

«The true spirit of our country».

US-Präsident Calvin Coolidge (1923–29) über das *Near East Relief*

The volunteer relief committee was, from the beginning, a National organization of the United States, manned by our people and incorporated by a special act of Congress in 1919 as the Near East Relief. It was National because it received its support from all our people and was endorsed by Congress and all our Presidents throughout its history; and, in its widely extended work of
5 life and child saving, it represented the true spirit of our country. It was more than our country, for its benevolence extended to three continents where, irrespective of religion and creed, it clothed the naked, fed the starving and provided shelter, care and practical schooling for more than a hundred and thirty thousand fatherless waifs left as wreckage from the Great War. While the war was waging in Europe and Western Asia, and the contending nations were using every
10 known engine of destruction against each other, this organization was salvaging men, women and children, not of its own race, and doing everything in its power to heal the wounds which were the indirect results of the conflict.

This service to humanity has involved great sacrifice beyond the vast sums contributed by a willing people. Thirty American relief workers have laid down their lives in this service to
15 mankind and their bodies lie in the soil of the land and amid the peoples whom their efforts and sacrifice have saved.

No private enterprise ever undertaken by Americans and in the name of America has accomplished more to arouse, in the minds and hearts of all the peoples of the countries in which this organization has carried on its operations, a sincere regard and even affection for America.
20 They have seen in this service a demonstration of a practical consciousness of brotherhood and good will toward all peoples. Those who dwell in the Near East have been impressed, through the work of this Committee, with what they regard as the true spirit of our people. They have not been able to detect in its years of service any ulterior motive, taint of politics, territorial ambition, bid for spheres of influence, or sectarian propaganda. They can see embodied in the
25 fifteen years of disinterested operations, the sincere desire and purpose to render help to peoples in extreme need, and to give it without expectation or even the possibility of return in anything except the expressions of gratitude from those helped and the consciousness of having responded to a call to duty.

In all the countries around the Eastern Mediterranean and along the shores of the Black Sea, the
30 names «American Near East Relief» and «American Committee» are held in affectionate regard.

Whoever journeys there under these names is recognized as a friend. To the millions of peoples in all those countries our country was the Good Samaritan that did not pass them by but bound up their wounds and poured into their troubled lives the consoling oil of sympathy and healing.

35 Not only has life been saved, but economic, social, intellectual and moral forces have been released. New methods in child welfare, in public health and in practical education have been introduced. A new sense of the value of the child, a new conception of religion in action and a new hope for a better social order have been aroused. All this has brought enduring results, a promise of a brighter future to replace the despair of years of fear and hopelessness.

40 The work of the Committee has demonstrated practical Christianity without sectarianism, and without ecclesiastical form, recognizing the rights of each and all to their ancestral faith, while expressing religion in terms of sacrifice and service that others might live and be benefited. Its creed was the Golden Rule and its ritual the devotion of life and treasure to the healing of wounds caused by war. [...]

45 The story of the formation of the organization, of the lifegiving relief operations affecting not less than a million and a half wandering, scattered refugees, most of them children and women, and of the training of more than a hundred and thirty thousand waifs for constructive service and good citizenship in their own countries and among their own people, is told here by those who have been personally involved in the work from the beginning. It is a story of philanthropic achievement which may well be a satisfaction to all our people.

«Introduction», in: Barton, James L., *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930)*, New York, 1930, S. VIII–X.