

**RUSSIA RELIEF: HEARINGS BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
SIXTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS, SECOND
SESSION ON H.R. 9459 AND 9548,
DEC. 13 AND 14, 1921**

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RUSSIA RELIEF

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

P104-85

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

**STANFORD
LIBRARIES**

H. R. 9459 and H. R. 9548

FOR THE RELIEF OF THE DISTRESSED AND STARVING
PEOPLE OF RUSSIA

DECEMBER 13 AND 14, 1921

STATEMENTS OF

* HON. JOSEPH W. FORDNEY

HON. JAMES P. GOODRICH MR. SAMUEL GOMPERS

DR. VERNON KELLOGG MR. RALPH SNYDER

HON. HERBERT C. HOOVER MR. CARL VROOMAN



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1921

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIXTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION.

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RUSSIA RELIEF.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Tuesday, December 18, 1921.

The committee this day met, Hon. Stephen G. Porter (chairman) presiding. The CHAIRMAN. The committee will be in order. The committee was called for the consideration of H. R. 8459, which is before you, entitled "A bill for the relief of the suffering people of Russia through the American Relief Association." Representative Fordney, of Michigan, is here and we would like very much to hear his statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH W. FORDNEY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN.

Mr. FORDNEY. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I have but very little to say. I introduced the bill because of the suggestion made by the President in his message to the House a week ago to-day. What information I have is to the effect that in this territory in Russia the crops have failed and the people were starving in a great territory, formerly a very rich country, which is without a crop and without food for these people. As corn is at the present time selling on the market for 70 to 72 cents a bushel, it is thought that the \$10,000,000 limited by this bill would purchase, perhaps, 10,000,000 bushels of corn and 1,000,000 bushels of other grains for these people. Much of it is expected to be used in planting, to reproduce some crops in that territory.

If relief is given it must be given in the next 90 days, or else it will come too late for them to use in producing more crops for the future. Therefore I feel, as other gentlemen did that I consulted with, that if we do anything we should do it quickly, and this great rich country, in my opinion, can afford to do this and do it promptly and without a loss to our own people. If this has any effect on the market in the country it will have the effect of increasing values and therefore the people that produce grain who have been complaining of late that they have suffered because of this depression and decrease in values more than any other class of people in the country. If it benefits anybody it will benefit that class of people—the farmers of the country. As they constitute about one-third of our population, and perhaps the most important part of the population, because they produce the bread and butter for all the people, if it inures to their benefit, I think it is an advantage to our own people as well as the effect that this would have politically upon the whole world and especially the people of Russia. Therefore I would urge most earnestly that your committee give most earnest consideration and prompt action in the matter if you feel inclined as I do in the matter. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. We thank you, Mr. Fordney.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. GOODRICH, FORMERLY GOVERNOR OF INDIANA.

The CHAIRMAN. Gov. Goodrich, of Indiana, is here, and I understand that he has just returned from Russia. We would like very much to have a statement from him.

Mr. GOODRICH. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, the chairman stated that I had just returned from Russia. I spent about two months there, going through the famine districts. I first went to Moscow, then out to Samara and down the Volga River to Saratov, then on down the river 30 miles below Saratov. I drove out in that lower Volga district to 18 different communes, going into the various communal houses, examining their records, going through

their grain houses, collecting all the statistics that I could get, to ascertain the true situation. I afterwards went out to Kazan, and from Moscow to Petrograd, covering pretty much all of the so-called famine district except the extreme lower part, and, perhaps, a part of it at the north end extending out toward the Siberian frontier.

To understand the real situation in Russia it is necessary to go back a bit because the famine is due to a number of contributing causes. In 1920 in all Russia they planted 76 per cent of the crop planted in 1916. In 1921 they planted 55 per cent of the 1916 crop. The major part of that decrease in the planting of crops in Russia occurred in the years 1918, 1919, and 1920, and the marked decrease in the last two years. There are several causes given for that, one the policy of requisitions, which cause is recognized by both Mr. Trotski and Mr. Lenin.

The other is due to the war that swept over this famine district, a civil war following four years of foreign war in which Russia was engaged. They had a partial crop shortage in 1920, due to two causes, a short planting, and to the failure of rainfall during that year. Then, in 1921, following the season of not to exceed a 55 per cent planting, came an almost total failure of rainfall. The rainfall in May, June, and July was less than 10 per cent of the normal rainfall, and the normal rainfall in that country is rather short. So that had there been a normal crop planting in 1921 in that part of Russia from the Tartar Republic on down to the Caspian Sea, still they would have had a tremendous grain shortage in the lower Volga country.

On my return to Moscow after my first trip, I went to the commissar of agriculture and asked him to prepare me certain statistics, which I afterwards got on my return there, and in going to the capitals of the various States I went to the commissar of agriculture to get what facts I could obtain there, and then went into the commune and got the communal records, which are very complete in most of these Russian communes, especially so in what is known as the German-Russian commune in the lower part of the Volga Valley. Those records are very complete and accurate in the Tartar Republic. Other places have kept their records with more or less accuracy, so the conclusion I arrived at was made up on this information obtained from the commissars of agriculture at Moscow, and from the commissars of the various States. By checking that back with the records of the local communes, I think that the information I have is reasonably accurate.

Later on, if the committee so desires, I will file and make a part of the record these various tables and statistics that I have prepared touching this famine.

The CHAIRMAN. We would like very much for you to leave those, if you will, Governor, so that we can incorporate them in the record.

Mr. GOODRICH. I will put these in in order so that you may have them included.

I do not know how hard this famine hit the country but we must realize something of the general conditions of the lower Volga Valley. This famine district is, perhaps, the most densely populated in the world outside of China dependent wholly upon agriculture. They have no industrial background, no manufacturing centers, as the industries of Russia very largely disappeared in the last three or four years and the people must depend almost wholly on the products of the soil. And so we find extending from Kazan to Samara a population running above 100 to the square mile. That is four times the population of my own State of Indiana, depending on agriculture alone, and when you eliminate the waste land in these provinces, or rather the communes or collections of communes, I found 150, 170, and even 190 to the square mile, so that you can understand something about the situation from the population viewpoint.

In going into the German and Russian communes and the Russian communes in the lower Volga I found an appalling situation. On going into the cities and observing these great, strong, round-faced, red-cheeked men and women in the bazaars and on the streets, one would think there was no famine in that country, but when you go into the community houses where deserted children and orphans are assembled, go out into the communes and into the communal homes where they have gotten them together, you realize how terrific the situation is, especially when you get down to the brass-tack facts and see the small amount of food that they have there upon which they must depend to sustain life for the next six months.

Let me give you two typical communes. I do not select them because of their unusual character but they are typical of the communes on the lower

Volga. First the commune of Schilling. It is a German commune with a population of 3,798. With 3,795 dessiatines plowed lands and 872 dessiatines of pasture lands, or a total of 4,487 dessiatines, or $1\frac{1}{4}$ dessiatines per capita, which is $3\frac{1}{4}$ or $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres to the inhabitant in that little commune. They planted in 1919, 1,590 dessiatines of land that yielded 37,950 poods of grain, of which the Government took 12,000 in taxes that year. In 1920 they planted 1,737 dessiatines, a little bit more than in 1919, and raised 30,533 poods. They had that year almost a failure of wheat. The wheat crop dropped from 22,888 to 4,646 poods. There was a partial drought in 1920, but their potato crop increased from 7,000 to 19,800 poods and that kept them alive that year.

Mr. CONNALLY. Will you tell us how much that pood is?

Mr. GOODRICH. A pood is 36 pounds. The Government that year took 5,000 poods, or 40 per cent of what they did the year before. In 1921 they planted 1,255 dessiatines, about 20 per cent less than in 1920. Of the 1,255 dessiatines they did not get back the seed used to plant the crops. I went through their grain houses. They had 11 communal grain houses that are usually filled with grain and 9 of them were empty without a pound in them, and the other 2 were partially filled. I met there a pretty clean looking lot of farmers, Russian farmers assembled in the communal hall. By the way, this year the Government did not tax them at all but instead of that gave them back enough seed to sow 330 dessiatines of rye, so that they paid no tax at all this year, and they have there plowed ready for next year 800 dessiatines of ground ready to sow in wheat if they can get the seed to sow.

So the crop this year compared to 1919 was only about 6 per cent, and compared to 1920 about 7 per cent. They had that much available foodstuffs in the commune to preserve the lives of 3,798 people. There are not that many now, because a great many of them have already died, but they have only about $1\frac{1}{2}$ poods per capita, including their cabbage and everything they use there. They gave me the reports recently, and since the 1st day of July 25 died from cholera, 30 from typhus, and 45 from starvation. They said that in that little commune they have 1,146 children under 15 years of age. They said that at least 800 of them would have to have help or die of starvation before next spring.

It was my opinion from the serious expression on the faces of these farmers that they believed that they were telling the truth. They said that the Government had promised them seed and they were in hopes that they would get this. This commune and all others told me that if they had enough grain to sow their wheat next spring they could get along without any help after next harvest. The Russian commune of Babaroff, 10 versts from Schilling, was next visited. It has 2,816 people and 3,100 dessiatines of land, about the same proportion as Schilling. They planted rye, oats, wheat, and potatoes, and other crops in 1919 on 1,200 dessiatines and harvested 4,260 poods; in 1920 on 1,625 dessiatines they harvested 3,021 poods; in 1921 they planted 1,100 dessiatines and got 1,460 poods of grain. I went into their warehouses, and out of nine warehouses eight of them were empty, and they had surplus grain stored in one warehouse. Those communes are typical.

I went over to the commune of Norda, which has 21,000 dessiatines of land, with a population of 8,500, and is said to be the richest of the communes in the whole Volga Valley. It is made up of Germans who came to Russia under Catherine the Great and have maintained their customs and cultivated the land in an efficient way. They have an unusually large amount of land, because five years ago they bought 5,000 dessiatines extra and paid for it out of their communal earnings, so they have there two and a half dessiatines per capita, which is rather unusual for Russia. The population in that commune is only 96 to the square mile, and Schilling is 189 to the square mile. In the commune of Norda they raised there 10,650 poods of grain on 21,000 dessiatines of land, and with that they must feed and take care of 8,500 people. Between that commune and the commune of Schilling I saw in one field as I went by grandparents—I judged so by their appearance, and afterwards learned that was true—the grandfather and grandmother and the son and the daughter-in-law and five children, who were on their knees going across their little allotment of land gathering every weed they could get, tying them in bundles, hauling them down to their commune, and there they intended to thrash out the weed seeds and grind them in the communal mill, mix with rye, and try to get along. The straw from the weeds they put in stacks that their stock might eat it to keep them alive until the next harvest. I asked them whether or not the stock would eat it, and they said, "They will not until everything else is gone, but

they will eat it before they will starve to death." I saw children out along the little waterways gathering rose pods, cuckie burrs, and things like that in little bags that they would take home to grind in their little communal mills, which they have everywhere.

In that commune were 145 people starved to death this year, 65 died from typhus, which is just getting under way there, and 82 from cholera.

I had heard these reports, from different communes, of people starving, and I knew they had fool enough to prevent starving for the time being. I said to these folks, there were 20 or 30 in the communal hall, "I wish you would tell me why it is that where there is enough to preserve life for all of you for several months that you permit your neighbors to starve to death." One peasant answered the question rather slowly. He said, "You Americans do not understand. There is not enough to keep us all alive until next harvest. If we divide up now and do not get help, we will all starve to death. It is better that some shall die in order that others might live." That was his philosophy. He told me they had had a good bit of experience in 1891, when 300,000 died of starvation in the Volga Valley. But at any rate that was the answer, not easy for Americans to understand, but yet when you get inside of Russian life and understand the terrific situation that confronts those people you cease to wonder why, knowing that death must overtake them all if they divide, that they choose to preserve their own families. They are making every preparation to meet the situation. Perhaps they will discount any figures we get, because the human being has a tremendous capacity to maintain life under adverse conditions.

In the commune of Houk, 20 versts beyond Markstadt, we found the communal kitchen in operation. They serve one meal a day at the noon hour, giving to those who have no food three ladles of soup made from cabbage, carrots, and other vegetables, with some meat in it; also about half a pound of rye bread. We saw no evidences of starvation at the communal hall or about the center of the commune. We visited the communal home, where orphans and abandoned children are collected from the nearby communes. We found 145 children in this home. They are first taken into one part of the home, deloused, and given a bath. These children when they come in are dirty, ragged, living skeletons, with a helpless, hungry look in their faces, and take little or no interest in their surroundings. They seem more like an animal that has been shot to death and crawled off in the brush to die. It was a terrific sight for an American to witness. After the children are cleaned up they are given rough cotton clothing, very scant and light, most of them without shoes and stockings, although the thermometer on the day we were there was 28° below zero and the home in which they were quartered not very well heated on account of the shortage of fuel.

I found in this commune 41 houses which had been abandoned. The owners had either died or left the commune. The roofs had been torn off these houses to get wood for fuel. Fuel is very scarce in that country, for the lower Volga is almost as devoid of timber as western Kansas. They burn manure, which is made up in small blocks, and some peat. On the outskirts of this commune, Houk, as we passed a small shed near one of the abandoned houses we found in it two little girls, 10 and 12 years of age. They came out of the shed holding their arms close about them, shivering and crying in the cold, bitter wind blowing the snow across the commune that day. I inquired as to their trouble. They said that their father and mother and two of their brothers had died of cholera and starvation the week before.

That for the past five days they had nothing to eat except some cabbage leaves and carrots that they had gathered from about the commune. They were bare-footed and had on no clothing except thin cotton dresses extending to their knees. They said that they were very hungry. They looked as if they were in great distress, were exceedingly thin and emaciated.

I asked them why they did not go to the communal authorities and apply for help at the communal feeding kitchen. They answered that they did not think it would be any use; that they understood that there was not food enough in the commune for every one. We gave them 100,000 rubles each and told them to go to the communal hall, where they would be taken care of, and they did so. These children probably would have starved to death had we not found them. I asked the communal officers why they did not hunt these cases up. They did not give a very good excuse. They said the cases of hunger usually were called to their attention and that they had all they could do with the limited supply at their command to care for those who came to them.

I tell you these things in order that you might get some idea as to the things that are happening in Russia. I went into a peasant's home in the province of Saratov, where a man and woman were lying at the point of death. They had had nothing to eat for over a week, no money to get anything with. They said "there is no hope for us; we are too weak to get out; we shall die but it does not matter." Many stories of this kind are being told you of the things we saw and heard throughout the famine district. It is difficult for Americans to understand this situation. In these same communes where the terrible conditions I relate occur, a great majority of the people have sufficient to eat and are at this time living in comparative comfort.

Mr. TEMPLE. May I ask one question?

Mr. GOODRICH. Yes, sir.

Mr. TEMPLE. You spoke of giving these little girls 100,000 rubles apiece. What was the value of that money? How many meals would that buy?

Mr. GOODRICH. Quite a great many, because you could get rather a good meal in Russia for 5 to 10 cents American. The rate of exchange, perhaps \$1 for 100,000 rubles.

Mr. SABATH. You could get 100,000 rubles? Yes; for \$1.

Mr. GOODRICH. You could get a very good meal in Saratov, consisting of soup, bread and butter, and tea, for 7 cents, including the tip.

Mr. SABATH. What is 1,000 rubles worth—about a cent or less?

Mr. GOODRICH. One hundred thousand rubles is worth a dollar.

Mr. SABATH. Then 1,000 would be worth one-hundredth of that?

Mr. GOODRICH. A cent; yes.

Mr. LINEBERGER. Do you anticipate the possible delivery of this grain to those for whom it is intended without the interference of the authorities?

Mr. GOODRICH. No question about that.

Mr. LINEBERGER. You have their full cooperation?

Mr. GOODRICH. Absolutely. The Soviet Government, whatever you may say or think about it, is cooperating to the fullest extent. It will not permit a pound of the food to be diverted, but is carrying it to its destination without loss. It is the death penalty for anyone to steal food from the American Relief Administration. I heard a man tell the American Relief Administration officers at Saratov that if anyone stole anything not to fool with them but to report them, and that anyone found stealing American food would be stood up against a wall and shot. There has been a remarkably small amount of food lost. They have an organization down in all those places.

Mr. SABATH. Whom do you mean by "they"?

Mr. GOODRICH. The American Relief Administration. I talked to the different communal officers. They will drive 40 or 50 versts across the country and haul the food out and distribute it to the kitchens, and every pound of food will go to the mouths of the hungry people in Russia.

Mr. LINEBERGER. Do they have the same idea about the survival of some, with the perishing of others, or do they feel that the food should be for general distribution?

Mr. GOODRICH. No; the food now being sent is used only for children. They are doing the best they can under tremendously difficult conditions.

Mr. COCKRAN. Speaking of the people or of the Government?

Mr. GOODRICH. The people, and the Government is doing the best it can.

Mr. CONNALLY. Is the Government taking any measures now to relieve this condition?

Mr. GOODRICH. Yes, sir.

Mr. CONNALLY. Supplying them with grain and food?

Mr. GOODRICH. Doing that to some extent; yes.

Mr. FAIRCHILD. To as full an extent as they can?

Mr. GOODRICH. I think so.

Mr. FAIRCHILD. There is \$10,000,000 in this proposed appropriation. With that would you be able to save the lives of all those in that condition?

Mr. GOODRICH. No, sir; I do not think it is enough, gentlemen. It ought to be doubled. It ought to be 20,000,000 bushels of corn and 5,000,000 bushels of wheat sent over from this country to save that situation.

Mr. COCKRAN. Would even that be enough?

Mr. GOODRICH. Yes, sir.

Mr. COCKRAN. When you say it should be double that, do you think that would be sufficient to supply and give the means of sustaining them next winter?