



**A CASE STUDY OF GENOCIDE
IN THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE OF 1921-1923**

FAMINE AS A WEAPON

WASYL VERYHA

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**With a Foreword by
Valerian Revutsky**

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Front cover photo: Starving workers in the city of Mykolaiv in 1921.

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Dedication

To my children Andrew, Luba, Peter and Olena

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Prof. V. Revutsky	I
Preface	V
Acknowledgements	IX
Introduction.....	1
War Communism in Action.....	15
Volga Valley Crisis and Society.....	35
The All-Russian Relief Committee.....	61
Soviet Government's Countermeasures	73
The American Relief Administration	85
The Nansen Mission.....	95
The Situation in Ukraine.....	119
Crimea.....	179
Confiscation of Church Treasures	187
The ARA Visits Ukraine	197
Medical Assistance.....	245
A False 1923 Forecast.....	257
Famine and Ukrainians Abroad.....	265
The People, Soviet Authorities and the ARA	271
The Human Losses of the Famine	283
What Does Soviet History Say	287
Conclusion	293
Documents	299
Glossary	333
Bibliography	337
Index.....	349

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: The difference in crops harvested in 1916 and in 1921.	134
Table 2: A comparison of machinery production in Ukraine from 1911-1913 and 1922.	144
Table 3: Daily expenses incurred per patient (in kopeks) based on information from the Ukrainian Health Department.	248
Table 4: The number of patients who received treatments and died in Southern Ukraine.	251
Table 5: The number of famine sufferers in Ukraine receiving food from the International Committee of the Russian Relief Funds as of August 15, 1922.	280
Table 6: Summary of the number of wagons of foodstuff sent from the Ukrainian SSR to the starving provinces of Ukraine, Volga Valley and Crimea from the beginning of relief activity to November 1, 1922.	327
Table 7: The number of starving people in 1922 in the south-eastern Ukrainian provinces.	331
Figure 1: Population ethnicity composition Ukraine 1922.	329
Figure 2: Famine intensity in Ukraine April 1922.	330

List of Photos

1. Starving workers in the city of Mykolaiv in 1921. Front Cover photo
2. A group of starving villagers in the province of Mykolaiv in 1921.
3. Swollen from hunger, a mother holds her child in the village of Poltavsk, county of Mariupol' in the province of Donetsk 1921-1922.
4. Workers at a railway steam engine factory in Kharkiv stand beside the silver bell taken down from a Kharkiv Cathedral, like so many other church treasures sold to collect funds for the starving. May 21, 1922.
5. Demonstrators collecting funds for the starving children in the city of Mohylovi-Podilskomu in the province of Podilski in 1922.
6. Starving children from the city of Nikopol' in the province of Katerynoslav circa 1921-23.

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Tsentralnoyi derzhavney kinofotofonoarchiv Ukrainy im. H.S. Pshynychnoho

Foreword by Prof. V Revutsky

In the Kyivan weekly *Ukrains'ke slovo* (Ukrainian Word), November 2004 (No. 42), appeared an interesting article entitled *Little known famine in Ukraine*. This piece of writing was truly atypical because it was one of the first references to the national tragedy of 1921-1923 in the south-eastern provinces of Ukraine. However, until this publication, no historian had dedicated the time or energy to determine the extent and the reasons for this calamity in a country known as the bread basket of Europe, a land of rich and fertile soil. The basic reasons for the famine can be directly attributed to the faulty economic politics introduced by Lenin for the Soviet Union, where Ukraine comprised one of the 16 republics, along with the drought conditions during those years.

Although there was no historian to document the famine of 1921-1923, beginning in 1972, exactly 50 years after the tragedy, Dr. Wasył Veryha, a historian and librarian of the University of Toronto, began his mission to delve into the many unanswered questions. After a quarter century of research, Dr. Veryha has produced what seems to be a pioneer work. Indeed, this famine is virtually unknown compared to the holodomor of 1932-1933, especially among the two younger generations of the Ukrainian population.

The main reason for the last Ukrainian famine of 1945-47 was due to the bloody Second World War. The famine of 1921-1922 can be attributed not only to the political activity of the First World War, but even more so to the official economic policy of the Soviet government, which squeezed out many material resources through its well-known tax-in-kind on the newly established Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Soviet government demanded as much food as possible to aid the Volga Valley, Moscow and Petrograd through the War Communism Act and the tax-in-kind even from the five south-eastern provinces of Ukraine severely affected by the terrible drought.

The author presents not only the essence of this famine, but he also describes the extensive attempts of foreign relief organizations such as the Nansen Mission, the American Relief Association (ARA), the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Papal Mission as well as other organizations from Western Europe, which trusted the newly established Soviet system. Each of the relief organizations had their own assigned territories in Ukraine. The most favoured one was the Nansen Mission which permitted Soviet personnel to be responsible for distribution of relief. The least favoured but most helpful was the ARA. The Soviet authorities did not cooperate with the ARA distribution of relief because they considered the ARA to represent a capitalist bourgeois state and belittled their contribution to Ukraine. In the summer of 1923, when the prospect for a better harvest was visible, the Soviet authorities requested that the ARA stop their relief work. Personally, I fondly remember the assistance from the ARA, when as a school child living in rural Ukraine, I signed my name as a recipient for a relief package.

The author also broaches the topic of the confiscation of Church treasures. In 1922, the Soviet Government issued a decree to confiscate Church treasures for the purposes of selling and using the proceeds to purchase food for the starving victims. Unfortunately, the money collected was channelled to the massive Soviet propaganda campaign and not to any relief effort.

A noticeable feature of Dr. Veryha's book is the extensive list of references as resources for this work. Resource material was obtained from North American libraries such as the New York Public Library, University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and original documents in the Herbert Hoover Institution of Archives in Stanford, California. French, German and British sources are also referenced.

As a final answer to the question of the number of victims attributed to this famine, the author-historian through consultation of numerous sources determines the probable number of victims in Ukraine to be from 2 to 2.5 million persons.

As a young boy in the early 1920's, I can testify that in the summer of 1923 in my village of Irzhavets, in the province of Poltava (now in the province of Chernihiv), a special brigade of food searchers was sent from Russia to Ukraine to

collect surplus food. The brigade went from one household to another confiscating food as well as grain assigned for the spring sowing leaving the village without seed for future crops. The collected food was sent to the North by orders of Moscow's Central Commissariat of Supplies to fulfill the assigned tax-in-kind contingent.

During my stay in the village, living on the opposite side of the local cemetery, I witnessed five or six funerals daily for famine victims. The funerals were performed without the benefit of a priest. Later, I was told that the number of villagers decreased in that year by one quarter.

I would like to emphasize that the main reason for this famine was politically engineered and caused by the Soviet government - the well-fed exploiters of the starving victims. The famine of 1921-1923 was performed as a cruel ethnocide in Ukraine. For centuries the Russian imperial government was absolutist. In 1917, the Russian government changed to a popular government although their methods remained unchanged. The Communist party replaced the tsar with all the historical treats of absolutism.

Dr. Veryha's work is a documentary which has all the characteristics to become a manual about the famine in Ukraine of 1921-1923.

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Preface
Famine As A Weapon
Dr. Wasyl Veryha B.A., B.L.S., M.A., Ph.D.

It was sometime in 1972 that I, as the editor of the Ukrainian bi-monthly *Veterans' News*, decided that it would be proper to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1921-1923 famine in Ukraine. As I knew little about the famine, I began my research. The first information I obtained about this famine was from Harold H. Fisher's *Famine in Soviet Russia 1919-1923* (Freeport, N.Y., 1927, reprinted in 1971). The author was director of the ARA relief work in Ukraine, and had first-hand information about this tragedy. Dr. Ewald Ammende, author of *Human life in Russia* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1936) also provided me with valuable information. My inquiries among the survivors did not provide satisfactory results. Everyone discussed the great famine in 1932-1933, and remembered little of the other famine a decade earlier. The main reason for this was that these older timers' provenance was not from southern Ukraine and this indicated to me, that in a series of cataclysms such as famines, terrors and all kinds of sufferings people tend to forget and usually remember the most recent. In addition, there was little mention of this earlier famine in Ukrainian historical literature.

Through my research, I determined that the famine in southern Ukraine was not limited to one season, 1921-1922, as in the Volga Valley, but continued into 1923. As a result, I wrote a 16-page article that was published in the Ukrainian bi-monthly *Veterans' News*, No. 5-6 for 1972. As the saying goes, appetite comes with eating. Once started, I continued to search for additional information on the Ukrainian famine of 1921-1923.

Prof. Fisher has noted the discriminatory approach to the famine in the Volga Valley and in Ukraine, Don Cossacks and the Kuban provinces. In his recollections, he could not understand those Ukrainian “povstanci” whom the Russians called bandits and who had once organized a raid on the ARA storage. A few days later, having found out that it was prepared for the starving Ukrainian people, they returned everything and apologized for their mistake. In his opinion, this was not a typical bandit’s behaviour, so I began to consider the political aspect of this famine that had been neglected by the ARA employees.

Since I was planning my sabbatical, I thought it would be more practical to write my work in English, which would enable me to get a grant from the Canadian Social Sciences Council. In accordance with the grant application requirements, I submitted two names of Ukrainian professors for evaluation of my proposal of study with a request to support my grant application. One of the references supported my application but the other, with a rather better-known name, did not believe I could cope with this daunting task. I resolved to continue my research with no financial assistance forthcoming.

I went to the Hoover Institution Archives in Stanford, California in July 1979 where I reviewed the ARA Archives and found a wealth of information on my topic. All of it was original documentation, but most was never used as who would be interested in the famine in Ukraine?

As a result of this research, I prepared a paper, *Famine in Ukraine in 1921-1923 and the Soviet Government’s Countermeasures* and presented it at a summer seminar at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champlain. After the presentation, Professor S. Horak asked me for a copy of my paper for publication in *Nationalities Papers*, a periodical under his editorship. I gladly complied with his request, but when at least two issues were published without my contribution, I contacted the late professor. To my astonishment, he said the copy was lost at the correctors and he requested another copy. This time, Professor Horak arranged for the document to be proof read elsewhere and it was eventually published in

the *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 12, No. 2, p. 265-285.

In the meantime, I collected a bibliography on the subject of the famine, but also on other topics of that period which I consider not to be elaborated upon in Ukrainian historiography, such as the *Galician Soviet Socialist Republic of 1921*, *The November Raid of Gen. Tiutiunnyk into Soviet Ukraine in 1921*, and also on the *Confiscation of Church Treasures in Ukraine in 1922*. All this was a side product of the Ukrainian famine and published in the Ukrainian language. Thus, I collected quite an extensive bibliography and hundreds of notes from various sources preparing myself to concentrate exclusively on the famine.

In the summer of 1986, I was occupied with some domestic and organizational problems and forgot to renew my application for the study carrel in the University of Toronto Library, where I was employed. When in the second half of October of 1986, I finally went to check my cabine, all of my bibliography and notes on library cards were gone. Usually, if somebody neglects to renew an application for a carrel, the procedure is to remove the contents from the cabine to the lost and found office and keep it there for a while. In my case, this practice, for some unknown reason, was not applied and, in spite of the fact that everybody in the library stacks knew me (or perhaps because of it?), my research had vanished. My inquiries to the Library Administration as well as a written complaint to the University Ombudsman ended in nought. The Ombudsman, instead of providing a written explanation, preferred to deliver it orally. It was quite a loss and it slowed me down considerably, but despite this unpleasant incident, I did not give up.

I hope this book serves to bring to light the little-known but nonetheless, significant Ukrainian famine of 1921-1923.

Wasył Veryha

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I am much obliged to the University of Toronto Library personnel, especially in the inter-library loans section for their co-operation and assistance. Also, I am appreciative to the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress in Washington, especially Mr. Wasyl Nadraga who was most willing to help. Professor Bohdan Budurowycz of the University of Toronto Slavic Department always served me with good advice for which I am grateful. No less thanks I owe to Dr. D. Shtohryn and the University of Illinois Library in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. As mentioned earlier, I could not have written this book without the archives of original documents from the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace in Stanford, California. I feel regret that I was not able to use the ARA photographs illustrating its relief activity in Ukraine.

My sincere thanks also go to a number of people especially my former co-workers and colleagues: Mrs. Olga Apic, Vira Denderys, Svitlana Hrybinsky, Kalyna Kandyba-Lazor and Ivanna Maxymiw from the Slavic Section at the University of Toronto Library, and to my wife Oksana and many others for their advice and support. I am particularly grateful to my children Andrew, Luba and Olena for their editing of this work in preparation for publication.

Wasyl Veryha

Introduction

The February Revolution of 1917 brought about the downfall of the autocratic tsarist regime in Russia. This preceded the proclamation of a new democratic system throughout the territories of the Russian empire. While Finland and Poland declared their separation from Russia, all other non-Russian inhabited parts of the empire remained in the form of a democratic republican federation of autonomous entities - Ukraine, the Baltic and Caucasian states.

In fact, it was the Ukrainian Central Rada, the revolutionary parliament of Ukraine, which sponsored a special conference in Kyiv on September 19-28, 1917 where representatives from various nationalities of the former Russian empire discussed the possibility and form of such a multinational federation. Unfortunately, the Russian Provisional Government was against any concessions to the former subject nationalities. The decision was to be left to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly that was to be convened at some later date.

In the meantime, the revolutionary movement advanced throughout the vast Russian empire and extended to bordering lands such as Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic and Caucasian areas. The reluctance of the Russian Provisional Government in Petrograd to recognize this fact and grant some concessions antagonized the subject nationalities and lent support to the advocates of complete separation from Russia.

Perhaps the most vociferous criticism of the Provisional Government and its nationalities policy was voiced by the radical faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, otherwise known as the "bol'sheviki", which was headed by Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. All Bolshevik propaganda was aimed at increasing its own popularity and bolstering its support among the peasantry. Moreover, Lenin

¹During the 1903 2nd Party Congress held in London the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party split into two factions, the "bol'sheviki" or majority which followed Lenin and the "mensheviki" or minority which was against Lenin's radical party program.

consistently proclaimed that the Bolsheviks recognized the right of self-determination for each and every subject nation of the former tsarist empire.

Nevertheless, the Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917 proved to be unpopular among the peoples of the subject nations and the process of national independence in all borderlands was accelerated. On November 15, 1917 the Estonian People's Assembly abrogated itself sovereign powers and on December 6 the Finns followed this example. In the south, the Ukrainian Central Rada, representing most segments of Ukrainian society, refused to recognize the Soviet Government in Petrograd and proclaimed its Third Universal on November 19, 1917 whereby the Ukrainian National Republic was established in federation with a democratic Russian republic. Given the fact that Russia under Bolshevik rule could hardly be described as democratic, the clause regarding federation was a moot point. This fact did not prevent Lenin from issuing a "Manifesto to the Ukrainian People with an ultimatum to the Ukrainian Rada" in which he stated:

"...the Council of People's Commissars recognize the People's Ukrainian Republic and its right to secede from Russia or enter into a treaty with the Russian Republic on federal or similar relations between them.

We, the Council of the People's Commissars, recognize at once, unconditionally and without reservations, everything that pertains to the Ukrainian people's national rights and national independence."²

At the same time, Lenin accused the Rada of disorganizing the front against the Central Powers, a tactic that the Bolsheviks had already adopted and demanded a common front against General Kaledin and his Don Cossacks, returning home from the western front through Ukraine.

When the date for the election of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly came on November 25, 1917, the Bolsheviks had already spent a full month in power and did their utmost to win a majority of deputies. In spite of their political jockeying

²V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), vol. 26, p. 361 - shortened to *Collected Works*.

They only managed to obtain 175 representatives out of a total 707 members, which amounted to some 25% of the total votes cast.³ This was an obvious indication of Bolshevik unpopularity among the Russian people. In the borderlands, Bolshevik results were even more meagre as they were able to obtain barely 10% of the votes cast.

Notwithstanding such minimal support from society at large, the Bolsheviks decided to discard all pretence of democratic principle and to retain power in Russia by force. They did not permit the All-Russian Constituent Assembly to convene as planned on January 18, 1918. When the Assembly declined to recognize the Bolshevik government as the *de facto regime*, as it came to power through violence, and wanted "to form a government in accordance with the wishes of the electorate,"⁴ the Bolsheviks decreed the Constituent Assembly dissolved. The Bolsheviks used force to quell the All-Russian Constituent Assembly and established a precedent that remained until 1989.

The Bolsheviks behaved in a similar manner in Ukraine. The All-Ukrainian Congress of Workers, convened by the Bolsheviks in Kyiv on December 24-25, 1917, had the objective of taking power in Ukraine. However, only one hundred and thirty, or 6.5%, of the approximately 2,000 delegates from all provinces of the country belonged to the Bolshevik faction⁵. As it was obvious that the opportunity to topple the popular Ukrainian Central Rada was not present, the seventy s withdrew from this assembly and went to Kharkiv where a provincial Donbass-Kryvyj Rih conference had been in progress. Having heard of the unfavourable turn of events in Kyiv, this local conference disregarded its strictly regional composition and proclaimed itself to be the first All-Ukrainian Congress of Workers' Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies.

At this point, a rival Soviet Ukrainian government was established in Kharkiv. As the Central Rada government in Kyiv called itself the General Secretariat, the Bolshevik Kharkiv government named itself the People's Secretariat.

Anatole G. Mazour, *Russian Past and Present*. (New York : Van Nostrand, 1951), p. 595.

³Ibid.

⁵'Istoriia' Ukrain's'koi RSR. (Kyiv, 1967), vol. 1, p. 58

In their propaganda, the Bolsheviks sought to misinform the population by stating that the General Secretariat consisted of aristocrats, while the Soviet People's Secretariat was composed of working people.

In essence, this meant there were two Ukrainian governments. The Ukrainian National General Secretariat, backed by the Central Rada, was based in Kyiv with representation from all parties and national minorities of Ukraine. Its rival, the People's Secretariat backed by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (i.e. the Bolsheviks) consisted largely of non-Ukrainian workers of the industrial Donbass-Kryvyi Rih area. This Soviet "Ukrainian" government turned to the Soviet Russians in Petrograd for both recognition and military support in the upcoming struggle with the Ukrainian Central Rada. Both were promptly granted and Russian military aggression along the northern frontier began on December 30, 1917. As the war between the Ukrainian Republic and the Soviet Russians developed, the Bolsheviks attempted an abortive coup in Kyiv, which was suppressed by Ukrainian troops loyal to the Central Rada.

Socialist parties, who firmly believed in a socialist international brotherhood and considered every army a tool of capitalist oppression, dominated the Ukrainian Central Rada. This anti-militarist sentiment resulted in strong feelings against the formation of a Ukrainian Army with the hope that socialist Russia would not fight socialist Ukraine. Ukrainian military units, formed against the wishes of the Central Rada, were demobilized. During the autumn of 1917 the General Secretariat demobilized the whole First Ukrainian Corps commanded by General Pavlo Skoropadsky that had already once saved the Central Rada from the Bolshevik onslaught in August 1917. The end result of this anti-militarist bias of the Ukrainian governing parties was easy penetration of the border by Russian "socialist" military units. At the same time, these units had backing within Ukraine from the Red Guards, "the defenders of the proletarian revolution", organized by Bolsheviks in Ukrainian industrial centres without any hindrance on the part of the Central Rada.

While the above events were in progress, Lenin initiated discussions with the Central Powers in Brest Litovsk with the aim of securing his grip on power by

ending an unpopular war. On December 3, the Soviet delegation, headed by Leonid Brezhnev, expressed a desire for peace "without annexations and without indemnities" and a guarantee of national self-determination. By virtue of the fact that the Ukrainian representative of the Bolshevik Kharkiv government joined the Russian delegation, it sought not only to speak on behalf of the Soviet Russian Federative Socialist Republic but also on behalf of all the land and people formerly within the Russian empire except Poland and Finland. The bitter irony was that this ran counter to the principle of national self-determination that the Soviet delegation wanted the Central Powers to respect.

In order to prevent the Soviet Russian delegation from speaking on behalf of the Ukrainian National Republic, the Ukrainian Central Rada sent its own emissaries to Brest Litovsk. Having failed to secure any promise of assistance from the Entente powers in any forthcoming struggle with the Russian Bolsheviks, a separate treaty was signed with the Central Powers on February 9, 1918. However, in view of a Russian military offensive, the Ukrainian Central Rada was forced to abandon Kyiv a few days before the treaty was signed.

The Treaty of Brest Litovsk secured two tangible items for the Ukrainian National Republic: international recognition by the Central Powers and military assistance from both Germany and Austria against the invading Russian forces. The treaty was particularly significant as a similar attempt with the Western allies in 1917 had failed. Shortly afterward, German military forces combined with a number of Ukrainian troops pushed the Bolshevik army out of Ukraine and the Central Rada was able to return to Kyiv.

The Central Powers, most notably Germany and Austria, signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk in expectation of securing Ukrainian foodstuffs for their hungry population. For this reason the Treaty was nicknamed the "bread peace". Both the presence of German troops in Ukraine and the obligation of the Ukrainian government to supply Germany and Austria with one million tonnes of surplus

foodstuff alarmed the Russian Soviets.⁶

At the time, Russian industrial centres were also suffering from a major lack of foodstuffs that the Bolsheviks had hoped to obtain from Ukraine. This action not only would have alleviated widespread hunger, but would have consolidated the workers' support of the Bolsheviks.

Initially, the Soviet Russian government refused to sign a peace treaty dictated by Germany which entailed recognizing the independence of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine. However, the movement of German military forces into the territory of the Soviet Russian Republic forced the hand of the Soviet of People's Commissars. The treaty, signed on March 3, 1918, stipulated much harsher conditions than those proposed two weeks earlier by the Central Powers as a provision for the separation of some Caucasian territory was incorporated into the terms.

While the Treaty of Brest Litovsk did not serve the interest of Ukraine or Russia, it did provide time for the Soviets to consolidate their power. At the same time, it also posed problems of great magnitude as Russia lost some 26% of her total area, over sixty million inhabitants and 35% of agricultural production. The difficulties seemed even more insurmountable with respect to industrial output; 27% of its cultivated area, 26% of its railroads, 33% of the textile industry, 54% of industrial enterprises which produced 80% of the sugar, 73% of the iron and 75% of the coal were now lost. All of the aforementioned output was to have come from Ukraine.⁷

The lack of food in Russian industrial centres, and the inability of the government to supply it in sufficient quantities resulted in diminished productivity as workers left factories for the country in search of provisions for their families. This hurt Soviet industry universally as even those factories capable of producing goods stood idle for lack of manpower. Others lacked both raw materials and manpower.

⁶ *Die deutsche okkupation der Ukraine, Geheim-Dokumente* -- (Strassbourg: Editions Prométhéem 1937), p. 25-27

⁷ Georg von Rauch. *A History of Soviet Russia*, translated by Peter and Annette Jacobson - Rev. ed. New York : F. A. Praeger, 1957, p. 76.

To prevent workers from abandoning their factory posts, a workers' militarization drive was implemented. In simple terms, it meant that a worker in an industrial plant was assigned the same importance as a soldier on the front lines with equally severe penalties for desertion.

The need to provide industrial centres, the army and government employees in Russia with food and other daily necessities, led Lenin to introduce the so-called War Communism Policy. A key feature involved the forceful requisition of "surplus food" from the peasantry with the abolition of a free market for agricultural produce.

The food producers were hard hit as they were only allowed to sell their food products to the state at low government-fixed prices. Given the overall shortage of industrial goods and foodstuffs, the peasantry was not interested in selling its produce for virtually worthless paper money. Nevertheless, in February 1918, a state grain monopoly was introduced and was soon followed by similar action on all other commodities.

In May 1918, the Soviet government issued a grain control decree which made for compulsory delivery of all surpluses over and above subsistence and seed; any concealment could lead to seizure without payment".⁸ Responsibility for grain collection was vested in local organs of the Ministry of Supply, then called the Commissariat of Supply of *Narodnyi komissariat prodovolstviia*, or, in abbreviated form, *Narkomprod* in Russian. To ensure efficient performance, not only local gangs of workers but also members of the feared Extraordinary Commission provided assistance. This body was the political police known in Russia as *Chrezvychainaia komissia* or *Cheka* in abbreviated form. In June 1918 another institution was formed, the *komitet bednoty* or a "committee of poor peasants" which was known also as *kombidy*. These kombidy were to expropriate grain from the wealthy peasants, known in Russia as *kulaks*, who were viewed as the "exploiting class and therefore a class enemy". Any resistance by the peasantry was dealt with in the cruellest manner imaginable, including summary executions without trial. However, the kombidy

⁸ Roger Munting. "The economic development of the USSR" -- (London : Croom Helm, c. 1982), p. 44

lasted for only a short period in Russia, being abolished in November 1918 as a direct result of their extreme unpopularity.

Although War Communism had been imposed with the aim of introducing a steady flow of foodstuffs to both urban centres and the government, its results actually augmented the misery of the Russian population. The forceful requisition of farmers' produce provoked a massive resistance by the peasantry. As the remuneration for produce was insufficient, the peasantry tended to decrease the acreage of tilled field in order to meet only its own immediate needs. This was also necessitated by pressing shortages of agricultural machinery and domesticated beasts of burden, notably horses and oxen, which were indispensable for efficient farming. By virtue of a decree on August 8, 1918, the Supreme Economic Council and the commissariat of Agriculture were empowered with regulation and organization of all production and the management of every enterprise within the Republic. The distribution of all commodities was entrusted exclusively to the Commissariat for Food Procurement that had been established on May 27, 1918.

The results from these initiatives were meagre. While the peasants were obligated to provide the state apparatus with foodstuffs, they did not receive anything in return that would serve to satisfy their needs and mitigate those privations that were a fact of everyday life. In the autumn of 1919 these privations were recounted by peasants to President Kalinin as he travelled through the Tambov guberniia (province). According to his reports, peasants stated that:

“the village had been without nails for a whole year, there were no implements and no kerosene; salt was so scarce that one pound brought in barter eight pounds of grain.”⁹

In addition there were many other shortages that impeded efficient food production for both the peasantry and the state.

At the same time, in Ukraine, the Central Rada was unable to live up to the

⁹M. Kalinin, "Za eti gody", p. 54-72, quoted by O.H. Radkey in *The Unknown Civil War in Russia*. Stanford CA: Hoover Institution Press, c. 1976, p. 20.

Ukraine pledged in the peace treaty and honour its obligations towards Austria and Germany. Having cleared the Bolsheviks out of Ukraine, the Germans and Austrians considered their part of the treaty fulfilled. According to the agreement between the Central Rada and both Austria and Germany, Ukraine was to deliver one million tonnes of grain by July 1, 1918, with an assigned quota for every month beginning in April of that year. The Central Rada, primarily due to its inability to organize an efficient local administration capable of such an undertaking, had not honoured this agreement.

During this period Ukraine still had extensive food surpluses. Goodwill on the part of the Ukrainian government to meet its obligation toward Germany and Austria could have avoided any significant harm to the Ukrainian economy. This was especially relevant, as Germany was now obliged to sell agricultural implements and machinery. As time progressed friction between the German military command in Ukraine and the Ukrainian authorities developed and multiplied. Subsequently, any agreement by the Ukrainian authorities resulted in the Germans stepping forward and imposing their own military law and power. In short, they behaved not as an ally but as an occupational force with a total disregard for the disorganized Ukrainian authorities.

In the interim, Russian Bolshevik propaganda tried to maximize any possible gains from German-Ukrainian friction, especially in the countryside. The Central Rada was labelled, in propaganda messages, as a bourgeois institution that had sold out Ukraine to the German capitalists. The slogan *factories for the workers and land for the peasants* had great appeal to both Ukrainian peasantry and workers. Unfortunately for the Central Rada, Ukrainian socialist parties, most notably the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries, effectively supported Bolshevik propaganda.

Given the inability of the Central Rada and its General Secretariat to maintain order in the countryside and organize the agreed upon delivery of foodstuffs, the Germans decided to act unilaterally. On April 25, 1918 Field Marshall Eichhorn, Commander of German Forces in Ukraine, issued an order making Ukrainians subject to German military courts for offences committed against "German interests". Any

military activity by Ukrainians was thwarted by the disarming of the two Ukrainian army divisions, known as the "Blue Coats" and the "Grey Coats", organized by prior agreement with the Central Rada. These divisions consisted of Ukrainians conscripted in the Russian army who had been rescued in German prisoner-of-war camps.¹⁰

The Ukrainian Central Rada had fallen out of favour not only with the Germans but also with the Ukrainian society at large, especially as the chaos and disorder was caused by both the General Secretariat and the German occupational military government. Among the wealthier peasants and landholding nobility, the Central Rada was disliked for its socialist beliefs and its radical legislation such as the abolition of laws protecting private property. Conversely the poorer peasantry was disenchanted by the lack of tangible land reform which was so vociferously demanded by both the socialists and the Bolsheviks. The industrial working class, consisting primarily of Russians and russified Ukrainians, was never really influenced by the Central Rada as its primary allegiance was to the Russian "Mensheviks" and also, to some extent, the "Bolsheviks".

Matters came to a head on April 28, 1918. The Central Rada was in session deliberating upon the existing situation in the country and the constitution of the Ukrainian National Republic. When strong criticism of German behaviour was voiced, a detachment of German soldiers interrupted the session, arrested two ministers and searched others. This notwithstanding, the following day the Central Rada approved the constitution of the Ukrainian National Republic and elected M. Hrushevskyi as its first president. This, however, was to be the Central Rada's last day in existence.

Concurrently, another Congress was being held in Kyiv by landowners, among whom the Central Rada was anathema due to its radical slogans and legislation. Dissatisfaction with the Central Rada's inability to establish strong local governments with law and order in the countryside and the unenviable deterioration

¹⁰Ents'klopediia ukrainoznavstva; slovnykova chastyna 8, Volodymyr Kbuyovych, ed.(Munich, 1955)p. 820, shortened to Entsyklopediia ukrainoznavstva.

the state of affairs was a subject of lively debate. On the same day Hrushevskiy was elected president of the Ukrainian National Republic, the landowners' Congress proclaimed General Pavlo Skoropadsky, the Hetman of Ukraine, to be the new head of the Ukrainian state.

The Ukrainian monarchy was born and with German backing these conservative forces staged a *coup d'état* with hardly a shot fired in defence of the Central Rada. The change in government restored some semblance of law and order. Both the Germans and Austrians saw this as a promising development that would speed up organized delivery of agricultural commodities to their homelands. In an effort to improve the situation in the countryside, the new Ukrainian government allowed some formerly dispossessed landowners, even some of non-Ukrainian nationality, to reclaim their estates. This move created another source of friction in Ukrainian-German relations.

Greed among the landowners antagonized the peasantry further, especially in their attempt to repossess lands that had already been distributed to the villagers by the prior government. Efforts at land repossession were aided and abetted by local army detachment commanders who sent punitive expeditions into villages where often opposition was encountered. Such actions by the Germans and Austrians proved erroneous as they led to a further deterioration in the relationship with Ukrainians.

These punitive expeditions, frequently organized on a local level, contrary to the wishes of the central Ukrainian government, alienated the peasantry not only against the Germans and Austrians but the Hetman as well. This unfortunate situation continued to deteriorate even further through adroit manipulation of Ukrainian socialist propaganda by the Bolsheviks and their Ukrainian supporters.

The Russian Bolsheviks were fully cognizant of the fact that their existence in Ukraine depended heavily upon the Russian working class which was facing the threat of starvation. The only hope of keeping workers aligned with the Bolsheviks was to supply enough food for their needs. This, in turn, required access to Ukrainian agricultural commodities. If Ukrainian bread was to be taken away to Austria and

Germany, the spectre of mass starvation would undermine the shaky foundation of the Bolshevik government in Russia. The ruthless behaviour of Germans and Austrians with the Ukrainian peasantry was playing directly into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

The anti-Hetman movement in Ukraine soon became widespread and met with support not only from Bolsheviks but also Ukrainian socialist and republican leaders. The latter saw it as a common cause to defy the capitalist and "bourgeois" government of the Hetman. An anti-Hetman uprising followed on November 14, 1918; three days after Germany capitulated on the Western front. The Directory, a newly formed supreme ruling body, consisting of five members and headed by the well-known Ukrainian socialist writer and former premier in the Central Rada government, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, was established. Vynnychenko was able to secure some Bolshevik assistance from their underground in Ukraine and after a month of fighting the Hetman abdicated. As the Directory entered Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, the forces loyal to the Hetman recognized their defeat and the Hetman himself fled the country with the retreating German army. Although the Directory had triumphed over the conservative forces, and reinstated the Ukrainian National Republic, its victory was Pyrrhic in nature.

When it became evident that the Hetman had no support from the peasantry and the Germans would not stand in the way of Ukrainian republican forces gaining the upper hand, Lenin decided to act. He ordered his followers to form a Ukrainian "Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government" with the mandate to commence "liberation" of Ukraine from the "bourgeois nationalist" usurpers. History seemed to be repeating itself as the above government was formed on November 28, 1918, in the Russian city of Kursk, with the issuance of a Manifesto, declaring that the Hetman regime was overthrown and the Soviets reinstated. Lenin promptly extended recognition to this "Ukrainian" government, consisting of nine members - seven Russians and two Ukrainians, headed by a Russian, Georgi Piatakov. The request of this "Ukrainian" government for military assistance to overthrow the Directory marked the beginning of the second invasion of Ukraine at the end of 1918.

Nevertheless, the Russian Red forces stationed along the Ukrainian border did not cross over until mid-December. The attention of the Russian invaders was mainly focused on the Donets Basin and the industrial centre of Kharkiv where strong support could be expected from the Russian working proletariat. The Red Army occupied the city of Kharkiv on January 3, 1919; Chernihiv on January 12 and Zhytnoslav, a large industrial centre on the Dnipro River, on January 27. On January 6 of the same year, the Soviet Ukrainian government unveiled a new name - the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic. This act served to camouflage the Russian invasion as a civil war in which the Ukrainian National Republic, headed by the Directory, was fighting against the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic headed by a Russian "puppet" government.

The Ukrainian republican forces that had risen up against the Hetman were in general disarray. This had also been fomented by Bolshevik propaganda to either stand and to return home to participate in land distribution or forfeit any future claims. Although the Ukrainian socialist parties were quite successful in disseminating anti-Hetman and anti-German propaganda, they were overpowered by such Bolshevik sloganeering as *Land for the peasants and factories for the workers* and *Rob what has been robbed!* The latter slogan found great appeal among the dispossessed of society which became a mainstay of Bolshevik support in both Russia and Ukraine.

The Directory and its government, insistent upon preservation of democratic rights and privileges even in time of war and revolution, undermined its own position. As a result, its army dwindled to only those patriotic and nationally conscious elements that were willing to fight for the freedom and liberty of their country. The Ukrainian Labour Congress, which was to be the Ukrainian Parliament, convened in Kyiv on January 22, 1919 to approve unification of the Western Ukrainian Republic with the Ukrainian National Republic. However, it was unable to deliberate on other matters of state importance due to the Bolshevik invasion. The Directory was forced to move to the city of Vinnytsia, the capital of Podolia Province, and Red Army units occupied Kyiv on February 5.

The Russian "puppet" government of Ukraine was reorganized at the end of

January 1919 and renamed the Soviet of People's Commissars. Its first chief and commissar for foreign affairs was Christian Rakovsky, a Bulgarian by national origin, Romanian by citizenship, a physician by education and a revolutionary by profession, who had never had any prior dealings with Ukraine or Ukrainians. This government was composed of 16 members, only three of whom were Ukrainians: Volodymyr Zatonsky, Mykola Skrypnyk and Panas Zharko. All others were of either Russian or Jewish background and yet claimed the right to represent and defend the interests of the Ukrainian people. While Moscow committed itself to waging war against the Ukrainian national government in the western parts of the country, the Soviet Ukrainian government was entrusted with the uneasy task of introducing War Communism policies and supplying whatever quantity of agricultural produce was demanded by Moscow.

War Communism in Action

The year 1919 was critical for the Soviet government as enemies surrounded Russia on all sides and the blockade by the Western Powers contributed a great deal to the misery of the country. The large Russian industrial centres, especially cities like Moscow, Petrograd and Ivanovo-Voznesensk, were short of food supplies and starved workers were becoming restless. Since Ukraine was separated from Russia through most of 1918, the Soviet government had to rely on its own limited agricultural resources. This meant some Russian areas were carrying the brunt of the burden imposed through the War Communism policy of food requisition. Although Lenin had clearly stated that requisition should apply to the surpluses only, and in limited quantity, the reality of the matter was somewhat different. With the supply so meagre, neither the workers nor the Russian peasantry were satisfied, since there was too little to meet the needs of the former and too much drawn from the scanty reserves of the latter. Consequently, the Russian Soviet government cast covetous eyes on Ukraine where the Germans and the Austrians were collecting food products for their respective homelands. It was in the interest of the Russian Soviet authorities to do everything possible to prevent the export of Ukrainian wheat and other agricultural products to Austria and Germany. This was the prime reason why the Bolsheviks and their followers in Ukraine spread anti-German propaganda and made so much noise about "the robbery of Ukrainian people by the Germans". Lenin and the Russian Communist Party, although proclaiming national self-determination for all subject nations of the former Russian Empire, had never given up the hope of recovering a resource-laden Ukraine.

Suffering food shortages in their own homeland, Russian authorities viewed every ton of wheat exported from Ukraine to Germany as one ton deprived from the Russian proletariat. Hunger represented a volatile situation for the Bolsheviks as dissatisfied Russian workers could rebel and overturn their authority. As early as

January 28, 1918, during the first Bolshevik occupation of Ukraine, Lenin wrote to his Commissar Extraordinary for Ukraine, Grigory Ordzhonikidze, stating:

“For God’s sake, apply the most rigorous measures in order to dispatch grain to Petrograd!!! Without it Petrograd may perish. Special trains and (military) detachments. Grain collection. Convoyed trains. For God’s sake, report daily.”¹

In late spring of 1919, Admiral Aleksander Kolchak presented the most dangerous threat to the Soviet Government. Already proclaimed by the opponents of the Bolshevik Revolution as Supreme Ruler of All Russia, he had established his government in the city of Omsk in Western Siberia. Kolchak was also recognized and supported by the Western Allies in a manner similar to all other anti-Bolshevik Russian Forces. The fact that the Allies were not popular among the former Russian subject nationalities, such as the Armenians, Georgians, Latvians, Estonians or Ukrainians, mattered little. Although a groundswell of opposition to the Bolshevik regime existed, there was no unity among the anti-Bolshevik factions. Hostility among non-Russian nationalities was provoked by the fact that none of the key anti-Bolshevik leaders recognized the principle of national self-determination, and all supported a struggle on behalf of “the one indivisible holy mother Russia”.

The Anglo-American troops, commanded by the tsarist General Evgeny Miller, along with General Yudenich’s Russian Army were stationed on the shores of the White Sea in the Baltic area. From March 1918 onward, they occupied the northern ports of Murmansk and Archangelsk and in late spring 1919 began to advance south into north-western Russian territories.

* * * * *

In the summer of 1919, the Ukrainian Army, having united with the Ukrainian Galician Army, also launched a successful campaign from the southwest in an attempt to expel the Bolsheviks from Ukraine. By the end of August,

¹Lenin, *Collected Works*. 4th ed, vol.26, p. 594.

Ukrainians reached Kyiv and the overall situation seemed promising from a Ukrainian perspective. At the same time, Russian General Anthony Denikin, commander-in-chief of the anti-Bolshevik forces known as the Russian Volunteer Army, was stationed in the North Caucasus and was able to unite with the Don Cossacks and the Kuban Cossack forces. Being generously supported by the Western Allies, the Russian Volunteer Army launched a massive campaign against the Red Army through the Donets Basin - Kharkiv. They were aiming at Moscow in the north and Tsaritsyn in the north-east on the Volga River to unite with the forces of Admiral Kolchak in Western Siberia. In a short time, Denikin was able to conquer the Donets Basin and expel the Bolsheviks from most of the Left Bank Ukraine including the city of Kharkiv. They reached Russian territory occupying the cities of Kursk and Bryansk in the west and the environs of Tsaritsyn on the Volga River in the east.

General Denikin, instead of linking with the Ukrainian anti-Bolshevik forces and proceeding together in a common front against the discredited Bolshevik regime, ordered a contingent of his troops to take Kyiv. Subsequently, soon after the Ukrainian troops arrived from the west and liberated Kyiv from the Bolsheviks, the Russian troops, commanded by General N. E. Bredov, reached Kyiv from the east and demanded General Anthony Kraus, commanding officer of the Ukrainian troops, to abandon the city in favour of the Volunteer Army. Ukrainians, hoping for some understanding from the Volunteer Army to fight against the common enemy and a peaceful solution to the problem, complied with the request and surrendered the city without any struggle.

These hopes, unfortunately, remained unrealized as Denikin not only refused to recognize national Ukrainian aspirations as a separate nation and its army as an ally in an anti-Bolshevik struggle, but also demanded Ukraine's total submission as former subjects of the Russian tsarist regime. Denikin's aim to rebuild "the one indivisible holy Russia" and Ukraine's refusal, based on the principle of national self-determination, resulted in armed conflict. This created a second front, which was detrimental to both armies but served the Bolshevik cause quite well. The Ukrainian Army, exhausted by continuous fighting throughout the year without any aid, was

brought to its knees not so much by the Russians as by the epidemics of typhus and lack of medical supplies. Ukraine was subject to the Allied blockade in the same way as was Soviet Russia.

The leaders of the White, or counter-revolutionary movement, as the Bolsheviks called it, attempted to restore the old regime and by doing so antagonized most of the population. After initial military successes, the White armies encountered stiff resistance from the peasant masses, which automatically strengthened support for the Reds. The revolts of the peasantry only served to further demoralize the Whites, already more dedicated to pillage and robbery. The Bolsheviks took advantage of this situation and organized a counter-attack and forced the Whites to retreat. For General Denikin the turning point came in October 1919 when his troops stopped at the gates of the city of Orel. When the Bolshevik armies began their counter-attack, Denikin was forced to withdraw his advancement from Orel, but the Bolshevik pressure did not diminish. The Red Cavalry Corps, under S. Budyenny, gained legendary fame in these battles against the Volunteer Army. Shortly thereafter, the Volunteer Army had to abandon most of the Ukrainian territory where popular opinion turned against the Whites.

Ukraine posed an additional problem. In the south, a daring Ukrainian peasant leader, Nestor Makhno, organized his "green" bands who wanted nothing to do with either the Whites or the Reds. Not only did a well-contrived Bolshevik propaganda campaign target agricultural and social efforts, but it also influenced Ukraine's desire for autonomy. Peasant uprisings flared up in various places where contact was made with the advancing Bolsheviks, and Denikin's retreat could no longer be halted. Before the end of the year, he had to surrender Kyiv and Kharkiv. At the beginning of 1920, Denikin's troops fell back to their initial positions in the Kuban region after evacuating Rostov on January 8. In March, the rest of the Volunteer Army and some of the Don and Kuban Cossacks retreated in panicky haste to a last redoubt in Crimea and to the south-east without much further combat.²

Most of the fighting took place on Ukrainian territory and the presence of all

²Georg von Rauch, *History of Soviet Russia*. p. 113 - 114.

The armies proved to be a tremendous drain on Ukrainian food reserves. The White Volunteer Army was exceptionally ruthless in its treatment of the local population. However could not be taken was razed to the ground, with complete disregard of local needs, to prevent possible Bolshevik use.

The defeats of the Russian Volunteer Army were caused not so much by the Red Army, but through its own conduct in occupied Ukraine, Kuban Cossack and Russian territories. Pillage of anything displaying Ukrainian national characteristics and pogroms of the Jewish population characterized the Russian Volunteer Army's behaviour. Schools with Ukrainian language instruction, which had opened after the February Revolution, were closed and a pre-revolutionary Russian regime was introduced.

Early in 1920, the Bolsheviks were already a dominant power in Ukraine and the Kuban area. By February 1920, Admiral Kolchak was defeated and both the Ural mountains and Western Siberia came under Bolshevik domination. Yudenich was also forced to retreat from Russian soil to Finland where he ended his armed struggle against the Bolsheviks. On May 21, 1920 General Evgeny Miller, commanding a detachment of some of the White Russian Army units, recognized Admiral Kolchak's government and abandoned the city of Archangelsk. The only remaining viable threat was the Ukrainian underground and the remnants of the Volunteer Army that retreated to Crimea.

Through the lack of co-ordination between the anti-Bolshevik Russian and anti-Bolshevik Ukrainian forces and the misguided efforts of the White leaders to restore the pre-revolutionary Russian regime, the Bolsheviks were able to survive the crucial period of the summer of 1919. The Russian Bolshevik victory was also aided inadvertently by Western governments, which disregarded the national movements of the oppressed minorities and supported the unpopular White generals. A prime example of a counterproductive policy toward the Bolshevik regime was the hostile behaviour of the French Expeditionary Force in southern Ukraine towards the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian independence movement.

The Ukrainian underground played a very significant role in this struggle.

General Denikin, being blinded by the initial success of his campaign and crediting it to the valour of his troops, did not recognize the Ukrainian underground. It was Leon Trotskii, commander-in-chief of the Red Army, who in his order to the Red Army acknowledged the underground's role. He wrote:

"It is no secret that it was not Denikin who forced us to retreat from Ukrainian territory, but the great uprising organized against us by the Ukrainian peasantry. The communes, Cheka, Prodarmy detachment and the Jewish Commissars are hated by the Ukrainian peasant with all his heart."

Lenin also admitted that the Bolsheviks were unable to attract the more prosperous peasants to their cause, and even the poorest people turned against them when the government started to organize state farms on abandoned large estates instead of following through on land distribution. In December 1919, Lenin wrote:

"Dictatorship of the proletariat was particularly displeasing to the peasants in those places where there were the largest stocks of grain available and the Bolsheviks showed that they would strictly and firmly secure the transfer of those surplus stocks to the state at fixed prices. The peasants in the Urals, Siberia and Ukraine turned to Kolchak and Denikin."

This is an important admission and it explains, at least in part, the Soviet policy towards the peasants in those areas at a later date.

As far as Ukraine was concerned, the Soviet regime did not exist in the rural areas beyond the larger cities occupied by the Red Army units. The countryside was engulfed in flames of revolt and, in fact, served two masters: the Bolsheviks in daylight hours, reinforced by the Russian Cheka and the Red Army detachments, and the Ukrainian insurgency under cover of darkness. This was a troublesome and costly situation for the peasants since both the Bolsheviks and the insurgents relied on Ukrainian villages for supplies of provisions. As a result, the Ukrainian countryside was becoming increasingly impoverished and yet, when the Soviet government

³*Volia*, February 1920, p. 21, quoted by M. Stakhiv in his "Tretia Soviets'ka Respublika v Ukraini... Biblioteka ukrainoznavstva, Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka,...(Niu-York, 1968), p. 32-33.

⁴V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*. 4th ed. vol. 30, p. 268.

returned in late 1919 - early 1920, a new levy of grain was assigned in the amount of 100 million poods, of which the steppe provinces alone had to supply 100 million. Soon afterwards the Proarmy gangs resumed their odious collections from household to household. The struggle continued all through the winter of 1919-1920.

In the meantime, the Ukrainian national government headed by Symon Petliura, concluded an agreement with Poland known as the Treaty of Warsaw of 1920 establishing a military convention by which the Poles were obliged to help the Ukrainian Army to liberate the Right Bank Ukraine. Subsequently, by the end of April 1920, a Polish-Soviet war broke out. Within a few weeks the Ukrainians and Poles were able to liberate the traditional capital of Ukraine - the city of Kyiv. On June 6, 1920, the Russian "White" Volunteer Army lay in Crimea, this time commanded by General Peter Wrangel. The White Army decided once more to try its luck and invaded south-eastern Ukraine from the Sea of Azov, aiming at the industrial Donets Basin. However, both attempts failed to achieve their goals. General Wrangel suffered a serious defeat and was forced to evacuate Crimea. Thus, ended the last attempt of the White Russian armies to restore the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire.

The Bolshevik counter-attack expelled the Poles from Ukraine and the Bolshevik Red Army reached the gates of Warsaw. In view of the potential disaster, Poles began their peace negotiations with Bolshevik Russia, which eventually ended with the Treaty of Riga, signed on March 18, 1921. By this Treaty, Poland recognized the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and also Byelorussian and Ukrainian Socialist Republics as independent countries. In return, Russian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian Soviet governments recognized new Polish boundaries, which incorporated western Byelorussian and Ukrainian lands as integral parts of Poland. Thus the Polish Ukrainian Treaty, signed a year earlier, came to naught although remnants of the Ukrainian Army continued their armed struggle for the liberation of their homeland. In November 1920, the last regular military units of the Ukrainian National Army were forced to cross the demarcation line between Poland and the Soviet Ukraine. They surrendered to the Poles and subsequently were

disarmed and interned by their former ally. From the Zbruch River in the west down to the Black and Azov Seas in the south-east, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was established nominally as an independent and sovereign state.

By the end of 1920, the Soviet government had achieved victory over its external foes but the situation on the domestic front still remained precarious. The unemployed and hungry workers of Petrograd and Moscow were restless. The government rigidly applied its War Communism policy with requisitions of “food surpluses” and non-negotiable prices for food products and the continuing alienation of the peasantry. The major irritant for the rural population was government duplicity with respect to land policy. Bolshevik propaganda continued to reiterate its slogan regarding land redistribution from the nobility to the peasantry. In reality, the large land holdings remained intact and were transformed into state farms, quite often managed by the very same personnel as during the tsarist regime. Moreover, even the small landholdings, beginning in 1918, were being organized into collective farms. All accounts of this action, from both Soviet and non-Soviet sources, concur that these enterprises were intensely unpopular.⁵

Soviet sources also indicate that war activity had a negative impact on the amount of cultivated land available, one of the main factors contributing to the shortage of agricultural products. Food shortages were directly attributed to the civil war and the food requisitions by various armies and governments in 1919-1920, but this was untrue. Meredith Atkinson, an internationalist and honorary famine commissioner, testified:

“Neither Denikin nor Wrangel nor Kolchak ever crossed the famine area (i.e. Volga Valley). Only Kolchak touched the fringe of the area, and the evidence of his presence was still visible. As to the main cause of the famine there is considerable dispute, but no amount of verbal quibbling can dispose of the actual figures collected in the villages by Sir Benjamin Robertson and myself as to the requisitioning of food by the Soviet for the Red Army. In 1918 before the first big requisition, there was no food shortage. In 1919, after the requisition, there was still no serious shortage, but a considerable falling off in cultivation, as the peasants refused to grow more than enough for their

⁵Oliver Radkey, *The Unknown Civil War In Russia*, p. 22.

own needs. The 1920 requisition was more searching, but naturally less fruitful. The sowing that year was only 50 per cent ... Peasants themselves [were] convinced that the requisitions were the main cause of the famine and the drought was the final blow to a wretched peasantry. The main point is that the requisition took away the margin of safety to which the peasants were accustomed, not to speak of their complete abolition of the surplus for export."⁶

Therefore, the main cause of decreased cultivated land was actually the Soviets' own compulsory requisition of food products. All supplies were requisitioned by the local, district, or regional food committees and especially from those farmers who once enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity. In fact

"during the spring of 1919, after the Czechoslovak Legion abandoned the Volga River Valley and moved further east to Siberia, there were huge reserves in the Ufa and Ural provinces. Ufa province alone had reserves amounting to some sixty million poods (or one million tons), and along the railway lines Kazan-Saratul and the Volga-Bogul about ten million poods of grain was stored, waiting to be transported wherever needed."⁷

Notwithstanding that 1918 and 1919 had been fairly good crop years, in 1920 famine touched the provinces of Samara and Saratov.⁸ By 1920, the reserves in these provinces had entirely vanished directly as a result of the War Communism policy. This policy had only served to deprive the local peasantry of their produce with nothing to show in return.

The requisition of foodstuffs caused the peasantry to undertake passive resistance by reducing the acreage of cultivated land down to the bare minimum necessary for their own subsistence. This did not prevent the Soviet government from disregarding the decreased acreage of cultivated land and imposing a levy based on total available arable land. The rural population was angered even more by the enforcement of fixed state prices for agricultural products. When in the fall of 1919

⁶Meredith Atkinson. "Soviet Russia and the famine" in *The Nineteenth Century and After* (London); a monthly review, vol. 41, January-June 1922, p. 606.

⁷S. F. Baburin. "Narkomprod u pervye gody Sovetskoi vlasti" in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 61, p. 360. ⁸*The Times*, (London). September 1, 1921, p. 9a.

Mikhail Kalinin, President of the Russian SFSR was passing through Tambov province, the peasant delegation lamented that:

“the village had been without nails for the whole year; there were no implements and no kerosene; salt was so scarce that one pound could be exchanged for eight pounds of grain.”⁹

Matches and ironware of all kinds could have been added to the list, since they were also unavailable. Even though no foreign troops had ever trod the land and no civil war wrought its terrible destruction through pillaging, robbery and lawlessness, the economic conditions of Tambov province were appalling.

In addition to peasant dissatisfaction, the Soviet government faced an even more serious challenge; 1920 proved to be a drought year with resulting crop failure. Yet, the War Communism policy was unrelenting in its demand for food “surpluses”. Little attention was given to the fact that neither the environmental conditions nor the forecasts of the day indicated another lacklustre crop year for 1921. Little snow fell prior to the arrival of the strong frost early in November 1920. The seasonal winds were so devastating that they caused the roots of the sown winter seeds to lose their protection from the elements and freeze in -20°C temperature. The following intense winter meant a grim harvest for the coming year.

In view of the official policy, the peasants who had previously enjoyed an element of prosperity, attempted to dispose of their possessions wherever possible. Even oxen and horses were sacrificed. This action resulted in further economic deterioration as the heavy, fertile soil of Saratov and Samara provinces required deep ploughing. Thus, according to the statements of the Volga Valley farmers, beasts of burden such as good horses or at least a pair of oxen were an absolute necessity.

A description from the German Volga Commune was quite telling:

“all homes, barns, stables, cellars, lofts were searched and literally swept of everything they contained down to the last dried apple, and last egg... and woe to the farmer, in whose house flour or any other produce was found; he

⁹M. Kalinin. *Za eti gody...* vol. 3, p. 67-75, quoted in Redkey's op. cit., p. 20.

was tortured and whipped to the blood... In several settlements the appearance of their starving children caused many mothers to ask on their knees, and in tears, for bread at the supplies commissariats at which thousands of poods of grain were stored; but instead of getting bread they were whipped and struck with batted rifles. In January and February 1921, according to the account, disturbances and revolts broke out and when a regiment mutinied in Vakulin, its leader urged the starving and oppressed Germans to die fighting rather than live like slaves, many peasants joined him. The rebels captured grain stores and distributed them among the people. However, guns and ammunition were lacking and soon the troops from Saratov came and suppressed the revolt. An unspeakably cruel revenge was taken in villages in which the insurgents, prior to this, had cruelly slaughtered and murdered all communists, who had been caught. Thus in a German settlement of five to six thousand settlers, which for a length of time had shown resistance, the Red Army men shot three hundred persons (the first they came across) without trial. And after the military had left the tribunal, which had relieved the soldiery, had as many condemned and done to death".¹⁰

The harsh Bolshevick agricultural policy ruined the farmers. Many horses were requisitioned for military purposes while those left in the possession of other farmers were confiscated by the local kombidy and distributed among the other peasants as a reward for their loyalty to the Bolshevick government. Grain and other agricultural products were forcibly seized by the government for the maintenance of the civil service, the Red Army and industrial workers. As a result, the Bolshevicks "left part of the population unemployed and eliminated all drive and desire to work in the rest".¹¹

The rigid enforcement of War Communism policy alienated and enraged the peasantry which forced many able-bodied young men to join the underground to fight the Soviet Russian authority. Thus, Ukrainian guerrilla warfare was gaining in force rather than subsiding. It was an armed uprising in self-defence, which successfully defied the Bolshevick government until the summer of 1921.

In late January - early February 1921, western Siberia erupted in fury. On

¹⁰From a memorandum by an eyewitness, a German pastor, "The hardships of our co-religionists in the German Volga Colonies", written November 10, 1921 - quoted by Harold H. Fisher in his "Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923", p. 500-501.

¹¹The Times, (London). September 1, 1921.

February 13, the Armenian nationalists rose in open revolt and within five days had seized their capital city of Erevan. By the end of February, sailors of the Baltic fleet in Kronstadt, a 14,000 strong naval base (the very same which was the most instrumental in victory of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917) began organizing their rebellion.¹² On March 7, 1921 they had rebelled against the Bolsheviks to condemn their three years of bloody destruction and cruelties committed throughout Russia. The sailors rose in support of strikes of the half-starving Petrograd workers who resented labour regimentation and food shortages. Under the slogan *Soviets without Bolsheviks!*, they demanded greater economic and political freedom for workers and peasants. After attempts at pacification failed, Trotskii and Tukhachevsky led a military attack and suppressed the uprising. Survivors of the mutiny were shot or imprisoned.

Bolshevik economist Nikolai Bukharin, in his speech at the Third Congress of the Third International on July 8, 1921, explained,

“the Kronstadt mutiny was a petty bourgeois rebellion against the socialist system of economic compulsion. Sailors are mostly sons of peasants, especially Ukrainian peasants. Ukraine is more petty bourgeois than Central Russia. They are against tsarism but have little sympathy for Communism. The sailors were home on leave and there became strongly infected with peasant ideas.”¹³

These resistances to the government created many headaches for the Bolshevik leaders.

In 1920, Soviet agriculture, being in critical condition, amounted to 1.8 billion poods gross output instead of four billion poods as in the pre-war year of 1913. At the same time, the stock supplies from previous years had been fully depleted. It was estimated that by year-end 1920, the country would be short of some 200 million poods of grain, even by comparison of the already diminished 1919

¹²O. Radkey, *The unknown civil war*, p. 395.

¹³Bukharin. *The New Economic Policy of Soviet Russia*, quoted by Harold H. Fisher in his *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923*. (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1927), p. 503 - note.

However, some regions had a fairly decent harvest and did not require any aid, but in the Volga Valley provinces a state of economic misery along with a poor harvest resulted in a steadily growing famine.

By the spring of 1921, military operations ceased on all fronts and the Soviet Government was finally in a position to dedicate its full attention to another enemy. The real danger at this time lay in the starving cities where unemployment and dissatisfaction of the working class with the shortage of food was steadily increasing. The peasantry, on the other hand, was dissatisfied with the policy of food requisition and Ukraine was still in flames from the almost general uprising.

* * * * *

After a long and cold winter, spring arrived two weeks earlier than usual. In the eastern and south-eastern provinces of Russia, the snow thawing was slow and gradual, which allowed moistening of dry soil. Unfortunately, from then until the end of May, the weather was very dry with continuous eastern arid winds and sharp fluctuations of temperature from frosty mornings to hot days. Of all the precipitation during that period, not a single rainfall could be considered beneficial for the crop. In short, atmospheric conditions were quite unfavourable for agriculture. The winter crop came from under the snow in good condition and a fair harvest had been expected. Unfortunately, the dry months that followed reversed this course.

"All over the Volga Valley, including the Tatar Republic, the winter crop, as well as the spring crop, were estimated to be below the average and in some areas altogether poor."¹⁵

Early in 1921, it was already obvious that climatic conditions would not allow for an exceptionally good crop. Even an above average crop meant any surplus grain would amount to only about 423 million poods. It was quite evident that the

¹⁵Baburn, *ibid*, p. 364.

¹⁶*Pravda*, No. 106, May 18, 1921.

War Communism did not work according to the Party's expectations and something had to be done. Radical adjustments were necessary to salvage the economy if the regime was not to perish. On March 17, 1921, the day when the Kronstadt uprising was finally crushed, Lenin introduced a plan for a New Economic Policy (NEP) with compulsory food requisitions and tax-in-kind (*prodovolstvennyi nalog*, or *prodnalog* in Russian abbreviated form) which was to replace the War Communism Policy practiced since 1918.

The New Economic Policy allowed for limited free market where agricultural products could be exchanged for industrial goods. At this time, Moscow's planning was based on a presumed certainty that the crop would be, at best, average and the surplus would be approximately 423 million poods. To encourage the peasantry, Lenin decided that 240 million poods, the minimum required for the government, should be delivered to the state granaries in form of tax-in-kind. Thus in Moscow, on April 9, 1921, at the meeting of the secretaries and responsible representatives of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) Cells of Moscow and Moscow Province, Lenin proclaimed the New Economic Policy. Lenin wrote:

"Tax-in-kind amounts to only about one-half of surplus grain appropriation rate grain, for example, will amount to 240 million poods instead of 423 million. Every peasant will know the exact amount of tax he has to pay beforehand that is in the spring. This will reduce the abuses in tax collection. It will be an incentive for the peasant to cultivate a larger area to improve his farm and try to raise yields."¹⁶

The essential difference between the food appropriation and tax-in-kind was that the food appropriation from the War Communism Policy was based on acquisition of the peasant's food surplus only. With the tax-in-kind, the peasant was now obliged to deliver to the state granary a strictly assigned amount of grain regardless of yield and then any surplus could be disposed according to the peasant's preference.

Also in April, Lenin urged L. B. Krassin, the People's Commissar for Foreign

¹⁶V. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4th ed. Moskva, 1965, vol. 43, p. 153.

Commerce, who was with the Soviet Trade Delegation to Great Britain, to expedite negotiations for a loan to purchase industrial goods. Remaining confident about the upcoming crop, Lenin hoped to have so much bread that peasants would be only too willing to exchange it for necessary industrial products. In his words, “all the efforts of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Commerce should be directed toward this goal.”¹⁷

In Lenin’s address to the Plenum of Moscow Soviet Workers and Peasants Deputies on February 28, 1921, he discussed the problem of food shortages in Russia and asked:

“Have the peasants of Ukraine and Siberia seen the point of this reckoning? Not yet, I am afraid. Their present and past grain surpluses have never been matched in central Russia, nor have they ever experienced such a plight. The peasants of Ukraine, Siberia and other Caucasus have never known such destitution and hunger as the peasants of Moscow and Petrograd gubernias (who received far less than the Ukrainian peasants) and endured for three years. Their surpluses usually run into hundreds of poods, and they were accustomed to receiving goods at once for that kind of surplus.”¹⁸

In mid-May, the situation became grim and conflicting reports arriving from various parts of Russia and Ukraine indicated that it was very bleak on the agricultural front. In May 1921, the Soviet government was already well informed about the drought in certain areas and the prospects of crop failure although grain collection as a tax-in-kind in the Russian SFSR and as “prodravverstka” in Ukraine continued to accumulate the largest reserves possible.¹⁹ The evidence clearly shows that neither the Moscow nor the Kharkiv authorities were aware of what was actually occurring in the agricultural areas. Otherwise, Lenin would not have made plans to charter grain for foreign industrial goods. By mid-June 1921, it was already quite evident that a great calamity was on its way. At its June 10th meeting, the Soviet government decided to send a special commission to investigate the situation in the

¹⁷ Rubinshtein, *Bor’ba Sovetskoi Rossii s golodom* - in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 22, p. 3.

¹⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed., vol. 32, p. 154-155.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Middle and Lower Volga Valley. At the same time, the government agreed to exempt Samara province from the tax-in-kind in the sown area, which effectively stopped the collection of eggs and butter.²⁰ Although the Centre was misinformed or refused to believe the bad news about drought area conditions, the impending catastrophe was well understood by the local authorities. However, being subject to central planning dictates, they were powerless in preventing the oncoming disaster.

On June 15-18, the All-Russian Conference on Experimental Agriculture was held in Moscow where professor Tuliysi, head of the Research Station of the Saratov University, discussed the conditions in the Volga Valley or as he called it, in the South-East:

“The poor crop in the South-East shall be very detrimental... To feed seven million people [in Samara and Saratov provinces] we need, in addition to our meagre harvest, more than 100 million poods of bread... There is a complete crop failure in the meadows and this occurrence elsewhere ... threatens the complete destruction of cattle breeding in the South-East.”²¹

Three days later, *Izvestiia* fully supported the views of Professor Tuliysi reporting that:

“In Saratov, Samara, Tsaritsyn and Astrakhan provinces the unusually destructive drought ruined the winter crop and grasses. The spring crop seems to be in a better state.”²²

As there were already some positive results from Lenin's New Economic Policy, such as increased agricultural acreage in the Volga Valley, optimism was stimulated with respect to future improvements. In fact, these unjustified expectations led the State Planning Commission to levy a tax-in-kind for the entire Russian SFSR at 240 million poods, including 60 million poods of grain for the Volga Valley. Moreover the head of the Central Statistical Office in Moscow, P.

²⁰I. U. Poliakov. “Sel'skoe khoziaistro nakanune perekhoda k Nepu”, in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 2, p. 285-286.

²¹*Izvestiia*, No. 184, June 20, 1921.

²²*Izvestiia*, No. 187, June 23, 1921.

presented a paper on June 20th to the All-Russian Conference on Food Supplies where he stated that the situation was not critical. According to *Izvestiia*, he stated cautiously that, in spite of the unfavourable conditions and crop failure in the Volga Valley,

"we are going to exceed by 50 million [poods of grain] last year's total. This year it shall not be worse but better. What we need, however, is to find out how to extract bread from Ukraine (600-650 million poods) and from Siberia (300-320 million poods)."²³

Although the conference was to deal with the ever-present problem of food supplies for urban centres, there is no evidence that the issue of crop failure in either the Volga Valley or Ukraine was ever discussed.

The Third All-Russian Food Conference on Food Supplies, held in Moscow from 16 to 24, was attended by 499 delegates including provincial food commissars, local authorities and representatives of food agencies, cooperatives and trade unions. In his opening address, Lenin discussed the collection of the tax-in-kind and the commodity exchange:

"the tax has been fixed on the assumption of an average harvest, at 240 million poods, which is inadequate even as a limited ration for the army which we need and for absolutely essential industrial enterprises."²⁴

Most simultaneously he admitted frankly:

"it will be difficult to collect this amount in full, not only in view of the impending crop failure but under any circumstances."²⁵

However, he quite resolutely stated:

"we must achieve it, if not 100% then as near to that figure as possible; and we can achieve it even amidst the difficulties created by menacing harvest failure. The tax deficit may run into tens of million poods, but this may be

²³ *Izvestiia*, No. 138, July 28, 1921, p. 2.

²⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th edition, vol. 32, p. 446.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

balanced by the extra amount that is likely to be collected in the areas where the harvest has been particularly good.”²⁶

By expounding his views on how collection should proceed, Lenin stated that:

“areas of the RSFSR and in neighbouring and fraternal republics, where the harvest outlook is particularly good, or above average, are the very regions where the food supply apparatus is certainly not above average, but rather substandard. Vigorous measures must be taken to transfer extra food supply workers to these areas... This is a matter which needs very close attention.”²⁷

While Lenin’s speech dealt with the policy of food collection, Popov, the Chief of the Central Statistical Office, discussed its practical aspects using various statistics. According to Popov, Russia and Ukraine in peacetime produced 4,300 million poods of grain, but in 1921, given the decreased sowing area, it was estimated that the crop would fall short by 1,200 million poods. Taking into account the diminished crop which was further exacerbated by the drought by approximately 900 million poods, there was a 2,100 million pood shortfall to the pre-war crop, or 48% of the pre-war harvest.

“Should we achieve an average crop of the pre-revolutionary period, the Republic might have 549 million poods of bread. Should the crop be below average, the grain reserves would amount to 99 million... Without Ukraine, the Russian Soviet Republic may count on 140 million poods of surplus grain.”²⁸

Furthermore, Popov suggested that:

“very approximate calculations indicate that with an average crop it will be possible to ship abroad from both the South-East and Ukraine up to 200 million poods of bread [i.e. from the territories affected by the drought - W. V.]. In exchange for bread, foreign countries will be willing to supply us with their industrial products, means of production and with consumer goods. In other words, everything we need to invigorate our industry and to expand

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

our agriculture."²⁹

Unfortunately, Popov's statistics were not entirely correct and therefore, not realistic. Thanks to his optimism or miscalculation, the attention of the conference was focused on how to extract grain from the peasantry and not how to prevent the occurrence of starvation. Nonetheless, Popov's statement was in agreement with the theme of Lenin's opening address. The conference concluded with a number of resolutions on the topic of "the main tasks facing the food collecting organs." An odd omission could be noted by the fact that the food conference did not appear to discuss the incipient famine in the outlying areas of the Russian Federative Republic of the Volga and Don Valleys or the Northern Caucasus. In his opening speech Lenin touched upon the topic and stated,

"For the second year our country is afflicted by a disaster that entails grave hardships. We do not know whether we are commencing a long cycle of drought, as has been predicted these two years, but it is now clear that the grain and hay crop will fail in a large area of our country for the second year running, and the prospects are sombre."³⁰

This problem was not explored in further detail, as if it was of minimal relevance.

²⁹ *Pravda*, No. 133, June 28, 1921.

³⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed., vol. 32, p. 440.

Volga Valley Crisis and Society

On June 25, 1921 I. A. Teodorovich, a high official of the Commissariat of Agriculture to the Russian SFSR, in a report to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP, addressed the problem of crop failure in the Middle and Lower Volga Valley and suggested ways of combating the approaching peril. The next day *Pravda* published a front-page article entitled *The famine in the Volga Valley, and measures of relief*, where it officially stated for the first time that:

“The famine affected some 25 million people and, according to some knowledgeable authorities, the sufferings are now more horrible than they were in 1891.”¹¹

Pravda recommended that a special committee of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (i.e. the government) be created and be delegated with extraordinary authority. Using the slogan *Help the starving and dying people in the Volga Valley*, a special fund was needed to purchase bread abroad and organize a wide-ranging campaign:

“The committee to aid the starving should speedily elaborate a plan for various countermeasures as to how to regulate evacuation, organize employment for the starving, etc. The task is very difficult; however it must be dealt with. We shall accomplish that task as we have done many times before with other more difficult tasks during the revolutionary period.”¹²

By mid-June, it was quite evident that the harvest would not meet the high expectations as hopes for rainfall had been dashed. The summer of 1921 proved to be intensely hot and dry. The average temperature in the city of Saratov, situated at

¹¹*Pravda*, No. 137, June 26, 1921, p. 1.

¹²*Ibid.*

about 51:30 degrees North approximated readings in Cairo, a subtropical Egyptian centre located at 31:15 degrees North. Subsequently, *The Times* correspondent wrote

“the whole of southern and central Russia has been parched dry and can produce no harvest worth mentioning. Prospects are reported to be moderately good westwards in parts of Volhynia and Podolia [in Ukraine - W.V.] and the Soviet government has sent troops there armed (also) with agricultural machinery in order to secure a harvest by force. A famine worse than anything yet experienced threatens the whole of Russia this winter.”³

Yet relatively,

“in spite of the abnormal conditions of drought in the Volga and Southern Ukraine provinces, the yield for the whole of Russia was actually better than in 1920. But reduction of sown area was so serious that the total supply available for consumption fell from 1.748 to 1.602 million poods.”⁴

The official organ of the Russian Communist Party, *Pravda*, also took a stand and suggested that in those regions where the crop was either average or above average, the government should concentrate its most experienced and efficient food collectors in order to collect the tax-in-kind:

“The peasant masses understand the situation that in a critical period it is necessary to help the workers in order to save our industry. They understand the necessity to help the Red Army in order to prevent the return of the landlords. There should be no difficulty to understand and to help the peasants stricken by the crop failure in order to prevent them from leaving their settlements in search for more prosperous provinces.”⁵

An informative article by Masanov also appeared in a Moscow newspaper, *Ekonomicheskaja zhizn*, which presented not only the geographical extent of the famine but also the degree of significance of crop failure for the Russian economy. The importance of this article necessitates quotes of its most significant highlights:

³*The Times*, (London), July 15, 1921, p. 9d.

⁴League of Nations. Secretariat. *Report on Economic conditions in Russia*. With special reference to the famine of 1921-1922. Geneva, 1923, p. 26.

⁵“Protiv goloda i griazi” in *Pravda*, (Moscow), No. 140, June 30, 1921, p. 1.

"The area stricken by the crop failure could be described as follows: Samara province suffered the most and could be considered the centre of the drought area. From Samara province the affected area extends to the south and to the north. In the south it reaches, with some minor exceptions, Saratov province and the German Volga territory, Tsaritsyn province, the eastern part of the Don (Cossack territory), Astrakhan province and the north-eastern part of Kuban-Terek region. To the north the drought basically extends to the east and embraces Simbirsk province, part of Penza province, the Tatar Republic, Chuvash region, Ufa and the south-eastern parts of Viatka and Perm provinces.

According to official state estimates, in Samara province the crop will not exceed 7-8 poods from a desiatina, in Saratov province - about ten poods, in Simbirsk - from 10 to 30 poods. For the population of seven million in the Samara and provinces, this allows only for starvation rations of 22 poods per person and when seed and fodder are taken into account, 154 million poods of grain are required, while the three million desiatinas of sown land in those provinces will provide only 30 million poods..."⁶

In other words, the two provinces of Samara and Saratov would be short by 124 million poods of grain to sustain their population and cattle. It was further written

"In addition to drought, many places have been overwhelmed by locusts which devoured whatever vegetation survived the heat. Ominous forebodings of approaching famine were already felt in these provinces for some time. First of all, the population began to get rid of cattle in order to reduce consumption of grain, on the one hand, and to provide meat on the other. The price of bread is three or four times higher than for meat in Saratov and Samara, while in Moscow the opposite holds true. The population became restless and in short order it succumbed to panic. The peasantry began to abandon their homesteads individually, in groups, and soon whole settlements were escaping the drought area. But where were they to go? They don't know ... Most of them head eastward to the Kirgizland, to Siberia and Turkestan. Significantly fewer direct themselves to the south-west into the south-eastern provinces of Ukraine and Kuban province."⁷

"It is necessary to state categorically that the Soviet authorities have no reason to cover up the extent of this sorrowful phenomenon and to present it

Ekonomicheskaja zhizn', No. 14, June 30, 1921.

in a classical way as “a poor harvest” as was done during the tsarist regime.”⁸

Notwithstanding the tragic situation, the author still expressed some optimism stating that,

“fortunately the restricted area of crop failure presents the possibility of preventing mass starvation. We insist that, while planning countermeasures, it is necessary to establish priorities of immediate help and act as time and circumstances permit. Moreover it is necessary to calm down the panic. At the same time Soviet authorities should assure the famine-stricken population that it will not be left at the mercy of fate, but all the resources of the Republic shall be used to render necessary relief.”⁹

An article by a correspondent from Helsinki was published in *The Times* (London):

“The Soviet authorities put down the whole disaster to the drought, which has ruined the crops. The assertion is, however, at most but a half-truth and requires closer explanation. In the first place, during last autumn and the spring of this year only a very small area was sown; this was partly due to the great shortage of seed and partly to the unwillingness of the peasants to sow, as they knew that the fruits of their labours would be taken away from them without any compensation being given. This explains the circumstances that in the country districts the shortage of food began as early as May and June, at which time this year’s harvest could not in any case have been utilized. Secondly, every farmer knows that drought has a much more severe effect on land that is badly or not at all cultivated than on land that is properly tilled. The conclusion is, therefore that the causes of disaster are mainly to be found in the communist system and cannot be attributed to the weather.”¹⁰

It was not Nature herself to blame for the harsh economic conditions of the drought stricken provinces. The War Communism policy contributed a great deal and this is well illustrated by a conversation of the migrating peasant, overheard by a correspondent of the newspaper *Krasnaya Gazeta* and published therein:

“ ‘Cholera is just mowing the people down,’ said the first one.
- ‘Oh, we will die without cholera,’ said the other.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰The Famine in Russia in *The Times*, (London), August 4, 1921.p.8:col.4.

- 'Everyone, who can, has got to save himself, everyone who's got money or horses.
- 'And if he has not got any, he must die.
- The comrades ought to help.
- They are comrades only to each other; they have robbed the peasant of all his bread.
- If they only give permits to travel. I know a place where there is a lot of corn... But the Devil's Paradise (the local Food Committee) will not give passes'.¹¹

This conversation illustrates two different aspects of contemporary social conditions in Soviet Russia. Firstly, it indicates whom the peasantry blames for their calamity (they "have robbed the peasant of all his bread"), and secondly, testifies to the lack of confidence in the communist regime, namely, that there is nothing to expect from the "comrades". This conversation was published in the government controlled newspaper, which cannot be branded as subversive and anti-Bolshevik propaganda.

Such was the description of the drought-afflicted territory, the approaching onset of famine and the suggested counter-measures. The oddity of this description is that there is no mention of either southern Ukraine or Crimea as victims of the very same drought. True, Ukraine at the time, at least theoretically, was considered to be an independent country, albeit one maintaining close ties and a political system similar to Soviet Russia. On the other hand, the Ukrainian and Russian Commissariats for Food Supplies were merged into one as Commissariat for Supplies for both countries as early as July 7, 1919. In view of this fact, it would be expected that a joint Commissariat would describe the economic conditions in southern Ukraine as well as those prevailing in the Volga River Valley in Russia. There could be even less justification for omitting Crimea from the list of drought areas suffering crop failure as Crimea was then a part of the Russian Federative Republic.

Although the news seemed significant enough to get the immediate attention of the Western press, it took almost a month to reach the *London Times*. The summary of the *Pravda* and *Ekonomicheskaja zhizn'* articles dated June 26 and 30,

¹¹ *Krasnaya Gazeta*, 1921.

respectively, appeared in the *Times* on July 22. It was hardly surprising that no mention was made about the critical situation in southern Ukraine or in Crimea.

Unfortunately, economic conditions in Ukraine were either misunderstood or totally disregarded by Moscow with almost daily demands being imposed on the Ukrainian economy. On June 28, 1921, Lenin demanded from Ukrainian Prime Minister Rakovsky, the Commissar of Supplies and Provisions Myron Vladimirov (Finkelstein) and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CCCP(b)) that a minimum of 30 wagons of foodstuffs be dispatched daily to the North.¹² Three days later on July 1, Lenin sent another telegram, this time to the First Secretary of the CCCP(b)U, Dmytro Z. Lebid, Chairman of the Ukrainian Council on National Economy, Vlas Chubar, as well as to the commander-in-chief of the Red Army in Ukraine and Crimea, Mikhail Frunze, demanding that the food collection committees in Ukraine redouble their efforts in order to dispatch 100 wagons of grain daily to the Centre.¹³ On the very next day, Lenin sent a third telegram where he demanded that 74 wagons of foodstuffs be sent daily to the North.¹⁴ Analyzing the two telegrams, dated June 28 and July 1, where Lenin demands that 30 wagons be sent daily to the North and 100 wagons daily be sent to the Centre respectively, it is not clear whether the term “north” and “Centre” are synonymous. Therefore, each subsequent telegram cancels the previous one, or the “north” and the “Centre” are two different entities and the number of wagons should be added (i.e. 30+100+ or 30+74 wagons).

Regretfully, such economic distress has never remained free of negative side effects. It was no different in Russia and Ukraine during 1921. On July 5, the Moscow daily *Izvestiia* published a terrifying article by Nikolai Semashko, the People's Commissar of Public Health of the Russian SFSR, entitled *Grom grianul* (The thunder struck) where he states that cholera broke out in the cities of Rostov, Voronezh, Orel and also in the Volga Valley. He also points out that the starving population of the Volga Valley has been moving in an avalanche-like formation southwards and spreading infection and death along its path. Semashko wrote:

¹²*Biograficheskaia khronika V. I. Lenina*, vol. 10, p. 613; V. I. Lenin, *pro Ukrainu*, vol. 2, p. 572.

¹³V. I. Lenin, *Biograficheskaia khronika*, vol. 10, p. 626.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 632.

"In the Volga Valley the horror pictures of famine and death of the years 1891-1892 reappear. Whoever survived those years (not mentioning those who participated in the relief action) is being chilled to the bone by recalling them."¹⁵

Immediately afterwards Semen Sereda, the People's Commissar of Agriculture of the Russian SFSR, authored another article entitled *Aid to the victims of crop failure*. It again restated that the Volga Valley provinces have been struck by a terrible calamity and millions of people were starving.

"They eat tree bark (leaves on forest trees have been already eaten), horses, squirrels, turtles, gophers. Whoever has been physically fit and capable of walking, runs away. The cattle are also dying. That is the testimony of eyewitnesses. When we add the spread of various epidemic diseases in Astrakhan, Samara, Saratov and Tsaritsyn provinces, then we may have a complete picture of calamity which befell the Volga Valley."¹⁶

Later, the People's Commissar appealed for general aid and discussed three related aspects: 1) food relief for the starving; 2) medical relief for the sick; and 3) rehabilitation of the agricultural economy (i.e. organization of winter crop sowing of grain and cattle fodder):

"The role of the Communist party which is in power is very important and responsible. Having both a powerful organizational apparatus and a large number of experienced worker cadres, it will form a link for the various forms of relief to the suffering population. It should create favourable conditions so as to prevent confusion, bureaucratization and criminal negligence."¹⁷

The next day *Izvestiia* published another article entitled *O bor'be s golodom* (About combating famine) by A. Beliaev, stating that:

"the task of the Soviet government in fighting famine in the Volga Valley is complex and could be divided into three separate issues: 1) to save the

¹⁵ *Izvestiia*, No. 144, July 5, 1921.

¹⁶ *Ibid*
¹⁷ *Ibid*

population from the death by starvation; 2) to preserve the agricultural economy of the Lower Volga Valley granary for future harvest by sowing fields; and 3) to use the restless moving masses of the starving population for state production purposes.”¹⁸

According to Beliaev, the best way to aid the starving population would be to transfer all those capable of working to other areas as a labour force for some communal projects. There, they would be fed and at the same time would produce something for the benefit of society. In order to justify the use of starving labourers, Beliaev stated, “even landowning and capitalist government practiced it quite widely and successfully in 1891 for various community projects.”¹⁹

These were the first articles which openly and officially declared the existence of famine in certain regions of Russia. Up to this point, news was covertly circulating but could not be discussed publicly. Yet, the famine threatened to no less of an extent five southern provinces of Ukraine and Crimea. In the summer of 1921 “the famine was in full tide,” - wrote a witness of this calamity - “and with it the brother of famine - epidemic typhus.”

It should be noted that the population of the Volga Valley was not homogeneous in its ethnic composition. The area of the middle Volga Valley, where the Kama River enters into the Volga River was inhabited by the Tatars. The Tatar Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic, with the city of Kazan as its capital, had been organized by the Soviets. To the east, there was the Bashkir Autonomous Republic with the city of Ufa as its capital and further west, the territory inhabited by Chuvash, Mari, Udmurts and other Ugro-Finnish peoples. In the lower reaches of the Volga River, there were territories settled by Germans who were brought there by Empress Catherine II in the late XVIII century. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the so-called German Commune was formed and further to the south and west of Volga River, there were Ukrainian settlements totalling over three quarters of a million inhabitants. The soil was quite fertile and the population relatively well off.

¹⁸*Izvestia*, No. 145, July 6, 1921.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

However, in 1920, the Prodamy requisitioned all their reserves and in 1921 the drought destroyed the crop. Locals were left bereft of any provisions whatsoever which was tantamount to plain robbery as a deteriorating situation raised the spectre of realizing death by starvation. The only alternative was to look for better and more prosperous places to survive these dreadful times. Germans and Ukrainians always had the option of moving to their homelands in search of a more secure future. By the month-end, the population of the Volga Valley provinces, not having received relief from the government or even assurances that such relief was forthcoming, had to flee their settlements. According to *The Times*,

“Enormous numbers of the country folk were trekking towards the Don, Caucasus and Ukraine. During June the deaths, officially notified in the town of Saratov, reached 1500 daily. A famine worse than anything yet experienced threatens the whole of Russia.”²⁰

A message from Riga stated that the harvest failure in the Volga region had caused the complete disintegration of the German communist settlement there:

“The settlers are poverty stricken and are appealing for help to relief societies and for the permission of the Soviet authorities in Moscow to allow an immediate return to Germany. The remnants of the German working companies, who were enticed by the Leipzig Communists Settlement Society to immigrate to Russia, have started returning home. The plight of young women who married Russian POWs and returned with them to Soviet Russia after the Revolution is causing much consternation.”²¹

Starvation and epidemics were not the only enemies of the refugees. Some lawless elements organized bands, which attacked the migrating defenceless masses, while others scoured the country robbing and burning abandoned homes. In the people's opinion, this was the second wave of lawless banditry. The first being the officially sanctioned Prodamy detachments “collecting the so-called *produce tax*, extracting the last remaining bushel of grain, including seed,” as stated by Mrs.

²⁰ *The Times*, (London) August 19, 1921, p 8d.
²¹ *Ibid.* July 15, 1921, p. 10, col. 1.

Wallen Feldbach of the town of Rovno on the Volga River bank located some sixty miles from Saratov. She left her hometown along with a trainload of Latvian refugees and crossed the Latvian border on August 13, 1921. She also stated that,

“Saratov communists are well dressed and fed but becoming panicky and leaving for other districts. The peasants and workers now despise the communists with hatred like consuming fire. The communists never travel alone, fearing capture and death by tortures popular among the peasants.”²²

Izvestiia reported:

“The Ukrainian colonists started to run away from their homesteads in the Volga Valley in the first days of July 1921 in a continuous stream towards Ukraine.”²³

According to local officials, at least 150,000 Ukrainians had left the Valley, although no official records of any kind were maintained about the movement. The road to Ukraine was difficult and full of dangers; people were harassed by bandits who would not only rob them of all their possessions, but even resorted to killing. An *Izvestiia* reporter concluded:

“This entire mass of humanity is being ruined and I doubt if it will be possible for them to establish themselves in Ukraine as individual farmers.”²⁴

The one notable consistency in the refugees’ testimony is the unanimous statement that the unrestricted requisitions of food undertaken by the Soviets during the winter had left the population without any reserves whatsoever.²⁵

Among the refugees were many repatriates from the Baltic States and Poland. The latter group of repatriates comprised Poles, western Ukrainians evacuated from their homes during the war in 1915 by the retreating Russian armies, as well as some

²²*The New York Times*, August 15, 1921, p. 6:2.

²³*Izvestiia*, No. 199, September 8, 1921, p. 2.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*The Times*, (London), August 19, 1921, p. 8d.

Victims of war from Austrian and German armies. Now these people were going west to the Polish-Ukrainian border, especially to the north and south of the Prypyet rivers. While fleeing starvation, they became carriers of epidemics, resulting in disease crossing international borders. In light of this complicated situation, *The New York Times* wrote:

“the Poles discussed closing the frontier but the fact that at present Poland is receiving 1,500,000 Polish war prisoners from Russia through the border town of Bnowice, makes closing difficult even if politically advisable.”²⁶

The situation in the Volga Valley was worsening daily. It was recorded that in some Tatar villages of the Petrovs'kyi district, people became so desperate and convinced of the hopelessness of their situation, that they were committing mass suicide through deliberate poisoning by charcoal fumes. *The New York Times* described the situation:

“People would put wood in the stoves, then tightly close chimneys, windows and doors and die by whole families in fear of slow death by starvation .”²⁷

Whatever the reason for the famine, it was necessary to act in order to prevent death by hunger and disease from spreading. One could count on at least some measure of success in containing the spread of epidemic if a transfer of the population from the famine areas was done in a planned and orderly manner. Thus the government began to organize a systematic evacuation of people from the starving provinces. This created difficulty as any whole scale transfer of people from the drought area to the more prosperous provinces would inevitably result in overpopulation and a host of other problems. The term “better off” meant only that the area in question did not require outside aid to feed its existing population, even though there was nothing to spare for the newcomers.²⁸ Moreover, it required transport, which was in very poor

²⁶ *The New York Times*, August 10, 1921, p. 5, col. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ A. N. Kogan. “Bor’ba s golodom” in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 48, p. 234-235.

condition. In 1914 there were 20,057 locomotives. At the beginning of 1920, their nominal number in Soviet Russia was 18,612. Out of this number 10,560 were classed as disabled and only 7,610 were considered in running order. In 1921, the disabled locomotives constituted 59% of the total as compared with 16% in 1914. To compound these difficulties, by February 1921, the number of engines idled through fuel shortage stood at over 1,000.²⁹

Circumstances pressed the government for some immediate and effective action to prevent a total disaster. As a first measure, the government dispatched telegrams to all the chief executives of the provincial authorities and the secretaries of the provincial party committees stating that,

"the Volga Valley is starving and has been left without seed for the winter sowing. Immediate help is needed with special priority placed on securing seed. The winter sowing area in the Volga Valley is not only a question of regional existence, but primarily determines the issue of food supply for the Republic and the possibility of economic development in future years."³⁰

The content of this communiqué was correct as far as the broad strategic issues of future harvests were concerned but it lacked any sense of urgency or compassion for the starving. Those most threatened by hunger were already heading to other "more prosperous regions" and were more preoccupied with their own immediate survival than with sowing seed for the future. Did the government overlook this aspect? Would it be willing to sacrifice its own people without any serious effort to rescue them from the slow death of starvation? It is difficult to envisage the donation of grain to starving human beings with the explicit instruction "do not eat it but plant it in the soil for next year's crop". Would the famished individual be concerned about next year's crop, given his own dire circumstances? Was this a mere misunderstanding of priorities or an utter contempt for human life?

In the meantime, the situation was growing worse in all areas stricken by the

²⁹B.L. Brasol. "The balance sheet of sovietism", (New York : Duffield, 1922), p. 101.

³⁰A.N. Kogan, "Sistema meropriiati partii i pravitel'stva po bor'b'e s golodom v Povolzhe" in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 48, p. 236.

drought. On July 12, the Government Commission for Children's Welfare submitted a request that urgent help was needed for the starving children in the Samara province.³¹ On the very same day, *Izvestiia* published the government's appeal *To all Citizens of the RSFSR* in which it stated:

"In a large region the drought destroyed the crop and grasses. The Astrakhan, Tsaritsyn, Saratov, Simbirsk and Ufa provinces, as well as the German Commune, the Tatar Republic, the Chuvash region and four districts of the Viatka province became victims of the drought. In this area live no less than ten million people who will be unable to survive to the next harvest without state aid. The population is starving. All over there is a critical situation because there are not enough seeds for sowing and no fodder for cattle. This calamity along with decreased reserves of foodstuffs and ruined farms may hurt our agriculture in the area for a long time and subsequently it may have a disastrous impact on our national economy.

Every citizen of the RSFSR should realize the seriousness of the situation and the feeling of great strength of a united effort of all people and this should reinforce our belief that we shall find a satisfactory way out of this situation. Millions of people from the area are awaiting our help, waiting for their salvation from the state."³²

The thirteen members of the government, including Chairman M. Kalinin and Secretary A. Eunukidze, signed this appeal. They also expressed hope that

"everybody will sacrifice a maximum of energy, initiative and spontaneous activity in an effort to overcome this calamity."³³

In spite of all these appeals and the tragic reports from the starving provinces indicating daily deterioration, the government did not move beyond theoretical discussions. Not only was food not sent into the area to relieve the situation, but additional food was shipped away for other purposes. On July 12, 1921, Lenin ordered the Commissariat for Food Supplies of the starving Tatar Republic to deliver

³¹ I. Lenin, *Biograficheskaia khronika*, vol. 11, Moskva, 1980, p. 27.

³² *Izvestiia*, No. 150, July 12, 1921, p. 1.

³³ *Ibidem*.

10,000 poods of grain within three days to the Kazan Railway section since there were some difficulties with foodstuffs. "This was to be on account of the July delivery of the tax-in-kind."³⁴ Soon after the Moscow Government sent a "request" to the Government of Turkestan and its Commissariat for Food Supplies

"to deliver within ten days no less than 250 wagons of grain to the Russian People's Commissariat for Supplies."³⁵

Finally, the Moscow Government also "resolved to request" the Ukrainian Commissariat for Food Supplies to ship the grain reserves within three days, in the care of the Commissariat for Foreign Trade, to granaries in and around Odessa. These granaries were originally assigned their supplies for export. Lenin sent a telegram to the Ukrainian Government in Kharkiv, ordering "to ship immediately out of the stock 160,000 poods of grain to Moscow."³⁶ This, of course, was by no means for the benefit of the famished population of the Volga Valley but, according to Vladimirov, the grain had been shipped to Moscow and to the Donets Basin (for the miners).

Lenin assigned the Army and the Cheka, the main pillars of Bolshevik existence and power, the foremost priority in governmental planning. Although Ufa province was also among the victims of the drought, it did not stop Lenin from ordering the Ufa authorities:

"to fulfill orders of People's Commissariat for Supplies [in Moscow] to ship immediately forty wagons of grain for the Army units in Samara and Saratov (twenty wagons for each)."³⁷

It was contrary to any logic to take away food from provinces like Odessa, Ukraine or Ufa, Bashkiriya, which were already in the throes of famine. It should be mentioned that the city of Ufa, capital of Bashkir was non-Russian by ethnic origin.

³⁴V. I. Lenin, *Biograficheskaia Khronika*, vol. 11, p. 9.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid, p. 27

There was no doubt that the situation in the Volga Valley worried Lenin and the other communist leaders. Their concern was not so much because of the peril of death by starvation for millions of people, but because it posed a threat to their communist power. In an attempt to find a way out of this unenviable situation, Lenin suggested in the first days of July 1921 that:

“if an area struck by the crop failure embraces the territory with some 25 million people, that it would seem to be the only proper and the most revolutionary countermeasure - to call up half a million (or even one million) young men from that area to the army.”³⁸

Normally, these men would be sent out of the starving areas and stationed in provinces where there was no shortage of food. In Lenin’s opinion, this would aid the starving population as the number of mobilized would be fed in the Army and, in addition, “they would mail food parcels to their relatives who would also aid the starving somewhat.”³⁹ According to Lenin:

“this half a million people should be stationed in Ukraine where they would be helpful in collecting foodstuffs. In this way they would be personally involved, especially after having perceived and experienced the injustices of the wealthy and insatiable peasants of Ukraine.”⁴⁰

This suggestion was not made in vain. On August 16, 1921, the Presidium of the All-Russian Pomgol met again where a proposal was presented to enlist volunteers to the administrative installations, to the Prodarmy in Ukraine and to replenish the cadres of the militia.⁴¹

Lenin had an erroneous notion regarding the surpluses and crop in Ukraine due to inaccurate data seemingly submitted by Rakovsky, the Premier of the Ukrainian S.S.R. In his crop estimate of 1921, Rakovsky stated that the crop of Ukraine should amount to some 550-650 million poods. This was still a forecast

³⁸V. I. Lenin, “Pro Ukrainu”, vol. 2, p. 581.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹*Investita*, No. 184, August 21, 1921.

dependent on the weather conditions. Lenin took the estimate as accurate information for his consideration.

“Let us subtract 150 million poods for seeds and 300 million poods for local feeding of people and cattle and there should be a surplus, on the average, of about 150 million poods. If we station in Ukraine an army mobilized from the starving provinces, then these surpluses could be collected in full by means of tax-in-kind exchange of goods and a special requisitioning assessed against wealthy peasants for the benefit of the starving.”⁴²

However, taking into account that at the time the population of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic amounted to some 25 million, Lenin did not allow for even a minimum ration which was established to be a minimum of 15 poods per person a year.

According to official Russian statements, the territory affected by the drought, and subsequently by the crop failure, was not limited to the Volga Valley provinces

“but also Crimea and the Ukrainian provinces bordering the seas (i.e. with a yield of under seventy-five poods per acre) are the Tatar Republic (formerly Kazan province), the Samara and Saratov provinces, the German Volga Commune, a part of the Stavropol province and the southern provinces of Ukraine.”⁴³

In mid-May, a Provincial conference was held in Tsaritsyn on provincial economic conditions where district representatives reported on the situation in their areas. It was generally agreed, “a problem of food supply is very difficult because of an invasion of bandits” and a crop failure in 1920. ‘Bandits’ was a Bolshevik term for all the anti-Bolshevik armed forces. In this case, the word applied to the Volunteer Army commanded by General A. Denikin. Some of the delegates stated that:

“sowing campaign has been fulfilled by 60% and germination had been quite

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³*Russian Information and Review*, No. 3, November 1, 1921, p. 58.

satisfactory but drought and dry winds interrupted it and the winter crop is almost entirely lost. The spring crop is slightly better thanks to minimal precipitation in some areas. If there will be no substantive precipitation no later than the beginning of June, then there will be complete crop failure.”⁴⁴

No significant precipitation occurred and there were no prospects for even an average crop. As a result of these climatic conditions, over the large areas from the Carpathian Mountains in the northeast to the Dnister River in the south-west of Ukraine and to the Caucasus, hopes were quickly dashed for a reasonable crop.

“The entire huge area, inhabited by some 30 million people, having been deprived by the Government of all foodstuff reserves, became helpless and faced a dreadful prospect of starvation.”⁴⁵

Although in the first half of 1921, the newspapers did not print anything about the catastrophic economic situation in either Soviet Russia or neighbouring Soviet Ukraine, rumours about the terrible drought resulting in a crop failure and ensuing famine were widespread. Stories of an impending calamity connected with crop failure in the southeast of Russia, especially in the Volga Valley, circulated in Russian society at large. It was not safe to speak of the famine publicly because the ever-present Cheka might classify this talk as counter-revolutionary and subversive propaganda. This might result not only in the loss of one’s freedom but even one’s life. The government had not officially declared that there was a famine in certain parts of the country and, at least publicly, there was no mention of starvation and human suffering.

In February 1921, a Committee to Aid the Starving was formed by the government under the leadership of a notable authority, Mikhail Kalinin, President (or Chairman) of the Executive Committee of the RSFSR. However, its primary duty was to take care of industrial workers, the Communist Party and the government employees. Even in this respect, it did not show much activity.

⁴⁴ *Investiia*, No. 145, July 2, 1921, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Staryi prodovol'stvennik. "Golod" in Russkaia mysl'*, vol. 42, No. 3, p. 184.

Fortunately, there were socially conscious members of society who were well informed as to the situation in the Volga Valley and in other regions of Russia. They remembered the horrors of the 1891 famine and worried about the fate of the impoverished population in these drought-stricken areas. This group of former leading members of society wanted to minimize the sufferings of the drought victims, if not to prevent starvation horrors, by producing an official publication of impending calamity in the Volga Valley. In order to do so, they wanted to form a special committee that would organize assistance and relief for the starving. This, could not be done without official government permission.

The initiative came from private citizens and among them were an economist, Professor Sergei Prokopovich, his wife Ekaterina Kuskova, a well known writer and political worker, as well as a famous Moscow physician N.N. Kuskin, and a number of others. Due to their previous connections with the Provisional Government of 1917 and their political activity, they did not have any relationship with the new Bolshevik rulers in the Kremlin and, therefore, were considered *personae non gratae*. To overcome this difficulty, they approached the famous proletarian writer Maksim Gorky, with whom the Prokopoviches were on good terms, with a request to speak on their behalf with Lenin. Madame Kuskova was surprised by Gorky's cool and indifferent response. It was only after their insistence that Gorky agreed to intervene with Lenin, but he did not show much of his typical enthusiasm. This, as Kuskova thought, might have been explained by the fact that at the time Gorky's relations with the Kremlin rulers were beginning to cool.⁴⁶

Gorky did not go to the Kremlin himself but wrote a letter to Lenin. He explained that Prokopovich and associates were willing to set up a non-partisan All-Russian Relief Committee dedicated to the responsibility of organizing and

⁴⁶E. Kuskova, "Tragediia M. Gor'kogo" - *Novyi zhurnal*, vol. 13, kn. 38, p. 235. In this biographical article, E. Kuskova wrote that contrary to a generally accepted view, Gorky initiated a special relief committee for the starving in 1921. It does not correspond with the actual facts since he did not show much interest in the fate of the starving (see p. 124-245).

distributing foodstuff among the hungry of the Volga Valley.⁴⁷

Soon after his return to Moscow, Lenin read the letter at noon on June 28. The names of Prokopovich and Kuskova, known for their activity in the Provisional Government, did not inspire him. Nevertheless, he wrote a memorandum to I.A. Fedorovich, a member of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, informing him of Gorky's suggestion. At the same time, he expressed his own idea that Gorky's suggested committee and the existing Government's committee could be merged into one. Lenin also stated that this problem should be discussed at the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party scheduled for the next day on June 29.⁴⁸ Indeed, it was thoroughly discussed as planned but no decision was made.

Two weeks later on July 12, the problem of a non-partisan committee to aid the starving was discussed again at the Politburo meeting. N.A. Semashko initiated this discussion and opinion among participants as to the committee's usefulness seems to have been divided. Some concerns were expressed that the "mensheviks" and the social-revolutionaries might abuse it for their own political purposes.⁴⁹ There were worries not only as to the usefulness of a non-partisan relief committee, but also as to the expediency of appealing for help from abroad and making considerable processions in order to obtain it. According to *The Times* correspondent, Lenin with the section of the ruling body, considered the circumstances and was inclined to appeal for aid. Another section, represented by Trotskii, was against any appeal to

⁴⁷The Russian historian of the famine 1921-1923 Belokopytov in his work "Likholetie" (The hard times) stated that Gorky wrote his appeal to the Western powers on the advice of Lenin. But there is no real confirmation of this statement. It might have been just the reverse, that Lenin approved Gorky's intention which, it seems, might have been developed under the influence of Dr. Ewald Landmann (see his "Human life in Russia", p. 14). Belokopytov also stated that the first who responded to Gorky's appeal was the "international proletariat." To prove it, he wrote that "Comintern appealed through the means of radio to the working class of all the countries." A month later, on September 12, 1921, an International Workers' Relief Committee to Aid the Starving Russia was formed under the chairmanship of Clara Zetkin with Wilhelm Mützenberg as Secretary". In fact, by the time this committee was formed, the ARA and the International Red Cross had already signed an agreement with the Soviet Russian government as to how to bring effective relief to the Volga Valley (see Belokopytov, *Likholetie*", p. 57).

⁴⁸Бюрографическая хроника Ленина, vol. 10, p. 621.

⁴⁹Ibid. vol. 11, p. 7..

the capitalist countries on the grounds that an intervention of foreign relief organizations would undermine the power of the Bolsheviks and lead to the downfall of communism.⁵⁰ In spite of spirited debates, or perhaps because of them, the Party leaders could not resolve the problem. Meanwhile, the situation in the Volga Valley continued to worsen.

While the Party and the government leaders were debating the usefulness and expediency of having a non-partisan relief committee and foreign aid, Tikhon, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, thought it was his duty as a religious leader to seek aid for those who were in dire need. In his opinion, it was urgent to call for action in any possible way to reduce the calamity to a minimum. Knowing quite well that the task was beyond the possibilities of Russia alone, Patriarch Tikhon decided to solicit foreign aid through the Christian churches of the world. Subsequently, he prepared a draft of an appeal to all patriarchs of the Eastern Orthodox Church, to all autocephalous churches, to Pope Benedict XIV, to the Archbishop of New York, as well as to the Archbishop of Canterbury in England, pleading for aid in the form of food and medicine for the Volga Valley victims of famine and disease. Having done this, he submitted his draft to the state authorities for approval since nothing could go out of the country without the government's permission. The draft was identical to all addressees, differing only in small details in the message to the Archbishop of Canterbury:

“I call through you to the English people. Our country is famishing. The bulk of her people are doomed to starve. The corn crops are destroyed with drought in those districts that used to victual the whole country. The famine is causing dreadful epidemics. Help on the largest possible scale is urgently required - immediately.”⁵¹

The Patriarch's appeal was deliberated at the Politburo meeting on July 7, 1921, where it was eventually approved. Following that, it was resolved “to compose a press release about it to the newspapers” and to make the Patriarch's endeavours

⁵⁰*The Times*, August 10, 1921, p. 10c; *The New York Times*, September 9, 1921.

⁵¹*The Times*, (London), August 11, 1921, p. 9c.

public.⁵² Indeed, on July 10, 1921, it was duly reported in the government's press organ *Izvestiia*. However, this news item was not presented in positive terms but rather in reproach, being entitled in Russian *Davno by tak*, which translates to "It should have been [done] a long time ago".⁵³ This title conveys annoyance that the Patriarch did not act any earlier. *Izvestiia* mentioned the Patriarch's appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury (England) but omitted dignitaries from the other churches.

* * * * *

At this time Soviet Russia did not have any foreign embassies, with the exception of the Baltic countries, so the Patriarch's appeal, dated July 11, 1921, was transmitted to the West through the Estonian Embassy. Coincidentally, a representative of the Estonian Red Cross, Dr. Ewald Ammende, who was present in Moscow, heard about the Volga Valley calamity and grasped the impending horror of the famine. He volunteered his services to both publicize it abroad and mobilize outside help. Dr Ammende was able to arrange an interview with Maksim Gorky when a document entitled "To all honest people" about the impending famine was drafted for publication in the Western press.⁵⁴

Soon after, Dr. Ammende returned to Estonia with the document that enabled him to establish contact with the Norwegian philanthropist Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, Prince Carl of Sweden, Professor L. Brentano and other eminent men in Western Europe. He raised the question of providing immediate assistance to the people in Russia threatened with famine. Dr. Ammende wrote an article entitled *At the eleventh hour* and published it in the Latvian German language newspaper *Rigasche*

⁵² *Biograficheskaiia khronika*, vol. 10, p. 563.

⁵³ *Izvestiia* (Moscow), No. 150, July 10, 1921.

⁵⁴ Ewald Ammende. *Human Life In Russia*; introduction by Lord Dickinson. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1936), p. 14; Dr. Ammende claimed that Gorky handed him the document at the interview, however, it seems that Gorky sent a copy to Lenin and it was discussed and approved at the meeting of the Politburo on July 7, 1921 where "those who preached fratricidal hatred" was added. But Belokopytov, the author of a monograph entitled "Likholetie" (The bad times) stated that it was Lenin who suggested that Gorky writes an appeal to the Western powers. However, there is no confirmation of this statement in *Leninskii sbornik* or in the *Bibliograficheskaiia khronika*, which describe practically every move of Lenin.

Rundschau where he described the imminent Russian catastrophe and made suggestions for combating it "on a purely humanitarian basis."⁵⁵

In mid-July, while the question of the famine was dragging on in the party and government discussions, Gorky wrote an appeal in the name of deceased Russian writers to the well-known German author Gerhard Hauptmann, French author Anatole France and Spaniard Bosco Ibañez asking them to use their popularity to help the starving Russians. Unfortunately, the response to this letter, excluding their own personal contributions was rather insignificant.⁵⁶

In the meantime, the Russian Orthodox Church authorities organized an All-Russian Church Committee "for the purpose of aiding the starving", money and provisions were gathered in churches by the parochial brotherhoods. The money collected was to be expended through the administrative channels of the Church for the "relief of the starving".⁵⁷

The Soviet press did not mention this activity at all because the government itself had not moved beyond the discussion stage as to what should be done in the matter of relief.

As a further step, the Patriarch Tikhon assigned an "All-People's prayer day" on August 5, 1921, in the Christ the Saviour Church in Moscow. By six o'clock in the afternoon of August 6, 1921, the churchyard was filled with a multitude of people. Believers and non-believers attended the services. Specially appointed individuals of goodwill distributed the Patriarch's appeal and collected gifts for the benefit of the famine victims. The final outcome was 10 million rubles, which proved that people were willing to help if there was a trustworthy organization to oversee the relief effort.⁵⁸

On July 12, *Pravda* published an article entitled *Bor'ba s goldom* (A struggle with famine) which cast some light on the government's activity for famine relief. It

⁵⁵Ewald Ammende, *Human Life In Russia*; Introduction by Lord Dickinson. (London : Allen & Unwin, 1936), p. 17.

⁵⁶Anatole France contributed to the relief fund for the starving Russians the money he received with his Nobel prize award in 1921.

⁵⁷Matthew Spinka. *The Church and the Russian Revolution*. (New York : Macmillan, 1927), p. 163.

⁵⁸E. Kuskova. "Mesiats sotrudnichestva" in *Volia Rossii*, No. 4, 1928, p. 51-52.

seems that it was initiated in response to activism by both the Church and private citizenry, which worried some communists. *Pravda*, therefore, stated:

“the Communist Party and the Soviet Government should take the initiative in a broad communal organization of contributions of gifts for relief for the starving. This should have a special response among the peasantry of the provinces with good crops.”⁵⁹

The article also demanded that some countermeasures be introduced to the resettlement movement which so far had been spontaneous, unorganized, uncoordinated and without medical services. *Pravda* suggested:

“All this, however, should be done in an organized form and therefore, a special commission of authority should be established to elaborate a specific plan of countermeasures. This commission should go to the Volga Valley and from there, on the spot, coordinate all the activities in combating the famine in every province that fell victim to the drought.”⁶⁰

Since the situation in the Volga Valley was not improving, the All-Russian Executive Committee, after having discussed the problem at length on July 14,

“formed a special Commission which would organize relief for the working population of the provinces stricken by the drought. The Commission, consisting of comrades Andrei Andreev from the Union Council of Trades, Alekssei Rykov, Commissar of the Interior, I. I. Lobachov, member of the Narkomprod, and A. H. Paderin, deputy of the Narkomprod, has already got down to organizational work”⁶¹

and resolved the measures which would have to be undertaken with the following established priorities:

- a) To select at least 600 students from the Sverdlov University and send them to work in the famine stricken provinces.

⁵⁹*Pravda*, No. 150, July 12, 1921.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Pravda*, No. 155, July 17, 1921.

- b) To create an extraordinary commission which would address the migration problem.
- c) To recommend to the Commissariat of Internal Affairs evacuation of the population from the suffering localities.⁶²

Clearly, these priorities were still dealing with theoretical aspects of famine and not with the real problem of feeding the hungry. For example, if students were to arrive in their areas without the means of relief, they would naturally not be able to help. The other two priorities spoke of “creating” and “recommending” which would take at least several weeks while the people were in a dire need of immediate food and medical assistance.

Two days later, the government discussed the ways and means of relief for the starving provinces. With reluctance, it agreed on the formation of a non-partisan All-Russian Famine Relief Committee as suggested by Gorky. In the meantime, the governmental Central Commission of the All-Russian Committee to Aid the Starving (in Russian called *Tsentral'naia Komissiia Pomoshchi Golodaiushchim pri Vserossiiskom Tsentral'nom Ispol'nitel'nom Komitete*, or in an abbreviated form: *Central Pomgol*) published its first communiqué on July 20 stating that the Volga Valley suffered from the drought and did not have enough seeds for winter crop sowing. Therefore, it said, the first task of the Commission was to help the drought stricken provinces with seeds no later than the end of August.

As to where the seeds would be obtained, the Commission enumerated three sources:

- a) The state had loaned the peasants more than 35 million poods of seeds for the winter crop of 1920 and spring crop of 1921. The recipients should now return the loan by August 15 as prescribed by law.
- b) There are state farms which have been organized on the means of the former workers' and peasants' estates and they are obliged to harvest the crop as soon as possible, thresh it and surrender it to the state.

⁶²*Obshchee delo*, August 8, 1921.

- c) The peasants of the provinces with an excellent crop... are obliged to deliver most of their tax-in-kind, also by August 15, to the state granaries.⁶³

After a close analysis of this communiqué, particularly the information regarding the first source for the seeds, one cannot help but come to the conclusion that the request applied to all peasants - recipients of the loan, including those in the drought area who would now have to repay the seed loan. This is confirmed by the third source in the special paragraph where the provinces with “an excellent crop” would also have to pay the tax-in-kind. Finally, it should be remembered that those 35 million poods of seeds “loaned to the peasants” consisted of grain requisitioned from the peasants after the last harvest. Most importantly, these discussions did not take into consideration the current plight of starvation but rather deliberated about the next sowing season and crop.

⁶³ *Izvestiia*, No. 157, July 20, 1921.

The All-Russian Relief Committee

Although the government was very reluctant to permit organization of any public committees and even less so with the suggested composition of personnel, permission was eventually granted to form a non-partisan All-Russian Relief Committee. None of the communist leaders were pleased that such anti-Bolshevik politicians as Prof. S. Prokopovich, E. Kuskova and others would play a leading role in the Committee.

On July 20, in the White Hall of the Moscow City Council, a preliminary meeting was held and attended by a number of high ranking Government and Party officials such as Lev Kamenev (Leon Rosenfeld), Leonid Krassin, Anatoly Lunacharsky, I. Teodorovich, El'shanov, Peter Smidovich, Maksim Gorky and many others. The meeting was opened by L. Kamenev who welcomed the newly formed All-Russian Relief Committee comprising 63 members of various prominent political personalities. It also had 12 members imposed by the government as a "condition sine qua non". The Chairman of the Committee L. Kamenev and his deputy Aleksei Rykov were Government appointees. Vladimir Korolenko, the famous Russian writer of Ukrainian extraction, was elected the Honorary Chairman of the Committee. Among other famous personalities were Sergei Prokopovich, former member of the Provisional Government, his wife Ekaterina Kuskova, Nikolai Kishkin, K. Korobov, a leader of the Russian co-operative movement, and others. I. A. Cherkassov was elected to the post of Executive Director of the Committee.

The next day, on July 21, *Izvestiia* published two communiqués. The first one entitled *The Central Commission to Aid the Starving* ("Tsentral'nyi komitet pomoshchi golodaiushchim") and the second about the formation of the All-Russian Relief Committee. It is interesting that the information concerning the reorganization of the Government's Commission to Aid the Starving into the Central Commission of the All-Russian Executive Committee was published at this time although it was

supposed to be reorganized on July 17, 1921. This seems to have been an act of deliberate obfuscation by the government to prevent citizens from differentiating between these two committees, as both the All-Russian Committee and the Central Commission were organized for the very same purpose.

According to this communiqué, on July 18 Mikhail Kalinin was to be Central Commission Chairman with three deputies: Smidovich, Rykov and Kamenev. The Central Commission was delegated the right to unite and coordinate the activity of all the Commissariats and of all Soviet institutions at both the central and local levels working in the field of relief for the starving. The Commission will not create its own working apparatus. The communiqué stated:

“but will rely on the apparatus of the Central Executive Committee and the Peoples Commissariats. All the commissions of the Peoples Commissariats engaged in the relief work shall continue their activities within their Commissariats. Interdepartmental conferences and committees may be created only with the approval of the Central Commission of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. The Commission shall be ordered to establish close contacts with the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. The decree of the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee about local economic conferences and their accountability and guidance, specified that all provincial, district and regional conferences administered by the communal branches should be a subject to government control.”¹

On July 22, the Commission had another meeting where Kamenev read a report detailing the desperate situation in the starving provinces. Following that, there was a paper presented on the planning of relief organization as well as on the structure of provincial, district and regional commissions.²

The All-Russian Relief Committee had its first working session on July 23 in the White Hall of Moscow City Council where N. Kishkin presented a working committee structure. It would have numerous departments: general, administrative, purchasing, gift collecting, financial control, economic, sanitary, foodstuff, as well as other consumer goods distribution departments. A special department would be

¹*Izvestiia*, No. 158, July 21, 1921, p. 2.

²*Izvestiia*, No. 162, July 26, 1921, p. 2.

established for the organization of children's relief. At this meeting, a special committee was elected to prepare plans of activity in fighting famine. To establish better relations with Western Europe and solicit its help, the Committee came to the conclusion that a special delegation would be sent abroad.³

All plans were approved by the Committee's membership including government representatives. The creation of a non-partisan All-Russian Relief Committee evoked a favourable response in Western Europe and America. In addition to the Patriarch's and Gorky's appeals, it played an important role in the mobilization of favourable public opinion and eliciting sympathy for those suffering from hunger in Russia. *The Times* of London published:

"The Patriarch of the Russian Church has sent out to the head of other churches an appeal for help. There is no heart that will not be moved by such an appeal, but the darkest tragedy of all is that as things are, Western Europe is powerless to help. The famine is but the extension, culmination it may be, of that blight which for four years has now preyed on Russia and isolated her from the rest of Europe. There have been bad famines in Russia in the past; but a famine under Bolshevism is the worst of horrors because it precludes the possibility of any relief, whether from within Russia or from without."⁴

Commenting on the formation of the non-partisan Relief Committee *The Times* remarked that,

"the Soviet Government seems to have relaxed its rigid tyranny so far as to allow a feeble remnant of the liberal workers who in the old days undertook famine relief, to engage in some effort to combat the distress."⁵

The New York Times wrote:.

"A decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee has granted wide powers to the recently organized non-partisan Public Famine Relief Committee which comprises 63 representatives of all classes and political parties in Russia. The Committee will conduct the activity under the Red

³*Izvestia*, No. 161, July 24, 1921.

⁴*The Times*, (London), July 22, 1921.

⁵*Ibid.*

Cross emblem, and will enjoy full legal rights and self-government.”⁶

On the surface everything seemed to be in order, but the reality was somewhat different. On the third day, after the All-Russian Relief Committee was solemnly inaugurated, Gorky visited the Prokopovych residence. In a seemingly confused state, he had the following conversation with E. Kuskova:

“ ‘By chance I was able to find out from very reliable sources that the Committee is in danger.

-But the Committee did not as yet have a chance to make anything illegal.

-This is nothing to do with legality,’ said Gorky. ‘The problem is in a decree, which in itself is denying everything that the Soviets stand for.

-Then why did the Kremlin approve it?

-Yes! It was the Kremlin that issued a decree... But besides the Kremlin there is also the Lubianka that is against it and stated bluntly; we will not permit that institution to exist.

-Why do you relate it to me?’ asked Kuskova. ‘Do you suppose that the Committee should commit suicide?

-Not at all. It would be cowardliness. However, you and other members of the Committee should be very careful. I repeat, the danger is very serious indeed.

-Mr. Gorky, who is ruling Russia?

-Don’t you see it for yourself?

-But Lenin...

-Lenin?’ And a painful grimace appeared on his face.

-‘Lenin... I beg your pardon... Let us not discuss it’.”⁷

* * * * *

As soon as the All-Russian Committee was formed, the Patriarch, on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church, expressed his wish to take an active role in the organization of relief for the starving. Subsequently, the Church created a diocesan and All-Russian committees for aid to the starving and began to collect funds. The Church also wanted to oversee the delivery to the hungry and wanted a Church representative to be privy to the disposition of the collected money. The government,

⁶*The New York Times*, July 27, 1921.

⁷E. Kuskova. "Tragediia M.Gor'kogo" in *Novyi zhurnal*, 1954, vol. 13, book 38, p. 236-237.

which did not want the Church to be seen in relief work, denied the Patriarch's request.⁸

The response of the Western Powers to the Patriarch's and Gorky's appeals were better than the Kremlin could have expected. It worried the Party leaders since it would require admittance of foreigners into the country and among the foreigners there would also be anti-Bolshevik minded individuals doing relief work. Therefore, the government endeavoured to keep everybody under strict control. In the first attempt to bring some relief to the Volga Valley, the Russian Government turned to Ukraine which had always been looked upon as a cornucopia of inexhaustible plenty. Rebellious Ukraine had to be subdued and this was an opportunity to complete the task.

Lenin, himself, was reluctant to appeal to the Western governments for help in combating the famine. Most likely, he did not believe the Western Powers would respond favourably because he had declared a merciless battle on all bourgeois-capitalist governments of the world. Lenin was therefore, in an ideological war with the West and did not expect help on humanitarian grounds. Lenin's treatment of the bourgeoisie and capitalists, along with wealthier peasants, not counting his political opponents like Social Revolutionaries, "Mensheviks" or Ukrainian "separatists", is perhaps a good example that politically he lacked any humanitarian values. On August 2, Lenin wrote two appeals: one addressed to the international proletariat and the other to the peasants of Ukraine. In his appeal to the international proletariat he was just as belligerent as if he were calling on them to rise against their bourgeois government:

"Several gubernias [provinces] have been hit by a famine whose proportions are apparently only slightly less than those of the 1891. It is the painful aftermath of Russia's backwardness and of seven years of war, first, the imperialist, and then the Civil War, which was forced upon the workers and peasants by the landowners and capitalist of all countries.

We need help. The Soviet Republic of Workers and Peasants expects this

⁸*The New York Times*, July 31, 1921, p. 2 : 1.

help from the working people, the industrial workers and the small farmers. The mass of both the former and the latter are themselves oppressed by capitalism and imperialism everywhere but we are convinced that they will respond to our appeal, despite their own hard condition caused by unemployment and the rising cost of living.

Those who have suffered from capitalist oppression all their lives will understand the position of the workers and peasants of Russia, they will grasp or, guided by the instinct of working and exploited people, will sense the need, helping the Soviet Republic whose lot it was to be the first to undertake the hard but gratifying task of overthrowing capitalism. This is why the capitalists of all countries are revenging themselves upon the Soviet Republic; that is why they are planning a fresh campaign, intervention and counter-revolutionary conspiracies against it.

All the greater, we trust, we will be the vigour and the self-sacrifice with which the workers and the small labouring farmers of all countries will help us.⁹

Lenin's appeal to the international proletariat was soon published in the French communist paper *Internationale* and made public all over the western world:

“The Russian government addressing itself on this subject to all governments desires to express the hope that these latter will not interfere with any social organization and individuals in their countries wishing to aid starving fellows in Russia. The Russian Government will welcome all aid from every source and will disregard all existing political relations.”¹⁰

Based on this appeal, Lenin demonstrated that he had no desire to reconcile with the Western countries even for the benefit of those dying of hunger. His militant expression and suspicion of a new intervention and counter-revolution did not indicate an acceptance of good faith. He also wrote another appeal to the peasants of Ukraine, asking them to help the starving in the Volga Valley. Lenin did not take into account the actual economic conditions in Ukraine. Moreover, he did not mention the Ukrainian famine in the southern provinces, which required immediate help from those provinces where the drought was not so devastating.

⁹V.I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, vol. 32, p. 501.

¹⁰Ibid

The day after Lenin's appeal was made public; the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Georgii Chicherin, announced the official appeal of the Russian Soviet Government which was addressed to all governments of the world to help the starving people. He enumerated all the provinces which were victims of the drought and pointed out that "all Russia is doing her best to combat that famine, all Russia regardless of political affiliation."¹¹ He also cited the non-Partisan All-Russian Relief Committee and stated:

"the population of the ten provinces (recognized as famine-stricken) is about 18 million people. Feeding the rural population, according to the lowest standard is half the ordinary consumption and counting domestic animals, calls for 41 million poods of grain. For the city population the need is 17 million poods of grain. To sow the fields in localities where the crop is absolutely lost, another 15 million poods of wheat are needed before the 15 of September."¹²

As can be observed, Chicherin's appeal was not militant but rather conciliatory in tone. Both Lenin and Chicherin limited their reference to the Volga Valley, completely ignoring the tragic situation in Ukraine, Crimea, the land of the Don Cossacks and Kuban. These areas simply did not exist for them whenever a question of relief arose. This created the impression abroad that the Volga River Valley was the only region victimized by famine and drought. *The New York Times* and *The Times* of London published maps of Eastern Europe indicating areas of crop failure and drought in the territories of the Don Cossacks, Kuban, southern Ukraine and Crimea . However, these areas were not referenced in the articles to which the maps served as illustrations, similar to the appeals by Lenin and Chicherin.¹³ Moreover, Lenin, in writing his appeal to the Ukrainian peasantry, did not mention that their southern brethren were also victims of drought and needed help similar in measure to these peasants in the Volga Valley.

On August 6, the Central Commission for Relief, or Pomgol discussed the

¹¹*The New York Times*, August 13, 1921, p. 8 : 2.

¹²*The New York Times*, August 5, 1921, p. 1 : 6.

¹³*The New York Times*, August 10, 1921, p. 5 : 2.

problem of seeds for the winter crop. It was suggested that every drought-stricken province should be assigned a seed supply from another province which had good crops. This was done quickly, but hardly any food was supplied by the government to rescue the population from the current situation of starvation. The people, who left Saratov province at the beginning of August 1921, testified,

“the Soviet Government was taking no steps to relieve the famine. The only food available was that imported by speculators who sell at fancy prices.”¹⁴

The *New York Times* reported:

“In Saratov forty pounds of flour are worth 300,000 rubles, and one pound of black rye bread mixed with bray and straw - 8,000 rubles. Peasants who last year exchanged food for goods bring back the latter demanding food in return.”¹⁵

Subsequently, because of food shortages

“all work of every sort was stopped, the schools and the universities were closed and all educated people migrated westward.”¹⁶

However, Checherin, the Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs, stated in one interview to foreign correspondents that “the situation is well in hand” in the famine region. The refugees from Russia explained that:

“translated into realities, it means the formation of committees and a decree to print a new series of twenty-five 500,000 rubles, smaller being useless.”¹⁷

Cholera had also created frightful ravages among the population, already worn down by famine with an appalling mortality.¹⁸

¹⁴*The Times*, (London), August 19, 1921, p. 8 : e.

¹⁵*The New York Times*, August 5, 1921, p. 10.

¹⁶*The Times*, (London), August 19, 1921.

¹⁷*The Times*, (London), August 5, 1921, p. 3.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

The inertia of the Bolshevik Government was heavily criticized by the opposition Party of Social-Revolutionaries. With respect to the famine they issued a proclamation in Moscow that violently attacked the government, not only for its own lack of effective initiative but even more so, for preventing others from taking action.

The Social-Revolutionary manifesto proclaimed:

“It is impossible to speak of public aid when instead of citizens - there are only dumb slaves; it is impossible to speak of public initiative when the most innocent display of initiative is suspect and is severely punished. Down with the criminal policy of the Bolsheviks that prevents any real fight with hunger and only hastens decomposition and ruin that must be your second watchword. There are ways of helping the starving. All that is spent by the ordinary commissions and their minions, and they spend a lot, must be handed over for famine relief. The Red Army must be reduced and the resources so saved, must be used to feed the hungry. The corruption of big and little commissars must be ended. The co-operative societies must be set free and the people must be emancipated so that it may be in a position to take up the fight with hunger through its own freely elected organs.”¹⁹

There was some truth in the proclamation of the Social-Revolutionaries. While there was so much talk about the famine, not much had really been done. In:

“Estonia and Finland the Bolsheviks circulated untrustworthy rose-coloured accounts of phenomenal energy in the fight against the famine in Russia.”²⁰

On the following day the Central Relief Commission decided that the problem of child feeding was so vast that it must have its own dedicated section. Also, the Communist International and the International Council of Trade Unions would appeal to the Western world. This was a sensible move but it placed the communist press in an awkward position. Until now the press had been informing its readers about a happy and prosperous life in Soviet Russia and denied all rumours about the famine. Now they had to reverse their stand and declare openly the extent of the famine. Thus the Bolshevik propaganda ridiculed itself by exaggeration, wrote

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰*The Times*, (London), August 8, 1921, p. 8c.

The Times correspondent from Stockholm:

“Swedish Bolshevik journals, which at first totally denied that there was any famine, now avow the magnitude of the catastrophe.”²¹

* * * * *

On August 13, another official commission was sent to the Volga Valley. This time it consisted of the higher echelon of Soviet dignitaries; Mikhail Kalinin, the President of the RSFSR, and five people’s commissars (i.e. ministers) of Roads, Communications, Food Supply, Agriculture and Internal Affairs. The Commission left Moscow in a special train containing various educational and propaganda material, but no foodstuffs. The commission travelled for 22 days and visited Penza, Samara, Saratov, Tsaritsyn and Astrakhan provinces. According to *Izvestia*, its duties were to direct and supervise practical relief work for the starving population. It was supposed to help with food supplies, evacuation of cattle, organization of community works, resettlement and mutual aid on both a local and all-Russian scale.²² In fact none of this happened and realistically, could not have been done in 22 days. The formal visit offered an official acknowledgment that “the Centre” knew about this calamity and was doing something.

Soon afterwards, the starving provinces were assigned to more prosperous provinces as sources for food with several quick subsequent changes. By the end of the year, five of them: Ufa (Bashkiria), Samara, Saratov, Tsaritsyn and Urals were assigned to Ukraine. It is officially recognized that 200,000 adults and 50,000 children from the Volga-Ural region were evacuated to Ukraine for food relief.²³ This provision of food was in addition to the tax-in-kind which was still mercilessly collected. To expedite collection of prodnalog, the Central Commission of Relief (i.e. Central Pomgol) at its meeting on August 16, resolved that:

²¹Ibid.

²²*Izvestia*, No. 157, July 20, 1921.

²³*Komunist Ukrainy* (Kyiv), 1959, vol. 25, No. 12, p. 65.

“the starving population should be used for needs of the War Commissariat in calling up volunteers for the working rear units, for the Pro Army in Ukraine, for the Red Army officers’ courses and to reinforce the militia cadres.”²⁴

There is one very important aspect for both the food collecting campaigns and the Soviet agricultural statistics: namely, the mutual lack of confidence between the Soviet Government and society at large. Government officials suspected that reports submitted from the villages and sub-districts about the sowing area and crop harvesting were usually diminished. The peasants knew that for every sown piece of land they would have to pay tax-in-kind and, the more they worked, the more they saved and the more easily they might be classified as kulaks. A kulak was a social class marked for extinction whether by economic or physical means. In short, “there was a vast gulf between the interests of the government and peasantry.” This was evident throughout Russian history, but under the Bolshevik workers’ and peasants’ government this rift had grown even worse.

Just as there was no confidence among Russian society in the Bolshevik government, there was even less of it among the various governments of the world. In September, the most outspoken article on the famine and political situation appeared in the French newspaper, *Le Temps*, which declared:

“whoever feeds starving people of Russia, was helping to maintain the Soviet rule. What must be remembered is that the Bolshevik dictators are endeavouring simply to exploit for political ends the immense misery of the peoples, whom they oppress. When the march on Moscow of starving hordes began they felt that they were menaced and sought to save themselves by making appeals to the solidarity of all-Russians and the charity of the civilized world. At that moment the Pan-Russian Committee (i.e. All-Russian Relief Committee) was formed. But as soon as they were certain that no revolt was to be feared in Moscow because they are still able to feed their mercenary guards, the communist dictators changed their attitude and returned to their original method of oppression and persecution.”²⁵

²⁴Bulletin Tsentral'nogo Komiteta pomoshchi golodaiushchim, (Moscow, 1921), No. 1, p. 24.

²⁵ Quoted in *The New York Times*, September 25, 1921, p. 3-4

Soviet Government's Countermeasures

July 21, 1921 could be considered a turning point with respect to the government's policy in the starving regions. All hope for an improved crop in the drought stricken regions had already faded and the reality was extremely bleak.

At its plenary session, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee had fruitful deliberation on the subject of famine in the Volga Valley. It had established the non-partisan All-Russian Relief Committee as an action agency and the Central Relief Commission as the governmental coordinating body. Until now the *prodnalog* (*tax-in-kind*) had been collected in all provinces, regardless of the local economic conditions. It resolved that the famishing provinces of Astrakhan, Samara, Saratov, Simbirsk, Tsaritsyn, the Tatar Republic, the Chuvash region, four districts of the Viatka province, two districts of Mari region, two districts of the Ufa provinces (Bashkiria) should be relieved of the *prodnalog*.¹

Since the ten provinces of the Volga Valley had been relieved from the tax-in-kind, the plan to collect 240 million poods of grain had to be revised. The 60 million poods originally assigned to the Volga Valley provinces were to be reassigned to the provinces where the crop was not as meagre. In other words, the tax levy had to be increased in those provinces to absorb the shortage of 60 million poods. If any peasant had been counting on a possible surplus for the benefit of his family, he must have been terribly disappointed.

On the very same day, the Presidium of the All-Russian Executive Committee had deliberated on various topics concerning the famine in the Volga Valley. It resolved:

¹ *Izvestia*, No. 162, July 21, 1921.

- a) to mobilize half of the personnel of various Commissariats on the federal, provincial and district levels for relief work. The sub-districts (*volost'*) should prepare all the data necessary for collection of *prodna-log*
- b) to order militia to take part in the food collection, and
- c) to ensure the Council of Labour and Defence to cooperate in the project
- d) to "ask" the Ukrainian Government to either accept this resolution or develop a similar one for the use in its jurisdiction.

These resolutions were duly signed by Chairman Kalinin, and the secretary Eunukidze.

To publicize the Volga Valley calamity, the Russian Communist Party press organ *Pravda* dedicated its issue No. 180, dated July 23, 1921, exclusively to the famine. Directly, on the front page, under the newspaper's title, there was a statement reading:

"The Volga Valley - the Granary of Russia. It is the duty of all workers, of all peasants, of all honest people to save the Volga Valley from ruin. Who does not help the starving - he digs a pit - a grave that he himself may fall into."²

The whole issue was filled with contributions by such dignitaries as M. Kalinin, the President of the RSFSR, Georgii Zinov'ev (Radomyslsky), the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (Comintern), Lev Kamenev, the Chairman of the Moscow City Soviet and various commissars such as, V. Dubavskii, V. Kuraev, V. Kutuzov, M. Semashko, A. Serafimovich, A. Sviderskii, A. Vishinskii, S. Voronskii, E. Yaroslavskii (Minei Gubelman), G. Zinov'ev (Apfelbaum).

It was in this issue that the government's decree of July 21 published the news that the ten Volga Valley provinces were relieved from the *prodna-log*. It was also in this issue that a decree about the formation of the All-Russian Relief Committee, with a complete list of 63 members from various parties and backgrounds, was printed.

²*Pravda*, No. 180, July 23, 1921.

Starting with the issue of July 23, 1921, *Pravda* transferred its column entitled *Help the starving* to the front page where reports, short stories, poetry and updates about the government's relief activity in the Volga Valley were published in each issue. There was even a special column entitled *In starving places*, where the horrors and sufferings of people were described. From July 23 onward, the government launched a campaign under the slogan *Help the starving*. In short, the government did its best to give prominence to the famine in the Volga Valley and stir public opinion and sympathy for the starving. According to Kalinin, who had returned from an investigation mission in the Volga Valley, in September, 1921, the population affected by the famine was 21,073,000 persons of which 8,700,000 were children.³

The government's organ *Izvestiia* also dedicated much space to publicize the famine. In fact, all the central Moscow newspapers assigned a great deal of press coverage during the *Help the starving* drive which lasted from September 26 to October 2, 1921. At that time almost all the attention of the press was focused on the collection of the *prodnalog* and donations to the starving. In fact, the first collection of *prodnalog* was conducted under the slogan *Combat the famine*.⁴

The All-Russian Relief Committee, which abroad acquired the name of Gorky's Committee, organized branches in a number of other provinces and cities of Russia. It also launched a collection for money, food and clothing to benefit the starving. By August 13, the Committee succeeded in acquiring 58,379,890 rubles and a great deal of other donations in clothing and foodstuffs worth about 300 million rubles.⁵

On August 8, the editorial board of *Izvestiia* newspaper together with editors of other newspapers, decided to publish a newspaper *Pomoshch* (The Relief) dedicated to the relief effort. The government eventually granted permission for this publication. The circulation was 500,000 and each newspaper cost 2000 rubles. The

³Russian Information & Review, No. 4, November 15, 1921, p. 77.

⁴A. N. Kogan, "Antisovetskie deistviia ARA ..." in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 48, p. 237.

⁵V.I. Belokopytov. *Likholetie: iz istorii bor'by s golodom v Povolzh'e 1921-1922*. (Kazan): Tatarskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1974, p. 50.

net proceeds were donated to Pomgol.⁶ Members of the Pomgol played an important role in this publication. They wrote articles relating to the calamity in the Volga Valley and described the duties and obligations of the government and its citizens.

The editorial board misjudged the political situation and expressed their opinions far too openly on the pages of *Pomoshch*. The Bolshevik government did not welcome these remarks. The first issue published articles essentially of an organizational nature. In the second issue, E. Kuskova expressed her doubts whether “the collected means [of subsistence] will reach the starving and requested for some additional guarantee from the government”. Her doubts were caused by “the revolutionary lawlessness and lack of security”, as well as by “disregard for civil rights in Soviet Russia”. She was worried that “the foodstuffs may be seized by the military commanders.”⁷ V.K. Zaitsev in his article bluntly stated:

“The horrors of the starving regions were the result of the food requisitions and tax-in-kind collection in general in the regions hit by the crop failure.”⁸

The articles prepared for the third issue of *Pomoshch* were even more outspoken in criticism of the government’s policy in famine relief. For instance, N.D. Kondrachev in his article entitled *In the Upper Volga Valley* stated:

“the country does not have much confidence in the government’s undertakings and doubts if the collected foodstuffs will ever reach the starving.”

He also expressed his doubts whether “the local committees will be permitted to perform their functional duties, etc.”⁹ Some authors suggested that to make a collection of food more attractive:

⁶*Izvestia*, No. 174, August 9, 1921, p. 1.

⁷I.A. Chemeriskii. “Iz istorii klasovoi bor’by v 1921”, (Vserossiiskii komitet pomoshchi golodaiushchim) in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 77, p. 195.

⁸*Ibid*, p. 201.

⁹*Ibid*.

“the purchase of foodstuffs in the provinces with good crops should be done on a free market. Ports and railways should be made available for transport of foreign foodstuffs, as well as inspection of all the starving regions should be made an immediate goal of the government and of the All-Russian Relief Committee.”¹⁰

The Soviet authorities were not pleased with such outspoken criticism. They did not like the newspaper’s description of horrors in the Volga Valley, which the government tended to minimize. In fact, *Pravda* also published grim pictures of the conditions and it stated on July 16 that,

“the food crisis, which was already painfully evident in May, has now made it necessary to forget everything else. Even a shortage of fuel receded into the background. As a result of the continued and growing food crisis we are compelled to characterize the state of all branches of our national economy as being on the brink of catastrophe. This is not a phrase but a bitter reality.”¹¹

Therefore, *Pravda* confirmed that the images presented by *Pomoshch* were not a product of fantasy. *Pravda*, as a press organ of the Russian Communist Party, could afford to publish such information while *Pomoshch*, as well as the All-Russian Relief Committee, was viewed as the opposition and therefore, its criticism was interpreted as anti-Soviet propaganda. Some of the statements were called “an open lie” while others as “exaggerated” and the government claimed that *Pomoshch* deliberately presented the situation in the Volga Valley as hopeless. As a result, the government did not allow a third issue of *Pomoshch* to be published.

The opinions and ideas published on the pages of *Pomoshch* were enough to make the Committee unpopular with the Communist Party and the government. To make matters worse, Dr. Nikolai Kishkin, one of the leading members of the Committee, took a stand in the Moscow City Council and described Russia as “a land of fear, lawlessness and anarchy”. He invited the Soviet authorities to show before the whole world that “relief workers will have real protection of all cargoes and lifts

¹⁰Ibid, p. 202-203.

¹¹*Pravda*, July 16, 1921

designed for the starving.”¹² He had good reason to ask for such guarantees, but it was considered as an open challenge to the Soviet authorities and an expression of non-confidence. Kishkin considered the Soviet authorities as insincere in their desire to combat the famine and that they were trying to pursue their own interests at the expense of the starving.

Officially, Leo Kamenev was the Chairman of this Committee and A. Rykov, his Vice-Chairman, but it seems that they held these posts only nominally since the real Chairman, or the Executive Chairman, was considered to be Professor S. Prokopovich. The dislike for the All-Russian Relief Committee was exemplified by the fact that within Government circles, it was not called “Pomgol” but “Kukish” or “Prokukish”. This name was derived from the first syllables of its leading personalities: PROkopovich, KUSkova and KISHkin for “Prokukish”.

By the end of July, the Committee informed Lenin that it was ready to send a special delegation abroad scheduled for August 18, 1921. The delegation consisted of N.M. Kishkin, Golovin, S. Prokopovich, his wife E. Kuskova, and others. Passports were ready in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, but there was no European currency. At 2:00 p.m. on August 18, a messenger brought a letter from the government with a request to postpone the departure abroad and to concentrate the attention of the Committee members on the starving population in the Volga Valley. Eventually, the government, which temporarily postponed its reply, decided to refuse permission altogether. It suspected that these leading figures of political opposition wished to go abroad, not so much for soliciting assistance for the Volga Valley, but to communicate with Russian anti-Bolshevik groups known as the “white guards” in order to organize an overthrow of the Soviet Government. Instead of going abroad, the government in its meeting on the very same August 18, suggested that the Committee should travel to the starving regions and organize relief.¹³

On August 23, the Committee discussed the government’s reply and considered it contrary to the promised “free hand in organizing relief for the

¹²I.A. Chmeriskii, op. cit., ibid, vol. 77, p. 195.

¹³E. Kuskova. “Mesiats soglashatel’stva” in *Volia Rossii*, 1928, No. 5, p. 70.

starving." Challenging its refusal, the Committee insisted on an immediate departure of the delegation. In fact, by this time the Committee had procured visas for all members of the delegation for entering England, Germany and Sweden. In the Committee's opinion, it was useless to send the members into the starving regions with empty words and without food. The non-Communist members strongly protested and delivered a quasi-ultimatum while planning a great protest meeting on Saturday, August 27.¹⁴

No doubt the government was annoyed with such behaviour of the All-Russian Relief Committee because its promise of "a free hand" did not mean a free hand to travel abroad. The anti-Soviet elements of the Committee, as well as the opinions expressed in the Committee's bulletin *Pomoshch*, worried the Communist Party leaders. They were waiting for an opportunity to get rid of them and, if necessary, of the whole Committee. Since the Committee's loyalty to the Soviet Government, particularly that of the delegation, was questioned, the exit visas were again denied.

In Riga, on August 20, 1921, M. Litvinov, the Russian deputy of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and Walter L. Brown, from the American Relief Administration, signed an agreement by which the latter agreed to contribute relief activity to the Volga Valley or to Russia in general. Another agreement with Dr. F. Nansen, the representative of the International Red Cross and Red Cross Societies League, also came to a successful conclusion. Having secured the assistance of these relief organizations, the Soviet Russian Government did not require a non-partisan All-Russian Relief Committee for propaganda purposes or for actual relief work. It was now necessary to find a good reason to curtail its activity or abolish the committee altogether. This was a Cheka field of activity that did not present any difficulty.

At this time, the Antonov peasants' uprising in the Tambov province was crushed by the Soviet military. The Cheka insisted that some compromising material, discovered in Antonov's archives, indicated a connection of members from the All-

¹⁴*The Times*, (London), September 1, 1921, p. 10a.

Russian Relief Committee with the Russian counter-revolutionary forces abroad. In Petrograd, the Cheka arrested Professor V.N. Tagontsev and accused him of having a connection with American and French intelligence services. Arrests followed and among the arrested happened to be S.S. Manukhin, a member of the Petrograd Relief Committee.¹⁵ This was sufficient evidence to accuse the entire All-Russian Relief Committee of being involved in some conspiracy against the Soviet Government.

Perhaps the most perfidious role in these suspicions was played by the White Russian émigrés who quite openly stated in their publications that the Soviet power in Russia was falling apart and that the All-Russian Relief Committee would serve as the first transitional government of Russia.¹⁶ Moreover, they spread this information among the sensation-hungry Western journalists who were only too ready to publish it in their newspapers.

On August 26, 1921, the Cheka chief, Felix Dzierzhynski, and his deputy Joseph Unschlicht reported to Lenin this alleged conspiracy by S. Prokopovich, his wife E.D. Kuskova, and N.M. Kishkin. Both Dzierzhynski and Unschlicht proposed to arrest some members of the Committee but Lenin wanted to study all the available documents himself before any arrests were initiated.¹⁷

The next day at 4 o'clock, the Committee was to have a meeting with Chairman Kamenev. Lenin ordered Unschlicht to quickly arrest S. Prokopovich and all other non-communist members of the Relief Committee to prevent the meeting. The Cheka was unable to conduct the arrests in time and the meeting was still held:

"a number of guests were invited, including British and other journalists. When the meeting assembled at the time required, the chairman did not appear. Instead, there came a detachment of the Cheka whose leader announced that the Committee was dissolved and the members were under arrest."¹⁸

¹⁵I.A. Chemeriskii, *op. cit.*, *ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁶*The New York Times*, August 6, 1921, p. 1, col. 7.

¹⁷V.I. Lenin, *Biograficheskaya khronika*, vol. 11, p. 242.

¹⁸Harold H. Fisher, "The famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923; operations of the American Relief Administration." Freeport, NY; Books for Libraries Press, 1974, p. 79.

The arrests took place on the same day the first representatives reached Moscow. Presumably, the arrests were conducted to prevent members of the All-Russian Relief Committee from communicating with the Americans. Lenin and the Central Committee of the Communist Party were concerned that undesirable information would be provided. *The Times* correspondent wrote that, whatever the reasons, real or imaginary,

“the incident is further proof of the determination of the Soviet Government to confine contact between Russia and the outside world in connection with the distribution of relief as far as possible to communists.”¹⁹

Of all the members of the All-Russian Relief Committee only A.M. Gorky, V.N. Figner and P.N. Sidorin, a well-known co-operator, were left at liberty. Soon after, former tsarist minister N.N. Kutler was released from prison.

Dzierzhynski and Unschlicht assured Lenin that a search after the arrests

“fully confirmed that the Relief Committee abused its rights for active combat of the Soviet Government. It was connected with active Social-Revolutionaries abroad and with the white guard organizations and capitalist groups.”²⁰

On September 8, 1921, the dissolution of the All-Russian Relief Committee was reported in *Izvestiia* by the Cheka. Among other accusations, the Cheka stated that:

“from the days of existence of the Committee reports were reaching Cheka indicating that a group of members of the Committee has not repudiated its active political tasks and attempted to sensationalize the calamity in the Volga Valley as a means of political struggle and conspiracy against the Soviet Russia. They hoped for a new intervention of foreign capitalists in a different form”.²¹

¹⁹*The Times*, (London), September 1, 1921, p. 10.

²⁰V. I. Lenin, *Biograficheskaiia khronika*, vol. 11, p. 248.

²¹“Soobshchenie Vserossiiskoi Chrezvychainoi Komissii ob arrestakh vo Vserossiiskom Komitete Pomoshchi golodaiushchim”, *Izvestiia*, (Moscow), September 8, 1921.

Subsequently, the four members of the Committee, Prokopovich, Kuskova, Kishkin and Avsorkisov were tried and sentenced to death.²² Vladimir Korolenko, the Honorary Chairman of the Committee, who was then on his deathbed, was magnanimously “pardoned” by the Cheka. Korolenko had a chance to express his views about the accusations and reasons for dissolving the Relief Committee as “the worst of dirty political tricks, a dirty political trick by the government”²³ Later, the death penalty would be commuted and, upon the insistence of the Western powers, the four prisoners would be released and expelled from Russia. This marked the end of a noble effort to help the victims of the famine and end the unjustified hopes held by Russian emigrants waiting for the downfall of the Soviet regime.

The presence of any connections between the All-Russian Relief Committee and the anti-Bolshevik forces abroad is debatable. Some students of that period deny it. Nevertheless, it was used as a good public reason for the Soviet Government to abolish the Committee. According to A. Solzhenitsyn:

“the heart of the matter, however, was that theirs was the wrong hand to be offering food and could not be allowed to feed the starving.”²⁴

This view is well confirmed by Soviet sources that state:

“some counter-revolutionary movements attempted to join the relief work for the starving in the Soviet land in order to gain the authority among the people and to revitalize the world political organizations.”²⁵

So it was not what they *did* that lead the authorities to dissolve the All-Russian Relief Committee, but rather what they *might have done*.

The official explanation for the Western world was published in *The New York Times* on August 28, 1921 that:

²²*The New York Times*, September 25, 1921, p. 2, col. 7.

²³Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn. *The Gulag Archipelago*, 1918-1956; an experiment in literary investigation. (New York; Harper & Row, 1974) vol. 1, p. 34.

²⁴A. Solzhenitsyn, *ibid*.

²⁵Chemerisskii, *op. cit. Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 77, p. 191-192.

“the liquidation of the Committee was due to the fact that it unfortunately became the instrument which the French and outside white press tried to use to overthrow the Soviet power.”²⁶

The different publication dates indicate that the news for the foreign press was released over a week earlier than that issued for the Russian media.

The Russian trade unions, cooperatives and the government were the first ones to render any relief to the starving in the Volga Valley. The relief started late and the population, having no hope of obtaining any help, were leaving their homesteads and moving wherever they could. Roads and railways were filled with refugees, homeless and starving. The government attempted to regulate the fleeing population and issued some 30 decrees but to no avail. No registration of refugees was even attempted as to their coming and going. The government created a special committee for the evacuation of people from the famine stricken provinces. By mid-September 1921, a total of 474,000 persons had been transferred from the famine provinces. Two hundred and twenty thousand people were planning to transfer to Turkestan in Central Asia. However, it proved impossible due to the difficulty of making suitable arrangements and the plan had to be abandoned.²⁷ Most of those evacuated in an orderly manner were the workers from Samara, Saratov and Simbirsk. Of the 399,218 persons evacuated from the Volga Valley provinces, more than two-thirds were the workers who were directed to places where they could be employed. Among those places was the Donets Basin in Ukraine.²⁸ Many peasants left without awaiting evacuation orders. There is strong evidence that about 600,000 people migrated independently.²⁹ According to some sources, by the end of 1921, the government had evacuated 875,000 persons.³⁰

At first, all the attention was focused upon relief for children. By mid-August 1921, the government had organized sanitary trains. The representatives of the

²⁶*The New York Times*, August 30, 1921, p. 2, col. 6.

²⁷*Russian Information and Review*, No. 4, November 15, 1921, p. 80.

²⁸*Ibidem*.

²⁹M. Asquith. *Famine*, p. 20.

³⁰*Russian Information and Review*, No. 4, November 15, 1921, p. 80.

Commissariat for Health and the Children's Welfare Commission accompanied these trains to make the necessary arrangements for the orphans and abandoned children in the areas where the trains were stationed. There is no data as to the number of trains and how many children they fed. Train No. 12, fed a total of 43,500 children from August 18 to September 3, 1921.

Until September 30, 1921, the total donations collected in Russia amounted to 5,617,00 rubles while the government contributed 37,389,000,000 rubles. Although the amount of money was large, its purchasing power was minimal.

More effective in combating the famine and saving people's lives from starvation were the "16,600 tons of food products and vegetables and 100 tons of other products" These were received for distribution among the starving from the more prosperous provinces. The province of Kursk made a special effort and contributed 930 tons of grain and the province of Orel contributed 900 tons of food.³¹

The government also attempted to establish rest homes for refugees, but they became more like houses of death. It proved impossible to maintain these homes as they quickly became spreaders of contagious disease and the government was forced to close them.³² One Russian observer in Simbirsk wrote:

"But it could not close the railway station to stop the great wave of starving peasants who were coming to the city to die."³³

³¹*Russian Information and Review*, No. 4, November 15, 1921, p. 77.

³²H. H. Fisher. *Famine In Soviet Russia*, p. 90.

³³Quote by H.H. Fisher in his *Famine In Soviet Russia*, p. 90.

The American Relief Administration

The Volga Valley famine eventually became front-page news in all the newspapers of Europe and America. The appeals of Patriarch Tikhon and Maksim Gorky were publicized in the West and commented upon in editorials by journalists and politicians. The response to these appeals was sympathetic from the Western powers, better than anyone in Russia would have expected. A number of philanthropic relief organizations expressed their willingness and readiness to help the unfortunate victims of the drought and crop failure.

The first and most serious offer came from the American Relief Administration (ARA). It was organized when the United States entered World War I and President Woodrow Wilson appointed Herbert Hoover as its Chairman. The ARA distributed food to the starving people of Europe with priority given to undernourished children. Fourteen million families pledged donations of food to this program. By the end of the war, Herbert Hoover was also named head of the Supreme Economic Council at the Peace Conference in Paris.

On July 23, Hoover sent a telegram to Gorky in reply to his appeal. Hoover informed Gorky that his organization was ready

“to furnish assistance to invalids and one million children in Russia on conditions that have been laid down by Relief Administration, in the effort to help distressed people in 23 other countries.”¹

¹ *The New York Times*, July 26, 1921, p.14, col. 2; The already mentioned Soviet author Belokopytov states that the first who responded to Gorky's appeal was "international proletariat" and to prove it - he says that "the Comintern appealed through the means of radio to the working class of all countries" - (See Belokopytov. *Likholetie*, p.57). This, however, requires a correction. The Comintern was Lenin's instrument, presided by the Russian Bolshevik G.E. Zinov'ev. It was a month later, on September 21, 1921, that an International Workers' Relief Committee to Aid the Starving Russia was formed under the chairmanship of Clara Zetkin with Wilhem Müntzenberg as a secretary. But, by the time this Committee was formed, the ARA and the International Red Cross had already signed an agreement with the Soviet Russian Government as to how to bring in effective relief to the Volga Valley.

There was, however, one additional condition:

“that Soviet authorities must immediately release all Americans held prisoners in Soviet Russia, and some of them were also starving... The immediate release of these prisoners is the absolute *sine qua non* of any assistance from the United States.”²

Lenin and the Soviet Government tentatively accepted the offer and replied on July 28 that they would welcome further discussions to reach an agreement. This meeting would be held in Moscow, or outside of Russia, in Riga or Revel. However, when the news spread in the United States that Hoover made an offer of relief, it evoked some criticism on the grounds:

“that food sent to Russia for children by the American Relief Administration would in reality be a boon to the Soviet Government and would aid the government to bolster itself up still further.”³

“The Russians, on the other hand, although needing aid badly, feared that American bread might be used as a weapon against the Soviet regime. They remembered Hoover as the outspoken foe of Bolshevism and recalled the recent experience of the Bela Kun regime in Hungary, in the suppression of which food agents played no small part. Supplying famished people with American canned goods was considered as effective a weapon as the dispatch of occupational troops; to refuse aid was tantamount to destruction of the regime.”⁴

Lenin wrote to Molotov on August 21, 1921:

“Here is a very complicated play. The meanness of America, of Hoover, of the Council of the League of Nations, is very special. We have to punish Hoover, to slap him in the face publicly so that all the world could see it, and the same deserves the League of Nations. It is difficult to do it but it has to be done.”⁵

Soon after, the deputy People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, M. Litvinov

²Ibid.

³*The New York Times*, July 29, 1929, p. 15 : 3.

⁴Anatol G. Mazour. *Russia: Past and Present*, p. 621.

⁵V.I. Lenin. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 53, p. 110.

(Maksim Wallach) left for Riga to meet with Hoover. Although the government was pleased to start discussions, some of the Soviet politicians cynically remarked:

“Mr. Hoover puts in balance seven or eight American prisoners and the lives of millions of starving Russian women and children and holds them of equal weight.”⁶

The American press promptly highlighted this cynical remark, but Hoover paid it little attention.

On August 4, the British Save the Children Fund Committee informed the Russian People’s Commissar for Foreign Trade, L.B. Krassin that they were ready to receive some children from the starving regions.⁷ *The Times* wrote:

“The Russian calamity made a vivid appeal to the sympathies of the Prime Minister Lloyd George who, dismissing interjection regarding Bolshevism, realized that the call of humanity transcended everything. We are faced with the most terrible visitation that had afflicted Europe and the world for centuries. In the districts bordering Volga, crops had completely failed and crops in the neighbouring districts were barely sufficient to satisfy the needs of the districts. They estimated that 25 million people would require relief. The British Trade representative in Moscow reported that inhabitants of stricken districts said that there was no prospect of help reaching them in time to prevent starvation and they are travelling in large masses in different directions.”⁸

Subsequently, the Prime Minister appealed to the British nation to contribute to the Russian Relief Fund to relieve the misery of the Volga Valley population. Soon after the Russian Famine Relief Committee was formed in London and having expressed sympathies and compassion to the Russian people, the British Government assigned for relief purposes the sum of £100,000 sterling.⁹ The Soviet officials were somewhat disappointed with Great Britain’s relatively small contribution.

In addition to the government, *An Appeal to the Nation* to help the victims of

⁶*The New York Times*, July 27, 1921, p. 14:6.

⁷V.I. Lenin, *Biograficheskaja khronika*, vol. 11, p. 171.

⁸*The Times*, August 17, 1921, p. 8d.

⁹Rubinshtein, “Bor’ba Sovetskoi Rossii s golodom”, *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 22, p. 27.

the famine in Russia was issued by the Imperial War Relief Fund which was signed by the Lord Mayor of London, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor Lord Crewe and many other dignitaries in Great Britain.¹⁰ On August 16 a full-page advertisement appeared in *The Times* by the Save the Children Fund stating that the drought in Russia was “the most terrible devastation that has afflicted the world for centuries” and it promised to feed 100,000 children in Saratov and 30,000 in the border states.¹¹

On August 9, 1921, Pope Benedict XV appealed for aid for the starving and plague-afflicted Russians and invited all Christians and civilized people to contribute generously to this cause. He added that he was deeply touched by the recent appeal and invited the Secretary of State to call the attention of all governments to the necessity for common action to help Russia.¹²

On August 10, 1921, the first meeting took place in the Latvian capital city of Riga between William L. Brown, from the American Relief Administration (ARA), and Maksim Litvinov, the Russian deputy of People’s Commissar for External Affairs. At that time, Brown presented a list of 76 detained Americans who were not permitted to leave Soviet Russia. The negotiations took longer than the Americans expected. Although the Russians did not strongly object to freeing the American citizens, there was a serious disagreement as to the system and form of relief distribution. “The negotiation of this agreement was a difficult business”, wrote H.H. Fisher, the author of the study *The Famine in Soviet Russia*. The vital point of disagreement in negotiations proved to be the question of the ultimate control of relief work. In the discussions the words “food as a weapon” was constantly on Litvinov’s lips.¹³ The Soviet Government was unwilling to allow the Americans unrestricted control of food distribution, instead they wanted them

“to use the Soviet organizations for distribution or they should establish their

¹⁰*The Times*, (London), August 11, 1921, p. 9c.

¹¹*The Times*, (London), September 1, 1921.

¹²*New York Times*, August 10, 1921, p. 5:3-4; *The Times*, (London), August 10, 1921, p. 8:3.

¹³Fisher, op. cit., p. 62.

own distribution organization under Soviet control.”¹⁴

It should be emphasized that post-war Western Europe was in a state of economic depression and the United States was already engaged there in relief activity, having collected \$30 million for that purpose. An economic downturn in 1921 had a strong impact on the United States and American benevolence had been extended to its limits.¹⁵

While ARA representatives continued negotiations in Riga, the economists in America considered it impossible to have a successful campaign for benevolent funds in the United States, following so quickly after the European Relief Council drive for \$30 million. For this reason the President of the United States, Warren G. Harding, declared that there would be no appeal for funds from the public and requested that the distribution of relief from the United States be carried out through one organization. He ordered that immediate steps be taken to rush food to Russian children who were initially the main objective of the ARA:¹⁶

“The only alternative of benevolent support to meet the financial requirements was federal aid. Mr. Hoover placed the problem before President Harding, calling his attention to the difficulties of our own farmers at this time, particularly as regards the enormous surplus of corn and the fact that this cereal was selling at 11 cents per bushel and was actually being burned. President Harding was sympathetic and recommended legislation in his message of December 6, 1921, and after hearings a bill was passed (Act of December 22, 1921) which authorized the Congress to cause to be expended out of the capital of the United States Grain Corporation a sum not exceeding \$20,000,000 for corn, seed grain and milk for the starving people of Russia. Corn was specifically mentioned as it was a distressed product in the United States and at the same time the Russians were familiar with its use as food.”¹⁷

¹⁴*The Times*, August 18, 1921, p. 8e.

¹⁵Frank M. Surface and Raymond L. Bland. *American food in the World War and Reconstruction period: operations of the organizations under the direction of Herbert Hoover 1914 to 1924.* (Stanford University: Stanford University Press, 1921, p. 245).

¹⁶*New York Times*, August 19, 1921, p. 1:5.

¹⁷F.M. Surface, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

In addition, the American Red Cross agreed to provide \$3,600,000 worth of medical supplies to Russia which unfortunately was insufficient to meet the demand. The War Department had a considerable surplus stock of hospital and medical supplies. Through Mr. Hoover's efforts, a resolution was introduced and passed in Congress, authorizing the President to transfer to the ARA medical and hospital supplies, not to exceed \$4,000,000 cost value, without further charge.¹⁸

To assure sufficient funds for relief work, Mr. Hoover urged the Soviet authorities to do their share and convinced them to assign part of their gold treasury, specifically gold coins, for purchasing seed grain and food supplies. By the end of December 1921, the Soviet Government placed gold, chiefly gold rubles, at the disposal of the ARA. This action was followed within a very few days by a similar agreement with the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, which placed approximately \$2,000,000 in the form of gold at the ARA's disposal.¹⁹

In the meantime, alarming news reached the Soviet authorities that the harvest would be no more than half of what it was in the great famine year of 1891. The harvest was a complete failure in the provinces of Lower and Middle Volga Valley. The revised data as to the extent of the famine indicated that:

“for the immediate needs of the famine zone it is estimated that at least 90,000 tons of grain, besides seeds for sowing, are needed. In Russia itself help can be expected only from the Ukraine.”²⁰

In such a situation, the Soviet authorities had to agree to the condition that the ARA be allowed to set up the necessary organizations for executing its relief work free from governmental or other interference. The central and local Soviet authorities had the right of representation therein.²¹ This was stipulated in Paragraph 12 of the Riga Agreement between the ARA and the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet

¹⁸Ibid, p. 246.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰*The Times*, (London), August 20, 1921, p. 8e.

²¹Agreement between the ARA and RSFSR, H. H. Fisher. *Famine in Soviet Russia* : Appendix a. Document 1, No. 12.

Republic, signed on August 20, 1921 by Maksim Litvinov on behalf of the RSFSR and Walter Lyman Brown on behalf of the ARA.²²

According to the Riga Agreement, the Russian Government obliged itself to create the necessary conditions for ARA activity in Russia. It allowed American personnel free movement to execute their duties and secure transport, living quarters, storage, etc. The Soviet Government was to pay all expenses connected with the organization of relief within the country. The Riga Agreement guaranteed that the ARA supplies:

“will not go to the general adult population nor to the army, navy or government employees but only to such persons as designated in Paragraphs (8) and (24).”

Paragraph 8 deals with children and paragraph 24 states:

“relief distribution will be to the children and sick without regard to race, religion or social or political status.”²³

Paragraph 24 was essential since the Soviet Government had practiced a class approach in dealing with its citizens. It divided them into five groups with five priorities excluding the highest echelon of the Communist Party leaders and Government. The groups were prioritized in the following manner:

1. The most favoured and with highest priority were the Red Army, the naval fleet, factory workers and government employees of state institutions and establishments.
2. Railway and water transport employees formed the second group.
3. Railway and water transport dependents, if unable to work.
4. All persons relying on the state welfare (invalids, students, etc.)
5. The rest of the population was deprived of any state food provisions and

²²ARA Bulletin.

²³“American terms accepted”; *The Times*, (London), August 22, 1921, p. 8 : 4.

were left to fend for themselves.²⁴

Some sources testified that once wealthy peasants and their families were deprived of state care and even of foreign relief on the grounds of their social origin.²⁵

After the Riga Agreement was signed, it was reported from Moscow that the Soviet Government was disappointed because the Americans controlled distribution and this seemed rather dangerous to the Soviets. Karol Radek (Sobelson), a leading member of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, wrote in *Pravda*:

“the arrangement is equivalent to permitting international counter-revolutionary elements to form political forces on the Soviet soil.”²⁶

Commenting on this situation, the *New York Times* correspondent stated that it was impossible for the Soviets to refuse help because the famine stricken population would then revolt.²⁷ Indeed:

“the Soviet Government was in no position to refuse it since it did not have any seed reserves. All it could give was grain collected on the next *prodnalog* on the 1921 crop.”²⁸

Another American relief organization known as the Russian Commission of the Near East Relief, comprised five members and headed by Albert N. Johnson, visited Eastern Europe with the objective:

“to assemble information as to economic conditions and reputed destitution in Russia, in cooperation with the Russian Government.”²⁹

The Commission's intention was to place:

²⁴ *Obshchee delo*, No. 429, September 19, 1921, p. 1:4.

²⁵ Asquith, *Famine*, p. 15-16.

²⁶ *Pravda*.

²⁷ *New York Times*, August 25, 1921, p. 15:4.

²⁸ A.N. Kogan. “Bor'ba s golodom...”. *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 48, p. 236.

²⁹ *The Nation*, vol. 113, No. 2994, December 7, 1921, p. 648.

“this information, when gathered, before such American organizations as might be designated to represent the American people in extending relief to Russia.”³⁰

In their four weeks of travel, the Commission visited the Caucasus, Northern Caucasus, several provinces in Russia, and also Kharkiv, the capital city of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. For reasons unknown, the Commission failed to visit the five southern starving provinces of Ukraine.

When the Riga Agreement was accepted as a working charter, several organizations incorporated in the European Relief Council held a meeting in August 1921 in Washington D.C. An agreement was needed to give support to the relief work in Russia.

In the USA, an organization named Friends of Soviet Russia, already existed which also collected money to help the starving in Russia. However, this society did not join the ARA, International Red Cross, or the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, but worked independently. According to the editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, Mr. Abraham Cohan, the Friends of Soviet Russia did not send its collection to Russia, but used a large part of its funds for support of the

“devilish work which the communists have undertaken against labour and socialist forces in America.”³¹

³⁰ibid.

³¹*The New York Times*, July 28, 1922, p. 15:5.

The Nansen Mission

On August 15, the Joint Council of the International Red Cross Committee and the League of the Red Cross Societies decided to convene a conference in Geneva for discussion of relief for the starving people of Russia. Twenty governments, approximately thirty Red Cross societies and leading relief organizations, such as the Committee for Relief Credits, the ARA, the Society of Friends (Quakers) and also Pan-Russian Relief Committee were represented. Altogether over 100 delegates participated in this conference. It was decided to immediately send aid to the stricken areas, provided the Soviet authorities guaranteed foreign delegates complete freedom to supervise and distribute supplies. Subsequently, the Allied Supreme Council created an International Commission for Russian Relief that eventually was joined by all European relief organizations working in the famine areas. This International Commission was represented by all principal allies. Its main function, besides providing an international framework for the administration of aid, was to coordinate relief plans and prevent duplication amongst the various organizations in the field. American relief bodies were grouped under the vast ARA, chaired by Hoover, and substantially backed by the United States Congress.¹ At this conference on August 18, 1921, Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, the well known sixty-year old Norwegian Arctic explorer, philanthropist and humanitarian, was elected the High Commissioner.² His authority was to negotiate preliminary agreements with the Soviet Government, regulate dispatches of food products and oversee their distribution.³

Meanwhile, the International Red Cross called another conference in Geneva on August 25, 1921, which was attended by delegates from forty-eight Red Cross and philanthropic associations and twelve governments. They also met to discuss the

¹M. Asquith, *Famine*. — (London, 1943), p. 15-16.

²F. Nansen born in Frøen, Norway, October 10, 1861, died in Oslo, May 13, 1930.

³Rubinshtein. "Bor'ba Sovetskoi Rossii ..., *Istoricheskie zapiski*, tom 20, p. 12.

Russian famine and to plan measures for its relief. This body met again in Paris on August 30 to which the British, French, Belgian and the Italian governments sent their delegates. It eventually came to include all European organizations working in the famine area.

Soon afterward, Dr. Nansen left for Moscow to negotiate his Agreement with the Soviet Government, which was signed on August 27, 1921. Under the Nansen Agreement which included the English Quakers, the Soviet authorities defrayed a very large proportion of relief costs while guaranteeing free transport of relief supplies and equipment in sealed wagons from port to destination, free postal and telegraphic facilities and free travel for relief personnel. The government was also obliged to provide free living accommodations and storage depots for any subordinate Russian staff.⁴

The Nansen Agreement differed in at least one very important aspect to the ARA Agreement. While the ARA had its own personnel to distribute and control aid, the Nansen Agreement permitted the distribution of aid through the local government agencies. According to this Agreement :

“all the problems connected with distribution of food products, were to be resolved by the Soviet authorities.”

Knowing that the Bolsheviks conducted a policy of class struggle and favoured the poor as their supporters, this arrangement evoked harsh criticism in some circles of Western Europe.

The Times praised the ARA but criticized Dr. Nansen's Agreement:

“It is particularly unfortunate that Dr. Nansen, acting for the Red Cross Societies and other philanthropic organizations, has made with the Soviet Government a thoroughly unbusiness-like arrangement which leaves open all sorts of opportunities for abuses. It is regrettable that this arrangement, made by Dr. Nansen during a two-day visit to Moscow, in the course of which he

⁴M. Asquith, *Famine*, (Quaker work in Russia 1921-1923) - with foreword by Melville Mackenzie. (London : Oxford University Press, 1933) p. 30.

did not consult with foreign and impartial observers, has been confirmed by the International Red Cross without amendments. In a matter where the need for help is so pitiful and so urgent, the Red Cross should have taken pains to insure public confidence by insisting on guarantees for a proper distribution of supplies far more satisfactory than those assured by Dr. Nansen.”⁵

The French periodical *Journal des Débats* was rather quick to recognize the Bolshevik policy and, on September 21, wrote that Nansen was outwitted by the Soviets and congratulated Hoover on his farsightedness in exacting full control of the supplies the ARA was sending to Russia. The *Journal* wrote:

“The play of the Bolsheviks is perfectly clear. They see in the famine only an opportunity to be turned to their profit and in the offers of aid only an occasion to fortify their power. The dissolution of the All-Russian Committee and the arrest of the members show the Soviet Government mock bourgeois philanthropists. It does not even consider it necessary to conceal its purposes. On August 26, Zinov’ev declared that the All-Russian Committee was constituted only to obtain food from western simpletons.”⁶

Soon after Pope Benedict XV notified the Joint Council of the International Committee of the Red Cross League and Red Cross Societies that he would contribute 1,000,000 lire (about £12,000 sterling, at present rates) for famine relief in Russia. One half of the funds was to be placed at Dr. Nansen’s disposal, the other half to go to the Save the Children Fund, which was feeding children in Russia under Dr. Nansen’s general direction.⁷

The Allied Supreme Council also discussed the problem of the Russian famine and there was almost unanimous agreement that some aid had to be provided. However, the stipulated conditions that the Bolshevik Government agree to pay the debts contracted by the tsarist government was unacceptable to the Kremlin. The Soviet Government, hostile to the entire Western world, with its agitation aiming for a worldwide revolution, was itself an impediment on the road to relief realization.

⁵*The Times*, (London), Monday, September 19, 1921, p. 11.

⁶*The New York Times*, September 2, 1921, p. 2 : 1.

⁷*The Times*, (London), September 22, 1921, p. 9 : 2.

Here Russia was viewed as an ally in the war with the Central Powers and the Allied Supreme Council felt some kind of moral obligation to help the Russian people in this terrible situation. *The Times* wrote:

“Russia, our ally who fought bravely at our side in the war, is in the grasp of a system that has not made any effort whether from within, or from outside Russia, to save the victims of the famine a torturing, almost insoluble problem.”⁸

Nevertheless, the Council appointed an International Relief Commission, with the intention of visiting and helping the famine area of Russia. The French diplomat, Joseph Noulens, was appointed as the head of the Commission. Noulens, formerly a French ambassador to Russia, was considered by Bolshevik circles to be one of the chief organizers of the anti-Soviet intervention in 1918-1919. They blamed him for financially supporting Boris Savinkov, who was one of the leaders of the Russian anti-Bolshevik movements and revolts and cooperated with the Czechoslovak Legion, and other “white guard” organizations. There was no doubt that Noulens was *persona non grata* for the Bolshevik government. Therefore, his appointment was an undiplomatic move on the part of the Western allies. It is no wonder that Moscow denied the Commission, consisting of some twenty-odd members, permission to tour the starving regions.⁹

In view of the denial, the International Relief Commission called another meeting on September 16 to discuss the latest events. It “requested each government to appeal for support of its national Red Cross Society.” It also asked Dr. Nansen to change his agreement with the Soviet Russian Government to make it correspond with those conditions negotiated by the ARA. However, nothing came of this request.¹⁰

In spite of the Soviet refusal to allow the International Commission to enter Russia, it persisted in its efforts to coordinate relief on sound and impregnable

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *The Times*, (London), September 14, 1921, p. 8.

¹⁰ H.H. Fisher. *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 67.

principles and invited the cooperation of neutral and former enemy nations to work on humanitarian grounds. This was not just idle talk. As early as July 24, 1921, *The New York Times* reported from Copenhagen:

“several steamers carrying foreign foodstuffs and other supplies, have left here in the past few days for Russia ... American flour and bacon were included in cargoes.”¹¹

There were also some relief organizations, which did not join the Nansen Mission and attempted to work on their own. Among them was one of the smaller relief delegations, sent into Russia by the “Second International”, whose headquarters were in Amsterdam, Holland. This organization was criticized by Lenin, creator of the Third International, and was contemptuously referred to by the Bolsheviks as “The Yellow International” as distinct from the “Third” or “Red International” of Moscow. Several of its delegates of various nationalities arrived in Russia and were summarily ordered to vacate their train, not far from the frontier, with no accommodation or food. The Soviet officials would not even allow the delegates to take some of the food from the relief trucks they were conveying. It took the delegates several days to extricate themselves from this highly uncomfortable predicament, which naturally made them furious. They were then kept a week in Moscow without being received by the appropriate commissar, to whom they dispatched a strong ultimatum. The Second or “Yellow International” was Menshevik propaganda against the Bolsheviks.¹²

* * * * *

On August 27, 1921, the Russian unit, comprising seven people of the ARA and headed by Phillip Carrol, arrived in Moscow. Immediately, they encountered a

¹¹*The Times*, (London), September 19, 1921 (editorial).

¹²M. Atkinson. "Soviet Russia and the famine" in *The nineteenth century and after*. (London) vol. 41, Jan-June 1922, p. 605.

minor setback. The Russians were prepared to receive only three persons, as originally planned, and did not have accommodations for the additional four arrivals. Since it was a Saturday afternoon, and the offices were closed, nothing could be done and the four additional unexpected ARA officers had to spend the nights in a railway car at Moscow railway station.¹³

The first food shipment of 600 tons of rice and sugar for children of Moscow arrived on August 27, 1921 in Riga from Danzig aboard a German vessel. On September 1, 1921, the S.S. Phoenix reached Petrograd with 700 tons of balanced rations. The ARA relief work was about to begin. The next day, workmen arrived to unload the ship, but in fact they wanted to be the first ones to obtain relief. The sacks filled with flour, rice and sugar were torn apart and their contents rapidly disappeared into the pockets of hungry workers. Afterwards, they proceeded to unload the ship contents for the starving population. The sentries were unable to prevent this rapacious behaviour. The ARA supervisor Donald Lowrie objected to such practices, which in turn enraged Lenin who considered it an affront to the Soviet State. He advised to keep all the "Hooverites" under strict surveillance and to arrange some kind of a scandal for them.¹⁴

The first relief kitchens for children were organized in Petrograd on September 7 and in Moscow on September 11, 1921.

As soon as the Riga Agreement was signed, Colonel William N. Haskell was appointed director of all the ARA operations in Russia. He arrived in Moscow on September 21 and, having received first-hand information from his colleagues about the situation in Moscow, he immediately went to Kazan, the capital city of the famine stricken Tatar Autonomous Republic in the Volga River Valley. From there he went to Tsaritsyn, making numerous side trips by motorcar to investigate famine and transportation problems in the area where the ARA planned to develop its activities.¹⁵

The ARA work was divided into several departments or divisions according

¹³H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 71-72.

¹⁴V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 53, p. 177-178.

¹⁵*New York Times*, September 22, 1921, p. 3:4.

to their primary occupations:

- **Food Supply Division** – food supplies were purchased in the United States and brought to the farmland countries via American vessels to the Baltic and Black Sea ports
- **Food Remittance Division** – distributed food packages bought in America or Western Europe for delivery as gifts to the purchasers' relatives or friends in famished countries or cities
- **Medical Division** headed by Dr. Henry Beeuwkes
- **Traffic Division**
- **Liaison Division** – performed certain consular functions providing for the repatriation of American citizens in Russia
- **Communication Division** – handled relations with the Russian press and with foreign correspondents.
- **Motor Transport Division** – gathered and collated statistics and general information concerning the conditions in the areas in which the ARA was interested. This Division was headed by Professor Harold H. Fisher.

As far as communication with the Russian Government was concerned, Lev Kamenev, the Chairman of Moscow Soviet was to be the contact officer. However, by the end of September, Alexander Eiduk, a Latvian, was appointed as Representative Plenipotentiary of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic with all foreign relief organizations.

The distribution of relief was to be done through the local committees established on a strictly non-sectarian and non-political basis. In a short time, thousands of such committees were organized and some 6,000 feeding stations were opened in different towns and villages of the Volga Valley. Those committees were usually under the chairmanship of the local doctor or school teacher and embraced every section of the local community in their membership. Supervision of these committees and the direction of work was performed by the Americans. According to

some statements, there had been faithful cooperation almost everywhere.¹⁶

In most cases, the local officials were unaware of the Riga Agreement under which the ARA was to operate and were unfamiliar with the system of organization and control. H.H. Fisher wrote:.

“During these first days the local officials, practically without exception, gave their full cooperation in assisting the ARA to create its own organization although it was independent and functioned on a non-partisan basis. There was an evident desire to show a friendly spirit.”¹⁷

It was not quite the same with the higher officials with whom the ARA encountered two imposing obstacles. The first obstacle was the attempts of the government to circumvent the Riga Agreement wherever possible and the second obstacle was the Soviet attitude towards the ARA officials holding the positions of greatest responsibility in the proposed committee.

“While recognizing the right of the ARA under the Riga Agreement to form independent committees, Lev Kamenev flatly refused to agree that any, except an appointee of his government, should sit with the representatives of the ARA on the central controlling committee of the RAKPD.”

The Soviets would only deal exclusively with the ARA and not with unofficial Russians.¹⁸

The selection of inspectors, administrators, and kitchen managers was not an easy matter. In other European countries where the ARA performed relief work, it was straightforward to find someone with administrative experience in almost every city or town. This was almost impossible in Russia. The reason was that the class from which volunteer workers would naturally have been drawn, had entirely disappeared, and those who had been identified with public service of this kind before the revolution were dead, in exile or thoroughly terrorized and themselves the

¹⁶“The Russian famine tragedy” - in *Current history*, vol. 16, p. 148.

¹⁷H.H. Fisher, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 78.

neediest objects of charity.¹⁹ Almost everywhere the Soviet authorities tried to appoint their own people, not because they were qualified for the job but because they enjoyed the confidence of the Party and Government. When the ARA officials managed to appoint a qualified person against the wishes of the Communists, these appointees were viewed with suspicion as spies and counter-revolutionaries because they felt the ARA was engaged in subversive work. One of the Soviet Russian historians wrote:

“There could be no doubt that one of the main task[s] which the ARA was obliged to do for the United States was espionage. In fact, there could not be any better camouflage for espionage than a stamp of non-governmental semi-philanthropic organization headed by army officers in a role of food distributor and enjoying full freedom of movement and contact all over the country.”²⁰

Another historian wrote a lengthy article entitled *Subversive Activity of the ARA in Soviet Russia*. The author states that the ARA, while in Soviet Russia, endeavoured to bring together all anti-Soviet elements in order to reinforce counter-revolutionary groups. “Reviewing the applications filled by the ARA employees shows that it was a leading intention in all its activity”²¹ wrote A.N. Kogan. He enumerated all the sins of those enemies of the Soviet State, who could not be trusted and yet were hired for ARA work:

“The ARA clerk, originally from a petit bourgeois family, had completed a high school education, and had been convicted for desertion from the Red Army; the office cleaner - a woman originally from a noble family, who knew three languages; the provincial instructor - from a petit bourgeois family, had lived abroad and was convicted for storing counter-revolutionary literature; a clerk in charge of business correspondence - a lady of a noble family who used to live abroad and visited Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Romania and Poland; the manager of the transport section was of peasant origin, but had a high school education and had been abroad; an accountant - originally from the gentry, completed education in the Theological Seminary

¹⁹Ibid, op. cit., p. 92.

²⁰H.L. Rubinshtein. *Bor'ba Sovetskoi Rossii s golodom*, p. 9.

²¹A.N. Kogan, op. cit., *Istoricheskie zapiski*.

and was tried for counter-revolutionary activity; another instructor was also from a gentry family who had completed his education in Munich university; a registration clerk - from a noble family, educated in the Smolny Institute, educational institution for daughters of noble families. In addition to that she stayed also in Germany, Austria and Italy; another clerk - hereditary citizen who had travelled at least over half of Europe; the stock manager - of German nationality, who had stayed in Germany, Austria, Italy and Turkey.”²²

In analyzing the above-described “subversive elements”, it is clear that an education was not an asset in the original Soviet society but rather a liability. Travel outside of Russia and knowledge of foreign languages were also considered disqualifying elements for a good Soviet citizen. Subsequently, every ARA employee of Russian nationality was considered to be, at best, a potential spy. Therefore, the Cheka kept Russian ARA employees under constant surveillance, harassed them and frequently arrested them.

On November 4, 1921, the provincial Cheka of Samara arrested the assistant to the ARA Director, Aleksander Borodin, who for several years used to live in Germany as a commercial businessman.²³ At the same time a correspondence clerk in the ARA office, Nadezhda Mukhanova was arrested because she was of a noble family and stayed for some time in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy and Switzerland.²⁴ In January 1922, the Cheka arrested the ARA manager of medical stocks in Samara. A man by the name Illin whom they accused of connections “with bandits” in Petrograd, allegedly ran away to prevent his arrest, and hid himself under “the warm wing” of the ARA under an assumed name of Ailan.²⁵ In fact, it was not an assumed name but his own name “Illin” pronounced by the Americans as “Ailen”. H. H. Fisher wrote:

“This epidemic of arrests threatened to terrorize into ineffectiveness the whole ARA distributing organization, just as it was beginning to take shape

²²Ibid vol. 29, p. 10

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid, p. 11.

²⁵Ibid.

and show the results of the desperately energetic efforts of the Americans.”²⁶

Four districts were created in the Volga Valley: Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara and Saratov. This is where the first feeding points were established. In Saratov, however, the British Save the Children Fund also arrived at the same time as the ARA. Subsequently, the territory was divided: the British had the west side of the Volga River while the ARA had the east side.

In response to Lenin's appeal, the International Federation of Trade Unions met in Berlin on August 13-14, 1921, and also considered the question of relief for starving Russia. Subsequently, appeals were issued and funds were collected from 13 various Western European countries which amounted to 48,180 sterling. The International Council of Trade Unions signed an agreement with the Central Pomgol on October 18, 1921 where a number of clauses were identical with the Nansen Agreement.²⁷

* * * * *

In spite of all the difficulties, the ARA continued its work by establishing communal kitchens for children and adults.

“By December 1921, seventy days after the signing of the agreement permitting relief, 567,020 persons were receiving each day a balanced ration of American food in 2,997 ARA feeding points set up in 191 towns and villages of the regions of greatest need, from Petrograd on the Baltic to the Astrakhan on the Caspian.”²⁸

The extent of tragedy that struck the Volga Valley could not have been properly evaluated until it was seen by the Americans themselves. Contemporary documents even testify to cannibalism. This was the reason the ARA staff could not

²⁶H.H. Fisher, *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 124.

²⁷*Russian Information and Review*, No. 5, December 1, 1921, p. 104.

²⁸H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

limit its relief to children alone, as originally planned, but had to extend it to the starving adults as well. The ARA urged the United States Government to do more. The American press proved to be helpful in stirring public opinion in favour of aid by publishing horror stories, based on eye-witness and survival accounts. It also added its voice in favour of extension of relief for adults. As a result, on December 22, 1921, the U.S. Congress approved a congressional appropriation of 20 million dollars for Russian relief.

The U.S. Government also donated 4 million dollars worth of medical and hospital supplies from the War Department surplus stock. The American Red Cross contributed medical supplies worth 3,600,000 dollars. In view of this, Hoover urged Soviet authorities to do their share. Since the Soviet Government had several million dollars in gold coins, Hoover proposed that a large portion of that reserve be used for purchasing seed grains and food supplies.²⁹ For the Congressional appropriation, the U.S. Government shipped to Russia 20 million bushels of corn and five million bushels of seeds. By the end of December 1921, the Soviet authorities allocated approximately \$10 million worth of gold rubles, as suggested by Hoover, at the disposal of the ARA.

According to Dr. Nansen's information, the ARA was feeding close to one million children and the Nansen Mission was feeding about 350,000 children and adults. The Soviet Government recorded the following data: Soviet Government fed 2,186,000 persons, the ARA fed 1,291,168 persons and all other foreign relief organizations fed a total of 421,223 persons for a total of 3.7 million.³⁰

The ARA, with all affiliated organizations, was not the only American organization that provided relief for the starving population in Russia. The Friends of Soviet Russia had raised 183,000 dollars by November 7, 1921. The Polish Co-operative Bakery in Detroit was shipping 30 barrels of dried bread every week to Soviet Russia. Farmers and grocers of San Francisco had given 30 cwt of prunes and smaller quantities of honey and soap. Russian, Finnish, Lithuanian and other

²⁹F.M. Surface and R.L. Bland. *American food in the world war*, p. 246.

³⁰E. Ammende. "Die Hungerskatastrophe und der Wiederaufbau Russlands", p. 20. Bundesarchiv. Reichskanzlei (alte). Russland Ausw. Angelegenheiten. Bd. 3, p. 449.

organizations were taking part in collecting money and other donations.³¹

Soon after, a number of relief agencies were formed in various countries and some attempted to negotiate their own agreements with the Russian Government. In late September, 1921, the Danish Relief Committee had to halt negotiations because the Bolshevik Government, not only wanted foreign aid, but wanted it on its own conditions and terms. In spite of that, out of sympathy to the poor starving people in Russia, the Danish Government had donated two million crowns for famine relief that was assigned for the children in the Volga Valley.³² Most of these committees, which were formed in various countries of Europe, usually joined the Nansen Mission and were assigned an area where they were to care for the starving. Some of them, like the British Quakers' Unit, were already doing relief work in Russia during the war years as well as during the Revolution of 1918-1919. The British Save the Children Fund was supported almost entirely by the British Government. By the middle of November of 1921, the Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Czechoslovak and Italian Red Cross Societies were all engaged in relief activity for the children and, by that time, 250,000 of them were fed regularly by various foreign relief societies.

In 1920, the British Society of Friends (Quakers) and their American branches carried their relief work in Buzuluk district of the Samara province, an area roughly equal to that of Belgium with a population of some 650,000. By September 1921, the population had been reduced by death and emigration to 618,976. It was regarded as the worst part of the Russian famine area, followed by Saratov. By mid-winter, the entire Buzuluk district was practically without food, with the exception of the supply provided by the Quakers and the government, who at the time were feeding some 30,000 railway workers and 40,000 others through the co-operative societies.³³ All other segments of the society would not receive any help from the government, only from some foreign philanthropic organizations. The Quakers fed 180,000 children and some adults although they planned to expand their relief to

³¹ *Russian Information & Review*, No. 7, January 1, 1922, p. 149.

³² *Russian Information & Review*, No. 1, October 1, 1921, p. 6.

³³ M. Asquith. *Famine*, p. 28.

300,000 people.³⁴ The British Quakers had been in Russia since the summer of 1920.

Now:

“an agreement had been negotiated with the Government under which goods became Soviet property to be distributed through Russian societies under Quaker supervision while the Government supplied free transport, labour personnel and warehouses accommodations.”³⁵

In December 1921, the American Quaker Unit, working under the ARA, took over the eastern part of the Buzuluk district. The British stayed in the western part with a population of approximately 450,000. The Quakers began feeding in October 1921 and by March 1922, there were 75,000 children and 100 adults receiving aid, while the government fed 30,000 children. By June 1922, the British Quakers were feeding 145,000 children and 112,000 adults, for a total of 257,000 persons.³⁶ The Quakers' distribution food system was based on the local Famine Committee or Committees of Mutual Aid, which had been appointed in each village and each rural district to organize relief.

The first relief for the Volga Valley was distributed in October in the Tatar Republic and in the Samara province, where altogether 668,398 children were getting food from the ARA. By May 1922, 1,990,501 children and 2,993,728 adults, or altogether 4,984,229 persons were fed from the ARA stocks.³⁷ The province of Saratov had been allotted for the administration of relief to the Save the Children Fund (British) and Save the Children Fund International Union. Saratov, which lies along the west bank of the Volga River, had an area of 32,624 square miles and an estimated population of over three million. The majority was of a Russian nationality, followed by the Ukrainians and German colonists, native Mordvinians, Chuvash and Tatars. The capital town of the province, Saratov, had a population of about 200,000. The Save the Children Fund had undertaken to feed 250,000 children

³⁴*Golod 1921-1922*; sbornik, p. 101.

³⁵M. Asquith, *Famine*, p. 1.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁷H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 557.

in this province.³⁸

The Tatar Republic was also in a terrible state in 1921. It had a population of 3,232,092 of whom 1,508,293 were children. About two-thirds of the whole population were on the verge of starvation. The *Russian Information & Review* reported:

“In spite of every effort, however, it proved impossible to feed more than 70,000 children from the state relief centre in September 1921.”³⁹

The situation became much easier when they began feeding 200,000 children in this area.

According to the first census of the Provincial Relief Committee, dated November 1, 1921, the number of people was 389,384 affected by famine in the province of Tsaritsyn (exclusive of the city of Tsaritsyn). By December 1, there were 492,722 people starving. The 72 homes in Tsaritsyn accommodated about 6,000 children and the 134 homes in district towns accommodated another 11,000. The total number of children who needed immediate shelter and maintenance was 201,683. Even the children in the homes did not receive sufficient nourishment. At most, the homes provided about half a pound of bread per day and occasionally fish and meat.⁴⁰ The ARA started its work in Tsaritsyn province in January 1922 by issuing supplementary feeding to 3,107 children. Although there were more than 1,000 institutions for children in the famine area, they were overfilled and received only a fraction of the number who were in distress and in need of assistance.⁴¹

Owing to the lack of resources, the total number of children cared for by the Soviet Government in various institutions was only a small proportion of the total involved. The number rose from 375,000 in October 1921 to 1,125,000 in December

³⁸*ARA Bulletin*, series 2, March 1922, quoted *Current History*, vol. 16, p. 308.

³⁹*Russian & Information Review*, No. 4, November 15, 1921, p. 78.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

1921 and again to 1,500,000 in January, 1922.⁴²

Throughout this entire period, the Soviet Government was fully aware of the urgent need to supply food to the starving adult population. Yet, due to limited resources, the government decided that it was essential to give priority to grain for seed, thus leaving the population to starve. Subsequently, during the early months of the famine, the total volume of food sent to the famine area was not large. During this period the number of adults fed by the government was only about 200,000 (in addition to the number of children referred to above). In January 1922, the number of adults fed by the government had been increased to one million people.⁴³

Thanks to the publicity rendered by the foreign press, donations started to arrive for the benefit of the starving population in the Volga Valley; from the Norwegian Government - 200,000 barrels of herrings, 2,000 tons of salted fish and 100,000 of cod liver oil; from the Nansen's Mission - 2,000 overcoats and 2,000 suits; from the Estonian Government - 16 trucks of various foodstuffs; from the German Government - 1,500 tons of medical supplies and foodstuffs; from the Swedish Trade Unions - 4 tons of medical supplies and foodstuffs; from the Persian Government 330 tons of rice and 660 tons of grain.⁴⁴

"The first ship from the Congressional funds was dispatched on January 1, 1922 and during that month, 24 full American ship loads and several part cargoes were dispatched on all accounts. These shipments included 301,658,000 lbs of corn, 31,632 lbs of wheat seed, 27,750,000 lbs of milk and sundry food and medical supplies for children for a total of 160,000 tons."⁴⁵

As soon as significant resources were made available at the beginning of the year, the program was extended to also include adults as well as providing seeds for sowing.

The village committee selected those who were to be fed in each village. The district committee collected food from the Friends' warehouses and transported it to

⁴²*Russian Information & Review*, No. 11, March 1922, p. 244.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁴⁴*Russian Information & Review*, vol. 1, No. 2, October 15, 1921, p. 29.

⁴⁵*The New York Times*, February 11, 1922, p. 4 : 1.

the individual localities for local committees to pick up for distribution. The district committee was responsible for general supervision and control feeding in the district. It also appointed a warehouse manager who also managed the kitchens in the main village of the district and was responsible for distribution of food to villages, collecting returns and submitting them monthly to area supervisors. The district committees also recommended the number to be fed in each village.⁴⁶ Having all the relief resources in their hands, the Bolsheviks were able to prevent contact between the Russian citizens and foreign relief workers. Hence, the Soviet Government took all the credit for relief and assured that no counter-revolutionary ideas were spread among the population.

It is customary in foreign aid situations for people to want to know how their funds or donations are distributed. In February 1922, Professor Meredith Atkinson arrived in Russia from London and stated:

“the Soviet authorities were doing their best to deliver the food to the people who need it. This was particularly true of the village local committees, which were not necessarily communists.”

He saw however,

“a deplorable degree of incompetence and inefficiency in the administration of relief. It was impossible to be certain that the simplest arrangements would be carried out, because of the lack of coordination between the various government departments and the Russian personnel.”

On the other hand,

“each of the three foreign organizations in the field, Save the Children Fund, the Quakers and the American Relief Administration was remarkably efficient.”⁴⁷

The Soviet authorities were not too happy with ARA independence since

⁴⁶Asquith, *Famine*, p. 34-35.

⁴⁷“The Russian famine tragedy” in *Current History*, vol. 16, 1922, p. 145

their very presence had a detrimental influence on the Soviet citizenry. Its support to all the needy, regardless of their political or religious affiliations was contrary to the Bolshevik policy, which emphasized class distinctions. Subsequently, government agents tried to discredit the ARA wherever they could. They accused the ARA inspectors and instructors in the Pugachev district, the worst hit by famine in the Samara province, of counter-revolutionary activity. They stated that the Russian-American Relief Committee for Children to be “a kulak-popish organization” because it admitted priests to the local committees whom they accused of misappropriation of American foodstuffs and of mocking the starving peasants. As an example, they cited the fact that the priests conducted prayers and served Holy Masses at the feeding points.⁴⁸

In addition to ARA relief, there were at least 15 other foreign relief organizations working in Russia. “It is to those organizations that several million people, children and adults, owe their lives.” stated E. Kuskova.⁴⁹ “In comparison to the number of the starving our (Government) contribution in feeding the hungry was very insignificant.”⁵⁰

The most welcome in relief initiatives was the International Workers’ Relief Committee organized by Communist elements. In the United States, this Committee was supported by Friends of Soviet Russia. It consisted of some 200 communist oriented organizations that appealed to American communists and socialists with a request that donations should not be sent to the ARA but directly to the authorities in Russia. By February 1922, they had already collected over \$300,000 from workers in America and \$250,000 of it had been transferred to the American Federated Russian Famine Relief Committee. According to a report published in *The New York Times*, the Committee had spent 93% of its funds for the purchase of food that had been forwarded directly to Russian officials in Moscow.⁵¹

⁴⁸A.N. Kogan, “Antisovetskie deistviia ARA v Sovetskoi Rosii” - *Istoricheskie zapiski*, No. 29, 1949, p. 22.

⁴⁹E. Kuskova, *Russkii golod in Sovremennye zapiski*, vol. 22, p. 3.

⁵⁰Art Khalatov, “Golod i Narkomprod: obshchestvennoe pishchenie v dele pomoshchi golodaisushchim” in *Golod 1921-1922*, p. 74.

⁵¹*The New York Times*, February 11, 1922, p. 4, col. 4.

These communist organizations did not join the general American effort in the Russian famine relief yet they criticized Herbert Hoover and the ARA for not doing enough. *The New Republic* wrote:

“the gift of America, large as it is in amount, is nothing in sacrifice. For what is America’s gift in fact? It is the sending out of the country corn that has been used for fuel: and it means that America is ten million dollars richer in gold than it was before. It was the relieving of American farmers of loans that will be distributed more widely over the entire population. It was a redistribution of money within America (not to mention the ten million dollars in gold received from Russia) in exactly the way in which redistribution was most urgently needed for the contentment of America itself. It was a sensible thing to do, and a worthwhile thing; but it was not half as great in actual amount and not one tenth as great in generosity and sacrifice, as the gift given by the Russian government and the Russian people.”⁵²

However, these radical organizations were suspected of mismanagement of money collected for the starving. By sending the money directly to the leaders of the Communist Party, there was no proof that the funds were in fact used to aid the starving. The American magazine *The Independent* wrote:

“The exposures show that only a small portion of the funds raised goes to actual relief; the major part goes to the transport of the promoters and to revolutionary propaganda.”⁵³

By the end of April 1922, the famine conditions in Russia greatly improved. The movement of food inland averaged about 500 tons daily and the ARA was able to feed three million children and several million adults daily. There was even surplus piling up at the ports subduing the panic conditions.⁵⁴

According to the Riga Agreement, railway employees were under the Russian government care and, as such, were exempt from the reach of the ARA. This

⁵²*The New Republic*, vol. 30, May 3, 1922, p. 2,816.

⁵³*The Independent and Weekly Review*, February 18, 1922, vol. 108, p. 166-167.

⁵⁴“Defiant attitude of Soviet Russia” - in *Current history*, June 3, 1922, vol. 16, p. 535.

arrangement proved to be unsatisfactory as the railway employees were dissatisfied and created a great deal of trouble for the ARA officials by seizing food between ports and the famine districts. By spring of 1922, about 100 carloads had been seized.

Some Soviet historians noted that “guard bands and the underground organizations practically used famine to defy the Soviet authority and robbed the granaries.” To substantiate this argument, they cited the Pugachev district in the Samara province where the “bands ransacked granaries by taking 16,738 poods of grain, a property of the Central Pomgol.”⁵⁵ Most likely, this was an act by desperate peasantry who, instead of quietly succumbing to hunger, decided to pillage a granary where grain was stored for the government and the Party employees.

In an official report to the Moscow Soviet dated August 20, 1921, Chairman Lev Kamenev, stated that the population within the famine area amounted to 22 million people:

“It is assumed, the official sources stated, that the peasant households with over 11 acres of ground (four desiatins) under cultivation, will not require assistance as the yield will be enough for their own requirements. Such households account for over 7.5 million of the total population. Almost exactly the same number of persons is accounted for by households with one to four desiatins (2 to 7 acres of cultivated ground) and the town population amounts to less than seven million and they need almost complete support. In order to provide a bare minimum support the Soviet statistician stated that ten poods per head for consumption, for which little more than six poods per head usually regarded as the “golodaiushchaia norma” or famine ration, is left if allowance is made for feeding even the present reduced number of livestock.”⁵⁶

In fact, for that rural population an allowance of 16 poods per head should be regarded as adequate in order to keep the population healthy and strong and to achieve possible restoration of normal economic activity in the famine area.⁵⁷

At first the Soviet Government was very suspicious of the practice of food remittances. The government argued that it could be used by people outside of Russia

⁵⁵Chemerisskii, op. cit., *Istorichiskie zapiski*, vol. 77, p. 191.

⁵⁶Report on economic conditions, p. 65-66.

⁵⁷Ibid.

“to aid the very persons who were least sympathetic to the Soviet regime.”⁵⁸ This is clear evidence that the Soviet Government would not have minded if all of its opponents starved to death. Indeed,

“The Soviet leaders were frank to say that while, on the one hand, the ARA was their benefactor, on the other hand, it was their greatest enemy. The operations carried out through non-political committees of their own choosing, are at once evidence to the people that there is a happy land outside Russia, not swallowed up in revolutionary misery described to them in the Bolshevik propaganda and an object lesson of efficiency and organization in glaring contrast to the Soviet conduct of government.”⁵⁹

Therefore, the Soviet authorities suspected that whatever the ARA was doing, its aim was to hurt the Bolshevik Government. The ARA did not recognize social class priorities and distributed foodstuffs to every needy person. Among the needy were former members of the nobility, tradesmen and businessmen who were now dispossessed of all their properties and without any means of subsistence. The Soviet historians, in order to belittle positive results, blamed the ARA for organizing all the anti-Soviet dark forces and counter-revolutionaries in their quarters.

“In order to facilitate it, the ARA endeavoured to increase its staff, which was paid by the Soviet Government. Thus the Soviet money was used for salaries of the Soviet enemies. On the other hand, the more valuable food stuffs assigned for starving children were distributed among the various vagabonds.”⁶⁰

In other words, the Soviet Government disliked the fact that the ARA would not apply a class approach and discriminate against the former members of the wealthy classes in favour of the poor ones.

The Food Remittance Division was also very successful in its work. It served those Americans who wanted to help relatives in Russia, or simply anybody who was

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 206.

⁵⁹Ibidem.

⁶⁰A. N. Kogan. "Anti-sovetskaia deiatel'nost' ARA ..." - in *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 29, p. 10.

in dire need. The ARA instituted a system of "food remittance" which was similar to a "food draft" system. Anyone paying \$10 could have that value in food purchased wholesale in America, sent to Russia at the lowest transportation costs and delivered to any of the many Relief Administration warehouses established in Russia. The transaction would be completed by the beneficiary, upon presentation of a remittance card, or by the bearer of the card. If the beneficiary lived too far from the warehouse he could have the food sent by Russian parcel post. Special arrangements had been made for a reasonably prompt and safe delivery by mail.⁶¹

In a short time, the food remittance warehouses were established in many Russian cities like Moscow, Petrograd, Kazan, Orenburg, Samara, Saratov, Simbirsk, Tsaritsyn, Ufa, Rostov on the Don, as well as in Minsk, Homel and Vitebsk in the White Russian Republic.⁶²

According to the report of the Plenipotentiary A. Eiduk, the ARA opened feeding stations across all starving places in the Volga Valley and by May 1, 1922, it delivered to Russian ports 17,164,846 poods of foodstuffs while feeding almost two million children and five million adults.⁶³ In fact, Eiduk was astonished with the speed and efficiency of the ARA. Eiduk stated:

"Its work strikes with effectiveness and on American speed. The leaders of the ARA are undoubtedly sincerely dedicated to their humanitarian cause. ARA Director Colonel Haskell always meets our wishes responsively, tries to see our point of view and takes into account shortcomings of our transport. Such cooperation makes it much easier for me to discharge my duties as the governmental representative for foreign relief organizations,"⁶⁴

Praise was also expressed by the *Pravda* correspondent in Petrograd, who had a chance to observe the ARA from the beginning of its operation.

"The attitude of the American Relief Administration is strictly non-political.

⁶¹V. Kellogg, "Hungry Russia" in *The Independent & weekly review*, vol. 107, November 26, 1921, p. 203a.

⁶²*ARA Bulletin*, series 2, No. 28 September 1922, p. 35.

⁶³Belokopytov. Likholetie, p. 92-93.

⁶⁴A. Eiduk, "Inostrannaia pomoshch'" - in *Golod 1921-1922*; sbornik, p. 101.

It is irresponsive to innuendos of the white guards and is doing a great necessary work. Without joy or tranquillity we accept the gifts of our American benefactors."⁶⁵

In April 1922, Dr. Hutchinson requested all possible information about the economic situation concerning the famine in Russia. Having collected all the information available from official, private and ARA sources, Dr. Hutchinson prepared a report on May 14, 1922, where he came to the conclusion that total bread and fodder cereals would approximate a surplus of 45 million poods.

"In respect to area under cultivation Russian agriculture shows marked improvement. Under the stimulus of a reversal of governmental policy as to the landholding and taxation, the tilled acreage is rapidly coming back to its pre-war surpluses."⁶⁶

In addition to these estimates by Hutchinson and others, who supported a general impression that the day of emergency relief in Russia was passed, Haskell asked all District Supervisors and all Chiefs of Divisions in the Headquarters to give their opinions concerning the continuation of operations. None of them believed that the relief should be continued.⁶⁷

It was on May 17, 1922, that the Deputy Chairman Vinokurov of the Central Pomgol published an article in *Izvestiia* and officially declared that:

"the Volga territory is now a convalescent on the point of recovery and favourable weather affords the hope of a good crop."⁶⁸

⁶⁵*The New York Times*, September 25, 1921, p. 3 : 5.

⁶⁶L. Hutchinson. "Food conditions in Russia" in *Bulletin*, Series 2, No. 28, p. 3-16.

⁶⁷H.H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 391.

⁶⁸H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

Indeed, the horror of death by starvation was drawing to an end in the Volga Valley.

The Situation in Ukraine

The crop in Ukraine was never as poor as in the Volga district yet nowhere in all of Russia did the devastation match levels in Ukraine. Especially hard hit were the provinces of Podolia, Volhynia, Kyiv and Chernihiv. These four provinces had been involved in the Great War of 1914-1918, and although Kyiv and Chernihiv were not directly impacted by World War I, both provinces endured civil war, insurgencies and conflict with Polish armed forces. It suffices to say that during the period of 1917-1921, the government in Kyiv had changed 15 times and the city itself had suffered repeatedly from the most horrible bombardment. Nothing of this sort took place in other parts of the Russian empire.¹

At the beginning of 1919 Moscow created the second Soviet Government for Ukraine and the Bolshevik forces were busy invading it. The government of Ukraine was not elected by the people nor constituted by Ukrainian political parties, but rather appointed by Lenin and the Central Committee of the Russian Communist party. The newly formed Government established itself in the industrial city of Kharkiv, which had been more russified than Kyiv. Local governments were also filled with appointed "trustworthy" people. It was not an easy task to accomplish as there were not enough local Ukrainian communists to organize the local Soviet administration and entrusting non-communists with such responsibilities was not desirable. However, before this Government moved into Ukraine, it had been instructed that its first duty was to collect and transport food to Russia.

At this time, Ukrainian villagers were optimistic about their future. Bolshevik propaganda promised so much and their slogans were very appealing that by the beginning of 1919, there was as yet, no reason to doubt their word. However, the

¹Herbert Hoover Archives (H.H.A.), Stanford, CA. ARA Russian operations, Box 127, Folder : Ukraine - Kiev - History.

wealthier segment of the Ukrainian peasantry was in a precarious situation since all the attacks of the Bolshevik propaganda were focused against them. Their fear of Bolshevik retribution would soon be realized.

On January 26, 1919, the Soviet Government issued a decree *About the organization of food supplies in Ukraine*, which in fact, was a mere formality since the *Prodarmy* (food collecting army) was formed soon after certain territories had been occupied by the Red Army with the immediate assignment of grain collection.² In spite of the fact that Ukraine was considered to be an independent Soviet state, Moscow treated her as an integral part of Russia. By the middle of January 1919, a branch of the Russian War Food Supply Office was established in the Ukrainian capital. Shortly thereafter, the War Communism policy was introduced in Ukraine and food collection began. On February 19, Lenin assigned an initial quota of 50 million poods of grain (1 pood equals 16.38 kg or 36 lbs) and requested that it should be collected as soon as possible and sent to the Centre not later than June 1, 1919.³ The next day, Alexander Shlikhter, Lenin's plenipotentiary in Ukraine was ordered to fill the four trains with grain and ship them to the North.⁴

In the meantime, the *Prodarmy* continued its work requisitioning the "surpluses". In order to fill the requirements of the Centre, that is the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party and the Soviet Government in Moscow, the armed gangs of the *Prodarmy* confiscated whatever they were able to find, thus leaving peasants without any stocks.⁵ Moscow was not pleased with the results of the Ukrainian food collection, especially with the shipments that were arriving at the Centre. This led Lenin to express his doubts whether the quota would be fulfilled on time "since there is no food collection agency in Ukraine".⁶

In early March, 1919 Moscow sent Iakov Sverdlov (a.k.a. Yankel Sverdlov)

²Iurii Kondufor. *Ukrepnenie soiuza rabocheho klassa i krest'ianstva na Ukraine v period grazhdanskoi voiny; v khode provedeniia prodovol'stvennoi politiki, 1918-1920 gg* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1964), p. 123.

³V. I. Lenin pro Ukrainu, vol. 2 (Kyiv: Vyd-vo polit. lit-ry Ukrainy, 1969), p. 588.

⁴A. Shlikhter. "Bor'ba za khleb na Ukraine" in *Litopys revoliutsii*, 1928, No. 2 (29), p. 123.

⁵Conf. Arutunian, Markus. *Razvitie ...*, p. 88.

⁶V. I. Lenin pro Ukrainu, vol. 2, p. 255.

to take over the Ukrainian Food Supplies Office. Sverdlov was charged with ensuring the reorganization of the Prodamy in Ukraine in a similar fashion as the one in Russia. Subsequently, all the activity of the Prodamy was directed by the two administrative organs exactly as it was in Russia: Administration of the Prodamy and the Office of the All-Russian Soviet of the Professional Trade Unions.⁷ To ensure the decree was properly executed, Lenin sent approximately three thousand experienced party men and a large group of Red Army officers from Moscow and Petrograd. They were subordinated to the Commissariat for Food Supplies of Ukraine, headed by Myron Vladimirov (pseudonym of Miron Steinfinkel). This Russian food expedition force to Ukraine is termed in Soviet literature as “brotherly aid to needy Ukrainians.”

After the Ukrainian Prodamy was reorganized, it consisted of small units of 25 men each, headed by a commissar and his deputy. For practical purposes, each unit was divided into sub-units of five men, headed by someone with experience,⁸ which in practice meant a Russian Prodamy man.

In mid-January 1919 the All-Russian Soviet of National Economy had sent into Ukraine a special commission that helped to reorganize the Council of Economy for Ukraine. Somewhat later they were directed primarily towards the collection and shipping of agricultural products to Russia. “As a brotherly aid from Russia one billion rubles was lent to the Ukrainian Government.” Since official Soviet history does not specify if the money was in gold rubles or paper money (Sovznaki), for the salaries of the Russian administration in Ukraine, it was considered a loan subject to repayment. In addition, “railway wagons and locomotives, coloured metals, wood for mines, workbenches and petroleum” were sent to Ukraine. Twenty-one million arshins (over 16 million yards) of textile products and other goods of everyday use were also sent to the workers.⁹ There is no indication where these goods were sent but, knowing that Moscow relied heavily on Ukrainian industries, they were most

⁷Ibid.

⁸Kondufor, *op. cit.*, p. 114-115.

⁹Ibid.

likely sent to the industrial Donbass and Kryvyj Rih areas. The railway wagons were assigned to transport coal, industrial products and above all, grain and all kinds of food products from Ukraine to Russia. The Ukrainian people, coerced to supply the foodstuffs, received little of the textile wares that had been sent to Ukraine.

“Fulfilling its brotherly obligation toward their Russian brothers, the workers of Ukraine did their best helping them with whatever they could,” according to the official Soviet history of Ukraine. In February and March 1919, Ukraine shipped 40 wagons of metals and 30 million poods of coal. Special attention was paid to the provision of the Baltic War Fleet and two million poods of coal, captured from the enemy in the Mariupol’ port, were shipped to the Department of Navy of the RSFSR. This aid helped to alleviate the fuel crisis in Petrograd.¹⁰ Even though Ukrainian industry was at a standstill due to fuel shortages, it did not even draw a cursory mention from the authors of the official Soviet history.

For the purpose of food requisitioning, the peasantry was divided into four categories: the wealthy farmers, the “middle” farmers, the “bidniaks” and the “batraks”. The wealthy farmers, who used hired hands, constituted in Soviet terminology a social class of “kurkuls” or “kulaks” in Russian. According to Lenin “they were the most ferocious, the roughest and the most savage exploiters” of hired labour.¹¹ As such, they were considered to be the enemies of the working class and consequently, of the Soviet State and therefore, subject to persecution. In reality, they were simply outlawed on the grounds of their social status. Theoretically, all farmers owning ten or more desiatins of land (27 or more acres) were considered to be kurkuls. In practice, quite often even the owners of five desiatins (over ten acres) were also treated as kurkuls. This depended on the region of the country, the government during the revolution of the country, and also on the current Government. The most important factor was the farmer’s political activity during the revolution. If he participated in the struggle for Ukrainian independence, then he was

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 115

¹¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. Vol. 28, p. 38.

treated as a kurkul regardless of the number of landholdings.¹²

The next category was the “middle farmer” (*seredniak*) who had enough land to keep himself and his family busy but did not use a hired hand on his farm. The Bolshevik depiction of a “middle farmer” would be considered a very small, if not poor farmer, with land from three to nine desiatins (from 8 - 24 acres) by Western standards. This was the most numerous group that the Bolsheviks wanted to attract in order to destroy “the kurkuls as a class.”

The third category was the “bidniak”, the poor peasant class. The peasantry owning not more than three, in some regions up to five desiatins of land (up to 13 acres), were compelled to work for the wealthy farmers to supplement their income. This was an acceptable class for the Bolsheviks and it was instrumental for the establishment of the Soviet regime in the Ukrainian village.

The fourth category was called the “batraks”, peasants who owned nothing and lived from their labour alone. This category was most favoured by the Bolshevik regime and, thanks to the terror tactics used against other social groups or classes, their representatives were usually elected to the Committees of the Poor Peasants (*kombidy* in Ukrainian), to the communal councils, and to other civil and state agencies. The Committees of the Poor were designed to be the central organizations through which the Soviet Government hoped to rapidly and easily subjugate Ukrainian villages under Moscow's supreme power. Toward the end of 1920 a Kombid Congress was held, which passed a resolution that: 1) the poor farmers of Ukraine were to be compelled to join the armies of the Interior Service to fight the bandits; and 2) the defence of the villages was to be organized. Every district in which the problem to combat banditism had become serious was to form its own territorial detachment to fight.¹³ “Banditism” was the term employed to designate the armed political resistance of the Ukrainian farmers against the Russian occupation.

¹²Iurii Boyko. *Rosiis'ki istorychni tradytsii v bol'shevyts'kykh rozviazkakh natsional'noho pytannia Paryzh: Natsionalistychne vyd-vo v Europi, 1964, p. 146.*

¹³Y. Khorolsky. *The story of the "Kombiyeds" in The Ukrainian Review*, vol. 2, No. 2, London, 1955, p. 505. This organization continued to operate in Ukraine until the final subjugation of the villages and liquidation of the wealthy farming class.

The Committees of the Poor were designed to handle food requisitions from wealthier farmers as well as destroy the “kulaks” as a class. They were quite helpful to the Prodamy units since the communists incited them against the wealthier group of farmers. The kombidy decided to remove wealthier peasants, land owners, families whose members took part in anti-Soviet uprisings and all other enemies of the Soviet regime from their homes. These vacant homes were then assigned to the poor farmers or for the needs of the Soviet administration.

The tasks of the kombidy in Ukraine were thus entirely different from those of the same organizations in Russia. In March 1920, the Communist Party of Ukraine began to organize this instrument of proletarian dictatorship and in May of the same year, it was officially recognized on the strength of a special decree by the occupation authorities in Ukraine.¹⁴

The kombidy were entrusted with the organization of working groups with members of the wealthier families, and to perform various work for the benefit of the community. They were also required to arrest enemies of the regime and send them to the concentration camps.¹⁵

The kombidy, together with the local revolutionary committees, were entrusted with full authority in their respective localities.¹⁶ They were equipped with all manner of implements and were ready to search for hidden grain or other foodstuffs. The Prodamy units, on the other hand, were armed with firearms. Together they went from household to household and requisitioned the “surpluses” of foodstuff. Quite often they merely looted whatever they could lay their hands on.

Peasants tried to defend their meagre food remnants and this activity frequently resulted in bloodshed with victims on both sides. As an example, the Chernihiv branch of the Communist Party of Ukraine sent fifteen members to requisition food from the outraged peasantry and only three returned; the others killed.¹⁷ In the city of Myrhorod, in the province of Poltava, members of the Food

¹⁴Ibid, p. 506.

¹⁵Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian Ukrainy, p. 125-126.

¹⁶Kondufor, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁷Ibid.

Supply Office were killed while collecting food and their chief Andrey Ivanov, a Russian sent from Moscow, was caught, put on trial and sentenced to death. Luckily for him, a Red Army unit arrived and freed him from the enraged peasantry.¹⁸ At the end, the upper hand usually belonged to the government forces. Unfortunately, Soviet historian I. U. Kondufor does not specify the number of peasants killed in the struggle with the armed Prodamy unit, or later with the arrival of the Red Army unit.

Conditions were horrible. The Ukrainian Communist paper *Chervonyi Prapor* (The Red Flag), published in Kharkiv, the capital of the Soviet Ukraine, wrote:

“Something unbelievable is taking place in Ukrainian villages. The armed gangs come [to the household] and take not only bread but also whatever could be carried away. Bread is being taken away arbitrarily without any plan, and in most cases without payment whatsoever.”¹⁹

Although the Ukrainian Government was not controlled by individuals of Ukrainian nationality and could not relate to either nationalist aspirations or sympathize with the plight of the Ukrainian peasantry, it understood that some form of reconciliation between the rulers and ruled was priority. The situation was rather tragic since the government and its agencies were only safe in the bigger towns and cities where the military garrisons were posted. As a result, no party members or Government officials dared to go into the country without a strong military escort. The authority of the Soviet government did not exist in Ukrainian villages and this situation resulted directly from the actions of the Prodamy and kombidy.

On April 5, 1919 the Ukrainian Commissariat for Food Supplies requested to abolish the Prodamy and replace it with a “podovolstvennaia militsiia”. This was an effort to improve relations with the rural population. The proposed duties of the militia were defined thus:

“would be to guard the granaries and the storehouses of the collected grain. It

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Pavlo Khrystiuk. *Zamitky i materialy do istorii ukrains'koi revoliutsii, 1917-1920 rr.* Viden, 1921 (reprint New York, 1969), chapter 4, p. 177.

would not have anything to do with the actual collection of provisions. This was necessitated, they argued, by the specific conditions in the Ukrainian village which requires a different approach to grain collection than was practiced in Russia.²⁰

Shortly afterwards the Prodarmy units were disbanded and the villages were relieved, at least in part, from the arbitrary rule of the gangs. However, this did not last long and upon the insistence of Moscow, the Prodarmy was reinstated to their prior role. This was seen as recognition of its effectiveness in food collecting for the Centre's needs. Thus the terror in Ukrainian villages continued and the most conscientious villagers were deprived of the fruit of their hard labour. The negative results of this policy revealed themselves in the decreased area in spring sowing. The tendency here, as in Russia, was to sow only as much as was necessary for one's family consumption.

The original levy of 50 million poods was the initial amount that had to be delivered to Russia by June 1, 1919. Shortly afterwards, the authorities revised this original estimate of food surplus in Ukraine. Given that the 1918 area decreased by 8%, that the Germans and French *dessant* collected grain as well, and that the crop in 1918 was below average, the Soviet authorities came to the conclusion that the actual grain surplus of Ukraine should be no less than 278,780,000 poods. Taking this into consideration, Lenin decided to split the amount in two, and half of it would be collected by the Prodarmy unit for the needs of the Soviet Government in Moscow. Thus the revised levy for the 1918 crop was set at 130,390,000 poods.²¹

The bitter irony of this situation was that the Bolsheviki had heavily criticized the German military authorities in Ukraine for their endeavour to collect one million tons (60 million poods) of grain for Germany. The Bolsheviki called it robbery, although it was to be exchanged for German industrial goods needed by the local population. The Soviet authorities assigned a levy, an amount equal to 230 million tons which was much more than the amount the Germans planned to collect.

²⁰Kondufor, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 176.

Though little was offered in return, the Soviet authorities labelled their levy “a brotherly assistance to Russia.”

To improve the requisition of agricultural products in Ukraine, in early June 1919, Lenin ordered the Commissariat of Food Supplies of the “independent” Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic to merge together with the Commissariat of Supplies of the Russian SFSR.²² As a result, the Ukrainian Government department became a mere agent of the Soviet food requisition campaign. In practice, it meant further collaboration with Russian personnel and acceptance of all orders from the Soviet Government in Moscow. “The requisitioning apparatus in Ukraine was formed in a rather cruel struggle with the “kulaks” and the nationalist counter-revolution”, said the Soviet historian Kondufor.²³ The levy of 50 million poods represented an initial amount that was to be delivered to the Russian authorities by June 1, 1919. Hardly, 10,500,000 poods were collected, or rather requisitioned.²⁴

The authorities in Moscow were firmly convinced of the existence of significant food surpluses in Ukraine and were determined to access this supply by whatever means possible. While the Commissariat for Food Supplies was shipping grain to Russia, a mass campaign was launched for additional food collection on a “voluntary” basis for the industrial regions of Soviet Russia. This was another way of justifying a return visit by the Prodarmy gangs to those peasants, who had already fulfilled their levy, under the guise of demanding more *voluntary gifts* for the hungry Russian workers.

In analyzing the economic situation in Ukraine, it should not be forgotten that the southern regions of the country, along the Black and Azov Seas, were plundered mercilessly. First by the interventionist forces, the French and their allies, and later by the Russian Volunteer Army of General Denikin. Starting from 1917 to the end of 1920, Ukraine was traversed by a multitude of military and refugee movements causing the deterioration of the economy and creating terrible hygienic conditions

²²Ibid, p. 103.

²³Ibid, p. 107

²⁴*Istoriia Ukrain's'koi RSR*, K.K. Dubyna, editor-in-chief. -ARA- (Kyiv, 1967), vol. 2, p. 116.

leading to various epidemics. Military activities ruined the country's economy along with two consecutive years (1920 and 1921) of drought and, of course, the Soviet Government's requisition of food "surpluses".

It was quite evident Ukraine was already depleted from an agricultural viewpoint. All edible products had been confiscated and the population was on the verge of starvation. As there was no hope of obtaining protection from the government desperate villagers turned their hatred against the officials responsible for food collection. Many were seized and killed. Punitive actions were initiated against offending villages but this only increased the tension. Many able-bodied peasants, having recognized Bolshevik duplicity, joined the Ukrainian underground insurgency, which during the summer of 1919 practically dominated the countryside.²⁵ According to Soviet sources, from April 1 to May 1, 1919 there were 93 peasant uprisings and during the first 20 days of June, there were 207.²⁶ Instead of gaining friends, the Soviets and their War Communism policy alienated the peasantry and worsened their own political and military situation.

Forceful requisition of grain was not the only factor that alienated the Ukrainian peasantry, not to mention other ethnic peasants. The harm done by the Red Army's behaviour in conquered lands matched or exceeded the brutality of the past tsarist invaders. Having conquered Ukraine and the Kuban country, the Bolsheviks secured for themselves rich agricultural areas that were designated to save the Soviet regime from destruction. Instead of behaving like benevolent liberators as claimed in their propaganda, the Red Army pillaged and robbed to such an extent that, when the news reached the Kremlin, Lenin was compelled to react. On July 11, 1919 he sent a telegram to Christian Rakovsky, then the Prime Minister of the Ukrainian government, in which he stated,

"Some military committees and the Red Army units pillage and destroy livestock and agricultural implements which ruins Soviet farms and endangers harvesting of the crop."²⁷

²⁵Kondufor, *op. cit.*, p. 124-125.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 201.

²⁷V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, vol. 29, p. 29.

In July 1919, some 46 Proarmy units were sent into Ukraine from the Russian industrial centres, which altogether amounted to some 1,500 workers and 800 Proarmy soldiers from Moscow and its environs.²⁸ According to official reports, from February 5 to May 1, 1919, the Ukrainian sugar factories shipped over 2.6 million poods of food products to Russia under the slogan *Bread for Lenin and Moscow*. During this campaign, the Bolsheviks removed from Ukraine and shipped to Russia approximately ten and a half million poods of bread.²⁹ The activity of the Proarmy units played an important role in the food collection campaign. The Soviet historian Kondufor stated:

“It is impossible to give the exact figures as to how much grain was collected by the Proarmy since the grain elevators did not keep records. However, such quantities of grain collections by the Proarmy could be well estimated in those regions where the Proarmy was the only agent entrusted with grain collection for the Commissariat for Food Supplies. As an example in Kherson and Tavria provinces from the beginning of grain collection up to June 15, 1919, the Proarmy units collected 915,771 and 1,503,763 poods respectively, or a combined total of 2,419,534 poods.”³⁰

This amount represented 41% of total grain collected in Ukraine for that time period.

These figures indicate that the Proarmy units performed a very thorough job, leaving little behind for the food producers themselves. It should be noted that the Tavria and Kherson provinces, in the period up to April 1919, had already been plundered by the French Expeditionary Forces and their allies. At the same time, the Soviet newspaper *Bil'shovyk*, in its issue of July 20, 1919, reported that in the Katerynoslav province “seven villages delivered 90,000 poods of products.” The local peasantry, according to *Bil'shovyk* “joyfully give bread for the Army and other products they donate without payment.”

If one considers that the Red Army units stationed in Ukraine consumed 1,700,000 poods of grain fodder per month in 1919, then one can easily appreciate

²⁸Kondufor, *op. cit.*, p. 114-115.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 195.

³⁰Kondufor, *op. cit.*, p. 156-157.

the great burden placed on both the Ukrainian peasantry and the local economy.³¹ This burden was even more aggravated by other events such as the ongoing Ukrainian-Russian conflict of that summer. The Ukrainian national Government and its Army, stationed in the south-western region of Ukraine, in Volhynia and Podolia provinces, also relied on supplies from Ukrainian villages. Other insurgents were fighting the Soviets across the entire stretch of Ukraine and they too sustained themselves at the expense of the Ukrainian peasantry.

In late spring of 1919, General Nikolai Yudenich, Commander-in-Chief of the White North-Western Russian Army, launched a campaign against Bolshevik-held Petrograd. Moscow exacted all manner of food products for the Red Army and proletariat of the endangered city of Petrograd. It turned again to the Soviet Ukrainian Government, which complied with shipping from Poltava and Chernihiv provinces 50 wagons of sugar and another 20 wagons from Kyiv to Petrograd. Odessa also shipped 50 wagons of food products to Petrograd. Moreover, some sources state that the peasants of Melitopol', Berdians'ke and Dnipropetrovs'k counties were obliged to ship to the revolutionary Petrograd "a gift consisting of 200 wagons of bread."³²

All these food shipments were gratuitous. It is noteworthy that the Prodamy requisitioned not only grain but also flour and whatever other edibles were found in the homesteads. In a number of cases, it was staged so that the poor peasants not only did not complain that they were being left without food but were "begging" Prodamy units to take the requisitioned load of food products free of charge. As an example, in the village of Shapovalivka of the Oleksandrivs'ke County, a general meeting of peasants was called by the local Kombid to announce that they will have to collect bread "for brothers in Great Russia". Moreover, Soviet historian, Iurii Kondufor assured his readers that the peasants "insisted that the bread be shipped to the Russian SFSR free of charge".³³ There could be no doubt that the meeting was organized on orders from either the Communist Party or the Soviet Government with

³¹Ibid, p. 231-232.

³²Ibid, p. 222-223.

³³Ibid, p. 223.

specific acting roles assigned to individuals. The gathering was orchestrated in such a manner that only one person had to make a motion and the terrorized peasants would not dare show open opposition, especially in the presence of the Cheka members or their informers.

* * * * *

Although Ukraine was re-conquered by the Russian Red Army in 1919, it had not yet been entirely subdued and the regime was not supported by the Ukrainian population. When the Soviet government was established for the second time, Lenin declared that

“The surplus grain in Ukraine is enormous and the Soviet Government in Ukraine offers to help us. Now we need not fear the lack of foodstuffs.”³⁴

It was admitted also by C. Rakovsky, the head of the Ukrainian government, that the Russians came to Ukraine to use it “to a maximum in order to relieve the food shortage in Russia”. For this reason the Russians refused to subdivide the nationalized land among the landless peasants but instead began the organization of state farms (*radhospy*). The state farms would be controlled and administered by the government which would take the maximum amount of grain while disregarding the wishes of the peasantry. Such an approach had serious defects, admitted Rakovsky.³⁵ On February 5, 1920, the All-Ukrainian Revkom, a temporary body of local government set-up by the Bolsheviks, passed a law on land redistribution. It allowed all lands confiscated from landowners and monasteries by the Soviet Government to be used by Ukrainian peasants without payment on their part. Subsequently, the number of *radhospy* rapidly decreased from 1,185, organized in 1919, to 640 and their landholdings fell from 1,104,600 to 340,759 desiatins.³⁶ Later, on February 26,

³⁴V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5 izd. (Moskva, 1965) vol. 37, p. 467.

³⁵Vos'maia konferentsiia RKP(b). *Protokoly*. (Moscow, 1961), p. 95-96.

³⁶S. N. Semanov. "Makhnovshchina i ee krakh" - in *Voprosy istorii*, 1966. No. 9, p. 53.

the Soviet Government of Ukraine issued a decree on food requisition that obliged peasants to sell grain to the Soviet government at officially established prices.³⁷ However, the amount of grain to be requisitioned and the manner of requisition differed from province to province. Both Katerynoslav and Kherson were assigned extremely heavy quotas.

On April 15, the plenum of the Central Committee of the CP(B)U decreed a formation of the *Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian*, in short *Komnezamy* (Committees of the Poor Peasants) to perform the grain requisition. They were to be the executors of the Party's land and grain policies in the villages. Since Moscow did not trust Ukrainians to fulfil this important task, membership in these new organizations was mostly non-Ukrainian. As an example, at the first and second congresses of the *Komnezamy* less than a fourth of the delegates spoke in Ukrainian.

Apart from the formation of the *Komnezamy*, detachments charged with food requisition were sent to the villages. From April to September 1920, about 15,000 workers were mobilized for this purpose by the CP(B)U and labour unions in Ukraine. Food detachments were also sent to Ukraine from Russia. By the autumn of 1920, a total of 262 detachments were requisitioning food in Ukraine. In spite of this, less than one third of the counties fulfilled their quota.³⁸

Harsh treatment, abuse and outright theft by the requisitioning detachments contributed greatly to peasant protest and revolt. The forcible requisition of food products in the countryside alienated Ukrainian peasantry and they turned their sympathies toward the Ukrainian guerrillas. Many of the young men, having tasted the Soviet Russian "liberation", joined the underground forces hoping the tide may yet be turned in their favour. Ukraine was in flames from the numerous uprisings of wronged peasants and nationally conscious elements. In addition to the uprisings, Ukraine, Russia and central Asia were experiencing a terrible drought.

On September 6, 1920, the Ukrainian Commissariat of Internal Affairs widely

³⁷Radians'ke budivnytstvo na Ukraini v roky hromadians'koi viiny; Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv. (Kyiv, 1967), p. 70.

³⁸L. N. Mel'nikova. "Bor'ba KP(B)U za usushchestvlenie prodo-vol'stvennoi politiki" (konets 1919-seredina 1921 gg.), Kyiv, 1972, p. 17-19.

broadened the responsibilities of the *Komnezamy*. They became not only the organ for Sovietization of Ukrainian villages, but also the executive organs of local government and the local militia. At the first All-Ukrainian meeting of *Komnezamy*, it was resolved that the most urgent task before the committees was to fight against rich Ukrainian peasants (*kurkuls*) and especially, the Makhno Army which controlled the steppe provinces.³⁹

At the end of 1920, there were about 6,000 *Komnezamy* in Ukraine, comprising 820,000 members, who were assigned the additional task of disarming the Ukrainian villages. After a while, the *Prodarmy* detachments' diligent work in Ukrainian villages found that "villages in the steppe Ukraine had little grain but plenty of weapons."⁴⁰

The 1920 crop in Ukraine was rather poor but Moscow made a plan for 160 million poods with over 100 million poods to be collected in the steppe provinces. Although the requisition was conducted strictly, the result was quite poor – 9.7 million poods which was grossly insufficient. In view of this, Lenin wondered:

"We obtained grain from Siberia. But we have not been able to get it from Ukraine. In Ukraine the war is going on and the Red Army is inevitably fighting with peasant bandits. There is quite a lot of grain in Ukraine."⁴¹

Lenin was wrong. The harvest in southern Ukraine in 1920 was already very poor and the following year it was worse. In 1916, the average crop amounted to 42.6 poods per person, in 1921 it averaged scarcely 8.5 poods. In some regions of Ukraine the peasants harvested less than they had sown.⁴² This unenviable situation was discussed at the conference of the Communist Party of Ukraine. It was stated that in the province of Zaporozhe, from 700 thousands of *desiatins*, barely 500 thousand poods of grain were harvested, less than one pood per *desiatin*. Somewhat better results were achieved with maize. From 80,000 *desiatins*, over one million poods of

³⁹*Radians'ke budivnytstvo*, p. 157.

⁴⁰M. Kubanin. *Makhnovshchina*. (Leningrad, 1927), p. 127.

⁴¹V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 41, p. 22.

⁴²*Komunist Ukrainy* (Kyiv, 1925), vol. 25, No. 8, p. 65.

corn were harvested which was more than 12 poods per desiatin.⁴³

Table 1: The difference in crops harvested in 1916 and in 1921.

Region	Harvest 1916 (tonnes)	Harvest 1921 (tonnes)	Shortage
Katerynoslav	1,335,716	263,900	80.2%
Zaporozhe	1,219,016	298,233	75.5%
Mykolaiv & Odessa	2,694,216	810,133	70.0%
Donets	1,572,916	283,183	82.0%
Total:	6,821,864	1,655,449	75.7%

In all of Ukraine, the 1916 crop amounted to 14,795,666 tonnes of grain and in 1921 it amounted to 5,753,116.⁴⁴

On February 23, 1921, the very same day the Kronstadt uprising started, Lenin appealed to the Soviet Ukrainian government to organize assistance for the workers of Petrograd and Moscow. The appeal was a reminder that Ukraine had been lagging behind in the fulfilment of its quota of food supplies, levied by Moscow for the 1920 harvest in the amount of 160 million poods of grain alone. Thus far, only 65 million poods were collected.⁴⁵ According to Lenin, Ukraine had to supply Russia, especially Moscow and Petrograd, with 60 wagons of foodstuff daily.⁴⁶

On March 17, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), abolishing the food levy of the War Communism Policy and replacing it with a tax-in-kind, which allowed a limited freedom of trade within the RSFSR. The NEP did not affect Ukraine as the levy for the 1920 crop had not been fulfilled. Since the prospect of fulfilling the levy was unlikely, Lenin reduced the balance from 95 to 50 million poods of grain and left the War Communism Policy in force until the autumn of 1921. Even these reduced requirements could not be met and the collection proceeded slowly and with meagre results annoying Moscow. Early in May 1921, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party obliged the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine to supply Russia with no less than one million

⁴³Pravda (Moscow), No. 287, December 20, 1921.

⁴⁴Ukrainian Red Cross report, quoted in *Nova Ukraina*, (Prague), 1922, No. 2, p. 29.

⁴⁵*Istoriia Ukrain's'koi RSR* K.K. Dubyna (Kyiv, Naukova Dumka, 1967), vol. 2, p. 177.

⁴⁶Lenin pro Ukrainu: zbirnyk u dvokh chastynakh, (Kyiv, 1969), vol. 2, p. 516-517.

poods of foodstuffs for the month.⁴⁷

The prospects for a new crop were uncertain until the beginning of April 1921, when they improved due to a series of rains. According to the reports in *Pravda*,

“in Left Bank Ukraine, especially in Kharkiv province, and in Right Bank Ukraine, the winter crop should be above average. However, in the southern Ukraine and in Kuban province the crop is expected to be somewhat below average or close to it.”⁴⁸

A few days later the very same paper published another report, which described the situation in the Kuban province in more cheerful terms:

“The spring in Kuban is very favourable. Sowing and planting of bread grains and cereals is completed. In many localities not a single piece of arable land has been left fallow... During the middle and the end of April there were favourable rainfalls. In general, the situation in the environs of Krasnodar is quite promising. Replacement of food requisitions with tax-in-kind served as an incentive to the, up until now, idle Kuban Cossacks who had decided to sow not more than three desiatins of land, just enough for family consumption. When this new incentive was announced, many Cossacks, who previously declared that they were in no condition to sow more than five desiatins had, in fact, sown 15 or more desiatins.”⁴⁹

By contrast, in Crimea, especially in its steppe regions, the economic conditions were very poor since all the crops, particularly barley and wheat, had suffered severely from frost.⁵⁰

In Western Europe, information about the prospects of the Ukrainian harvest was somewhat confused. *The Times* of London quotes:

“Miss Mellor, an English lady who escaped from the Soviet Ukraine, reported that the harvest west of Kiev is moderately good, but the inhabitants

⁴⁷Biograficheskaja khronika V. I. Lenina, vol. 10, p. 408.

⁴⁸*Pravda*, No. 100, May 11, 1921; *Pravda* still used the old term Novo-Russia, instead of Southern Ukraine - W.V.

⁴⁹*Pravda*, No. 105, May 17, 1921.

⁵⁰*Pravda*, No. 108, May 17, 1921.

are expected to be swamped by an invasion of starving people from the famine counties farther east...The demoralization, even among the better elements of Soviet authorities, has been very marked during the past year. There is no longer any law or order. The Bolshevist authorities and troops steal what they like under the name of *requisition*.⁵¹

In Ukraine, after an initial good start in the spring of 1921, a great drought ensued. During the entire summer not a drop of rain fell. Under a serene blue sky a scorching sun burned everything. With wages so very low, peasants attempted to plant vegetables, have an orchard and provide for themselves and their families with food for the winter. Everywhere across the steppes the human ants toiled.

Unfortunately, all hope for a decent harvest was lost in August and the approaching winter was faced with dread. As an example, the county joining Odessa had again suffered extremely poor crop conditions due to various causes such as the summer drought, lack of draught animals, and a failure to seed the necessary acreage. The southern part of Odessa county was proclaimed to be in very poor condition but the crop in the southern part of Tyraspol and Voznesensk counties was deemed inferior. Mortality from starvation among the children of these counties had been observed and, in the Malyi Buyalyk section, many adults were also showing the effects of starvation and an increase in typhus.

Medical institutions were in a desperate state due to a severe shortage of bed supplies, hospital supplies and medicines. In December 1921, a cholera epidemic erupted. Typhus and recurring fever were already prevalent. Patients and personnel were dying by the scores and Gubzdrav (Health Department) could do nothing. Personnel were unpaid and existed by stealing from the hospital. Patients starved or died of disease. Early in 1922, the ARA began its medical work. Words cannot begin to describe the blessing of ARA blankets, sheets, pyjamas, soap and medicines.

The price of food commodities was rising daily and the approaching winter would make foodstuffs even scarcer. In Mykolaiv city and county, for example, the price of barley increased 120 times, wheat 100 times, millet 63 times, potatoes 49

⁵¹*The Times* (London), August 21, 1921, page 7b.

times, and so on. It was evident that the poorer classes of the population would again be doomed to suffer famine conditions unless help arrived.

The peasants, who in the previous year exchanged their food products for any sort of household goods, clothes, even jewellery in the towns, brought them back trying to obtain some flour in return. During the summer and early autumn of 1921, many villagers were travelling into more prosperous neighbouring provinces to exchange anything of value for food. By autumn, peasants were exterminating cattle and selling meat in the town markets, or preparing salt-meat for winter. Some fled, abandoning their homes, and attempted to reach Podolia or Kyiv province. Many of these peasants were scarcely fed, fell ill and died en route, often in train cars at one of the railroad stations. At these places and, especially, at the junction stations, one could see these unfortunates struggling to escape the arms of death.

In Katerynoslav province the general picture was equally bleak. By August 1921, the city had already suffered great hardship due to the scarcity of food as the rural areas had not supplied the necessary corn and vegetables. The price of bread increased daily as did the numbers of starving. They were seen everywhere - in market places and main streets asking for bread. The starving comprised mostly children and the elderly who could not work due to age, weakness or their social status (not of "proletarian stock").⁵²

Captain Vidkun Quisling, the representative of Dr. Nansen's Mission, wrote:

"The extent and gravity of this general calamity is being increased by the use of various indigestible surrogates of bread, maize, stems of maize, sunflower, oleaginous seeds and even kaolin. These articles, which are injurious to health, serve to deaden hunger. The meat of dogs, cats and crows are looked upon as delicacies."⁵³

The Soviet Government in Moscow disregarded the actual economic situation in Ukraine and for the 1921 crop assigned a levy of 90 million poods of grain as a

⁵²Prof. Gooskoff. *Famine in Ekaterinoslav, 1921-1922*, page 6. In H.H.A., Stanford, CA; ARA Rus. oper.. Box No. 124. Folder: Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav history.

⁵³Vidkun Quisling, *Famine situation in Ukraina*; report Captain Vidkun Quisling, Dr. Nansen's representative in Ukraina and the Crimea. Geneva, April 30, 1922. Information No. 22, p. 21-22.

tax-in-kind. Subsequently, it was reassigned proportionally to individual provinces and among them were the famine-stricken Katerynoslav (8.5 million poods), Odessa (13 million poods), and Mykolaiv and Donetsk (6.5 million poods each).

In September 1921, soon after food tax collection began, some 20 million poods sat idle ready for shipping to Russia but neither the personnel nor transport could handle this amount of grain. By January 1922, some sixty-one million poods of grain were collected in taxes and an additional 400 wagons of grain and various food products collected and sent to the starving Volga Valley.⁵⁴ The largest amount of food taxes was collected in the Poltava province where the Romny county proved to be very efficient. It contributed 25 wagons more than the assigned quota.⁵⁵ Besides the Romny county, the Poltava county and Hlukhiv county of Chernihiv province donated respectively 60 and 22 wagons of grain.⁵⁶ The donation was possibly the result of a most effective and ruthless administration of tax collection. This is even more surprising since there were two districts, Kobyliaky and Kostiantynohrad, within the province borders where cases of death from starvation were already registered.

With such a system applied to the tax-in-kind collection, Ukraine was exhausted. *Pravda* wrote:

“There is no more food. Kyiv province and Volhynia delivered what was assigned to them. Poltava and Kremenchuk provinces are delivering their remnants. Podolia delivered barely 40 per cent of its levy and there is no other province where more grain can be obtained. Whatever could be taken was taken - more than the country could afford. Ukraine kept silent the whole time about her own precursors of famine but now it is more than she can suffer.”⁵⁷

The All-Ukrainian Party Conference decided to pay serious attention to its own “Volga” while the All-Ukrainian Conference of Soviets passed a resolution that “all

⁵⁴Nova Ukraina (Prague), 1922, Nos. 4-5, p. 34.

⁵⁵*Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini* ; zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv, S.V. Kulichytsky, vidpovidal'nyi redaktor. Kyiv : Naukova dumka, 1943, p. 54.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 219, Note no. 23.

⁵⁷*Pravda* (Moscow), January 5, 1922, No. 4, p. 2, column 2.

the resources should be directed to fight the famine right in Ukraine.”

The resolution to fight the Ukrainian famine was just an abstraction, a passing sensation. The Volga Valley famine was well advertised but the famine in Ukraine was not. In September 1921, newspapers dedicated a great deal of space to the Volga Valley famine and the period from September 26 to October 2 was declared to be a week of relief work for the starving. Strange as it may seem, all the reports were limited to the Volga and Ural region. No information was provided about similar famished conditions in the Don Valley, Kuban, Ukraine with Crimea. The situation in these areas was precarious and in no way better than in the Volga Valley or Ural region, where foreign relief was already doing a marvellous job. Was this a deliberate policy for those regions that most defied, and for the longest period, the Soviet Government? If any reports from the starving provinces of Ukraine did appear in the Central Russian newspapers, they were usually in the column concerning the food collection rather than the column *Let us help the starving*. Even if a report of the Ukrainian famine regions was printed in the newspapers, it was not given the prominence it deserved.

Instead of publicizing the plight of Ukrainian starving provinces, the newspapers brought Lenin's *Appeal to the peasants of Ukraine...*

“This year, Ukraine, west of the Dnieper, has had an excellent harvest. The workers and peasants in the famine stricken area, who are now suffering hardships only a little less severe than the dreadful calamity of 1891, look to the Ukrainian farmers for help. Help must come quickly. Help must be abundant. No farmer must refrain from sharing his surplus with the starving Volga peasants who have no seed with which to sow their fields.

Let every uyezd (i.e. a county) that is well supplied with grain send, say two or three peasant delegates to the Volga to deliver the grain, and to see for themselves the terrible suffering, want and starvation, and tell their fellow countrymen upon their return how urgently help is needed.”⁵⁸

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars
August 2, 1921 V. Ulyanov Lenin

⁵⁸V. Lenin, *Collected works*, 4th ed., vol. 32, p. 503.

In response to this appeal, the Ukrainian government formed the Ukrainian Central Relief Committee with provincial and regional subcommittees whose duty was to organize foodstuffs for the starving in the Volga-Ural region.⁵⁹ Thus even the Ukrainian Government, which at the time was still considered to be independent from the Russian Republic, paid more attention to the economic conditions of the Russian citizens than to its own in southern Ukraine.

The circular issued by the People's Commissariat of the Internal Affairs of Ukraine as an instruction for the Committees of the Poor Peasants indicated that the highest priority at the time was the collection of foodstuffs for relief of the starving in the provinces of the Volga-Ural region. On September 13, 1921, the highest executive organ of Ukraine approved a decree for the organization of communal relief committees for the Volga starving.⁶⁰ There is no indication whatsoever that any relief was contemplated with respect to the starving population of Ukraine.

It was already evident in the early spring of 1921 that there was not much hope for a good crop in Ukraine, yet Moscow did not soften its demands. In March of 1921, a quota of food tax was levied at 117 million poods of grain. In addition, there was a food tax on various agricultural products such as potatoes, fruits, oil seeds and meat.⁶¹ Furthermore, there was also a cash tax. Since no food reserves were available, famine seemed imminent.

By the end of the year 1921, the food tax deliveries fell rapidly which concerned Government officials, especially Myron Vladimirov, the People's Commissar of Supplies, who made an interesting statement:

"The latest data indicates an unusually sudden decrease in delivery of food tax in parts of Poltava, Kremenchuk and Chernihiv provinces. Daily deliveries there fell to 3-4 thousand poods and especially in Kharkiv province where it reached an inadmissible and shameful amount of less than 1,000 poods."⁶²

⁵⁹*Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* (Kyiv), 1960, vol. 4, No. 3, p. 97.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 97-98

⁶¹*Ekonomicheskaiia zhizn* (Moscow), July 1, 1921, No. 141.

⁶²*V. I. Lenin pro Ukrainu*, vol. 2, p. 516

Further on, the Commissar spoke of the tragic consequences of insufficient deliveries of food taxes, namely that:

“the workers of Donbass may stop their production, and it may hurt the sowing campaign for which seed deliveries have not even yet started. And, of course, there are the hungry waiting for relief that so far has not yet moved beyond paper resolutions. The starving peasants of Zaporozhe, Katerynoslav and Donetsk provinces have not received any government aid. Moreover, the establishment of the important communal mobilizing reserves also have not as yet been completed.”⁶³

However, the New Economic Policy was not as yet applied in Ukraine, which had fallen short on its levy by 50 million poods of grain, and the Prodamy continued its work requisitioning the non-existent “surpluses”. In order to fulfil the requirements of the Centre, the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party in Moscow and the armed gangs of the Prodamy confiscated whatever they were able to find, leaving the peasants bereft of any stocks. Moscow was displeased with the Ukrainian food collection results, especially with the shipments that were reaching the Centre. Subsequently, on February 23, 1921, Lenin sent a telegram to Ukraine’s Prime Minister Christian Rakovsky, asking that the daily quota of 40 wagons of grain supplies be shipped to the Centre in Russia by the Ukrainian Commissariat of Supplies. Lenin wrote:

“I would like to remind you that according to the Vladimirov’s dispatch No. 3781, sixty wagons should be shipped. I hope that the Ukrainian Commissariat of Food Supplies will respond favourably and will do its best to fulfil this new task by using all available means to speed up shipping food to Central Russia in order to relieve the food crisis at this very difficult time.”⁶⁴

On February 24, 1921, Lenin received a telegram from Rakovsky, dispatched two days earlier, in which the Ukrainian Prime Minister informed him that there was

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

unused stock of grain in Ukraine that he proposed to divide, one half for the Centre and the other for starving Ukrainian workers.

From the next telegram sent by Lenin to Rakovsky, on the very same day, it is evident that the Ukrainian Prime Minister had sent a reply, dispatch No. 672, in which he apparently complained that the situation in Ukraine was also unenviable; Ukrainian workers were dissatisfied and the peasantry wanted something of value in return for their crops. This in turn elicited yet another telegram from Lenin in which he advised Rakovsky to ship three-quarters of the specified grain allotment to Russia, leaving only one-quarter for the Ukrainian population. As compensation for the requisitioned food products, Lenin suggested that the Ukrainian Government buy some goods abroad in exchange for gold or petroleum to satisfy, in part the demands of the Ukrainian peasantry.

“Should that be impossible, make some other concessions, but keep in mind that our situation is very difficult.”⁶⁵

It should be noted that Lenin neither liked nor trusted the peasantry in general, primarily because of their “bourgeois outlook” on private property and land. Yet the Ukrainian peasants had a special place in Lenin’s view, which is quite evident from his address to the Plenum of Moscow Soviet of Workers and Peasants’ Deputies on February 28, 1921:

“...we are to make use of all our resources and put in the greatest effort in every field. We must know how to reckon. Reckoning will give us control of the whole Republic, for proper reckoning alone will give us an estimate of the large amounts available of grain and fuel. The bread ration will be short for a lusty appetite, but the amount cannot be increased all at once. There will be a shortage only if we do not lay in stocks, but we shall have enough if we make a correct estimate and give to the most needy, and take from those, who over the last three years may have given away their last crust. Have the peasants of Ukraine and Siberia seen the point of this reckoning? Not yet, I’m afraid. Their present and past grain surpluses have never been matched in Central Russia, nor have they ever experienced such a plight. The peasants of

⁶⁵Ibid, p. 517.

Ukraine, Siberia and Northern Caucasus have never known such destitution and hunger as the peasants of Moscow and Petrograd gubernias (who receive far less than the Ukrainian peasants) have endured for three years. Their surpluses usually run into hundreds of poods, and they have accustomed to receive goods at once for that kind of surplus.’⁶⁶

After having discussed pilfering practices, Lenin pointed out:

“any amount of scandalous practices in the way of pilfering of coal is taking place in Ukraine, while here we are suffering from a great shortage. Over there they have had 120 governments, and the rich peasants have been corrupted. They cannot understand that there is a workers’ and peasants’ government and that, if it confiscates grain, it does so in order to ease the position of the workers and peasants. Until we are able to achieve full clarity on these questions in that area, we shall continue to receive news of disturbances, banditry and revolts. This is inevitable because we have inherited from capitalism, a peasant who is isolated and cannot help being ignorant and full of resentment, and it will take years to re-educate him.’⁶⁷

Such a view on the Ukrainian peasantry partially explains why Lenin, while introducing the New Economic Policy in Russia, did not extend it to Ukraine but left it under the War Communism Act until the end of 1921. He firmly believed that Ukraine was loaded with grain surpluses that should be collected and shipped to starving Russia. The requisitioning of grain in Ukraine continued in spite of ominous signs on the agricultural horizon. As a result of the Prodamy activity, Ukraine, Volga Valley, Northern Caucasus and other agricultural regions were deprived of all their food reserves.

The war devastation of Ukraine was terrible and hurt Ukrainian industry, which in turn had a detrimental impact on Ukrainian agriculture. During 1920-1921, the production of agricultural machinery in Ukraine was at an extremely low level. In 1921, heavy industry fell to a low of 12% of pre-war production. Five hundred mines were destroyed and hardly one blast furnace was still working. Transport was totally ruined and 150 bridges were either blown up or burnt down. The working proletariat

⁶⁶V. I. Lenin. Collected works, 4th ed., vol. 32, p. 154-155.

⁶⁷Ibid, p. 156-157.

was reduced by half. Over 80% of the Ukrainian population was employed in agriculture which by 1921 was reduced in sowing area by 20% while agriculture production was hardly one fourth of its pre-war state,⁶⁸ varying between two and four percent of the pre-war figure. Towards the end of 1921, the population was so impoverished by the heavy fighting in 1920 and by the local crop failures of 1921, that there was no demand for new machinery. The producers of the most important factories, the Ukrainian and the Southern Agricultural Machine Trusts, remained idle. A few factories, not included in these combines, were still being worked by the local agricultural councils. Some had been leased and a number closed down.

Table 2: A comparison of machinery production in Ukraine from 1911-1913 and 1922.

Items	1911-1913	1922	% Decrease in Production
Ploughs, etc.	500,000	50,000	90%
Drills	33,000	5,500	83%
Reapers	140,000	6,800	95%
Threshing Machinery	15,000	4,000	83%

The 1922 production figures are based on an estimate derived from actual totals for the first half of the year. The estimate can be considered optimistic as it assumed a productivity increase of 70% over the first half of the year.⁶⁹

On the other hand, decreased numbers of draught animals due to the shortage of food, and worn out agricultural implements, which had not been replaced since the beginning of the war in the summer of 1914 contributed to the decrease of land under cultivation. Overall, cultivated land in Ukraine decreased in 1921, as compared with the acreage of 1914, by 19.4%, and with 1916, by 10%. The sowing area of spring wheat diminished by two million desiatins and barley diminished by 626,000 desiatins (or 45.4 percent and 17.7 percent respectively). These losses, according to Gurevich, the People's Commissar of Agriculture of Ukraine, should be credited to the interrupted export to foreign countries and also to diminished internal trade

⁶⁸Istoriia Ukr. RSR u dvokh tomakh. (Kyiv, 1967), vol. 2, p. 167-168.

⁶⁹Russian Information and review, 1922, vol. 2, No. 3, p. 38.

markets. A great deal of influence upon this phenomenon had also been the expropriation of large estates. This had a tremendous significance on the cultivation of sugar beets which had almost ceased, from 526,000 desiatins to barely 47,000 desiatins in 1921, a decrease of 91 percent. Diminished sowing comprised almost all spring crop grains.⁷⁰

Even the Ukrainian authorities, including the People's Commissar of Agriculture, Dmytro Manuilskyi, were no better informed about the actual state of affairs in the countryside. Reporting to the All-Ukrainian Executive Committee (government of Ukraine), Manuilskyi optimistically stated,

"the sowing campaign in Ukraine was fulfilled. According to the State Plan, Ukraine had to sow 19,170,000 desiatins of arable land, which would be equal to the amount sown in 1916. However the winter crop represented only 4,971,000 desiatins instead of 6,657,000. In Mykolaiv and Odessa provinces the losses of winter crop fluctuate from 20 to 30%. In general, the conditions of the winter crop in the Ukrainian SSR are satisfactory due to precipitation at the beginning of May."⁷¹

According to Manuilskyi's statement, the total area sown for the 1916 spring crop was 11,099,000 desiatins while in 1920 there were 9,082,000 desiatins sown and 2,017,000 desiatins fallow. The agricultural authorities planned to sow 16 million desiatins and they managed to do it satisfactorily. The sown area of 1916 was to be achieved and it was expected that at least some provinces would exceed it. An unsatisfactory situation existed in Donets province. There was a shortage of late spring crops in the Odessa province but all was reported to be well in the Poltava province. Somewhat less favourable news came from the Katerynoslav province, especially from the Novo-Moskovske county where almost 15% of arable land remained unsown. This was at the time when Ukraine was expected to harvest 870 million poods of grain. In spite of this news, Manuilskyi hoped that the goal would

⁷⁰M. Gurevich, "Golod i sel'skoe khoziaistvo" - *God bor'by s golodom, otchet Tsentral'noi komissii po bor'be s posledstviiami goloda pri VUTSK.* (Kharkov, 1922) p. 74.

⁷¹*Pravda*, No. 112, May 25, 1921.

still be achieved.⁷²

Ukraine, in addition to crop failure, suffered an infestation of vermin and pests including locusts. Under more normal circumstances, it would have been possible to wage a relatively successful fight against this infestation but in 1921 it was impossible due to the lack of insecticides and fungicides. Even the necessary equipment for the application of insect killer was unavailable. In Kharkiv, Donets and Katerynoslav provinces a multitude of gopher hordes appeared, destroying the ripening harvests. The endeavour to fight vermin was disorganized and left entirely to individual localities and, in the final analysis, was ineffective.⁷³

In Ukraine the situation did not differ to any degree from prevailing conditions in the Volga Valley but the misconception about its "surpluses" in Moscow circles was even worse. Most likely it was based on the report supplied by Nikolai Bukharin, the editor of *Pravda*, who visited Ukraine in April 1921 and reported to Lenin that the crop there was quite promising. Lenin then wrote to Mikhail Frunze, Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army in Ukraine, who was also entrusted with collection responsibilities:

"Now the chief task for all Soviet authorities is to collect 200 - 300 million poods of grain, which is for us a question of life and death."⁷⁴

The War Communism policy was detrimental for agriculture in general since it deprived peasants of their food reserves and their incentive to work harder to improve their lot. As a result the land under agricultural cultivation decreased even more in 1921, which in turn diminished the prospects for a better harvest the following season.

In 1921 the population of Ukraine numbered 26 million: 76% were Ukrainians, 11% Russian and 7% Jewish, both minorities residing mostly in the cities; approximately 2% German and 4% other national minorities. The five

⁷²*Pravda*, No. 112, May 25, 1921.

⁷³M. Gurevich, *op. cit.*, *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁷⁴V. I. Lenin *pro Ukrainu*, vol. 2, p. 560.

provinces stricken by drought and threatened with famine included 9,600,000 persons. The population requiring assistance was estimated at 3,700,000 including 1,600,000 children.⁷⁵ Most of the Jews and Germans were living in the famine areas. In Odessa and Kherson, Jews formed one-fourth to one-third of the total population. Katerynoslav also contained a large indigent Jewish population. The population of Kyiv increased significantly as compared with that of the pre-war period and the Jews formed some 60% of the total. In October 1921, there were 28,365 civil or military officials and out of them 3,840 were Christians while 24,525 were Jews. In 1922 the Christian officials amounted to barely 3 percent.⁷⁶

The Germans were most numerous in Donetsk, Odessa and Zaporozhe provinces. About one-sixth of the Germans belonged to the Mennonite sect and settled on the Dnipro island Khortytsia, a Cossack stronghold in the XVII-XVIII centuries. German colonies were a model of order and organization for their neighbours. However, on the threshold of the 1920s, they had been ruined by war activity, the draconic food requisitions and famine, and ultimately, they were threatened with complete destruction. Statistical data indicates that the region of Mariupol' was suffering the most bitterly of all the counties along the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. The destitution in these counties was so terrible that words cannot adequately describe it.⁷⁷

Undernourishment of the population or even complete lack of foodstuffs was bound to produce side effects in the form of sickness and epidemic, which did indeed occur. Sporadic cases of cholera occurred during the autumn of 1921 but reappeared at full strength in December of the same year.⁷⁸

Taxes for individual provinces of Ukraine were decided in Moscow on the basis of the last year's statements of the Narkomprod. At the same time, the taxation

⁷⁵Wm. R. Grove. Report of operations in Ukraine 1922 / by Wm. R. Grove. Supervisor, District of Ukraine, Russian Unit. Odessa, July 31, 1922 - H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

⁷⁶Ereignisse in der Ukraine 1914-1922, deren Bedeutung und historische Hintergründe / hrsg. von T. Hornykiewicz. (Publikationen des W. K. Lypynsky Ost-Europäischen Forschung Institut in Philadelphia, Pa.) Band 4. Philadelphia, PA : Druck u verlag Ferdinand Berger und Söhne, 1969, Dok. 1188, p. 333.

⁷⁷V. Quisling, op. cit., p. 20-21.

⁷⁸Report on the economic conditions in Russia, vol. 2, p. 50.

for the drought inflicted Ukrainian provinces was artificially increased to secure grain for unproductive Russian provinces. As a result, the peasantry of the Ukrainian provinces affected by the drought was burdened with fantastically high taxes which proved to be impossible to fulfill. For instance, P. Popov, the Chairman of Statistics of RSPSR, calculated taxes for the Zaporozhe province based on the 1920's harvest. The ensuing repression introduced by the government, caused the peasantry to respond with their own terrorist acts.⁷⁹

This entire tragic situation was disregarded in Moscow. Official representatives of the Tsarityn Relief Committee arrived in the starving Odessa province and, according to the newspaper *Proletarii*, were allowed to take away five wagons of grain. At the same time, another load of eight wagons of foodstuffs arrived in starving Saratov as a "gift" from the Ukrainian workers and peasants,⁸⁰ a "gift" taken by force by the Prodarmy. How this was accomplished was explained by two local peasants to a *Pravda* correspondent. It also explained why it was necessary to mobilize all the Soviet apparatus to achieve the result:

"They take everything, eggs, butter, white meat (that is house birds) all is taken away... At the beginning, said another peasant, they took ten poods of tax-in-kind. But it was not enough so they raised taxes. And now, two weeks later, some kind of a 'fortnighter' - 100%, which means that they just clear out whatever they find. Nothing is left for us to live on. And what shall we sow? It will be necessary to close the house and move away to look for work somewhere else... And so we paid our taxes already three times."⁸¹

By the end of 1921, perhaps the most authoritative statement about the general conditions in Ukraine was made by no less an authority than the President of the Ukrainian Republic, Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi. He wrote a series of articles in the Moscow daily *Pravda* entitled *Dela ukrainskie* (Ukrainian affairs):

"From the province of Zaporozhe, instead of the originally planned 8.5 million poods of food taxes, thanks to the drought only 250,000 poods were

⁷⁹ Document No. 4 in *Holod v Ukraini, 1921-1923*, p.75-85.

⁸⁰ *Proletarii* (Kharkiv), 1921, No. 266, quoted in *Nova Ukraina*, (Prague), 1922, No. 2, p. 30.

⁸¹ *Pravda*, No. 208, September 18, 1921.

collected. In the province of Donetsk it was necessary to collect 6.5 million poods but the final result was only 1,200,000 poods, and the province of Odessa, instead of delivering 13 million poods, could only plan to deliver 5.5 million. By this time only four million poods were collected and so it was in all other provinces that were hit by the crop failure - Katerynoslav and Mykolaiv. The drought had severely hit the province of Donetsk and there were some cases of cannibalism reported ... In other provinces, which had a satisfactory crop this year, disregarding the fact that Ukrainian farmers are notably poor, Ukrainian Peoples' Commissariat for Supply of Provisions (Narkomprod) collected 60 million poods while at the same time from all of Russia only 90 million poods were collected."⁸²

This was also confirmed by M. Kalinin, President of the Russian Republic and of the All-Russian Relief Committee, in the official organ of the Ukrainian Government *Visti*. He stated that Ukraine not only:

"delivered 61 million poods of food taxes but also 400 wagons of food products were collected in Ukraine and shipped to the starving brothers in the Volga region."⁸³

Many hungry industrial workers had been leaving their mines and factories and going in search of food for their families. From May to August of 1921 the workforce was steadily declining in Ukrainian industries, especially in the Donets Basin. As a result, production of coal decreased rapidly which negatively impacted on both transport and factories with a resulting fuel crisis. In December 1920, the miners of Ukraine produced about 32 million poods (over a half-million tons) of coal and the figure sank steadily. By May 1921, coal productions amounted to 24.7 million poods, in June - 18 million pods, and in July 1921 only 9.1 million poods of coal were extracted. A similar state of affairs also existed in the Russian Republic.⁸⁴ Clearly the situation in the drought areas was deteriorating on a daily basis. The lack of visible effort to provide some relief had a very negative impact on the population's

⁸²G. Petrovs'kyi. "Dela ukrainskie" - *Pravda* (Moscow) No, 24, February 1, p. 4.

⁸³*Visti Vseukrains'koho Tsentral'noho Vykonavchoho Komitetu* (Kharkiv), 1922, February 16, quoted in *Nova Ukraina* (Prague 1922. No. 4-5, p. 34.

⁸⁴A. V. Lykholat. *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrevoliutsii na Ukraine, 1917-1922 gg.* (Moskva: Gos. izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1954), p. 531.

morale.

In spite of these terrible conditions, neither the Ukrainian puppet Government nor the Russian Government ever mentioned Ukraine in their appeals to other countries and governments. Crimea was also not mentioned and, in the above-quoted official source, was not listed among those “worst affected”, even though conditions there were desperate indeed. As a result, foreigners remained ignorant of the Ukrainian famine. In fact, P. Popov declared that even the regions of Ukraine affected by crop failure were expected to produce 877,000 tons of surplus. Therefore, as has been pointed out, the Russian Government looked towards Ukraine as the “land of plenty” that was to save the Volga Valley population from starvation.

On July 28, 1921, Lenin had a telephone conversation with M. K. Vladimirov, his appointee to the post of People’s Commissar for Supplies in Ukraine. Vladimirov plainly stated that Popov’s estimation that Ukraine could supply Russia with 800 - 1,000 million poods of grain was unrealistic and Ukraine could not spare more than 17 million poods.

In response, Lenin told Vladimirov that Popov believed that not 80 million poods but 133 million poods could be obtained from Ukraine as a tax-in-kind.⁸⁵ In view of this, Lenin did not accept Vladimirov’s explanation and held to Popov’s estimates as the more plausible. Lenin wrote his appeal to the Ukrainian peasantry and another to the international proletariat. He did not mention the Ukrainian famine although the vision of calamitous hunger was already quite evident by July 1921. The Soviet Russian Commissar for foreign affairs, Georgii Chicherin, in a note to a number of world governments, also did not refer to the conditions in Ukraine.

Unfortunately this was not all. To alleviate the shortage of food in the Volga Valley Lenin suggested, and the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party promptly approved that 500,000 young men in the area be mobilized for the Red Army and the Prodamy to be deployed to Ukraine. This was dutifully done and these young men were not only sufficiently fed in Ukraine but also proved themselves useful in collecting grain and other edible products for the starving Volga

⁸⁵ Lenin pro Ukrainu, vol. 2, p. 587.

Valley population and for various Russian industrial workers.⁸⁶

On August 28, 1921, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee resolved to remove 20 thousand persons from the starving regions and resettle them in more prosperous regions of Ukraine. The Ukrainian government was obliged to provide these people with a plot of land, agricultural implements and draught cattle as well as with seeds, wood for building construction and financial assistance. However, instead of 20,000 persons, ten thousand families (close to 50,000 persons) from the Russian Federation were resettled and provided with all the agricultural necessities.⁸⁷ According to another Government plan, Ukraine was to accept 25,000 children from the starving regions but in fact it accepted 56,000 from the Russian Federation.

By December 1921, Ukraine was flooded with refugees. According to some incomplete data from the Ukrainian Evacuation Commission, the number of refugees numbered 442,780 persons, of which 266,361 were from the Volga Valley and 176,219 from Siberia. Most of them (168,687) were settled in the province of Kharkiv. These were the people who came to Ukraine with official registration and some 10,000 families were properly resettled.⁸⁸ The Ukrainian Red Cross reported:

"It is impossible to fix the exact number of refugees arriving in Ukraine for the greatest part of them arrive without any organization, with their own means and it is quite impossible to stop this movement. In all cases, the number of refugees amounts to hundreds of thousands and the greatest part of them have never passed through any bathing disinfection or delousing."⁸⁹

It is odd that 72,888 persons had been resettled to the starving provinces, among them Zaparozhe province (35,790) and Katerynoslav province (19,222 persons).⁹⁰

In the meantime, the Russian Central Relief Committee began its relief activity by assigning each of the gubernias officially recognized as "famished" to a

⁸⁶Ibidem.

⁸⁷O. M. Movchan. "Braters'ka vzaïmodopomoha trudiashchym Ukrainy i Rosiï's'koi Federatsii v borot'bi z holodom (1921-1922 rr.)" - *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, zhovten' 1982, p. 86-87.

⁸⁸Otchet Tsentral'noi komissii po bor'be s posledstviïami goloda pri VUTSK'e, noiabr' 1922-sentiabr' 1923, Khar'kov, 1923, p. 88.

⁸⁹Report to ARA from the Ukrainian Red Cross, p. 3, in H.H.A., Rus. oper., Box 120.

⁹⁰Otchet Tsentral'noi komissii po bor'be s posledstviïami goloda, p. 88.

province that was in a better economic state.

“The latter province (Katerynoslav) was supposed to devote its energies to collecting supplies within its own borders for the support of the famine stricken gubernia attached to it. Five of them, Bashkiria, Samara, Saratov, Tsaritsyn and Uralsk were assigned to Ukraine for feeding. It is officially recognized that the 200,000 adults and 50,000 children from the Volga Ural region were evacuated to Ukraine.”⁹¹

A great number of unregistered refugees came on carts, running away from starvation, to Ukraine - the land of plenty. By December 1921, some 120,000 were already in Ukraine of whom 49,000 were children. They were placed in specially organized children's homes all over Ukraine under the supervision of the local committees of the Poor Peasants (*Kombidy*). According to some sources, 3,000 adults from the Volga-Ural area were evacuated into the starving Odessa province.⁹²

From October 12, 1921 to June 1, 1922, land committees were responsible for the care of refugees and resettling them in the Right Bank provinces and stopping the inflow of refugees from Russia into the famished provinces of Ukraine. During that specific time, 10,000 families, or approximately 50,000 persons, were resettled in four southern gubernias: Mykolaiv - 7,376; Katerynoslav - 4,832; Odessa - 4,318 and Zaporozhe - 3,795. A number of refugees were resettled for good on the reserved lands of the state: Mykolaiv - 20,771; Katerynoslav - 9,250 and Zaporozhe - 12,410. Most of the refugees were settled in the Chernihiv province.⁹³ According to one news item, some 70,000 Russian refugees were sent to the county of Proskuriv in the province of Podolia. In addition to the requisitioned foodstuffs and newly introduced tax-in-kind, each homestead was assigned two or three of the refugees for free feeding. This move was strongly resented by the peasants and, in some cases, led to armed confrontations with the refugees who were supported by the Bolsheviks. This

⁹¹Komunist Ukrainy (Kyiv), vol. 25, 1959, No. 12, p. 65.

⁹²Proletarii; (Kharkiv), 1921, No. 267, quoted in Nova Ukraina (Prague), 1922, chapter 2, p. 30.

⁹³God bor'by s golodom, 1921-1922, p. 31; but a researcher O. M. Movchan in his "Braters'ka dopomoha ..." in Ukr. istorychnyi zhurnal, 1982, No. 10, quotes different numbers, namely: about 439 thousand refugees, 263,459 from the Volga region and 175,198 from Siberia. Most of them were settled in the Kharkiv province.

unhealthy situation existed in all 12 counties of the Podolia province, each comprising about 200 villages. It resulted in an apprehension of the possibility of a situation similar to, if not worse than, the French "Bartholomew night".⁹⁴

The Volga Valley refugees were not the only ones in need of care. When starvation became unavoidable in the southern Ukrainian provinces, and no help was forthcoming. Ukrainian peasants were leaving their villages and homesteads, moving to those regions where foodstuff was available: Poltava, Kyiv, Podolia and Chernihiv provinces. Since money now had no value, the exchange trade came into existence using cloth, home furnishings, agricultural equipment, even horses and cattle for food and seeds.

* * * * *

On September 14, 1921, Zhytomyr sent three trains of food products and collected 100 million rubles from the Volhynian counties where the harvest was acceptable for the purchase of food for the Volga Valley.⁹⁵ By September 18, the Iziaslav Relief Committee also collected four wagons of grain. The Polonne Relief Committee dispatched three wagons that were intended for the starving in the Volga Valley.⁹⁶ A union of food processing workers from the city of Kyiv delivered one wagon of grain for the disposition of the Central Russian Relief Committee for the starving in the province of Uralsk. The workers of the tobacco factory also loaded four wagons of grain for the starving.⁹⁷

The crop gathered in the fall of 1921 was tragically below the normal level, 8.5 poods per capita, and in some areas of Ukraine even less. In Velykyi Tokmak, for instance, it amounted to seven-tenths of a pood per capita. In the county of Odessa - 2.1 poods per capita while in 1916 the crop amounted to 42.6 poods per capita.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, No. 21, August 6, 1921.

⁹⁵ *Pravda*, No. 258, November 16, 1921.

⁹⁶ *Pravda*, No. 212, September 23, 1921.

⁹⁷ *Pravda*, No. 231, October 14, 1921.

⁹⁸ H.H. Fisher. *The famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923*, p. 261.

There were scant reserves from the previous years as 1920 had been one of the driest the country had experienced since 1840.

At the beginning of August 1921, the Presidium of the Ukrainian Executive Committee decided to organize the Ukrainian Central Committee to Aid the Starving. Under the chairmanship of H. Petrovs'kyi himself, the assigned deputies were D. Manuilskyi and Vlas Chubar, with Yermoshchenko as secretary and 18 members from the highest echelon of the Ukrainian Government. It was a Ukrainian Central Pomgol just like the one organized in Russia under the chairmanship of M. Kalinin. In a special decree issued on August 7, 1921, it was stated that this Committee would not have an apparatus of its own, but instead it was going to use the apparatus of the government. This Committee was to co-ordinate activity of the various relief committees. At the same time, instructions had been issued to provincial and district authorities to organize local committees to aid the starving which were to report to the Central Pomgol in Kharkiv on the 1st and the 15th of each month.

According to this decree, provincial Pomgols were obliged to create similar committees at district and regional levels. They had to consist of five members - Chairman of the district government, members of the CPU, the trade unions, co-operative societies and of the kombidy (poor villagers).⁹⁹

In late summer 1921, on all the main roads leading north and north-west of Ukraine, caravans of horse carts and pedestrians were moving away from famine stricken areas in search of more affluent provinces.¹⁰⁰ The authorities did not like this movement and the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party issued an appeal that, among other items stated:

“it is necessary to stop the spontaneous wave of peasants moving from the famine stricken area. The masses should be advised of the harmfulness of such a transmigration.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹God bor'by s golodom 1921-1922; otchet Tsent. Komissii po Bor'be s Posledstviiami Goloda ... Khar'kov, 1922, p. 101-102.

¹⁰⁰P. Stradnyk. Pravda pro soviets'ku vladu v Ukraini; serp i molot siut' smert' i holod. New York: M. Chyhyryns'kyi, 1972, p. 59-60.

¹⁰¹“Na bor'bu s golodom. Sbornik materialov.” Petersburg: Gos. izd-vo, 1921, p. 8, quoted by E. Kuskova, in “Russkii golod”, p. 377.

They were also prevented from entering:

“the northern parts of Ukraine where the harvest was good and from coming to the help of the southern Ukrainian provinces, where famine was raging. A blockade has been proclaimed over the famine stricken southern Ukraine. The population of the famine stricken Ukrainian governments was allowed neither to buy corn in northern parts of the Ukraine nor obtain it by barter. The blockade commanders of the Russian occupation army had closed all the routes along which it would be possible to bring grain into the famine stricken districts of the Ukraine.”¹⁰²

This appeal had been devised in order to uphold Russia’s claim to the entire harvest of northern Ukraine as a *prodnalog*.

Many starving could be seen in the streets and markets, too weak to walk, lying on the frozen earth, wrapped in rags, begging passers-by to give them a little crust of bread. Within a short lapse of time they were transformed into corpses whom nobody cared to bury and dogs tore to pieces. This was particularly evident in January, February and March of 1922. People died in the streets every day. This was also the time when a number of professional people, striving to relieve the sufferings of others, were dying themselves. In the Hlukhiv district of Chernihiv province on April 19, 1922 died a well-known social and political activist Dr. Petro Galagan. He was in charge of a barrack filled with swollen starving people. Salaries, as well as food for the barrack, were late three to four months. A physician taking care of the swollen famished patients starved to death.¹⁰³

It seems that the Agricultural Commissar of Ukraine, Dmytro Manuilskyi, was unaware as to what was transpiring in the south of his country. Speaking at the Sixth All-Ukrainian Deputies Congress in Kharkiv in mid- December 1921, he said:

“Regardless of how many other important matters cannot wait for a solution, being a member of the Central Committee, I consider it my duty to warn the Conference, to warn the Party and the whole country, that if we do not decide what heroic countermeasures we should employ, we will be having our own

¹⁰²The famine in Ukraine. Berlin: Dietz Nachf., 1923, p. 5.

¹⁰³E. Kuskova, "Russkii golod", *ibid*, p. 378.

Volga Valley.¹⁰⁴

Was it possible that Manuilskyi did not yet know that the conditions of the Volga Valley already existed in southern Ukraine? Was he unaware that in the Zaporozhe province barely 500,000 poods of grain were harvested on 700,000 desiatins? Could it be that he was not informed that all the grain reserves were already shipped north to Russia? Was he aware that the famine was already creating its own harvest of thousands of starving people? Did Manuilskyi know that Kalinin had visited Poltava, Myrhorod, Vinnytsia and even Odessa and appealed to the population to help combat famine, not in southern Ukraine but in the Volga Valley?¹⁰⁵

The Soviet authorities, being in a catastrophic situation with transport, critical conditions in Donbass and with industry in general, found themselves in an unbelievably difficult position of internal reconstruction from the War Communism to the New Economic Policy with a tax-in-kind system. Soviet authorities in Ukraine struggled to fulfil their obligations of "fraternal" debt to supply the North with food products, provide the minimum of necessary workers due to a reduced industrial program as well as the governing apparatus. There could be no doubt that the Ukrainian Soviet Republic could have managed these tasks quite well if there had not been a drought. Moreover, the dearth of statistical research and the sluggishness of food agencies and agricultural departments in the provinces of Ukraine, presented a false portrait of the overall situation. Although the Centre had been flooded with telegrams from the starving provinces, they were not taken seriously because there were no data to support the legitimacy of this calamity. The famine in the Volga Valley caught the full attention of the Centre while the Ukrainian famine was pushed to the side; nobody talked about it, and even less wrote about it. Adhering to the old tradition of requisition and that the federal tax-in-kind should be collected at all costs, the collecting agencies of the Ukrainian SSR disregarded the real fact that the Ukrainian agricultural economy was bordering on ruin. They continued to collect

¹⁰⁴"Vscukrainskaia partiinaia konferentsiia" in *Pravda*, No. 287, December 20, 1921.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

food products in Ukraine to save the Volga Valley - the granary of the RSFSR .¹⁰⁶

Only after famine was already well-advanced, growing at a tremendous pace and following a constant bombardment of "hungry" telegrams, the five Ukrainian provinces were recognized as famished but not in a well publicized manner. It was in response to these telegrams that in May 1922, the provinces in question were recognized as starving in a federal sense. By this time, famine had already gripped anywhere from 30% to 80% of the population in the affected provinces and authorities began to keep some statistics of the number of starving. The dimension of the famine in Ukraine was as bad as in the Volga Valley. This was established by the representatives of foreign agencies, who visited the Volga Valley and then came to see Ukraine's starving provinces. Unfortunately, a trip by M. Kalinin, President of the RSFSR, and H. Petrov's'kyi, President of Ukraine, did not depict the Ukrainian famine in its full dimension and the trip was a complete failure as far as the starving were concerned.

Aid in Ukraine had its own distinguishing features. Until the month of March 1922, combating the famine in Ukraine was done in a manner similar to that of the Volga Valley. By March, the famine was growing at an unbelievable rate. In Odessa province, for instance, the number of starving reached 25% of the population and yet Odessa province had an honorary mention on the "Red Board" for shipping 58 wagons of food products to the Volga Valley. (It is noteworthy that the Ukrainian Pomgol did not supply Odessa province with a single pood of food during its entire struggle with famine). Two-thirds of everything edible harvested in Ukraine was sent to the Volga Valley, which had been receiving aid from the very beginning of the Pomgol campaign. The remaining one-third was assigned to the starving provinces of Ukraine but was delivered only during the last three months of the famine.¹⁰⁷

In the meantime, the Dniprovsky county authority of the Mykolaiv province, in reviewing Moscow's requests for food delivery, came to the conclusion that in

¹⁰⁶"Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini": *Zbirnyk materialiv i dokumentiv vidpovidal'nyi redaktor S.V. Kul'chyts'kyi.* (Kyiv; Naukova dumka, 1993), p. 135-136.

¹⁰⁷Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini, p. 137-138.

view of the very poor crop in the county, they would have to reserve 300 thousand poods of grain from their quota of tax-in-kind. The provincial Mykolaiv authorities also reviewed Moscow's requests and came to the conclusion that because of the poor crop they might fulfil only 50% and ship 250,000 poods to the North, and not 500,000 as requested. However, at the same time, the provincial authorities considered Dniprovsky decision "to retain 300,000 poods for a rainy day" illegal. On July 4, 1921, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine decided to oblige provincial authorities to ship daily to the North 10 wagons from the Kyiv Province, 20 from Poltava, 5 from Kremenchuk, 7 from Zaporozhe, 5 from Mykolaiv, 5 from Odessa and 3 from Chernihiv.¹⁰⁸

* * * * *

From prosperous to famished, the Ukrainian population protested in every way against the forcible requisition of grain and other food products. A report from the town of Lityn, Podolia province, read that,

"after the shock-group of Prodarmy, consisting of 70 men, headed by Aleksandrov, arrived on the sixth of February 1922, it seemed that the situation improved, but not for long. During the night of February 27-28, in the village of Maidan of Bahryn volost', two agents of the Aleksandrov group were caught and shot, while three others were critically wounded."¹⁰⁹

The commissar responsible for food collection in Lityn county went to the village Maidan to investigate the crime himself. To detect the perpetrators he appointed an extraordinary committee of five men, called a revolutionary tribunal and arrested eight wealthy farmers as hostages. Since the guilty parties were not found, the revolutionary tribunal condemned all eight of the hostages and had them shot while terrorized villagers fled. The regional commissar stated:

¹⁰⁸Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukra'ni, p. 28-29.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, p. 105, Dokument 58

“These are the circumstances under which we execute tax in food collection and I am doing my best to employ various means to speed up and pump up as much food as possible while disregarding the difficulties.”¹¹⁰

In 1920 and 1921, the struggle between peasant and Soviet troops in the Ukrainian villages became so bitter and violent as to resemble a civil war. Myron Vladimirov, the Commissar for Food Affairs in Ukraine, reported that 1,700 men requisitioning food in Ukraine had been killed by the peasants.¹¹¹

In January 1922, the number of starving children in the city of Katerynoslav and its county registered 142,944. The government had organized only five kitchens in the city and two along the railroad. The predicament of the children was the worst. As an example, in a small children’s hospital in Katerynoslav, patients ill with different kinds of typhus were in the same room with patients afflicted with measles and scarlet fever. In a home established for diagnosing ill children between the ages of 6 and 18 years, all were sleeping on the floor without any distinction as to grave illness from tuberculosis.¹¹² In 1921, the children’s buildings in Ukraine comprised 75% children from the RSFSR.¹¹³ Captain Quisling, in a telegram to Dr Nansen, described the horror:

“Five million persons are now without food and probably more than ten thousand die daily of starvation. Even in the city of Odessa 276 hunger corpses were gathered from the street during the first week of April. In Zaporozhe the famine is so intensified that our representative reports villages where he has observed 7 to 10 percent of the population die in one day. Cannibalism, and especially secret necrophagy, has increased in an alarming way, even in those villages relatively best situated.

When I visited them some weeks ago, I got for instance such undoubtedly true information as the following: The physician enters the house; he finds the sixty-year old mother lying on the floor dead of starvation, the younger son, twelve years old, also dead of starvation, with the abdomen and chest torn open, and in front of him the elder brother, twenty years old, dead from

¹¹⁰Ibid..

¹¹¹Desiatyi S'ezd RKP(b). (Moscow, 1963), p. 422.

¹¹²Prof. Goskoff. *Famine in Ekaterinoslav in 1921-1922*, p. 8.

¹¹³*Holod vUkraini*, p. 13.

corpse poison, a knife in his right hand and in his mouth pieces of meat from his brother's body. The famine has reached such dimensions and such insignificant relief is given that the starving population loses every hope and dies. Relief workers are also often on the point of giving up."¹¹⁴

Although the situation was dire, there were no countermeasures undertaken to prevent starvation in the five southern provinces of Ukraine. The Moscow Government did not recognize the famine in Ukraine and the five famished provinces went unpublicized. No attempt was made to relieve the drought stricken provinces of Ukraine and of Crimea from the tax-in-kind as was done in the Volga Valley provinces. On the contrary, the tax-in-kind campaign was launched soon after the harvest in all of Ukraine, including the southern provinces. Collection of food taxes in Volhynia started on August 28, 1921.

In view of the bread shortage, it was quite common for people to mix some foodstuffs with other substitutes such as grounded birch with barley, corn peel and soil with leaves and oak bark, to sustain themselves. Undernourishment of the population, or even complete lack of foodstuffs, was bound to produce side effects in the form of sickness and epidemic. Sporadic cases of cholera occurred during the autumn of 1921, but in December of that year it was already at full strength.¹¹⁵ The number of famine victims increased daily. According to the official statistics at the beginning of 1922, there were approximately 12% starved in the drought inflicted provinces, but in May 1922, the number increased to 40% of the population.¹¹⁶

Captain Quisling wrote:

"Ukraine, being the main export country of the Russian Federation, had its economical life severely affected by the blockade of the Allies. It may also be assumed the requisition of products from the peasants under the old economical system of the Soviets was especially severe in Ukraine, and that the levy of taxes under the new economical system 1921-1922 was imposed until too late a date considering the famine situation."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴V. Quisling's telegram to Dr. Nansen, Appendix 3, in his *Famine Situation in Ukania*, p. 30. (The author's spelling of Ukania corrected to Ukraine.)

¹¹⁵Report of the economic conditions in Russia, vol. 2, p. 50.

¹¹⁶ Document No. 77, in *Holod v Ukraini 1921-1923*, p 12.

¹¹⁷V. Quisling. *Famine situation in Ukania*, p. 4.

By December 1, 1921, Ukraine was obliged to send Russia 20 million poods of foodstuff for the Volga starving but by November 21 only 9,635 wagons were shipped, less than half of the requirement. Subsequently, the deadline for delivery was extended to January 1, 1922.¹¹⁸ To fulfil the plan, the authorities in Odessa had mobilized in their province 200 workers and 24 accountants and sent them to the country to collect food taxes from the starving peasants.¹¹⁹

At the same time, the Moscow daily *Pravda* reported that the famine in Ukraine was quite serious in Zaporozhe, Katerynoslav and Donets provinces, as well as parts of Odessa and Mykolaiv.

By December 1, 1921, in one Melitopol' county in the province of Zaporozhe, 459 cases of death were registered through starvation, in Huliay Pole county - 49, and Berdiansk - 39. The number of starving in the entire province reached 250,000 people.¹²⁰

Disregarding this tragic situation, the Prodamy managed to extract enough money, food products and animals in the Tyrsa volost' of the Melitopol' county in the Zaporozhe province for the starving peasants in Russia, that the volost' was also listed on the honorary Red Board for its "generous" contribution to the starving Russians.¹²¹

In December 1921, the food resources were depleted and the death rate in the south increased due to starvation. The central Government softened the tax-in-kind and the shipment of Ukrainian bread to the RSFSR was lowered from 57 millions to 27 million poods.¹²² In the fall of 1921, the Russian provinces, victims of the drought, were relieved from the food taxes and received food from Ukraine. At the same time a benevolent campaign by Russian and foreign aid was encouraged while no official aid plan for the summer and fall of 1921 was mentioned on behalf of Ukrainian starvation victims. Although the state agencies were well-informed about the famine

¹¹⁸ *Pravda*, No. 269, November 29, 1921.

¹¹⁹ *Izvestiia*, No. 4, January 5, 1922.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ M. Movchan, "Braters'ka dopomoha trudiashchykh Ukrainy i Rosiis'koi Federatsii, Ukr. istor. zurnal, 1982, No. 10, p. 83.

¹²² Document No. 77 in *Holod v Ukraini 1921-1923*, p. 124

and that Ukrainian food supplies even from miserable grain reserves collected in the provinces of Dniprov's'k and Mykolaiv were donated to the starving in Russian SFSR, they remained silent. No official information about the tragic situation was published in either the Russian or foreign newspapers and journals.¹²³

The Canadian Ukrainian pro-Communist newspaper which had printed nothing but praises about the prosperity of Soviet Ukraine could not remain silent about the starving in the home country. It informed its readers that the famine in Ukraine was becoming more terrifying by the day. According to the official press organ *Visti*, published in Kharkiv, Soviet Ukraine's peasants consumed nearly all the horses and tens of thousands were ailing from famine. There were many cases of insanity driven by famine and cannibalism. In Vinnytsia region, the peasants ate bread made of mud and dirt mixed with bran. Typhoid fever as a result of famine was spreading rampantly.

On July 13, 1922, an international conference of various committees and organizations involved in relief activity was gathered in Berlin. Russian and Ukrainian delegations were in attendance: V. Kh. Ausem, Kaliuzhny and M. Levytskyi represented the Ukrainian Red Cross. When the Ukrainian delegation submitted a request to speak and invite foreign aid to combat Ukrainian famine, it was assured by Plenipotentiary Eiduk that Ukraine's case would be well represented by the Russian delegate Smidovich, who had collected all the necessary data. Sadly, Smidovich failed to report on the Ukrainian situation and focused his entire presentation solely on the Volga Valley famine with not one word about Ukraine. The same happened when Eiduk, following Smidovich to the podium, talked about the activity of foreign agencies in Russia, not a single word uttered about Ukraine. Moreover, he presented the Russian case in such an optimistic way as if the hunger had been overcome and Russia would soon be in a position to export food surpluses. Eiduk also stated that the Volga Valley needed about 150 horses to return to normal production. While this might have been true for the Volga Valley, Ukraine needed no

¹²³Document No. 38 in *Holod v Ukraini 1921-1923*, p. 69.

less than one million horses to achieve a pre-war rate of agricultural production.¹²⁴

Afterward, M. Levytskyi of the Ukrainian Red Cross took the stand to present a short paper about the ways and means of combating the famine in Ukraine:

“The streets of Katerynoslav are crowded with hungry children and adults who drown out the noises of the streets with their heart rending cries for help. The children resemble walking corpses who wander the streets like shadows. Hungry little girls no longer ask for aid but sob silently. The sobbing cannot be described. The unfortunate exhausted victims fall in the streets and die on the spot.

This is in the town. In the neighbouring villages the situation is even worse. Over 100,000 mostly children are completely drained of strength. They are so weakened that they cannot move about but are lying down. The situation in Eastern Ukraine is more terrifying. All that is known till now about famine areas of Russia are insignificant in comparison with the suffering of the population of Eastern Ukraine. In one region where there are 1,300,000 people, 900,000 are destined to die. Cases of consumption of human corpses has reached unbelievable proportions...”¹²⁵

Levytskyi also mentioned that Poland had confiscated all products and money collected for the starving people of Ukraine and this evoked interest especially among the American and French delegates.¹²⁶ Levytskyi’s presentation also generated a great deal of interest among the foreign Red Cross representatives who had never heard of the famine in Ukraine and asked for whatever information was available to become acquainted with the true situation. Unfortunately, the final resolution of the Conference was to give priority to the Volga Valley, then to Donbass and finally to the other starving provinces of Ukraine.

In April, the government assigned some grains for sowing but in most cases, the hungry peasants simply consumed them. There were no horses, no cattle and no ploughs for agricultural labour. In Melitopol’ county,

“in the great but remote village of Tomashivka, the peasants received news

¹²⁴Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini, p. 152-153.

¹²⁵“Vsi na pomich holoduiushchym”, *Ukrains’ki Robitmychi Visti*, (Winnipeg) April 22, 1922.

¹²⁶Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini, p. 152-153.

that corn was being given to them for sowing. They went on foot, many with little wagons to fetch it. They were too weak to carry it, a part of them died on the road going there, more coming back, hardly a third of them could reach their homes and bring the grains..."

The situation worsened with the passing weeks and months. In March 1922:

"in the main street beggars in long rows; women, children, men all in rags, almost naked; dilated eyes, exceedingly bright, looking if you are carrying a piece of bread in your basket. Poor little babies, crying at the bosoms of their mothers unable to feed them. From dawn until late at night sufferers knocking at your doors, at your windows, asking for 'very little crust of black bread'."¹²⁷

There were many cases of suicide. Mothers threw their children into wells and rivers, killing themselves afterward. Hunger tormenting people so much that they became crazed. Parents who had to choose two or three of their stronger children and feed them scantily while condemning the rest to die from starvation. There were horrific stories about people captured in the evening on the streets by unknown persons and disappearing forever.¹²⁸

In Odessa province, the situation was especially bad in the south and along the Dnister River. In addition to local populations, there were some 15,000 starving fugitives from Bessarabia. On the first of March, the authorities estimated that there were some 350,000 starving, of whom 205,000 were children. This represents 18% of the population. While back on February 1, the registered starving people were 105,000 persons.¹²⁹

According to a statement by the President of the Ukrainian SSR, G. Petrov's'kyi, food products were continuously shipped to Russia. By the end of September 1921, on the railway station in Kharkiv, then the capital of Ukraine,

"were ready 30 wagons of grain, a gift from the Ukrainian peasants, to be

¹²⁷"Report on the Ekaterinoslav district of the ARA," p. 40 - in H.H.A.. ARA Rus. oper., Box 124, Outcard no. 519.

¹²⁸Ibid, p. 41 - H.H.A., ARA Rus. Oper, Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav - History, Box 124. Outcard No. 519.

¹²⁹Ibid, p. 10.

shipped immediately to the starving gubernias of Volga region.”¹³⁰

and this information was even entitled *Ukrainian working peasants - for the starving Volga Valley*.¹³¹ It is interesting to note that collections for the starving had nothing to do with the food taxes. It was a different campaign altogether, performed essentially by the local Committees of the Poor Peasants.

With the Ukrainian Government paying more attention to the starving in the Volga Valley, the national insurgents committed a number of acts of sabotage. Since there was no help or protection forthcoming from the “Ukrainian” Government in Kharkiv, the people of Ukraine were left to fend for themselves. Consequently, the Ukrainian insurgents intensified their struggle against the Soviet authorities. In many cases they fought the Prodamy units in the villages and attempted to prevent the export of grain and other foodstuffs from starving Ukraine north to the Russian S.F.S.R. Soviet sources stated that “in the month of July 1921 alone, bandits organized 30 raids on the railway train loaded with Ukrainian grain.”

Thus, wrote *The Times Of London*:

“a food train from the fertile districts of Ukraine, destined for the famine areas on the Volga, has been wrecked at Fastiv, near Kyiv; 27 persons being killed and 30 injured. The accident is attributed to the destruction of the line by Petlura’s insurgent bands and great use is being made of this by the Soviet authorities as propaganda to set the sympathies of the population against the bandits and stimulate feeling for their Red followers...In an order to the Red Army, Petlura’s followers are referred to as hirelings of the Polish landowners and capitalists.”¹³²

In a more recent mention of the incident at Fastiv, the details are somewhat different. Namely, the derailed transport train, in September 1921 near the town of Fastiv was assigned for the Donets Province not to the Volga Valley with thousands

¹³⁰ *Pravda* (Moscow), No. 215, September 27, 1921.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *The Times* (London), September 22, 1921, p. 9:1.

of poods of peasants' grain.¹³³

"On November 7, 1921, in the village of Ivanychi of the Zhytomyr county insurgents destroyed state grain storage scattering grain around right in the street mud."¹³⁴

This was the official explanation. Whenever a train was derailed or the food storage robbed, the authorities usually explained that the particular train of food was assigned for Ukrainian workers or for the Ukrainian starved regions. Even if it was derailed on the railway heading north to Russia, the guerrillas were blamed for committing a crime against their own countrymen.

While collecting the tax-in-kind, the Prodarmy units were also engaged in combating the uprisings against the authorities. In order to fulfil the allotted tax-in-kind in Ukraine, the militia was called for assistance. When it seemed that the results were not what Moscow expected, assistance was given by the "brotherly" Russian people. In 1921, some 10,000 militiamen, 2,000 commanding personnel and 200 administrators were sent to Ukraine from the Russian Federation. In one Poltava province they killed 72 bandits and 1,216 political perpetrators were taken prisoner. In the Melitopol' county, all militia personnel was mobilized and the 30th Thirkutsk division from Siberia was brought in to combat the uprisings.¹³⁵

Early in 1922, a pamphlet *Relief to the Hungry* was published, which included an article entitled *Ukraine on the famine front*. According to this article, there were 553 wagons of grain collected for the starving (in addition to the food tax) of which 92 wagons were collected in the starving Ukrainian provinces. They were distributed among the Volga-Ural provinces: Samara - 103; Saratov - 138; Tsaritsyn - 83; Uralsk - 66, and Tatar SSR - 3 wagons; 28 wagons were assigned for the Zaporozhe province; 15 for the employees of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive

¹³³A. D. Zalevs'kyi. "Rozhrom kurkul's'ko-natsionalistychnoho bandytyzmu na Ukraini (1921-1922 rr.) - in *Ukrains; 'kyj istorychnyj zhurnal*, 1959, No. 4, p. 93-94.

¹³⁴Ibidem.

¹³⁵V. Altuev. "Uchast' militsii v borot'bi z bandytyzmom u 1921-1925", *Ukr. istor. zhurnal*, 1973, No11, p. 122.

Committee (Ukrainian Government) and 28 wagons for all other Ukrainian starving provinces.¹³⁶

The above figures speak for themselves. Out of 553 wagons of Ukrainian grain, 462 were sent to the Volga-Ural area where the relief activity of the ARA and of the Nansen Mission was already in a full operation. Seventy wagons, or 15 percent, were sent to the five starving Ukrainian provinces, with a population more or less equal to that of the Volga Valley area (8.5 - 9 million persons), where no foreign relief activity was as yet undertaken. Moreover, from the 71 wagons only 56 were sent to the starving population as 15 wagons were assigned for the employees of the government in Kharkiv. In short, out of 92 wagons of grain collected in the starving Ukrainian provinces, only 56 were returned for their own use while 36 wagons were sent to feed the hungry in the Volga-Ural area.¹³⁷

By January 1922, 12 percent of the Ukrainian population was classified as "famished". On February 8, 1922 the *Daily News Summary* reported:

"in the county of Odessa 1,500 men are starving of hunger in the village of Troits'ke. Neither help nor supplies being foreseen. In the county of Tyraspol 16 villages starve of hunger - 79,346 adults and 11,346 children. The situation is not any better in Mykolaiv, where nearly all the population is dying of hunger. Every day increased the number of the famine sufferers."¹³⁸

Professor L. Hutchinson, in his *Observations in the Ukraine*, stated:

"the statistical information given out by the central Moscow authorities is almost wholly unreliable. Statements made by Ukrainian authorities and the local government authorities differ enormously. Even statements made by each of these authorities at different times vary considerably."¹³⁹

Captain Vidkun Quisling of the Nansen Mission also verified this fact. On his

¹³⁶"Ukraina na golodnom fronte" in *Pomoshch golodnym*. March 10, 1922, quoted by I. Herasymovych in his "Holod na Ukraini". Berlin: Ukr. Slovo, 1922, p. 201.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Extracts from the *Daily News Summary*, in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

¹³⁹ ARA Bulletin, March 1922, Series 2, No. 22, p. 7.

way to Ukraine, he sought some information in Moscow about the situation in Ukraine from presumably well-informed persons. He wrote:

“They told me that in Ukraina the situation was very bad, about half a million people starving. In reality the number was more than six times greater.”¹⁴⁰

Then he made a tour inspection of the famine stricken provinces and found out that about 8 million people were suffering from famine that was especially severe in southern Ukraine. Two and half million did not even have food substitutes and would inevitably perish. The government, the co-operatives and the Red Cross were feeding 320,000 persons including 220,000 children, but a certain number of canteens were being closed down for want of provision. The mortality in the children’s homes was very high and exceeded fifty per cent. Sanitary conditions were terrible and there was a great lack of medicine.¹⁴¹

Prof. Hutchinson observed:

“In regard to medicines, drugs, hospital supplies, clothing, et cetera, the situation in the Ukrainian famine area is very similar to that in the Volga region. There is an appalling lack of even bare necessities, all the more serious because, in contrast to the food situation, supplies do not exist anywhere either close at hand or at a distance.

In one respect the famine area in Ukraine is in a more serious situation than that of the Volga. The drought followed four or five years during which the peasants were ravaged by succession of wars, insurrections, pogroms, bandit raids, and other disturbances which were far more serious than anything of this nature that happened on the Volga. Their domestic animals have been reduced by these successive operations plus the drought more seriously than anywhere in Russia. For the Ukraine as a whole this reduction probably reaches fifty per cent: in the five governments of the famine area. I doubt whether the peasants now have left more than 25 per cent of their normal number of animals ... it appears to be a fact that in the Ukrainian famine area (except in Katerynoslav) there has been far less autumn planting or autumn ploughing for spring planting than I found anywhere on the Volga.”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Vidkun Quisling, *Famine situation in Ukania*, p. 2.

¹⁴¹*Industrial and labour information* (Russian Supp), Apr 13, 1922, H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

¹⁴²L. Hutchinson, *Observations in the Ukraine*, *ibid*, p. 11.

This unhappy situation was later confirmed by survivor Victor Kravchenko, a high-ranking official in the metallurgical industry of Soviet Ukraine. As a member of the Soviet Trade Mission to the United States during the war, Kravchenko defected in 1944 and wrote his memoirs entitled *I choose freedom* in which he also recalled the famine of 1921-1923. According to him:

“there were no words to describe the suffering and horror of the population. Men eyed with greedy despair every living thing - horses, dogs, cats, house pets. Cattle not slaughtered died of starvation and was devoured despite official warnings against pestilence. Trees were stripped of their bark, which was brewed for “tea” or a “soup”. Untanned leather was chewed for sustenance. Fields were picked bare of every last stalk of straw and blade of grass. Stories of peasants eating their own dead became more frequent; and unhappily they were often true - I knew such cases in Romankovo, Auly, Pankovka and other neighbouring villages.”¹⁴³

With the coming of spring, the food substitutes increased and by May 1, the number of starving decreased by 10%. By June 1, the number decreased by 20% and by June 15 - possibly by 35%. No doubt, after the harvest, the number of starving would decrease by 65% in March and June 1922. The remaining 15-20% of the starving were still in need of aid. The starving comprised that portion of the population which lost its crops in 1922, those unable to sow their fields in the spring, those who lost their parents of which there were many, and finally, the invalids who lost their ability to work.

This served as encouragement for the Soviet Government to not only continue the collection of *prodnalog* and food products for the Volga Valley but also levy and collect civil tax in money with famine stricken regions not being spared.

“The relatively prosperous gubernias of Volhynia and Chernihiv produced taxes amounting to 31 and 40 million rubles respectively.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³Kravchenko V., *I choose freedom; the personal and political life of a Soviet official.* (New York: Ch. Scribner's, 1946), p. 31.

¹⁴⁴H.H. Fisher, *The Famine In Soviet Russia*, p. 264.

According to one researcher,

“the workmen and peasants *willingly* paid these taxes whereas the non-labouring classes tried to avoid payments and the authorities were obliged to have recourse to the Revolutionary Tribunal. The trials of the stubborn elements had great moral and political influence on the labouring classes exciting its interest in the relief question.”¹⁴⁵

On December 11, 1921, Moscow finally recognized that the “Don area, part of the North Caucasus, and part of Ukraine had also suffered considerably”¹⁴⁶ and early in January 1922, it was confirmed that 12% of the Ukrainian population was starving. This fact did not change the attitude of the Moscow Government and its satellite “Ukrainian” Government in Kharkiv. In addition to the obstacles created by the Moscow Government to the ARA’s intent to move into Ukraine, the Ukrainian Government itself, was not overly receptive.

At the same time, the Russian information agencies minimized or did not mention the actual contribution of Ukraine to the starving of Russia. This obliged the premier of Ukraine, Christian Rakovsky, to write a secret letter to Lenin on January 28, 1922, in which he corrected the Russian statements regarding the quantity of food supplies sent from Ukraine to Russia.

According to Khalatov from the Russian Commissariat of Supplies (Narkomprod), until now Ukraine sent to Russia 12 million poods of grain while other sources stated 14 million. By all standards, Khalatov’s numbers do not correspond to the reality because Narkomprod of Ukraine states that by January 1, 1922:

“We have sent to Russia, including Caucasus and Crimea, 18,847 million poods of grain, and by January 25, 1922, we sent more 1169 wagons of food (wheat and rye) and I dare to state that each wagon contains more than 1000 poods. Thus according to the Narkomprod by January 1922, Russia has obtained no less than 16,500,000 poods and by the end of January it will be

¹⁴⁵Russian Information Review. December 1, 1921.

¹⁴⁶Itogi bor’by s golodom v 1921-1922 Tsentral’naia komissiiia pomoschi golodaiushchim (Moscow), p. 260, quoted by H. H. Fisher in his *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 264.

no less 18 million poods and I consider it satisfactory results. I enclose also a report by comrade Vladimirov which contains more detailed information."¹⁴⁷

In February 1922, a congress of industrial co-operatives was held in Kharkiv where Dmytro Manuïlskyi, the Peoples' Commissar of Agriculture of the Ukrainian Government, delivered a speech on the economic conditions in Ukraine. Among other things, he pointed out that very little arable land in Ukraine was sown. Not only due to the lack of seed grain, but also from the scarcity of draught cattle destroyed by the lack of forage caused by the drought. As an example, Manuïlskyi cited that in the Zaporozhe province some 30,000 horses died and in the German colonies, located in the best cultivated regions of Ukraine, 300 out of 6,000 horses survived.¹⁴⁸

Discussing the situation in the starving provinces, Manuïlskyi stated that if one were to fix a hunger ration of twelve poods per person and three poods per head of cattle, the minimum requirement for the region in question would be 96 million poods. The actual supply in the five provinces amounted to 82 million poods, 17 percent below the hunger ration. This deficit, according to Manuïlskyi, would be wiped out by the death of the population by hunger.¹⁴⁹ Instead of doing its best to prevent death from hunger in Ukraine, the government turned its attention to the Volga Valley area and left its own people to starve.

In the discussion that followed, the congress delegates expressed their bewilderment that the government did not publicize the Ukrainian famine in order to attract the attention of Western governments and charitable organizations to provide aid to prevent starvation. To this reproach Manuïlskyi replied "that such publicity would have hurt the food tax collection campaign."¹⁵⁰ This again indicates that the Russian and "Ukrainian" Governments were fully aware of their actions. H.H. Fisher stated:

"It is quite clear that neither the Communists of Moscow nor those of

¹⁴⁷ Document No. 42, *Holod v Ukraini 1921-1923*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁸ *Golod na Ukraine* - in *Ekonomicheskaia zhizn*, Moscow, No. 41, February 21, 1922, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ "Russian famine in 1923" - *The New York Times*, August 27, 1922, sec. 7, p. 6, col. 1-3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ekonomicheskaia zhizn*, No. 41, February 21, 1922.

Kharkiv found their sympathy so aroused by the horrors of the south as those in the east."¹⁵¹

Famine had an especially hard impact on the population of the Kherson city and county. During the first four months of 1922, in the city of Kherson, 164 babies were born and 3,722 deaths registered. In the following three months of May, June and July, for every 100 births there were 2,200 deaths. During these three months the population of Kherson decreased by 8 percent. In the very same city out of 3,600 persons under medical care, 53% died. Almost all of the 31,500 persons seeking medical aid had sicknesses relating to famine.

Cities, especially industrial ones such as Katerynoslav, Odessa, Nikopol, Berdiansk, and Kherson, found themselves in dire straits. In the latter, the population dropped from 70,000 to barely 30,000. All others died or fled. There were instances where whole villages died out.¹⁵² According to the Ukrainian Government's *Bulletin of the Central Committee to Aid the Starving*, the situation in the Mariupol' county was truly tragic:

"Having exhausted all the available local means of combating the famine and having presented to the Soviet administrative centre all the facts about the horrors of the expanding famine and awaiting death of starvation, deprived of any relief from the local county, Soviet authorities, we are just facing a terrible question: What to do next? How to save the running wild, dying out and being deserted by the people countryside? There is only one way to turn to the Soviet administrative centre - the All-Russian Executive Committee. The country is dying out ... We are morally bound to yell about it and demand relief to save the country.

We are submitting concise data about various events, developing in the fourth rayon of the Mariupol' county of the Donets province, caused by the famine, which are officially summarized and presented to the Committee to Combat the Famine, which has been organized in the fourth rayon of the Mariupol' county, prepared by similar committees organized in the volost's of the fourth rayon.

¹⁵¹H.H. Fisher. *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 266.

¹⁵²Itogi bor'by s golodom 1921-1922 g.g., p. 255.

Because of the famine strange phenomena have developed which are hard to describe. There are already registered cases of death by starvation (108), acute sickness (in Novo Petrykivka and Novoivanivtsi people lay swollen from famine), larceny, burglary, murders, selling of agricultural remnants and domestic animals. Because of the lack of food products people kill horses for meat, and some in despair abandon their homesteads and run away to save their lives. The countryside is running wild, dying out and deserted. Everything that could be done to combat famine - was done; we organized volost' committees to combat the famine and prepared instructions for rayon and volost' committees how to do it, which were approved by the county authorities. We have resolved to the most extensive countermeasures with internal self-taxation for the benefit of the starving. We organized feeding points and orphanages. Now the only hope for us is the government, from the Centre.

On December 16, our plenipotentiary com. Nekliukov found out from the country's agricultural office that to the Mariupol' railway station arrived four wagons of food products for the starving children. But his attempts to find them proved fruitless.

Upon hearing such news the population becomes even more discouraged. And phenomena based on famine continues to progress.

Here is the latest report for one week from the village of Novo-Petrykivka and one excerpt reads as follows:

1. On December 19, 383 families were registered as starving with 2,322 with acute starving.
2. Fourteen deaths from starvation were registered and 342 cases of sicknesses because of starvation.
3. To get relief from local sources impossible and majority of the population is doomed to die of starvation.
4. Children's home closed and barefoot and naked children roam in the village unsuccessfully begging for food.
5. If the Centre will not help us at least in part, then we have to expect the worst in the near future.
6. Robberies caused by the starving are terrible. Children and women take active part in thefts.¹⁵³

This report was prepared by the volost' Committee to Aid the Starving which comprised all the volost' authorities including physicians, paramedics,

¹⁵³Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini, p. 60-62.

representatives of the starving, co-operative unions, etc.

In the city of Mariupol' during the first six months of 1922, there were 281 births and 2,931 deaths, which meant 1.143 deaths for each 100 births. In Kermencheska volost' of Yuzivka county 49 babies were born and 443 persons died (i.e. 6.5 times more deaths than births) and in the entire Yuzivka county there were 854 births and 2,194 deaths. In Novo-Mykolska volost', Tahanrih county, 67 born and 443 died; in Debaltsevo county 1,562 born and 3,343 died. Comparatively, in the Pervomaisk county of Odessa province, which did not suffer from either drought or poor crop, there were 3,596 births and 592 deaths.¹⁵⁴

During this time, M. Kalinin, president of the RSFSR, and G. Petrovs'kyi, president of Ukraine, travelled all over the famished provinces of Ukraine. As a result, Petrovs'kyi prepared a report to the Russian Relief Committee in Moscow in which he stated that in the province of Mykolaiv the situation had been very bad indeed:

"On June 14, 1922, comrade Kalinin and I visited some volost's in the county of Mykolaiv: Bohoyavlenske, Vodopoiske and Ochakiv volost' and the town itself. There are no words to describe the unheard of sufferings which inflicted their population. Villages look like cemeteries, the whole streets and even town blocks have died out. In Bohoyavlenske out of 2,700 homesteads remain 160, all others are ruined, houses without roofs, farms without necessary agricultural implements, since it was sold out or exchanged for food. The remaining population resembles walking corpses. It's only recently that some feeding points were opened by the Red Cross. And it was like a turning point, people do not collapse in the street anymore, but it is not enough. In the volost' of Bohoyavlenske with 6,000 people starving - hardly three feeding points serve the meals, all others eat cattle cake and die out. Out of 20,000 desiatins of cultivated land hardly one thousand was sown, in Vodopoiske - out of 19 thousand desiatins sown two thousand. All winter culture was destroyed by the glazed frost. Seven hundred desiatins of maize were destroyed by vermin, bird pests and gopher. With the latter it is impossible to fight because there were no containers to carry water. Out of 2,500 horses only 100 remained and these, before the feed grass grew, lay hungry. In view of this the relief from the government is urgently needed otherwise there will be no one to harvest the promising good yield from the sown fields because the swollen from hunger villagers, instead of harvesting,

¹⁵⁴*God bor 'by s golodom, 1921-1922, p. 28.*

will be awaiting slow death from starvation.”¹⁵⁵

Another tragic Ukrainian example was described by a traveller who wrote to Professor M. Hrushevskiy in Vienna:

“Along the road, starting from the Polish boundary all railway stations are filled with the refugees from the starving regions. Everywhere on the railway platforms, on the stored wood, or right on the ground lie, sit, or stand stripped to skin exhausted poor figures without a human expression on their faces which recall poor killed animals and not human beings. As soon as the train arrives, they run to the wagon windows and one could hear their strange, like from the grave, voices:

‘Mister, give me a piece of bread, my dear, please!
My dear, let me have at least a small rim.
Madam, let me have at least a bit of anything to eat.’

To my window approached a young woman, skeleton-like, exhausted, barefoot and bare-breasted, with a crying baby in her arms. ‘Mister, let me have at least a little piece of bread, don’t let me die by starvation, my husband already died and so did one of my children’, and started to cry in despair.

Seeing that, one gives whatever is available, tries to console the poor victim and cries himself in compassion. I can’t look at it anymore, and walk away from the window. But those out of grave-like voices are heard from all sides of the train that starts to move further. The voices die out until the train reaches another station and similar scenes were repeated all through the way until we reached Kharkiv. And here the railway station is also full of hungry children, barefooted, who at night lay on the sidewalks, under the open sky one upon another like little puppies, they surround every passer-by and beg a piece of bread.”¹⁵⁶

There is an equally moving account of the situation by the municipal government of the city of Mariupol’ on the shores of the Sea of Azov. The Union of German colonists, from the district of Mariupol’, wrote a testimonial to the Russian and German authorities and to the relief organizations of Germany and America on

¹⁵⁵Holod 1921–1923 v Ukraini, p. 129–130.

¹⁵⁶M. Hrushevskiy, “Dukha ne uhashajte! U spravi dopomohy holodnym na Ukraini do zemliakiv v Amerytsi”, Vienna, July 19, 1922, p. 1, HH Archives, ARA Operations in Russia..

behalf of the starving German colonists upon famine conditions in their region.

Captain Quisling described:

“This document attests that, according to the statistical data, the region is suffering the most bitterly of all the districts about the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. The destitution in these districts is such that words are powerless to describe.

The crop was so bad that the farmers had harvested scarcely one-twentieth of the sowing. The greater part of the population had already exhausted the reserves of corn and other food in the summer. Men were already beginning to suffer from hunger in the spring [of 1921].

The idea may be formed of the wide extend of this disaster by the fact that by December 25, 1921, the number of starving German colonists had risen to 79%. It is impossible to give the present percentage, since the latest reports on this question have not yet been presented to the Union. In all probability this percentage is not below 90 percent. The number of the starving increases from day to day. Soon 95% will be suffering from hunger. About 50% wander about, and being no longer able to walk, their faces and limbs being swollen, they are in consequence doomed to death.”¹⁵⁷

This was a report from the former flourishing German colonies, a model of order and organization for their neighbours, ruined by the civil war, food requisitions and “banditism”. In conclusion of their testimonial, the Union of German Colonists stated:

“the extent of the disaster exceeds that in the famine area of the Volga. The eyes of the whole world are turned upon the latter region, while those of the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea and the district of Mariupol’ are forgotten and forsaken.”¹⁵⁸

In their appeal to the world, the German Union and the German colonists stated:

“In the name of humanity have pity upon us, come to our help, we are perishing. If there is a delay in affording the help thus implored, 60% of the

¹⁵⁷V. Quisling, Famine situation in Ukraina, report, Geneva, April 30, 1922, p. 20-21.

¹⁵⁸V. Quisling, *ibid.*, p. 23.

whole German population must inevitably succumb by spring."¹⁵⁹

This statement, no doubt applied to the entire population of the famished areas of Ukraine and not only to the German colonists. The German colonists hoped that their mother country would be in a position to somehow help them while the Ukrainians, living in their own homeland, were forsaken. The "Ukrainian" Soviet authorities, whose total attention was focused on the Volga Valley, not only continued to collect the tax-in-kind, but prevented foreign relief organizations from starting their activity until the middle of May 1922. The local administration proved to be helpless in providing even the most basic aid to the starving.

"If the Centre will not help at least to some extent then in the near future one would expect something very unusual... Locally, we cannot do anything, therefore, most of our population is doomed for terrible death by starvation... Children are walking barefoot and naked begging bread with no results... Schools are being closed because hungry children in classes faint.

Do we have to present more facts? We simply cannot describe more of these sufferings since the nerves are too weak. We suppose that the Central Government does not need more of these stories... If you can, do something to provide real aid to the starving... Help us, save us in the name of the obligation that is resting upon us before the population which had given everything to the Soviet Republic and now starve themselves."¹⁶⁰

This plea was signed by the municipal chairman and secretary on December 29, 1921 and, by some unexplained chance, published in the Bulletin of a Ukrainian Pomgol. Further on, in the same issue, was printed a report of the county physician who concluded with a plea that the Central authorities, before anything else, should declare: 1) Mariupol' county famished in its entirety; and that 2) No more tax-in-kind should be collected.¹⁶¹

The last request suggests that in the county of Mariupol', despite its tragic

¹⁵⁹Ibidem.

¹⁶⁰"Biuletyn Tsentral'noi Komissii Pomoshchi Goloduiushchim pri VUTSIK, No 5-6, quoted by Mykhailo Mukhyn. "Holodna polityka Moskvy na Ukraini" in *Sterni (Praba)*, No. 1, July 1922, p. 126-127.

¹⁶¹Bulletin, No. 5-6, p. 96, Ibid, p. 127.

situation, the tax-in-kind had been collected for the benefit of the Centre for the Volga Valley.

In the meantime, the overall picture of starvation in Ukraine was presented by the Moscow daily *Izvestiia*, which stated that on May 1, 1922, there were 3,793,481 persons starving, out of this number 1,940,000 were children under sixteen years of age. By the end of May, incomplete data indicated that the number of starving over all of Ukraine amounted to 4,218,270 persons. This meant that, in comparison to the general population of the starving provinces, 9,669,300 persons or 40 % of the population was starving.¹⁶²

The Volga Valley, proclaimed "starving" in the summer of 1921, was released from the tax-in-kind and began receiving Government aid. During this same period, the starving provinces of Ukraine continued to be subjected to the tax-in-kind until the autumn of 1921 when starvation reached colossal proportions. Even then, the provinces were not recognized together as "starving" but were each individually mentioned and subject to receive Government aid under differing circumstances.

¹⁶²"Golod na Ukraine i bor'ba s nim" in *Izvestiia*, No. 146, July 4, 1922, p. 3.

Crimea

Crimea, a peninsula bordered by the Black Sea to the south-west and the Sea of Azov to the east, is connected to the Ukrainian mainland by the narrow isthmus of Perekop. Its territory amounts to 26,600 square kilometres with a population of 853,900 (according to the Russian census of 1897). The Crimean population has not been homogenous in national composition; over one-third were Tatars, numerically followed by the Russians and Ukrainians, as well as several other national minorities such as Armenians, Germans, Greeks, Jews and others.¹ Tatars lived in the country and constituted a majority in the southern Crimea. Russians and Jews lived mostly in the cities, like Sevastopol, Simferopol and others, while Ukrainians lived in the countryside in northern Crimea.²

Economic conditions in Crimea were not any better than in Ukraine. It had suffered greatly in recent years as a result of war and famine. The population in 1921-1922 was slightly below one million and many buildings in cities and towns had been destroyed. The incidence of various diseases was high and cholera was epidemic. The medical institutions were in great need. After General Peter Wrangel departed with the remnants of the Volunteer Army, Bolsheviks took over Crimea with their harsh rule of terror and War Communism and established their own government. On December 21, 1920, Crimea was declared to be an Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic within the Russian Soviet Federation.

Crimea was essentially an agricultural area, which in 1920 had some seven million poods of grain surplus but the combination of army operations and communist tax requisitions wiped out the surplus of 1920. Food supplies in 1921 were miniscule. The crop of 1921 was well below average and due to the hot dry summer months, this completed the disaster. According to local estimates, the gross

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed, Cambridge, At the University Press, 1910, v. 7, p.449.

² Entsyklopediia ukrainoznavstva, vol 2, part 3, p.1180

yield was only 2,500,000 poods or ten percent of the previous year.³ Of these 2.5 million poods, the government attempted to collect one million poods. It failed and collected barely 300,000 poods in grain but cattle delivery was fulfilled 105% by the end of October 1921.⁴ Official sources stated that the failure to collect 400,000 poods was the result of the weak pressure applied by the tax collectors and recommended more energetic measures. By the end of the year, another 330,000 poods were collected in grains.⁵ The approaching famine could have been overcome but the internal political decision led to the fateful calamity.⁶ Regardless of national origin, the overwhelming majority of the Crimean population harboured anti-Soviet feelings.

In view of the government's predatory economic policy which was robbing its own citizens, local self-defence was the only answer. Dr. Nansen testified in his memoirs that, while travelling in Crimea, he noticed:

“here and there along the roads was occasionally found the body of a tax collector whose mouth was stuffed with straw.”⁷

This was the result of the “more energetic measures”.

On August 13, 1921, on the inspiration of Moscow, a committee was formed in Simferopol to aid the starving not of Crimea but those “along the Volga.”⁸ In the meantime, out of the total population of 800,000 in Crimea, 500,000 starved including 200,000 children. According to the official statistics in December 1921, there were at least two thousand deaths.⁹ In view of this situation, the Crimean “autonomous” government formed a relief committee to fight the famine at home and it appealed to the Central Government in Moscow to recognize Crimea officially as a

³H.H. Fisher, op. cit., p. 278; Johann Kraus. *Im Auftrage des Papstes in Russland. Der Steyler Anteil an der katholischen Hilfsmission*, p. 54.

⁴*Pravda*, No. 252, November 9, 1921.

⁵H.H. Fisher, op. cit., p. 278.

⁶Johann Kraus, *Im Auftrag des Papstes*, p. 5.

⁷F. Nansen. *Through the Caucasus to the Volga*; translated by G. C. Wheeler (London: G. Allen, 1931), p. 278.

⁸H. Fisher, op. cit., p. 278.

⁹Ibid

famine stricken area. This would mean relief from taxes and from making famine collections for other regions. Moscow however, did not act until the February 16, 1922.¹⁰ In the meantime, the Crimean Government was left on its own to organize the collection of food taxes and also relief for its own hungry people. All it could afford was 100,000 daily rations consisting of a quarter pound of black bread.¹¹

This was the Crimean tragedy. Even Soviet contemporary sources did not deny this sorrowful state of affairs although their figures tended to minimize its impact. According to *Izvestiia*, until May 5, 1921, sixty thousand people died of starvation of which 60% were children. This mortality affected mostly the Tatar population.¹²

Since Crimea was forming part of the RSFSR, M. Kalinin, president of the RSFSR, wrote after his visit to Ukraine and Crimea:

“the relief activity started on December 1, 1921, first of all for children for whom there were established 671 children’s homes in seven counties. Death percentage was always rather high. In February 1922, there were 302,000 people listed as starving of which 14,413 persons died; in March out of 379,000 starving - 19,902 died, and in April 377,000 starved and 12,754 died.”¹³

Dr. W. J. Haigh, medical adviser to the International Russian Relief Executive and a member of the Epidemic Commission of the League of Nations, stated that the famine in Crimea during the winter and early spring months of 1922 had been so acute that the death rate was calculated at 40,000 per month.¹⁴

In June 1922, Crimean Pomgol organized county committees in Simferopol, Sevastopol, Evpatoria, Dzhankoy, Feodosia, Kerch and Yalta. Furthermore, the number of organized local self-helping committees in June 1922 numbered 400 units.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 279.

¹¹W. J. Haigh, "Epidemics as a result of famine"; report from Dr. W. J. Haigh, medical adviser to the International Russian Relief Executive and member of the Epidemic Commission of the League of Nations. (Geneva, 192), p. 5.

¹²*Izvestiia* (Moscow), No. 112, May 21, 1921, p. 2.

¹³M. Kalinin, "Po golodnomu Krymu", *Izvestiia*, No. 156, July 15, 1922, p. 4 : 4.

¹⁴Ibid.

In July 1922 Pomgol organization fed about 200,000 starving, but 213,000 including 80,600 children were left outside of any assistance because there was no money to bear the cost.¹⁵

The ARA came first in contact with Crimea not through Moscow or the governmental relief officials, but in connection with the transportation of supplies purchased through the Congressional Appropriation. On February 28, 1922, a large ship carrying corn arrived at the Crimean port of Theodosia. It was a bitter disappointment for the starving local Crimean people because the cargo was assigned for the Volga Region. Strange as it may sound:

“neither the ARA port officials in Theodosia, nor the headquarters in Moscow were approached by the Crimean or the Moscow authorities to divert relief to Crimea. The Crimean Government did approach J. N. Brown, the ARA representative, with the proposition that the ARA assist it in making a purchase abroad of five million dollars worth of food supplies and seed. The ARA used its good offices to put the authorities in touch with American concerns who could handle this affair.”¹⁶

Following the approval of the central Soviet authorities on May 13, 1922, the ARA established feeding, food remittance and medical work. Soon after, amicable relations with local Crimean officials were established but the liaison officials sent from Moscow by Eiduk, brought much trouble in their wake.

The Turkish Red *Halfmoon* and the Dutch Mission also joined the Crimean relief work but the most effective proved to be the Catholic Relief Mission headed by Reverend Edmund Walsh.

Funds for the Catholic Relief Mission had been contributed from all quarters of the world and administered by special representatives chosen by the Pope from various nations. Its headquarters were in Moscow and the Papal flag and the Papal coat of arms (the crossed keys of Peter surmounted by the Papal Tiara) was flying in the streets of Petrograd and in four main distributing stations - Moscow for Northern

¹⁵Itogi bor'by s golodom v 1921-1922 g.g., p. 222.

¹⁶H.H. Fisher, *The famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 279.

Russia, Eupatoria on the Black Sea for Crimea, Rostov on Don for Cossack country, and Krasnodar for Kuban, Northern Caucasus and the towns and villages of Crimea.

The first public kitchen and feeding station opened in Eupatoria in Crimea on September 29, 1922 by the Catholic Relief Mission. Eupatoria was one of the chief ports on the west coast of Crimea. Once a city of 40,000 inhabitants but in 1922, it was all in ruins barely reaching a population of twelve thousand. The ruined houses, villas and public buildings, were mute reminders of the former splendour and prosperity. The second feeding station was established in Northern Crimea in the city of Dzhankoy.

Father Walsh sent weekly reports to Rome about the progress of his work in Crimea. In his report dated March 10, 1923, he wrote that "during the week of enforced activity" in Novorossiisk he was enabled to observe, as he wrote, "certain facts not without value," namely that:

"...considerable friction has been caused between the Soviet Government and some foreign relief organizations on the subject of grain export from southern ports. Naturally enough, the nations now contributing large amounts of money to buy food for Russia find it very difficult to explain to the people who contribute their money for famine relief. Here the foreign relief organizations are bringing huge amounts of food into Russia for the starving and, at the same time, the Government is selling food to foreign buyers for cash. If the Government can do this, these organizations argue, why can it not take care of their starving? For this reason the Swedish Red Cross has decided to stop all relief activities and withdraw from Russia. The American Relief Administration is also showing signs of terminating its work and I do not doubt that it too will be out of Russia in four months.

The export of foodstuff is sometimes admitted by the Government and sometimes denied. But I wish to inform your Eminence that it is an actual fact, as I saw it with my own eyes, loading foodstuff for export (e.g. Steamship *Clydesdale* flying the British flag was loading 4,180 tons of barley). On asking one of the junior officers where his ship is bound for, he would not answer but said 'to Gibraltar for orders'. But one of the workmen, engaged in loading the barley, replied 'Hamburg'. From various other sources I have gathered sufficient authentic data to affirm with certainty that exportation of foodstuffs has been going on for some time. Among other shipments was one, mentioned by one of the commercial Missions here, of

some 8,000 tons for German workmen in the Ruhr Valley.”¹⁷

In the very same letter, Father Walsh made two other observations. The first observation was about the spreading of Bolshevik propaganda among the sailors of foreign ships in the Russian ports and the other about the repatriation of former White Army officers and soldiers. He cautioned that little confidence could be put in the Bolshevik guarantees given to the League of Nations:

“The Cossacks who fled to Romania after the defeat of Wrangel ... are coming back to Russia under the protection of the League of Nations which guarantees that no harm will come to them. To control the return of these men an agent of Dr. Nansen is stationed in Novorossiisk whose business it is to meet every ship and see that no men are taken off and shot (as is commonly rumoured in the district reports) and that no undue hardship are imposed on this conquered army on their return to the land now ruled by their bitter enemies.

Without here going into details it was my personal observation that any number of men could have been taken off that boat and could have disappeared before the representative of Dr. Nansen was allowed to put foot on board. He was not allowed on board for 24 hours after the boat docked, during which time the military authorities and Cheka had complete control of the boat.

The Nansen representative informed me that the same thing had happened when the previous shipload had come, although he has had solemn assurances from the authorities that he would be among the very first to board and control the arrival of these returning soldiers of the White Army.”¹⁸

There is no need to speculate on the fate of those repatriated soldiers under the “guarantee” of the League of Nations.

Part of a report by the Supervisor of the Kyiv district, K.K. MacPherson, read:

“the general lack of work has brought many families to desperate need. For example: men were visiting homes of children, fed in ARA kitchens up to

¹⁷A letter of Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, Vatican, dated March 17, 1923 // Father E. A. Walsh papers, George Washington University Library, Washington, D.C., Box 3, Folder 21.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

October, in order to choose 2,000 out of 13,000 for our new feeding program, we found that many children though starving could not come to the kitchens owing to the lack of clothing. Ninety-nine percent of them were scantily dressed in dirty rags. There were families whose parents could not go to work, only by turn, due to the absence of clothing. During the autumn even on cold rainy days, 50% of the children fed in ARA kitchens came there in thin one piece cotton dresses, bare-footed and, in many instances, without underwear."¹⁹

¹⁹Report to ARA Russian Unit, dated January 15, 1923, Box no. 149, Folder: Kiev - Letters to Moscow.



1. Starving workers in the city of Mykolaiv in 1921.
By permission of the Ukrainian Government Archives, Kyiv, Ukraine.



2. A group of starving villagers in the province of Mykolaiv in 1921.
By permission of the Ukrainian Government Archives, Kyiv, Ukraine.



3. Swollen from hunger, a mother holds her child in the village of Poltavsk, county of Mariupol' in the province of Donetsk 1921-1922. By permission of the Ukrainian Government Archives, Kyiv, Ukraine.



4. Workers at a railway steam engine factory in Kharkiv stand beside the silver bell taken down from a Kharkiv Cathedral, like so many other church treasures sold to collect funds for the starving, May 21, 1922.
By Permission of the Ukrainian Government Archives, Kyiv, Ukraine.



5. Demonstrators collecting funds for the starving children in the city of Mohylovi-Podilskomu in the province of Podilski in 1922.

By permission of the Ukrainian Government Archives, Kyiv, Ukraine.



6. Starving children from the city of Nikopol' in the province of Katerynoslav circa 1921-23.
By permission of the Ukrainian Government Archives, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Confiscation of Church Treasures

The All-Russian Central Committee was not satisfied with collections made by the church authorities and it cast its eyes on Church treasures. In an attempt to provide funds for relief activity, the Committee decided to confiscate some valuable and decorative Church artifacts that were not used in ritual services connected with worship. In the usual fashion of propaganda by the Communist Party, a request to confiscate the Church treasures for the benefit of the hungry was not conducted by the government but rather positioned as the government succumbing to pressure from the masses. As a result, a number of articles were published in the Soviet press with suggestions that Church treasures be removed for the benefit of the starving population of the Volga Valley. There were also letters to the editors asking for the removal of Church treasures, signed very conspicuously by "believers." There could be no doubt that most of these letters were fabricated in the newspaper editorial offices or the Communist Party offices.

The Communist Party launched a propaganda campaign outlining how many people would be saved from starvation by exchanging the treasures for food. One example suggested removing the embossed golden covering from the icon of the Holy Virgin in the Kyivo-Pecherska Lavra. This treasure had 55 diamonds weighing 92 carats, pearls and other precious stones and would be exchanged to buy more than 100 wagons of food. Another example was quoted from Kharkiv, whereby if a silver cathedral church bell, weighing 18 poods (close to 300 kg.), was sold, it would provide enough cash to buy food to feed 3,000 hungry children for the next 6 months until the next crop.¹

In the meantime, Soviet newspapers launched a campaign against the clergy and the Church hierarchy depicting priests and monks as "murderers in cassocks", "thieves in cassocks", "drunkards", "social parasites" and demanding the government

¹Golod, 1921-1922; sbornik. (New York, 1922), p. 98.

confiscate Church treasures and buy food for the starving. This was done to discredit the clergy in the eyes of the believers and prepare them for the eventual requisition of the Church treasures. The quantity and value of the treasures was deliberately overstated to impress even the believers. *Izvestiia* wrote:

“It has been calculated that if all the Church treasures were loaded on a train it would be over seven kilometres long. And, if all those treasures were exchanged for food for the starving, then the Volga Valley and other starving regions could be fed for two years.”²

In response to this campaign, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee issued a decree on December 9, 1921:

“Taking into consideration the long list of solicitations from various religious societies asking for permission to make collections for the relief of the starving, the Presidium of the All Russian Central Executive decided:

1. To permit ecclesiastical authorities and the various religious societies to make the collections;
2. To direct the Central Committee for Aid of the Starving to enter into an agreement with the religious societies about the method of collection of contribution having in view the wishes of the donors.”³

Signed by M. Kalinin, President A.C.E.C.
and A. Enukidze, Secretary A.C.E.C.

Patriarch Tikhon expressed his consent that *some* valuable Church property could be donated for relief purposes. On February 14, 1922, he issued a pastoral letter calling upon his hierarchy and the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church to donate valuables and decorative artifacts that were not used in sacral services to the famine fund. In return, the Patriarch asked the government for the right to participate in decision-making and ensure the treasures were used for relief purposes.

The Patriarch’s proposal was insufficient for the Communist Party and the

² *Izvestiia*, No. 32, February 10, 1922.

³ *Itogi bor’by s golodom v 1921-1922*, Moscow, p. 257

government. After a prolonged anti-clerical campaign, the Party issued on February 23 another decree ordering the requisition of some Church treasures for the benefit of the Russian Relief Committee. The decree was again personally signed by the President of the RSFSR, Mikhail Kalinin.

Patriarch Tikhon was surprised by this arbitrary action of the government and, after his two requests for clarification went unanswered, issued another pastoral letter to his clergy. He instructed them that while valuable decorations could be donated for relief purposes, the sacred articles should not be removed from the churches. The Patriarch warned that acts of disobedience would result in lay people being separated from the Church and priests defrocked.

According to the decree, the removal of Church treasures was to be completed within a month's time and in the presence of believers. The collected treasures were to be transferred to the Russian Pomgol. It also specified that the content of confiscated treasures should be periodically published in the press with exact information as to which Church was subject to removal and a list of items.

Although the Russian Government signed the decree for the Russian Soviet Republic, it was instantly introduced in the Ukrainian SSR. Here it was enforced, not by the order of the government, but seemingly under pressure from the popular masses.

“In the villages of Davydivka in the county of Berdiansk peasants decided to confiscate church treasures and from the money realized from the sale of them to buy bread for the starving.”⁴

This was the signal for government action in Ukraine. The first confiscation attempt occurred at one of the local churches in Kharkiv on February 26, 1922 which evoked a public disturbance. People did not trust the government “fearing that most of the requisitioned treasures will disappear in the pockets of the officials.”⁵

To avoid such disturbances, on March 8, 1922, the Ukrainian Government

⁴Ibid. p. 261.

⁵God bor'by s golodom, Ts. K. Pomgol, 1922, p. 261.

signed its own decree, ostensibly under “pressure” of the working people ordering the forced removal of treasures from the churches of Ukraine. In fact, the Ukrainian decree was nothing more than a word for word repetition of the Russian decree with one significant omission. While the Russian decree mentioned famine in the Volga Valley, it was conspicuously absent in Ukraine’s case. Meetings were organized in large and small communities all across Ukraine where the decree was explained and, of course, “approved” by the population.

It is noteworthy that Moscow did not have much confidence in the “Ukrainian” government known as “Sovnarkom“. This was in spite of the fact that, out of approximately 20 People’s Commissars (Ministers), only four were of Ukrainian origin, the others being mostly Jews or Russians. To ensure everything was handled “properly”, Moscow sent a man by the name of Serafimov to act as Deputy of the State Security (GPU) in Ukraine to oversee the removal of Church treasures.

Serafimov began his work from the wealthiest churches and monasteries. Thus the Pecherska Lavra in Kyiv, revered in all Orthodox Slavdom, turned out to be his first mission. To make sure that the requisition would be performed flawlessly, the higher monastic hierarchy was arrested thus ensuring the cooperation of the lower clergy and monks under threat of terror. To avoid any disturbance on the part of the population, the requisition was organized at night and the Lavra was surrounded by the most trusted military units stationed in Kyiv. Since Serafimov was already well acquainted with the monastery’s inventory, he requested that every item as it was listed in the inventory book, be surrendered to him.

One of the monks, a jurist consultant, Ivan Nikodimov, had a glance at the treasures collected in one room and wrote in his memoirs:

“When I was permitted to enter the room and look at the marvellous collection, I was lost. It was an unusual sight. Diamonds of various sizes, beginning with small ones and ending with those weighing several carats, pearls, gold, platinum, rubies and other precious stones, shining in the

candlelight, glimmering with thousands of colourful resplendents.”⁶

According to the official report of *Russpress* May 3, 1922, the requisitioned treasures from the Kyivo-Pecherska Lavra totalled

“2,417 diamonds of which the smallest weighed one and half carats; some precious stones and many other valuable items. There was no mention of precious metals, platinum, gold, silver. Yet, the other sources indicate that together from the Pecherska Lavra, which has some 25 churches, requisitioned treasures amounted to 64 kg of gold, 11,200 kg of silver.”⁷

Serafimov and the GPU continued to St. Michael's Monastery, founded in 1108, with its four beautifully decorated churches. From the richly endowed St. Sophia's Cathedral, built in the 11th century, they took nine silver plates, each over 25 kg of weight and designed to cover the altar, several platinum plates, an icon lamp made of gold and platinum decorated with diamonds and pearls and another icon lamp made of gold with 241 brilliants and 347 large pearls.⁸ The GPU persisted with their confiscations from one monastery to another and from one church to another, of which there were roughly about one hundred in Kyiv. Although none of these monasteries was as wealthy as the Pecherska Lavra or St. Sophia's, each of them was subject to the same action of confiscation.

While it was relatively easy to seize the treasures in the Pecherska Lavra monasteries, it was not so easy to remove them from the monastery grounds. The people of Kyiv, having found out about the plundering of their Holy Shrine, were very indignant and endeavoured to prevent the removal of these treasures. They gathered in front of the Lavra and, as armed sentries would not let them in, lay on the road leading to the main gate. The protesters were forcibly removed and trucks laden with Church treasures left the Pecherska Lavra. Two days later in the

⁶I. N. Nikodimov, *Vospominaniia o Kievo-Pecherskoj Lavre. —Issledovaniia i materialy. Seriiia II, No. 76.* — (Munich: Institute for the Study of the U.S.S.R., 1960), p. 55.

⁷M. Miller, "The confiscation and destruction of church property in Ukraine" in *Religion in the U.S.S.R.* — Munich: Insti-tut po izucheniiu SSSR, 1960), p. 114.

⁸M. Miller, "Moskovs'kyi vandalizm" in *Novyi Shliakh* (Winnipeg), No. 104, September 13, 1952.

Moscow daily *Pravda* appeared a news item about the Holy Virgin rich vestment entitled *One hundred wagons of bread for one icon for the starving people?*⁹ There was no mention of the people's objections.

Although the Ukrainian decree, dated March 8, 1922, specified that the removal of Church treasures was to last only one month, and be limited to items not used in ritual services, it lasted for over two months until the beginning of May 1922. The Commission confiscated everything of value which they could assess.

With the removal of the Church treasures, the struggle with the Church became the focus of Soviet internal policies. Atheist propaganda became quite pervasive. The Moscow *Pravda* described how this program was carried out unswervingly:

“The inauguration of anti-religious work among youth was approved by a special council of our party anti-religionists. The All-Russian Council of Political Education (Politprosvet) heartily welcomes this initiative.”¹⁰

School teachers were ordered to actively participate in the propagation of atheism. On the great holidays, special lectures were given to explain to children the superstitious and pagan sources of Christian ceremonies and beliefs. These measures were conveniently introduced during the campaign for the removal of Church treasures.

As all the attention of the Ukrainian Government was focused on the Volga Valley region, the Ukrainian famished provinces were neglected and governmental assistance was negligible. After the campaign for the removal of Church treasures was completed, the Ukrainian Government requested Central Pomgol in Moscow to assign 15% of the requisitioned Church treasures for the benefit of the Ukrainian starving population.¹¹ There is no evidence that Moscow authorities honoured this request.

⁹*Pravda*, No. 103, May 11, 1922.

¹⁰*Pravda*, March 31, 1922.

¹¹*Kommunist* (Kharkiv), 1922, No. 126, quoted in *Nova Ukraina* (Prague), August 1, 1922, No.8-9,p 46.

In spite of all the propaganda in favour of the removal of Church treasures for the benefit of the starving and the anti-religious and anti-clerical campaign, riots in defence of Church treasures were very common all over Russia, Belarus' and in Ukraine. According to some rare reports, these disturbances took place in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Poltava, Kamianets' Podilsky and in a number of other places. Some of the uproar was caused by priests and parishioners, some was caused by parishioners attempting to defend their Church treasures. Because of these riots, Lenin instructed the Bolshevik Government that it

“should declare the decisive and ruthless war to the *black hundred* clergy to suppress it with such cruelty that they would remember it for the next several decades.”¹²

Russian priest Mikhail Pol'skii, in his book *Novye mucheniki rossiiskie* (The New Russian Martyrs) stated that, at the time, the GPU shot or tortured to death 98 priests in the Kharkiv diocese, 124 in Poltava, 92 in Katerynoslav, 78 in Chernihiv and 191 persons in the Odessa-Kherson dioceses. Altogether in the aforementioned dioceses, 583 people were killed.¹³ Not all the dioceses are accounted for and, most likely, the list of victims is incomplete. No laymen victims were taken into account and it is well known that “workers and peasants government” did not show any mercy to those who dared to protest against any official action.

The requisition of Church treasures across the Soviet Union resulted in 2,691 members of the clergy and 5,409 monks either shot or tortured to death.¹⁴ Altogether, 8,100 clergy lost their lives. When the value of the treasures acquired by the requisition is divided by the number of clergy who lost their lives, the Soviet Government received 55 grams (or 2 ounces) of gold, 415 kg of silver and 166 grams (6 ounces) of other precious metals for each life. The lives of laymen are not taken

¹²From Lenin's Letter to Molotov and others, quotes Lev. M. Regel'son in his *Tragediia Russkoi Tserkvi, 1917-1945*. –(Paris: YMCA Press, 1977), p. 281.

¹³M. Pol'skii, *Novye mucheniki rossiiskie*, –(n.p.: Tip. 1. Pochaevskogo v Sviato-Troitskom monastyre, 1949, p. 27, 31, 57, 213.

¹⁴D. Konstantinov, *Gonimaia tserkov; Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov v SSSR*. – New York: Vseslovianskoe izd-vo, 1967, p. 12.

into account since there is no means to estimate their losses. There could be no doubt that the number of victims among laymen was rather larger than that of the clergy.

To save the Russian Church treasures from destruction, Pope Pius XI proposed to the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Chicherin:

“to buy these sacred and valuable objects, and to deposit them with Archbishop Cieslak [Roman Catholic Bishop in Petrograd]. The price agreed upon will be immediately paid to Your Excellency or to any other person whom the government may nominate.”¹⁵

Since no answer was vouchsafed from Moscow, on June 7, 1922, another telegram was sent directly to Lenin by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri where he stated that he:

“should be very grateful to know what reception has been accorded to the proposal of the Holy See to buy the valuable conformably with the letter addressed to M. Chicherin on May 14.”¹⁶

If the offer was to be accepted, the vessels of the altar would be saved and money would still be guaranteed for famine relief. This would nullify the very purpose of the confiscation: not famine relief, but destruction.

Was it really necessary to rob the churches of their treasures, which had been collected for over 900 years and represented the historical and artistic development of a nation over the ages? If the government actually wanted to obtain the means to buy food for the starving population, they could have taken advantage of the offers of Patriarch Tikhon and Pope Pius XI. Moreover, the Soviet authorities had the disposition of the former imperial jewels, the aggregate value of which was estimated in the summer of 1926 at no less than “five hundred million rubles.”¹⁷ Yet, the imperial jewels remained untouched.

According to official sources, quoted by Prof. Julius Hecker of the

¹⁵ Father E. A. Walsh Papers // George Washington University, Washington D.C.; *The New York Times*, July 14, 1922, p. 5 : 2.

¹⁶*Ibid.*.

¹⁷M. Spinka. *The Church and the Russian Revolution*. — (New York : Macmillan, 1927), p. 171.

Theological Academy in Moscow, the requisition of Church treasures in all of the Soviet Union brought 442 kg of gold, 336,227 kg of silver, 1,345 kg of other precious metals, 33,456 diamonds weighing 1,313 carats, 4,414 pearls and 72,383 pieces of other precious stones.¹⁸ *Izvestiia*, stated that this was “ridiculously low”.¹⁹

First of all, many valuable articles disappeared into the pockets of those who were engaged in the requisition. There were several sensational news items in the Soviet Press about various contraband activities such as smuggling Church treasures into foreign countries. Even more sensational was the story reported in the *New York Times* on July 7, 1922, of the involvement of Soviet diplomats in contraband smuggling of Church jewels to Holland.²⁰

The Bolshevik economist Nikolai Bukharin, then editor of *Pravda*, admitted in 1923 that during the famine when entire villages in Russia and Ukraine, were devastated, the Soviets spent \$13,750,000 for propaganda purposes abroad.²¹ Professor M. Miller, from the Rostov on Don University stated:

“not a single kopek of all the Church treasures was spent for the relief of the starving.”²²

¹⁸ Julius Hecker, *Religion under the Soviets*. (Vanguard studies of Soviet Russia) – New York; Vanguard Press, 1927, p. 81.

¹⁹ *Izvestiia*, No. 187, December 19, 1922.

²⁰ *The New York Times*, July 7, 1922.

²¹ Quoted by R. J. Cooke, *Religion in Russia under Soviets*. --New York : Abingdon Press, 1924, p. 149.

²² M. Miller, *op. cit.*, *ibid*, p. 56.

The ARA Visits Ukraine

While death by starvation in Ukraine, especially in the south, continued to mount, it did not become front-page news in Russia. It was neglected even by *Visti* (The Herald), the Ukrainian official organ of the Central Executive Committee of the Ukrainian S.S.R. On August 4, 1921, the Politburo of the Communist Party of Ukraine discussed the methods of combating famine and decided to instruct provincial authorities to make a distinction between an appeal to combat the famine in Russia and the poor crop in Ukraine which could be aided with local, provincial or even counties' supplies.¹ This indicates that Party authorities did not consider the situation in southern Ukraine as an imminent menace and paid it little attention. Nevertheless, some reports of Ukrainian economic conditions did appear in the Russian press but had no impact on the Kremlin and no recognition by the Soviet Government. In fact, it did its best to prevent the news from spreading either inside or outside the Soviet border.

While Ukrainian political refugees in Western Europe endeavoured to bring the tragic situation in Ukraine to the attention of the western democratic powers, their efforts produced no effective results. Since there was no official announcement or confirmation by the Soviet Government, most foreigners considered refugee information tainted on the premise that all political refugees are always hostile to the government in their homeland.

Nonetheless, a good response came from Mennonite communities both in the United States and Holland, who were willing to help their fellow members in Ukraine. Since there were already representatives of the American Mennonite Relief (AMR) in Moscow, affiliated with the American Relief Administration (ARA), a contract was made with the Soviet Government. However, when Alvin J. Miller,

¹ "Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini", Document No. 10, p. 31.

Assistant Secretary of the American Mennonite Central Committee, went to Kharkiv, he found that the contract made with the Russian government in Moscow was insufficient for Mennonite relief activity in Ukraine. Due to the lack of information about the situation in Ukraine, the American Mennonite Relief representatives were not certain their visit to Ukraine was absolutely necessary. This question was decided by a messenger from the Ukrainian Government, Rev. Benjamin B. Janz, who brought a letter from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, requesting the presence of the representative of the American Mennonite Relief (AMR) at a conference in Kharkiv dealing with relief work in Ukraine.

By mid-October 1921, such a conference was held, attended by Benjamin Yermoshchenko, representing the ailing Mr. Petrovs'kyi, president of Ukraine, and a representative of the Ukrainian Red Cross whose name was not given. It was at this conference that the Ukrainian delegation met the Americans. Mr. A. J. Miller wrote:

"They informed us, to our astonishment and with evident self satisfaction, that they also were taking part in the relief activities in the Volga Valley. We were offering to help them, and they were already helping elsewhere. The famine in the Volga districts had been widely advertised. Its appeal was dramatic. How comradely they felt in sending aid from the sister state! They loved to talk of the fine things but their own starving masses - oh, yes, they were filled with pity for them too, and someone must go to their aid; but the opportunity to record that the Ukrainian proletariat came to the rescue when the Volga population was famishing, that must not be lost. So the Ukraine kept on sending supplies across its borders even when starvation at home had become acute. Ukrainian gubernias (provinces) adopted certain Volga regions and were then supposed to provide for them, even if some of their own people were at the same time starving."²

On October 20, 1921 the relief contract was signed by the two highest officials of the Ukrainian government: B. Yermoshchenko, on behalf of the Central Commission of Famine Relief, and countersigned by C. Rakovsky on behalf of the Ukrainian Soviet Government, and by Alvin J. Miller on behalf of American

²P. C. Hiebert. "Feeding the hungry; Russia famine 1919-1925", Scottsdale PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1929, p. 160.

Mennonite Relief.

Primarily, the AMR was interested in the fate of Mennonites of Ukraine but the government did not exhibit any sense of urgency.

“Over a month and a half was spent in Moscow and Kharkiv in contract making. If we could then have begun our fieldwork immediately, as should have been done, our neediest centres could all have been operating within a month. Those Mennonites, and others who finally died of starvation in the communities later occupied by American Mennonite Relief, could have been saved from weeks of slow death. That month and a half included days and days of agonizing waiting.”³

The AMR began its work in the Volga Valley in December 1921 and was prepared to do the same in Ukraine. Ukraine desperately needed aid and in spite of a general media blackout on the Ukrainian famine, it was well known to all in Russia who had any knowledge or contact with Ukraine. Rev. Benjamin Janz had reported in October on the conditions in the volost' occupied by Mennonites. By December a general survey had been completed under his direction in those regions and in each volost' where the Mennonite organization was ready to work. When the food credit for the Volga Valley was established in December by the Committee, a generous amount was specified simultaneously for the needy centres in Ukraine. By December, 1921, the districts in Southern Ukraine assigned to the AMR were well organized to distribute food supplies in a manner similar to Volga Valley relief. The need was serious, the committees ready to work and a significant sum had been allocated for the South, yet the work did not begin.

The difficulty seemed to lie largely between the ARA and the Ukrainian Government with the situation further aggravated by antagonism between Moscow and Kharkiv. Since the AMR was dependent on the ARA for food supplies, they were unable to begin their relief work. The rumours of hunger in Ukraine persisted and eventually reached the representatives of the ARA and the Nansen Mission.

³Hiebert, op. cit., p. 179.

"It was not ignorance of the serious need in the South that caused the opposition in Moscow. During the July and August sessions of the All-Russian Relief Committee in Moscow, the conditions of the South had been described. Apparently the hostility was due, in part, to the Ukraine's refusal to subordinate itself to Moscow."⁴

The hostility was in connection with the Food Remittance business established in Russia on October 19, 1921, heavily used by the Jewish community in the United States. The emigrants to America had principally come from Belarus' and Ukraine and were now attempting to help their suffering brethren. Reports from sales offices in America and Western Europe quickly showed that, by far, the greater part of the business would call for deliveries of food packages to White Russia and Ukraine where Jews lived in the greatest numbers. Since the Jewish benevolent society, known as the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or "Joint") was especially interested in the members of their faith, it insisted upon the ARA conducting an investigation in Ukraine as to prevailing economic conditions. In order to satisfy the Jewish request, Colonel Haskell asked the Soviet Government to allow Prof. Lincoln Hutchinson and Dr. F. A. Golder to go to Ukraine.⁵

In November, 1921, Dr. Golder and Prof. Hutchinson, special representatives of Herbert Hoover, applied to the Soviet Government in Moscow for travel permission to Ukraine. They wanted to explore the actual state of nourishment in the five southern provinces where, according to rumours, an emergency relief operation would be most desirable.⁶

On November 16, Alexander Eiduk replied to their request in a letter to the Executive Officer of the ARA, Mr. T. C. Lonergan, stating:

"Hutchinson and Golder could not be permitted to make the investigation since the provinces of Kyiv, Volhynia, Chernihiv, Podolia and Poltava were not famine gubernias but, on the contrary, they had produced a surplus, part of which had been exported to support the central provinces of Russia ... In

⁴P.C. Hiebert. "Feeding the hungry", p. 196.

⁵H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 246-247.

⁶B.M. Weissman. "Herbert Hoover and famine relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923". (Stanford, CA : Hoover Institution Press, 1974), p. 93.

view of this Prof. Hutchinson and Dr. Golder wish to go to Kyiv in connection with ARA work, the purpose of which is the feeding of the starving of the famine stricken districts, is a matter of some surprise at Kharkiv and Kyiv, as there are no starving in the districts mentioned.”

Eiduk added that:

“it is necessary to request ARA not split its forces where that is not absolutely indispensable, but on the contrary to concentrate them entirely on the Volga area.”⁷

Even the

“Ukrainian authorities at Kyiv and Kharkiv were surprised that ARA wanted to visit these localities since ‘no one is starving there’.”⁸

A similar conversation took place with a representative of the AMR, Mr. P. C. Hiebert, who went to see Gen. Eiduk to advise him of his intention to travel to Ukraine. In response to this announcement, Eiduk protested forcefully and declared that the Volga region was where AMR was needed and not in Ukraine. He declared vehemently that, if the decision were his to make, he would not let any relief food be sent into Ukraine and that he was “categorically opposed” to Mr. Hiebert going there. This led Mr. Hiebert to remind General Eiduk that if the Ukrainian government had allowed it, AMR could have started their relief work nine months earlier than it did. Eiduk again protested that at the time no one knew famine was coming. However, when Mr. Hiebert reminded him that as early as April 1921, Byelborodov and Frumkin and other leading officials in the south-east were anxious to have the AMR begin relief work at once but Moscow refused, Gen. Eiduk was silenced. Yet he had

⁷A letter of Eiduk to Mr. T. C. Lonergan, Executive officer of the ARA In H.H.A., Stanford, CA. ARA Rus.oper., Box 120.

⁸B.M. Weissman, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

not changed his attitude about Ukraine.⁹

In spite of this initial refusal, the ARA insisted on going to Ukraine and permission was eventually granted. It seems that, if it were not for the expatriate Jewish community and their Parcel Remittance Service, the ARA and other beneficent organizations would have never come to Ukraine and rescued millions of lives from starvation.

Unfortunately, both Dr. Golder and Prof. Hutchinson were insufficiently informed about the country where they were to visit. In the archival collection at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California, there is a historical-ethnographic sketch entitled "Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and its people" (22 legal size pages), contributed by a Russian employee of the ARA. It is written in a domineering Russian tone where one can find such statements as "the Ukrainian movement is of a very narrow national character and being of a chauvinistic nature, was hostile to everything Russian, including the Russian language," and "Ukrainian dialect ... could not become a cultured language and therefore unable to replace the Russian language in the State." This highly "scholarly" outline on Ukraine is supplemented with another outline on the "Civil War In Ukraine", (9 legal size pages) contributed by another Russian employee of the ARA and similar in tone. If these essays served as basic background information about Ukraine, this would illustrate how little the ARA directors knew about the country and the people they were so anxious to rescue from starvation.

On November 26, 1921, Prof. L. Hutchinson and Dr. F. A. Golder reached Kyiv and from there proceeded to Kharkiv, the interim capital of Ukraine. Arriving in Kharkiv on November 30, the two Americans immediately tried to contact Ukrainian officials. Kharkiv provincial officials were evasive and non-committal. Christian Rakovsky, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Ukraine,

⁹P.C. Hiebert, "Feeding the hungry", p. 197; B. M. Weissman in his work "Herbert Hoover and famine relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923" states that "The real reasons behind this refusal was strictly political. The city of Kyiv was under martial law at the time and the Soviet government feared that the presence of foreign official persons would create difficulties." - see p. 93. But in view of other available testimonies, it was a result of hostile Russian politics toward Ukraine and its people.

was not present at the meeting and Mykola Skrypnyk, Commissar of Internal Affairs, represented the government of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic.

Hutchinson and Golder explained to Skrypnyk that the purpose of their visit was to secure the cooperation of the Ukrainian government in carrying out relief work, which the ARA had undertaken in Russia in accordance with the terms of several agreements made with the Soviet Government of Russia. In response to this statement Skrypnyk,

“announced with caustic emphasis, that the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was not a party to these agreements, knew nothing of them, and was in no sense bound by them.”¹⁰

To solve this problem Skrypnyk suggested a temporary agreement be drawn up at once but the Americans had no authority to enter into negotiations and they resolved to “return to Moscow, where the diplomatic entanglements could be unravelled without involving the ARA.”¹¹

In Kharkiv, Hutchinson and Golder visited the Central Bureau of Statistics and they were informed that

“there was a good crop in Kyiv, Volhynia, Chernihiv, Podolia and Poltava provinces and part of it, amounting to over 50 million poods (about 833,000 tonnes), had already been shipped to Central Russia. In addition, Ukraine received a large number of refugees from the Volga Valley. At the same time the statisticians confirmed that the situation in the steppe provinces of Ukraine is very menacing indeed.”¹²

At the request of the Russian Government, the Ukrainian Government temporarily permitted the distribution of packages in Ukraine and during Prof. Hutchinson’s tour of the drought stricken districts, particularly Alexandrov[sk]. Considering that the pre-war emigration from the:

¹⁰H.H. Fisher, *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 248.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹²L. Hutchinson, “Observations in the Ukraine” in *ARA Bulletin*, Ser. 2, XXII, p. 7-13.

“Russian Empire to America chiefly proceeded from Ukraine and, desiring to enable these emigrants to send packages to their relatives through the ARA, the Ukrainian Government was prepared to allow the ARA to extend its activities in Ukraine on conditions that a supplemental convention be concluded with the Ukrainian Government, that the Riga supplementary agreement regarding food packages concluded between the ARA and RSFSR be employed with reference to Ukraine.”¹³

The correspondence of Prof. Hutchinson with Col. Haskell, Director of the ARA Russian Unit in Moscow is most revealing. It seems that Prof. Golder, travelling with Prof. Haskell in Ukraine, spoke either Russian or Ukrainian, had also served as an interpreter but had to return to Moscow after December 1. Accordingly, Prof. Haskell asked for a reliable interpreter, free of Soviet influence, to ensure the work would be carried out in a full and impartial manner. Prof. Haskell knew such an interpreter in Prague, in whom he had the utmost confidence, and he asked Col. Lonergan to apply to the Soviet authorities for permission to have this individual, named Konecny, enter Russia. Prof. Haskell was assured that there would be no objection. In response to the request, Konecny left Prague en route to Moscow before going to Ukraine to join Prof. Haskell.

Soviet authorities abruptly reversed their former decision and denied Konecny permission to enter Russia and he returned to Prague, having gone as far as Riga. Prof. Hutchinson was assured that he would be assigned another reliable Russian interpreter but such a person never appeared. Prof. Hutchinson wrote:.

“This leaves me in a very embarrassing position. I am undertaking to make a *full and impartial* report which shall *carry the utmost weight possible* with no interpreter except the two representatives Eiduk has sent along - for he has, without notifying us in advance, sent *two* men this time instead of one as previously. They clearly intend that I shall get no information except such as they wish me to have.”¹⁴

This incident proves that Prof. Hutchinson grasped the circumstances quite well and

¹³H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box No. 20.

¹⁴Prof. L. Hutchinson's letter to Col. Haskell, dated December 13, 1921, in the H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

stated bluntly in his letter:

“I am very sceptical as to the value of any report that I can make under these circumstances. I can get *something* undoubtedly but it will be mostly only such information as the authorities wish me to have, I may get certain sidelines which will enable me to form some judgement as to the accuracy of what I am told but I suspect that they will be very dim.”¹⁵

* * * * *

A party consisting of Mr. Philip Matthews, Mr. Donald Lindsay and Morozov, the interpreter, arrived in Kharkiv, accompanied by bitter cold, on Thursday, December 15, 1921 at 7 o'clock in the morning at the Kharkiv district offices. No officials came to meet them and they had to wait patiently. The two travellers spent their first hours in Kharkiv driving about the streets in a carriage waiting until 10:00 a.m.

When they presented their credentials to the provincial authorities they discovered that, not only were they not expected, no one knew of the reason for their presence. After a while it was satisfactorily explained and the Americans were escorted immediately to their quarters. However, finding suitable quarters in an overcrowded city was a problem.

“The sanitary arrangements, too, were most crude, and cleanliness was a thing either not clearly understood, or consistently and conscientiously neglected. The quarters selected consisted of one room which presented a most forbidding appearance, and which was immediately declined.”

Subsequently the Americans were immediately informed that there were no other quarters available.¹⁶

Mr. Matthews was not discouraged. He had a letter of introduction to a

¹⁵L. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, *ibid.*

¹⁶George F. Harrington. "The ARA operations in the western half of the Ukraine from the beginning of the work until January first, 1923", H.H.A.. ARA Rus. oper., Box 121, Folder: Ukraine - History.

Romanian newspaper correspondent in the city of Kharkiv and they decided to visit him in the hope that he might be able to help them out of their difficulty. They found the Romanian, comfortably established in two rooms, who after listening to their story offered to help. He intervened with someone in authority and was assured that the ARA would receive suitable quarters but they would have to wait a short while.

“And so it was. A representative of the government called at the house shortly after, and expressed regret at their inability to find a room. Everything was now settled. They [the Americans] were to take possession of the two rooms of the [Romanian] correspondent, and he was to move out immediately.”¹⁷

The official Ukrainian government had received representatives of the institution that was set to save its citizens from starvation in a most inhospitable manner.

The following days were spent in conference with representatives of national and local governments. It was established that the Kharkiv provincial government was feeding between five and six thousand children. Children up to five years of age were taken care of by the Kharkiv province and those from five to sixteen years of age by the Board of Education in the same city. While the first category of children was reasonably well-tended, the older ones did not fare as well as their rations were not balanced. As an example, one day they would receive sugar and butter but no bread, and the following day there would be bread and tea but neither sugar nor butter. About 3,000 of these children were refugees from the Volga Valley. It was also discovered that the medical situation in Ukraine was disastrous. Due to the lack of proper medicine, anaesthetics and dressings, no patients could be treated for anything other than typhus. In order to accommodate the patients, spaces were allotted on the floor owing to the scarcity of beds.¹⁸ In the meantime news arrived about the lack of co-operation between the government and the ARA in Odessa, Kyiv and Kharkiv.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁸From a diary covering the period from December 15, 1921 to January 3, 1922, p. 5-6, in Herbert Hoover Archives, ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

Hutchinson continued his investigation during the second half of December 1921, and found that the official reports about the economic situation in Ukraine did not correspond with reality. In Moscow he was assured that the 1921 crop in Ukraine had amounted to 700 - 800 million poods, whereas officials of the Statistical Bureau in Kharkiv stated that the crop was no larger than 400 million poods of grain. Moreover, they confessed that even this figure was unverified since the officials of the Bureau were Jews and they would not dare go into the countryside where they would feel unwelcome.¹⁹

“I have had no opportunity to talk with any one other than a local official except in the presence of such an official or one of Eiduk’s representatives who accompany me and interpret for me. The most I can do is to accept the statements made to me and later check them with such other information as I gathered in Moscow and Kharkiv. And this process is only useful in revealing how utterly unreliable the data given to me are. In general the figures by Moscow, by Kharkiv and by the local authorities are in a ratio to one another of about four, to two, to one. If the Moscow Government states that 1920-1921 crop in the government [i.e. province] of X in Ukraine at 2,000,000 poods, the Kharkiv authorities give me 1,000,000 and the local authorities - 500,000. I have to fall back, therefore, on the general impressions from what I *see* rather than what I am *told*; and these impressions are being rather definite.”²⁰

It was left to Hutchinson alone to verify information provided by the Ukrainian Central Bureau of Statistics. He visited many towns and villages and came to the conclusion that the 1921 crop could not be larger than 250 million poods of grain, or about one-third of what Moscow claimed. According to his estimates Ukraine still had a surplus of some 93 million poods of grain in northern provinces while in the south starvation was as bad as in the Volga region. In his own words,

“The famine in these sections, even more than in the Volga, could be attributed ... to inability to move the surplus which existed in certain regions, a relatively short distance and distribute it among those who were dying of

¹⁹H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

²⁰L. Hutchinson’s letter to Col. W. M. Haskell in Moscow, dated December 21, 1921 - in the H.H.A., Stanford, CA. ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

hunger."²¹

Hutchinson visited Kharkiv, Oleksandrivsk, Yelesavethrad, Odessa, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr and Kyiv, and reported that, while Ukraine as a whole had a small surplus of foodstuffs, all the evidence pointed to serious regional shortages. The most affected provinces were Donets, Zaporozhe, Katerynoslav, Mykolaiv and Odessa. Hutchinson also discovered that even in the provinces that:

“as a whole have large surplus supplies there are counties and volost’s where famine and starvation exist.”²²

Prof. Hutchinson further reported:

“whatever the actual figures, there can be no question that over the considerable area conditions are as serious as in any part of the Volga basin. In one respect the famine area of the Ukraine is in a more serious condition than the Volga, the drought followed four or five years during which the peasants were ravaged by successive wars, insurrections, pogroms, bandit raids, and other disturbances, which were far more serious than anything of this nature which happened in the Volga. Their domestic animals have been reduced by these successive operations, plus the drought, more seriously than anywhere in Russia.”²³

“In regard to medicine, drugs, hospital supplies, clothing, etc the situation in the Ukrainian famine area is very similar to that in the Volga region. There is an appalling lack of even bare necessities, all the more serious because, in contrast to the food situation, supplies do not exist anywhere either close at hand or at a distance. Typhus is epidemic in about the same proportions as in the Volga Valley and even where medical organization is good ... little progress is being made against the disease because medicines, instruments, sheets, blankets, clothing, and other equipment are lacking throughout the entire Ukraine.”²⁴

Hutchinson confirmed that, in the previously mentioned five provinces, there were counties and volost’s where famine and starvation existed and conditions there were:

²¹H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

²²A letter of L. Hutchinson to Col. Haskell, December 23, 1921, in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

²³L. Hutchinson. "Observations in the Ukraine" in *ARA Bulletin*, Ser. 2, No. 22, March 1922, p. 11

²⁴*Ibidem*, and also in Wm. R. Grove, *op. cit.*, p. 2-3.

“very similar to those in the Volga basin. In fact I have seen worse horrors than any that I saw on the Volga.”

He also wrote:

“the officials are only mildly interested in, if not antagonistic, to the food draft plan. What they want is a slice out of the child feeding supplies.”²⁵

On December 31, 1921, Philip Matthews, who was in charge of traffic, reported to Col. Haskell from Kharkiv that they could not begin their operation because the cars dispatched from Moscow on December 15, had still not arrived. He thought that some of the delay was:

“due to the fact that the local authorities do not wish to take any definitive action with reference to our work in the Ukraine until Mr. Rakovsky returns from Moscow.”²⁶

On January 4, 1922, a conference between Col. Haskell and Ukrainian Prime Minister Rakovsky and Representative Eiduk was held in Moscow at which Rakovsky declared that:

“Ukraine is not an autonomous but an independent allied republic which makes its own treaties not bound by the Riga agreement but desires signature of agreement identical with the Riga one. Till such signature food draft work of ARA in Ukraine allowed only as a favour, need of signing agreement immediately in order to regularize situation and permit extension of the system. Ukraine would have its own plenipotentiary.”²⁷

A temporary agreement was struck with Mr. Rakovsky whereby work could begin started pending the signing of an official agreement. However, this proved insufficient as the ARA needed warehouses and offices in Kharkiv and other large cities. George Harrington, District Supervisor in Katerynoslav wrote:

²⁵H.H. Fisher, op. cit., p. 251.

²⁶Letter dated December 31, 1921. H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 145, Folder: Letters to Moscow, 31 December 1921 to 23 June 1922.

²⁷H.H.A. ARA Rus. oper., Box 120, Cablegram dated January 2, 1922.

"but all requests were refused on the grounds that it had no official standing. Permission to send couriers was also refused and, to make matters worse, telegrams were received daily from Kyiv and Odessa stating that the ARA representatives in those districts were not permitted to commence operations for the same reason."²⁸

This state of affairs continued for a month. On January 10, 1922 an agreement, which was an exact replica of that made in Riga, was signed in Moscow by Colonel Wm. N. Haskell on behalf of the ARA and Christian Rakovsky on behalf of the Ukrainian SSR.

Under the terms of the agreement concluded between the American Relief Administration and the Ukrainian Government, the government agreed to provide:

1. the necessary premises for kitchen and feeding stations
2. the necessary kitchen equipment and utensils, fuel, etc
3. railway, motor and other transportation
4. necessary offices, living quarters, warehouses, etc together with heat, light and water
5. necessary gasoline and oil for motor transportation.²⁹

An official standing of the ARA was established and after the agreements were signed Harold H. Fisher was appointed Director of the ARA in Ukraine and Crimea.

In short order an agreement was signed between the Ukrainian Government and the Nansen Mission of the International Red Cross Societies with Capt. Vidkun Quisling appointed as representative High Commissioner of Dr. Nansen's Mission activity in Ukraine and Crimea. Both organizations were now ready to begin their long overdue relief activity.

On his way to Ukraine, Captain Vidkun Quisling sought information about the situation in Ukraine from a well-informed individual in Moscow. He wrote:

²⁸ "The ARA operations in the western half of the Ukraine from the beginning of the work until January 1, 1923", p. 3, by George Harrington. In H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 121, Folder: Ukraine - History.

²⁹ John H. Hynes, District Supervisor - Odessa to Mr. Artamonov, Plenipotentiary Representative of the Ukr. SSR of April 18, 1922 - H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

“They told me that in Ukraina the situation is very bad, about half a million people starving. In reality the number was more than six times greater.”³⁰

Not much later Mr. H. Petrovs'kyi, Chairman of the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, issued on January 21, 1922, *Order No. 34* which stated that “the American Relief Administration (ARA) begin to fulfil the engagement to nourish the starving population of Ukraine.” He proposed:

“this work of greatest importance, very urgent and requiring for its fulfilment extraordinary means. To all commissariats and provincial governments to order all, depending on the institutions to carry out all requests of the ARA in 48 hours since the moment of their receipt.”³¹

However, it was soon evident that not all obstacles were yet overcome.

It took time for Petrovs'kyi's order to reach the provinces and, when received, it had no significant impact. On January 25, Chief of the Inspection and Control Division in Odessa, J. H. Hynes, was unable to get any assistance from the official at the Ukrainian Foreign Office. This official stated that he had received no word from his superiors of any agreement nor had he received any instructions to assist ARA in preparing the port to receive the shipments of corn, even though the agreement had been signed two weeks earlier in Moscow. When Hynes asked for information concerning the port Uzhny, the official at the Ukrainian Foreign Office, ordered port officials not to give out any particulars, as he did not know whether the ARA was entitled to it.³² This response was very perplexing because Hynes had sent a telegram to the Gubispolkom (i.e. provincial government) in Kyiv, addressed to the authorities in Odessa, announcing the arrival of an ARA representative to Odessa.³³

In early February, a meeting was held in Kharkiv at which representatives of all government relief organizations, Ukrainian Red Cross, Captain V. Quisling and

³⁰Vidkun Quisling. *Famine situation in Ukraina* [sic], (Info. No. 22). Geneva, April 30, 1922, p. 2.

³¹H.H.A.. *ARA Rus. oper.*. Box 120.

³²H.H. Fisher, *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 267-268.

³³General report to ARA Director in Moscow, by John H. Hynes, December 12, 1921, in H.H.A.. *ARA Rus. oper.*, Box 128, Folder: Ukraine - Odessa.

Harold H. Fisher, the Director of the ARA in Ukraine were present. The agents of the Ukrainian Government insisted that the foodstuffs brought from abroad by the ARA and the Nansen Mission were to:

“be pooled and their distribution handled by a committee where all the organizations were represented.”³⁴

Mr. Fisher, of the ARA, objected to such a pool stating that the ARA:

“was obliged to retain full responsibility for supplies entrusted to it, and to handle them in accordance with its agreements.”³⁵

The Nansen Mission, on the other hand, complied with the Soviet request and subsequently, was favoured by the Soviet authorities.

By this time several train cars of foods arrived in Kharkiv, but there was no arrangement in place for storage and

“it was only after threatening to return them to Moscow that a warehouse was provided. Even then no offices were available, and no work could be accomplished.”³⁶

although the content of the Ukrainian agreement was essentially similar to the one with the Russian SFSR in which paragraph 12 stated that

“the ARA shall be allowed to set up the necessary organizations for carrying out its relief work free from governmental or other interference. The Central and local Ukrainian authorities have the right of representation therein.”³⁷

In carrying out the Food Remittance business, it was decided to also organize delivery stations in Ukraine in such cities as Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa. Harold H. Fisher complained:

³⁴H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 269.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

“During the winter months of January, February and March 1922, the Ukrainian ARA organization took shape and struggled, often with doubtful success, to overcome the handicap of a late and inauspicious start and, in some regions, the continued hostility of officials.”³⁸

The signature of Rakovsky to the ARA and Ukrainian Agreement did not, as was hoped, remove existing frictions. The Central Government, the local governments and the press viewed the ARA with the greatest suspicion. They could not accept the fact that the ARA refused to merge its relief work with that of the government and to place the control of their supplies in the hands of the authorities. Was there a hidden motive? The ARA was viewed a *bourgeois organization* and its *capitalist* representatives were to be carefully watched. They were monitored closely, even to the point of being followed through the streets of Kharkiv every day and night for weeks at a time, with a special man for each American. Employees had been summoned many times to the G.P.U., and interrogated with questions like *What do the Americans do, what do they say? Are they interested only in relief work?*³⁹

In a report by Mr. Gorvin dated February 1, 1922, Dr. Nansen's Moscow representative in Zaporozhe province stated there were 1.1 million starving, including 380,000 children under 16, and 10,000 children less than five years of age out of the total population of 1.3 million persons. In December 1921 and January 1922, the number of deaths in Zaporozhe province alone was 16,600. The Ukrainian government was unable to provide relief for more than 2% of the starving population. Ukrainian humanitarian institutions, such as the Red Cross, were helping 20,000 but they had already exhausted their resources.⁴⁰

The Nansen Mission was entrusted Donets, Mykolaiv and Odessa provinces, excluding the city of Odessa, and the ARA - the city of Odessa, Zaporozhe, Katerynoslav provinces and Crimea. Actual relief activity for these provinces, due to a variety of difficulties, had been postponed week after week.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ George F. Harrington. "The ARA operation in western half of the Ukraine ... p.4-5, in H.H.A.. ARA Rus. oper., Box 121. Folder: Ukraine - History.

⁴⁰ HH Archives, Stanford, CA. The Rus. oper., March 17, 1922.

The ARA was finally ready to start relief activity including food remittance by January 1, 1922. In Kyiv, a delivery room for the issuing of packages was prepared. The organization was besieged by English speaking citizens desiring jobs. However in warehouse storage at the railway station, there were only a scant 300 packages waiting and the ARA hoped the rest would soon come from Moscow. Yet Moscow failed to send supplies or even information as to when they could be expected. The supplies did not arrive until February 12, 1922 and it was only in March that the ARA was able to deliver the food packages paid for in the U.S.A.⁴¹

On February 3, 1922 another agreement was reached in London between the ARA and the Ukrainian Government by which Ukraine undertook to place two million dollars in gold at the disposal of the American Relief Administration for the purchase of food and seed grain. Dr. Walter Lyman Brown and Leonid Krassin signed the agreement on behalf of the ARA and the Soviet Trade Delegation to Ukraine respectively. The agreement stipulated that all the supplies should be bought in the U.S.A. on orders supplied by accredited representatives of Ukraine to the Administration's London office. The supplies were to be distributed to Ukraine's famine stricken population. In order to facilitate the purchase of the necessary supplies, a shipment of gold was to be made immediately to a Stockholm bank.⁴²

On Monday, February 13 at noon, a conference was held of all the public, co-operative and foreign organizations for relief in Ukraine under the chairmanship of Mr. Kaplan, temporary president of the Central Relief Committee. The Nansen Mission was represented by Capt. V. Quisling, the ARA by Mr. P. Matthews, Mr. Dashkevych representing the Ukrainian Central Co-operative Union and Dr. Slatkovsky of the Ukrainian Red Cross, and others. Mr. Kaplan informed the conference of the current state of affairs in the starving regions of Ukraine with statistical detail. Later the conference took on the question of real work and possibilities for relief by foreign organizations.

The communists were displeased that they could not control the distribution

⁴¹K. A. Macpherson's report in H.H.A., Rus. oper., Box 127.

⁴²*The New York Times*, February 4, 1922, p. 3 : 5.

of relief aid. The issue of pooling together all the feeding resources was raised again. Mr Matthews, speaking on behalf of the ARA, refused to comply. In response, Capt. Quisling, perhaps naively, stated that he did not understand how the work could be done other than with the full cooperation of the Central Pomgol and other organizations. Mr. Matthews stated that he was following established ARA policy and had no authority to make any agreement or to negotiate with any party.⁴³

Since the Communists did not succeed in controlling the distribution of American relief, they decided to slow down its organizational process. On February 15, 1922, the Russian Pomgol held a meeting at which it was decided not to extend American relief activity outside the Volga Valley. As a result Mr. Eiduk would not permit the start of preparatory work for the ARA relief in Ukraine nor permit the extension of American relief to Crimea.⁴⁴

* * * * *

Upon the submission of Dr. Hutchinson's report, the appalling conditions existing in Ukraine moved Col. Haskell, Director of the Russian Unit, to recommend that a food relief program be started in Ukraine. At the time it was not thought that any considerable amount of money would be available for this work. However, in New York on March 9, 1922, an arrangement was made for a joint operation by the ARA and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or Joint), headed by Felix Warburg and its Director General Dr. Boris D. Bogen respectively. They decided on relief measures that were estimated at a cost of 700,000 pounds sterling. The sum was believed sufficient to provide for a maximum of 800,000 children and 400,000 adults, the maximum to be reached by July 15. The JDC agreed to finance the

⁴³Information about the Conference from the H.H.A., the ARA Rus. oper., Box 120. For the compliance of Nansen's Mission to work with government agencies by pooling together feeding resources, Dr. Nansen was granted special privileges in Russia and, among them, he received more publicity in the Soviet press than the ARA. Also, in spite of horrendous shortages in the Soviet transportation system, Nansen was given a beautiful salon-wagon, which was used all through 1921-1923, whenever he wanted to travel.

⁴⁴"Holod 1921-1923 v Ukraini", Dok. No. 56, p. 102-103.

movement and the American Relief Administration to administer it. The work, at least in its initial stages, was to be done as part of the Russian Unit, and was to be strictly non-sectarian in its administration. It was also decided to include the larger cities outside the famine area in the food distribution effort as the refugees and patients in hospitals and other institutions in those cities were also in a deplorable state of need.⁴⁵ At the same time, it was agreed to provide a large medical program already initiated by the ARA.⁴⁶

Soon after the Ukrainian Government nominated Mr. C. Artomonov, an able and experienced administrator, as Plenipotentiary Representative of the Ukrainian Government for the foreign relief organizations. His broad understanding and efficient cooperation were of great value to the ARA nominating Colonel William R. Grove, Supervisor of the Ukrainian District of the Russian Relief Unit, effective May 1, 1922.

On April 10, 1922, Assistant Director in Russia, CJC Quinn issued Memorandum No. 5 which became a blueprint for relief organization in Ukraine. According to this Memorandum:

1. Effective May 1, the entire territory of Ukraine would, except in matters of accounting, constitute a district with headquarters in Kharkiv.
2. Ukraine, for the purpose of ARA relief operations, formed a district and was subdivided into four sub districts:
 - a) Kyiv (embracing four gubernias or provinces: Kyiv, Chernihiv, Volhynia and Podolia),
 - b) Odessa (Odessa, and Mykolaiv provinces),
 - c) Kharkiv (Kharkiv and Poltava provinces), and
 - d) Katerynoslav (Katerynoslav, Kremenchuk, Aleksandrivsk and Donetsk provinces).⁴⁷

The present district of Kyiv, Odessa, Katerynoslav and Kharkiv formed sub-districts under the general supervision of Col. Grove whose activities also

⁴⁵Wm. R. Grove. Report on operations ..., p. 3.

⁴⁶*Manchester Guardian*, May 1, 1922. HH Archives, ARA Rus. oper. - Ukraine. Box 1920.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

encompassed port operations at Odessa.

Until further notice, all accounting matters were to be continued directly with the Moscow office as before. All other matters were to be taken up with Col. Grove.⁴⁸ As a result of this memorandum, the famine stricken territory of Ukraine was divided between two relief agencies: the ARA, headed by Dr. Harold Fisher, and the Nansen Mission, headed by Captain Quisling.

At first, the government endeavoured to restrict ARA activities in the Zaporozhe and Katerynoslav districts on the grounds that all necessary relief was already being undertaken with the Nansen Mission in the Donets Basin feeding all needy children and adults in Odessa and Mykolaiv districts. Luckily, the ARA representatives were able to convince the government that there was a large difference between promises and performance.⁴⁹ As the Nansen Mission could not honour its obligations because of food shortages, the ARA was responsible for the Zaporozhe district consisting of the former Aleksandrivsk, Henichesk, Huliay Pole, Velykyi Tokmak, Melitopol', Berdiansk and Kamianka counties.

In Ukraine, the ARA established its own District Offices with their representatives in Kharkiv, Katerynoslav, Yelesavethrad, Kyiv, Mykolaiv and Odessa with All-Ukrainian Representative Office in Odessa. All instructions were received from Moscow, where the ARA Head Office for the Russian operation was located. Every district representative was directly responsible to the Moscow Head Office. The authorities on all levels did not show much appreciation of what the ARA was doing for the starving population. As an example:

“on March 11 a telegram for the ARA was received at the Soviet Foreign Office and there (it) was delayed for 10 days and delivered to the address on March 21.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸At a later date the ARA territorial division of Ukraine was changed to consist of six districts: Odessa, Zaporozhe, Mykolaiv, Katerynoslav, Kyiv and Kharkiv with the main office in Odessa.

⁴⁹Report of J. H. Hynes, District Supervisor in Odessa, as of August 3, 1922 to ARA Russian unit in Moscow. H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 177, Folder 99: Odessa letters to Moscow.

⁵⁰George P. Harrington in a letter dated March 22, 1922. ARA Rus. oper., Box 126, Folder No. 3, H.H.A., Stanford University, CA.

In the meantime, the reach of the famine expanded. In a report quoted by the *Manchester Guardian*, Capt. Quisling estimated that by May 1 there would be about five million starving people in Ukraine and this number would increase to six or seven million before the completion of the next harvest.

In the first week of June, the ARA inspectors returned from the country and made their reports about the conditions they encountered. They stated that the conditions in the country were dire:

“Everywhere pain, death, famine. Every recently started kitchen a real bliss for many hundred children. There were houses where inspectors found only cadavers. In Berestove, a great village of Berdiansk county, out of 2,500 children remained about 150, all the others died from starvation.”⁵¹

* * * * *

The activity of the ARA was performed by three departments: (1) parcel remittance; (2) feeding the starving population; and (3) medical and anti-epidemic relief.⁵²

Soon after the Agreement was signed in Moscow, the ARA offices in Europe and America began the sale of parcel remittances. The Jewish population, living mainly in Belarus' and Ukraine, were the primary recipients of these parcels since reports had shown that the majority of these food parcels were purchased in the United States by Jewish emigrants from the former Russian Empire for their friends or relatives residing in these two Soviet Republics. Food remittance offices were established in Kharkiv, Odessa, Kyiv⁵³ and Minsk. The food remittance station in Kharkiv was used as a base for nourishing children in the provinces of Kharkiv, Poltava and Kremenchuk, and the station at Kyiv was used as a base in supplying

⁵¹Report on the Ekaterinoslav district of ARA, p. 42 - unpublished in the H.H.A..

⁵²Otchet Tsentral'noi Komissii po bor'be s posledstviiami golodami pri VTSTIK'e; noiabr; 1922-sentiabr' 1923. -- (Khar'kov, 1923), p. 121.

⁵³"The Jews were living in the towns, and in the famine districts towns like Odessa and Kherson had one-fourth to one-third Jewish population. In the country Jewish population the Jews were not so numerous and represented no more than 1 - 5% of the population ..." See V. Quisling, Report, Geneva, April 30, 1922, p. 20.

Kyiv, Volhynia, Podolia and Chernihiv. Subsequently, the ARA asked for the co-operation of the Soviet Government in opening these stations. Parcels were promptly delivered to the addressees. According to Col. Grove:

“these packages saved many thousands of families from starvation before our adult program got under way. While there have been cases reported where a number of a families died while waiting for the arrival of a food package, there is no means of knowing how many thousands were actually saved by the arrival of these packages, but certainly a large number. The major portion of food packages in Ukraine went to the Jewish population because so many of them had friends or relatives living in the United States.”⁵⁴

In April 1922, the ARA decided to undertake feeding of children in the southern provinces of Ukraine with a program of 100,000 recipients. Conferences were held in Kharkiv with government representatives and a short time later a much larger allocation of rations was granted. Kharkiv and Kyiv, not included in the original plan, were allocated a certain number of children to feed. This created new problems since local committees were to be selected, additional kitchens and local warehouses were to be opened. The ARA district supervisor had no American assistant and when traveling, the office had to be left in the charge of local personnel. On two such occasions upon returning to Kharkiv, the ARA district supervisor found that the offices had been broken into and robbed during his absence.⁵⁵

The selection of committees, warehouse managers and field inspectors was also fraught with difficulties because it had to be made on the spot with no possible verification of previous experience held by the applicants. The government agencies wished to have control of feeding activities and desired to appoint all local committees primarily for political reasons. However, the ARA managed by and large to secure the committees it desired.

In Kharkiv the committee consisted of three men who had years of experience in social work and proved to be keenly interested in the work and most capable. In

⁵⁴Wm. R. Grove. Report of operations in the Ukraine 1922, p. 14.

⁵⁵G.P. Harrington, op. cit., p. 6-7, *ibid*.

spite of their efforts and repeated requests from the ARA, no kitchen was provided in Kharkiv for almost a month after the announcement of the program. This was chiefly due to the ARA's refusal to turn the food over to the authorities for distribution through their existing institutions. There were many other impediments that deliberately slowed the work of assisting the needy.

Kharkiv, Poltava and Kremenchuk were the first provincial capitals visited by the ARA representative. Conferences were held first with provincial and later with district authorities. It took time and protracted discussions, which sometimes lasted several hours or even days, before agreements could be reached.⁵⁶ Generally the treatment of Americans by the local "authorities was cordial, and at such times the work was a pleasure," said District Supervisor G. P. Harrington. However, in his report he also stated, "but there were also instances of hostility which made it most difficult and even impossible to work."⁵⁷

There were also difficulties with food transport. The first one, sent from Moscow to Odessa, was lost for an entire month in Kyiv. Almost four months passed from the date the Agreement was signed until finally, on April 30, the first children's feeding station opened in Odessa. As Odessa had the largest Jewish community in Ukraine, the Jewish children happened to be the first ones to benefit from the ARA newly opened kitchen. Here, in close co-operation, worked the ARA and the JDC. By July 15, the number of children fed in Odessa grew to 822,000 (22,000 more than planned) and also 400,000 adults.⁵⁸ In Kherson the first kitchen for children was opened on May 13, and in Mykolaiv on May 15, 1922.

The ration for adults in Ukraine was one Russian pound (9/10 equal to 659.60 calories of an English pound) of corn grits per day per person. It was issued dry as no kitchens were operating for adults except special kitchens for students in Odessa and Katerynoslav. The ration for children was different, slightly bigger and varied daily, and was cooked directly at feeding points.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 8.

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 9.

⁵⁸H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

⁵⁹Wm. R. Grove, *Report of operations in the Ukraine*, p. 12-13.

In some cases, the opening of kitchens was stopped because the local committee was afraid to commence work without an American on the spot. Such an instance occurred in the town of Henichesk bordering the Sea of Azov. Two weeks after food arrived in Henichesk, the kitchen was still not open, although the streets were filled with ragged, emaciated children and deaths from starvation were increasing at an alarming rate.

Essentially, the JDC was involved in a reconstruction of agriculture. It provided Odessa and Katerynoslav counties with 77 tractors, horses, cows and other domestic animals. For the last two months, March and April 1923, it acquired for distribution 400 harvesters, 200 winnowing machines and 100 grain sorters.⁶⁰ The JDC financed the Ukrainian program on a non-sectarian basis and for this, it received much favourable comment. Like all similar movements, however, it had to have a permanently beneficial effect on the minds of the large majority of people who were capable of appreciating such magnanimous action.

The JDC appropriated and allocated to the ARA the sum of \$1,250,000 for nourishing children and medical work exclusively in Ukraine and Belarus'. The appropriation was based on a program lasting until August 1923. The JDC insisted, however, that it should receive full credit for it throughout Ukraine and Belarus' with appropriate signage at feeding stations, hospitals, and clinics, so that the population would know that the work, both of child feeding and medical relief, was assisted by the Jewish sponsored JDC. This was prompted by the hope that the JDC would foster better relations with the Ukrainian and Belarus' population.⁶¹

The ARA agreed to this clause but it was not easy to fulfil as it encountered objections, particularly from government representatives. In July 1922, in Katerynoslav, the ARA District Supervisor T. C. Barringer had the original sign "Gift of the American People" removed from the front of the kitchen and replaced it with another one inscribed "This kitchen is exclusively maintained at the cost of the

⁶⁰Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini; zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv. (Kyiv : Naukova Dumka, 1993), p. 193.

⁶¹Agreement with the Joint Distribution Committee regarding operations in the Ukraine and White Russia, of August 14, 1922. H.H.A., Stanford CA. ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.” Barringer was rebuked by Mr. M. Skvortzov, the Representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Government. According to Skvortzov, who was of Jewish background:

“such a signboard calls for an unwished for explosion of anti-Semitic feeling among the ignorant part of the population of the province.”⁶²

It is difficult to believe that the hungry would indulge in debate on whom to thank as they welcomed all those who delivered them from death by starvation.

The JDC started under the flag of the ARA, but after year-end 1922, it worked independently. According to a letter of the District Supervisor in Katerynoslav, Mr. George P. Harrington, in spring 1923, the city of Katerynoslav had:

“a large percentage of Jewish people and the relief of the JDC is given chiefly, if not altogether to them... they keep record of all the people of their own faith, who receive aid from them. We do not discriminate against the Jews and, as a matter of fact, I should say that fully one half of our relief has been given to Jews, for most of the doctors, professors and other such people here are Jews.”⁶³

The JDC contributed one million dollars to ARA child feeding and \$750,000 for adult feeding in Ukraine. It also provided such special relief as 129,000 pairs of underwear for adults for distribution in various districts of Ukraine, 3,480 yards of blue woollen cloth, 7,024 yards of grey flannel, 14,340 yards of flannelette, 16,958 yards of grey sheeting and also some sums of money for distribution among needy individual families throughout Ukraine.⁶⁴

Although the ARA began its activity in Ukraine in the middle of May (except Odessa where activities commenced on April 30 1922), by August it was already

⁶²M. Skvortzov to T. C. Barringer, July 27, 1922 in H.H.A.. ARA Rus. oper., Box 120. Folder Correspondence - Alexandrovsk - Ekaterinoslav.

⁶³G. P. Harrington, a letter to Mr. C. C. C. Quinn, Assistant ARA Director in Moscow, dated April 13, 1923.

⁶⁴Wm. R. Grove. Report of operations in the Ukraine 1922, p. 15.

feeding 978,942 children and 975,572 adults. However, there were many more in need of help, which was not easy to deliver since local authorities continued to set up obstacles. H.H. Fisher, the man in charge of ARA activity in Ukraine, described one such case in the town of Nikopol, where an ex-bandit Tetov,

“converted to Communist Party, who ruled with the absolutism of an African chief over Nikopol, a town of about 22,000 on the Dnipro River ... The American who came to Nikopol to make arrangements for the commencement of feeding passed no less than four dead bodies on the way to Gubispolkom [Gubernia’s government] and saw everywhere the evidence of unbelievable suffering. Tetov’s claim to fame in ARA annals is that he succeeded for two or three weeks in preventing the beginning of American feeding, first by dissolving the ARA distributing committee, then by putting guards around the warehouse to prevent food being issued to kitchens. Finally, when P. U. Muir, the American in charge, shoved off the guard and distributed the products himself, Tetov called a general strike which deprived the kitchens of labour, water and fuel necessary for their operation.”⁶⁵

Among all the regions of Ukraine and Russia, Zaporozhe was the most affected by the famine, wrote William R. Grove, head of the Ukrainian enterprise. The official estimate of the number of starving in April 1922 was 74% of the entire population. According to Captain Quisling, deaths from starvation amounted from thirty to forty daily in each volost’. The district of Zaporozhe was thoroughly covered personally by the supervisor Mr. Gibbed. The situation at the beginning of the operation was abysmal. The rapidity of organization that accomplished the feeding of 252,569 children and 309,428 adults so efficiently in such a short time reflected to the credit of the ARA. The people in some sections of Zaporozhe, would require assistance through the coming years, as they literally had raised nothing, and they had to be assisted with the alternative choice of becoming refugees or starving.⁶⁶

In Donets province it is easy to follow the progress of the famine because in October 1921, one county reported 2,299 starving and from that time they began

⁶⁵H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

⁶⁶Wm. R. Grove. "Operation in Ukraine" in *ARA Bulletin*, 1922, Ser. 2, No. 31, p. 29; V. Quisling, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

registration. In November, famine spread to other counties and the number of starving jumped to 48,297. In December it reached 204,884 and in March 1922 - 654,749 persons. The chief of the relief work in Donetsk estimated that by the end of April, the number of starving would have reached one million, and before the new harvest at least 1.5 million.⁶⁷ The ARA fed only the south-east corner of the province of Donetsk, where foreign colonists had settled. The work here was rapidly organized and the maximum number reached was 104,936 children and 101,562 adults.⁶⁸

The degree of starvation was terrible in the province of Mykolaiv; 50% of the population was actually starving and 30% were perpetually hungry.

“Many families had to live on one pound of oil cake per day. From the month of January 1922 corpses showing malnutrition lined the streets. To carry the dead out into the street became a common occurrence. During the day about ten sick persons were picked up from the street and taken to the hospital with most dying shortly afterward. Some were so overcome by exhaustion that they succumbed with a piece of bread in their mouths unable to chew. Everything was used as food including horses, collars and horse hides, both raw and cooked. After all the dogs and cats were eaten, the roots of spear grass, reeds, tree bark, millet husk and oil cake became dietary staples. There was no bread made of flour. It was generally prepared with coarse meal, lentils and millet. The bread made from these substitutes was heavy and raw.”⁶⁹

Under such circumstances everybody who was still capable of walking, went in search of bread or anything else edible.

All the ARA offices were obliged to report periodically on their activity, at monthly and bi-monthly intervals. All these reports emphasized the difficulty of getting along with Soviet government officials. Mr. J. W. H. Aikher, acting district supervisor in Kharkiv, reported on March 31, 1923:

“We have had considerable difficulty with the trade union. The trouble

⁶⁷V. Quisling, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶⁸Wm. R. Grove, *op. cit.*, *ibidem*.

⁶⁹“Account of the relief activities of different organization”. ARA Rus. oper., Box 129, Folder: Ukraine - Odessa, No. 2. Hoover Herbert Archives, Stanford CA.

started when we discharged some of our employees because they couldn't be trusted."⁷⁰

District supervisor G. P. Harrington, in his report on the Kharkiv district of the in July 1922, stated:

"the work of the Ukrainian Government has also been very small in this district, for their supplies and resources were decidedly limited and were consequently concentrated in the famine areas. Refugee kitchens were maintained by the Ukrainian Red Cross at the railway station in Kharkiv, where 1,500 adults and 400 children were taken care of. At present (July 1922) there is no feeding in Poltava and only 700 adults are being fed in Kharkiv."⁷¹

When the ARA first came to Kharkiv there were about fifteen children's kitchens in operation under the direction of the government provincial relief committee but these were rapidly being closed for lack of supplies and in the latter part of May, the ARA took over the last two for its own feeding. Money was constantly being collected for famine relief but no definite information can be found as to how it was used.⁷²

All available data indicates that Ukraine was suffering from onerous famine conditions, which were further aggravated since the summer of 1921 by the influx of starving refugees from the Volga Valley. They came to Ukraine from the RSFSR. On May 1, there were 30,292 persons, 12,200 of them were resettled in Children's homes in provinces with a good harvest, while 18,292 were added to the burden of homeless children to be under the care of the Ukrainian government. At the same time, homeless Ukrainian waifs were roaming and searching for any available scraps of nourishment.⁷³

In addition to the five provinces (Zaporozhe, Katerynoslav, Donetsk,

⁷⁰Semi-monthly report, Kharkiv, March 31, 1923, p. 1; H.H.A., Stanford, CA. Rus. oper., Box 125, Ukraine - Kharkiv - Reports.

⁷¹Wm. R. Grove. "Operation in Ukraine" in *ARA Bulletin*, 1922, Ser. 2, No. 31..

⁷²H.H.A. Rus. oper. - Box 121. Folder: Ukraine - History. Report of the Kharkov District of the ARA, p. 16-17.

⁷³Ibid.

Mykolaiv and Odessa) with their 9 million inhabitants or 36% of the population of Ukraine, starvation touched the southern counties of Kharkiv and Kremenchuk provinces, and the south-eastern counties of Poltava province. Subsequently, the number of starving people doubled from January 1922 and amounted to 3.8 million people with relief covering only one-tenth of the need.⁷⁴

This fact is well illustrated in a letter from James F Hodgson, ARA District Supervisor in Odessa to Col. Wm. N Haskell in Moscow dated April 11, 1922:

“In view of the fact that the situation in Odessa is extremely bad, I am at a loss to account for the apathetic attitude taken by the local authorities. No explanation that I can think of is adequate to cover the situation. The death rate is appalling - reliable information indicates that there are between 600 and 700 deaths a day - and every minute lost in the establishment of our child-feeding station means the loss of some lives. McElroy has made a general survey of conditions and it is his opinion that *the situation here is worse than in any Volga district* (emphasis - W.V.). The dead are left lying in the streets unburied for days at a time; and on many of the prominent streets can be seen bodies half eaten by dogs. Practically no effort is being made to remedy these conditions, and unless some pressure is brought to bear, the next few months will bring about a most dangerous sanitary situation.”⁷⁵

The most striking fact was that for the Volga region, food was requisitioned in Ukraine not only where the 1920 crop was satisfactory but even from provinces afflicted by hunger. From the Mykolaiv province, Harold H. Fisher wrote:

“with a crop of only 4 per cent of normal, and containing the city of Kherson, the most desperately afflicted spot in south Russia [i.e. Southern Ukraine], in fact one of the worst in the entire country, sent eight cars to Volga.”⁷⁶

Here, according to Col. Grove

“people were dying in March at a rate which would have wiped the city out in one and one-half years.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴“God bor’by s golodom”, p. 35.

⁷⁵ARA Russian Operations, HIA Stanford, Box 127.

⁷⁶H. H. Fisher, *op. cit.* p. 263

⁷⁷Wm. R. Grove. Report of operations in the Ukraine, 1922. Odessa, July 31, 1922, p. 4.

According to the *Kommunist*, in the Mykolaiv province by December 1921, the Prodarmy units collected 1.4 million poods of tax-in-kind versus a planned collection of 4.5 million poods of tax-in-kind and 600,000 poods of flour.⁷⁸

How this “decisive action” was performed is explained by the same newspaper in connection with a tax-in-kind collection in the Yelysavethrad county of the Mykolaiv province, most hit by famine in Southern Ukraine. The tax-in-kind collection was accomplished as usual under duress and those who attempted to defend their bread for the sake of their children were accused of tax collection avoidance and taken to court. The authorities organized two special sessions of the Food Revolutionary Tribunal and worked in four sessions split into twelve units.⁷⁹ Captain Vidkun Quisling wrote that at the beginning of March 1922, he had seen big posters in the starving city of Mykolaiv with an appeal - *Working masses of Mykolaiv, to the help of the starving Volga district.*⁸⁰

According to contemporary sources, the refugee situation in Ukraine was incredibly bad. In April 1922, many of the railway stations and all junction points were a mass of humanity of all ages and genders - all in a frightful state as to lack of clothing and food. There was less suffering from lack of clothing than from lack of food, but almost all the clothing was infected with vermin, and it was practically impossible for the refugees to keep themselves clean. Bathing facilities were non-existent. Refugees were herded into boxcars where they were packed as tightly as they could be fitted in, or else left to loiter about the railway stations where again they had to lie in contact with each other to find a place to sleep.⁸¹ It was impossible to estimate the number of refugees with even a close approximation, but there were certainly several hundred thousand in April 1922.

On April 25, 1922, Mr. Grove, Dr. Bogen and Mr. Artomonov met in Kharkiv to discuss the final program of tentative foodstuff allocation for the various

⁷⁸ *Kommunist* (Kharkiv), December 23, 1921.

⁷⁹ *Kommunist*, December 22, 1921.

⁸⁰ Vidkun Quisling. Famine situation in Ukraine; report from International Committee for Russian Relief, Information No. 22, Geneva, April 30, 1922, p. 1-2.

⁸¹ Wm. R. Grove. Report of operations in the Ukraine 1922. July 31, 1922.

provinces. At the meeting, Mr. Artomonov advised opening the kitchens at railroad junction points, especially the labour centres, in all provinces but Donets, which was under the government's care. At that time, no adult feeding program had been authorized and only tentative allocations were made for child feeding. Along the way, as the need developed, various additional allocations were made. On June 26, allocations were made to cover two million monthly rations for children and 1,180,000 monthly rations for adults. On July 15, 75,000 monthly rations were added for Odessa province (under the term "ration" it is understood as food for one person for one month). The ARA divided the needy population of Ukraine into two main groups: a) the starving and b) the undernourished.⁶²

By May 1922, the situation in the southern provinces of Ukraine had worsened. According to *Izvestiia*, by May 1, 1922, there were 3,793,481 persons starving and among them 1,940,000 were children under the age of 16 years. By the end of May, according to incomplete data, the number of starving across Ukraine amounted to 4,218,270 persons. Out of a total population of 9,669,300 in the famished Ukrainian provinces, this would amount to over 40% of the total population. When the Volga Valley was declared as famine stricken the previous summer, it was exempted from paying tax-in-kind and was receiving state aid. At the same time, the famished provinces of Ukraine were not only not receiving any state aid, but they were not even exempted from the tax-in-kind. It was only during the spring months when the famine reached a colossal dimension, Ukrainian gubernias were exempted, albeit at different points in time, from tax-in-kind and began receiving state aid. Foreign aid began with the opening of a feeding kitchen in Odessa for children on April 30, 1922 that fed 400 children. Within the next eleven days, Odessa established 14 feeding stations where 14,200 children were fed. At that time there were already 1,207 feeding points for the starving of Ukraine and they served 368,018 persons, which meant only 9% of the necessary relief was achieved. By the end of June 1922, Ukrainian Red Cross operated 111 feeding points serving

⁶² Wm. R. Grove. Report of operations in Ukraine, p. 5-6.

71,700 persons.⁸³ Finally, an official organ of the RSFSR admitted the obvious about the Ukrainian famine!

Thanks to the ARA food intervention, by July 31, 1922 there were no known cases approaching starvation, claimed the Supervisor of the Ukraine District. It was evident then that by July month-end, the ARA fed 1,954,514 persons classified as truly needy. This figure can be used as a maximum count for starving people in Ukraine. At the time, the ARA was also feeding hundreds of thousands who were on the "undernourished" rather than the "starvation" list.

"It is true that thousands of people died from starvation during the last spring, and these would decrease the number mentioned above. However, they were probably more than offset by the very large number added to the starving list on account of exhaustion of supplies in some sections where they had enough to carry them up to spring only."⁸⁴

In every province, district and region there were committees to help the starving so it was presumed that they would co-operate with the ARA and other relief organizations in their efforts. As the Kyiv District Supervisor K. K. MacPherson stated in his report,

"the District Commission for Relief to the Famishing in each province do not assist the local population. Their purpose is to collect money and grain for the starving population of the Volga region, which is done by means of taxation, special appeals to the general population and donations from co-operatives and unions."⁸⁵

In spite of all the difficulties, the work progressed rapidly. Food was shipped and stored in district warehouses; kitchens were equipped, staffed and opened. Children were selected according to need and fed. By July, adult feeding was added. In mid-August, 55,000 children and adults were receiving American food daily in the

⁸³Ya. G. "Golod na Ukraine i bor'ba s nim" in *Izvestia*, No. 146, July 4, 1922, p. 3, col. 3-4.

⁸⁴Wm. R. Grove. Report of operations in the Ukraine, p. 7.

⁸⁵K. A. MacPherson. General report of the Kiev Sub-District of the ARA in Ukraine, September 14, 1922, p. 19, in ARA Rus. oper., Box 121, Folder: Ukraine - History.

Kharkiv district.⁸⁶

All during the winter of 1921-1922 and the early spring, the southern provinces of Ukraine had been suffering under famine conditions comparable to those in the Volga Valley, but the ARA had not been in a position to undertake the feeding of the population. Every day requests were pouring in from peasants, villages, counties and provinces for relief to the starving provinces of Odessa, Mykolaiv, Katerynoslav and Zaporozhe province. Among these, the worst conditions were in Zaporozhe province with its centre in Oleksandrivsk, renamed as Zaporozhe in 1921 (the same as the province).

When the ARA was able to undertake feeding activity, Oleksandrivsk was one of the first counties to be considered. At the initial stage of organization, Oleksandrivsk and Katerynoslav were included in the Kharkiv district for food remittance but in April 1922, they were established as a separate unit.

When at last the ARA complied with the repeated requests for relief in the Zaporozhe province, the population gladly welcomed it.

“But from the authorities there was very little co-operation and, indeed, in many instances, active opposition. At every turn the initial stages of the work were delayed.”⁸⁷

It was chiefly due to the ARA determination to run its own kitchens, issue its own food, choose its own personnel and retain overall control of the operation which engendered mistrust of the Americans whenever they came into contact with the local officialdom.

The attitude of the local authorities was no different in Zaporozhe than in Kharkiv. First, the provincial government did not feel any sense of urgency in providing the ARA with official automobiles or horses to expedite hunger relief. When the first shipment of food arrived from Odessa on May 11, it could not be unloaded due to lack of a suitable warehouse, although every day people were dying

⁸⁶Tbid, p. 9.

⁸⁷G. P. Harrington. *The ARA operations in the western half of the Ukraine ...*, p. 11.

from starvation. After a delay of several days, a satisfactory warehouse was located and a temporary office was provided in the building of the provincial government.

One of the most difficult phases of organization of relief activity was to obtain qualified personnel. In spite of all the delays and annoyances, by May 27, 17,000 children were being fed daily. During August the feeding reached its maximum height, and in general the work went smoothly. At no time, however, was there any real cordiality or co-operation shown by the authorities, who have always attempted unsuccessfully, from time to time, to take matters into their own hands.⁸⁸

Katerynoslav, during the Revolution and subsequent uprisings, suffered as much as any other city in Ukraine. Over the short span of four years the city experienced 21 different changes in government. Much of the city was destroyed by fire with most inhabitants losing a part or all of their possessions, many killed, and others fleeing to other parts of Ukraine or across the border to Russia. Apart from the city, the province lay in a part of Ukraine stricken with famine so that by winter 1921-1922, conditions had reached the point where deaths from starvation were rising sharply and immediate relief was necessary.

As the refugees from the Volga Valley came to Ukraine in 1921, Katerynoslav province was allocated over 4,800 migrants and resettled them without threat of starvation. On January 10, the ARA representatives arrived in Katerynoslav. They were already awaited and received a most cordial welcome. Favourable comments appeared in the newspapers and officials seemed as pleased as the inhabitants. The papers gave long descriptions of the work done in the Volga Valley, including the number of children who were receiving American food. These stories were followed by descriptions of the starvation in the Katerynoslav province. The years of revolution and the Ukrainian war for independence had resulted in the crippling and neglect of the city's infrastructure. On January 11, the first car of food packages arrived but there was no warehouse to store them and it stood on the tracks in the railway yards until the seventh of February before it could be unloaded. Meanwhile, people were dying of hunger in the city.

⁸⁸G. P. Harrington, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

The population awaited help and every day petitions were received from villagers and townsfolk seeking to have the kitchens opened. Unfortunately, the ARA was not prepared at that time to feed all children who needed assistance because the food packages were only for those who had friends or relatives in the United States and who had postcard notification "tickets" permitting them to receive their packages.⁸⁹

In Katerynoslav, the authorities had by March 1, 1922, about 520,000 registered as starving or 27% of the population. By the end of May, there would be about 730,000 starving, or 38% of the population. The Nansen representative in Katerynoslav, who was supposed to be very well acquainted with the local circumstances, estimated the population in the province at 1,779,000 on March 1, and the number of starving at 774,000 or 43%.⁹⁰ It was only in the first weeks of May that large quantities of food began to arrive and on the eleventh of May, the first kitchen was opened.

Katerynoslav was an unfortunate example of poor cooperation with local authorities. Here the official representative generally interfered with the work of the ARA and attempted to direct its operations. He demanded the right of managing personnel, supervising the remittance of food packages and allocation of rations. The refusal of the Americans to submit to his dictate caused his level of hostility to rise toward the ARA with increased levels of annoyance and interference.⁹¹

In spite of this harassment, during the July-August 1922 period, the ARA opened sixteen kitchens where 15,090 children were fed in Katerynoslav. In sixty-two closed institutions, the ARA supported 6,400 children. During this period, the maximum number of adults getting their meals from the ARA kitchen in Katerynoslav was 15,857. In Katerynoslav county the most intense work of the ARA was in August 1922, when the number of kitchens rose to fifty and the number of children being fed increased to 133,211. In total, the closed institutions of the county

⁸⁹George P. Harrington, *Operations in the western half of the Ukraine from the beginning of the workH.H.A., ARA Rus. oper.*, Box 121, Folder: Ukraine - history, p. 20.

⁹⁰V. Quisling, *op. cit.*, p. 11

⁹¹G. P. Harrington, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

provided food relief to 9,177 children and 195,906 adults.⁹²

The counties joining Odessa were afflicted by extremely poor crop conditions due to various causes brought on by summer drought, lack of draught animals and failure to seed the necessary acreage [mentioned during a meeting with Mr. David Brown, a representative of the JDC]. The southern part of the Odessa county was proclaimed in the worst condition, but the southern part of Tyraspol and Voznesensk counties did not lag far behind. Among the children of these counties, mortality from starvation had been noticed and in the Malyi Buyalyk section, many adults were already showing the effects of starvation along with an increase in typhus.

The prices of food commodities were rising daily and the approach of winter resulted in increased scarcity. It was evident that the poorer classes of the population would again be doomed to suffer famine conditions unless help was forthcoming from some source. In a conference with representatives of the ARA held in August of 1922, the government representative could find nothing to revise the figure of 90,000 which was the minimum number requiring nourishment in the Odessa area during autumn.

As far as the government was concerned, the Pomgol intended to apply the limited commodities at its disposal toward closed institutions first, as the ARA was supplying only one ration daily. Official figures were not available but the Pomgol would extend its help to approximately 12,000 children in the city of Odessa to make up for the deficiency of the ARA rations. This information was reported by C. S. Forbes, District Supervisor in Odessa to ARA Russian Unit in Moscow on October 4, 1922.⁹³

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The representatives of the ARA, Harold H. Fisher, Frank A. Golder and

⁹²Prof. Goskoff. "Famine in Ekaterinoslav 1921-1922", p. 10-11. H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 124, Folder: Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav - History.

⁹³ARA Rus. oper., Box 177, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA.

Lincoln Hutchinson, were under the strong influence of biased Soviet official propaganda which was reflected in their hostility toward the Ukrainian national movement and its underground activity. As a result, they used the term “bandits” to refer to the anarchist leader Nestor Makhno, the Ukrainian national insurgents and also the regular army units of the Ukrainian Peoples Republic. Eventually they defined two kinds of “bandits”, those who robbed for personal gain and the Ukrainian patriots or as F. A. Golder wrote, “partisans - they are kind to peasantry who in turn help them in their effort against the communist.”⁹⁴ In his memoirs, Fisher stated:

“there were numerous bandit gangs operating there, who made a specialty of holding up trains, shooting commissars and robbing rich Jews. These bandits never molested the ARA food supplies. Once, when they robbed an ARA warehouse manager of money, they courteously sent the ARA a receipt for the amount they have taken.”⁹⁵

These were strange “bandits”, a case that Fisher somehow could not explain. Even the statement of Prof. Hutchinson in his observations that “most of the officials whom he met were obviously Jews”⁹⁶ did not explain the reason why there was such hostility towards Jews, which could be more precisely explained as anti-communism rather than anti-Semitism. It is worth mentioning that among the surnames of all the officials involved in famine relief on the part of the government, one rarely came across a Ukrainian name. Prof. Fisher stated in the official report of the Government Relief Committee:

“The policy of the Communist Party with respect to Ukraine presents many curious aspects. Not only did the Moscow Government fail to bring the Ukrainian situation to the knowledge of the ARA as it did other regions much more remote, but it actively discouraged ... anything likely to bring the Americans in contact with the Ukraine, the explanation that the situation along the Black Sea was unknown to the officials of the Central Government

⁹⁴F. A. Golder and L. Hutchinson. *On the trail of the Russian famine*. - (Stanford, CA. Stanford University Press, 1927), p. 212.

⁹⁵H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

⁹⁶L. Hutchinson, “Observations in the Ukraine”, *ibid.*, p. 13.

is not worth serious consideration. In July 1921 the vision of calamitous hunger was seen approaching."⁹⁷

The 1922 harvest was not any better and the prospect for the winter of 1922-1923 remained bleak. Subsequently,

"in the fall of 1922 in Mykolaiv, Katerynoslav, Zaporozhe and Donets provinces (no data available for the Odessa province), there were 3,150,000 starving. Oddly enough, government statistics indicated only 2,500,000 including Crimea."⁹⁸

According to the figure of the Soviet statistical organ, twenty-one famine stricken areas were enumerated in Ukraine in fall 1922. The province of Zaporozhe was acknowledged to be 100% famine stricken. In the Donets District 48% of the arable land reflected a poor harvest. In the provinces of Katerynoslav (82%), Mykolaiv (75%) and Odessa (61%) experienced bad harvests. At the beginning of February 1923, the number of famine stricken in Ukraine amounted to six million people of whom two million were starving and homeless children.⁹⁹ It was clear that in the course of the winter and spring, that number would increase if speedy relief was not provided. Nevertheless Moscow imposed a new tax-in-kind of 95 million poods, of which 80,653,000 had been delivered by November 20, 1922.¹⁰⁰ While Rakovsky declared that the districts most severely hit by the famine were freed from the tax-in-kind, in fact, not a single county of the famine stricken southern Ukraine, including the province of Zaporozhe, was exempted from the tax-in-kind in 1922.¹⁰¹

Although the situation was tragic, it was not reflected in the pages of the national newspapers and when mentioned, the news was not prominently placed. At the same time, in winter 1922-23, great attention was focused on the French occupied German Ruhr. The French occupation of the German Ruhr Valley with its

⁹⁷H.H. Fisher, "The famine in Soviet Russia", p. 261.

⁹⁸The famine in the Ukraine -- (Berlin : Dietz Nachf., 1923), p. 5.

⁹⁹*Kommunist* (Kharkiv), January 7, 1923

¹⁰⁰*Bednota* (Moscow), December 19, 1922.

¹⁰¹The famine in Ukraine, p. 7.

unemployment and critical economic conditions was widely advertised and the Communist Party organ *Pravda* dedicated a steady stream of commentary on the topic through the month of January 1923. Ukrainian famine conditions were almost completely neglected by the Soviet press.

As stated previously, this situation did not prevent Moscow from levying a tax-in-kind even for the starving provinces and their districts. According to the District supervisor for Kharkiv, George P. Harrington, in Cherkasy district (*uyezd*) the tax levied amounted to seven poods grain per desiatin. The average yield was about 40 poods, which meant that the average tax was 16% of the yield. Moreover, the tax had been levied on the number of desiatins held irrespective of whether they were planted, as only 45% of the land had been planted, the result was that many peasants in that section had only five poods of grain per person left for food and for spring planting. Such a policy did not bode well for conditions later in the winter. In addition, other taxes had been levied for local needs since the regular tax had been collected and shipped to Moscow.¹⁰²

According to information presented by the Ukrainian Red Cross at the Berlin Conference on July 13, 1922, during the first four months of 1922 the population of Zaporozhe decreased by 200,000. It is most probable that for the period extending from November 1, 1921 to May 1, 1923, the population of Zaporozhe decreased by 900,000 resulting from famine and epidemics.¹⁰³

* * * * *

The December 18, 1922 issue of the Odessa *Izvestiia* brought the unpleasant news that a part of the Voznesensky county of Odessa province was still seriously affected by the prior year's famine and currently there were 13,434 starving adults and 16,800 children. It stated that the complete registration of the starving in Odessa county showed that there were 61,680 persons in dire need of aid in its 19 volost's or

¹⁰²G. P. Harrington. "Conditions in the Kharkiv district", in *ARA Bulletin*, Ser. 2, February 1923, No 3, p. 29.

¹⁰³"Holod i ioho naslidky" in *Nova Ukraina* (Prague), 1923, No. 6, p. 158.

almost a third of the population. The newspaper article ended with a forecast that the number of persons requiring aid would gradually increase and, by the first of May 1923, it would reach 116,671 persons or 50%.¹⁰⁴

After the difficulties with the Ukrainian Government had been resolved, more challenges lay ahead for the ARA officials with the local government. It was necessary to deal with local governments in each province separately. This proved to be very difficult for in one province the government would assist and take an active part while in another they were inclined to be uncooperative. An official ARA document stated that the Kyiv sub-district:

“was not included in the famine area, made it at all times difficult to get action from the local authorities. The local population on the other hand took hold in great style and worked willingly and, in many cases, without pay to help us accomplish our mission.”¹⁰⁵

In accordance with the Riga Agreement, the ARA was entitled to import foodstuffs and commodities duty-free and these were subject only to casual inspection by the custom authorities. However, the Odessa Customs Office did not respect the Riga Agreement, and on a number of occasions attempted to inspect every item which created time-consuming delays. The Customs Office also asked that custom duties be paid on every cargo.¹⁰⁶ In April, the government gasoline supply office prohibited further credit to the local *Posledgol* in furnishing ARA the necessary amount of gasoline, which was also contrary to the original agreement.

Every official from the chief of the Foreign Affairs Office down through the hierarchy attempted to show their authority and sometimes created very difficult situations. In summer 1923, when the ARA was forced to fold its operation, the ARA offices tried to dispose of office items that were no longer needed. In Katerynoslav, District Supervisor George P. Harrington had several typewriters in his office which

¹⁰⁴ *Izvestiia* (Odessa), No. 906, December 16, 1922.

¹⁰⁵ General report of the Kiev Sub-district of the ARA in Ukraine, p. 13, H.H.A., in ARA Rus. oper., Box 121.

¹⁰⁶ Joseph N. Brown. "Odessa port in Russian relief" // *ARA Bulletin*, Ser. 2, No. 35, April 1923, p. 38-

he wanted to sell but encountered some difficulties. He endeavoured to sell them to the Commercial Bank for \$185. Skvortzov did not approve this transaction and ordered the bank to return the typewriters to the ARA office. The next attempt was to sell them to the *Posledgol* and other institutions but none of them had any currency with which to pay. It was then decided to ship the typewriters to the ARA Head Office in Moscow with their regular courier. Skvortzov informed the ARA that he could not allow this since he had not received any instructions from his superiors in Kharkiv. This was but a small example of difficulties in dealing with local bureaucracy.¹⁰⁷

In the port of Mykolaiv, the personnel of the ARA were constantly harassed by the guards while unauthorized Russians were permitted to board and disembark the American steamers without any interference or difficulty. When the Americans attempted to send letters to the destroyer and merchant ships, they were not delivered. If they came in person and did not have the appropriate pass, or the guard questioned some aspect of the document they were not permitted to board. Considerable theft of ARA supplies was taking place at the port and although Soviet guards had been placed in the ships and quays to prevent them, they did absolutely nothing to stop this illicit activity.¹⁰⁸

Unfriendly conditions developed in Odessa. According to information from Dr. Hynes dated April 11, 1922, a government representative named Studenikin, seemed to be really anxious to help the ARA but was unsuccessful in obtaining any favourable action from the authorities. His attitude changed rapidly. Dr. Hynes wrote that, during the past months, Studenikin's attitude was so unfriendly that

"we have been doing our work here under the greatest difficulties. He is without doubt labouring under a grave misapprehension as to his functions with the ARA and the letter which I have received from him in the course of the last few days would indicate that he felt that his function here was not to assist, but obstruct - not to work with us but against us. He has made demands that were absolutely unjustifiable. For example, he has insisted not

¹⁰⁷H.H.A., Rus. oper., Box 138, Folder: Ekaterynoslav - Letters to Moscow.

¹⁰⁸J. H. Hynes to Col. W. N. Haskell in Moscow, dated June 14, 1922, in H.H.A., ARA operations, Box 128, Folder: Odessa.

only to supervise the employment of our personnel, but also to employ persons himself and place them in ARA offices. He was constantly interfering with the work of the department heads, demanding that they report to him directly upon matters that in no way concerned him. He had requested copies of memorandums regarding ARA matters and because they did not give them to him, he obstructed the ARA officials along the line. He even tried to place his employees in ARA feeding stations, behind the back of Dr. Hynes, to supervise the work. These employees had seriously interfered with the operation of the kitchens and have even had the presumption to withdraw the feeding cards from a number of children. Studenikin had evolved an elaborate questionnaire that he insists all of our employees fill out, although he demands information on subjects that do not at all interest the ARA in its employment of personnel.”¹⁰⁹

The ARA relief work gained wide popularity among the population, which the Soviet Government considered detrimental to its own existence. Various authorities in different locations simply hampered the activity of foreign relief organizations and curtailed them whenever possible so as to prevent their objectives from being fulfilled.

At the same time, as the ARA, International Red Cross and JDC were bringing food to Russia and Ukraine to feed the hungry, the Soviet Government was exporting grain to foreign markets from the ports of Petrograd, Odessa and Novorossiisk. This activity was also observed by Father E. A. Welsh, the Pope’s representative in Russia. In his letter of March 1, 1923 to Cardinal Gasparri, the Secretary of State at the Vatican, he wrote:

“considerable friction has been caused between the Soviet Government and some foreign relief organizations on the subject of grain export from southern ports. Naturally enough, the nations now contributing large amounts of money to buy food for Russia find it a very difficult thing to explain to the people who contribute money for famine relief. Here the foreign relief organizations are bringing huge amounts of food into Russia for the starving and, at the same time, the [Soviet] Government is selling food to foreign buyers for cash. If the government can do this, these organizations argue, why cannot it take care of the starving? For this reason the Swedish Red

¹⁰⁹J. H. Hynes to Col. W. N. Haskell, dated June 14, 1922 - H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 128, Folder: Odessa.

Cross has decided to stop all relief activities and withdraw from Russia."¹¹⁰

In both Ukraine and Russia it took a tremendous amount of energy, persistence and patience to complete simple tasks. In Odessa, for example, such basics as water and fuel were always in short supply. Food preparation frequently involved such actions as tearing up the floors of buildings for wood to make a fire. H.H. Fisher recalled seeing a Greek ship in Odessa harbour loading a cargo of wood shipped in from northern Ukraine for Holland.¹¹¹

Although ARA activity started late in Ukraine due to unforeseen impediments from the Soviet authorities, by August 1922 it was feeding 960,553 children and 889,139 adults - a total of 1,849,692 individuals. These figures exceeded the original ARA maximum program by one-third. However, it was remarkable progress in view of the fact that work with children did not begin in Ukraine until April 30 and the adult program only commenced in June 1922.¹¹²

The *Kommunist* newspaper published in Kharkiv, as of August 15, 1922, supplied slightly different numbers for the ARA. Nevertheless, it was quite evident that by that time the foreign relief organizations were already in full swing in Ukraine:

- The ARA alone, according to *Kommunist*, had already supported 2,665 kitchens and 1,536 children's institutions, in which 959,197 children and 763,270 adults were fed for a total of 1,722,647. In addition to this, there were already other active relief organizations.
- The Dutch Mennonite organization fed 21,000 persons in Zaporozhe province.
- The American Mennonite organization supported 138 kitchens and 200 institutions in which 12,516 children and 3,393 adults were fed, in total 21,909 persons.
- The Czechoslovak mission fed 10,239 children and 3,037 adults 13,947

¹¹⁰ Welsh, E.A. Papers. George Washington University. Papers. Letters to Cardinal Gasparri.

¹¹¹H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

¹¹²*ARA Bulletin*, Ser. 2, No. 28, September 1922, p. 5.

persons in Melitopol' county of the Katerynoslav province.

- The Nansen Mission was feeding at the time 90,180 persons. All foreign organizations in Ukraine supported 1,968,503 persons.

The extensive operation of the American Relief Administration in Ukraine was facilitated by funds furnished by the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and U.S. Congressional appropriation.¹¹³

Concurrently there were few chances for economic improvement in Ukraine. *Statistical Bulletin*, published by the Central Statistical Bureau of the Ukrainian Soviet Government, stated that the sown area, as of August 15, 1922, was 12,160,000 desiatins, which compares with 13,800,00 desiatins based on P. Popov's figures supplied to Dr. Nansen's representative in September, and with 12,100,000 given by the Petrovs'kyi Agricultural Academy. The estimates of the Central Statistical Bureau in Moscow and those of the Ukrainian Statistical Bureau show considerable divergence, as the former figure is 1,640,000 desiatins of sown area higher than the Ukrainian official estimate without allowing for the increase of 20% that P. Popov, People's Commissar of Supplies, thought it was necessary to make.

The same seemed to be true for crop estimates in the same year which differ as widely as the figures given above for the sown area. The calculation based on the figures handed to Dr. Nansen's representative, indicates that the harvest in September would yield 2.02 billion poods. The Dept. of Statistical research attached to the Petrovs'kyi Agricultural Academy gave the lowest forecast of all – 1.97 billion poods. It is worthy to note that, in the estimate of 2.02 billion, the Ukrainian harvest was given as 699 million poods. This figure was almost identical with the estimate of the Statistical Bureau of the Ukrainian Government, which was 699.2 million. The estimate of the Petrovs'kyi Agricultural Academy in regard to Ukraine was much lower – 649 million whereas a published October statement by P. Popov, People's Commissar of Supplies, estimated a figure as high as 829 million poods.¹¹⁴

¹¹³H.H.A., Stanford CA. ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

¹¹⁴League of Nations. Report on economic conditions in Russia, p. 59.

Since Moscow's requirements were in excess of what Ukraine could provide, the Ukrainian Government invited President Mikhail Kalinin, to acquaint himself with the real state of affairs in the starving regions. Kalinin arrived in Kharkiv on June 11 and two days later left with the Ukrainian President H. Petrovs'kyi and representatives of the Ukrainian People's Commissariats for the southern Ukrainian provinces and Crimea. Their route ran through Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporozhe, Melitopol', Berdiansk and other cities suffering from the poor harvest.¹¹⁵ This official visit did little to help matters. The newspaper *Vpered* (Forward) reported:

"At the time when the Ukrainian Council of the Posledgol has decreed that several volost' in the northern section of Yelesavethrad county are in an acute state of famine and shipments of food supplies were arriving from foreign countries with relief to Ukrainian population, Communist divisions have collected among the workmen and employees of the government organization in Kharkiv five million rubles for the relief of the workmen of the Ruhr districts in the occupied territory of Germany."¹¹⁶

In spite of the fact that foreign aid was very much needed in Ukraine, the Soviet Ukrainian Government started to curtail ARA activity. Refusals to provide rent-free storage for ARA food supplies were followed by refusals to transport supplies to locations where aid was needed most. The ARA had to pay for these expenses out of the budget allocated for food. In September 1922, the ARA was feeding 609,844 children and 303,919 adults. By November 1922, the number of

¹¹⁵*Pravda*, No. 130, June 14, 1922, p. 3.

¹¹⁶W.H.A. Coleman. Bi-monthly report by the District Supervisor of Elizabethgrad, Ukraine, February 6, 1923, p. 7. // ARA Rus. oper., Box 125, Folder: Ukraine - Elizabethgrad - Reports. H.H.A., Stanford, CA.

children fed decreased to 213,919 before rising to a level of 508,317 in June 1923. At the same time the number of adults fell from 303,499 to 17,194 in June, 1923, when the ARA was forced to close down its operation.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷H.H. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 556-557 (table V).

Medical Assistance

Ukrainian medical institutions were in a desperate state lacking basic hospital supplies and medicines. In December 1921, a cholera epidemic broke out in an environment where typhus and recurrent fever were already prevalent. Both patients and personnel died in multitudes and the Provincial Department of Public Health (the Gubzdrav) could do nothing. The personnel were unpaid and subsisted by stealing from the hospital. When the ARA began its medical relief work in 1922, words could hardly describe the blessings of ARA blankets, sheets, pyjamas, soap and medicine.

Dr. T. F. Foster was the chief medical officer for the Medical Relief District of Ukraine with its headquarters based in Kyiv. At that time the city of Kyiv had a population of about 800,000 or about 200,000 more than prior to World War I. It was organized into five medical divisions, each with its own office. In Kyiv, the office was opened on March 30, 1922 and closed on May 1, 1923. Its work embraced four provinces: Kyiv, Podolia, Chernihiv and Volhynia with a combined population approaching ten million.

The Odessa division, headed by chief physician Dr. F. Raymond Surber, covered the three provinces of Kharkiv, Kremenchuk and Poltava, with a population of 6.7 million. The Oleksandrivsk division, with Dr. John P. Caffey as chief physician, covered three provinces: Zaporozhe, Katerynoslav and Donets Basin, with a population over 8.8 million. The Crimea division with its office in Theodosia, headed by Dr. Stephen Venear, dealt with a population of approximately one million.¹

The general sanitary state of the Kyiv district and especially the urban areas was most unsatisfactory, particularly with the breakdown of important public utilities such as water supplies and sewage systems. Housing facilities were also inadequate.

In 1920, there were 25 hospitals in Kyiv with 5,500 beds but the number had

¹ *ARA Bulletin*, Ser. 2, No. 32, January 1923, p. 6.

gradually decreased owing to the lack of food and medical supplies. The number of beds available reached 4,525 at the time of the ARA arrival. In smaller cities around Kyiv and in the rest of Kyiv province, there were 2,717 hospital beds making a total of 7,242 beds.²

When the first office in Kyiv was opened it treated between 140 to 170 patients a day and administered up to 300 inoculations during the American vaccination campaign. The need for medical relief of this kind was so great in Kyiv that Dr. Foster established three other dispensaries in different parts of the city. During the latter months each of the four averaged 170 treatments daily.³ It issued medical and hospital supplies worth approximately one half million dollars to the 427 hospitals with 13,127 beds and 302 children's homes with 36,141 children. It organized 274 dispensaries that treated on average 13,433 patients daily.

“All institutions in Kyiv district have been changed from *death institutions* to clean habitable hospitals and homes.”⁴

On August 14, 1922 the JDC obliged itself to feed 300,000 children monthly in Ukraine and White Russia under the administration and supervision of the ARA. It inaugurated an extensive medical program chiefly in urban centres with a focus on hospitalization, inoculation, and sanitation. The ARA estimated that it had already allocated supplies in the amount of \$500,000 in Ukraine and White Russia with the expectation of allocated additional supplies to the value of at least one million dollars.

“The indifference of the government to our plans has not been confined to child feeding, but has extended to the medical work as well. McElroy has been doing everything possible to get his show going, but the Health Department, despite the fact that hospitals are in a very serious way for want of medical supplies, have shown no evidence of any desire to have the supplies, or to assist in the distribution.”⁵

²ARA *Bulletin*, Ser. 2, No. 25, June 1922, p. 23-24.

³H.H. Fisher, *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 443.

⁴“Summary of our operations” // Kiev Medical statistics. ARA Rus. oper., Box No.151, Folder No. 40.

⁵H.H.A., Stanford CA, ARA Rus. oper., Box 128, Folder: Ukraine - Odessa.

There were cases where medical supplies arrived and could not be unloaded and transferred from the railway yard to the warehouse due to transportation deficiencies. In March, two carloads of medical supplies were shipped from Moscow and more were to follow as soon as warehouse space could be obtained. The government proposed that ARA medical supplies should be placed in the main warehouse of the Board of Health from where distribution could take place. This was refused and followed by long arguments and searching for a suitable building. It was only under threat, that the medical program would be abandoned and the medical supplies returned to Moscow, that a satisfactory warehouse was found and, on March 28, Dr. Frank Lynam was able to commence his medical program.⁶

During 1921, the Provincial Department of Public Health (the Gubzdrav) carried out what they considered to be a solid inoculation and vaccination campaign. In 1922, the ARA carried out a similar initiative and by the end of July, 65,000 persons had received cholera and typhus inoculations and 75,000 persons received small pox vaccinations. The number of inoculations and vaccinations was nearly double the prior year's campaign by the Gubzdrav, reported Theodore F. Foster.⁷

Before the ARA began its work in Ukraine in 1922 the hospitals were so short of supplies and food that individuals stricken with cholera were afraid to be admitted. As a result, there could be no adequate isolation. The sanitary conditions were horrific and the refugee movement aided the rapid spread of the disease.

“In Zaporozhe District all the schools are shut and 3,500 teachers are leading a pitiful existence, also begging for alms and dying out like the rest of the population. Further, the medical personnel is in no better state, their work must be done in horrible conditions; no medical supplies or bands, and how to treat those whose best medicine would be a piece of bread. The hospitals are overfilled chiefly with starving. Linen and any kind of equipment are missing. For instance, in the village of Voskresinka (Volest' Huliay Pole) in a hospital for 133 persons only 30 beds, 20 mattresses and 15 pairs of underwear are to be found, no blankets; all linen is quite outworn. No medicaments for the whole Huliay Pole county with a population of 250,000, with 11 hospitals, ambulatories and 150 grams of iodine and 40 arshines of

⁶G.P. Harrington, *op. cit.*, p.5-6.

⁷ARA Rus. oper.. Box 127, Ukraine - Kiev - History // H.H.A., Stanford CA.

gauze.”⁸

The situation was dire in regard to sick adults and medical personnel:

“In the first days of June 1922 it was told that the number of patients in the hospitals was to be reduced by 50%, the number of personnel as well. In the community hospital, one nurse was working in three storeys of the building at once. One time she was giving injections on the first storey while on the third floor patients with high fevers went from one room to another, fell from their beds etc. at great risk to their lives. Insane patients were together with the others, no distinction was made and the sick with different infectious maladies were tended by one nurse.”⁹

In considering the relief of the ARA it is interesting to note what the local authorities were also doing. The following information considers only the work of the Health Department and shows a comparative list of daily expenses per patient (in kopeks).

Table 3: Daily expenses incurred per patient (in kopeks) based on information from the Ukrainian Health Department.

Expenses	1913	1922	1923	Received from ARA			
				1922		1923	
Feeding of patients	26.10	11.45	17.50	5.00	44%	5.00	29%
Supply of bedding, underwear, etc.	7.48	24.35	11.80	1.08	4%	8.08	68%
Moveable property	2.24	3.03	2.90	0.01	33%	1.04	36%
Medicines	17.67	7.88	13.87	3.69	47%	10.01	72%
Surgical instruments	1.05	0.26	1.91	0.26	100%	1.91	100%

These records are based on reports from four of the largest hospitals in Kyiv, which is a fairly representative sample of government hospitals. During 1913, it is interesting to note that 7.5 kopeks were spent per patient for bedding, underwear, etc while in 1922, 24 kopeks were spent for the same items. The terrible years of 1914 to 1921 inclusive had absolutely exhausted these supplies, and practically all the money the government could command was allocated to purchase these items. The same

⁸ H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box no. 124. Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav - History. Outcard no. 31Prof Gooskoff. Famine in Ekaterinoslav 1921-1922, p. 8.

⁹Report on Ekaterinoslav district of ARA, p. 42, in the H.H.A.

pattern held true for moveable property and surgical instruments.¹⁰

“The movement of refugees has continued throughout the winter and has been the chief reason for the spread of ... epidemics. Many people who have never been in contact with a sick person get infected by travelling, and the healthy carrier of infected lice is a terrible source of danger.”¹¹

On July 14, 1922, the ARA opened a cholera treatment centre at the first Peoples Hospital, and as soon as word spread that cholera patients could get decent food and proper treatment, the sick flocked there. Shortly after the opening, the incidence of disease began to decline rapidly. By the end of July 1922, in Mykolaiv, there had been more than 15 times as many cases of cholera than there had been on the corresponding date in 1921. By the end of August 1922, in spite of the great intensity of the epidemic, there were fewer deaths reported than the previous year.

The inoculations against cholera, which were administered in the same institutions where feeding occurred for adults and children, was a major factor in checking the disease. The ARA also furnished the serums for the inoculations. The results accomplished by the can be measured by the fact that by the end of August 1921, the epidemic had been reduced by 66%, and in 1922 the reduction amounted to 98%. Forty thousand cases had been registered during the epidemic and three million inoculations were given. The cholera epidemic in Ukraine had ended.¹²

The epidemic of 1922 was the worst in 12 years. Dr. Frank Lynam, district physician with the ARA, had visited Kharkiv, Poltava and Kremenchuk provinces in the spring of 1922. He wrote a report to the Chief Medical Division ARA in Moscow where he vividly describes the appalling conditions in the Yelesavethrad hospital, which was typical for other locations as well. They:

“were reduced to the bone as far as medical personnel and hospital supplies

¹⁰ARA Rus. oper., Box 127, Ukraine - Kiev - History, report dated May 11, 1923.

¹¹W. J. Haigh. Epidemics as a result of famine. (Information No. 23) -- Geneva : International Committee for Russian Relief, 1922, p. 3

¹²ARA Bulletin, Ser. 2, No. 31, December 1922, p. 69.

were concerned. There was no soap and they were close and evil smelling. This was accentuated by the fact that there was little fuel for heat or heating water and the patients were too poorly covered, many with old clothes and occasionally a covering that they had brought in with them, that doors and windows were kept closed. Almost everywhere they had covering made of cotton cloth or of any other available material which had been filled in with flux waste cotton or woollen rags, when washed they greatly shrunk, those who could sit up in bed and did so in order to double up and get more completely covered ... In surgical hospitals they had no material for sponges other than waste from flux, no antiseptics, and they said that nearly all their cases are septic, their ether was very poor.”¹³

Dr. W.J. Haigh, medical adviser of the International Russian Relief Executive and member of the Epidemics Commission of the League of Nations, wrote that in the Ukrainian famine area, where over 5.5 million were suffering and dying at a rate of ten thousand per day with food only provided for 300,000 daily rations, epidemics continued to flare up. Circumstances were not helped by winter conditions, poor railway facilities and widespread loss of livestock.

During the first three months of 1922, there were 32,115 reported cases of typhus, 38,398 relapsing typhus, 12,699 typhoid and 2,499 dysentery. In the other seven Ukrainian provinces there were 35,973 cases reported of typhus, 39,436 of relapsing typhus, 13,250 of typhoid and 1,505 of dysentery in the five provinces afflicted by famine. Dr. Haigh wrote:

“Such figures are startling, but it must be remembered that many of the existing hospitals are closed, those which carry on their work are almost without supplies of linen, bandages, drugs and instruments and the ration of food available is quite useless for saving of life; they are also encumbered with famine victims, the death rate amongst whom amounts to 40-50% of cases treated. On April 1 [1922], there were practically no supplies or medicines in Ukraine, all were used up, and the only relief would be the gifts of the American Relief Administration which were just arriving.”¹⁴

There were insufficient hospitals in Ukraine to treat all the patients, and no

¹³ ARA Rus. oper., Box 147, Folder : Medical statistics report, dated October 16, 1922 // H.H.A., Stanford, CA.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 5.

special hospitals for the treatment of the debilitated individuals weakened by the combination of malnutrition and disease. There were, however, reserved wards for them in Mykolaiv, Kherson and in Yelesavethrad. Altogether there were 500 beds and in the district hospitals there were from 5 - 10 beds in each.

Table 4: The number of patients who received treatments and died in Southern Ukraine.¹⁵

Area	No. of patients receiving treatments	No. of patients who died	% Mortality
Mykolaiv	720	321	45%
In counties	2,392	1,212	51%
In Kherson	4,609	2,248	49%
In counties	3,612	419	12%
In Yelesavethrad	160	139	87%
In counties	2,773	33	1%
In Dnipropetrovs'k	900	594	66%
Total:	15,166	4,966	33%

Henry Beeuwkes, chief of the ARA Medical Division, reported:

“Conditions in Odessa were worse than in any other sections of southern Russia [southern Ukraine] visited and approximated those existing in the Orenburg District during the winter. Crops in this section were almost a complete failure last winter and many are starving. Cholera and typhus are epidemic and hospital facilities entirely inadequate. This condition is aggravated through the closing of numerous institutions due to food shortage. The water supply is inadequate due to shortage of fuel for operating the pumps and, until recently, water was carried by hand and sold in the streets. The dead are not promptly buried and bodies are seen lying about in the streets. At one hospital I saw five hundred cadavers more or less decomposed, piled up in the morgue and was told that an additional five hundred had recently been removed. Co-operation here has not been very satisfactory, causing delay in the relief program, but the difficulties area being overcome and the ARA is now carrying out extensive food and medical relief.”¹⁶

The city of Kherson suffered most - 3,389 patients entered the hospital, 1,469

¹⁵ Account of the relief activities of different organizations, p. 4 in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 129, Folder: Ukraine - Odessa, #2.

¹⁶ ARA Bulletin, Ser. 2, No. 27, August 1922, p. 26.

of which were children. Among adults there were 1,805 (53.3%) deaths and among children - 660 (46.8%) deaths. Kherson county only had enough food to last until October 1922 and was doomed unless help was forthcoming.

“Other counties will be able to hold out longer, but by the middle of November the famishing, who already number more than one million, will be nearly two million.”¹⁷

The district physician, F. Raymond Surber, reported on February 8, 1923 that cases of extreme starvation in the Kharkov district were not as frequent as in other locations. Most of the children were simply undernourished and this occurred in varying degrees of intensity. Almost all were suffering from diseases of malnutrition such as rickets, anaemia and scurvy. Over 50% were affected by tuberculosis and the same held true of the children in special homes. Lymphadenitis was also found to be very common, being present in 40% of the cases.

The percentage of deaths in proportion to the number of births had increased since the start of the decade. The number of deaths from famine in this district had been placed at about 5,000. It is difficult to separate deaths due to famine itself from those due to the consequences of famine. We know definitely that the great increase in the mortality of various diseases is mainly due to the effects of famine. The population of the provinces of this district in 1914 stood at 8,257,000 and in 1922 - 6,576,000. These were the most recent figures from the local Board of Health.¹⁸

In Odessa, the 1922 death rate increased alarmingly in comparison with other years. In 1920, there were 17,955 births and 23,205 deaths; in 1921 - 23,396 births and 30,014 deaths, in 1922 - 13,682 births and 42,252 deaths.¹⁹

In certain provinces, the 1922 harvest was fair but marginal in others. The representative of the Epidemic Commission of the League of Nations telegraphed that the outbreak of famine in the provinces of Zaporozhe, Mykolaiv and Odessa was

¹⁷H.H.A., Report on economic conditions in Russia / League of Nations, p. 106.

¹⁸F. Raymond Surber. Report of February 8, 1923 on Questionnaire in H.H.A.. ARA Rus. oper., Box 147, Folder : Kharkov medical statistics.

¹⁹H.H.A., Stanford CA, ARA Rus. oper., Box 129, Folder : Ukraine - Odessa, #2.

extremely severe. The authorities did not have any foodstuffs and could not even supply their own hospitals.

In early September 1922, Mr. Grove made an inspection tour in the famine provinces and wrote a report to the ARA director Wm. H. Haskell in Moscow in which he stated:

"that for the moment everyone is eating but there is everywhere the impression that food will be short during the middle of the winter and my own personal inspection confirms this. Just now there are plenty of vegetables, some corn, melons, etc. available for food. But in six or eight weeks the fields will be entirely cleaned of these articles and anyone who has no supply laid in or money to buy, will go hungry. Adult feeding has now been suspended for a week everywhere and for two or three weeks in most places and there is already beginning to be observed a change for the worse. I believe that Ukraine will be able to get along until January 1 on the 250,000 rations that we have been allowed and while perhaps it is too early to make any definite predictions, I am quite confident that we will not be able to avoid some starvation among children if we do not feed in some of the country counties. I have been much impressed everywhere with the need of clothing for the winter, especially in the cities ... I believe we should have practically that many shoes to distribute to them, as practically every child whose parents or relatives are so poor that they cannot buy food are also not in a position to buy shoes ... Stockings, of course, should be furnished and a warm coat. If we are going to stay in Russia, we should do the job right."²⁰

According to a statement by the representative of the Russian Society of the Red Cross in America, there was no official list of the starving nor a detailed list of where the harvest failed in Ukraine. The newspapers reported that the area of starvation in Ukraine embraced some six provinces with a population of 7.5 million persons, 5.5 million of city dwellers and 2 million of the rural population.²¹

On April 24, 1922 on Nansen's instructions, 22 wagons loaded with food arrived in Zaporozhe from Prague. At the same time the Ukrainian Red Cross

²⁰Wm. R. Grove, letter dated September 9, 1922, H.H.A., Box 120.

²¹"Chislennost' golodaiushchego naseleniia" i Golod 1921-1922. (New York : Predstavitelstvo Rosiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta v Amerike, 1923), p. 31.

received an offer from Pope Pius XI to feed 2,000 starving children.²²

Even in the southern part of the Kyiv province along the Dnipro River, peasants did not have enough grain to hold them through summer 1922 in anticipation of a new harvest. There was a period of about two months in this section when actual starvation was known. These people appealed to the ARA for aid and, after forming committees, the members took delivery of grits at the warehouse in Kyiv and conveyed them to their destination. All villages in distress were assisted in this manner until the new crop was harvested.

Kitchens for refugees were opened with the assistance of the Ukrainian Red Cross at all important railway junctions and stations, such as Bakhmach, Konotop, Kyiv, Zhmerynka and Koziatyn. Corn grits were issued, cooked and, whenever possible, the Red Cross Society supplied some vegetables and meat.

In large towns, grits were issued to the intelligentsia, such as doctors, teachers, professors and other professionals who found it impossible to live on the money they earned. Grits were also issued to hospitals, homes for the aged, insane asylums, students' kitchens and to persons presenting private petitions. In the city of Kyiv, relief was also given with provision of corn grits to the prisoners in the jails where conditions were found almost unimaginable. Prisoners also did not receive enough food to keep them from starvation.

Local governments were inclined to be unresponsive to the ARA's requests for assistance but at no time had they attempted to control or hamper whatever project the ARA planned to carry out.²³ In general, it could be stated that the ARA relief activity in Ukraine was not welcomed by the Russian imposed administration and by Moscow itself. They also spread unfavourable propaganda against the Americans. Katerynoslav District Supervisor Thomas Barringer in a confidential letter to Haskell dated October 20, 1922, wrote that in some areas rumours were circulating so as not to be thankful to Americans because the Soviet Government had paid for the food with church gold. He wondered if "there was no particular effort on

²²*Pravda* (Moscow), No. 91, April 26, 1922, p. 4 : 5.

²³General report of the Kiev-Subdistrict of the ARA in Ukraine, p. 17 // ARA Rus. oper., Box 21. H.H.A.. File : Ukraine - History, Box 121.

the part of the Soviet authorities to dispel these rumours.”²⁴

ARA personnel watched carefully for communist activity. While studying the reports of the Provincial Health Department, they found no real acknowledgement of the tremendous medical relief work they had undertaken in Ukraine.

“Officially they do not recognize that the ARA has been an important factor in improving the medical conditions. We wish they would look at the chart of this report that is based on their own figures. The President of the Union of Medical Workers (a communist) is said to have made the following statement *When there is a fire, dirty water is good enough to extinguish it. The ARA relief is for us as dirty water is for a fire.*”²⁵

²⁴H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 1123. Folder : Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav, No. 6, p. 2.

²⁵ARA Rus. oper., Box 127. Ukraine - Kiev - History. // H.H.A., Stanford CA., May 11, 1923.

A False 1923 Forecast

Thanks to both ARA efforts and those of the Central Government, the fall 1921 sowing campaign in the Volga Valley was performed quite successfully even though there were no reserves for seed corn. However, the Soviet Government with its merciless collection of the tax-in-kind in Ukraine and in part, from Siberia supplied the necessary seeds to such an extent that Russian President M. Kalinin was able to boast about the successful fulfilment of the sowing plan. This, in turn, yielded good results the following spring and provided an opportunity to overcome the starving crisis.

Other authorities also confirmed the report on the improved economic conditions in the Volga Valley and in Russia in overall. The representative of Dr. Nansen, who on August 24, 1922, wrote a letter to the Prague Ukrainian Committee to Aid the Starving in Ukraine declared that:

“All the reports of our delegates indicate that the situation in Russia after the harvest will really improve, however, it will be just as severe in certain areas, especially in the southern Ukraine.”¹

Therefore, he suggested that it is necessary to continue with the collection of food products. He also emphatically stated that:

“the relief in Ukraine was begun later than in the Volga Valley, but from now on Dr. Nansen intends to dedicate more attention to Ukraine.”²

In the very same letter there was also information that, up to August 1, 1922, foreign relief organizations (except ARA) brought to Russia - 45,715 tons (2,700,000

¹“V spravi dopomohy holoduius’hchym na Ukraini”, in *Nova Ukraina* (Prague), No. 12, September 15, 1922, p. 22.

²ibid.

poods) of grain, into Ukraine - 3,088 tons (approximately 180,000 poods). These organizations fed 1,107,000 in Russia and 265,000 in Ukraine."³

The ARA estimated the 1923 crop would yield a fair surplus and it was thought that the need for emergency relief in Russia had passed. Subsequently, the ARA made tentative plans for the termination of Russian relief activity. The dismantling of auxiliary relief operations, remittances and medical relief was underway before formal notification was given that June 15, 1923 would be the termination date for the ARA relief activity.

Since the situation in the Volga Valley improved slightly, the Russian Government decided that the famine in the RSFSR was over. Subsequently it dissolved its Pomgol and on September 12 created in its place the Posledgol, ("Committee for Famine Recovery"). While the personnel of the Posledgol were essentially the same as those of Pomgol, it was announced that its methods of work would be fundamentally changed. Its purpose was to

"help to re-establish the destroyed farms and to relieve the poor population, especially the war invalids, labour and the helpless children from the famine regions."⁴

Such an action was at least partially justified in Russia where the amount of land under cultivation (inclusive of the Volga region) had increased between autumn 1921 and spring 1922 by 26 percent. It meant that reconstruction of the agricultural industry was taking place in Russia after having received a solid boost from foreign aid. Yet the situation in the southern Ukrainian provinces and Crimea was still very dire. During the same period, a lack of seeds and draught animals meant that enormous stretches of steppe land were lying fallow. In 1922, there was another crop

³Ibid.

⁴*Izvestia*, September 30, 1922, quoted by H.H. Fisher. *Famine in Soviet Russia*, p. 309; The Russian statistical data are always at variance. T. G. Sofinov in his work "Istoricheskii povorot" published in 1964 stated that in the fall of 1921 even in the starving provinces of Russia some 75% of arable land was cultivated. In some provinces the sowing was even higher and it allowed a harvest of 3 billion poods of grain in 1922 which was 40% more than in 1921. T. G. Sofinov, *Istoricheskii povorot: perekhod k Novoi ekonomicheskoi politike*. (Moskva : Izd-vo polit. lit-ry), 1964, p. 62.

failure. When a conference of the representatives of the famine stricken provinces was held in Kharkiv in September 1922, it stated quite clearly that the conditions in the five famine stricken provinces of Ukraine were grave. An improvement in the coming year could not be assumed.⁵ In fall 1922, circumstances were unchanged and lack of seeds and draught animals resulted in about 40% less land under cultivation.⁶

Most of the population and the ARA officials saw quite clearly that the time to conclude relief activity in Ukraine had not yet arrived. Even Petrovs'kyi admitted

“in Ukraine we must still struggle, not so much with the aftermath of famine, as with the famine itself.”⁷

Moscow wanted to get rid of the American presence in Ukraine as soon as possible and let it be known that, since Podolia, Volhynia, Kyiv and Chernihiv provinces were not famine stricken, the ARA should close all the public kitchens, children's homes and related facilities located there. Instead, they assured the ARA that the government obliged itself to feed the hungry. This was an empty promise and on October 14, 1922 an *Izvestiia* correspondent openly criticized the government for dismantling its famine relief apparatus while the threat of famine still hung over “many regions of Russia”. “Most threatening,” he declared, “is the situation in the southern part of the Soviet Ukraine.” Nevertheless, the government kept up the pressure on the ARA to close its kitchens in the area. On December 1, 1922 Cyril J. C. Quinn, Assistant Director to Col. Haskell, agreed to confine ARA relief in Ukraine to Soviet “closed institutions” such as children's shelters, hospitals and convalescent homes but he reserved the right to maintain open kitchens wherever the ARA district supervisor deemed necessary. The ARA could not accept the representative of the Ukrainian S.S.R. dictating on matters relating to the administration of their relief operation.⁸

⁵*Na kanune*, No. 178, September 20, 1922.

⁶*Pravda* (Moscow), No. 2291, December 23, 1922, quoted by The famine in the Ukraine, p. 7.

⁷TsDASHR (Kyiv), F. 258, op. 1, spr. 323, ark. 10, quoted by R. Serbyn in “Holod 1921-1923 i ukrains'ka presa v Kanadi” / Materialy uporiadkuvav i zredaguvav Roman Serbyn. (Toronto : Urk. Kanad. Doslidno-Dokument Centr, 1995, p. 44.

⁸B.M. Weissman, Herbert Hoover and famine relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923, p. 161.

“The Ukrainian authorities decided to take more drastic action. On January 4, 1923, Karl Lander, who succeeded Eiduk as Plenipotentiary of the RSFSR, passed on to Quinn the formal decision by the Ukrainian Congress of Soviets to discontinue all ARA operations in four provinces. Two days later he insisted that Quinn respond immediately to his order, reminding him that the resolution had to be obeyed by all government institutions in Ukraine. On February 13 he informed Quinn that he was surprised to learn that ARA was still feeding children at its own kitchens in Kyiv. He warned the active director that he must close these kitchens immediately and that he would not intervene with the Ukrainian Government in case of trouble. It was not until Haskell returned from the United States that the ARA finally acceded to the demands of the Ukrainian authorities. On February 24 Haskell notified Lander that the ARA had decided to shut down its installations in the provinces indicated.”⁹

The validity of the decision made by the Ukrainian Congress of Soviets could be well doubted; the Congress would not dare to discuss the matter without instructions from the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in Moscow.

Another problem developed with the Parcel Remittance Program, which was also considered undesirable by the Soviet Government, since the ARA was delivering parcels to all designated recipients without discrimination including non-Communist intellectuals, former members of the nobility and the new class of tradesmen that had developed under the New Economic Policy. On December 9, 1922 the Soviet Representative to the ARA Remittance Division demanded that the relief organizations discontinue all transactions with the public famine relief committee and with all other groups that were illegal in Russia. The Post Office abrogated special exemptions granted from import duties and delivery charges. In Yelesavethrad, the local government published an order that prohibited, under threat of arrest, the delivery of any independent committee of any foreign freight to individual Jews.¹⁰

This latter decision was designed to prove to the Americans that the Ukrainian people harboured anti-Semitic feelings. However, that interpretation is questionable especially if we consider the large proportion of Jews in the urban

⁹Ibid, p. 161.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 163.

centres of Ukraine. Some bad feelings did arise from the large number of leading party members who were of Jewish background, including Skvortzov.

While the situation in Ukraine did not coincide with the Russian one, the so-called Ukrainian Government also decided that the famine in Ukraine was over. On November 22, 1922 it abolished its Central Committee to Aid the Hungry (Ukrainian Pomgol) and established a Central Commission for the Combating the Aftermath of the Famine and the Central Commission of Children's Relief. At the same time the ARA was also asked to terminate its activity in Ukraine. Again "the Ukrainian peasantry was once more sacrificed at the altar of Russian Economic interests."

The Soviet press wrote less and less about starvation in Ukraine, and eventually was forbidden to mention it for the duration of the Lausanne Conference from November 20, 1922 to July 24, 1923.¹¹

Although the government decided that the famine had been overcome, the conditions in the famine afflicted provinces of Ukraine (Mykolaiv, Kherson, Donets, Odessa and Katerynoslav) were still critical. From a population of 8 million, 3.7 million were starving and required immediate help but their provinces still remained under the obligation to feed four Russian provinces. It was only when the decrees declaring the end of the famine had been issued that the locals were finally relieved from the tax-in-kind.¹²

The worsening situation compelled Dr. Nansen to call a meeting with the representatives of the Ukrainian Government in Kharkiv, on January 31, 1923, to discuss ways of combating the famine in view of another crop failure. Mr. Rakovsky admitted that one-third of Ukraine was in the grip of starvation that was far greater than that experienced in the Volga Valley in 1921.

Statistics from the People's Commissariat for Supplies had indicated that the total number of adults and children who should be aided to prevent starvation in April would reach about 5,640,000 persons. Moreover, the reports from the starving provinces indicated that half of the seeds intended for spring sowing had to be

Roman Serbyn. *Holod 1921-1923 i ukrainska presa v Kanadi*, p. 44.
¹² *Izvestiia* (Moscow), No. 114, May 24, 1922.

distributed among the hungry to prevent starvation.¹³

In a letter to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in Moscow, the provincial Party Committee in Katerynoslav stated that:

“in the province the ghastly famine is raging for the last three months and the local authorities do not have any means to combat it. The villagers and town folk broke into the seed storage and took the seeds by force. Spreading of the red typhus and stomach epidemics is also on the rise. Child mortality is unbelievably high. In some villages there are no children below the age of 10 years. Robberies and plundering are more frequent all over the province. While prisons are filled with some of the running wild robbers and murderers, others are roaming all over the province, looting wealthy peasants, cooperative stores and railway storage. Closing of factories increased the ranks of unemployed. The Party members are being demoralized, avoid responsible appointments and some of them resigned from the Party membership.”¹⁴

Mr. Étienne Gilson, from the French Committee to Aid the Children, travelled in Ukraine in August and September 1922 and described his impressions in the *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge*. One of the worst places he came across was the Poltava railway station in Ukraine where tracks were covered with women and children who had swollen legs and inflated stomachs.

“I was in a position to inspect the villages in the neighbourhood of Odessa called Dal’nyk, Tatarka, Kuyal’nyk and Usatova. Between these villages and Odessa one can notice extensive areas of fallow fields, which makes an impression of an abandoned desert. In the villages, the majority of houses are ruined not by the war activity but by the famine. To save themselves the villagers were selling their domestic animals, farm leftovers and even their clothes to purchase some flour. Doors, windows and even roofs were removed from the houses of the dead owners, and after a while they were selling their own houses. In the village of Kuyal’nyk, by the end of August hardly 190 buildings out of 320 were left. In the villages of Dal’nyk, which two years ago, had 3,000 horses, there remained only 150 ... In the village of Usatova there were 19,000 desiatins of arable land before the famine, now they had sown hardly 5,800 desiatins. The population was being decimated by starvation and epidemics. On April 1, 1921, Usatova had 1,419

¹³ *Nova Ukraina*, No. 5, 1923, p. 157.

¹⁴ *Nova Ukraina*, No. 5, 1923, p. 157.

inhabitants, by April 1, 1922 - 331 had died; in Kuyal'nyk in 1921 there were 808 children, by the summer of 1922 only 404 children were still alive and 145 of them were orphans, and 80 half orphans. Those children still alive were only little skeletons with a meagre likelihood of surviving another winter."¹⁵

In a number of cases, wrote Gilson, he came across abandoned houses in which two or three children were hiding without any adult supervision, waiting for their imminent death.¹⁶

A similar description by a British lady, Ella Anker, can be found in the *Manchester Guardian*.

"My train arrived in Kharkiv, the capital of Ukraine, from Moscow, at dawn of a November 1922 morning. The railway platform was covered with all kinds of rags. But when the train stopped those rags started to move and all of a sudden I found myself in a crowd of shadows, beggars, creatures with wild, sick eyes, which wanted to carry my luggage. They laid by the thousands on the platform, in waiting rooms, on the steps, everywhere jammed tightly to each other, shivering from hunger, cold and fever. At last I came across a Soviet official with a red star and then I felt safe ...

Then I went to one of the Government offices that looked after Children's homes accompanied by Mrs. Desone, a Swiss physician who is in charge of the International Aid for Children. We arrived there just before lunch and children crowded the steps leading to the cold dining room. But what a sight it was! These were not children, but silent skeletons, a crowd that carefully moved ahead as if to avoid any abuse from their superiors. Their heads unnaturally large on thin necks, and many of them showed signs of sicknesses connected with hunger. Old faces attempting to smile, but all they could manage to do was to look bluntly. But these children were still in a better situation than the others. I went through the room where the children were lying. At first, they looked better than those on the steps, their cheeks were reddish, but in fact they were swollen in the last phase of starvation. They were dying from the starving tuberculosis or typhus ...

'Do you believe they could be rescued?' I asked Mrs. Desone. Yes! If the Government will take care of the Children's homes. But there is enough food for no longer time than two months. And what's after? The ARA and the

¹⁵ *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge*, 1922, October issue, quoted in the *Nova Ukraina*, 1923, No. 5, p. 159.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Nansen Mission are forced to close or limit their feeding stations and Children's homes. It's a pity that the press publishes false information about this year's crop, which supposedly will enable to liquidate the famine. We are already compelled to think that this year's famine in Ukraine will be more severe than that in the last year.

With a representative of the YMCA, a Dane, Dr. Lange, we went to the Students' cafeteria for 2,000 persons. The students are also in dire need of clothing and footwear, especially the girl-students. Clothes and footwear they use, in a communist way, in turn some go to school, others stay home."¹⁷

¹⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, January 24, 1923.

Famine and Ukrainians Abroad

Neither the authorities in Moscow nor their puppet government in Ukraine appealed to the world for help. Instead they sent Pro Army units into Ukraine that collected all kinds of foodstuffs and sent it to the north, to Moscow and the Volga Valley. In return, Moscow sent bayonets to force the submission of the Ukrainian people.

In spite of suppressed information about the famine in Ukraine, news reached Western Europe by summer 1921. The population of western Ukraine as well as political emigrants in Central Europe attempted to help their countrymen and publicized the famine in their press. However Western Europe tended to distrust émigré information and would not take it seriously. Western Ukrainians under Polish domination, on the other hand, were

“prevented from collecting money and gifts in kind for the suffering provinces in Eastern Ukraine. There were cases where the corn that had been collected was confiscated and prohibited from being exported.”¹

On July 10, 1921, the Ukrainian emigrant community in Prague, Czechoslovakia formed the Ukrainian Citizens Committee to Aid the Hungry in Ukraine. It issued an appeal stating that Ukraine

“which used to export over 300 million poods of bread to other countries is herself in dire need of foreign bread to feed its own people. In the province of Katerynoslav, Tavria and partly also in Poltava and Kherson regions crop failure is very dramatic ... Our people found themselves in a precarious position because famine is accompanied by epidemics of cholera and also of

¹The famine in Ukraine. Published by the Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Social Democratic party. (Berlin : Dietz Nachf., 1923), p. 10.

black death in Tavia at the same time.”²

This Committee transferred its collection to Ukraine through the Nansen Mission.

On August 18, 1921, an appeal to socialist organizations around the globe was issued also by the Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Labour Party in Lviv “regarding the famine in Russian and the Ukraine.” This declaration was signed by two prominent members of the Party, Isaak Mazepa, former Prime Minister of the Ukrainian National Government now in exile, and Panas Fedenko, a leading member of the Party. Being ardent socialists, they did not appeal to the peoples of the West in general but to the proletariat of the capitalist world:

“We are decisive opponents of a capitalist intervention in Eastern Europe, but all the more urgently we appeal to the proletariat of the whole world to take immediate action for the inauguration of a democratic regime in Eastern Europe.

The socialist organization, the whole world over will have to focus their special attention on the situation in the Ukraine, where in connection with the famine extraordinary threatening conditions prevail.

The socialist proletariat will have to come to the assistance of the famine stricken of Russia and the Ukraine and, in view of a critical national relationship, it will have to demand the formation for the purpose of systematic distribution and control of special relief committees for the famine stricken of Russia and the Ukraine.”³

Being in exile, they somewhat naïvely hoped that the famine in Eastern Europe may be a good chance to remove the Bolsheviks from power and re-establish democratic governments in Russia and Ukraine.

The Times of London published a news item from Paris, by the Reuter News Agency, that the:

²Nova Ukraina, No. 12, September 15, 1921.

³The famine in the Ukraine. Published by the Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party. (Berlin : J.H.W. Dietz, 1923), p. 11-12.

“Ukrainian National Committee has appealed to the Entente and the United States of America to organize international aid for the population of Ukraine, which is facing famine. It pointed out that such aid could only be efficacious if under control of foreigners and representative of the Ukrainian peasants.”⁴

At this time, Professor Hrushevskyy, Chairman of the Ukrainian Central Rada in 1917-1918, and the first President-elect of the Ukrainian National Republic, staying in exile in Vienna, organized a *Union to Aid the Starving in Ukraine*. Since Russian official notification about the pending famine in Russia did not mention Ukraine, he attempted to bring it to the attention of the Western world that Ukraine was also in the throes of famine. In some countries Hrushevskyy's appeal found a sympathetic response, most notably from the Swedish Committee to Aid the Children, but the Nansen Mission informed him that nothing could be done until the relief action was completed in Russia. Knowing that the Ukrainians outside Ukraine could not manage the relief of the starving nation, Hrushevskyy managed to provide aid to some individuals in Ukrainian academia.⁵

In the meantime, the Soviet Mission in Vienna did not show any sympathy toward the Ukrainian émigré initiative and granted permission to the Union to send only two packages a month to a group only, weighing no more than 50 kilograms. This meant a group of people or a society and not to an individual person. The Union chose to aid the Ukrainian Learned Society in Kyiv as the oldest scholarly organization in Ukraine.

The Union to Aid the Starving in Ukraine was also able to organize public opinion among some influential personalities, like Madam Lindhagen, President of the Swedish Committee Aid to the Children. The Ukrainian Aid Committee in Philadelphia sent some money as well as the Ukrainian Committee for Hungry Ukraine in Lviv, which launched a major campaign to aid Ukraine.

A similar Committee to Aid the Starving in Ukraine was also formed in Berlin under the leadership of Volodymyr Vynnychenko, former Prime Minister of

⁴ *The Times* (London), July 22, 1921.

⁵ *Spravozdannia Soyuzu "Holodnym Ukraintsiam"*, ch. 2 (date of the stamp: August 24, 1922).

the Ukrainian National government and later head of the revolutionary Directory of Ukraine. It also extended its activity to neighbouring countries where there were no such benevolent organizations. This Committee began its work in September 1921 and by March 1, 1922 it had collected nearly 350 thousand German marks and an equivalent 9.9 million in dollars, liras, dinars, etc. Altogether 10.3 million marks were raised. By March 1, 1923, the Committee purchased food and medicine at a cost of 7.1 million German marks. In addition the Committee was quite successful in gathering clothing and food products.⁶ While the numbers were insignificant in comparison to the foreign relief organization in Russia, this represented a moral boost for all involved.

In spring 1922, Ukrainians abroad, represented by the foreign branch of the Ukrainian Red Cross in Prague, made another attempt to solicit aid from the West for the starving in Ukraine. On May 30, 1922, this plea was addressed to the International Trade Union in Amsterdam, Holland. This plea was reviewed by the Executive of the Trade Union, which came to the conclusion that, in view of the fact that it already obliged itself to feed 90,000 Russian workers, the Union could not take any more relief obligations upon itself. This decision was clearly stated in a letter to Borys Matiushenko, Chairman of the Red Cross Society:

“Should we want to aid Ukraine this would be possible only at the expense of our Russian relief activity, which would be detrimental to both countries. Although we would like to aid comrades of your country, however being convinced in the expediency of continuation with our relief in Russia we have with great sorrow to decline your request.”⁷

They also wrote:

“In order to combat the famine in a determined fashion as well as in the interest of development of the proletariat and of the Ukrainian democracy, we demand that the Russian Government immediately withdraw its army of occupation of Ukraine and restore to the Ukrainian people the right to set up its own democratic sovereignty. The socialist proletariat of the whole world

⁶*Nova Ukraina* (Prague), 1923, No. 3, p. 165.

⁷“Sotsiialistychnyj rukh” in *Nova Ukraina* (Prague), No. 7, July 1, 1922, p. 40-41.

must pass its decisive judgement on this matter and lend the suffering population of Russia and the Ukraine fraternal assistance."⁸

The Central Committee of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party repeated its appeal to the Socialist Organizations of the World, on May 15, 1922 where they reiterated the tragic situation in Ukraine, stating that:

"8 million people are starving in Southern Ukraine. Two and half million have nothing to eat whatsoever, and another 2.5 million are eating surrogates like hay, dry weeds, etc having no ordinary food."⁹

The Western Ukrainian provinces (Galicia, Volhynia, Bukovina), being under the Polish and Romanian rule, were not permitted by their governments,

"to render assistance to their starving countrymen in Eastern Ukraine. The Polish occupational administration in East Galicia prevented the Ukrainian population from collecting money and gifts in kind for the suffering provinces of Eastern Ukraine. There were cases where the corn that had been collected was confiscated and prohibited from being exported."¹⁰

There was a sympathetic response to the needs of Ukraine among the Ukrainian emigrant communities in North America. In Canada, under the influence of Prof. Hrushevskyy, the Ukrainian Red Cross in Canada began a collection of funds to help the starving in Soviet Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian Red Cross treasurer, it collected \$53,000 and from March 1922 to April, 1923, a further \$5,600.

The Ukrainian Red Cross, though not well provided with funds, helped whoever applied for aid from among the needy Ukrainians.¹¹ There were several different groups involved in assistance including both nationalist and communist Ukrainians. Disagreements between the various factions meant that the community was not up to the task. Its contribution was late and meagre in comparison to the

⁸The famine in the Ukraine, p. 11-12.

⁹*Nova Ukraine* (Prague), 1922.

¹⁰The famine in the Ukraine, p. 10.

R. Serbyn, op. cit., p. 653, doc. no. 789.

foreign relief organizations in Ukraine but it was important since even this small sum saved some lives and strengthened the spiritual bond between the Ukrainians outside of Ukraine and those in their oppressed homeland.¹²

¹²Holod 1921-1923 i ukrains'ka presa v Kanadi / materiialy uporiadkuvav i zredaguvav Roman Serbyn. –Toronto : Ukr. Kanads'kyi Doslidcho-Dokumentatsiinyi Tsent, 1955, p. 44.

The People, Soviet Authorities and the ARA

The Supervisor of the District of Ukraine stated in his report for the 1922 ARA activity that:

“There is a very general feeling of appreciation of our work among the masses. This feeling is being tempered only by the dread of the ARA’s withdrawal and the attendant fear of the coming winter, when both fuel and food are predicted to be so short that the population of the cities fear great sufferings if not actual death, from these causes. It is also thought that the ARA work has been generally appreciated by the Soviet officials - both central and local - but as the Russian press is government controlled, we must conclude that the Government generally has not been favourably disposed to the ARA, as practically no mention other than a bare occasional statement that a few carloads of supplies has arrived has been made about the ARA, whereas more space has been devoted to other organization having a very small feeding program compared to that of the ARA. We have also found the press ready to publish trivial complaints, endeavouring to make capital of them. The press of the Ukrainian government, we are led to believe, has been definitely hostile to the ARA. In no country in which the ARA has operated could any such condition have prevailed - the public would have dealt with any paper that took such passive, when not actually hostile attitude toward the ARA.”

Indeed, the Moscow government which controlled the government of Ukraine, in spite of its claims of independence, was very unhappy with the presence of foreign relief agencies and especially of the ARA in spite of their charitable work. Political reasons which disregarded the welfare of its citizens motivated the government to get rid of foreign relief agencies as soon as possible. At the same time the attitude of those relying on foreign relief was entirely different which was encouraging since,

“the greatest tribute came - from the people themselves. The ARA was

known in every village. The members of the ARA were the constant recipients of expressions of appreciation from private individuals wherever they went."²

The news that the ARA would discontinue its relief activity in Russia soon reached Ukraine and was accompanied by rumours that it would dismantle its relief activity in Ukraine as well. This outcome was met with sadness. In various places across southern Ukraine, public meetings were held where both gratitude for relief already obtained and a desire to continue this activity were expressed. G. Prokopenko and G. Pessotzky, as Chairman and Secretary respectively, chaired one such meeting held in the village of Voyskova on August 14, 1922. It was attended by over two hundred individuals where the following resolution was passed:

"Taking into consideration that the awful calamity of 1921 (bad harvest, poor crop) which befell Ukraina (Voyskova included) and brought us to the brink of misery, led us into the most piteous and inextricable situation - illness of all kinds, dreadful deaths occasioned by starving 'swept away' from our villages hundreds and hundreds of lives (beginning in fall 1921).

Notwithstanding the call, the invocation addressed by the Authorities and to the Foreign Powers did not result in a single response to our appeal. There was no one to save our people.

The whole population was doomed to perish with hunger when suddenly the dawn of salvation flashed (i.e. the gift of the American Nation).

Having deliberated to a great length concerning this matter, we decided unanimously to express our deepest and heartiest gratitude to the American people and to its representatives they being the first who extended their hand to save our people.

Let history immortalize and inscribe on its pages that the American people saved the people of Voyskova Village from starvation. This benefit shall be remembered here forever and ever!"

Signed by the G. Prokopenko (Chairman) and G. Pessotzky (Secretary).³

²George P. Harrington. Report on the Kharkov district of the ARA, p. 19 - in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper. Box 124, Folder : Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav - History.

³Protocol (Minutes) of the meeting held on August 14, 1922 in H.H.A., ARA operations, Box 126

This meeting had also expressed its views and gloomy prognosis for the coming year 1923.

“The situation of people appears to be even worse than it was last year, because in 1921 we still possessed cattle, horses and therefore could eat meat, we could also sell the furniture, clothes, etc. that we still had, whereas now nothing of the above named exists anymore. Everything has been either sold or devoured including the last cat and dog in the village. After deliberation of this question we decided to request the ARA to prolong and augment its alimentation succour for another year yet.”⁴

These are the words read in the minutes of the Public Meeting in the village of Voyskova on August 14, 1922.⁵

This document is quoted rather extensively, since it represents positive proof as to how ordinary Ukrainian people viewed American aid in those critical times of famine in 1921-1923, not only in the village of Voyskova but in all regions stricken by the same famine.

This was not the only letter of gratitude from the Ukrainian people. A letter was received from six members of a local committee on behalf of Khadjibey Lyman (a suburb of Odessa) which thanked the Americans by comparing their involvement to that of a golden fairy tale and expressed the hope that such an affliction would never affect their benefactors. A similar letter arrived from the village of Ivanovo, in the Tahinska volost' of the Kherson district. There were also about thirty such letters from the province of Mykolaiv.⁶

In vast areas of Russia and Ukraine in winter 1922, life was reduced to the basics of survival. Social and intellectual activity declined as energy was hoarded for the struggle for a piece of bread and a piece of wood to sustain their families. In this situation, the ARA became the *idée fixée* of everybody, especially of the intelligentsia. The starving did not think of anything else nor expect salvation from

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box No. 129, Folder : Ukraine - Odessa, No. 2.

any other party.⁷

These letters led the ARA administrators to believe that, when the ARA departed, it would leave behind a positive memory which would translate into a lasting tribute from a grateful people.⁸

The authorities disliked the popularity of the ARA among the population of the starving provinces and they made every effort to cast ARA statements in the worst possible light. In Katerynoslav province, they spread rumours that the government purchased bread from the Americans with Church treasures and therefore, the people do not owe them any gratitude and should not thank the Americans for their food.⁹ In mid-December 1922, the VII Convention of Delegates of the Local Soviets was held, at which criticism of the American relief activity had been voiced and its significance questioned with the importance of its aid minimized. The Central Pomgol published speeches of its executive members in a special issue of a newspaper in which one can find statements such as:

“The ARA always gives information that it feeds 250,000 children, whereas actually the number is only 50,000 as its rations amounting from one-quarter to one-fifth of the normal ration needed by a child. No child can subsist on the ration - all the peasants of the country around Mykolaiv know that.”¹⁰

Comrade Deev, the Poltava delegate, declared that the help the ARA affords in the prosperous gubernias [provinces] is not so very urgent at present. The Americans had better come and help famishing gubernias, where comrade Deev had personally examined a case involving cannibalism of fourteen children. “The prosperous gubernias will manage to help their children without foreign aid.”¹¹ All this was directed towards the masses with the intention to cool their enthusiasm and gratitude for American relief.

⁷“Report on Kiev”, by Friends of America, quoted (H.H.A., 260) by B. M. Weissman in his “Herbert Hoover and famine relief ...”, p. 110-111.

⁸George P. Harrington. Report on the Kharkov district of the ARA, p. 19, *ibid.*

⁹Confidential letter by Thos. C. Barringer of October 20, 1922 to Wm. Haskell, Director in Moscow H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 123, Folder : Ukraine - Ekaterynoslav, No. 6.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Central Pomgol issued its report entitled “K bor’be i pobede” (“To combat and victory”).

The negative attitude of the Soviet Ukrainian rulers toward ARA activity was mentioned several times in connection with various localities. It should not be forgotten that it depended not so much on feedback from local Ukrainian officials, as on the instructions directed from the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow. The ARA, as well as all other foreign relief agencies, had been working under agreements which bound the Soviet government to pay for the transportation and distribution of food within Russia, as well as within Ukraine, while the foreign agents, so long as they abstained from political activity, had freedom of movement and complete control of distribution.

Toward the end of September 1922, however, the government demanded from all the foreign agencies that they either deliver food to government agencies and institutions for distribution at their discretion or retain independence of action but assume all costs of transportation and distribution. Most relief agencies chose the latter,¹² but some withdrew from relief activity. This was a breach of agreement by the Soviet government, which naturally depleted relief agencies' resources and, *ipso facto*, forced them to decrease the number of people relying on foreign aid – in other words, it was detrimental to the starving.

In his report, George P. Harrington, District Supervisor in Katerynoslav, stated:

“When the Kharkiv district first opened, the ARA was viewed with suspicion - both by the central and local governments and by the press. The Nansen Mission held the centre stage and our unwillingness to merge our relief with the program and supplies of the Government brought forth a storm of criticism. Hostile articles appeared in the press. Requests from the authorities were either refused or neglected and work was most difficult. Gradually, however, a change was noticed. Cars of food kept rolling in, in increasing numbers, and a promise was never made until it was known that it could be kept, which created confidence. The old attitude of suspicion disappeared and now we have all kinds of expressions of thanks and praise and we read in the press articles of commendation and appreciation. The attitude of officials too has changed. They now meet reasonable demands with promptness and

¹²“The Russian famines, 1921-1922, 1922-1923; summary report” / Commission on Russian Relief of the National Information Bureau, New York, 1923, p. 37.

afford us satisfactory cooperation. This is especially true of the Central authorities, for there is still much to be desired from the local one."¹³

The relationship of the ARA and the government agencies on the local level are well illustrated in a letter by E. R. Howard, Odessa ARA District Supervisor, to Colonel Haskell in Moscow. Howard wrote:

"For your information and advice, the government representative attached to us notified me verbally yesterday that the sale of spoiled foodstuffs and empty containers to private concerns and individuals is considered a violation of Paragraph 25 of the Riga Agreement, which prohibits any commercial activity on the part of the ARA and that these sales must be stopped or else he would place an advertisement in the newspapers for the benefit of purchasers that all such commodities purchased would be confiscated. He also stated that all such commodities must be sold to government organizations through him.

I explained to him that all receipts from the sale of spoiled food and empty containers went back into the relief funds of the ARA and that his stand is entirely contrary to what had been done in Russia for the past year with no objections being raised by the Government in Moscow. However, he is one of the kind with whom reasoning is impossible and I finally notified him that if sales to individuals was a violation of the Agreement, sales to the Government were equally a violation and that pending advice from you I would make no sales either to private concerns or Government organizations and would make no further deliveries to the Pomgol on a contract for empty milk cases and tins.

Every day something new is rung in on me along these or similar lines, the ultimate object I have been unable to uncover, except that they are using every means possible to get full control of personnel and feeding lists.

You are no doubt having the same complaints as mine coming from the other districts as I feel sure the present policy of our local government is dictated by Moscow, but I feel you should know how things are going down here."

The treatment of the ARA, or rather mistreatment by some of the Soviet

¹³George P. Harrington. Report on the Kharkov district of the ARA, p. 19, in the H.H.A., Rus. oper. Box 124, Folder : Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav - History.

¹⁴E.R. Howard's letter of December 8, 1922, in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 177, Folder 101 Odessa - Letters to Moscow.

officials in Ukraine is well illustrated by a "Confidential Memorandum No. 1", by Dr. John P. Caffey, Medical officer in Katerynoslav Province, and his relationship with the government representative M. Skvortzov, a former political commissar and former secretary of the Communist Party at Kazan. After an introductory paragraph, Dr. Caffey enumerated his difficulties with the government representative:

"Shortly after the arrival of the medical division to Ekaterinoslav, Mr. Skvortzov had published in the local newspaper a statement that no institution or individual would be permitted to apply for assistance of any kind from the ARA without first receiving permission from Mr. Skvortzov to apply to the ARA. We have by our inspectors and personnel interviews with representatives of institutions counter acted Skvortzov's in this direction as much as possible. However, he has and continues in some cases, to cloud the fact that our supplies are a free gift from America.

Skvortzov has insisted from the start in having a representative of his offices in the medical warehouse. This has always been refused. He did however prevail upon one of our employees, unbeknown to me, to act as his informant. At the time of a theft in the warehouse, this man came under suspicion and was discharged. This was followed by Skvortzov's storming into my office and attempting to bluff it through that as this man was "his man", we would have to keep him on. We flatly refused to reinstate the man. This was followed by the militia's breaks into the homes of several of our honest employees and attempts to incriminate them because of ARA supplies in their possession which I had given them at Christmas time. This only stopped when I told Skvortzov that the warehouse would be closed until the thing was settled. It was with great difficulty at this time that I persuaded two exceptionally capable employees to continue in our service because of their fear of dangers of being ARA employees. In addition, our distributions were held up for more than a week. This whole thing was absolutely needless and due to Skvortzov's method of representing the Government.

Our vaccinations this year have been delayed almost one month because Dr. Levin, my interpreter, requested the professional union rather than the Gubzdrav for twenty doctors for this work. 'A tempest in a tea pot' resulted over the incident due chiefly to jealousies existing between these departments of the Government. As a result Dr. Levin was called in by the head of the Board of Health and told he must immediately cease his work with us on the pain of being professionally ostracized by the Government's health authorities. This was referred to Skvortzov for settlement and he wrote back that Dr. Levin could not continue to work for us and that all our employees must be recommended by the Government and he later proposed that he

would select an interpreter and medical inspector for the city. He issued the edict that I could not take any questions with members of the various health boards. His presence in a difficulty of this kind has always served only to aggravate the question. This was all settled a few days later by my dealing with the head of the Gubzdrav but the result had already been a month's delay in the vaccinations.

I have just returned from Aleksandrovsk, where we recently shipped a carload of supplies for distribution in the uyezd of Zaporozhe. On arrival of the car, Skvortzov's Aleksandrovsk representative under his order secured a list of the institutions to which we were about to distribute. Each was forced to register with the Government and forbidden to go to the ARA warehouse without the visa of the Government representative. This was actually being carried out until we stopped it yesterday.

Skvortzov has always taken the attitude that he was here to direct the ARA relief, to conceal the origin of the source of our supplies and belittle the efforts of the American personnel in so far as possible. Trivial incidents, which are of no import, became serious obstacles and hindrances in his hands. I do not think it possible to give any worthy publicity to the results of our work or leave the desired and natural friendly impression at the time of our departure as Skvortzov continues as representative.¹⁵

George P Harrington in his report of April 13, 1923 states:

At no time since I have been here has there ever been any attempt to aid us in our work or to smooth out any of the difficulties which we met. As I look back, I cannot point to a single incident wherein he [Skvortzov] has helped us."¹⁶

The deliberate starvation of Ukraine by the Soviet Russian regime is a fact of high importance. The hunger policy of the Soviet Russian Government was determined by the objective of weakening the political activity of the Ukrainian masses in their struggle against the occupation. It seemed that the political and national terror raging in Ukraine could not attain its end and accordingly the Russian authorities decided to make convenient use of the drought as a means to force the

¹⁵Confidential Memorandum of April 12, 1923, by Dr. J.P. Caffey in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 123, Folder : Katerynoslav - History.

¹⁶Ibid.

nation into submission.¹⁷

It is interesting to note that in decisions concerning policies of War Communism, tax-in-kind and foreign relief activity, one rarely comes across a Ukrainian name. Examples of non-Ukrainians include Rakovsky, Vladimirov, Eiduk, Frunze, Batkis, Rachlis and Skvortzov.

After the departure of the ARA, it is believed that the Soviet Government arrested most of its former employees. Much of the evidence is anecdotal with an example provided by W. Reswick, a disenchanted communist who had good connections with the Russian revolutionaries including G. Yagoda, deputy of the Cheka chief. In his memoir entitled *I dreamt revolution*, he stated that by the end of 1925:

“the first biggest instalment paid by Yagoda re his debt of gratitude was to liberate hundreds of former Russian employees of the American Relief Administration ... He signed an administrative order releasing all former employees who were under arrest.”¹⁸

According to 1923 Soviet documents, the following foreign relief organizations were engaged in Ukraine: the American Relief Administration, the Nansen Mission combining ten smaller organizations, Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, American Mennonite Relief, International Children's Aid and International Working Association and Swedish Red Cross. Among the foreign organizations, the ARA was the first one to start its relief work in March 1922. It had been helpful primarily in food and medical relief. If one counts rations, the ARA issued, these exceed by a large factor that of all other relief organizations taken together. In March 1923 it distributed 11.7 million rations. In April 14.6 million and by 1923, 45 million rations. The ARA also distributed medicine to individual ambulatories, hospitals, and children's homes. From the beginning of the campaign through March 1923, the ARA distributed medicine worth four million gold rubles.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁸W. Reswick, "I dreamt revolution", Chicago : Regnery Co., 1952, p. 108.

During ARA activity in Russia and Ukraine about four hundred ships brought food that was handled in ten ports of the Black and Baltic Seas and transported in 56 railway cars to interior points. If all these cars were placed end to end they would cover a distance of 1.6 kilometres. If the tins of milk distributed in Russia were placed together they would equal a distance around the world at the Equator - 40,000 km. The financial expenditure of the ARA for Russia amounted to 100 million rubles in gold. To fulfill its relief work the ARA employed two hundred Americans and over 100,000 locals.¹⁹

The size of relief rendered by the Nansen Mission, as compared with that of the ARA, was a distant second. It comprised a number of various Western European relief groups and organizations. However, appeal for relief in Western Europe was hampered by strained relationships between the British and French governments with the Bolsheviks resulting from the latter defaulting on debt incurred and seizing foreign owned property. The United States, on the other hand, not having any investments in Russia, placed only one condition on relief, the release of American citizens from Soviet prisons. With the exception of the International Save the Children Fund which was 90% supported by British sources and fed thousands of children in Saratov province, all other participating relief organizations depended essentially on goodwill contributions.

Table 5: The number of famine sufferers in Ukraine receiving food from the International Committee of the Russian Relief Funds as of August 15, 1922.²⁰

	Children	Adults	Total
Nansen Spanish and Norwegian Funds	80,000	53,000	133,000
Nansen Fund with the Ukrainian Red Cross	31,675	25,192	56,867
Czechoslovak Mission		16,331	16,331
International Save the Children Fund	10,300		10,300
German Red Cross	3,000	2,000	5,000
Nansen Refugee Relief (Kremenchuk)	600	400	1,000

¹⁹Statement of Dr. Hershel C. Walker at the banquet in honour of the departure of the ARA; copy of the clippings from *Proletarian Kharkov*, June 24, 1923, in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 125, Folder Ukraine - Kharkov.

²⁰Asquith, *Famine*, p. 1.

Baptists (Melitopol')		6,100	6,100
Nansen Fund (Crimea)	20,000	12,000	32,000
Mennonite (Simferopol)	20,000	10,000	30,000
Total in Ukraine	165,575	125,023	290,598
Volga-Ural Valley	568,845	777,873	1,346,718

At that point in time the ARA was getting ready to fold its operations. The food remittance station shut down on June 15, 1923. The medical office was already closed and all remaining medical supplies were distributed among the ambulatories, hospitals and children's homes. In June, the feeding stations were also closed.²¹

On July 5, 1923 there was a farewell party for the ARA given by the Ukrainian Government at which Ukrainian Prime Minister Rakovsky formally acknowledged the work of the American Relief Administration. He also addressed a formal communication to Colonel W. N. Haskell, director of the ARA in Russia:

"I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to mention once more the gratitude of Ukraine for the help given by the American Relief Administration to our population in the difficult days of famine.

Thanks to this help hundreds of thousands of peasants, and particularly children, were saved from death by starvation. The people of Ukraine shall always remember the expeditious manner in which the citizens of the United States gave us their help.

I hope that the work of the ARA in our territory, as well as the territory of the Union of Soviet Republic, will be followed by a foundation of more solid bonds between the United States and the Union of Soviet Republics.

Having been among us for nearly two years the representatives of the American people have become convinced, not only of the possibility, but also of the necessity of an economic and agricultural cooperation with the Soviet Republics. In closing I feel it is my duty to mention the faithfulness and the loyalty to their tasks which have been evinced by the representatives of the ARA, and I hope that, when they leave our country after having completed their humanitarian mission, they will carry away with them the very best recollections of relations which they had with the representatives of the

²¹ Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini, p. 190-191.

Soviet Government.”²²

²²Press release, July 5, 1923 - H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 120.

The Human Losses of the Famine

There is the unavoidable question of addressing the number of people who perished in the famine of 1921-23. Some official statistics indicate that 5,053,000 individuals died of hunger and related causes in the 1921-22 period.¹ Since Ukraine was not treated at the time as a separate entity of the Soviet federation, one can only assume that the number covers both Ukrainian and Russian losses.

The famine in Ukraine lasted longer than in Russia which means the 1922 statistics cannot be considered complete. According to the Report of the Peoples Health Commissariat of Ukraine for the first half of 1922, there were further registered deaths of 67,126 from disease and another 741,532 from famine. The same report stated that whole villages, ravaged by hunger, were not able to apply for medical help.² It must be noted that these figures apply to the first half of 1922 but when analyzing Soviet statistics, one has to be cognizant that they are less than 100% truthful. These statistics also only apply to those who died in hospitals where records were kept but not in the villages where recordkeeping was almost non-existent, given the harsh circumstances of the famine.

In addition to five million officially acknowledged victims, there were at least another ten million in Ukraine and Crimea afflicted by hunger. Foreign relief to Russia started in September 1921, while in Ukraine the first public kitchen was not opened until April 30, 1922 in Odessa. Followed in short order by openings in Kherson (May 13) and Mykolaiv (May 19). This meant that through winter 1921-1922 and early spring 1922, Ukraine had no foreign assistance whatsoever. While there are varying accounts and statements about the number of deaths in any period, there is no accurate way of aggregating totals by period and location.

¹ *Biuletën' Tsentral'nogo statisticheskogo upravleniia*, No. 72, p. 91, quoted by S. N. Prokopovich. *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR* (New York, 1952), vol. 1, p. 59.

² *Report of the economic conditions in Russia*, vol. 2, p. 55-56.

Applying stated figures *pro rata*, the ARA supplied Russia and Ukraine with 741,573 tons of food products, of which 442,514 tons were distributed in Russia among 25 million inhabitants while only 83,827 tons were assigned to Ukraine and Crimea in general. About 10 million hungry individuals in Ukraine and Crimea hardly received 73,444 tons while the Tatar ASSR on the Volga Valley with a fraction of the population received aid of 81,660 tons. This would undoubtedly indicate that the death rate in Ukraine must have been much higher than in the Tatar ASSR. At the same time, one should not forget that the Soviet Government had started to organize relief for the Volga Valley in the summer of 1921 and the ARA and Nansen Mission started their work in October 1921, while in Ukraine no relief was available until May 1922. The number who perished from starvation and corollary epidemics in Ukraine must have been *pro rata* much higher than in the Volga-Ural areas with the strong possibility of being doubled. In this case, it would give us at least three million famine victims in Ukraine combined with Crimea. However the actual number could be much higher.

The Central Committee to Combat the Consequences of the Famine created by the Kharkiv Government attempted to estimate the total number of persons helped with food relief as well as fatalities from sicknesses and hunger in 1922. The Committee's report stated that famine in Ukraine embraced five entire provinces and endangered neighbouring counties of the prosperous provinces. In January 1922, there were 1,900,000 starving people, in April - 3,320,000, and in July 3,800,000, which totalled 40% of the population in those provinces. According to incomplete data, there were 280,000 ill people in August and a further 350,000 afflicted with typhus and cholera. However, those who succumbed to any epidemic illness were not to be counted as victims of famine.

Data available from the counties afflicted shows that 31% had an increase in population, in 25% there was no change whatsoever, and in 44% of the counties, there was a decrease in population. In the prosperous provinces, 64% increased their population; in 27% there was no change, and in 9% of counties the population decreased. In all of Ukraine - 54% counties increased their population; 26% did not

experience any numerical change in population and 20% decreased in population. It must not be forgotten that there were some villages where all starved to death and subsequently, these villages were resettled with migrants from Russia. As a result, individual local figures may not have changed considerably but the composition of inhabitants was different with the next census in 1926.

Before the war, Katerynoslav and Tavria provinces enjoyed the greatest natural increase in population. Those provinces (excluding Crimea) were redistricted and three new provinces were created, namely Donetsk, Katerynoslav and Zaporozhe. In 1922, these provinces suffered the greatest decrease in population. At least 166,000 people abandoned the area. Natural demographic increase in those provinces was supposed to equal 70 thousand. Thus, the loss of population was over two times greater than the natural increase.

To establish the 1926 population, it is necessary to start with the first Russian census in 1897. At that time, the population of Ukraine totalled 25.5 million. With an average natural increase of 18 persons per thousand, the present day Ukraine should have had 33 million of population. In the meantime, according to the census of 1920, the population of Ukraine amounted to 25.5 million. Approximate calculation for 1926 should be no less than 27 million. This would indicate that the losses of the Ukrainian population for the entire war and the internal revolutionary struggle would be from 5.5 to 7.5 million people. It seems that, considering all factors involved, Ukraine must have paid for its famine not less than one third of her total losses. This would amount from 2 to 2.5 million people.³ As already indicated, the intensity of the famine was greatly increased by the Soviet Government itself through pumping out anything edible even in the provinces where starvation was at its peak.

³ Report of the Central Commission to combat the post-famine results at the All Ukrainian Central Executive Committee about the numbers of persons to feed, falling sick and passing away from among the starving, dated 1923, but all the information applies to 1922 - in *Holod 1921-1923 rokiv v Ukraini*, p. 201-202. According to the leaflet issued by the Ukrainian Red Cross at the Berlin Conference, the population of Ukraine in 1921 amounted to 25 million. This would add 300,000 more than in 1920.

What Does Soviet History Say

According to the official history of the USSR:

“the Nansen Mission played a major role in the organization of relief to the starving people of Russia. In appreciation of his activity, he was elected an honorary member of the Moscow City Soviet and in December 1921, the Russian Ninth Congress of Soviet expressed its deep appreciation to him for his endeavours in organizing relief for the starving in the Volga Valley.”¹

Nansen tried to organize Western European countries for the relief effort but the final result was not so impressive. This was alluded to in the honorary note of the Congress, when it stated:

“The Ninth All-Russian Soviet Congress, having learned of your noble efforts to save the perishing peasants of the Volga area offers you its profoundest gratitude in the name of the millions of toilers of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic. The people of Russia will ever cherish in its memory, the name of the great scientist and explorer, Citizen Fritjof Nansen, who heroically broke through the eternal ice of the silent North, but was yet powerless to overcome the boundless savagery, rapacity, and heartlessness of the capitalist powers.”²

Soviet histories, while mentioning this tragedy, state that the Soviet Government and the Communist Party managed to overcome the calamity of drought and famine. However they do not present this calamity in its full tragic extent and limit it only to the 1921-22 period in the Volga Valley. While discussing the efforts of combating the famine in Russia, they also mention the Ukrainian famine but with limited reference to the 1921-22 period. During this period, Ukraine did not receive any relief from foreign countries. The fact that the famine in Ukraine lasted into 1923

¹Istoriia SSSR; epokha sotsializma (1917-1957), p. 263.

²Russian Information and Review, vol. 1, p. 179.

does not draw any mention. While admitting Ukraine did plenty to aid the starving in Russia, Soviet historians at the same time also point out that Russia did reciprocate its relief to Ukraine with technical equipment and personnel.

“Quite significant aid in completing requisitions was given by brotherly republics to the Ukrainian SSR. The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party had sent to Ukraine 540 experienced party and economic activists. The People’s Commissariats in Moscow sent 10,000 men to Ukraine to reinforce the Pro Army and 20,000 to militia units who were engaged in food collection. The Russian Federation also provided volunteers to strengthen inspection personnel in food collection procedures and supplying uniforms for those volunteers.”³

In short, Russian relief to Ukraine consisted of technical equipment and personnel to direct Ukrainian grain for the Russian North and the Volga region without aiding those Ukrainians in need. In fact, these actions deepened the deprivation of the Ukrainian people.

In May 1922, Moscow did relieve Ukraine from the obligation of helping the starving Volga Valley provinces.⁴ Ukrainian Soviet historian Kasymenko wrote:

“The Soviet people led by the Communist Party survived the famine. All over the country food collection committees were organized for the starving. A great assistance to the south Ukraine and the Volga Valley was provided by the regions of the RSFR and northern provinces of Ukraine which fared much better with their crop.”⁵

The eight-volume history of Ukraine, published in 1974, also mentions the famine of 1921-1923, and how Ukraine helped the Volga Valley population to combat this disaster. In response to Lenin’s appeal of August 2, 1921.

“The poor peasants of Chernihiv and Poltava provinces were among the first

³M. Movchan, Braters’ka vzaiemodopomoha trudiashchykh Ukrainy in *Ukr. istor. zhurnal*, 1922. No 10, p. 81.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵O. K. Kasymenko. *Istoriia Ukrainiskoi RSR; populiarnyi narys.* (Kyiv Vyd-vo Akademi Nauk Ukr RSR, 1960), p. 172.

ones to act. In 1921-1922 the workers of Ukraine sent 31 million poods (5 million tonnes) to Soviet Russia.”⁶

There is no information about the Ukrainian famine and who helped the Ukrainian people to combat it. This history also states that:

“great relief to the starving arrived from the International proletariat and from the progressive intelligentsia through the International Workers’ Union.”

The French trade unions and a newspaper *Humanité* sent to Soviet Russia 400,000 francs and the trade unions of Czechoslovakia donated 125,000 krone. The French writer Anatole France donated money received from his Nobel Prize of 1921 to the famine relief fund. Norwegian polar explorer F. Nansen organized a fund drive to buy food products for the Soviet country. A significant part of the Nansen Mission relief was given to Ukraine during 1921-1922. The International Workers’ Union was active in Katerynoslav, Odessa and other southern provinces of Ukraine. All in all, the Soviet Union received over 33 million poods of food products.

The significance of international solidarity was emphasized by V.I. Lenin who, on December 2, 1922 wrote:

“Relief to the starving from the International Working class contributed substantially to survive and overcome last year’s famine.”⁷

Perhaps it did contribute substantially compared to its economical capacity - however, it was insignificant in comparison even to the Nansen Mission. According to Sofinov, by the end of 1921 the workers, peasants and other citizens of capitalist countries contributed 700,000 poods of foodstuffs, other goods and money equal to 4 million gold rubles.⁸

⁶Istoriia Ukrain's'koi RSR u vos'my tomakh. (Kyiv : Naukova Dumka, 1977), tom 6, p. 27.

⁷V.I. Lenin. Povne zibrannia tvoriv, tom 45, stor. 31, quoted in Istoriia Ukrain's'koi RSR u vos'my tomakh. Tom 6, (Kyiv : Naukova Dumka, 1977), p. 28.

⁸O. K. Kasymenko. Istoriia Ukrain's'koi RSR; populiarnyi narys. (Kyiv : Vyd-vo Akademi Nauk Ukr. RSR, 1960).

According to official documents, this Workers' Union began its relief work in Ukraine in November 1922 and through one whole period of its activity, it issued 382.980 rations to the Ukrainian starving.⁹

“Even the counties Kobyliaky, and Kongrad of the Poltava province, which suffered from the crop failure, and people were dying of starvation, were compelled to aid the Volga Valley.”¹⁰

The nature of Russian help to aid Ukraine in overcoming this calamity was not ambiguous.

In 1964, in Moscow Politizdat published a work entitled *A historical turning back; a transition to the New Economic Policy* (“Istorichekoi povorot; perekhod k novoi ekonomicheskoi politike”) by Prof. P. G. Sofinov, the author of a number of historical books, in which as the subtitle suggests, he discusses a transition from the War Communism Policy to the New Economic Policy. He also describes the 1921-1923 famine as well as the foreign efforts to help the starving and states that:

“the imperialistic Entente endeavoured to exploit the famine for development of banditism in our country ... But with a united effort of all the powers and brotherly assistance of the international proletariat the Soviet Government overcame the drought and bad harvest. Our country managed to avoid enslaving debts and fully secured its independence. It was the best proof that the introduction of the New Economic Policy was the right move.”¹¹

At the same time, there is no mention of the contribution of the ARA and the Herculean task it undertook in the hunger-ravaged areas of Russia. In contrast, a great deal was said about the Nansen Mission and other initiatives to help the starving in Russia.

J. H. Hynes, District Supervisor in Odessa to the ARA Russian Unit in Moscow, wrote:

⁹Holod 1921-1923 rokov v Ukraini; zbirnyk documentiv i materialiv. Kyiv: Naykova dumka, 1993, p. 192 (Document 196).

¹⁰A. A. Nedukh. “Zv’iazky komnezamiv Ukrainy z trudiashchym selianstvom Rosiis’koi Federatsii” - in *Ukr. istorichnyi zhurnal*, 1960, No. 3, p. 100.

¹¹T. G. Safinov. *Istorieskii povorot*, p. 57-58.

“The relief work of the Nansen Mission, Ukrainian Red Cross and Gubpomgol is practically negligible. Notwithstanding the fact that all these organizations are constantly advertising themselves in the press and endeavouring in every way possible to create the impression that the bulk of the relief work in this district is being carried out by them,”¹²

In fact, the reality was different. The American Relief Administration, which was feeding over 30 times as many children and 50 times as many adults as all the other relief organizations combined, had considerable difficulty in securing proper recognition for the work which it had been doing.

It is worthwhile to recall that at the beginning when:

“the ARA first announced its intention of carrying on child feeding in the Ukraine, the Government endeavoured to restrict its activity to the Zaporozhe and Katerynoslav districts on the grounds that they were doing all the relief necessary in the Odessa and Mykolaiv districts. Had the ARA accepted the Government’s proposal and left the Odessa and Mykolaiv districts to the Nansen Mission and the Ukrainian Red Cross, the result probably would have been an appalling loss of child life in both these districts. Fortunately we were able to convince the Government that there is a difference between promises and performance and the attached reports showing that the Nansen Organization is feeding 2,600 children compared to 190,000 receiving supplies from the ARA, should serve further to emphasize the difference. We hope that the moral in the lesson will not escape them.”¹³

“The Communist Party of Ukraine contributed a great deal in extending a brotherly hand to the workers of Russia,” says the History of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Over 31 millions of foodstuffs were sent from Ukraine to the Volga Valley and other regions touched by the famine of 1921-22. Moreover, Ukraine accepted over 200,000 refugees from Russia of which 50,000 were children.¹⁴ There is not a single reference to the famine in Ukraine and how this calamity was handled.

¹² Report of Wm. N. Haskell in Moscow of October 20, 1922 in H.H.A., ARA Rus. oper., Box 127, Folder : Ukraine - Ekaterinoslav, No. 6.

¹³ J. H. Hynes, District Supervisor - Odessa - ARA Rus. oper., Box 177, Folder : 99, Odessa letters to Moscow. H.H.A., Stanford, CA.

¹⁴ *Narysy istorii Komunisty'chnoi Partii Ukrainy*, (Kyiv, 1971), p. 309.

Conclusion

The statement that the famine of 1921-1923 in Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine, was a result of drought and a subsequent crop failure is only partially true. Foreigners engaged in relief activity were baffled by the fact that the starving Ukrainian provinces were also forced to substantially contribute to the starving provinces of the Volga Valley as well as for the Russian workers of Petrograd, Moscow and other industrial centres. Although the Russian Soviet press claimed that the Ukrainian peasantry willingly contributed to the relief of the needy in Russia, foreign journalists present in Russia as early as mid-September 1921 informed their newspapers that the,

“Soviet Government is experiencing the greatest difficulty in procuring any corn or other food from the Ukraine where the crops have failed to a large extent. The small stacks of foodstuffs, which the Ukrainian peasant possesses, are not willingly surrendered to the Red Russians. In this connection the Governments in Moscow and Kharkiv have agreed to enforce a so-called tax-in-kind with the help of 20,000 demobilized Red soldiers and peasants from the Volga famine districts. This army of plunderers is, according to the Moscow *Izvestiia*, to be enlisted within two weeks and in compensation for their trouble, are to be given a percentage of the food requisitioned.”¹

This activity continued all through the period of foreign relief aid, which could not be justified by the ARA or Nansen Mission employees. H.H. Fisher wrote:

“The Communist Party’s Ukrainian famine policy is difficult to explain. One explanation is that those who formulated the policy of the Soviet Government were perfectly aware of the impending famine in the south, though perhaps not aware of its extent, as seemingly they were not in the case of the Volga. They knew, moreover, that of the two, the Volga famine involved a greater

¹ *The Times*(London), September 7, 1921, p.7:2

area and more people. The policy of ignoring the Ukraine, focussing all efforts on the Volga, may have been a deliberate one, forced by the knowledge that since it was unlikely that there would be enough food to supply both regions, it was better to handle one job well than to try to handle two and fail. This explanation obviously leaves many things unexplained, among them the policy of making the situation in the Ukraine worse by removing some of the food that the famine district had produced and needed."²

Unfortunately, Mr. Fisher could not grasp the fact that, in this case, the famine was used as a tool to force the Ukrainian people into Russian-Bolshevik submission to save the communist regime and not for the sake of saving a starving population.

Lenin stated:

"The food policy of the Soviet Russia in 1917-1921 years had been doubtless very rough, and contributed to abuses. During its execution there were a number of mistakes but it was the only possibility in those conditions. And it fulfilled its historic task: **It saved the proletarian revolution** in the ruined and backward country."³

This means the only objective of the food policy was to save the regime and not to save the people.

Historian K. Kononenko wrote:

"The food policy of 1920, realized by the armed detachments of the GPU (Government Security Forces) which had a double task going from homestead to homestead to search and requisition foodstuffs, they searched also for hidden weapons."⁴

It was not the disarmament of Ukrainian peasantry together with terror that contributed to the liquidation of armed struggles of the Ukrainian people for freedom. These struggles were liquidated by famine. The Ukrainian peasantry and population in general, were unable to think about anything but mere physical survival

²H.H. Fisher, "The famine in Soviet Russia", p. 264.

³V. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 32, p. 204.

⁴K. S. Kononenko, *Ukraina i Rossiia*, Miunkhen, 1965..

due to their situation brought upon by the famine. The swollen and dying by starvation peasants were unable to fight with weapons. Thus, the famine ended an over three year long period of struggle for national and social freedom, leaving the victory for Soviet Russia.⁵

The Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow elaborated its own system of priorities in combating the famine, but the starvation of Ukrainian peasantry was not one of them. Those priorities were dictated to the Communist Party of Ukraine and they were obediently followed. When the peasantry started to die *en masse*, even the disciplined Bolsheviks dared to voice critical remarks about the Central Committee. Thus at the VIth Party Conference in December 1921, Mykola Skrypnyk, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, stated that:

“The Central Committee for months refused to discuss the situation in Ukraine and we did not dare to say that in the wealthy Ukraine raves famine.”⁶

Contrary to the traditional claims, the drought and crop failures were not the main causes of the 1921-1923 famine in Ukraine. Starvation resulted from Moscow's colonial policies. The breadbasket of Europe was emptied by endless confiscations and shipments of grain to Russia and the West. Under the slogans of *proletarian solidarity* and *brotherly love of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples* perfidiously manipulated by the Bolsheviks, the administration exported more foodstuffs from Ukraine than it should have at the expense of millions of their starving countrymen. Christian Rakovsky, the Premier of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, in a letter to Lenin, dated January 28, 1922 stated that:

“The Ukrainian authorities committed criminal negligence by not reporting the shortage of food and saving supplies... And it was a result that we paid more attention to Soviet Russia and Donbass.”⁷

⁵Ibid.p. 111.

⁶*Istoriia Ukrainy; nove bachennia*. Tom 2 / pid red. V.A. Smo-liia. – Kyiv: Vyd-vo Ukraina, 1996. p. 187

⁷Ibid.

Thus, Rakovsky confirmed that the famine in Ukraine was a result of the policy of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, but he communicated this in a famous secret letter to Lenin and not at the Party conference. He stated this confirmation only when the famine in Ukraine ceased to be a state secret.

The Commission on Russian Relief of the National Information Bureau in New York, published in 1923 a summary report entitled *The Russian famines, 1921-1922, 1922-1923*. It stated:

“The Moscow Government imposing the grain tax in Ukraine estimated the crop at almost exactly twice the figure accepted by the local authorities. More than 30,000,000 poods were transferred to the Volga, although parts of the Ukraine were in an extreme famine condition. In the Volga provinces the tax collected was held for local distribution.”⁸

In Ukraine it was even collected in the starving provinces and removed to Russia. According to the information from the Ukrainian Transport Centre in Kharkiv, the dispatched grain products to the RSFSR, from the period of August 3, 1921 to January 1923, amounted to 31,209,484 poods in 34,845 wagons.⁹ In addition to that, from August 1922 to January 1923, Ukraine sent 9 million poods of grain to the neighbouring Soviet republics and 13.5 million poods of grain for sale to foreign countries outside of the USSR.¹⁰ All of this grain was collected in Ukraine which included the starving provinces where the ARA had already begun its activity in the summer of 1922. This information was reported in the Ukrainian newspapers. In response to it, on March 17, 1923, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine issued a prohibition on publication of such material.¹¹ A review of sources relating to the famine of 1921-1923 in the five south-eastern provinces of Ukraine indicates beyond doubt that it was caused by the removal of grain for the benefit of the North, the starving Volga Valley and in 1923 for export. However, the major benefactors of the grain were the two red capitals, Petrograd and

⁸“The Russian famine 1921-1922, 1922-1923”, p. 32.

⁹ Holod v Ukraini, 1921-1923, Document No. 93

¹⁰ Ukraina, stasis. Spravochnik, Kharkiv 1925, p. 20, quoted in Holod v Ukraini 1921-1923, p.118.

¹¹ Ini review of Sources relating to the famine of 1921-1923, N.85, p.159.

Moscow. Taking into account the Russian estimate that a single person would need not less than 25 poods of grain to survive one year, then one can quite frankly state that the Russian Soviet Government deprived 1,200,000 Ukrainian citizens of their foodstuff for a whole year. They starved to death, not by the whims of Nature that created the drought and destroyed the crop, but by the forceful removal of bread from the Ukrainian citizen and giving it to the Russian one. Nor was this done by error, but by a premeditated plan as punishment of the Ukrainian citizen for his hostile attitude toward the Soviet regime.

Luckily, the spring of 1923 proved to be more generous with rain and a prospect for better harvest was in sight. This allowed Moscow to ask foreign relief agencies and, especially, the ARA to end their activity. Some of the agencies had already concluded their relief efforts as a protest to the Ukrainian grain export.

The ARA had to leave Ukraine before the actual end of the famine. For Ukraine, the years 1922-1923 happened to be the worst. The Ukrainians discussed this tragic time at specially organized thank you meetings where they expressed their appreciation and gratitude for American and other countries' life-saving activities.

The famine of 1921-1923 in Ukraine was the first famine organized by the state and it demonstrated several issues. Firstly, it highlights the tactics and strategy of famine terror used at the state level. Secondly, the famine was used as a weapon to destroy democratic opposition of Ukrainian intelligentsia and, most of all, of the Church, which was the strongest political enemy of Bolshevism. Finally, the famine proved to be a factor, which more effectively contributed to liquidation of uprisings than the penal military expeditions.¹² In other words, the famine was used as a weapon to subdue the hostile nation. Thus, using recent terminology, it was a national genocide organized by Lenin, which physically weakened Ukrainian resistance.

The famine in the Ukrainian provinces started with the drought-destroyed harvest in 1921 and lasted until the summer of 1923. This should be identified as the Ukrainian famine 1921-1923. With the departure of the ARA and other relief

¹²*Istoria Ukrainy: nove bachennia*. Tom 2. Kyiv : Vyd-vo Ukraina, 996.p. 180.

organizations, the War Communism Policy was abandoned and Lenin's New Economic Policy was introduced. It allowed limited private enterprise in agriculture, trade and small scale industry. The Ukrainian famine of 1921-1923 was over and the country was set for another experiment with the New Economic Policy. By the end of 1922, Ukraine had lost even its nominal independence and was now included in the newly formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The end

Documents

- 1. Agreement between the American Relief Administration and the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.**
- 2. Agreement covering the purchase of food supplies and seed in America by the American Relief Administration for Ukrainian Soviet Republic.**
- 3. Agreement with the Joint Distribution Committee regarding operations in the Ukraine and White Russia.**
- 4. Speech delivered by delegate Romanchuk.**
- 5. Foreign help, a summary in the Bulletin of the Central Commission for Combating the Consequence of the Famine Kharkov, April 1923.**
- 6. Communal Response to the Activity:**
 - a. Protocol Meeting of the inhabitants of Voyskovaya Village**
 - b. Notes of Thanks**
 - c. Help to the Children of Ukraine – Official Remarks**
- 7. Summary of wagons of foodstuffs sent to Russia (Table 6).**
- 8. Chart indicating nationalities in Ukraine (Figure 1).**
- 9. Map of famine intensity in Ukraine April 1922 (Figure 2).**
- 10. Summary of the number of starving people in south-eastern Ukrainian provinces (Table 7)**

Agreement between the American Relief Administration and the Ukrainian Soviet Republic

Whereas, the American Relief Administration, an unofficial volunteer American charitable organization under the chairmanship of Mr. Herbert Hoover, is bringing food and medical relief to the famine-stricken population in Russia under an agreement entered into with the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic at Riga, August 20th, 1921, and

Whereas, the Ukrainian Soviet Republic declares itself not a party to nor obligated by the agreement referred to above and the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic concurs in this declaration of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, and

Whereas, the American Relief Administration may find it possible and desirable, even though its resources are pledged almost wholly to the Relief of the famine situation in the Volga Valley, to bring some assistance, particularly medical, to the people of the Ukraine.

Therefore, it is agreed that the Ukrainian Soviet Republic (hereinafter called the Ukrainian Authorities) will extend to the American Relief Administration (hereinafter called the ARA) the following privileges which are identical with those accorded the ARA by the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic under the Riga Agreement.

The Ukrainian Authorities agree:

First: That they may bring into the Ukraine such personnel as the ARA finds necessary in the carrying out of its work and the Ukrainian Authorities guarantee them full liberty and protection while in the Ukraine. Non-Americans and Americans who have been detained in Soviet Ukraine since 1917 will be admitted on approval by the Ukrainian Authorities.

Second: That they will, on demand of the ARA, immediately extend all facilities for the entry into and exit from the Ukraine of the personnel mentioned in (i) and while

such personnel are in the Ukraine the Ukrainian Authorities shall accord them full liberty to come and to move about the Ukraine on official business and shall provide them with all necessary papers, such as safe-conduct, *laissez passer*, et cetera, to facilitate their travel.

Third: That in securing Ukrainian and other local personnel, the ARA shall have complete freedom as to selection and the Ukrainian Authorities will, on request, assist the ARA in securing same.

Fourth: That on delivery by the ARA of its relief supplies at the ports of Petrograd, Murmansk, Archangel, Novorossisk, Odessa or other Russian and Ukrainian ports as mutually agreed upon, or the nearest practicable available ports in adjacent countries, decision to lie with the ARA or to any inland Russian or Ukrainian frontier point, the Ukrainian Authorities, in understanding with the Soviet Russian Authorities, will bear all further costs such as discharge, handling, loading and transportation to interior base points in the areas where the ARA may operate. Should demurrage or storage occur at above ports mutually agreed upon as satisfactory, such demurrage or storage is for the account of the Ukrainian Authorities. For purposes of this agreement the ports of Riga, Reval, Libau, Hango, Helsingfors, Windau and Abo are also considered satisfactory ports. Notice of at least five days will be given to Ukrainian representatives at respective ports in case the Ukrainian Authorities are expected to take cost insurance and freight (CIF) delivery.

Fifth: That they will at their own expense supply the necessary storage at interior base points mentioned in paragraph (4) and handling and transportation from same to all such other interior points as the ARA may designate.

Sixth: That in all above storage and movement of relief supplies they will give the ARA the same priority over all other traffic as the Ukrainian Authorities give their own relief supplies. and on demand of the ARA will furnish adequate guards and convoys.

Seventh: That they will give free import and re-export and guarantee freedom from requisition to all ARA supplies of whatever nature. The ARA will repay the Ukrainian Authorities for expenses incurred by them on re-exported supplies.

Eighth: That the relief supplies are intended only for those persons designated by the ARA in accordance with paragraph (23), and remain property of the ARA until actually consumed by those persons, and are to be distributed in the name of the ARA.

Ninth: That no individual receiving ARA rations shall be deprived of such local supplies as are given to the rest of the population.

Tenth: That they will guarantee and take every step to insure that relief supplies belonging to the ARA will not go to the general adult population nor to the Army, Navy, or Government employees but only to such persons as designated in paragraphs (8) and (24).

Eleventh: The Ukrainian Authorities undertake to reimburse the ARA in dollars at CIF cost or replace in kind any misused relief supplies.

Twelfth: That the ARA shall be allowed to set up the necessary organizations for carrying out its relief work free from governmental or other interference. The Central and local Ukrainian Authorities have the right of representation thereon.

Thirteenth: That the Ukrainian Authorities will provide:

- a) The necessary premises for kitchens, dispensaries and, in as far as possible, hospitals.
- b) The necessary fuel, and when available, cooking, distributing and feeding equipment for the same.
- c) Through the ARA the total cost of relief administration, food preparation, distribution, etc. The ARA will present a monthly budget to the Ukrainian Authorities and the Ukrainian Authorities will turn over to the ARA monthly funds to cover; the ARA will account to the Ukrainian Authorities for expenditures from those funds.
- d) On demand of the ARA such local medical personnel and assistance, satisfactory to the ARA as are needed to efficiently administer its relief.
- e) E. Without cost, railway, motor, water or other transportation for movement of relief supplies and of such personnel as may be necessary to efficiently control relief operations. The Ukrainian Authorities will for the duration of

the ARA operations assign to the ARA for the sole use of its personnel and transport free of cost, such railway carriages as the ARA may reasonably request.

Fourteenth: In localities where the ARA may be operating and where epidemics are raging, the ARA shall be empowered by the Ukrainian Authorities to take such steps as may be necessary towards the improvement of sanitary conditions, protection of water supply, etc.

Fifteenth: That they will supply free of charge the necessary offices, garages, storerooms, etc., for the transaction of the ARA business and when available heat, light and water for same. Further that they will place at the disposal of the ARA adequate residential quarters for the ARA personnel in all localities where the ARA may be operating. All such above premises to be free from seizure and requisition. Examination of above premises will not be made except with knowledge and in presence of the chief of the ARA operations in Russia or his representative and except in case of flagrant ... when examiner will be held responsible in case examination unwarranted.

Sixteenth: That they will give the ARA complete freedom and priority without cost in the use of existing radio, telegraph, telephone, cable, post and couriers in the Ukraine and will provide the ARA when available and subject to the consent of competent authorities, with private telegraph and telephone wires and maintenance free of cost.

Seventeenth: To accord the ARA and its American representatives and its couriers the customary diplomatic privileges as to passing the frontiers.

Eighteenth: To supply the ARA free of cost with the necessary gasoline and oil to operate its motor transportation and to transport such motor transportation by rail or otherwise as may be necessary.

Nineteenth: To furnish at the request of the competent ARA authorities all ARA personnel, together with their impediments and supplies free transportation in the Ukraine.

Twentieth: To permit the ARA to import and re-export free of duty and requisition

such commissary, transport and office supplies as are necessary for its personnel and administration.

Twenty-First: That they will acquaint the Ukrainian people with the aims and methods of the relief work of the ARA in order to facilitate the rapid development of its efficiency and will assist and facilitate in supplying the American people with reliable and non-political information of the existing conditions and the progress of the relief work as an aid in developing financial support in America.

Twenty-second: That they will bear all expenses of the ARA relief operations other than:

- a) Cost of relief supplies at port (See paragraph 4).
- b) Direct expenses of American control and supervision of relief work in the Ukraine. In general they will give the ARA all assistance in their power toward the carrying out of its humanitarian relief operations.

Twenty-Third: The agreement of October nineteenth, 1921, between the American Relief Administration and the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic covering the operations of the ARA warehouses in Russia, is accepted by the Ukrainian Authorities, with all its privileges and assistance to the ARA and its mutual guarantees, as covering the operation of the ARA warehouses in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The Ukrainian Authorities agree that the net profits accruing from the operation may be used, at the discretion of the ARA, for the feeding of children in the famine areas of Russia.

The ARA agrees:

Twenty-fourth: That its relief distribution will be without regard to race, religion or social or political status.

Twenty-Fifth: That its personnel in the Ukraine will confine themselves strictly to the administration of relief and will engage in no political or commercial activities whatever.

Twenty-Sixth: That it will import no alcohol in its relief supplies and will permit customs inspection of its imported relief supplies at points to be mutually agreed upon.

Twenty-Seventh: The Ukrainian Authorities and the ARA equally reserve the right of cancelling this agreement in case of non-fulfilment of any of the above clauses, or upon ninety days' notice.

On behalf of the American Relief Administration,
WM. N. HASKELL, Director in Russia.

On behalf of Ukrainian Soviet Republic,
CH. RAKOVSKY, President of People's Commissaries Council
and People's Commissary for Foreign Affairs.

Made in Moscow, January Tenth, Nineteen hundred and twenty-two.

Agreement
Covering the Purchase of Food Supplies and Seed in America
by The American Relief Administration
for Ukrainian Soviet Republic

In view of the famine existing in parts of Russia and particularly within the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and with a view to assisting in the alleviation of same, the American Relief Administration (hereinafter called the ARA) is prepared to assist the Ukrainian Soviet Republic (hereinafter called the Ukrainian Authorities) in the purchase of food supplies and seed from America on the distinct understanding that food so purchased shall be used for the relief of the general famine situation within the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The general terms of this assistance by the ARA are:

First: The Ukrainian Authorities will place at the disposal of the ARA gold to the value of two million dollars for the purchase of food supplies and seed in America.

Second: The ARA will purchase and ship foods and seeds as requested by the Ukrainian Authorities up to the above two million dollars as made available by the Ukrainian Authorities for this transaction.

Third: The ARA will ship such relief supplies to Black Sea ports of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic or to the nearest practical port in adjacent countries as designated by the Ukrainian Authorities, debiting the realized amount of gold in possession of the ARA with the cost of such supplies shipped on usual condition CIF delivery. The ARA will take no responsibility for damages or shortages but will insure in the ordinary manner, collecting any damages possible for credit of the Ukrainian Authorities.

Fourth: All orders of purchase will be given to the ARA by the Ukrainian Authorities through their Delegation in London and through the Agents of this Delegation, Messrs. Arcos Limited, or through such other machinery as may be set up by mutual agreement.

Fifth: As greatest speed in delivering these food supplies and seeds to the Ukrainian famine district is imperative, the Ukrainian Authorities undertake to place with the ARA buying orders covering the full amount of the credit established under the terms of paragraph ONE above within ten days of the signing of this agreement.

Sixth: The ARA will use its best discretion in the purchase and shipment of these relief supplies but will in no way be liable for market fluctuations or other contingencies.

Seventh: To cover the immediate placing of orders covering the commodities referred to in paragraph FIVE above and to guarantee purchases until gold is available, the Ukrainian Authorities will, within ten days of the signing of this agreement, open an irrevocable credit of two million dollars in favour of the ARA with the London Branch of the Guntz Trust Company of New York.

Eighth: The Ukrainian Authorities will immediately put in hand a shipment of gold for delivery to the ARA at Stockholm equivalent in value to two million dollars. The ARA will ship this gold to America and on establishment there of its value will release the irrevocable credit established under Paragraph SEVEN above to the extent of its realized value less charges. The ARA will handle the gold from receipt at Stockholm, arranging shipment, insurance, realization, etcetera, and charging same to the Ukrainian Authorities against gold received from them.

Ninth: The Ukrainian Authorities undertake to deliver to the ARA full amount of gold to the value of two million dollars within thirty days of the signing of this agreement.

Tenth: The Ukrainian Authorities guarantee that the gold used in this transaction has been in possession of the Russian Treasury since the beginning of the war in August 1914.

Eleventh: The ARA will accept in payment of these purchases American gold coin at

its par value; foreign gold coins or bullion at their fine gold content at standard U.S.A. prices.

Twelfth: The Ukrainian Authorities undertake that the foodstuffs and seeds purchased under this scheme will be used for the relief of the general famine situation in the Ukraine famine region or for refugees from this region. Full information to the satisfaction of the ARA as to the disposition of the foodstuffs so purchased shall be submitted by the Ukrainian Soviet Authorities to the Moscow Office of the ARA.

Thirteenth: In order to co-ordinate the distribution of the relief supplies purchased under this scheme with the relief program of the ARA and avoid overlapping, the Ukrainian Authorities will, through their proper governmental department, allocate these supplies in advance of arrival at port in mutual agreement with the Moscow office of the ARA

Fourteenth: The Ukrainian Authorities hereby agree to their full understanding that this is not a commercial or trade transaction and acknowledge that the ARA are giving their services without charge or profit as a measure to secure maximum food relief to the Ukrainian people.

MADE IN LONDON THIS FIRST DAY OF FEBRUARY
ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO.

ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN RELIEF ADMINISTRATION.
WALTER LYMAN BROWN
DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE.

ON BEHALF OF THE UKRAINIAN REPUBLIC.
LEONID KRASSIN

**Agreement with the Joint Distribution Committee
Regarding operations in the Ukraine and White Russia**

August 14, 1922

In view of the fact that the American Relief Administration expects to continue its child feeding and medical sanitary operations in Russia, (including the Ukraine and White Russia) at least over the coming winter, and since the Joint Distribution Committee desires the American Relief Administration to continue in the Ukraine and White Russia and desires to participate in these operations, being essential that additional foodstuffs be provided at once to inaugurate a feeding program estimated by competent authorities at about 300,000 children monthly in the Ukraine and White Russia, the following agreement is made between the American Relief Administration and the Joint Distribution Committee for operations after September 1st:

1. While the American Relief Administration remains in Russia (for a period which cannot be definitely determined) it will supervise and conduct, with the assistance of the Joint Distribution Committee as detailed herein, a child feeding program as above in the Ukraine and White Russia, in accordance with the American Relief Administration principles, on the basis of relative need. The facts at hand indicate that the feeding program for the coming year will be chiefly urban.

2. The American Relief Administration will supervise and conduct in the Ukraine and White Russia on the same basis of relative need, an extensive medical program already inaugurated, chiefly in large cities, looking towards hospitalization, inoculation, sanitation, etc. For this work, the American Relief Administration estimates that it has already allocated supplies to the

value of \$500,000 in the Ukraine and White Russia and expects to allocate additional supplies to the value of at least \$1,000,000.

3. The Joint Distribution Committee will appropriate and allocate to the American Relief Administration, the sum of \$1,250,000 for child feeding and medical work as aforesaid, these funds to be used exclusively in the Ukraine and White Russia. All further sums necessary for this program will be furnished by the American Relief Administration. This appropriation is based on a program lasting until August, 1923, should the American Relief Administration remain in Russia for that period.
4. The Joint Distribution Committee will continue to be entitled to have representation on the staff of the Director of the American Relief Administration in Russian and the allocation and methods of feeding shall be in accordance with the American Relief Administration principles, and shall be such as to reach a fair share of the Jewish children; feeding for such children may be through existing agencies, institutions, etc. Representation shall be had by the Joint Distribution Committee also upon the medical staff.
5. The American Relief Administration will see to it that the Joint Distribution Committee shall receive full credit throughout the Ukraine and White Russia by appropriate signboards at feeding stations, hospitals, clinics, etc., so that the population shall know that the work both of child feeding and medical relief is ASSISTED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE. This wish of the Joint Distribution Committee is prompted by its hope of fostering better relations between elements of the Russian people.
6. The Joint Distribution Committee expects on its own account and responsibility to engage in reconstruction work, and in so far as the American

Relief Administration is concerned, there is no objection. This work will be a completely independent Joint Distribution Committee operation for which the American Relief Administration will be in no way responsible.

**(Signed) Walter Lyman Brown
For the Russian Committee of the
Joint Distribution Committee**

(Signed) Lewis L. Strauss

**Speech delivered by Delegate Romanchuk
to the Workers of the Plenary Session
of the Construction Workers of the City of Mykolaiv
November 15, 1922**

Comrades!

A project to export abroad 500 poods of grain happened to be a subject of great debate, not only at our plenary session of the Party Section in our province but perhaps also, in our capital cities. It is possible that in the Centre they better understand problems of high politics but, believe me comrades, that in the most obscure corners of the province it is best visible, what is necessary for the population to secure its future or to cause a mortal blow.

Doubtless in our Ministries (Commissariats) they have information on all the scale and sizes and I am not judging the value of this date. There was enough discussion on our statistics and we know the value of official numbers. When my comrades became acquainted with a project prepared by comrade Brukhanov regarding the export of grain, to tell the truth, it initially caused light humour. The project itself was issued at the time when the corn seeds started to germinate and the officials were allowed to write any numbers they liked and add as many zeroes as they wanted, and estimate ahead of time the harvest and to write the net income for the Commissariat of Supplies for this year. And what did we find after the harvest? When we compare the figures of our official statistics and even less so with those who planned the grain for export comparison will not be favourable for the authors of the official statistics. And yet, we received the project with hardly any changes in numbers.

Perhaps, in Moscow, where people are well-fed, they could elaborate on the project for export but we, in Kherson, once rich and affluent, and now starving,

cannot speak seriously about it and I would add, it is dangerous to speak with peasants and workers. The project's authors no doubt involved in political planning and in communist party meetings, forgot about the numbers of starving in South Russia (sic: Ukraine). Moreover, the bread will be sent from the south, transported through the places where four million people are starving, and probably will not survive until spring. Bread will be loaded by the port loaders, and accepted by sailors: workers and mariners whose families have nothing to eat. It is an order that will have to be fulfilled (carried out) because it is an order of the state but what will be the result of such politics? That's what should be considered. The project's author was obliged to solve the problem and he did his project on paper. But we are responsible before our electors, before the people. Therefore we have to foresee how we should explain our behaviour.

Comrades! You know that the Donbass workers are on strike because they did not get their wages and food rations. The number of workers who need immediate assistance increase every day. I feel obliged to tell you that the project in grain export, which the population found out just before the election day for the Soviet, contributed a great deal to election losses for our party in the south of Russian and Ukraine. Peasants demanded that their delegates prevent export of any pood of grain being afraid that there will not be enough of it for sowing. In their plants and factories even the communists agree that it is necessary to protest the grain export. Workers and seamen in Mykolaiv condemned this project as theft, the last piece of bread taken from the hands of the starving workers. This is, my comrades, a time the voice of the people, which does not know that the Republic needs to manifest itself in a trade, knows that this demonstration will cause hundreds of thousands of new graves.

Instead of taking grain from the elevators it would be much more profitable to take care of its magazines of collected grain left without protection at various stations and the Commissariats cannot take away. It is with tears in my eyes on my way here I saw mountains of rotten grain guarded by Red Army soldiers, absolutely useless. It was no longer grain but colossal stacks of dung that, if rightly used, we could have

perhaps had indeed 500 million poods for export.

Until Commissariat acts the way it should, I declare in the name of the railway workers of Oleksandrivsk, workshops of Katerynoslav, ports of Mykolaiv, Mariupol' and Kherson, that there cannot be any talk about export. The situation will be awful should we be told to export regardless. The authorities that cannot save grain, already collected and rotted, should well evaluate their power to oppose people's anger and that anger has already begun to erupt.

High politics, it's doubtless state business, and working men of South Russia understand it quite well. But they will not allow the last piece of bread to be taken from their wives and children for the sake of high politics. That's why, my comrades, on behalf of our electors I ask you to revise the project with the greatest attention, the project which has been presented as well as my declaration in order to avoid tragic consequences. The peasants' work is hard enough and bitterness is increasing. There is no need to push peasants and workers to the limits. The strike in Donetsk already had terrible consequences for the state supplies. And it will be more dangerous if the railways and ports refuse to work.

There could be no doubt that the interest of the Party is dear to us, there is no doubt that we have to show the capitalists that the proletariat knows how to govern, but not for such high stakes. Think well before you decide about consequences not only about the foreign countries but also for the Republic where the situation is not any better than it was last year and by the spring it may be even worse.

A document No. 401 of the Political Dept. of the French Legation in Sweden, sent on December 11, 1922, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Minister of France, Raymond Poincare in Paris, illustrating a response of Ukrainian workers about the export of Ukrainian grain during the famine in 1921-1923, received on December 24, 1922 (Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Russia, Dept. of Information) with the inscription Secret.

Roman Serbyn. Protest robotnykiv proty vyvozu zbizhzhia zakordon pidchas pershoho holodu v Ukraini, 1921-1923. – Ukr Istoryk, 4 (104), rik XXVi, 1989, p.

73-75.

Foreign Help

During the period following the famine, from October 15 (1922) to March (1923), seventeen Foreign Relief Organizations have been working in the Ukraine: the ARA, the Nansen Mission, which embodies several small organizations, the JDC, the American Mennonites, the International Union of Children's Relief, the International Workmen's Relief Committee and the Swedish Red Cross.

Relief work was concentrated chiefly in regions where consequences of the famine were the most acute (the gubernias of - Ekaterynoslav, Kharkov, Poltava, Odessa and Kiev). It is necessary to point out that as compared with 1922, the help of Foreign Organizations was considerably reduced. For instance, the ARA gave the Ukraine, in July 1922, over 50,000,000 rations, in February - 10,000. (This is probably a typographical slip. It should read 10,000,000.) An ARA ration is equal to 400 calories. (This is another slight error as the balanced ration of the ARA, according to the Washington, D.C. Bureau of Standards, is 659.60 calories).

After the harvest the people of many districts ceased to be in need of further help and began to fix up their ruined farms. Beginning with December (1922) a gradual change from the feeding of the famished in open kitchens, which were maintained by Foreign Organizations, to reconstructive help and the issue of rations to schools, asylums, children's homes, etc. was begun. Help to children was the first consideration. The grand total of children fed at the beginning of March amounted to 322,000 while the number of adults fed was 36,000. (Of this total the ARA was feeding 314,442).

Other help given by foreign organizations consisted of distribution of supplies, clothes, linen, footwear and fuel to the people and in supplying medical institutions with medicines and also in the re-establishment of agriculture.

All organizations in the Ukraine distributed about 50,000,000 rations from October 15 to March 1. Four hundred thousand gold rubles worth of clothing.

footwear and supplies were distributed in the Ukraine. Over one million poods of coal were given to the population. The medical help consisted in supplying medical institutions with medicaments and medical equipment. The ARA distributed 40,000,000 gold rubles worth of medicines, the Nansen Mission 350,000 gold rubles worth. The greatest part of the relief work in the Ukraine was done by the ARA.

During the period following the famine, the ARA distributed 39,000,000 rations. The ARA is feeding at the present time 252,000 children. (On March 31, the ARA was feeding 402,488 children in the Ukraine). Lately, the ARA undertook to help the teachers of secondary schools. It started the distribution of 5,500 food and clothing packages assigned for the months of March, April and May.

The remittance operations of the ARA have been considerably reduced lately. They will stop altogether on April 15. It is planned to organize money remittances in place of food and clothing remittances.

The Nansen Mission, which embodies 10 relief organizations of various nationalities distributed 6,000,000 rations. After Professor Nansen visited the Ukraine, the Mission proceeded, according to his plans, to take measures for the reestablishment of agriculture.

The Baptist convention, which is working under the flag of the Nansen Mission, granted the Ukraine 20 tractors for rural works. The delivery of 150,000 scythes, which will be turned over to the Central Committee of the Posledgol for distribution among the population, is also planned.

The Czecho-Slovak Mission obtained from the Czecho-Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs the assignment of 15,000,000 Crowns to be delivered as a 5-year loan without interest in grain and agricultural machinery.

The Nansen Mission started the organization of children's farms where the children are being trained in agricultural work. Students are helped by food packages. The supplying of students with books and instruments is also being done. The Nansen Mission intends to take under its protection a number of institutions of the People's Commissariat of Public Health.

An agricultural experimental station for which 20,000 pounds sterling were

assigned will be opened in the near future.

The American – Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, “Joint” started under the flag of the ARA, since the end of 1922 it has been working independently. The JDC distributed 8,000 food packages during the period following the famine. It distributed 250 gold rubles worth of clothes and 1,110,000 poods of coal. In addition to this, the JDC has extended considerable reconstructive help. According to an agreement with the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture 75 mighty tractors were set to work; 2,800 harrows, 100 ploughs, 1,335 horses, 600 cows, 140 carloads of grain were distributed among the population; 15 cheese dairies were opened and the opening of 16 more is planned. According to an agreement with the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture, the JDC is organizing stations of grain-culture. The JDC gave \$6,000 for the campaign against tuberculosis, started by the People’s Commissariat of Health.

The American Mennonites distributed 1,750,000 rations and 9 carloads of clothes and children’s underwear. During the last autumn sowing campaign, the American Mennonites began cultivating the land with 29 tractors they brought in to Russia, 427 desiatins of land was tilled and 283 desiatins sowed by the American Mennonites. They intend to till 3,000 desiatins next spring.

The International Union of Children’s Relief had under its charge 63 feeding points in which 24,700 children were being fed on March 1, 1923. Its help is increasing.

The International Workmen’s Relief Committee distributed 220,000 rations, opened and is in charge of 20 standard children’s homes where children receive everything they need.

The Swedish Red Cross distributed among the population 410,000 rations, in addition to which it gave peasants 5,000 gold rubles worth of seeds. The population of the village Staro-Shvedskoye of the Kherson district is supplied with products, which will last them until May 1. The Swedish Red Cross has one tractor.

On May 1, 1923 All Foreign Relief Organizations in the Ukraine were feeding: 6,000 children in the Donets gubernia, 132,000 children and 8,500 adults in

the Ekaterynoslav gubernia, 23,000 children and 9,500 adults in the Kiev gubernia, 148,000 children and 15,500 adults in the Odessa gubernia and 13,000 children and 2,500 adults in the Kharkov gubernia.

ARA Russian operations

Box #120

Communications.

Feeding Figures for Ukraine

On August 1st we were feeding 960,553 children and 889,139 adults – a total of 1,849,192 – in Ukraine, these figures exceeding the original maximum program by one third. The progress of this program is remarkable in view of the fact that child work began in the Ukraine on April 30th and the adult program in June.

H.H.A. ARA Russian operations, Box 120

ARA Russian operation

PROTOCOL

August 14, 1922

Chairman – G. Prokopenko, Secretary – G. Pessotzky

At the meeting were present 217 Persons.

Notification – Subjects discussed

1. About ARA's Kitchen

DECISION

Taking into consideration that the awful calamity of 1921 (bad harvest, poor crop) which befell Ukraina (Voyskovaya included) brought us to the brink of misery, let us into a most piteous (i.e. pitiful) and inextricable (extinction) situation – illness of all kind, dreadful deaths occasioned by starving “swept away” from our village of hundreds and hundreds of lives (beginning from autumn 1921).

Notwithstanding the call, the invocation addressed by the Authorities to the Foreign Powers not a single living being responded to this appeal, there was no one to save our people.

The whole population was threatened to perish with hunger, when suddenly the dawn of salvation flashed, i.e. the gift of the American Nation! Having deliberated a great length concerning this matter, we decided unanimously to express our deepest and heartiest gratitude to the American people and to its representatives, they being the first who stretched out their hand to save our people.

Let history immortalize and inscribe on its pages that the American people saved the people of Voyskovaya Village from starvation!

This benefit shall be remembered, here for ever and ever!

The original has been signed by

Chairman of Ispolkom – Pessotzky And Secretary Pessotsky

ARA Russian operations, Box #120

PROTOCOL

August 14, 1922

Chairman - G. Prokopenko, Secretary - G. Pessotzky

At the Meeting were present 217 Persons.

Discussed: Expected famine in our village in the year of 1922

2. DECIDED

The famine of 1921 forced us to sell our cattle and our last clothes to save our lives somehow. It was with the greatest difficulty, and thanks to the help of the Authorities that we contrived to sow about 500 desiatins of spring and winter corn for the present year.

But, alas, the unheard of disaster of last year is reiterated in 1922 for the exception of a minimum all the corn has been lost, has gone to ruin, and has come to nothing. (The causes of this misfortune and the number of desiatins irretrievably lost are being indicated in the ACT signed by the Commission, a Copy of which is hereby attached.)

The situation of the people appears to be even worse than it was last year, because in 1921 we still possessed cattle, horses and therefore could eat meat, we also sell the furniture, clothes etc. that we still had, whereas now nothing of all the above-named exists any more, everything has been either sold or devoured up to the last cat and dog in the village.

After deliberation of this question, we decided:

- a) To request the ARA to prolong and augment its alimentation succour for another year yet.

- b) To request the “payoks” to be delivered uncooked - corn - grits etc, as it has been already practiced, this proving a most saving method of feeding the starving population.

And this being a gift of the honourable American people let it find its way straight, proximately into the hands of our people here, besides taking into consideration the fuel-crisis and our actual conditions of existence - bare-footed and nearly naked, it will be a whole problem in winter how to get to the Kitchen, how to dine there being thus undressed etc.

- c) Should the ARA consent to this, we request that food-stuffs might be distributed to all the members of the starving family, because thus, in mixing up the good products of the ARA with different succedaneum, more or less bad, we shall obtain a sufficient quantity of food to keep the whole family from starving. The separation of children from adults proved a mistake, a failure, the feed delivered to the children not being sufficient the parents used to deprive themselves in favour of their children and it happened that parents and children died, owing to insufficiency of feed.
- d) As solicitors (intercessors) we despatch to the ARA our representatives, inhabitants of Voyskovaya, Methodius Samuelovitch Tkatchenko and Alexis Laurencievitch Tcherevchenko.

Original signed by Chairman Ispolkom – Pessotsky and Secretary Pessotzky

Notes of Thanks to the ARA

Samples of notes of thanks from Ukrainian communities

The inhabitants of Preobrazhensky borough (of Odessa) represented by their Committee caring for the poor hungry children, give the ARA their warmest and most heartfelt thanks for the assistance it gave and is still giving to the poor children, the more so because the ARA feeding is still the fundamental one, the need in 1922 being too great.

*Committee Chairman of the Preobrazhensky
borough Starostin volost' Odessa District,
Signed by the Chairman (illegible)*

Oct. 1, 1922

When the famine, carrying away millions of lives on its way ... [and at the] moment of general grief and depression, a Fairy appeared like in a golden Fairy tale... This Fairy was your relief, dear American citizens,...no words can express your noble deeds and we shall never forget them. Accept our most hearty thanks. May God grant that your children will never have to drink of the Cup of Affliction, as ours have had to do it.

*Signed by the Chairman of the Committee
with five members on behalf of
Khadjibey Lyman (Suburb of Odessa)*

Similar letters of thanks arrived from the Ivanovo village Tahinska volost', Kherson county, and many other places.

From Mykolaiv oblast' arrived about 30 such letters.

H.H.A. ARA Russian operation, Box #179, Fold. Ukraine – Odessa No. 2

Such public response was not welcomed by the Soviet Ukrainian authorities. But, since they could not deny beneficial results of the American Relief Administration, they endeavoured to minimize its significance and issued the following statement:

Help to the Children of Ukraine

It is necessary to note that the help of the greatest organization – the ARA , being the most considerable by its extension is far from being satisfactory because of the insufficient number of calories in the ration. In no case can one consider the ARA ration to be a fundamental one, it can be issued merely as a supplement. The ARA ration was reduced to 435 calories last September, and only afterwards, in connection with insistent declarations of the Central Committee of the Posledgol and of the Central Children's Relief Committee, based upon the decision of the 7th All Ukrainian Conference of Soviets, was it increased to 660 calories in March. This restriction of the ARA ration obliged the Central Children's Relief Committee with the village ARA kitchens to distribute a supplementary bread ration out of its own means, this measure levelled the allocation of the ARA kitchens with those of the Central Children's Relief Committee and the Ukrainian Red Cross. The grand total of rations distributed by Central Children's Relief Committee and the Ukrainian Red Cross. The grand total of rations distributed by Central Children's Relief Committee to April 1 is 120,000. It requires a monthly outlay of 58,000 poods of rye.

In cities the feeding work of the ARA is gradually substituted by supplying open and closed children's institutions and schools with the maintaining of a minimum net of children's kitchens.

Communications.

Table 6*: Summary of the number of wagons of foodstuffs sent from the Ukrainian SSR to the starving provinces of Ukraine, Volga Valley and Crimea from the beginning of relief activity to November 1, 1922** (the remainder of table 6 is on the next page)

From To	Collections													Total	Percentage (%)		
	Podilskia	Volynskia	Chernihivskia	Poltavskia	Kyivskia	Krainska	Kharkivskia	Odeska	Zaporizhka	Mykolajivskia	Katerynoslavskia	Donetska	Army Relief			Int'l Work	Union
Odeska					1.0			319.0								320.0	74.4
Donetska		14.0	121.0	16.0	163.0							400.0			30.0	744.0	59.3
Katerynoslav				80.0	32.0	28.0	42.0				71.0				25.0	278.0	34.6
Zaporozhe	293.0	2.0	24.0	1.0	10.0	5.0	2.0	20.0	75.0	1.0				25.0	411.0	50.9	
Mykolajivska	248.0			1.0		2.0	2.0			23.0					276.0	44.0	
Kharkivska																	
Poltavska																	
Kyivska																	
Krometschukiska																	
Red Cross																	
Total USSR	293.0	264.0	145.0	98.0	206.0	35.0	46.0	399.0	75.0	34.0	71.0	400.0	14.0	80.0	2,032.0	51.6	
% USSR	67.4	57.2	43.0	46.0	62.4	27.1	46.7	84.3	106.0	75.0	98.6	99.7	10.7	100.0			
Samaraka	10.0	116.0	26.0	17.0	24.0	43.0		27.0		2.0			70.0		345.0	100.0	
Sorobivska						9.0	16.0			5.0	1.0				324.0	100.0	
Tsarytzynska	104.0	37.0	113.0	82.0	61.0	5.0	8.0	6.0		1.0		1.0	31.0		225.0	100.0	
Uraibka		25.0		3.0	31.0		43.0	20.0					15.0		137.0	100.0	
Tatar Republic	34.0	2.0													36.0	100.0	
Crimea						37.0									37.0	100.0	
Moscow		17.0		8.0											25.0	62.5	
Total RSF SR	148.0	197.0	194.0	124.0	116.0	94.0	67.0	53.0	0.0	8.0	1.0	1.0	116.0	0.0	1,129.0	987.0	
% RSF SR	38.6	42.8	57.0	54.0	37.6	72.9	59.3	15.7		25.0	1.4	0.0	89.3	0.0		98.7	
Conclusion	441.0	461.0	339.0	222.0	322.0	129.0	113.0	392.0	75.0	37.0	72.0	401.0	116.0	80.0	3,161.0	714.1	

* God her by i put-dam, 19 21-19 22, Kharkov, 19 22, p 14 2

** In some cases, when the breakdowns by oblast is not available, only the total is provided

Continuation of Table 6 (from previous page)

From To	Realization					Total	Supplement	% USSR	Conclusion
	Gov't Ass't	Church Treasure	Taxes in Kind	Various Goods					
Odeska		2.0				2.0	108.0	25.6	430.0
Donetska	126.0	2.0	81.0	50.0		133.0	252.0	40.7	1,255.0
Katarynoslav	130.0	12.0	64.0	39.0		115.0	197.0	61.4	720.0
Zaporozhe	146.0	8.0	33.0	31.0		72.0	180.0	49.1	812.0
Mykolajivska	84.0	16.0	15.0	2.0		33.0	234.0	56.0	627.0
Kharkivska							60.0	100.0	60.0
Polivarska							5.0	100.0	5.0
Kyivska							20.0	100.0	20.0
Kremenchetska							5.0	100.0	5.0
Red Cross									0.0
Total USSR	486.0	40.0	193.0	122.0		355.0	1,961.0	49.4	8.0
% USSR	97.0	100.0	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0		
Sumarska									77.4
Saratovska									345.0
Tzarytzynska									324.0
Ural'ska									225.0
Tatar Republic									137.0
Crimea									36.0
Moscow	15.0							37.5	40.0
Total RSFSR	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	1.3	1,144.0
% RSFSR	3.0								22.6
Conclusion	501.0	40.0	193.0	122.0		2.0	1,961.0	634.1	

American Relief Administration. Herbert Hoover Chairman
 Russian Unit. District of Ukraine 1922.
 Chart indicating nationalities and races
 composing population of the Ukraine.

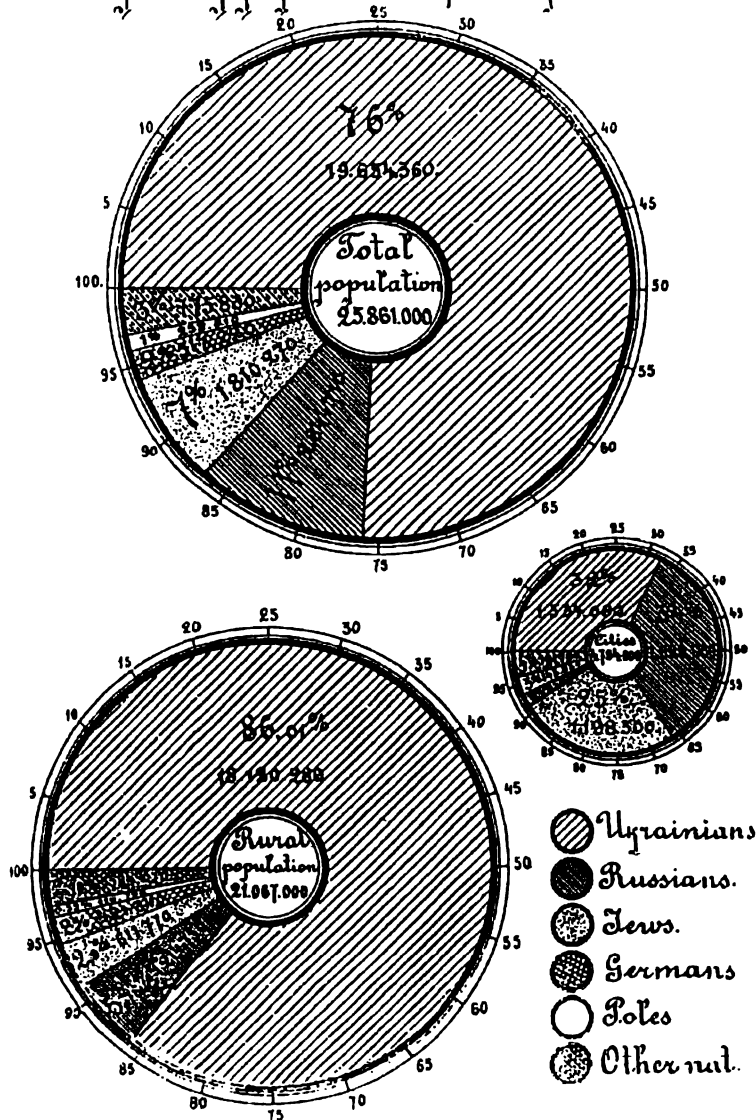


Figure 1. Population Ethnicity Composition Ukraine 1922. From "Report of Operations in the Ukraine 1922," by W. R. Grove, Supervisor, District of Ukraine, Russian Unit. Odessa, July 31, 1922. ARA (Unpublished).

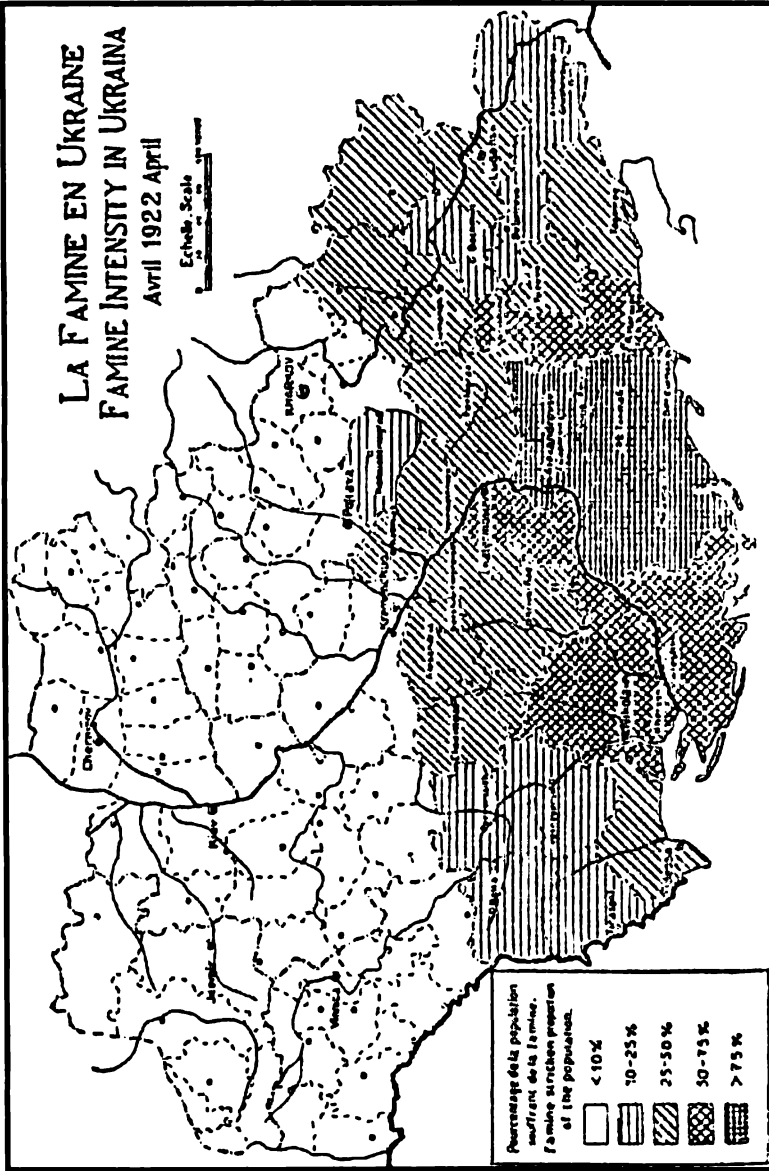


Figure 2 Famine intensity in Ukraine April 1922
Vidhan Quaiding, Famine situation in Ukraine, report Captain Vidhan Quaiding, Dr. Neuzen's representative in Ukraine and the Crimea, Geneva, April 30, 1922

Table 7 The number of starving people in 1922 in the south-eastern Ukrainian provinces.

Provinces	Total Population		Number of Starving											
	Adults	Children ≤ 16 years	December Total	January Total	February Total	March		April		May				
						Adults	≤ 16 years	Total	Adults	≤ 16 years	Total	Total		
Zaporozhie	1,270,300	401,400	225,000	436,000	891,000	518,927	394,000	902,927	478,556	470,000	918,556	918,556		
Ekaterinoslavina	1,767,000	735,800	329,996	580,000	708,795	456,795	252,000	708,795	447,000	319,000	766,000	766,000		
Nykolavivka	1,371,700	548,800	490,000	420,000	500,000	305,957	276,452	582,400	215,236	440,000	655,236	720,000		
Doneska	3,317,600	1,520,600	204,000	262,000	493,000	309,749	345,000	654,749	356,000	400,000	756,000	803,925		
Odeska	1,940,300	602,800	?	217,000	351,000	228,000	172,000	400,000	280,000	265,000	555,000	555,000		
Total	9,669,300	3,899,499	1,158,996	1,895,000	2,943,795	1,819,428	1,429,452	3,218,880	1,786,792	1,894,000	3,680,792	3,793,481		
Percentage	100%	100%	12.2%	20%	31%	-	36.6%	34.2%	-	48%	38.7%			

Ізгнї бїтї з гїбїлїтїтї • ІІІІ І-ІІІІ, шїмїкї стїтїї і оцїбїтї: Мїлїтїн, 1972, п.256.

Glossary

Arshines - an eastern-Slavic measure of length; 1 arshine = 0.711 metre or 28 inches

Blue coats – Ukrainian Army Division, former Ukrainian prisoners of war of Germany

Bolshevik - a member of the extremist wing of the Russian Social Democratic party that seized power in Russia by the Revolution of November 1917

Centre, the - the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party and the Soviet Government in Moscow

Cheka – early Soviet state security organization and a forerunner of the KGB

Commissar – government minister or department head

Comrades – a form of address by a fellow communist or fellow socialist

cwt - hundred weight, a unit of mass, 1/12 pounds

Desiatin - a unit of land measurement; 1 desiatin = 2.7 acres of land

District – Territorial unit of

Grey Coats – Ukrainian Army Division, former Ukrainian prisoners of war of Austria

Gubernia – a Ukrainian term for province

Gubzdrav –term for the Provincial Department of Public Health

Hetman – head of the Hetmanate, monarch

Kombidy - short form for the Committees of the Poor Peasants formed by the Central Committee of the CP(B)U to conduct grain requisition

Kulak - a social class of farmer characterized by Communists as having excessive wealth

Menshevik - a member of a wing of the Russian Social Democratic party before and during the Russian Revolution believing in the gradual achievement of socialism by parliamentary methods in opposition to the Bolsheviks

Narkomprod – Ukrainian Peoples Commissariat for Supplies and Provisions

Pomgol – the Central Commission of the All-Russian Committee to Aid the Starving

Pood – Eastern European unit of measurement; 1 pood = 16.38 kg or 36 lbs

Posledgol – Committee for famine recovery

Prodarmy – food collecting army

Prodnalog – Russian abbreviated form for *prodovolstvennyi nalog* for compulsory food requisitions

Red coats - Bolsheviks

Revkom - Revolutionary Committee

Tax-in-kind – strictly assigned quota of grain to be given to the state granary; food collection regardless of the farmer's yield

Volost' – administrative unit within a county

White Coats - Mensheviks

Abbreviations

AMR – American Mennonite Relief

ARA–American Relief Administration

CP(B)U – Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine

JDC – Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

NEP – New Economic Policy

RSFSR – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

USSR – Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

Names

Denikin, Anthony - Russian General, Commander-in-Chief of the anti-Bolshevik forces known as the Russian Volunteer Army

Eiduk, Alexander – a Latvian appointed as Representative Plenipotentiary of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic

Gorky, Maksim - famous proletarian writer

Grove, William R – American Relief Administration Supervisor of the Ukrainian District for the Russian Relief Unit

Haskell, William – Director of the American Relief Administration in Russian Unit in Moscow

Hoover, Herbert – Chairman of the American Relief Administration

Kalinin, Mikhail – the Central Commission Chairman

Lander, Karl - succeeded Eiduk as Plenipotentiary of the RSFSR. He passed on to Quinn the decision by the Ukrainian Congress of Soviets to discontinue all ARA operations in four provinces.

Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich – creator of Bolshevik party and head of Soviet State

Manuil'skyi, Dmytro – Agricultural Commissar of Ukraine

Nansen, Fridtjof –the well known Norwegian Arctic explorer, philanthropist and humanitarian who headed the Nansen Mission for famine relief in Ukraine and Russia

Petrovs'kyi, Hrehoriy. – President of the Ukrainian Republic

Popov, P – Head of the Central Statistical Supply in Moscow, People's Commissar of Supplies

Quinn, Cyril J – Assistant Director to Col. Haskell to oversee the ARA in Ukraine

Quisling, Vidkun – representative from the Nansen Mission for famine relief in Ukraine

Rakovsky, Christian - first chief and commissar for foreign affairs of the Russian "puppet" government of Ukraine, born in Bulgaria, Romanian citizen

Skrypnyk, Mykola – Commissar of Internal Affairs, representative of the Government of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic

Skvortzov, M – Representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Government.

Trotskii, Leon – commander-in-chief of the Red Army

Yermoshchenko, B – secretary the Ukrainian Central Committee to Aid the Starving

All place names in this work are given in Ukrainian form:

Kyiv – Kiev

Chernihiv – Chernigov

Dnipro - Dnieper

Kharkiv – Kharkov

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Volia Rossii

Index

- Aikher, J W H, 224
 Ailan, 104
 Aleksandrivsk, Town of, 216, 217
 Aleksandrov, 158
 Allied Supreme Council, 95, 97, 98
 All-Russian Assembly, 3
 All-Russian Central Executive
 Committee, 35, 57, 61, 62, 63, 73,
 151, 172, 187, 188
 All-Russian Council of Political
 Education, 192
 All-Russian Relief Committee, 52,
 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 71, 73, 74,
 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 87, 95,
 97, 112, 149, 151, 174, 200
 All-Russian Soviet of the
 Professional Trade Unions, 121
 America. *See* United States
 American, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116,
 117, 136, 167, 182
 American Relief Administration, II,
 79, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 95, 96,
 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104,
 105, 106, 108, 109, 111, 113, 116,
 183, 184, 185, 197, 199, 200, 201,
 202, 203, 204, 206, 209, 210, 211,
 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218,
 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225,
 226, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233,
 234, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242,
 243, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250,
 251, 253, 254, 255, 257, 258, 259,
 260, 261, 263, 271, 272, 273, 274,
 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281,
 284, 290, 291, 293, 296, 297, 300,
 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307,
 308, 309, 310, 311, 316, 317, 320,
 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 334
 Ammende, Dr Ewald, 53, 55, 56
 Amsterdam, 99, 268
 Andreev, A, 57
 Anker, Ella, 263
 Antonov, 79
 Archangelsk, City of, 16, 19
 Archbishop of Canterbury, 54, 55, 88
 Archbishop of New York, 54
 Armenia, 16, 179
 Artomonov, C, 216, 227, 228
 Astrakhan, Russia, 30, 37, 41, 47,
 70, 73, 105
 Atkinson, Meredith, 22, 111
 Auly, 169
 Ausem, V Kh, 162
 Austria, 5, 9, 11, 15, 104
 Avsorkisov, 82
 Azov Sea, 21, 22, 127, 147, 175,
 176, 179, 221
 Bakhmach, Town of, 254
 Baltic Sea, 101, 105, 280
 Baltic War Fleet, 26, 122
 Baranowice, Town of, 45
 Barringer, Thomas C, 221, 254, 337
 Bashkir Autonomous Republic. *See*
 Bashkiria
 Bashkiria, 42, 48, 70, 73, 152
 Beeuwkes, Dr Henry, 101, 251
 Bela Kun, 86
 Belgium, 96, 107
 Beliaev, A, 41, 42
 Benedict XIV, Pope, 54
 Benedict XV, Pope, 88, 97
 Berdiansk, City of, 161, 172, 189,
 217, 218, 242
 Bil'shovyk, 129
 Black Sea, 22, 101, 127, 147, 176,
 179, 183, 234, 280, 306

- Bogen, Dr Boris, 215, 227
 Bohoyavlenkske, City of, 174
 Bolshevik. *See* Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party
 Bredov, Gen N E, 17
 Brentano, Prof L, 55
 Brest Litovsk, City of, 4, 5, 6
 Britain, 29, 54, 55, 79, 87, 88, 96
 Brown, David, 233
 Brown, J N, 182
 Brown, Walter Lyman, 79, 91, 214
 Brown, William L, 88
 Budyenny, Semen, 18
 Bukharin, Nikolai, 26, 146, 195
 Buzuluk, Russia, 107, 108
 Byelborodov, 201
 Byelorussia, 1, 19, 21, 80, 116, 200, 221, 246, 299, 309, 310
 Caffey, Dr John P, 245, 277
 Carl of Sweden, Prince, 55
 Carrol, Phillip, 99
 Caspian Sea, 105
 Catherine II, Empress, 42
 Caucasus, 17, 29, 33, 43, 51, 93, 143, 170, 183
 Central Commission for Relief, 58, 67, 70, 76, 78, 105, 114, 117, 154, 157, 177, 181, 189, 192, 215, 233, 258, 274, 276
 Central Statistical Office, 30, 32, 241
 Cheka, 7, 20, 48, 51, 79, 80, 104, 131, 184, 279
 Cherkassov, I A, 61
 Cherkasy district, 236
 Chernigov. *See* Chernihiv
 Chernihiv, City of, 13, 119, 124, 130, 138, 140, 152, 153, 155, 158, 169, 193, 200, 203, 216, 219, 245, 259, 288, 336
Chervonyi Prapor, 125
 Chicherin, Georgii, 67, 68, 150, 194
 Children's Welfare Commission, 84
 Chubar, Vlas, 40, 154
 Chuvash, 37, 42, 47, 73, 108
 Clydesdale (Steamship), 183
 Cohan, Abraham, 93
 Commissariat for Food Procurement, 8
 Commissariat for Food Supplies of Ukraine, 121
 Commissariat for Foreign Trade, 48
 Commissariat for Health, 84
 Commissariat of Internal Affairs, 58, 132
 Committee to Aid the Starving, 51, 58, 154, 172, 257, 267
 Committees of the Poor Peasants, 123, 132, 140
 Communist International Trade Union, 69, 74
 Communist Party, III, 15, 26, 28, 36, 40, 41, 51, 53, 57, 74, 77, 79, 81, 91, 92, 113, 119, 120, 124, 130, 133, 134, 141, 150, 154, 158, 187, 188, 197, 223, 234, 236, 260, 262, 275, 277, 287, 288, 291, 293, 295, 296, 313, 333, 334
 Convention of Delegates of the Local Soviets, 274
 Cossacks, 2, 17, 18, 67, 135, 184
 Council of the League of Nations, 86
 Crimea, 18, 19, 21, 39, 40, 42, 50, 67, 135, 139, 150, 160, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 210, 213, 215, 235, 242, 245, 258, 281, 283, 284, 285
 Czechoslovakia, 23, 98, 107, 240, 265, 280
 Dal'nyk, 262
 Danish Relief Committee, 107
 Dashkevych, Ukrainian Central Co-operative Union representative, 214
 Davydivka, 189
 Debal'tsevo, City of, 174
 Deev, Comrade, 274
 Denikin, General Anthony, 17, 18, 20, 22, 50, 127, 335
 Denmark, 107
 Desone, Dr, Swiss representative, 263

- Detroit, City of, 106
 Dnieper River, 13, 223, 254, 336
 Don Valley, 139
 Donbass, 4, 122, 141, 156, 163, 295
 Donets Basin, 13, 17, 21, 83, 134,
 145, 146, 149, 161, 165, 172, 208,
 213, 217, 223, 228, 235, 245, 261,
 318
 Donetsk, 138, 141, 147, 149, 216,
 224, 225, 285
 Dubavskii, V, 74
 Dzhankoy, Crimea, 181, 183
 Dzierzhynski, Felix, 80, 81
 Eichhorn, Gen Herman, 9
 Eiduk, Alexander, 101, 116, 162,
 182, 200, 201, 204, 207, 209, 215,
 260, 335
 Ekaterinoslav. *See* Katerynoslav
 El'shanov, 61
 England. *See* Britain
 Epidemic Commission, 181, 252
 Erevan, Armenia, 26
 Estonia, 2, 6, 16, 55, 69
 Eunukidze, A, 47, 74
 European Relief Council, 89, 93
 Evpatoria, Crimea, 181
 Extraordinary Commission, 7
 Fastiv, Ukraine, 165
 Fedenko, Panas, 266
 Feldbach, Mrs Wallen, 44
 Feodosia, Crimea, 181
 Figner, V N, 81
 Finkelstein, M V, 40
 Finland, 1, 5, 6, 19, 42, 69, 106
 Fisher, Harold H, 88, 101, 102, 104,
 105, 108, 117, 171, 182, 210, 212,
 217, 223, 226, 233, 234, 240, 293,
 294
 Forbes, C S, 233
 Foster, Dr Theodore F, 245, 246, 247
 Foster, 96, 126
 France, Anatole, 56
 French Expeditionary Forces, 129
 Friends of the Soviet Russia, 93,
 106, 112
 Frumkin, 201
 Frunze, Mikhail, 40, 146
 Galicia, Province of, 269
 Gasparri, Cardinal, 194, 239
 George, Lloyd, British PM, 87
 Georgia, 16
 Germany, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15,
 24, 25, 37, 42, 43, 45, 47, 50, 55,
 56, 79, 100, 103, 104, 108, 110,
 126, 146, 147, 171, 175, 176, 179,
 184, 242, 268, 280
 Gibbed, Mr, 223
 Gilson, Etienne, 262, 263
 Golder, Dr Frank A, 200, 201, 202,
 203, 204, 233, 234
 Golovin, 78
 Gorky, Maksim, 52, 53, 55, 56, 58,
 61, 63, 64, 65, 75, 81, 85, 335
 Gorvin, Nansen Mission, 213
 Greece, 179, 240
 Grove, Colonel William R, 216, 217,
 219, 223, 226, 227, 253, 335
 Gubpomgol, 291
 Gubzdrav, 136, 245, 247, 277
 Gurevich, B, 144
 Haigh, Dr W J, 181, 250
 Harding, Warren G, 89
 Harrington, George, 209, 220, 222,
 225, 236, 237, 275, 278
 Haskell, Colonel William N, 100,
 116, 117, 200, 204, 209, 210, 215,
 226, 253, 254, 259, 260, 276, 281,
 305, 335
 Hauptmann, Gerhard, 56
 Hecker, Prof Julius F, 194
 Henichesk, Kherson province, 217,
 221
 Hiebert, P C, 201
 Hlukhiv, City of, 138, 155
 Hodgson, James F, 226
 Homel, Byelorussia, 116
 Hoover, Herbert, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90,
 95, 97, 106, 113, 200, 202, 300,
 335, 339
 Howard, E R, 276

- Hrushevskiy, Prof M, 10, 11, 175, 267, 269
- Huliay Pole, Zaporozhe province, 161, 217, 247
- Humanité*, 289
- Hungary, 86, 103, 104
- Hutchinson, Prof Lincoln, 117, 167, 168, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 207, 208, 215, 234
- Hynes, John H, 211, 238, 239, 290
- Ibanez, Bosco, 56
- Illin, 104
- International Commission for Russian Relief, 95, 98
- International Council of Trade Unions, 69, 105
- International Workers' Relief Committee, 112
- International Workers' Union, 289
- Italy, 96, 103, 104, 107
- Ivanov, Andrey, 125
- Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Russia, 15
- Ivanychi, 166
- Iziaslav Relief Committee, 153
- Izvestiia*, 30, 31, 40, 41, 44, 47, 55, 61, 70, 75, 81, 117, 178, 181, 188, 195, 228, 236, 259, 293
- Janz, Rev Benjamin B, 198
- Jewish, 14, 19, 93, 146, 147, 179, 190, 200, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 234, 260, 299, 310
- Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, II, 200, 215, 220, 221, 222, 233, 239, 241, 246, 279, 309, 310, 311, 316, 318, 334
- Johnson, Albert N, 92
- Kaledin, Gen O H, 2
- Kalinin, Mikhail, 8, 24, 47, 51, 62, 70, 74, 75, 149, 154, 156, 157, 174, 181, 188, 189, 242, 257, 335
- Kaliuzhny, 162
- Kama River, 42
- Kamenev, Lev, 61, 62, 74, 78, 80, 101, 102, 114
- Kamianka, 217
- Kaplan, Chairman, 214
- Kasymenko, 288
- Katerynoslav, 13, 129, 132, 134, 137, 138, 141, 145, 146, 147, 149, 151, 152, 159, 161, 163, 168, 172, 193, 208, 209, 213, 216, 217, 220, 221, 222, 225, 230, 231, 232, 235, 237, 241, 245, 254, 261, 262, 265, 274, 275, 277, 285, 289, 291, 314
- Kazan, City, Russia, 42, 48, 100, 105, 116, 277
- Kazan-Saratul, 23
- Kerch, Crimea, 181
- Kharkiv, City of, 3, 5, 13, 17, 18, 29, 48, 93, 119, 125, 135, 140, 146, 151, 154, 155, 162, 164, 165, 167, 170, 171, 172, 175, 187, 189, 193, 198, 199, 201, 202, 203, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 211, 212, 213, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 224, 225, 226, 227, 230, 236, 238, 240, 242, 245, 249, 259, 261, 263, 275, 284, 293, 336
- Kherson, City of, 129, 132, 147, 172, 193, 220, 226, 242, 251, 252, 261, 265, 273, 283, 318, 324
- Khortytisia, island, 147
- Kirgizland, 37
- Kishkin, Dr Nikolai, 61, 62, 77, 80, 82
- Kobyliaky, Poltava province, 138, 290
- Kogan, A.N., 103
- Kolchak, Admiral Aleksander, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22
- kombidy*, 7, 8, 25, 123, 124, 125, 152, 333
- Komiteti Nezamozhnykh Selian*, 132
- Kommunist*, 227, 240
- Komezamy*, 132, 133
- Kondrachev, N D, 76
- Kondufor, I.U., 125
- Konecny, 204
- Kongrad, 290
- Kononenko, K, 294

- Konotop, City of, 254
 Korobov, K, 61
 Korolenko, Vladimir, 61, 82
 Kostiantynohrad, City of, 138
 Koziatyn, City of, 254
Krasnaya Gazeta, 38
 Krasnodar, Kuban, 135, 183
 Krassin, Leonid, 28, 61, 87
 Kraus, Gen Anthony, 17
 Kravchenko, Victor, 169
 Kremenchuk, City of, 138, 140, 158,
 216, 218, 220, 226, 245, 249, 280
 Kremlin, Moscow, 52, 64, 65, 97,
 128
 Kronstadt, Russia, 26, 28, 134
 Kryvyj Rih, City of, 3, 122
 Kuban, province of, 17, 18, 19, 37,
 67, 128, 135, 139, 183
 Kuraev, V, 74
 Kursk, 12, 17, 84
 Kuskin, N N, 52
 Kuskova, Ekaterina, 52, 53, 61, 64,
 76, 80, 82, 112
 Kutler, N N, 81
 Kutuzov, V, 74
 Kuyal'nyk, Odessa province, 262,
 263
 Kyiv, 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18,
 21, 119, 130, 132, 135, 137, 138,
 147, 153, 158, 165, 184, 187, 190,
 191, 193, 200, 201, 202, 203, 206,
 208, 210, 211, 212, 214, 216, 217,
 218, 219, 220, 229, 237, 245, 246,
 248, 254, 259, 260, 267, 336, 337
 Lander, Karl, 260, 335
 Lange, Dr, 264
 Latvia, 6, 16, 55
 Lausanne Conference, 261
 League of Nations, 86, 181, 184,
 250, 252
 League of Nations Epidemic
 Commission. *See* Epidemic
 Commission
 Lebid, Dmytro, 40
 Lenin, Vladimir I, I, 1, 2, 4, 7, 12,
 15, 16, 20, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33,
 40, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 64, 65,
 66, 67, 78, 80, 81, 86, 99, 100,
 105, 119, 120, 121, 122, 126, 127,
 128, 129, 131, 133, 134, 139, 141,
 142, 143, 146, 150, 170, 193, 194,
 288, 289, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298,
 335
 Levin, Dr, 277
 Levytskyi, M, 162
 Lindsay, Donald, 205
 Litvinov, Maksim, 79, 86, 87, 88, 91
 Lityn, Town of, 158
 Lobachov, I, 57
 Lonergan, T C, 200, 204
 Lord Crewe, 88
 Lowrie, Donald, 100
 Lunacharsky, Anatoly, 61
 Lynam, Dr Frank, 247, 249
 MacPherson, K K, 184, 229
 Maidan of Bahryn, 158
 Makhno, Nestor, 18, 133, 234
 Malyi Buyalyk, 136, 233
Manchester Guardian, 218, 263
 Manuil'skyi, Dmytro, 145, 154, 155,
 156, 171, 335
 Manukhin, S S, 80
 Mari Region, 42, 73
 Mariupol, City of, 122, 147, 172,
 173, 174, 175, 176, 177
 Masanov, 36
 Matthews, Philip, 205, 209, 214, 215
 Mazepa, Isaak, 266
 McElroy, 226, 246
 Melitopol', 161, 217
 Mellor, 135
 Mennonites, 147, 197, 198, 199, 201,
 240, 279, 281, 316, 318, 334
 Mensheviks, 10, 65, 99
 Miller, Evgeny, 16, 19
 Miller, Prof M, 191, 195
 Minsk, 116, 218
 Mordvinians, 108
 Moscow, I, 14, 15, 17, 22, 28, 29,
 30, 31, 36, 37, 40, 43, 48, 52, 53,

- 55, 56, 61, 62, 69, 70, 71, 74, 75, 77, 81, 86, 87, 92, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101, 108, 112, 114, 116, 119, 120, 121, 123, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 132, 133, 134, 137, 140, 141, 143, 146, 147, 148, 157, 158, 160, 161, 166, 167, 168, 170, 171, 174, 178, 180, 181, 182, 190, 192, 194, 195, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 203, 204, 207, 209, 210, 212, 214, 217, 218, 220, 226, 233, 234, 235, 236, 238, 241, 242, 247, 249, 253, 254, 259, 260, 262, 263, 265, 276, 287, 288, 290, 293, 295, 296, 297, 305, 308, 312, 333, 335
- Muir, P. U., 223
- Mukhanova, Nadezhda, 104
- Murmansk, Russia, 16, 301
- Mykolaiv, 134, 136, 138, 145, 149, 152, 157, 161, 174, 208, 213, 216, 217, 220, 224, 226, 227, 230, 235, 238, 242, 249, 251, 252, 261, 273, 283, 291, 325
- Mykolaiv, City of*, 227, 274
- Myrhorod, City of, 124, 156
- Nansen, Fridtjof, II, 55, 79, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 105, 106, 107, 110, 137, 167, 180, 184, 199, 210, 212, 213, 214, 217, 232, 241, 253, 257, 261, 264, 266, 267, 275, 279, 280, 281, 284, 287, 289, 290, 291, 293, 316, 317, 335
- Narkomprod, 7, 57, 147, 149, 170, 334
- Netherlands, 107
- New Economic Policy: NEP, 28, 30, 134, 141, 143, 156, 260, 290, 298, 334
- New Republic*, 113
- New York Times, 45, 63, 67, 68, 82, 92, 99, 112, 195
- Nikodimov, Ivan, 190
- Nikopol, City of, 172, 223
- Noulens, Joseph, 98
- Novo-Mykolska, Village of, 174
- Novorossiisk, City of, 183, 184, 239
- October Revolution, 2
- Odessa, 48, 130, 134, 136, 138, 145, 147, 148, 149, 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 164, 167, 172, 174, 193, 206, 208, 210, 211, 212, 213, 216, 217, 218, 220, 221, 222, 226, 228, 230, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 245, 247, 251, 252, 261, 262, 273, 276, 283, 289, 290, 291, 301, 316, 319, 324, 325
- Oleksandrivsk, 208, 230, 245
- Omsk, Siberia, 16
- Ordzhonikidze, Grigory, 16
- Orel, City of, Russia, 18, 40, 84
- Orenburg, Siberia, 116, 251
- Paderin, A H, 57
- Pankovka, 169
- Pan-Russian Committee. *See* All-Russian Relief Committee
- Parcel Remittance Program, 260
- Parcel Remittance Service, 202
- Pecherska Lavra, Kyiv, 187, 190, 191
- Penza, Russia, 37, 70
- Perm, Russia, 37
- Persia, 110
- Pessotzky, G, 272, 320, 322, 323
- Petlura, Symon, 21, 165
- Petrograd, I, 1, 2, 4, 15, 16, 22, 26, 29, 80, 100, 104, 105, 116, 121, 122, 130, 134, 143, 182, 194, 239, 293, 296, 301
- Petrovs'kyi, Hryhorii, 45, 148, 154, 157, 164, 174, 198, 211, 241, 242, 259, 335
- Piatakov, Georgi, 12
- Pius XI, Pope, 194, 254
- Plenum of Moscow Soviet of Workers and Peasants' Deputies, 142
- Podolia, Ukraine, 13, 36, 119, 130, 137, 138, 152, 153, 158, 200, 203, 216, 219, 245, 259
- Poland, 1, 5, 21, 44, 103, 119, 163

- Polish Co-operative Bakery, 106
 Politburo, 35, 53, 54, 120, 141, 158, 197
 Pol'skii, Mikhail, 193
 Poltava, 124, 130, 138, 140, 145, 153, 156, 158, 166, 193, 200, 203, 216, 218, 220, 225, 226, 245, 249, 262, 265, 274, 288, 290, 316
 Pomgol. *See* Central Commission for Relief, *See* Central Commission for Relief, *See* Central Commission for Relief, *See* Central Commission for Relief, *See* Central Commission for Relief, *See* Central Commission for Relief, *See* Central Commission for Relief, *See* Central Commission for Relief
Pomoshch, 75, 76, 77, 79
 Popov, P., 31, 32, 33, 148, 150, 241, 335
 Prague, CSR, 204, 253, 257, 265, 268
Pravda, 35, 36, 39, 56, 57, 74, 75, 77, 92, 116, 135, 138, 146, 148, 161, 192, 195, 236
 Presidium of the All-Russian Pomgol, 49
 Prodamy, 20, 21, 43, 49, 71, 120, 121, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 133, 141, 143, 148, 150, 158, 161, 165, 166, 227, 265, 288, 334
 Prokopenko, G, 272, 320, 322
 Prokopovich, Sergei, 52, 53, 61, 78, 80, 82, 283
 Provincial Relief Committee, 109
 Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government, 12
 Prypet River, 45
 Public Famine Relief Committee, 63
 Pugachev, 112, 114
 Quakers, 95, 96, 107, 108, 111
 Quinn, Cyril J C, 216, 259, 260, 335
 Quisling, Captain Vidkun, 137, 159, 160, 167, 176, 210, 211, 214, 215, 217, 218, 223, 227, 335, 338
 Rada, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 267
 Radek, Karol. *See* Sobelson
 Radomyslsky, 74
 Rakovsky, Christian, 14, 40, 49, 128, 131, 141, 142, 170, 198, 202, 209, 210, 213, 235, 261, 281, 295, 296, 305, 336
 Red Cross, 55, 64, 79, 90, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 106, 107, 151, 162, 163, 168, 174, 183, 198, 210, 211, 213, 214, 225, 228, 236, 239, 240, 253, 254, 268, 269, 279, 280, 291, 316, 318, 326
 Reswick, J W, 279
 Revel, Latvia, 86
 Riga, 21, 43, 79, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 100, 102, 113, 204, 209, 210, 237, 276, 300, 301
 Robertson, Sir Benjamin, 22
 Romankovo, 169
 Romny, City of, 138
 Rosenfeld. *See* Kamenev, Lev
 Rostov, 18, 40, 116, 183, 195
 RSFSR, 32, 91, 122, 157, 174, 204, 225, 258, 260
 Russian Central Relief Committee. *See* All-Russian Relief Committee
 Russian Commission of the Near East Relief, 92
 Russian Constituent Assembly, 1
Russian Information & Review, 109
 Russian Orthodox Church, 54, 56, 64, 188
 Russian People's Commissariat for Supplies, 48
 Russian Provisional Government, 1
 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, 4, *See* Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party
 Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 39, 42, 48, 50, 52, 54, 61, 65, 69, 71, 76, 82, 96, 97, 98,

- 99, 107, 111, 112, 115, 119, 120, 123, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 152, 179, 184, 193, 195, 266, 280, 294, 295, 333, 334, 335
- Russian-American Relief Committee for Children, 112
- Rykov, Aleksei, 57, 61, 62, 78
- Samara, 23, 24, 30, 37, 41, 47, 48, 50, 70, 73, 83, 104, 105, 107, 108, 112, 114, 116, 152, 166
- San Francisco, 106
- Saratov, 23, 24, 25, 30, 35, 37, 41, 43, 44, 47, 48, 50, 68, 70, 73, 83, 88, 105, 107, 108, 116, 148, 152, 166, 280
- Save the Children Fund, 87, 88, 97, 105, 107, 108, 111, 280
- Savinkov, Boris, 98
- Semashko, Nikolai, 40, 53, 74
- Serafimov, 190
- Serafimovich, A, 74
- Sereda, Semen, 41
- Sevastopol, 179, 181
- Shlikhter, Alexander, 120
- Siberia, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 25, 29, 31, 37, 133, 142, 151, 166, 257
- Sidorin, P N, 81
- Simbirsk, 37, 47, 73, 83, 84, 105, 116
- Simferopol, Crimea, 179, 180, 181, 281
- Skoropadsky, Pavlo, 4, 11
- Skrypnyk, Mykola, 14, 203, 295, 336
- Skvortzov, M, 222, 238, 261, 277, 278, 279, 336
- Slatkovsky, Dr, 214
- Smidovich, Peter, 61, 62, 162
- Sobelson, 92
- Society of Friends. See Quakers
- Sofinov, Prof P G, 289, 290
- Solzhenitsyn, A, 82
- Soviet of People's Commissars, 6, 14
- Soviet Russian Federative Socialist Republic, 5
- Sovnarkom, 190
- St Michael's Monastery, 191
- St. Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv, 191
- State Planning Commission, 30
- Studenikin, 238
- Supreme Economic Council, 8, 85
- Surber, Dr F Raymond, 245, 252
- Sverdlov University, 57
- Sverdlov, Iakov (Yankel), 120
- Sviderskii, A, 74
- Sweden, 79, 107
- Switzerland, 104
- Tagantsev, V N, 80
- Tahanrih, City of, Russia, 174
- Tambov, City of, 8, 24, 79
- Tatar, 27, 37, 42, 45, 47, 50, 73, 100, 108, 109, 166, 181, 284
- Tatarka, 262
- Tavria, 129, 265, 285
- Teodorovich, I A, 53, 61
- Teodorovich, I A., 35
- Tetov, 223
- The Times* (London), 36, 38, 39, 40, 43, 53, 63, 67, 68, 70, 81, 88, 96, 98, 135, 165, 266
- Theodosia, Crimea, 245
- Third All-Russian Food Conference, 31
- Thirkutsk, 166
- Tikhon, Patriarch, 54, 56, 188, 189, 194
- Treaty of Brest Litovsk, 5
- Treaty of Warsaw, 21
- Trotsky, Leon, 5, 20, 26, 53, 336
- Tsaritsyn, 17, 30, 37, 41, 47, 50, 70, 73, 100, 109, 116, 152, 166
- Tsaritsyn Relief Committee, 148
- Tukhachevsky, Mikhail, 26
- Tuliyisi, Prof., 30
- Turkestan, 37, 48, 83
- Tyraspol, City of, 136, 167, 233
- Tyrsa, 161
- Udmurts, 42
- Ufa, 23, 37, 42, 47, 48, 70, 73, 116
- Ukrainian Central Bureau of

- Statistics, 207
 Ukrainian Central Rada, 1, 4, 5
 Ukrainian Commissariat for Food Supplies, 48, 125, 141
 Ukrainian Congress of Workers, 3
 Ukrainian Evacuation Commission, 151
 Ukrainian Labour Congress, 13
 Ukrainian Learned Society, 267
 Ukrainian National Republic, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 267
 Ukrainian Peoples' Commissariat for Supply of Provisions, 149
 Ukrainian Red Cross, 151, 163, 269
 Ukrainian Social-Democratic Labour Party, 266, 269
 Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries, 9
 United States, 85, 86, 89, 93, 95, 101, 103, 106, 112, 169, 175, 197, 200, 218, 219, 232, 260, 267, 280, 281, 304
 United States Grain Corporation, 89
 Unschlicht, Joseph, 80, 81
 Ural, 19, 23, 51, 70, 139, 140, 152, 166, 167, 281, 284
 Uralsk, Town of, 152, 153, 166
 Usatova, 262
 Vakulin, 25
 Velykyi Tokmak, City of, 153, 217
 Venear, Dr Stephen, 245
 Viatka, 37, 47, 73
 Vienna, 175, 267
 Vinnytsia, City of, 13, 156, 162, 208
 Vishinskii, A, 74
Visti, 149, 162, 197
 Vitebsk, Byelorussia, 116
 Vladimirov, Myron, 40, 48, 121, 140, 141, 150, 159
 Vodopoiske, 174
 Volga River Valley, 17, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 35, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 65, 66, 67, 70, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 90, 100, 101, 105, 107, 108, 110, 116, 117, 118, 119, 138, 139, 140, 143, 146, 149, 150, 151, 153, 156, 157, 160, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 171, 177, 178, 187, 188, 190, 192, 198, 199, 201, 203, 206, 207, 208, 215, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 257, 258, 261, 265, 284, 287, 288, 290, 291, 293, 296, 300
 Volhynia, 36, 119, 130, 138, 160, 169, 200, 203, 216, 219, 245, 259, 269
 Volunteer Army, 17, 18, 19, 21, 50, 127, 179
 Voronezh, City of, 17, 40
 Voronskii, S, 74
 Voskresinka, Village of, Odessa region, 247
 Voyskova, Town of, 272, 273, 299, 320, 323
 Voznesensk, 136, 233
 Vynnychenko, Volodymyr, 12, 267
 Wallach, Maksim. *See* Litvinov, Maksim
 Walsh, Rev Edmund, 182, 183, 184
 War Communism, I, 7, 8, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 38, 120, 128, 134, 143, 146, 179, 279, 290, 298
 War Department, 90, 106
 War Food Supply Office, 120
 Warburg, Felix, 215
 Welsh, Father E A, 239
 Western Europe, 55, 63, 89, 96, 101, 135, 197, 200, 265
 Western Ukrainian Republic, 13
 White Russia. *See* Byelorussia
 Wilson, Woodrow, President, USA, 85
 Wrangel, General Peter, 21, 22, 179, 184
 Yagoda, G, 279
 Yalta, Crimea, 181
 Yaroslavskii, E, 74
 Yelesavethrad, 208, 217, 242, 249,

- 251, 260
Yermoshchenko, Benjamin, 154,
198, 336
Yudenich, General Nikolai, 16, 19,
130
Yuzivka, City of, 174
Zaporozhe, 133, 134, 141, 147, 148,
152, 156, 158, 159, 161, 166, 171,
208, 213, 217, 223, 225, 230, 235,
236, 240, 242, 245, 247, 252, 253,
278, 285, 291
Zatonsky, Volodymyr, 14
Zbruch River, 22
Zharko, Panas, 14
Zhmerynka, 254
Zhytomyr, 153, 166, 208
Zinov'ev, Georgii, 74, 97



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Edmund Mellen

LA FAMINE EN UKRAINE

FAMINE INTENSITY IN UKRAINA

Avril 1922 April

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