

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE  
20 South Twelfth Street  
Philadelphia 7, Pennsylvania

FOREIGN SERVICE SECTION

News from Germany

Number 4

October 3, 1947

Child Feeding in the North Rhine-Westphalia

"Wir kinderlein klein,  
\* \* danken fein  
Und bitten sehr  
Bringt uns noch mehr"

This winter a group of 35,000 children (pre-school, adolescent and tubercular) in the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia will continue to be fed with AFSC supplies through a program originated by Walter Mohr, American Friends Service Committee CRAIOG representative in Dusseldorf last winter.

Walter Mohr's story of the Ruhr valley is a fine one. It is made so by the spirit of the people of North Rhine-Westphalia who cooperated to make it "a demonstration of how successfully a relief project can work when it is supervised by Public Welfare and implemented by private welfare agencies." It was not an easy demonstration to achieve in Germany where the history of the past fifteen years has made the private relief agencies deeply suspicious of Public Welfare agencies.

Nearly a year ago Walter Mohr initiated the program with a meeting with public officials in Cologne. He asked for a priority list of the city's needs. The answer was that just about everything was needed. The old city on the Rhine was 64% destroyed, and its population had increased. In consequence, the Burgomeister said, people were living "somewhat like rats."

But especially the children suffered. Swiss physicians who examined children for the Swiss feeding program reported that the children of Cologne were in worse shape physically than in any other city they had reached except Budapest. Some child-feeding programs were in progress under the German Red Cross and the British Military Government. These reached the school children. The pre-school children were not reached. The committee agreed that it was this age group to which our supplies should go.

Public officials cooperated from the first. The city of Dusseldorf offered free storage of supplies and the Landesregierung took responsibility for their transportation.

By the end of March 33,000 children were being fed. The programs were being held in Cologne, Moers, Arklenz, Dinslaken, and Landkries Cologne in the North Rhine-land. Westphalian towns included were Ahlen, Bottrop, Rheine, Gladbeck, Boekum-Hoevel, Muenster, Herford, Bielefeld, Minden, Altena, Hagen, Iserlohn, Luedensheid, Luenen, and Schwelm.

Setting up the Machinery --- The Program Begins

It was December before the program began. Walter Mohr, in a review of his year's work says:

Perhaps one of the most discouraging experiences of the whole year was the long wait between the reporting of conditions and the arrival of the first supplies.

Shipping conditions were such that there were necessary delays but by December a regular flow began and shortly before Christmas we were able to visit the storage places in Dusseldorf to see the distribution of clothing which had been shipped through CRAILOG and also to see the first children fed with CRAILOG supplies."

In his letter dated January 31, 1947, he says:

"You can imagine how happy the Dusseldorf AFSC representative was to hear that the first shipment for our child feeding program is under way. I immediately called Dr. Schwarz, the head of Public Welfare, who was also very much delighted. He is planning, if possible, to go to Bremen himself to start the first shipment to Dusseldorf. It is also planned for the Landesregierung to furnish trucks and guards for the transport from Bremen here because the Reichsbahn is not very trustworthy. The warehouse here is ready and Dusseldorf will furnish police protection. From here the supplies will be distributed to the various feeding centers. The feeding will be carried out as a cooperative Public Private Welfare Project with the Public Welfare officials having charge of the program and doing the checking to prevent duplication. The children are being selected by the German public welfare physicians.

"Dr. Schwarz is planning the proper combination of supplies and is providing 450 calories per day minimum per child. With such a program we can feed at least 30,000 children with what AFSC is furnishing and Dr. Schwarz predicts that he can do better than that although he is making no public announcement as yet. Another purpose is to make the supplies last until the harvest and it is Dr. Schwarz's opinion that if we could furnish 150,000 lbs. of cereal plus 20,000 lbs. of powdered milk in June he could run the program at least to August first. I was not certain whether AFSC planned any purchases for June but hope that it may be possible according to the above-mentioned quantities."

#### Public and Private Agencies Cooperate

At first, cooperation between public and private welfare agencies seemed difficult for the cleavage between them was deep. Walter Mohr wrote on January 8th:

"The longer I am over here, the more I see that there are real arguments on both sides of this question and our job is to bring about a reconciliation of views which are not too far apart. The private agencies can be criticised for thinking too much of their own particular constituents and institutions. On the other hand, the private agencies fear that if there is too much centralization, there will be danger of another dictator taking over all welfare for ideological purposes."

On April 9th he continued:

"Public Welfare is in charge of the feeding; the private agencies do help in the planning. A similar committee will also do the work in Westphalia. Things have not always gone smoothly but we do have the beginning of cooperation."

In a letter dated June 25th, he wrote with pride:

"We are making a pretty clear demonstration of how successfully a relief project can work when it is supervised by Public Welfare and implemented by the Private Welfare Agencies. The reports which are now coming into the office indicate that the whole thing is going to be very successful. It is the only Public Welfare Project in the whole British Zone and one of the few in Germany."

### The People Cooperate

But it was not only the public and private welfare organizations who cooperated to make the feeding program a success. Farmers gave milk. Walter Mohr reported in a letter dated May 28th:

"I want to call attention to an interesting thing which occurred in the Dinslaken area. As you know we have been trying to conserve our milk supply so as to extend the feeding program. The Landesregierung made an appeal to the farmers of the Dinslaken area to supply some extra milk, pointing out that the Americans had made a very generous contribution of supplies which could be used more effectively if a larger supply of milk were available. The result was immediate and astounding. In spite of the strict regulations under which the farmers are working, enough of them volunteered to furnish 1/2 liter a day that we shall have to use very little or none of our milk in that area. You see what that does to our program -- it means we can carry on a little longer!"

And we pick up a note on the cost of child feeding in the field. "The costs of the child feeding here originate mainly from the transports. The transports from Bremen to Dusseldorf are being paid by the Landesregierung. The expenses for the transports from Dusseldorf to the towns are carried by the towns themselves. These expenses are very low, however, as city trucks are being used. There are no other costs. All people assisting the program are working as a public service."

And the public authorities did more than cooperate in the machinery. They contributed. In a letter dated July 15th, Walter Mohr reports:

"Yesterday afternoon, in conference with Dr. Reichardt and Miss Schuster of German Public Welfare, it was determined to begin a feeding program at Essen because the city will furnish the milk. We will include 5,000 children in this program and shall feed them for nine weeks.

"In the meantime, the Landesregierung has acquired 14 tons of sugar for child feeding purposes. With the milk which you have already allotted us and the residue of supplies, we shall be able to feed 33,000 instead of 23,000 children for a nine weeks period."

Milk was very important in the feeding because the children were fed a "suppe" or porridge mixture which required it. There were three different meals used in the North Rhine feeding area -- which were really three different ways of preparing the cereal.

The first was soya, cereal, sugar and milk. The second was cereal, sugar and milk. The third was soya, cereal and lard. The first totaled 415 calories, the second 255, and the last 400 calories per child. Four meals were given each week, two of 415 calories, and one each of 255 and 400.

### Inspection Trips

At first it was a little hard for the children who had never eaten such rich food to get used to their "suppe." Walter Mohr writes of inspection trips:

"The child feeding program is under way and you can believe me when I say that I have never had greater soul satisfaction than when I saw those three to six year

olds in Cologne eating our food. It's amazing how clean these poverty-stricken people keep those kiddies.

"Certain slight adjustments will have to be made in the meals. It may be that the lard ration is a bit too rich for little tummies which are not used to such nourishing diet. The doctors still insist that it will work. We shall report such changes as may be necessary."

Later he writes:

"On Friday I visited the towns of Hagen, Schwelm and Luenen to inspect our child feeding projects there. I left at six-thirty in the morning and returned at six-thirty in the evening. It was a most inspiring experience. Public Welfare has the wholehearted cooperation of the Private Welfare Agencies and in every community visited things were in excellent shape. Most of the feeding centers are in Kindergartens and I wish you could see the little rascals eat. Some of them - especially the children of refugees - are pathetically undernourished but one can already see real results. Naturally they like the sweetened cereals a little better than the soya but they eat the latter surprisingly well. In most of the places the kiddies sang songs for us telling how much they enjoyed our 'Suppe' and how grateful they were to our Friends in America.

"That brings me to another problem to which I have already referred. We are facing another grim winter and with a population greatly undernourished because of inadequate food it may be a disastrous one.

"I was most depressed yesterday to see the rations which are fed to the dependent groups in some of the areas where we are feeding the children. Thus for example, our kiddies get as much fat in three days as grown ups get in a month. The daily ration in one of the towns I visited was two pieces of bread, one spoon of cereal, and one cup of skimmed milk."

#### "Amazingly Grateful"

"The Rhinelanders are amazingly grateful," Walter Mohr tells us. In a letter dated January 24th, he writes:

"The young messenger who delivers my mail each day was a former prisoner of war in the U. S. He became very good friends with a Texas farmer who still writes to him and sends him supplies. The youngster is so grateful for this friendship and help that he wants to hand over what money he earned (about \$100) in the U. S. as a prisoner of war to this Texas farmer who is not in too comfortable circumstances, but still manages to help others. He wants to know how this can be arranged."

Just before he returned to the United States, the city of Schwelm presented Walter Mohr with a plate -- a trophy usually reserved for the oldest and most trusted employees.

A letter from the Head of the Red Cross in Schwelm tells how the program worked out there and how the people felt about it:

"Our Schwelm population is poor on the whole. It is a small manufacturing town. In spite of being a 'Kreisstadt' the welfare possibilities are certainly not favorable with us today. There are many refugee families in the neighborhood; before they came, the town had to take care of their own bombed-out people, besides taking

in many others from the industrial towns of Dortmund and Bochum. The people of Schwelm are modest, unassuming, avoiding unnecessary complaints as to the needs of today, and leading an industrious life to the best of their endeavours. So it may seem to outsiders as if the distress is not so great as it really is. Mothers come with their children, neat and clean, to the meals. Although the children have almost all been going barefoot for a long time, because money is wanting in most cases to buy wooden sandals, yet their mothers have the knack of making new garments out of old for the little ones, and it is done with so much love and care that the children look as nice as if hardly anything were lacking. The children are so well-looked after in almost every family and from this may be deduced that they - superficially seen - still look comparatively well. Mothers always sacrifice themselves and are nearly all weak in health and undernourished for they give up almost everything for their children. So we always have nice happy childish faces in front of us. We get quite a different impression of the state of things, however, when the little ones are measured and weighed. Their ribs can be felt and counted. One feels so sorry to see them, one would like to help them if one only knew how to do so.

"These eight weeks, however, have brought sunshine into the lives and faces of our little ones and their mothers. As you, honoured donors, live far away in that, for our children, fairy land of wonders, America, they have asked us to thank you very much indeed. During the first few days a number of the children were not able to eat their portion but had to have it at intervals, and we had to feed them in many cases. They have become more and more accustomed to their meals and they are very unhappy now when Wednesdays or Saturdays come round and they do not get anything.

"In the mornings they have either eaten very little or nothing at all; neither have their mothers, but this is a fact to which the latter have long been accustomed. They are used to being hungry but it is a great worry for us as to how long they will be able to hold out, for it happens, and not rarely, that Mother faints because she has had nothing to eat.

"We had placed five fellow-helpers from the Red Cross for serving the soup, and one to keep watch over an equal distribution. They are all so pleased to have been chosen for this work and ask me to thank you most heartily for all your kindness to our children. From the parents' point of view too, we, workers in the Red Cross, were glad to be allowed to help, for it gave the meals more of a welfare appearance and so did not seem at all like alms. That was also the idea of the generous donors, I am sure, who only wanted to give true pleasure and real relief; not that all those others who helped would not have done so just as happily and well, but in their nurses' uniforms our helpers formed a pleasant and cheerful whole.

"Thanks and blessings once again to the generous donors.

Hanna Koch

Head of the Women's Red Cross in Schwelm/Westf."

Since March of 1946, the American Friends Service Committee has shipped approximately 750 tons of food supplies to the British zones of Germany amounting to the value of \$400,000, of which 250 tons valued at approximately \$70,000 went into this program.