

MCFADDEN, David, and Claire Gorfinkel, with an Overview by Sergei Nikitin, *Constructive Spirit: Quakers in revolutionary Russia* (Pasadena, CA: International Productions, 2004), pp. 213. ISBN 0-9648042-5-5, Paper \$16.95.

This is the latest in a series of books¹ chronicling the lives and work of a still largely unknown generation of Friends who redefined the Quaker internationalist tradition in the period between the First and Second World Wars. Apart from a brief historical overview of Quaker contact with Russia, drawn heavily from the work of Richenda Scott, this book concentrates on the role of American Friends in relief and reconstruction work from 1917 until their departure in 1931. The authors make clear the history of American Quaker involvement in Russia in the years immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution was closely bound up with the creation of the American Friends Service Council (AFSC) in April 1917 and shaped by the vision of Rufus Jones, its first Chairman.

The first AFSC Unit, a group of six women, who arrived in the district of Buzuluk in the Volga region of Russia in August 1917 to assist in emergency relief work with the 26,000 refugees uprooted by war, shared Jones' belief that Quakerism must carry its spiritual message into the political realm. This book provides a detailed and compelling account of the achievements of the lives of two of these six women – Nancy Babb and Anna Haines – by drawing on letters, diaries and reports that they

wrote at the time. Nancy Babb (1884–1948) emerges as a determined, energetic and independent-minded woman who did not always find it easy to operate as part of a group. Working on her own at Totskoye, a district adjacent to Buzuluk, she supervised feeding programs for the local population during the great famine of 1921–23 as well as organising child health clinics and facilities for those suffering from malaria. When the famine eased in 1922, she turned her attention to the work of reconstruction until she left Russia to return to the United States in 1927.

Given the material and political constraints which she experienced, her accomplishments during this five year period were truly remarkable. A list which she herself compiled included the construction and equipping of a new hospital which remained in use until the 1970s; the establishment of children's homes and adult literacy schools; and the creation of various cottage industries to assist the development of the rural economy in the area. According to McFadden and Gorfinkel the principles underpinning her projects provided a model for future Quaker relief programmes in that they involved an element of self-help, requiring all adults to do some work for food, thereby avoiding a culture of dependency which robbed recipients of dignity and self-respect. She also worked closely with local officials to ensure that the programmes she initiated matched local plans for reconstruction and development and later could be handed over to local people to run themselves, freeing up Quaker resources for new areas of work.

Equally dedicated, Anna Haines (1886–1969) was the first AFSC representative allowed back into Russia in November 1920 after the temporary withdrawal of all foreign workers during the civil war. Working alongside a British Friend, Arthur Watts, she successfully concluded agreements with the Bolshevik government that allowed the resumption of Quaker relief operations first in Moscow and then in Buzuluk as famine conditions took hold in the summer of 1921. She also oversaw the distribution of food and medical assistance, recounting her experiences in a pamphlet, 'The Story of a Quaker Woman in Russia' – published in New York in 1922 – to raise further funds for famine relief.

Like Nancy Babb, Haines looked beyond the immediate provision of relief to Quaker participation in the immense task of reconstruction and in particular to the role Quakers could play in improving the quality of medical services in Russia. After three years of nursing training in the United States to equip herself for work in the field, she returned to Moscow in 1925, combining her role as American representative at the Quaker Centre with a full-time job in a mother and baby hospital. She did an immense amount in a short time to improve the quality of nursing education although she was unable to secure Quaker funding for the project closest to her heart, a nurses training school run on western lines.

As well as looking at the work of Quaker volunteers in the field, the authors also explore the operations of the AFSC's central committee and in particular its troubled relationship with the American Relief Administration (ARA), a quasi-governmental agency, headed by Herbert Hoover, himself a birthright Friend. During the great famine of 1921–23 the ARA negotiated an agreement with the Bolsheviks to supply and distribute food and medicine to the worst-affected areas of rural Russia. Rufus Jones and Wilbur Thomas, the AFSC's executive secretary, reluctantly agreed to

1. B. Bailey, *A Quaker Couple in Germany* (York: Sessions, 1994); H.A. Schmitt, *Quakers and Nazis* (Columbia/London: University of Michigan Press, 1997); S. Spielhofer, *Stemming the Dark Tide* (York: Sessions, 2001).

Hoover's demand that American Quakers work under ARC direction during this period but as the book makes clear, the AFSC-ARA relationship was never an easy one. Thomas in particular was highly critical of Hoover's anti-Bolshevism and his use of food aid as an ideological weapon to undermine the Russian government, fearful that it would compromise the Quaker tradition of non-political relief work and jeopardise the good working relationship Friends had with Russian officials. His conflict with Hoover and his close connections with left-wing groups who helped to fund Quaker work in Russia also caused divisions within AFSC circles, alienating more conservative Quakers and eventually prompting Thomas' resignation from the AFSC in 1928. There is much in this book that will be of interest to a wider Quaker audience. Well researched and thought provoking it allows its subjects to speak with their own voices and sheds new light on the politics of relief and on the pitfalls and possibilities of humanitarian intervention that remain relevant in the contemporary international order.

Maureen Waugh
University of Birmingham, England

The war and draft resisters whose tales of incarceration are recounted in this collection might be accorded a rough tripartite classification as Gentle Souls, Self-Assured Moralists or Angry and Resentful Militants. Given the limited space available, a brief discussion of examples from each of the above categories may provide potential readers with some sense of the nature of the rich materials available herein. One must, like Brock, begin with the excerpt from *An English Prison From Within* (1919) by Stephen Hobhouse, the gentlest of Gentle Souls.

Hobhouse, a convinced British Friend who, prior to 1914, had renounced his comfortable inheritance for a life of selfless service to the less fortunate, took an 'absolutist' stand against conscription in 1916 and spent most of 1917 at 'hard labour'. Hobhouse's essay, later significantly expanded in collaboration with ex-CO Fenner Brockway into a ground-breaking account of *English Prisons Today* (1922), is largely concerned with the soul-destroying aspects of life in what one CO called the 'human dog-kennels' (p. 17) which were English prisons in the early twentieth century. The atmosphere of mistrust and fear in the Third Division, the harshest regime to which an English prisoner could be subjected and the one into which conscientious objectors were invariably placed, was such that any act of kindness toward a fellow prisoner was looked upon as a criminal enterprise. Hobhouse and fellow Quaker Hubert Peet provide graphic descriptions of the abysmal daily prison routine which, in Peet's words, amounted to 'calculated, scientific, soulless cruelty' (p. 46) robbing prisoners of any segment of personal dignity. For most, the cruelest cut of all was the silence system, forbidding prisoners any form of human communication. For Friends like Hobhouse and Peet, there was considerable irony in the fact that this most hated of all English prison rules had been championed by nineteenth century Quaker prisoner reformers John Howard and Elizabeth Fry. Because the deadening and debilitating silence rule was regularly broken by every prisoner, Hobhouse's Quaker scrupulousness made him feel increasing guilty for violating Friends' devotion to Truth-telling and honesty. This led to his declaring open revolt against the silence system, causing him to be placed in complete solitary confinement for the last four months of a sentence which brought him close to death before his release on grounds of ill-health.

Not all English war resisters, even religious ones, were, like Hobhouse, prepared to suffer in silence. One who was not was Robert Price, surely the angriest of seventy-seven members of the Churches of Christ imprisoned as COs. Brutally abused in a military prison in France before being returned to a civil institution in England, Price's account is a thoroughgoing indictment of the Government, the Army, the prison system and, for good measure, the Church of England. And while he was friendly with the Quakers he met in prison and spoke at their meetings, in the end, he noted, they did not appreciate his militant 'New Testament stand' (p. 85) against the mammon of wickedness.

Still, however angry, Price was but a pale shadow compared to the most articulate, and most resentful, CO chronicler, the English public school boy turned New Zealand sheep farmer and humanitarian pacifist, Ian Hamilton. In an exceptionally bitter account the intensely political and consistently caustic Hamilton rails against the 'cold-blooded, sadistic horror' (p. 264) of imprisoning any human being. Along the way he provides, *inter alia*, a riveting and insightful description of the terrors of solitary confinement that most other writers can only hint at.