism before transmission to House in Washington, D.C. Robins' very unsocialistic and imperialistic comments were to the effect that the manuscript was "uncommonly discriminating, far-seeing and well done," but that he had one or two reservations — in particular, that recognition of the Bolsheviks was long overdue, that it should have been effected immediately, and that had the U.S. so recognized the Bolsheviks, "I believe that we would now be in control of the surplus resources of Russia and have control officers at all points on the frontier."¹¹

This desire to gain "control of the surplus resources of Russia" was also obvious to Russians. Does this sound like a social reformer in the American Red Cross or a Wall Street mining promoter engaged in the practical exercise of imperialism?

In any event, Robins made no bones about his support for the Bolsheviks.¹² Barely three weeks after the Bolshevik phase of the Revolution started, Robins cabled Henry Davison at Red Cross headquarters: "Please urge upon the President the necessity of our continued intercourse with the Bolshevik Government." Interestingly, this cable was in reply to a cable instructing Robins that the "President desires the withholding of direct communications by representatives of the United States with the Bolshevik Government."¹³ Several State Department reports complained about the partisan nature of Robins' activities. For example, on March 27, 1919, Harris, the American consul at Vladivostok, commented on a long conversation he had had with Robins and protested gross inaccuracies in the latter's reporting. Harris wrote, "Robins stated to me that no German and Austrian prisoners of war had joined the Bolshevik army up to May 1918. Robbins knew this statement was absolutely false." Harris then proceeded to provide the details of evidence available to Robins.¹⁴

Limit of Area Controlled by Bolsheviks, January 1918

Harris concluded, "Robbins deliberately misstated facts concerning Russia at that time and he has been doing it ever since."

On returning to the United States in 1918, Robins continued his efforts in behalf of the Bolsheviks. When the files of the Soviet Bureau were seized by the Lusk Committee, it was found that Robins had had "considerable correspondence" with Ludwig Martens and other members of the bureau. One of the more interesting documents seized was a letter from Santeri Nuorteva (alias Alexander Nyberg), the first Soviet representative in the U.S., to "Comrade Cahan," editor of the *New York Daily Forward*. The letter called on the party faithful to prepare the way for Raymond Robins:

(To Daily) FORWARD

July 6, 1918

Dear Comrade Cahan:

It is of the utmost importance that the Socialist press set up a clamor immediately that Col. Raymond Robins, who has just returned from Russia at the head of the Red Cross Mission, should be heard from in a public report to the American people. The armed intervention danger has greatly increased. The reactionists are using the Czecho-Slovak adventure to bring about invasion. Robins has all the facts about this and about the situation in Russia generally. He takes our point of view.

I am enclosing copy of Call editorial which shows a general line of argument, also some facts about Czecho-Slovaks.

Fraternally,

PS&AU

Santeri Nuorteva

THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND REVOLUTION

Unknown to its administrators, the Red Cross has been used from time to time as a vehicle or cover for revolutionary activities. The use of Red Cross markings for unauthorized purposes is not uncommon. When Tsar Nicholas was moved from Petrograd to Tobolsk allegedly for his safety (although this direction was towards danger rather than safety), the train carried Japanese Red Cross placards. The State Department files contain examples of revolutionary activity under cover of Red Cross activities. For example, a Russian Red Cross official (Chelgajnov) was arrested in Holland in 1919 for revolutionary acts (316-21-107). During the Hungarian Bolshevik revolution in 1918, led by Bela Kun, Russian members of the Red Cross (or revolutionaries operating as members of the Russian Red Cross) were found in Vienna and Budapest. In 1919 the U.S. ambassador in London cabled Washington startling news; through the British government he had learned that "several Americans who had arrived in this country in the uniform of the Red Cross and who stated that they were Bolsheviks . . . were proceeding through France to Switzerland to spread Bolshevik propaganda." The ambassador noted that about 400 American Red Cross people had arrived in London in November and December 1918; of that number

one quarter returned to the United States and "the remainder insisted on proceeding to France." There was a later report on January 15, 1918, to the effect that an editor of a labor newspaper in London had been approached on three different occasions by three different American Red Cross officials who offered to take commissions to Bolsheviks in Germany. The editor had suggested to the U.S. embassy that it watch American Red Cross personnel. The U.S. State Department took these reports seriously and Polk cabled for names, stating, "If true, I consider it of the greatest importance" (861.00/3602 and /3627).

To summarize: the picture we form of the 1917 American Red Cross Mission to Russia is remote from one of neutral humanitarianism. The mission was in fact a mission of Wall Street financiers to influence and pave the way for control, through either Kerensky or the Bolshevik revolutionaries, of the Russian market and resources. No other explanation will explain the actions of the mission. However, neither Thompson nor Robins was a Bolshevik. Nor was either even a consistent socialist. The writer is inclined to the interpretation that the socialist appeals of each man were covers for more prosaic objectives. Each man was intent upon the commercial; that is, each sought to use the political process in Russia for personal financial ends. Whether the Russian people wanted the Bolsheviks was of no concern. Whether the Bolshevik regime would act against the United States — as it consistently did later — was of no concern. The single overwhelming objective was to gain political and economic influence with the new regime, whatever its ideology. If William Boyce Thompson had acted alone, then his directorship of the Federal Reserve Bank would be inconsequential. However, the fact that his mission was dominated by representatives of Wall Street institutions raises a serious question — in effect, whether the mission was a planned, premeditated operation by a Wall Street syndicate. This the reader will have to judge for himself, as the rest of the story unfolds.

Footnotes:

¹John Foster Dulles, *American Red Cross* (New York: Harper, 1950).

²Minutes of the War Council of the American National Red Cross (Washington, D.C., May 1917)

³Gibbs Diary, August 9, 1917. State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁴Billings report to Henry P. Davison, October 22, 1917, American Red Cross Archives.

⁵The Pirnie papers also enable us to fix exactly the dates that members of the mission left Russia. In the case of William B. Thompson, this date is critical to the argument of this book: Thompson left Petrograd for London on December 4, 1917. George F. Kennan states Thompson left Petrograd on November 27, 1917 (*Russia Leaves the War*, p. 1140).

⁶U.S. State Dept. Decimal File, 861.00/3644.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Robins is the correct spelling. The name is consistently spelled "Robbins" in the State Department files.

¹⁰U.S. State Dept. Decimal File, 316-11-1265, March 19, 1918.

¹¹Bullard ms., U.S. State Dept. Decimal File, 316-11-1265.

¹²The *New World Review* (fall 1967, p. 40) comments on Robins, noting that he was "in sympathy with the aims of the Revolution, although a capitalist "

¹³Petrograd embassy, Red Cross file.

¹⁴U.S. State Dept. Decimal File, 861.00/4168.

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