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AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

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FOREIGN SERVICE SECTION

News from Germany

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OF HUNGER

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This is a chapter on hunger in Germany. We send it to you so that you may understand the need for your contributions.

It is not easy to visualize hunger in the Spring when the earth seems so prodigal of its fertility. It is the old story, "The little foxes have their holes and the birds of the air their nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head". Man is much less self-sufficient than any other creature. He is much less able to depend upon the gifts of nature alone without those of his fellow man. In the Spring, nature seems to provide for every living thing lavishly - for all but mankind. For man, if he lives near the subsistence level, the Spring and summer months are the hardest, for then the past years harvest is depleted and until the new harvest comes, granaries are empty.

All over German people are hungry. The official rations in the three Western Zones between the period of January 1 and 20 were - according to an article published in the "Berliner Zeitung" - these: The amounts are given in ounces.

	Bread	Cereals	Meat	Fish	Fat	Sugar	Cheese	Skimmed Milk
<u>British Zone</u>								
Hannover	214 2/7	26 11/14	7 1/7	--	1/4	12 1/2	1 3/7	--
Bielefeld	214 2/7	8 13/14	3 4/7	--	--	12 1/2	2 1/2	--
Duesseldorf	250	17 6/7	10 5/7	--	--	--	--	--
Dortmund	254 13/28	25 15/28	---	5 5/14	--	12 1/2	--	--
<u>U. S. Zone</u>								
Muenchen	235 5/7	30 5/14	5	--	3 4/7	11 11/14	1 3/7	1 1/2 pint
Nuernberg	235 5/7	30 5/14	7 1/2	--	3 4/7	11 11/14	1 3/7	--
Bremen	235 5/7	30 5/14	5	12 1/2	2 9/28	12 1/2	1 3/7	--
<u>French Zone</u>								
Freiburg	148 3/14	23 4/7	14 1/7	--	--	--	--	1 1/2 pint
Wehr-Baden	140 6/7	--	14 1/7	--	--	--	--	2 1/2 pint
Alpirsbach	140 6/7	--	14 1/7	--	--	--	--	--

The official rations - meager as they are - are not always met. A report from Oberhausen translates these reports into other terms. It reads:

"As a matter of fact, during the whole of last year, for one week only, in September, the Germans got 1613 calories per day which was the maximum for the year, i. e. 360 days with an average of about 1300 calories per day. Today they get 1119 calories.

"Perhaps calories do not mean much to you. Therefore let us illustrate it in another way. A housewife is able to serve the following for her husband each day: 6 slices of bread (357 grams or 15 ozs.), 35 grams or 1.2 ozs. of cereals, 16 grams or $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of jam, and 9 grams or $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of sugar. That was actually what most families got on their ration cards on the first day of 1948. But where is the butter you will ask? The answer is that from December 20th, 1947 until the end of January 1948, you could not buy any butter, margarine or fat - and as you only got 50 grams or 1.8 ozs. when you bought your ration last time, you are forced to eat dry bread and to cook without any fat for a period of six weeks at least.

"Meat - no, there was no meat available. 20% of the inhabitants of Oberhausen got 20 grams or $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces of meat in the first week of 1948. It is better now. Most people get 80 grams or 2.8 ozs. to 100 grams or $3\frac{1}{4}$ ozs. per week.

"Although you may know it, we want to remind you about the potato situation here in the Ruhr District. Two cwt. of potatoes had been promised per head for the winter. This was cut down to one cwt., but when the winter came, only $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. was issued to about half the population of North Rhine-Westphalia. In Oberhausen, 60% of the inhabitants got their $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. (25 kg or 55 lbs.), 37% got one cwt. and 1% got three cwt.

"How is it possible to live on these rations? You may ask, we do not believe it. Yes it is difficult to believe, but it is so. We can only tell you that we do not know of actual deaths by starvation but we notice among our friends, who as a whole are not of the poorest class, that they have no resistance to disease. They struggle on, the one with heart trouble, the other with throat, stomach or skin troubles, if not with something worse, tuberculosis.

"For a fortnight we have been regularly visiting a family, and the following tables show what the wife bought during that time and what she was able to serve. They do not draw a heavy worker's rations:

PURCHASES - FOR TWO PERSONS

5/1/48 Nothing.
6/1/48 Nothing. Went in vain to buy fish, butter and fat.
7/1/48 Bread, 1500 grams or 3 lbs. 5 ozs.
8/1/48 Sauerkraut, 500 grams or 1 lb. 20 ozs., 1 glass of mustard, 1 bottle of shredded turnips (Rübenkraut).
9/1/48 Nothing. Went in vain to buy fish.
10/1/48 Cereals 250 grams or 8.8 ozs., 500 grams or 1 lb. 2 ozs. 'Pannas' (Horse meat or offal mixed with barley), 100 grams or 3.6 ozs. black pudding, 3000 grams or 6 lbs. 10 ozs. bread.
11/1/48 Nothing.
12/1/48 Nothing. Went in vain to buy fish.
13/1/48 1500 grams or 3 lbs. 5 ozs. bread, 126 grams or 4.4 ozs. cheese. Went again to buy fish.
14/1/48 Seven herrings.
15/1/48 Nothing.
16/1/48 Nothing.
17/1/48 1500 grams or 3 lbs. 5 ozs. bread, 500 grams or 1 lb. 2 ozs. black bread, 250 grams or 8.8 ozs. sugar, 50 grams or 1.8 ozs. yeast.
18/1/48 Nothing.
19/1/48 Nothing.

"Meals during the same period for one person:

10/1/48 Morning. One cup of coffee substitute, three slices of bread with Rûbenkraut.
Lunch. One plate of green pea soup, one piece of black pudding.
Supper. Two slices of bread with 'Pannas' and what was left of the black pudding, one cup of coffee substitute.

16/1/48 Morning. Coffee substitute, two slices of bread and Rûbenkraut.
Lunch. A plate of oatmeal, gruel.
Supper. Potatoes, mustard, two slices of bread, coffee substitute.

17/1/48 Morning. As above.
Lunch. 250 grams or 8.8 ozs. green peas, 500 grams or 1 lb. 2 ozs. potato soup.
Supper. Pea Soup (What was left from lunch) one slice of bread, mustard and coffee substitute."

And from the French Zone we have this summary from our team in Koblenz:

"Throughout 1947 the official ration remained below the 1500 calories figure. A compilation of the actual amounts of food distributed on the ration cards, shows that the adult who received no supplements either through scrounging or through packages from relatives in foreign countries, was obliged to subsist on the following rations during the entire year:

Bread	154 lbs.	Fats (this includes butter, margarine, etc.	5 lbs.
Sugar	8 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.	Cheese	3 lbs.
Meat	13 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.	Marmalade	--
Milk	--	Fish	5 lbs.
Macaroni, Noodles	11 3/4 lbs.	Cereals	13 lbs.
Potatoes	366 lbs.	Soup Mix	2 lbs.
Flour	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.	Eggs	only 19
Egg Substitutes	$\frac{1}{4}$ lbs.	Dates	2 lbs.

"Reducing the figures in the adult category to the daily rations, these are:

Bread	6.75 ozs.	Fats	.219 ozs.
Sugar	.37 ozs.	Cheese	.0131 ozs.
Meat	.592 ozs.	Fish	.219 ozs.
Macaroni, etc.	.515 ozs.	Cereals	.573 ozs.
Potatoes	1. lb.	Soup Mix	.0875 ozs.
Eggs	.285 ozs.	Dates	.0880 ozs.
Egg Substitutes	.001095 ozs.		

"The truth of the statement which one often hears to the effect that Germans are 'living illegally' becomes evident from the above figures.

"Up to January 20 there had been no ration of butter or cooking fats since the middle of December. Cheese for December is still outstanding.

"As of February, there is no prospect for further sugar rations and the potato supplement for persons doing heavy physical work can no longer be maintained.

"The 1947 crop, as is generally known, was a very poor one. The city of Koblenz has so far been able to give 100 pounds per person on the ration cards, and most people have received a second ration of 100 pounds. These are to last until the 1948

early potatoes come in. We were told that it is very doubtful that the population will receive the full 300 pounds which represented last year's ration. The potato situation is further aggravated by the disastrous winter floods. Many families who had their potatoes stored in the cellar found them floating in the quickly rising cold waters and were able to salvage only a portion of them. There are many smaller communities where the potato situation is even more critical than in Koblenz."

And what do these rations mean in human terms? They mean high tubercular rates, lowered resistance and depression. One of our team members in Ludwigshafen sent us the following stories of what starvation meant and means to some German people who attended an English class he was teaching there. The first is from a young woman:

"On December 15th, 1946, I went home with my little daughter. Suddenly I got weak and could not move a limb. My daughter cried. I could not move my mouth. All the muscles had their own movements without my will. My heart got slower and slower. I cannot say how long I was in this painful situation. As soon as I was able, I crept into the kitchen and lay down. When my husband came in in the evening I was unconscious with shivers and high fever. Never before in my life had I had a fever. He called the doctor who diagnosed it as a high degree of undernourishment and he had no hope that I could survive this attack. The cause had been only a little catarrh. The body had had no strength to resist such a little infection.

"What had happened before? At first I had had a steady feeling of being hungry; then I was always tired with a terrible longing for sleep. Never could I sleep enough. This longing for sleep was so heavy that I had a great and deep consolation in thinking of death. Once I took my little girl and opened the gas conduit. But waiting I thought that my girl would be dead before me - I would have to see my child killed by my own hands. So I didn't. Don't think I was especially unhappy at this very moment. It was only the longing for sleep and never awakening. My soul had no longer the power of intensive feeling. No impression could strike me hard. You must know that music gives me always the deepest impressions, especially Mozart. In former times, I knew most of the symphonies if I only heard a few lines of them. But now I could never follow, I had no memory. Very often I was not able to talk even in German. I could only say some simple words, but not a longer sentence. I did my work mechanically, most I did not because I couldn't. Sometimes when I was shopping I had the temptation to steal bread. I would have done it but I had no opportunity. I should have been very proud to get it home to my husband and child. I didn't steal, not because I feared the sin; no, I was only afraid of being discovered and punished.

"One day in the week I helped my old parents in their household. There I used every opportunity to steal a slice of bread or an egg or sugar. I ate the pure meal. I knew they had enough to eat. They got many parcels. Don't think badly of them. Old people suffer more than we do, because of the possibility that they may have nothing to eat, even once a day; although they had enough. Never would I have stolen if they would have not had a lot of eatables. On midday my mother gave us three a good meal. But we couldn't eat much because we were never used to it. This was only one opportunity for us during the whole week.

"In January we got a first and last CARE parcel. We bartered the cigarettes for other eatables. After the attack, I got supplementary rations for three weeks: 50 g. (under two ounces) of grits and 125 ccm (two ounces or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) of milk per day. That was all. In the meantime we bought from black market and my husband succeeded in going to the farmers. Life is now more supportable. I am not thin like a skeleton, still now it is easy to be good and to do right. But my memory is still not quite well."

The second is from a high school boy: The report from our Ludwigshafen team reads:

"One of the high school spoke convincingly: 'I used to be able to study easily and learn a lot; now when I go to school I can only read for ten minutes or so and then what I read doesn't make sense to me and I read but I don't know what I have read, and all I can think is "I'm hungry, I'm hungry, I'm hungry"; and then I look at my watch and figure out how long it is till I can eat again; then I think of what Mother may have been able to buy during the morning (sic!) for lunch; then I look at my watch again, and the first minute I can, I run home as fast as I can; and perhaps there is something there for lunch; and perhaps there is nothing!"

It is difficult for us to realize what this slow starvation does to human beings. Hunger and want are their daily companions; not some day, but every day. The food we send to them is pitifully inadequate; but it brings something to these people, that cannot be explained in terms of calories alone. Perhaps it is the knowledge that they are not quite forgotten; that somewhere outside the borders of their own country there are people who think of them with friendliness and good will as fellow beings. Thus far we have kept burning this little flame, it is a candle of hope in a dark world: we cannot, we must not, allow it to go out now!