

The following is compiled from several documents.

Coffee & Doughnuts

Questions continue to surface periodically about the fact that the Red Cross—whose service to the armed forces have always been free—sold some doughnuts and coffee during World War II. This was done at the request of the US government while in Britain. Problems were arising because the British Red Cross needed to charge its own troops for refreshments in order to survive financially. The same situation began to occur in 1942 to other British agencies that were providing refreshments. But the American Red Cross continued to provide the refreshments for free. United States Secretary of War Henry Stinson applauded the American Red Cross' policy, but noted that the American troops were the best paid among the Allies and thus could afford to pay. Under Stinson's order the American Red Cross began to ask for a nominal charge for coffee and doughnuts from those troops not on the front lines. Front line troops were never asked to pay for Red Cross refreshments. Please note that the American Red Cross personnel are sent overseas at the request of the US military.

The Red Cross charged for food, lodging, barber and valet services in stationary installations but did not charge in mobile facilities. (clubmobiles, etc.)

The Red Cross did NOT sell cigarettes. The sale of cigarettes is a violation of Red Cross policy and the Bureau of Internal Revenue regulations. There were instances, however, in which servicemen paid for tax-exempt cigarettes carrying the name of the Red Cross. Such a situation may have come about through confusion of Red Cross supplies with army post exchange supplies.

If you would like copies of the various articles I have, including a copy of the Stinson letter to the ARC, please contact me.