

Editor's Introduction

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Unlike most of the American eyewitnesses to the Russian Revolution, Ernest Poole (1880–1950) was already an accomplished professional writer well known to the American public.¹ He had also experienced Russia in revolution in 1905, had studied the language and the country's history, and had read many Russian literary works, especially those of Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev, and Maxim Gorky. He thus had an advantage over those who were new to the land and its people. Furthermore, in contrast to many of his compatriots, Poole was convinced that the real Russia was to be found in the countryside, among the peasants, and concentrated his time and efforts in understanding what was happening there.

Poole was born and raised in an upper-class neighborhood on Chicago's north side, near the corner of Erie and what is now Michigan Avenue. His father, of Dutch background (the family's original name was Vanderpoehl), came from upstate New York, and had moved west, first to Wisconsin and then to Chicago. Abram Poole served in the Union Army, marching with Sherman through Georgia, and worked his way up the ranks of the Chicago Board of Trade to become a leading "member," often acting as broker for Philip Danforth Armour of meat packing fame.² Ernest Poole and his seven siblings (four sisters and three brothers) grew up in a large Victorian house that he remembered as bustling with activity and visitors, in particular during the World's Fair of 1893. The family spent its summers at a beach house in Lake Forest.³

The young Ernest learned early to escape this crowd by roaming with a gang of other boys through a nearby slum of shanties and tents occupying a Lake Michigan

¹ Ernest Poole was unrelated to two other Pooles who were prominent in Russia during this period: DeWitt Clinton Poole, who served as American consul general in Moscow in 1917–18, and General Frederick C. Poole, British commander of the interventionist forces in the north of Russia in 1918–19.

² Ernest Poole, *Giants Gone: Men Who Made Chicago* (New York: Whittlesey House-McGraw-Hill, 1943), 107–09.

³ Ernest Poole, *The Bridge: My Own Story* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1940), 4, 24, 32.

landfill called “the Patch.”⁴ These childhood explorations sparked Poole’s life-long interest in the world of the lower class, whose struggles would influence much of his literary work. Poole’s family milieu thus stood in sharp contrast to this other world of poverty and disease, a disconnect of which he was acutely aware as he described the high-society life of his summers at Lake Forest.

Ernest Poole received his formal education at a Chicago high school associated with the University of Chicago. In 1898 he enrolled at Princeton University, then as now one of America’s leading institutions of higher education. In his autobiography Poole admits to having been an indifferent student for the first two years, more assiduous in his enjoyment of eating (and drinking) clubs than in his studies. He credits a professor of history and politics, Woodrow Wilson, for inspiring the interest in writing and social welfare to which he would devote much of his efforts in his remaining years at Princeton. Poole also succumbed at this time to the contemporary American craze for Russian literature, especially Tolstoy and Turgenev.⁵

During his college years, Poole spent summers with family and friends back in Chicago and Lake Forest. It was at this time that he met the “love of his life,” Margaret Ann Winterbotham, the daughter of another leading Chicago family; they would marry in 1907.⁶ In August 1902, after graduating from Princeton, he moved into the University Settlement on New York’s Lower East Side.⁷ This was another, and different, introduction to tenement slum life—and to Russia, since many of the people served by the Settlement were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, especially from the Russian Empire, where antisemitism was at its height. Among other “residents” serving this community with shelter, food, and English-language courses were Arthur Bullard, William English Walling, Leroy Scott, Phelps Stokes, and Walter Weyl, all of whom also developed professional interests in the Russian revolutionary movement. Bullard and Walling would be among Poole’s life-long friends, and Weyl would marry one of Poole’s sisters, Bertha, who had also joined the social welfare movement.⁸

The University Settlement drew many of those advocating increased public support for programs assisting poor immigrants. Visiting speakers included Jane

⁴ Ibid, 38–40.

⁵ Ibid., 55, 62–66. He cites Wilson as “his favorite professor and friend,” who often joined Poole and classmates for a “smoke” in their rooms. Wilson became president of the university the year Poole graduated, 1902.

⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁷ Founded in 1886 as the Neighborhood Guild in a basement on Forsyth Street, by 1902 it had become one of the largest and most active settlement houses, comparable to the nearby Henry Street Settlement and Hull House in Chicago. It continues to be one of the most prominent relief agencies in the city.

⁸ Poole, *The Bridge*, 68–72.

Addams, Lillian Wald, Clarence Darrow, H. G. Wells, and Lincoln Steffens. Steffens encouraged Poole's initial writings about the many street boys who roamed the area. Poole also associated with Abraham Cahan, a Russian Jewish social revolutionary who edited a local socialist newspaper. Cahan and Poole attended the Jewish Theater together, stimulating the latter's study of Yiddish and interest in the Russian Jewish neighborhood.⁹ Poole was soon exploring the nooks and crannies of the Lower East Side, taking notes and developing his reporting skills. His first published article, "Waifs of the Street," appeared in *McClure's Magazine* in May 1902.¹⁰ It, together with a pamphlet about the "The Lung Block" written for the New York Charity Organization Committee, brought Poole and his concerns about street children and the crowded, disease-ridden tenements to the public eye.¹¹ Additional writings were assembled into his first substantial publication, *The Voice of the Street*, considered by *The Bookman* to be "a book of unusual quality."¹²

By this time Poole had moved out of University Settlement to share an apartment nearby with Fred King, a Yale graduate who had been strongly influenced by Tolstoy. They continued to roam the East Side with another friend from the Settlement, Howard Brubaker, soon to be the editor of *Colliers' Weekly*, and were frequent visitors to the Henry Street Settlement, the home of Lillian Wald and her visiting nurses. Poole later said that Wald "meant more to [him] than any other woman in social service."¹³ His connections with the "settlement movement," then at its height, would be paramount for a few more years.

No doubt knowing that Poole was from Chicago, *Outlook*, a leading American progressive journal, sent him there in 1904 to cover the Stockyards Strike.¹⁴ He immediately connected with the settlement house of the University of Chicago and with its director, Mary McDowell, a veteran of Hull House. The University of Chicago Settlement House was located near the slum area of "Packingtown," an

⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 70; Poole, "Waifs of the Street," *McClure's Magazine* 21, 1 (May 1903): 5–8.

¹¹ "The School of the Street," *The Youth's Companion* 77, 27 (2 July 1903): 328; "Some Plague Spots in New York: In One Block 265 Cases of Tuberculosis Were Reported in Nine Years," *New York Tribune*, 13 September 1903, A1; "Modern Medicine, Surgery and Sanitation," *Current Literature* 35, 6 (December 1903): 746. The editor is indebted to ProQuest Historical Newspapers for the newspaper and periodical citations.

¹² Ernest Poole, *The Voice of the Street: A Story of Temptation* (New York: Barnes and Company, 1906); "The Voice of the Street," review of *The Voice of the Street: A Story of Temptation*, by Ernest Poole, *The Bookman* 23, 6 (August 1906): 640.

¹³ Poole, *The Bridge*, 85.

¹⁴ Among the American liberals who were regular contributors to *Outlook* was George Kennan.

area populated mainly by Polish, Slovak, and Lithuanian immigrants.¹⁵ If anything, conditions there were worse than those on New York's Lower East Side owing to poorer housing and increased pollution from the stockyards and meat packing plants.

Chicago, as a major industrial center, had a history of labor strife, notably the Haymarket Square Riot of 1886 and the 1894 Pullman Strike. The Stockyards Strike began in May 1904 when the packing houses (Meat Trust) offered workers a new annual contract that reduced hourly wages from eighteen and a half cents to sixteen and a half, or \$7.40 for a forty-hour week, well below a living wage. Such slave-labor wages were made possible by an abundance of unemployed ready to work at any price. The strike by 60,000 unskilled and skilled workers, led by Michael Donnelly, an American Federation of Labor organizer, also had as its goal the creation of a stronger, more inclusive union, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (AMC). Poole's sympathies were clearly with the unions, and he criticized the employers' tactics of refusing to compromise and of hiring black strikebreakers from the south. In articles he wrote jointly with William Hard, a writer for the *Chicago Tribune* who was also associated with Hull House, Poole lamented the inability of workers of varied ethnic backgrounds to unite.¹⁶

Poole spent the miserably hot Chicago summer in the company of others depressed by the union's failure. In addition to Hard and McDowell, he met John Commons, a University of Wisconsin professor of economics, and writer Upton Sinclair, both of whom were sympathetic to the plight of the workingman. Commons and Sinclair may have influenced Poole's most significant writing on the strike, a semifictional autobiography of a Lithuanian immigrant worker, "From Lithuania to the Chicago Stockyards—An Autobiography."¹⁷ At about this same time, Poole's Chicago family began to break up with the death of his mother, the marriage of two sisters, and the departure of his younger brother Abram to study art in Munich.¹⁸

Meanwhile, in February 1904 war began in the Far East with the surprise attack by Japan on Vladivostok and Port Arthur. The chief cause was a clash of interests of Russia and Japan, the two new imperial powers in the region, aggravated by

¹⁵ The University of Chicago Settlement was founded in 1895 by William Rainey Harper, founding president of the university, to provide service to the city and to provide an activity for faculty wives. As with the University Settlement in New York, it continues as a major welfare agency to this day. "University of Chicago Settlement," The Social Welfare History Project, socialwelfarehistory.com/settlement-houses/university-chicago-settlement (accessed 22 February 2017).

¹⁶ Ernest Poole, "The Meat Strike," *The Independent*, 28 July 1904, 179. See also William Hard and Ernest Poole, "The Stock Yards Strike," *Outlook*, 13 August 1904, 884.

¹⁷ Ernest Poole, "From Lithuania to the Chicago Stockyards—An Autobiography," *The Independent*, 4 August 1904.

¹⁸ Poole, *The Bridge*, 102–03.

Russia's lease of Port Arthur on the southern tip of Manchuria. Another factor in the growing Russian presence in what many in Japan considered their sphere of interest was the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Russia's rash decision to send the Baltic Fleet to the Pacific ended in disaster at the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905. The fall of Port Arthur and the necessity of supplying troops and arms to a distant front placed additional strain on a sprawling empire already in the throes of rapid industrialization. The result was revolution, which began with the massacre of peaceful demonstrators in St. Petersburg's Palace Square on "Bloody Sunday," January 22, 1905. Ernest Poole hastened to the offices of the *Outlook* begging for a new assignment—Russia—which he received.

Packing in a rush, he was aboard ship by January 28. After brief stops in Paris and Berlin, he arrived in St. Petersburg in mid-February, carrying funds donated for progressive and radical causes by Russian exiles in Europe. He delivered the money to Harold Williams, correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, who provided him with an orientation to the city.¹⁹ Poole was soon busy conducting interviews and writing articles for *Outlook*, identified only as "special correspondent in Russia." His first report, "St. Petersburg is Quiet!," dated February 18 and published a month later, described his settling in with a Russian family and beginning his study of Russian, and discussed his interviews with public officials.²⁰ The sixth article in the series, published in late May, finally revealed Poole's identity; the delay was due to the journal's fear that its correspondent might be expelled, as George Kennan had been a few years earlier.²¹ One of Poole's best portraits of Russia during the 1905 revolution was "Two Russian Soldiers," based on interviews conducted on a train.²²

He also wrote about meeting Juvenale (Iuvenalii) Tarasov, who was to be featured in the books Poole wrote in 1917, especially *The Village*. Tarasov is described as a large man educated in chemistry at St. Petersburg University who had traveled abroad and had some proficiency in English. He accompanied Poole on his trips into the Russian countryside.²³ Tarasov also served as guide on excursions to Ukraine and the Caucasus, where they met a Cossack who had spent four years touring with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. After being hounded by the police while visiting Tiflis

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 115–19. Williams (1876–1928), a noted linguist from New Zealand, was closely associated with the Constitutional Democratic Party through his marriage in 1906 to Ariadna Tyrkova (1869–1962), one of its founders. They fled Russia in 1918. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams emigrated to the United States in 1951.

²⁰ *Outlook*, 18 March 1905, 680–91.

²¹ Ernest Poole, "The Peasant and the War," *Outlook*, 27 May 1905, 219–30.

²² Ernest Poole, "Two Russian Soldiers," *Outlook*, 2 September 1905, 21.

²³ See Ernest Poole, "Russian Hamlet," *Outlook*, 29 April 1905, 135–40; Poole, "Russian Villager," *Outlook*, 13 May 1905, 113–18.

and Vladikavkaz, Poole felt the need to leave the region, reluctantly, as he had been charmed by the beauty of the landscape and the attractive women.²⁴

Poole did not return directly to America. Instead he spent a month in London, writing during the day and visiting theaters in the evening, often accompanied by Walling.²⁵ Then he went to Paris, where he met Brubaker, Bullard, and King, who joined him for hiking in the Swiss Alps. From there he traveled to Munich to visit his artist brother before returning to Chicago in October, where he wrote a touching portrait of a Russian peasant girl for *Independent* and an extended description of his trip through the Caucasus for *Outlook*.²⁶

By early 1906 Poole was back in New York. He found the old settlement group drifting apart. Walling and Bullard had left for Russia, but he joined Brubaker and Weyl in an apartment on Fifth Avenue, near Washington Square, where they formed the “A Club,” which was devoted to discussions of theater. Poole’s turn in this direction was probably influenced by his exposure to theater in Europe, though he gives particular credit to the appearance of a Russian drama company in New York headed by the well-known Russian actor Pavel Ivanovich Orlenev (1869–1932).²⁷

²⁴ Poole, *The Bridge*, 167. Poole had written in a letter to his father that he might stay in the Caucasus and marry a local girl.

²⁵ Out of money by this time, Poole wired his father, who sent money, relieved to know that his son had left the Caucasus.

²⁶ Ernest Poole, “Dounya,” *The Independent*, 26 October 1905, 974; Poole, “With the Caucasian Revolutionists,” *Outlook*, 18 November 1905, 653. Altogether Poole published over 200 printed pages on Russia in 1905, the equivalent of a book.

²⁷ Poole, *The Bridge*, 190; “Orlenev,” *St. Petersburg Encyclopedia*, www.encspb.ru (accessed 13 March 2017). Orlenev and his wife, Alla Nazimova (1879–1945), a Moscow Art Theater actress, performed there briefly in 1904 and were encouraged to return with a company of actors to produce a repertoire of Russian and other plays. The “St. Petersburg Players” arrived in the spring of 1905, the first such visit to the United States by a Russian touring company. They scored a rave review, especially for Nazimova, at their opening at the Herald Square Theater (“A Russian Play,” *New-York Tribune*, 24 March 1905, 7; “Paul Orleneff, the Russian Actor: His Aspirations and Ideals,” *New York Times*, 2 April 1905, SM3). Orlenev’s forte was playing Oswald in Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts* and Raskolnikov in an adaptation of Fedor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (“Russian Actors in “Ghosts,” *New York Times*, 11 June 1905, 20).

In November 1905 Orlenev rented a small theater on the Lower East Side, the “Russian Lyceum,” no doubt aware of a potential audience of Russian Jews, as all the performances were in Russian (“Russian Theater Opened,” *New York Times*, 4 November 1905, 9). One of the most popular presentations was Russian playwright Evgenii Chirikov’s *The Chosen People*, a dramatic depiction of the April 1903 pogrom in Kishinev, which had been banned in Russia. *The Chosen People* together with productions of works by Ibsen, Chekhov, and others attracted a good deal of attention, despite being performed in Russian. The Lyceum, however, ran into problems, and finally the city fire marshal ordered it closed. Still, boosted by the much publicized visit of Maxim Gorky and a \$10,000 aid fund, the Russian players continued well into 1906 and toured in Chicago and Boston as well.

Poole, apparently supported by his father, spent much of the summer of 1906 tramping in the Alps with his brother Abram and Bullard. In Lucerne and Interlaken they were joined by the young woman he had wooed in Chicago—Margaret Ann Winterbotham. They apparently returned to the United States together, as he notes that he begged her to marry him “all the way across the Atlantic.” The wedding in the Winterbotham home in Chicago on February 12, 1907, was a modest affair, with Poole’s older brother Ralph as best man and the bride’s younger sister Katherine as bridesmaid.²⁸ After a brief reception they departed by train for New York and a two-month honeymoon in Europe, some of it in his brother Abram’s apartment in Munich. Back in America they spent the summer in New Hampshire, and in the fall rented a small house in Greenwich Village.²⁹

The new Mrs. Poole reinforced her husband’s commitments to social progress by being active in such causes as women’s suffrage and Mabel Kittredge’s campaign for school lunches in New York City public schools. A highlight of the latter occurred in 1913 when Margaret Poole escorted Theodore Roosevelt to Public School 95 in Greenwich Village for a luncheon of bean soup and egg sandwich (one cent each).³⁰ She also served as president of the Woman’s City Club of New York, while bearing three children during the first five years of marriage and being a firm supporter of her husband’s career.

Meanwhile, Poole devoted most of his attention to writing plays, a total of eleven (including two with Harriet Ford), only two of which were actually produced.³¹ *None So Blind* opened in New Haven on January 29, 1910, and moved to the Hackett Theater in New York on February 3.³² *None So Blind* told the story of a construction engineer who goes blind in the middle of a bridge construction project and who then has an operation to restore his sight but who pretends to still be blind in order to uncover the betrayals of his wife and a rival engineer.³³ The second play, *A Man’s Friends*, had a better reception as a “drama of real merit.”³⁴ Opening in March 1913, it depicted an honest district attorney’s fight against a corrupt political boss who relies on duping

²⁸ “In the Society World,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 February 1907, 18.

²⁹ Poole, *The Bridge*, 179–81.

³⁰ “Colonel Eats 2-Cent Meal: >It Was Bully” *New York Tribune*, April 16, 1913, 11.

³¹ Poole, *The Bridge*, 192. Harriet Ford was more successful with sixteen Broadway productions and several film scripts. Apparently a third play with Ford, *Take Your Medicine*, was produced in 1916 in revised form; at least one major reviewer considered it Poole’s best play. George S. Kaufman, “Broadway and Elsewhere,” *New York Tribune*, 10 December 1916, 31; Truman Frederick Keefer, *Ernest Poole* (New York: Twayne, 1966), 37.

³² “Theatrical Notes,” *New York Tribune*, 29 January 1910, 7.

³³ “*None So Blind*,” *The Bookman* 31, 2 (April 1910): 142.

³⁴ “*A Man’s Friends*,” *New York Tribune*, 23 March 1913, 9.

his friends for support.³⁵ Poole also continued his journalistic career with two short, perceptive biographies.³⁶

Discouraged by his limited success in the theater world, Poole turned to a larger project: writing a novel. In early 1914 he learned that his first book, *The Harbor*, had been accepted by the Macmillan publishing house. To celebrate, he and his wife dashed off to France, leaving the children with their grandmother Winterbotham. They reached Paris by May 1, where they met Bullard, who warned them of major events ahead in Europe. They went on to tour the Pyrenees and Spain, and enjoyed the flamenco craze in Paris. In June they were back in the White Mountains of New Hampshire for Poole to make some revisions to *The Harbor* and begin work on a second novel.³⁷ His New Hampshire summer was interrupted by a world event. Europe went to war in August 1914, and Poole once again donned his correspondent cap.

This time he knocked on the door of *The Saturday Evening Post*, for which he had recently written some short stories, and was soon on the scene—in Germany! He spent a week in Silesia with an American Red Cross unit and quickly became acquainted first-hand with the horrors of modern war. Then, back in Berlin he received permission to visit the Western Front with a group of correspondents that included John Reed, with whom he visited an army hospital located just behind the lines. Poole described buying tobacco at a shop in a French village occupied by the Germans and a superb dinner at the headquarters of General Von Falkenhayn. He was impressed by German cleanliness and ingenuity, for example, in making alcohol from sugar beets to run trucks and using crushed rock on mud to firm the roads.

Poole returned in time to see the publication of *The Harbor* in February 1915. The book received a surprisingly favorable critical and public response: “It is one of the ablest novels added to American fiction in many a year.”³⁸ The author received laudatory letters from Theodore Roosevelt, William Allen White, William Dean Howells, Hamlin Garland, Walter Lippmann, John Reed, and others. Set in Brooklyn, *The Harbor* draws on Poole’s childhood experiences in Chicago and his adventures on the New York waterfront to tell two stories: one of a wealthy family involved in the modern shipping business and the other of the dockyard and its impoverished workers. The novel laments not only the passing of beauty as graceful Yankee clippers are replaced by ugly cargo ships, but also the passing of America’s hegemony at sea. Though quite popular at the time, it is not easy reading for later generations.

³⁵ “A Man’s Friends,” *The Bookman* 37, 3 (May 1913): 308.

³⁶ “Abraham Cahan,” *Outlook*, 28 October 1911, 467–78; and “Brandeis,” *American Magazine* 71 (February 1911): 481–93.

³⁷ Poole, *The Bridge*, 213–16.

³⁸ “Views and Reviews of Current Fiction,” *New York Tribune*, 13 February 1915, 10. It was reprinted five times within a month and twenty-two times overall, as well as in several translations, including Russian (Poole, *The Bridge*, 259).

Poole's second novel, *His Family*, came out in May 1917, after being serialized by *Everybody's Magazine*, beginning in September 1916. It tells the story of a man who awakes to the memory of having promised his dying wife some years earlier that he would maintain contact with their two daughters and bring their life stories to her when he dies. He finds them proceeding with contrasting lives, one embedded in and devoted to a nuclear family, the other a principal of a school of 3,000 students — the small, intimate family contrasted with the larger social family in which we all live. *His Family* was praised as purely New York but also quite personal, as one prominent reviewer noted: "This book is chiefly to be prized as a picture of Mr. Poole's own soul—a picture that one likes to remember for heartenment and reassurance. It rewards the best that one can bring to it.... It has spiritual penetration and latitude and elevation. It is filled throughout with a deep and intimate consciousness of the reality of other souls."³⁹ The following year *His Family* was awarded the first Pulitzer Prize in fiction for a work that best depicts "the wholesome atmosphere of American life and the highest standard of American manners and manhood."⁴⁰

Once again major events intervened in Poole's career—the Russian revolution of 1917 and American entry into the war. The first call for special duty came from his old friend Arthur Bullard on behalf of George Creel, who was the director of the newly created Committee on Public Information. Often dubbed the "Creel Committee," it was a controversial propaganda agency created to support the American war effort through news releases, public speeches, and film, and subsequently expanded to shore up America's allies, especially Russia. He worked at the Public Information office in New York for several weeks before Bullard convinced him to go to Russia.⁴¹

Poole again signed on with *The Saturday Evening Post* and arrived in Russia with a number of other journalists and exiles in May. He toured Nevsky Prospect with the United Press's William Shepherd, one of the best known American journalists in Russia at the time of the revolution.⁴² Initially, Poole deliberately selected as interpreter a Bolshevik who said that nothing could stop the revolutionaries, an avowal borne out by Poole's wild experience during the armed July demonstrations,

³⁹ Lawrence Gilman, "The Book of the Month: A New York Family," *The North American Review* 205, 739 (June 1917): 946.

⁴⁰ "Columbia Awards Prizes in Letters, Art, Journalism," *New York Tribune*, 4 June 1918, B2. Some critics considered *The Harbor* better and opined that the prize represented a retrospective award for that work.

⁴¹ Poole, *The Bridge*, 267.

⁴² Most of the American "journalists" in Russia in 1917, such as Poole, John Reed, Bessie Beattie, and Donald Thompson were on temporary contracts with newspapers or journals. A few, such as Shepherd and Robert Crozier Long of the Associated Press, were permanent employees on assignment in Russia. Shepherd probably published more on Russia at the time than anyone but did not write a book.

as described in the early pages of "*The Dark People*."⁴³ During the July Days, Poole was reunited at last with Iuvenalii Tarasov, his friend and guide from 1905, who was once again to serve as his guide. Tarasov expressed much greater pessimism about Russia than he had at the time of the first revolution. He saw Russia "sliding into hell": Petrograd was chaotic, with demonstrations every weekend, and there was genuine fear that the Hermitage might be destroyed due to its proximity to the Winter Palace, the headquarters of the Provisional Government, which was under attack. Most of the middle and upper classes were fleeing the city. As before, Tarasov urged Poole to spend time in his village and in the Russian countryside.

Poole's reports from Russia were subsequently revised and assembled into two books, "*The Dark People*": *Russia's Crisis* (1918) and *The Village: Russian Impressions* (1919). "*The Dark People*" covers the first months of his stay, focusing on the view from the top and describing the urban scene. *The Village* tells of Poole's weeks-long immersion in the Russian countryside. It, rather than "*The Dark People*," has been chosen for publication in the "Americans in Revolutionary Russia" series because in my opinion it is better written and provides a view of Russia that differs from those offered by other American observers. It also seems to have been better received, by both readers and critics, for its emphasis on character studies—impoverished landowner, school teacher, priest, midwife, artist (Tarasov's father)—and descriptions of river steamers, new school house, cooperative store, peasant bank, and an assortment of peasant huts.⁴⁴

Back in Petrograd in September, Poole found the situation more confused than ever, with faction fighting faction and the wealthy fleeing. He and Bullard were convinced that American aid for Russia was crucial to winning the war, regardless of who was in power. With the help of a Red Cross volunteer from the Swift meat packing family of Chicago, Poole succeeded in obtaining a berth on a special American Red Cross car on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Tarasov saw him off, more depressed than ever about Russia's future. Poole, in no hurry to get home after the long trip across Siberia, spent a few days each in Peking and Tokyo, before boarding a ship bound for the United States. He stopped in Chicago to visit a sister and then proceeded to New

⁴³ Poole writes, "Suddenly from just ahead came two single rifle shots; and then, an instant later, the long, sharp ugly rattle of a machine-gun, and the hiss and buzz of bullets over our heads. At once there was panic everywhere; and in the next ten seconds I grew so absorbed in my own career that I had no time to look around. In the rush I was carried off my feet; I threw up my arms and was borne with the mob through an open gateway into a court.... I looked back upon the street and saw it black with people lying on their faces. Bullets were flying thick and fast, and from all up and down the Nevsky I could hear the crash of shop windows as men dove through to get indoors" (Poole, "*The Dark People*": *Russia's Crisis* [New York: Macmillan, 1918], 6–7).

⁴⁴ "Real Russians: Vivid Sketches and Interviews of Village Life," *New York Tribune*, 16 November 1918, 9. "It is one of the most enlightening books on the Russian problem that have been written since the revolution."

York, but left immediately for Washington to deliver messages from Bullard to Creel at the Committee for Public Safety. The latter recruited Poole to head the New York office of a new Foreign Press Bureau, where he remained until the agency closed soon after the armistice.⁴⁵

In the 1920s Poole returned to writing fiction, producing one novel a year for his faithful publisher, Macmillan, despite the fact that they were not as well received as his first two novels: *Blind* (1920),⁴⁶ *Beggars' Gold* (1921), *Millions* (1922), *Danger* (1923), *Avalanche* (1924), *Hunter's Moon* (1925), *With Eastern Eyes* (1926), and *Silent Storm* (1927). Russia was not forgotten—in *Avalanche* its influence can be seen in the narrator's recollection of Russian folk tales and in the appearance of characters possessing the power to cure afflictions through telepathy or hypnosis—but it had clearly receded from Poole's view.⁴⁷ Though Poole continued to produce fiction into the early 1930s, in particular works about the Depression, he became interested in depicting the real world, writing primarily at his summer home at Sugar Hill, near Franconia in the White Mountains.⁴⁸ Having lost much of his family inheritance in the stock market crash of 1929, he was now writing primarily out of necessity.

Poole's personal experience of financial calamity also revived his concern for the fate of the lower classes, on whom the Depression had inflicted the greatest suffering. Proving that the writing of his earlier settlement years was not mere muckraking for financial gain, he wrote letters to the editor of the *Times*, for example, about the plight of the "Bottom of the Bowery," the poorest of the Bowery's poor, who resorted to drinking cheap wood alcohol, "Smoke";⁴⁹ he ended his letter with a plea for donations to the Bowery YMCA and Salvation Army Hotel.⁵⁰

This phase of Poole's career is perhaps more interesting to the historian, though his writing cites few sources, relying instead on the reporter's technique of weaving interview material into stories. His first book of nonfiction since *The Village* was

⁴⁵ Poole, *The Bridge*, 321–31; "Foreign Press Bureau Is Disbanded by Creel," *New York Tribune*, 20 December 1918, 5.

⁴⁶ "The Author of The Harbor Goes Adrift in His Latest Book: *Blind* is Overly Ambitious," *New York Tribune*, 24 October 1920, F9.

⁴⁷ Ernest Poole, *The Little Dark Man and Other Russian Sketches* (New York: Macmillan, 1925); Poole, "Mother Volga (as told me by a Russian friend)," *The Independent*, 20 December 1924, 537–38.

⁴⁸ Ernest Poole, *Great Winds* (New York: Macmillan, 1933); and Poole, *One of Us* (New York: Macmillan, 1934). Critics seem to agree that the latter, while not great, was much better than the former, which should not have been published (Keefer, *Ernest Poole*, 146–51).

⁴⁹ Ernest Poole, "'Smoke' on the Bowery," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 7 February 1929, 21.

⁵⁰ Ernest Poole, "Unemployed Still Unemployed: Spring Has Not Come to the Bowery," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 25 April 1931, 13.

Nurses on Horseback (1932), which drew inspiration from his settlement experience and admiration for Lillian Wald. This time the heroine was Mary Breckinridge, a woman from a distinguished Virginia family who became a midwife devoted to serving the poor in the mountains of eastern Kentucky and who founded the Frontier Nursing Service in May 1925. By 1932 the Service had grown to thirty-two nurses with over eight thousand patients. Poole himself traveled the region on horseback, accompanied by a nurse, to gather material.⁵¹ The book was quite successful and became required reading at some nursing schools.⁵²

Poole's next major work of nonfiction was his autobiography, *The Bridge* (1940). It was also published by Macmillan and included a number of photographs from his Russian and Caucasian tours of 1905 and 1917. The work emphasized Poole's childhood in Chicago and settlement years in New York, his experience as a reporter, his unsuccessful ventures into drama, and initial success as a novelist. Despite a disappointing dearth of information on Poole's family and the many individuals who were personal and professional associates, as well as its failure to discuss some of his more notable publications, *The Bridge* does provide an account of his travels and career. It attracted an audience that shared the author's nostalgia for the lost hopes of the early twentieth century and the American dream that a peaceful, progressive world would follow the horrors of the Great War and the Depression.⁵³ And the book provided valuable vignettes of people he knew, such as Woodrow Wilson, Mark Twain (from Greenwich Village), Maxim Gorky, Big Bill Haywood, Robert Frost (a neighbor in New Hampshire), William Dean Howells, O. Henry, and Lincoln Steffens. Poole was especially disappointed by the outcome of the Russian Revolution and, perhaps influenced by his recent visit to Italy, predicted the clash between dictatorships (particularly those led by Mussolini and Hitler) and the democratic countries that opposed them.⁵⁴

Another big project undertaken by Poole, *Giants Gone: Men Who Made Chicago*, was likely motivated by the years spent listening to his father's stories of growing up in Chicago.⁵⁵ Poole traveled to Chicago to look up old friends and conduct interviews, though a number of sources were undocumented. As with the omissions that marred *The Bridge*, many of the founders of modern Chicago were left out or barely mentioned

⁵¹ Keefer, *Ernest Poole*, 144–47.

⁵² Ernest Poole, *Nurses on Horseback* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).

⁵³ Rose Feld, "Ernest Poole Reviews Six Decades of Personal History," *New York Times*, 25 August 1940, 74. See also Ralph Thompson, "Books of the Times," *New York Times*, 14 August 1940, 23.

⁵⁴ Keefer, *Ernest Poole*, 158–59.

⁵⁵ Ernest Poole, *Giants Gone: Men Who Made Chicago* (New York: Whittlesey House [McGraw-Hill], 1943).

and quite a bit of the corruption that was so characteristic of old Chicago was whitewashed. Still, the *New York Times* gave it a full-page review.⁵⁶

Interestingly, while living in New York during the winter of 1942–43, Poole returned to the theme of *The Harbor* by visiting a New York waterfront bustling with troops and munitions bound for Europe, including a troop ship preparing to set sail. Naturally, he could not disclose details about its destination, but photographs accompanying his feature article graphically revealed the crowded quarters on board.⁵⁷

Poole's final works reflected his love for New Hampshire, where he spent most of his later years. The first, *The Great White Hills of New Hampshire* is simply a tribute to the history and beauty of the state.⁵⁸ The second, *The Nancy Flyer: A Stagecoach Epic*, published in the last year of his life, is a fictional account of a real stagecoach of the Concord Coach line that Poole discovered in a New Hampshire barn. The book was, in fact, commissioned by his son William, who worked for a publisher (Thomas Y. Crowell).⁵⁹ This coach may well have reminded Poole of an episode described in "*The Dark People*," when Tarasov showed Poole the ruins of an eighteenth-century French coach that had belonged to his grandmother and told the story that went with it.

After suffering two strokes, the second debilitating, Ernest Poole died in New York on January 10, 1950, just short of his seventieth birthday. An obituary stressed his role as a writer whose work portrayed the "other half" of New York City's population and as a reporter who rendered scenes and events subtly, yet graphically. A follow-up noted that he would be best remembered for *The Harbor* and *The Bridge*, concluding, "And until all his generation is gone he will be remembered as a warm and unselfish human being."⁶⁰ Poole's widow lived nearly another twenty years in the same New York apartment and at Sugar Hill, near Franconia in New Hampshire. She was survived by two sons, a daughter, and seven grandchildren.⁶¹



Poole describes the Russian countryside of 1917 as a land transitioning from communal farming to individual ownership, from backwardness to modernity, portrayed in vivid descriptions of local characters: a new, educated priest; an eager and ambitious

⁵⁶ Frank S. Adams, "Chicago's Builders," *New York Times*, May 7, 1943, BR9.

⁵⁷ Poole, "The Port of a Thousand Secrets," *New York Times*, January 31, 1943, SM19, 33.

⁵⁸ *The Great White Hills of New Hampshire* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1946).

⁵⁹ *The Nancy Flyer: A Stagecoach Epic* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1949).

⁶⁰ "The Days of Ernest Poole," *New York Times*, January 13, 1950, 22. See also "Ernest Poole, 69, Novelest, is Dead," *ibid.*, January 11, 1950, 20.

⁶¹ "Mrs. Poole, 87, Dies: Widow of Novelist," *Chicago Tribune*, May 11, 1968, A14.

schoolteacher; a “prince” fading away in a derelict mansion; an enterprising farmer; and, finally, a young Finnish girl aspiring to be a doctor. This optimistic, progressive scene is contrasted with the revolutionary turmoil of the city, which is resented by the peasants and villagers, who provide labor, food, and soldiers but receive nothing in return.

The reader is left with a big question: what happened to all of that? Poole apparently did not follow up and had no further contact with this “real” Russia after 1917. His central character, hero, and "coauthor", Tarasov, seems to have disappeared, apparently consumed by the revolution. Was this the fate of this Russia?