

THE AMERICAN CHILDREN'S RELIEF PROGRAM AND THE ESTONIAN CHILDREN'S RELIEF SOCIETIES IN 1919

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The American Relief Administration sponsored Children's Relief Program that operated in Europe in 1919–1922. The program was initiated and organized by Herbert Hoover, the head of the American Relief Administration (ARA) in Europe. The article provides a comprehensive account of the program in-so-far as it affected Estonia. The financing, the administration, and the distribution of food to children via the Estonian Children's Relief Committees will be covered.

At the beginning of April 1919, American Relief Administration (ARA) officials announced that its Children's Relief program will be extended to Estonia with an initial grant of \$20,000 that was soon, however, increased to \$40,000 worth of food per month for four months.¹ This marked only the beginning. The goal of the paper is to provide a comprehensive account of the program from its conceptualization to its implementation. This means examining the financing, program administration, transportation, and distribution and consumption of the food provided.

The idea for such a program originated with Herbert Hoover, the director of the American Relief Administration in post-World War I Europe.² On

¹ The news spread to the town of Haapsalu in the following fashion: "At 2:30 the American representative Lt. Andrew A. Granstedt appeared at the meeting... and announced that the American government has decided, instead of the promised food worth \$20,000 a month to double this, in other words \$40,000 a month for feeding Estonian children... In his final comments he stated that food in sufficient quantity will arrive from America so that not only the poor, but all children would receive some." The latter prediction did not turn out to be true. Protocol of the Lääne Ühistöö Lastekaitsetoimkonna eestseisuse koosolek, No. 2, 7 May 1919. Eesti Riigiarhiiv (ERA), f 3020, n 2, s 1.

² Actually Herbert Hoover was a man of many hats (titles and responsibilities) in Paris in 1919. For one, he continued to be the U.S. Food Administrator since 1917 which meant that, besides directing food policy in the U.S., he was in charge of policies to supply food on credit to the allied countries in Europe. At the same time he came to head the American Relief Administration

22 February 1919 Hoover wrote in a letter to Henry P. Davison, Chairman of the American Red Cross:³

Reports which we now have from the many skilled investigators whom we have sent through Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, Roumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Jugo-Slavia, Montenegro, and also in the North of France, show that there is a great deal of malnutrition amongst the children, more particularly of the poorer classes. It is necessary to at once provide a special ration for these children and to systematically organize such agencies as we conducted in Belgium for some years by way of creation of systematic handling of the debilitated children and the provision of supplementary rations through the schools, which shall be independent of the general rationing of populations.

We may note that almost the entire region of what came to be termed East Central Europe was included and the Baltic States were regarded as part of this region of Europe. The decision to include the Baltic States was made by Hoover. Hoover's reference to Belgium refers to Belgian relief activity that he organized in Belgium where more than 2.5 million children received one daily meal in feeding kitchens as a supplement to what they obtained by regular means. Hoover actually proposed to Davison that the American Red Cross take the task of feeding children in eastern Europe upon itself. Davison declined by admitting that such an effort was beyond the capability of the Red Cross. Since the American Red Cross declined to undertake this mission, Hoover took it upon himself to organize an effort in behalf of children. Whether Hoover expected the American Red Cross to take on such a task may be questioned. When Hoover became Director of the Food Administration in Washington in 1917, he asked the American Red Cross to take on the Belgian Relief activity. Since the answer was that the Red Cross was willing to administer the program provided someone else would take care of the financing and shipping, Hoover resigned himself to continuing to chair the Belgian Committee while also serving as the Food Administrator. After all, the difficult part of the Belgian relief effort was to find financing and locate shipping during wartime.⁴

Hoover was a successful mining engineer and millionaire with interests around the world who turned to public service in 1914 while in London at the

in Europe which was to distribute food for credit to countries liberated from the occupation of the Central Powers. He was also the head of the Food Section of the Supreme Economic Council in Paris as well as a member of that Council and served as one of the economic advisers to President Wilson.

³ Letter of Hoover to Davison (22 February 1919) in **Bane, S. L., Lutz, R. H.** (eds). *Organization of American Relief in Europe 1918–1919*. Stanford University Press, Stanford University, California, 1943, 287–288. Hoover continued to use the term “Baltic States” in his reports on the activity of the Children’s Relief program and of the ARA in general. Two questions can be raised. What were the “Baltic States”? Hoover very definitely included Lithuania, hence Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The second question on whether or not this implied some kind of recognition by the U.S. of the Baltic States requires a more complex answer. It may be noted that the Baltic States are included in the Children’s Relief program at its inception.

⁴ **Nash, G. H.** *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Master of Emergencies, 1917–1918*. W. W. Norton, New York, 1996, 447.

outbreak of the war. As a citizen of a neutral country, he became the main organizer and head of the Commission for Relief of Belgium. As such he took upon himself the task of feeding 9 million people in Belgium and German occupied France. Belgium, as an industrialized country before the war, had imported over one-half of its food. Its foreign trade came to a stand-still during the German occupation. Hoover had to find financing from Britain and France, organize shipping from the U.S., work with German military authorities as well as the political leadership, and help organize the food distribution system in Belgium and France that utilized both Belgian and French volunteers and paid employees. He was universally regarded as a strong-willed, ambitious, brusque individual, not given to emotion and driven by a desire to achieve results. In order to convince others to adopt his ideas he was prone to exaggerate at times and self-advertise himself. His staff was completely loyal to him.⁵

The United States had declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917 with the stated reason being the unrestricted submarine warfare policy adopted by Germany. Shortly after the declaration a special independent war time agency, the Food Administration, was set up to mobilize the food resources of the United States in behalf of the war effort. When Herbert Hoover became the Director of the Food Administration in the United States in August 1917, his task was formidable – the need to develop policies to increase U.S. food production for the war effort. He needed to balance the interests of the farmers and consumers in the U.S. and then supply food to the major allies of the U.S. in Europe. He rejected rationing and instead advocated voluntary food conservation in the U.S. There were to be meatless days and wheatless days when the average American was supposed to replace meat and wheat in his diet with other foods. Thereby the nation was mobilized behind the war effort. A nutrition department was created in the Food Administration. Food policy in part was conducted by calculating the nutritional value of food in terms of calories that could be produced for the lowest cost and the least amount of cross-Atlantic shipping.⁶ Hoover worked out a system of price supports for wheat, pork, and sugar that encouraged farmers to produce more, but allowed enough of a profit margin for food processing firms to maintain their level of activity. At the same time prices for American consumers

⁵ **Nash, G. H.** *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Humanitarian, 1914–1917.* W. W. Norton, New York, 1988. The three volumes by **G. H. Nash** (the first: *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer, 1874–1914*) provide the best scholarly treatment of Hoover's life and career. Unfortunately Nash ends with November 1918.

⁶ The person behind this calorie-consciousness was Wilbur Atwater, Prof. of Chemistry at Wesleyan College in Connecticut in the 1890's and the turn of the century. After finishing his graduate studies at U.S. universities, Atwater spent two years in Germany studying and observing work being conducted at chemistry laboratories. Upon his return to the U.S., Atwater devoted his life to the study of nutrition by conducting experiments that measured metabolism and the calories of energy provided by different foods. He also propagated the importance of greater awareness of the nutritional value of food people were eating and that substitution of lower cost food need not lower the nutritional value of a meal.

were kept under control (perhaps the right word is “fixed”), and in fact there was no major inflation in the price of food in the U.S. during the war. United States, besides feeding its own population, needed to produce a surplus in order (with Canada) to export food to its major allies: Britain, France, and Italy. Belgian Relief also needed to be continued. The U.S. Congress voted to provide \$10 billion of credits in 1917 to the Allied nations to purchase food, military equipment, and other supplies during the rest of the war (technically until the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty). Following a low harvest year in 1917, the U.S. had a bountiful harvest in 1918. The extra food was supposed to carry over to 1919, but the unexpected end of the war in the fall of 1918 left the U.S. in the possession of a considerable stock of surplus food, especially wheat and pork.

On 15 November 1918 when Hoover sailed to Europe to participate in Allied discussions on food relief for post-war Europe, what to do with the food surplus must have also weighed heavily on his mind. While in Europe, Hoover continued as the head of the U.S. Food Administration, the head of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and now came to also hold the title of Director General of the American Relief Administration and became a member of the Allied Supreme Economic Council in Paris. During the post-Armistice period, the bulk of the U.S. food surplus continued to be sold on credit to the major allied nations: Britain, France, and Italy as well as the smaller allies: Belgium, Serbia, Romania, Czechoslovakia, etc. Neutral countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Netherlands were permitted to purchase food through normal market-based channels. The blockade against Germany continued until March 1919 when Germany was permitted to purchase food in return for gold.

In addition to the post-war continuation of the Belgian food relief program initiated in 1914 (the financing of which was assumed by the U.S. in 1917), Hoover and Wilson sought new credits at the end of the war from the U.S. Congress to extend similar relief activity to countries that had not been Allies, but had been “liberated” from the occupation of the Central Powers. The original requested sum was 200 million dollars; Congress, however, approved a line of credit for only 100 million. The language in the Act stated:

That expenditures hereunder shall be reimbursed so far as possible by the Governments or subdivisions thereof or the peoples to whom relief is furnished.

In the Executive Order Woodrow Wilson issued, Hoover received the following authority:

...Herbert Hoover who is hereby appointed Director General of the American Relief Administration with full power to determine to which of the populations named in said Act the supplies shall be furnished... and... arrange for reimbursement so far as possible.⁷

It was this sum that was used to finance food purchases for credit to Poland (over 60% of the credits), Finland, the Baltic States, and Armenia. WW I enemy

⁷ The Act and the subsequent Executive Order may be found in **Bane, S. L., Lutz, R. H.** (eds). *Organization of American Relief in Europe 1918–1919*, 291–292.

countries: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey were specifically excluded by the Congressional Act from receiving any food on credit. Hoover would have wished otherwise. The Congressional authorization for the line of credit for 100 million dollars occurred just two days after Hoover's letter to Davison outlining the need for children's relief. Hoover came to interpret the act ("reimbursed so far as possible") in a fashion that allowed him to use, with the President's authorization, a part of the money the Congress appropriated as an outright grant. Thus part of the appropriated 100 million dollars (13.4 million) funded the initial activity of the ARA Children's Relief program.⁸ With a source of funding assured, Hoover began planning the program in March and, as we have seen, the initial announcement was made in early April in Estonia that children in Estonia would be included.

What was Hoover's motivation for his over-all relief activity in Europe in 1919? Some historians have pointed to economic motivations – he had to sell the U.S. food surplus.⁹ But there were also larger political-economic considerations – the major one being the promotion of the economic recovery of Europe so that it could be a stable trading partner of the United States.¹⁰ For Hoover, eastern Europe was to be the agricultural part of Europe and a necessary trading partner for an industrialized western Europe. A corollary of this goal was to check the spread of Bolshevism from Russia to Europe. But then there was the humanitarian aspect – the stated aim of Hoover was also the prevention of famine in Eastern Europe. It is difficult to argue that narrow economic considerations were the major driving force behind Hoover's launching the Children's Relief program. It seems that here humanitarian and political concerns were paramount: prevention of famine and a concern for the health of a future generation in eastern Europe and the use of food aid to lessen the attraction of Bolshevism.¹¹ The amount of food that went into the Children's Relief program in eastern Europe in 1919–1922 was simply too small to support an argument that it had a major

⁸ **United States Grain Corporation**, Fiscal Report and Audit of One Hundred Million Dollar Appropriation Submitted to the President of the United States (25 September 1920), 6. The 1920 report places the figure at 11.9 million dollars. Later published figures, however, place it at 13.4 million. **Surface, F. M., Bland, R. L.** *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period*. Stanford University Press, Stanford University, California, 1931, 87.

⁹ **Rothbard, M. N.** Hoover's 1919 food diplomacy in retrospect. – In: *Herbert Hoover: The Great War and its Aftermath 1914–23*. Ed. L. E. Gelfand. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, Iowa, 1979, 89–110. Rothbard does not credit Hoover with any humanitarian impulses, but argues that he used his control of American food to force European countries to buy the U.S. food surplus at high prices to cover the needs of U.S. producers and also to impose on Europe a "Wilsonian grand design for a reconstituted Europe". There is reason to be skeptical of this assertion, since following the signing of the Versailles Treaty, Wilson began a withdrawal from political and economic involvement in Europe in anticipation of the creation of the League of Nations.

¹⁰ **Hoover, H.** Memorandum on the Economic Situation of Europe, 3 July 1919. – In: **Link, A. S.** (ed.). *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Vol. 61, 389–395.

¹¹ Hoover used different arguments for different audiences: humanitarian "feed the children" for soliciting private contributions; need to counter Bolshevism in order to gain political support.

impact on agricultural surpluses or prices in the United States. After all, the program required the purchase of certain specialty items for children (cocoa, rice, condensed milk, etc.). In fact the program came to be supported in its later phase largely by private fund-raising from the American public which donated to a charitable cause of food relief for poor children in Europe. The English economist, John Maynard Keynes, who worked with Hoover on the Allied Supreme Economic Council, assessed the totality of Hoover's activities in the following terms:¹²

The ungrateful Governments of Europe owe much more to the statesmanship and insight of Mr. Hoover and his band of American workers than they have yet appreciated or will ever acknowledge. It was their efforts... which not only saved an immense amount of human suffering, but averted a widespread breakdown of the European system.

What was the scope of the Children's Relief program?¹³ In all, the U.S. contribution of commodities to the Children's Relief program (without the special program to Soviet Russia in 1921–1922) came to \$55,546,000. For Estonia the sum was \$1,371,000 (40,000 to 80,000 children were fed at various time periods) (Table 1).

Overall, over one-half of the program's total funds were spent on children in the Baltic Sea area. Each recipient country was required to contribute from its own resources to make the program work. Estonia, for example, contributed \$298,000 worth of food to the feeding program besides covering the cost of administering it in Estonia (estimated at \$433,000).¹⁴ Later, the program spread to Soviet Russia (1921–1922).¹⁵

How was the food aid financed? As has been noted above, part (\$13.4 million) came from the Congressional 100 million dollar appropriation. Estonia's share of this amounted to \$702,000.¹⁶ As has been noted above, Hoover could argue that

Table I. Children's relief (dollars)

| | | | |
|----------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| Austria | 13 194 000 | Latvia | 1 524 000 |
| Czechoslovakia | 5 374 000 | Lithuania | 463 000 |
| Danzig | 953 000 | Poland | 24 500 000 |
| Estonia | 1 371 000 | Romania | 477 000 |
| Finland | 914 000 | Yugoslavia | 1 655 000 |
| Germany | 3 182 000 | Northwest Russia | 118 000 |
| Hungary | 1 821 000 | | |

¹² **Keynes, J. M.** *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Penguin Books, New York, 1988, 274. (First published in 1920.)

¹³ **Surface, F. M., Bland, R. L.** *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period*, 82. The figures that follow are taken from the Surface and Bland book.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁵ **Patenaude, B. M.** *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921*. Stanford University Press, Stanford University, California, 2002.

¹⁶ In all probability the division is somewhat arbitrary since Hoover was adept at moving figures from one category to another to meet the needs of the moment.

the legislation gave Pres. Wilson and by extension him (Hoover) the authority to do this. The rest (for Estonia \$669,000) derived from two other sources. The first was from internal sources, so-called profits that resulted from the difference between the sale price of food to western European countries and the cost of the food paid by the National Grain Board plus the expense of shipping, insurance, administration, warehousing, etc. The second source was private contributions raised by a fund-raising campaign in the U.S. from December 1920 – April 1921. More than \$15 million was raised for the ARA Children's Relief program that allowed it to continue to 1921–1922. Of the \$15 million over \$10.5 million was contributed by individuals from every state in the United States. Approximately \$500,000 was contributed by school children (including \$100,000 from school children in New York City). Among non-individual donors were: the magazine, *Literary Digest*, donated more than \$2 million; the Rockefeller Foundation \$1 million; and the Cleveland Community chest, \$300,000. In addition to the \$10.5 million, three other relief organizations: the American Red Cross, the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Quaker American Friends Service Committee donated up-front money to the campaign that allowed them to utilize the transportation and warehousing system that had already been established by the ARA to draw out food covered by their donations from warehouses in eastern Europe and actually distribute the food themselves.¹⁷

The administration of the Children's Feeding program utilized the existing organizations and procedures. Initially, all food purchases in the U.S. were carried out by the National Grain Board, a semi-governmental board set up in 1917 to centralize the purchase and warehousing of food in the U.S. and its sale to allied countries.¹⁸ Arrangement of transportation to warehouses in Europe was also handled initially as part of the over-all organization of transport of food across the Atlantic. A number of ships were assigned to carry ARA food to ports in Europe where warehouses had been set up. Food was then transported from these warehouses to the destination regions. For Children's Relief certain food items (condensed milk, cocoa, rice, beans, etc.) were added to the bulk commodities (wheat, pork, etc.) usually handled by the National Grain Board and the ARA. This was done, because it was understood that growing children needed a different diet than adults. Even after the U.S. government-funded credit sales ended on 30 June 1919, the procedures followed had been well-established and could be utilized by the continuing privately-funded Children's Relief program.¹⁹

The ARA decided how much food should be sent to each particular country. In May an ARA representative, Col. A. J. Carlson of the University of Chicago,

¹⁷ **Surface, F. M., Bland, R. L.** *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period*, 78–80.

¹⁸ **Surface, F. M.** *The Grain Trade during the War*. The MacMillan Co., New York, 1928.

¹⁹ The American Relief Administration program officially ended with the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty. However, in the post-treaty "reconstruction period" Hoover's effort to provide relief in eastern Europe continued on the basis of private funding.

following observation of districts in Tallinn inhabited by poor people and after visiting a number of homes, commented to newspapers:²⁰

The children of our [Estonian] poorer classes in comparison with Belgium, Finland, Poland and other places that have suffered in the war are fed satisfactorily. He had not seen any starving children, unlike what one can find in the above-mentioned countries.

The basic model that the ARA advocated for feeding children involved setting up a network of feeding kitchen stations where needy children would receive one meal a day worth approximately 550 calories. The sample menu circulated by ARA officials included the following (three of the six suggestions) examples (Table 2).²¹

Since the food items supplied by the Children's Feeding program to all the recipient countries were the same, the suggested menu was a duplicate of the one circulated for children in Poland and for that matter in Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania.

What is noteworthy is the careful calculation in calories for each food item. One of the suggested meals included 6 prunes for rice porridge. Initially a question mark was placed on how many calories this meant. Later it was clarified to be 35. As was noted earlier, this calorie-consciousness emerged in the U.S. before WW I. Wilbur O. Atwater, a professor of chemistry who played a key role in this development, conducted experiments to measure metabolism and the calories of energy provided by different foods. He then published tables on his results and also tables on the diets of different groups of people in terms of the

Table 2. Sample menus

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Rice soup with pork and bread | |
| 50 gr. of rice | 175 cal. |
| 20 gr. of pork | 120 cal. |
| 80 gr. of flour for bread | 268 cal. |
| Total | 563 cal. |
| Bean soup with pork and bread | |
| 50 gr. of beans | 159 cal. |
| 20 gr. of pork | 120 cal. |
| 80 gr. of flour for bread | 268 cal. |
| Total | 547 cal. |
| Sweet cocoa with wheat bread | |
| 80 gr. of flour for bread | 254 cal. |
| 50 gr. of milk | 85 cal. |
| 25 gr. of sugar | 103 cal. |
| 13 gr. of cocoa | 48 cal. |
| Total | 490 cal. |

²⁰ Päevaleht, 26.5.1919.

²¹ ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 2.

calorie value of the food they consumed. He can be regarded as the person who popularized the use of calories in the U.S. to denote food value.²²

How was the program administered? As has been mentioned above, the existing procedures and personnel to purchase the food in the U.S., transportation arrangements, and the warehousing of food were already in place. Some of the particulars changed after 1919. In 1919 food destined for Children's Relief became part of regular ARA shipments. Two ARA officials acted as observers and controllers of the program in Estonia. The cost of food was high (this was after all food produced at a subsidized price), but administrative overhead was low and transportation and insurance costs were reasonable and shipping costs began to decline in the second half of 1919. All of these costs were borne by the ARA.²³

One of the requirements for a country to receive a Children's Relief grant was the establishment of a national children's relief organization with volunteer membership to administer the feeding in the recipient country. Hoover did not want state administrators running the program, because he wished to leave a legacy after the program had ended of a functioning voluntary association of concerned people who would continue to deal with issues of children's health and well-being. At the national level an Estonian Children's Relief Society (Eesti Lastekaitse Ühing) was established at the end of April 1919 and was headed by Voldemar Päts. It was a spin-off from Ühistöö (Cooperative Work) – an umbrella organization that had been formed by representatives of Estonian societal organizations to mobilize society in behalf of the war effort in 1919.²⁴ The Estonian Red Cross had been organized in a similar fashion a few months earlier as some of the members and functions of Ühistöö were separated to form the Estonian Red Cross to interact with the British and American Red Cross organizations. At the maakond or county level the relevant members of Ühistöö were joined by interested representatives from other social organizations and also representatives of political parties to form a county children's relief society. Within a month these societies had adopted by-laws and had become membership-based societies which anyone could join.²⁵ At the vald or rural commune level each commune council was instructed to organize a society of volunteers to deal with child relief. While members of the councils (rural commune councils had been recently elected in March 1919) could be members of the societies, the

²² **Atwater, W. O.** Principles of Nutrition and Nutritive Value of Food. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1910, revised edition originally published in 1902. Since a public understanding of calories had not yet developed in Estonia during this period, calorie as a term was not used in public discussions on food policy or food in general.

²³ **Surface, F. M., Bland, R. L.** American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period, 48, 135–139.

²⁴ **Laaman, E.** (ed.). Ühistöö Eesti riigi loomisel. Tallinna Õpetajate Selts, Tallinn, 1927.

²⁵ For the bylaws of the Läänemaa county committee see: ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 1.

council as a whole was not permitted to assume the functions of a society.²⁶ Women were well-represented in the county and commune society leadership positions.²⁷

The Estonian Children's Relief Society decided how to allocate the food it received among the urban centres and the counties for rural communes. Published figures below show the allocation of food for the first and second distribution. The allocations could and in fact were later changed by the Estonian national society due to changes in assessed needs (Table 3).²⁸

The following analysis rests in good part on the fairly complete archive of the Läänemaa (Haapsalu) county Children's Relief Society that makes possible a microlevel view of the implementation of the Children's Relief program in Estonia.²⁹ The Läänemaa statistics have been supplemented by available archival data for Virumaa and Viljandi and newspaper reports that permit some broader conclusions and comparisons to be made. Läänemaa was a county in the western part of Estonia along the Baltic Sea that included the island of Hiiumaa and consisted of a population of approximately 75,000; the largest minority was a

Table 3. Number of children fed in cities and counties

| Cities | June | July |
|-----------|--------|----------------|
| Tallinn | 15 271 | (circa 10 000) |
| Narva | 5 000 | 5 000 |
| Valga | 2 000 | 2 000 |
| Petseri | – | 500 |
| Nõmme | 450 | 450 |
| Counties | | |
| Tartu | 11 000 | 4 000 |
| Pärnu | 6 500 | 1 700 |
| Haapsalu | 7 000 | 500 |
| Viljandi | 4 200 | 700 |
| Võru | – | 7 900 |
| Rakvere | 9 000 | 9 000 |
| Kuresaare | 6 900 | 6 900 |
| Harju | 5 000 | – |
| Jamburg | 24 | – |
| Total | 86 645 | 39 050 |

²⁶ Indeed, initially some of the commune councils simply forwarded the composition of the council to the county society. They were issued fresh instructions to select a separate society. The protocols of Suuremõisa commune (on the island of Hiiumaa) Children's Relief Society may be found in: ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 1.

²⁷ In Läänemaa 4 of the 9 board members were women (ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 1). In Viljandi 3 of the 7 were women (ERA, f 3020, n 3, s 1). The Viljandi society decided to increase the size of its board to 9 members on 28 July 1919; five of the members on the new board were women.

²⁸ Päevaleht, 16.8.1919. The statistics published in Päevaleht do not include the July number for Tallinn. From other sources, 10,000 is a reasonable estimate.

²⁹ The archives of the other county children's relief societies, if they exist at all, are much less complete.

Swedish-speaking population (approximately 6,000–7,000) living compactly on a number of small islands and in a few coastal communes; in all, 37 communes of various sizes existed in the county; the only town and the county seat, Haapsalu, had a population of 4,500. The Läänemaa County is the only county for which archival material allows the researcher to delve below the county level and observe how the food was actually distributed to children (feeding kitchens) or to families (rural communes).

One of the first acts of the Estonian Children's Relief Society was to circulate a questionnaire to collect data. In effect a census of children under 16 was conducted. In the gathering of data the county societies received instructions from the Estonian Society. For urban areas the instructions state:³⁰

...after the town is divided into districts and the number of houses and apartments determined, as many as possible of the Children's Relief representatives should canvas house to house and apartment to apartment to control that the existing information is factually correct.

For the 37 rural communes in the Läänemaa county, the commune committee members were supposed to canvas individual farms, estates and villages and provide concrete data on the employment status and food needs for each family with children. For the Läänemaa county as a whole the return listed 20,697 children under the age of 16. The answers to the questionnaire indicated that of this number 3,515 children were under three years of age. Furthermore, 8,816 children were listed as belonging to families that were identified as poor. The mortality rate for children was listed as 4% and was the same for the first three months of 1919 as for the last three months of 1918. Finally the answer was negative to the question on the existence of religious or political conflict in the county.³¹

Next, the board of the Läänemaa Society instructed the rural commune committees to divide the children into three categories.³² This was also done for the town of Haapsalu. Category I was defined as children in dire need of food aid; for category II food aid was described as desirable, but not absolutely necessary. Finally, category III children were described as not needing food aid. Almost all children of families with property – meaning owners of farms in the countryside or house owners in Haapsalu – were placed in category III. In fact deciding into which category children belonged became one of the major functions of the Society board. Volunteer society members in Haapsalu went from house to house to collect data. Following their initial decision, the board had to meet and review the lists as throughout this process letter appeals were sent to the society.³³ The

³⁰ ERA, f 3020, n 1, s 3.

³¹ One of the ARA conditions for receiving food aid was a pledge not to discriminate in its distribution because of religious or ethnic reasons. ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 2.

³² ERA, f 3020, n 1, s 1.

³³ ERA, f 3020, n 1, s 3. "...aid for my son, Walter Scheffel, who is mentally retarded. It is very difficult for me to support my children... it is true that I operate a store that sells used goods. But on some days I sell nothing..."

lists were thus revised a number of times. Finally letter appeals could be sent also to the Estonian national board in Tallinn.

Decisions into which category children were placed aroused a great deal of controversy.³⁴ Calls for revision of the list in other counties also led to reviews and revisions. After all, at stake was children receiving some food in a situation when children and parents of poor families were often living in a state of malnutrition in 1919. In the town of Viljandi the initial classification list had to be reviewed on July 4 because of “a great deal of dissatisfaction.” This was followed by another review on September 9 and then finally a third revision brought the process to a conclusion on October 5.³⁵ Serious protests against what was perceived as injustice in distribution came from Virumaa county in northeast Estonia. As we have noted this county had been occupied by the Red Army and had been subjected to a food requisition. The plea from the county Children’s Relief society stated that:³⁶

...in the Virumaa county where, as a result of Bolshevik plundering, children were without bread for several months... There is a need for food for an additional 20,000.

News like this worked against the Bolshevik cause, because it highlighted the fact that the Bolsheviks and the Red Army during their advance had no food to offer the local population and in fact relied themselves on requisitioning existing supplies in their brief period of occupation of the eastern part of Estonia (December, 1918 – January 1919). Reports to the Estonian national society noted that all children were suffering, as there was a general shortage of bread, never mind the total unavailability of items like sugar, rice, cocoa, etc. at any price. Yet when the initial food aid began to be dispensed in Virumaa, it was noted that since no information had been received from 10 rural communes, no food would be delivered to them.³⁷ A real difference existed with the situation in Läänemaa which had escaped a Bolshevik occupation. Relief organization had not proceeded as smoothly as it had in Läänemaa. As a result when less food was sent by the ARA to Estonia in July, food delivery to Virumaa was not cut, but delivery of food to rural Läänemaa, Viljandi, Tartu, Pärnu, and Harju counties was eliminated. Later in the fall food delivery to the rural inhabitants of these counties was resumed albeit for a smaller number of children. Archival records by rural commune committees are lacking for Virumaa, but according to the county records, during autumn 1919 repeated complaints state that children of landed peasants were receiving food aid that should have been going to the rural poor.

³⁴ This is very different from procedures followed in Poland where children were given a quick physical examination. Underweight (taking into account the age and height of the child) and sickly children qualified for food aid. Children of normal weight and appearance did not qualify.

³⁵ ERA, f 3020, n 3, s 1.

³⁶ ERA, f 3020, n 4, s 2.

³⁷ Päevaleht, 18.6.1919.

The chairman of the Virumaa Children's Relief Society, H. Avikson, complained in a circular:³⁸

Numerous complaints have been received that the well-to-do... We repeat that the children of the owners of farms, artisans, etc. have no right to receive food... only for the poor.

A threat was made to the commune societies that if this practice did not stop, further sending of food would cease.

The worst organized county appears to be Saaremaa where poor leadership seemed unable to bridge deep divisions in society. The board of the Saaremaa society was reconstituted a number of times as a result of conflict between landed and landless rural inhabitants.³⁹ The result was that no clear direction was given to the rural communes. A December report noted:⁴⁰

...each commune acts on its own, in some communes all children under 16 receive aid, in another until the age of five, in some wealthy and poor receive the same, in another only the poor, and in Leisi commune the well-to-do wanted to monopolize the aid...

In the town of Haapsalu 303 children were placed in category I; 260 into category II; and 176 into category III for a total of 739 children aged 15 and under.⁴¹ In the rural areas 6,368 children were placed in category I. For several rural communes the data collected has survived in the archives. The data for Kalju commune shows the following:⁴² 188 children in all; 103 were placed in category I, 29 into category II, and 56 into category III. In the detailed report from the commune society the health of each child was noted (healthy, sickly, or with a defect). With a few exceptions (children with disabilities or listed as sickly), children of owners of farms were placed in category three or two. Overall, 5 of the 6 children with disabilities were placed in Category 1; 21 of the 26 children listed as sickly were similarly placed. In response to a question on what food they were eating, one respondent noted what was true for most: "potatoes, bread and milk, the farmers' food." Meat was listed for only 12 of the children and small, salted herring (silk) was listed for 33. Moreover, 34 of the children were listed as not receiving any milk; 30 of them were placed in Category 1, as were 10 of the 11 infants under the age of one and 36 of the children that were tagged as in needy families. Of children of farm laborers 54 were placed in the first category as well as 26 children of single-parent (mother) families.⁴³ Most of the children listed in Category 1 in rural areas of Läänemaa received a package of food delivered to them in the initial food disbursement.

³⁸ ERA, f 3020, n 4, s 2.

³⁹ Päevaleht, 21.1.1920.

⁴⁰ Päevaleht, 18.8.1919.

⁴¹ ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 1.

⁴² ERA, f 3020, n 1, s 1.

⁴³ Some examples: (1) Mother and one sickly child aged 8; husband killed in war; a laborer without steady income; main items of food: bread and potatoes. The child was placed in Category 1. (2) Mother and four healthy children aged 10, 9, 7, and 5; husband was a prisoner of war; a renter; main items of food: potatoes, bread, and small herring (silk). Three of the children were placed in Category 1; one in Category 2.

The first food delivery took place in July and covered all children placed in the first two categories in the town of Haapsalu. One feeding kitchen was set up in Haapsalu on 23 July to feed approximately 250 children above the age of 7 with one meal a day every day of the week. The daily menu resembled closely but not exactly the recommended menus.⁴⁴ After all, the food delivered was determined by the ARA. Children seven and under (another 250) had their food delivered home on a monthly basis. Initially this meant for each month: 4 pounds of flour, 1 pound of rice, 1 pound of sugar, one-half pound of beans, one-third pound of cocoa, two containers of condensed milk and some soap.⁴⁵ Food for approximately 6500 children was procured by rural commune society representatives and delivered to the families of children placed in category I in the countryside. No common feeding kitchens were established in the countryside.

The recommended ARA model included the setting up of feeding kitchens, since the food was supposed to go exclusively to children, and the kitchens were apparently central to the operation of the program in Poland.⁴⁶ There was a great deal of resistance to opening up feeding kitchens in Estonia, as the stated preference was delivery of food to the family. It may be suspected that the food delivered home was shared by all members of the family, but there is no real way to check. There is some evidence that cocoa that was delivered home was diverted to stores for sale. At one point in Tallinn home deliveries of cocoa ceased as a result.⁴⁷ It was with reluctance, following ARA entreaties, that the one feeding kitchen was opened in Haapsalu, but otherwise the rest of the food was handed out to the families of the children.⁴⁸ The ARA rationale was that the food was a daily supplement to children suffering from malnutrition to enable them to grow up into normal adulthood and that sharing it with the family would dilute the desired outcome. The reluctance to set up a town feeding kitchen was part of a general pattern. In Viljandi county in central Estonia a feeding kitchen in the town was established relatively late, on 19 October 1919.⁴⁹ There had been too much opposition by parents to have started one earlier. In Petseri a food kitchen operated for 200 by November (food for 300 was sent home).⁵⁰ In Rakvere a food

⁴⁴ Statistics for each day (number of children served and the food that was served) were maintained on a biweekly basis. ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 2.

⁴⁵ The reference is to Russian pounds: a Russian pound is equal to 409.5 gr.; for comparison an English pound equals 453.6 gr.

⁴⁶ **Fisher, H. H.** *America and the New Poland*. The MacMillan Co., New York, 1928, 228. "The strictest rule was that requiring the cooked daily meal to be served and eaten in the kitchens, and it was at first the most difficult to enforce." Since most rural inhabitants in Poland lived in villages the setting up of kitchen feeding stations was feasible for the rural population, unlike in Estonia or Finland. It took time and pressure from American ARA personnel to bring this about in Poland, since Polish parents preferred to receive the food at home.

⁴⁷ Päevaleht, 20.8.1919.

⁴⁸ In the rural communes a parent signed a sheet that signified that he/she had received the food that was earmarked for a child.

⁴⁹ ERA, f 3020, n 3, s 1.

⁵⁰ Päevaleht, 19.11.1919.

kitchen had been established for those six and older in November. A visit by Lt. John Thors, the ARA Children's Relief representative in December to Rakvere led to a demand that the obligatory age of those required to eat at the food kitchen be lowered from six to five. The threat was that if the demand was not met food aid could be cut off.⁵¹ In Kuresaare, where the situation was complicated because of political conflict, it also took a visit by Thors in October to elicit a promise to open two food kitchens.⁵² In Tallinn on 5 June three food kitchens were opened for 650 children.⁵³ The number was gradually increased so that by October 4600 children were eating in the feeding kitchens.⁵⁴ Apparently a few additional kitchens were opened and as a result one-half of the 10,000 children who received aid in Tallinn were being fed in kitchens while the other half (younger children) received deliveries at home.

Internal transportation of the food, warehousing, and the cost of running the feeding kitchens was funded by the Children's Relief Societies in Estonia and by local authorities. Warehousing in Tallinn and transportation costs from Tallinn to Haapsalu by train were covered by the national society; warehousing in Haapsalu and the operation of the kitchen was covered by the Läänemaa county committee; the cost of transportation (a person with a wagon) to the rural communes was covered by the commune councils. In some cases the communes asked that the recipient families cover the cost of transportation.

In Läänemaa, while Haapsalu received food for the late summer months of 1919, there was no second delivery to the rural areas. The national society decided instead to send the food to three counties: Virumaa, Võrumaa, and Saaremaa. The justification was that Virumaa and Võrumaa had suffered extensively from the fighting in 1919 and from the requisitions carried out during the two-month Red Army occupation. Saaremaa county, an island in the Baltic Sea, had been occupied by Germany already in October 1917 and had been subjected to a German requisition policy longer than the rest of Estonia that had been occupied only at the end of February 1918. When delivery was resumed during autumn to rural Läänemaa, enough food was sent for only 2000 children. The 500 children in Haapsalu continued to be fed but only 2000 children in the rural areas were to receive food. In other words, each rural commune received food for only one-third of the children in category I. The commune societies had to make the difficult decision on who was to receive food and who would be left off the list. To have simply divided up the food received among all category I children would have diluted what each family (child) received to a point where it would have been too small to be meaningful. What did they do? At least one commune

⁵¹ Päevaleht, 18.12.1919. As an example, Bulgaria was cited as a country in which the ARA had ended its Children's Relief program, because of a failure to comply with the requirements of the program.

⁵² Päevaleht, 14.10.1919.

⁵³ Päevaleht, 5.6.1919. Each feeding kitchen displayed an American and an Estonian flag.

⁵⁴ Päevaleht, 21.10.1919.

society divided up what it received among all category I children. Another commune, however, pared down the number of category I children from 150 to 80 and divided the food it received for 50 children among the 80. The Suuremõisa commune at one point decided to give food to all children under the age of two and cut down the number of recipients in Category I.⁵⁵

Throughout the three-year period (1919–1922) two-thirds of the children in the town of Haapsalu received either a daily meal in the feeding kitchen or had a home delivery of food. As we have seen, this was not the case for all needy children in the rural areas where the percentage who received food came to be close to 10%. Besides this, rural deliveries did not include all of the items of food sent to Haapsalu. While the Haapsalu delivery of food in November 1919 included wheat flour, rice, sugar, beans, cocoa, pork or lard, milk and soap, the food sent to rural areas in November 1919 included flour, rice (but only one-half a ration), sugar, beans (less than one-half of a ration), and cocoa. No meat, lard, milk or soap was included. It was assumed that milk was available in the rural areas, but as we have noted earlier, such was not always the case. In 1920 the ARA no longer included flour in its deliveries to Estonia. It was assumed that the 1919 harvest covered the need. As a result from March of 1920 onward we find that flour is no longer sent to rural areas. Flour was now to be supplied by the Estonian state and it went only to urban areas. However, in 1920 the rural areas did begin to receive lard or vegetable oil, milk and soap as well as rice, sugar, beans, and cocoa.

Was there theft of food? Apparently petty pilfering took place, but no large-scale thievery. For example on delivery to Haapsalu some of the boxes contained less than what should have been in them, 42 cans of condensed milk, instead of the standard 48 in a box. The cause, probably, was petty thievery by railroad employees or persons working at the warehouses. An inventory in the fall of 1919 of the warehoused supplies in Haapsalu noted some missing items, cocoa and prunes, but since no good records existed of the initial delivery of food it was hard to place blame on anybody.⁵⁶ This experience was repeated in other counties where bookkeeping procedures were established only in the fall of 1919. Apparently the Estonian Children's Relief Society sent out directives on bookkeeping in the fall.

In December, a new promise of American aid was made and became the major subject of discussion. ARA was to provide 35,000 school children with woolen cloth for overcoats and with shoes. Ühistöö was supposed to sew coats in varying sizes for children from the cloth, thread, and buttons that arrived by ship in early

⁵⁵ The Suuremõisa commune society made decisions on distribution upon receiving each food shipment. ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 1.

⁵⁶ See the report of 15 November 1919 on the food warehoused in Haapsalu when a system of bookkeeping was established by the committee. ERA, f 3020, n 2, s 2.

January 1920.⁵⁷ The basic food program, of course, was continued, as it was announced at the end of 1919 that a six-month extension had been granted.

What can we conclude? While there were a number of relief agencies at work during and after WW I, the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Quaker Relief, etc., none was as large and had greater impact as the one associated with Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration. The paper has dealt with just one of the programs of the ARA. The Children's Relief program was directed toward East Central Europe with a two-fold purpose, a humanitarian and a political one. If we address first the humanitarian issue, the announced aim was to target children in vulnerable areas where there was a serious food crisis with the purpose of supplementing their diet with a hot meal once a day. The aim was to save lives and contribute to healthier children who would be the next generation. There were children of the urban and rural poor, mothers with children (husbands lost in the war) for example, who were in a vulnerable situation in Estonia. For them receiving a daily supplement made a difference. Yes, there was a political part to the story. Perhaps the Red Army occupation and policies pursued in the eastern counties of Estonia served to highlight the fact that the Bolsheviks did not offer any solution to the existing food problem in Estonia. Surely psychologically it mattered in Estonia in 1919 to have a food program that targeted the most needy poor. Instead of food being requisitioned by the Germans or the Bolsheviks, food was being supplemented and coming from America not Soviet Russia. The fact that there were protests and renewed calls for revisions of the lists of children who were to receive the food attests to a felt need on the part of ordinary people. The food did reach the intended recipients – the needy children and families. Despite some signs of disorganization and mistakes, the system worked at the local level and is a testament to the organizational ability of Estonian society in 1919. Local voluntary organizations had sufficient organizational skills to manage the distribution of food. Yes, there could have been more food, the need was there. Certainly more food was actually sent to Estonia than was initially allocated. In fact, the initial four months was stretched into more than two years. The ARA claimed that as a result of the program the increase in child mortality, because of malnutrition and the resultant susceptibility to childhood diseases, was stopped and reversed. The claim needs to be verified. An examination of the archival records on the implementation of the program reveals the existence of a great deal of poverty and hardship in the Estonian countryside, but no real ongoing class-warfare in 1919. Only in one Läänemaa rural commune did a "workers" group protest as a group against the organization of the relief effort. Saaremaa seems to be an exception. Democratic elections had been held in the communes in March 1919. No political parties existed at the commune level at this time, but of course, a clear divide between the landed and the landless peasants existed. Landless peasants, however, were represented on all the rural commune societies for which there are records and in some cases controlled the

⁵⁷ Päevaleht, 19.12.1919; 8.1.1920.

councils and the children's relief societies at the commune level. While certainly the Children's Feeding program solidified support and helped legitimize the government of the Estonian state, the program by itself was not a determining factor in the survival of the Estonian state. It may be noted that new food products were introduced to children, especially among the poorer classes: rice, cocoa, wheat bread, prunes, margarine, beans, and condensed milk. Whether there was a long term effect of this on people's diets is hard to say. While the societies at the commune level ceased to operate after the ending of the food relief program in 1923, the ones at the county level continued to function until 1940, albeit with different tasks, when they were all disbanded.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication costs of this article were covered by the Estonian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of History, Archaeology and Art History of Tallinn University.

ARA LASTEABISTAMISE PROGRAMM JA EESTI LASTEKAITSE ÜHINGUD 1919. AASTAL

Olavi ARENS

ARA (*American Relief Administration*) lasteabistamise programm loodi 1919. aasta märtsis ARA direktori Herbert Hooveri algatusel. Programmi eesmärk oli Ida-Euroopa maade lastele abiandmine, motivatsioon oli humanitaarne ja poliitiline. Hooveri sõnade järgi: "Seal on näha laste alatoitlustamist, eriti ühiskonna vaesemates kihtides." Hooveri poliitiline siht oli Ida-Euroopat poliitiliselt stabiliseerida ja pidurdada bolševismi levikut Euroopasse.

Artiklis on käsitletud selle abiprogrammi finantseerimist ja juhtimist ning toidu transportimist ja jagamist lastele. Raha tuli kolmest allikast: 1) USA riigiraha, 2) kasum, mida saadi toidumüügist Euroopa riikidele, 3) eraannetused Ameerika organisatsioonidelt ja eraisikutelt. Administratiivselt allus programm Hooverile, kes kasutas struktuure, mis olid juba teistes talle alluvates abiprogrammides olemas. Transpordiprobleemid olid suurelt jaolt lahendatud ega vajanud uusi meetodeid. Toidujagamiseks oli aga vaja uusi organisatsioone: selleks tuli igas riigis luua oma lastekaitseühing, mis oli ühiskondlik organisatsioon ja mis polnud riigiparaadiga seotud. Eestis oli vaja asutada Eesti Lastekaitse Ühing (ELÜ) ja selle harud linnades, maakondades ning valdades. ELÜ võttis toitu vastu Tallinna sadamas ja otsustas, kuidas seda maakondade ning linnade vahel jagada. Toit pidi minema vaestele lastele. Maakondade, linnade ja valdade lastekaitseühingud otsustasid, kes pidid toitu saama ning kes mitte. ARA nõudmine oli, et

linnades pidid olema köögid, kus lastele pakuti üks kord päevas sooja sööki toiteväärtusega 550 kalorit. Alla kuue- või seitsmeaastased lapsed linnas ja kõik toidusaajad maal said toidupakke, mis sisaldasid jahu, riisi, suhkrut, ube, kakaod ning mõnikord kondenseeritud piima, rasva ja seepi. 1919. aasta sügisel tegutsesid Tallinnas köögid, mis toitsid umbes 5000 last. Haapsalus said köökides süüa umbes 250 last. Suvel ja sügisel anti Virumaal toidupakke 8000 maalapsele. Eri aegadel jagati toitu 40 000–80 000 lapsele.

Kokkuvõttes võib öelda, et lisatoit vaestele lastele pidurdas Eestis laste suremust haigustesse. Psühholoogiliselt tähtis ja vastukaaluks bolševismile oli asjaolu, et toiduabi vaestele lastele saabus Ameerikast ning et jagamist korraldasid Eesti organiseerijad. See aitas Eestis poliitilist olukorda stabiliseerida.