

TO FEED THE HUNGRY: GERMAN-AMERICANS, THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE EUROPEAN FOOD CRISIS

Nine days after the capitulation of German troops in Europe, the *New York Times* ran the headline: "Starvation in Reich is put up to U.S."¹ In a press conference in Paris, Lieutenant General Lucius D. Clay warned that the food supply in postwar Germany was "going to be a very tight squeeze" until next year's harvest was in. Given the situation it would be up to the "American Congress and the American people" to decide "how close to starvation the German people... may be allowed to come" before food would be shipped from the United States. "I would not say the policy on this has been decided," concluded Clay.² His remarks proved to be prophetic—indecision and confusion turned out to be exactly the problem with regard to the food supply for Germany. It would take President Truman until February 1946 to face the reality of a critical shortage of food in Germany and the world at large. Even then his response barely solved the food shortage the world was facing between the summer of 1945 and the summer of 1946.

Although perilous in many countries, the food shortage was especially critical in Germany. The country was thoroughly devastated by the war it had decided to fight. Successful agriculture in Germany was threatened by a shortage of all necessary material, from seeds and manpower to agricultural machinery. For obvious political reasons Germany was excluded from the help the United Nations Relief Agency (UNRA) was supplying to other countries, including Italy. Moreover, until the United States changed its policy towards Germany in the fall of 1946, the army, under governmental guidelines, was ordered to keep

rations at a minimum level and to strictly limit imports.

The focus in the following paragraphs will be on the American response to the massive shortage of food in Europe and the American occupation zone in Germany in particular. The first part will adumbrate the seriousness of the crisis in Germany and Europe. The second part will briefly analyze the Truman administration's food policy in 1945 as well as public reaction to that policy. Congress and the Truman administration differed on the appropriate response to the food crisis, and the public at large defended a variety of opinions on the issue as well. German Americans were naturally concerned about the crisis in their old homeland, a fact much reflected in German-language newspapers published in the United States at the time. Yet the reaction of other Americans, both to the crisis itself as well as to agitation for prompt relief on the part of German-Americans, varied. The third part will look at how successful German Americans were in their efforts and show how in the end a combination of events contributed to the opening of some relief channels to Germany.

PART I: THE WORLD FOOD CRISIS

The disruptions and devastation of the Second World War affected the world's agricultural regions to an unparalleled extent.³ Asia, which had been largely self-sufficient before the war, became dependent on imports from the Western Hemisphere. The same held true for Europe. Food production in the western half of the continent was considerably lower than before the war. The eastern regions, which were now under

Soviet control, produced a surplus but no longer shipped their agricultural products westward. Instead, the countries in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans supplied the Soviet Union with urgently needed grain. Many regions of the world were no longer able to supply themselves. A few countries were in a position to remedy this shortage, among them the United States, Canada, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and a few Latin American countries. Of course, each country had a varying quantity of food available to ship abroad, and not all these countries were willing to supply assistance to the needy.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), established in the spring of 1945, estimated that European production of food for 1946-1947 would supply 2,100 calories per day per person.⁴ These figures were considerably lower than the prewar level of 2,750 for continental Europe and close to what the FAO's panel of experts had established to be an "emergency caloric intake requirement." The availability of this recommended emergency ration of 1,900 calories would differ widely between rural and urban areas. To achieve a safe level of consumption throughout a country, the FAO experts recommended 2,500 calories a day. This level would support an individual at just above subsistence level. The FAO's estimates for available autochthonous calories in Europe for 1945-1946 showed that most of the European countries were seriously affected by the shortage of available food with the exception of Denmark, Sweden, and to some extent, Switzerland.⁵ In most countries caloric consumption ranged from 2,100 to 2,600 calories.

To alleviate the shortage and to provide a balanced diet was not an easy task in post-

war Europe. A healthy diet relies not only on starchy food but also on a balanced intake of animal products, fruits, and vegetables. Because meat production requires a large amount of grains, which in times of crisis can be put to more efficient use by being directly supplied to the people, meat production in Europe-and, due to other circumstances, also imports from the United States-remained low for years to come. The same held true for egg and poultry production while the fishing industry was hampered by the problem of providing refrigeration for its rapidly deteriorating product en route. Sugar, a high energy food, also remained in extremely low supply between 1945 and 1948 because, despite a rise in the European output of beet sugar, worldwide sugar production fell during these years.⁶

The true meaning of these mere figures was human suffering. Serious malnutrition lowers the population's resistance to dangerous diseases such as tuberculosis. It impairs the ability of the people to perform hard physical or mental work which, in the immediate post-war period, presented the concomitant danger of slowing down European economic reconstruction. It especially endangers the less fortunate and less aggressive parts of the population; the poor, the elderly, and children.

Although the people in most European countries were suffering from malnutrition, the former enemy countries and Spain were the most seriously affected. The FAO study found that in all these countries local consumption was below 2,100 calories. As the next section will demonstrate, concrete figures for Germany were actually considerably lower than the FAO estimated

Crisis in Germany: When United States troops moved into Germany in 1944-45, they did not know much about the food sit-

uation in the former German Reich. Original directives contained in the Joint Chief of Staff Document 1067 (JCS 1067) advised the army to "estimate requirements of supplies necessary to prevent starvation or widespread diseases... as they would endanger the occupying force."⁷ Consumption was to be held to a minimum so that imports could be "strictly limited." The army was also ordered to take no action "that would tend to support basic living standards in Germany on a higher level than that existing in any one of the neighboring United Nations." Few of these orders turned out to be realistic in the long run.

Soon after the army moved in, experts of its civilian arm, the US Group Control Council (USGCC), began to work on educated guesses concerning the food situation. It could do no better because the greater number of major and minor German officials had decided to go into hiding or to retreat with the German army.⁸ Even in his first report as Military Governor of Germany issued in July, Lucius Clay did not describe the situation in a favorable light: "The food situation throughout Western Germany is perhaps the most serious problem of the occupation," he states. "The average food consumption in the Western Zones is now about one third below the generally accepted subsistence level of 2,000 calories per day per person."⁹ The report outlined that the average supply to the civilian population in urban areas amounted to 1,000 to 1,400 calories per person with a zonal average of 1,150 calories. Caloric intakes were a little higher in the countryside. Rations were also higher (3,000 to 3,400) for coal-miners in the Ruhr to support an emergency program to keep the essential mining operations going. The early reports from July and August estimated that the results from the

incoming harvest would be favorable, reaching nearly 95% of the 1944 level. Even under these conditions, the July report stated, "the Western Zones ... are food-deficit areas to the extent that food must be imported if starvation conditions and a general breakdown of health are to be avoided."¹⁰

In the months thereafter conditions proved even more serious than previously estimated. In October the report of the Military Government found that "previous estimates of food production had been too high, and consequently that Germany's paramount economic problem—that of supplying its own food—is even more pressing than had been anticipated."¹¹ Food rations at the end of October stood at 1,250 calories per person after the initial intentions of the Military government to supply 1,300 calories could not be met from the available local supply.

Conditions worsened in November. The Military Government completed a thorough survey of the available crop which brought "into sharper focus the reality that the Germans will not be able to subsist healthfully through 1946."¹² The results from the harvest of 1945 had been seriously overestimated, and the survey showed it to be considerably lower than the 1939-1944 average. The survey gave rise to bleak forecasts. "[I]ndigenous production in the US Zone from 1 November 1945 through 30 September 1946," the report stated, "would provide the normal consumer with an average of 938 calories. The FAO had found that this was a daily food intake considerably below the minimum one recommended by doctors, a fact which "emphasizes the seriousness of the food situation in Germany."¹³ Even with the already authorized limited food imports from the United States the

To Feed the Hungry

caloric intake would not climb higher than 1,100 calories.

The rapidly shrinking food supply, which was only to be replenished by limited imports, made the prospect for the coming winter a gloomy one. The Military Government had done as much as it could to fully utilize all German resources to supply adequate foodstuffs. Any additional supply would have to come from one of the few countries which had a surplus—the United States. The low food supply not only raised questions of humanitarian concern but threatened to endanger the occupation force in several respects. Diseases and food riots would be hard to control. Economic reconstruction would be slowed down. And in the long run starvation could turn the populace against the occupation forces, thereby endangering the prospects for establishing a democratic German state.

PART II: DOMESTIC RESPONSES, SUMMER AND FALL 1945

The Administration: it was clear to many that the food situation abroad was serious. As Herbert Hoover, former president and renowned World War I food expert, put it during a radio interview in May of 1945: "it is now 11:59 on the starvation clock."¹⁴ But in the United States the Department of Agriculture and many food experts had been concerned with a different problem: abundance of food. Conditioned by the trauma of the Depression, promises of imminent military victory, and rising agricultural production, the majority of experts on the panel of the War Food Administration (WFA) feared the returning surpluses of the postwar era. In the last half of 1944, the WFA took steps to relax rationing controls, so that Americans could eat up the threatening food stocks. It drew up production plans that retreated from the policy of expanding farm

production. And, it stopped the stockpiling of emergency supplies.¹⁵

In March of 1945 it became apparent that the current food policy was heading in the wrong direction. Victory could take longer than expected, serious meat shortages plagued the big American cities, and the reports from Europe did not sound encouraging.¹⁶ Belatedly, the Department of Agriculture confirmed these fears. A report issued by its Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations in May of 1947 stated that continental Europe would need twelve Million tons of imported food in the next fourteen month but "[e]xcept for wheat, world supplies of these commodities are far short of demand."¹⁷ Soon Herbert Lehman, former governor of New York and current head of UNRA, joined Hoover in his warnings. Lehman would be a tireless although not very successful promoter of allocating help for Europe.

Ironically, coordinated attacks against the Truman administration's food policy came not from the promoters of foreign relief but from the opponents of the real or perceived domestic shortage. The blame was directed towards the Office of Price Administration (OPA). At its height at V-E day, the OPA was responsible for the rationing of over eight million commodities and had 73,000 employees all over the country.¹⁸ After the war's end many Americans felt that the OPA stood in the way of realizing the American dream of indulging in abundance. This view had actually been fueled by government propaganda during the war connecting the winning of the war with the return of the right to consume.¹⁹ As soon as the war was over the OPA was on the defensive, a position from which it could not hold out for long.

The ensuing debate over the OPA had important consequences for the food shortage in Europe. Controlling the flow of food in the United States meant that it was easier for the government to send products overseas. For example, the government could make most of the grain produced available for foreign relief rather than feeding it to hogs to increase meat production. Without OPA, the consumers' expectations of being able to indulge in full-fledged consumerism meant that it was less likely that much food would left to be sent abroad. Moreover, without price control the government would have to pay more for relief food, as prices were very likely to go up once the price ceilings were lifted—as indeed they did once rationing was abandoned.

During the fall of 1945 conditions in Europe worsened considerably, and the administration once again worried about oversupply. Chief among those concerned was Clinton P. Anderson, the new head of the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Truman had appointed Anderson, a congressman from New Mexico and an outspoken champion of consumer abundance, in the hope of silencing the attacks Anderson had launched in Congress against the administration's food policy. Under Anderson guidance, the USDA continued to court the American consumer and soon the self-styled "apostle of abundant production" set out to dismantle the OPA structure as rapidly as possible. In the aftermath of the bumper harvest of 1945, restrictions had already been eased considerably. Only meat rationing and the related rationing of fats and oil remained.

Chester Bowles, the administrator of the OPA, warned Truman of the consequences of dismantling the rationing system entirely. At the beginning of November he

wrote the president that he was "deeply disturbed about the food situation here and abroad and its relationship to our present program of rationing"²⁰ He suggested a ten-percent reduction of the amount of meat, fats and oil available to the American consumer which would still leave consumption at a level considerably higher than any time between 1936 and 1944. Such a program "would enable us to still eat better than any other people on earth." He believed that Americans would support such a program because they had indicated often their "willingness to make any reasonable sacrifice ... if the dietetic needs of our allies and even our former enemies overseas are clearly outlined to them." Truman forwarded Bowles' letter to Anderson with the advice to consider it carefully because, as he said "[a]s you know, I am very much interested in preventing the starvation of the people who were our friends in the war."²¹ However, Anderson ignored most of the issues it raised, informed Truman of the ample supplies, and recommended the end of meat rationing. Truman decided to rely on the judgment of his cabinet member. Anderson was the expert on food and would decide in his area of expertise. Without political backing the entire rationing apparatus of the OPA was dissolving rapidly. A reluctant Bowles agreed to end meat rationing by the end of November and soon all the remaining programs except sugar rationing were abolished.²² In a press conference given on the occasion of the end of rationing, Anderson assured the public that the United States would still be able to meet its overseas commitments.²³

German American concerns: Yet, at the same time, it was not only the members of the administration who were reading the reports about worsening conditions in

Germany and Europe. During the months after V-E day German American newspapers reported frequently on the conditions on the continent and the possible disaster to come. Of these newspapers the *New Yorker Staatszeitung und Herold* was the most important. Published daily in New York City the *Staatszeitung* was the oldest and largest German American newspaper in the United States. Indeed, it is still published today.²⁴ The paper provided a steady diet of foreign and domestic news to the largest settlement of German-born Americans in the country. Foreign news was either provided as translations of Associated Press reports or came from its own correspondents, who traveled with the army in Europe.

As soon as the war was over, the *Staatszeitung* began publishing articles which described the dire conditions in Germany. One day after Lucius Clay had given his press conference in Paris the paper's main headline warned of "Germany's gravest winter, Homelessness and hunger threaten civilians."²⁵ The article pointed out that, according to allied military officials, Germany had to expect the worst winter in centuries and that United States forces had tried their best to help stimulate farming in Germany. In its Sunday edition six days earlier the paper had already published a large map showing estimated rations for each country under the heading of "the ghost of hunger threatens Europe."²⁶ The accompanying article pointed out that help for Germany could only be self-help because UNRA first had to consider the needy masses of all other countries which had been plundered by the Nazis.²⁷ A commentary one week later warned again of the "death through hunger" in Europe and pointed out, albeit carefully, that Germany also needed a certain degree of food relief.

Such step would be in the interests of the occupying powers to keep the economy in Germany going. Thus, the paper was happy to report one month later that Allied high officials had indicated that Allied policy would now support very limited imports to Germany to alleviate dangers to the occupying forces.²⁸

Over the next few months the paper would not alter its general line of reporting. Many of the leading articles about Germany alluded to the difficult food conditions in the country.²⁹ Reports by the allied authorities in Germany in June, July, and early August, which found food conditions to be slowly improving, were normally placed inconspicuously on the second or third page.³⁰ The fact that even those optimistic reports had been premature and that conditions worsened steadily into the fall was faithfully reported in the paper at an ever-increasing pace. By November and early December articles about dire conditions in Germany and Europe filled the pages of the *Staatszeitung* almost daily.³¹

In the face of famine conditions in Europe, the paper clearly supported the end of rationing in the United States. Already in a commentary in May the editorial staff had reminded its readers that all the food promised to Europe still needed to be delivered. To ensure these exports "the American public has to be willing to carry on the restrictions which it put on itself during times of war for another year."³² Only then could the enemy of democracy, world peace, and civil order be defeated. When the end of meat and fat and oil rationing was announced, the *Staatszeitung's* commentator was not very convinced of the merits of the measure: "Already the notion of a wintry malnutrition catastrophe in the countries across the Atlantic ocean to which many millions of

Americans are connected by ties of blood is sufficient for every well-meaning person in this country to regard the fact of the so surprisingly announced end of the meat and feat rationing only with mixed feelings."³³ Despite these warnings the paper would never go as far as to advocate the introduction of new rationing measures.

As is apparent from the lines of the *Staatszeitung und Herold*, after the end of the summer of 1945 it became obvious to even the most cursory of its readers that conditions were continuously worsening in Europe and Germany. The concerns of German Americans translated into action on two fronts. On the one hand, German Americans tried to institute associations which would organize the collection of relief on the local level. Such associations, however, could not be successful without the means of shipping their relief supply overseas. Thus, on the other hand, these groups, aided by a large number of individuals, approached political leaders to change the American relief policy towards Germany so that they could deliver their supplies. Initially many of these attempts ended in frustration, as the administration was not very receptive. However, the general food crisis which befell the world in early 1946 finally reinforced the message of the German American lobbying effort and brought about a change in American food policies in Europe.

Initial response to the German food problem was slow. Obviously it proved difficult to translate individual concerns into public action given the state of organization of German Americans. When reports about Germany first began to appear in the *Staatszeitung* many readers seem to have reacted by asking about the resumption of mail and parcel service to Germany. Mail

delivery was not allowed to Germany because it was an enemy territory under army administration. The lack of postal communications troubled many readers of the *Staatszeitung*. On September fifth a commentary stated that "in the last days the number of letters from the circle of our readers which complained about the lacking renovation of postal communication with Germany—although the arms have been silent for four months—has increased remarkably."³⁴ In its answer to these complains the paper cited mainly technical difficulties for these delays. In the next month it would keep its readers continuously informed about developments in this regard until finally, in March 1946, it could inform its readership that a limited mail service would be opened on the first of April.³⁵ Parcel service followed in mid-June of 1946.

When the reports about the deteriorating conditions in Germany first came in, it was not possible to mail packages. Other forms of supplying goods had to be found and organized. The first efforts to start some kind of relief operations for Germany were undertaken by the National Council of the Steuben Society of America, a society old and patriotic enough to escape any suspicions about the loyalty of its members to the United States. On October tenth, Theo J. Hoffmann wrote President Truman asking for an appointment to discuss the question of rendering assistance to people in Germany and Austria.³⁶ At the same time, Hoffmann also approached Congressman Ploesner in order that Ploesner might raise the question of an appointment in his talk with the president the next day, but neither approach worked. The president's secretary, Matthew J. Connelly, wrote back six days later that his "request ... has been duly

noted" but that "the President... is working under tremendous pressure these days." Emphasizing that the president did not doubt the "loyalty, Americanism, and good citizenship" of "Americans of Germanic extraction," Connelly, as directed by the uninformed president, referred the request to UNRA for further help.³⁷ But Hoffmann was not prepared to give up. At the beginning of November he again wrote to the president asking for an appointment, pointing out that "[r]equests are coming in daily to us ... from our members ... inquiring when restrictions against help for the German people will be lifted. Hoffmann noted that "thousands of innocent women and children in Germany and Austria are dying daily while we procrastinate."³⁸ Again Truman would not to see him, but Hoffmann did get some positive assurance in a memo from the State Department that relief operations were planned for some time in the future.

Had he known the general opinion Truman held on supplying relief to Germany and Austria, Hoffmann would not have been surprised by the denial of his request. In a similar reply—this time in answer to a request submitted by senator Burton K. Wheeler (D, Montana)—Truman wrote: "there is naturally a growing sentiment in this country to feel sorry for the people who caused all the bloodshed and while I don't want to take the attitude of being cruel and inhuman ... I think the Germans brought on the war and ... should pay the penalty."³⁹ In December Truman reminded Senator Albert W. Hawkes of New Jersey that "[o]ur efforts have been directed particularly toward taking care of those who fought with us rather than against us.[e]ventually the enemy countries will be given some attention."⁴⁰ This obvious

resistance at the top made it difficult for German Americans to move forward successfully with their attempts to supply private relief to Germany.

Efforts got underway again in November. Early that month the *Staatszeitung und Herold* reported that members of the German American War Bond Committee had established an "American Committee for the Relief of German Children and the Needy, Inc." in New York. Its members, mostly from New York, were already preparing the establishment of branches in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Cleveland.⁴¹ Soon thereafter the founding members of the temporary committee traveled to Washington to inquire at the State Department about opportunities to ship private relief supply to Germany and Austria. They found, as their temporary chairman Hans A. Specht reported, some encouragement to submit an application for the official approval of their organization to the "President's War Relief Control Board." How quickly such application would be approved, officials in Washington were not able to say because "concerning relief actions towards Germany the State Department is guided by a certain policy set by the government which is based on the Potsdam treaty according to which Germany has to supply itself."⁴² It turned out that approval would not follow very quickly at all.

On December seventh, the committee reported that it was now legally incorporated in the state of New York. But chairman Specht reported that it did not yet have a license to ship relief supplies to Germany,. The next step, according to the *Staatszeitung und Herold*, would be to submit a resolution in Washington asking for higher calorie allowances for German civil-

ians, for the possibility of shipping relief supplies to Germany privately through American agencies, the opening of the mail service, and the permission for Americans to send relief supplies to Germans regardless of political or religious affinities. Approval was still not forthcoming. On December twenty-eight at a meeting of the President's War Relief Control Board the committee's application for licensing had been postponed as well as the application of the Wisconsin-based American Relief for Germany, Inc., another organization which had been founded in the meantime.⁴³

Apparently the applications of the two organizations were not approved for several reasons. On the one hand, private relief to Germany met with technical difficulties.⁴⁴ In the destroyed country transportation was still difficult, and a large percentage of what was available in the way of transportation facilities were being used by the army. The same was true for the transoceanic shipping of supplies. Further complications arose out of the necessity of getting the consent of the Allied Control Commission for the establishment of such a service. Although the Control Council was able to reach decisions in some areas, negotiations on the question of relief supplies were stalled due to French and Russian opposition.

On the other hand, approval also needed political backing, and that was apparently also not forthcoming. First, most officials still assumed that Secretary of Agriculture Anderson was correct in his assurances of an ample supply of wheat and other important foodstuffs—an assumption which soon proved false. Given the ample stockpiles, so the reasoning went, emergency conditions in Germany and elsewhere could be met if they had to be. Secondly, political backing for the two private, German American relief

organizations was also lacking because Germany had until recently been an enemy country which had inflicted great harm on the United States and its Allies. JCS 1067 and the Potsdam treaty provided the relevant guidelines and they called for self-help, not for the import of food. Yet even early on reports indicated that self-help alone was not adequate and that some form of stepped-up private and public assistance program would be required. But success in that arena would require at least a partial reversal of governmental policy, which was a slow and difficult process.

PART III: DOMESTIC RESPONSES WINTER 1945 AND SPRING 1946

Beginning in December 1945 and gaining strength in the following two months, incentives to change governmental food policy towards Germany and Europe came from two sides. On the one hand, the Truman administration found out, to its embarrassment, that the positive predictions about the available food supply in the United States had grossly overstated the actual situation. On the other hand, the administration came under increasing political pressure from the public and the Congress to change its approach towards supplying relief to Germany. The first problem was addressed by founding the Famine Emergency Committee, an organization under the honorary chairmanship of former President and food relief expert, Herbert Hoover. The Famine Emergency Committee relied on voluntary conservation measures and contributions by the American public to raise the food supply available for export. To decrease the public pressure, the administration decided finally in February of 1946 to allow private relief organizations to ship supplies collected in the United States over to Germany—initially 2000 tons each

month. These efforts were organized under the guidance of the Council of Relief Agencies Licensed for Operation in Germany (CRALOG).⁴⁵ The Council was joined in June by the Cooperative for American Remittance to Europe (CARE), which allowed Americans to buy individual army rations stored in Europe to be supplied to German civilians.⁴⁶

The Administration: Beginning in late December the administration became painfully aware that its forecasts of European wheat supplies were grossly off the mark. As Secretary of Agriculture Anderson acknowledged in early January, drought, shortages of seed and manpower, and transportation problems increased European requirements for wheat by twenty-five to thirty percent. Yet, much more disturbing for the administration was the fact that the perceived overabundance of wheat reserves in the United States had disappeared. As a report by USDA officials at the end of January made clear, with the end of meat rationing nineteen million tons of wheat had been fed to animals for meat production. To meet the shortage of meat mostly consumed in the United States, large wheat stocks had been used, reducing stocks to 16.9 million, six million tons of which should have been earmarked to fulfill outstanding promises to Europe.⁴⁷

At the end of January Anderson finally admitted that a food crisis was at hand and that the government would now have to take quick measures to curtail domestic consumption of wheat. On February 6, the president informed the public of the food crisis and ordered, using his remaining price control authority, limitations of grain going to industrial users and asked the public to save grain. To further this end, on February 27, Truman appointed the Famine Emergency

Committee to bring about the maximum voluntary conservation of food like grain and fat and oils. Standing above party lines, many of the members of the Famine Emergency Committee were leading executives in the media and advertising business. This was in fact, the policy motive behind the committee: to sell to the public a media crusade for voluntary food conversation. In the next six weeks the committee distributed a deluge of information to the public on how to conserve food.

Despite high hopes neither measure met much success. In April, United States' stocks of wheat stood at nine million tons, with half of it still on the farm. The country did not meet its export goals to any European country. Ration levels in the U.S. zone in Germany had fallen from 1,500 calories in January and February to 1,275 in April, with further reductions to 1,100 thereafter.⁴⁸

What finally saved the European countries from starvation were not the voluntary measures to save food but the clear inducement for farmers to sell their grain after the government had decided—reluctantly—to raise the price ceiling for grain. Chester Bowles, now Stabilization Director, had warned that raising prices contributed to inflation. But starvation was clearly worse than inflation. Initially, the farmers held back their products, but in April, a price increase of twenty-five-cents for corn and fifteen-cents for wheat in combination with a bonus, which had been announced earlier but had proved insufficient initially, convinced them to sell to the government. By the end of June the government was finally able to meet its earlier obligations to ship over five million tons of cereal grain abroad. The emergency situation of the food crisis had been met, albeit not through vol-

untary measures but by clear market incentives.

The resolution of the 1946 food crisis did not necessarily raise global food stocks above critical levels. Food would remain scarce for years to come. But in the next winter the government was more appropriately prepared and was able to meet the situation with better advanced planning. In Germany, as in other countries, the calorie supply would never reach such a low level again.

German Americans and the Public: Just as the administration began to realize that the United States' food supply would fall short of European requirements, it came under increasing pressure to open channels for private relief efforts to Germany. It is significant that the first organizations to supply relief goods to Germany were licensed shortly after the government had found out about the shortage in the United States and the President had asked the public to support the curtailing measures he announced on February ninth. All these measures were part of the administration's effort to end the "season of drift," as Bernstein and Matusow have called it.

In the months prior to the administration's ultimate actions, criticism of the governmental policy towards Germany had been especially harsh. On January 29, 1946, Senator Kenneth S. Wherry, Republican from Nebraska, thundered in the Senate: "The President knows perfectly well that an imposed diet of 1,550 calories subjects any people to mass starvation and the ravages of disease and unrest. Mr. Truman has defied not only American but world opinion by refusing to yield to the heart-rendering pleas for intercession and mercy that have come from all over the globe. Thus, the issue before us ... is a question of America's honor, and the basic humanitarian impulse

of the American people, as to whether they intend longer to submit to the browbeating of a man, who no longer speaks for, or represents, the American heart, mind, and conscience in these matters."⁴⁹ Wherry's calls to open mail service and relief supply for Germany did not find any dissenting voice in that congressional session.

Such strong words should not have been unexpected at the White House. The House Economics Committee, under the leadership of Representative Colmer (D, Miss.), had visited Germany in November and returned to criticize government policy as one that would "require the elimination of 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 Germans."⁵⁰ On December 15, 1945, thirty-four senators of all parties sent a petition to Truman asking him "as the Commander in Chief of our armed forces to take immediate steps toward relieving the appalling famine in Germany and Austria." Stating further that "[w]e did not fight the war to exterminate the German people" they asked the President to raise rations in the United States zone and to allow "private relief organizations to start operations in Germany and Austria."⁵¹

The petition of these senators was partially a reaction to concerns about conditions in Germany raised by Byron Price in a report submitted to the president on November ninth and released to the press on November twenty-eight.⁵² "We must decide whether we are going to permit starvation, with attendant epidemics and disorder, in the American Zone or ship food to prevent it," Price wrote. His report was, in fact, only the first of several which informed the public about conditions in Germany. Church organizations like the American Friends Service Committee, the National Catholic Welfare Council, and the Unitarian Service

Committee spoke out as well, and many of their reports spoke of the starvation conditions in Germany and especially of the children and elderly affected by hunger. By December and early January, many of these reports were generally available; various ones were cited in the senatorial debate in January.

Political pressure on the senators was also mounting from their constituents. At the end of October, German American newspapers began to carry appeals to write to Congress to allow for the opening of channels of communication with Germany.⁵³ In response, a number of members of Congress wrote to President Truman inquiring about the state of affairs in this regard.⁵⁴ In most cases the president's replies were along the lines already cited above. The longer the government stuck to that response, the less credible its policy became. After talking with the president in January of 1946, Senator Wherry stated in a press release that mail and package services had been restored in and between all four zones of Germany and for certain individuals in Germany accredited to UNRA and the Red Cross. It was the "German people alone [who] are being denied the change to ... receive aid from the outside world."⁵⁵ The president's replies to the congressional letters also received some criticism during the senatorial debate in January.

Thus, public pressure to open some channels for private relief to Germany was mounting from all sides. German Americans pressured their congressmen and senators to bring the matter to the attention of the administration. Incoming reports from Germany painted conditions in an unfavorable light. Slowly, the administration was ready to change. On January fourth

Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson wrote to Hassett, secretary to the president, that on the question of relief shipment to Germany the "body of public opinion ... in the country is so strong ... that the Department has receded from its previous negative position, primarily for fear ... to forestall the charitable instincts of the American public."⁵⁶ Still, it took the threat of the world food crisis to push the government towards a change of its position. Once the existence of a food shortage was admitted, it only seemed logical to allow German Americans and other citizens of the United States to contribute at least a little to the relief of the plight overseas. Soon the American Committee for the Relief of German Children and the Needy, Inc. and the American Relief for Germany, Inc. and other German American relief committees became affiliated with one of the twelve organizations combined in the CRALOG council and German American newspapers began to carry the news from the "Relief front" daily.⁵⁷ German Americans finally had at least one way to contribute to the reconstruction of their ancestral lands before the opening of the postal service allowed for more forceful efforts.

PART IV: CONCLUSION

The attempts of German Americans to open some channels for the private relief of food shortages in postwar Germany initially fell on deaf ears within the Truman administration. Despite the efforts of local organizations to either address the national political leadership directly or to go through local politicians, the response of the government was slow and indicated its uneasiness with the issue. Internationally the United States and its Occupation Forces were still bound by the words of the Potsdam declaration, and the Truman administration was still try-

ing to work out the differences with its ally, the Soviet Union. In the long run the Truman administration would turn its policy around. From the spring of 1946 the United States would seek to solve the German problem by integrating it into the Western community of states rather than by treating it exclusively as a vanquished enemy.

In the final analysis two reasons account for the difficulties German Americans encountered in convincing the administration of their demands. On the one hand, many historians agree that President Truman and his administration were often ill-prepared and sometimes overwhelmed by the many tasks arising at home and abroad from the end of the war.⁵⁸ In 1945-46 policy decisions concerning occupied Germany relied on a number of wrong assumptions, ranging from fears of economic recession to the belief that world agriculture would recover quickly.⁵⁹ The difficulties which arose subsequently were compounded by the fact that Truman, due both to the circumstances which had catapulted him into office and to his personal style in office, frequently relied on his staff for expert advice. Listening to Anderson but ignoring others like Bowles, he chose to disregard the warnings about the world food crisis which had been building since the summer of 1945. As long as supply was supposedly sufficient to fulfill the letter if

not the spirit of JSC 1067 and prevent disease and unrest, there was no apparent need to allow relief shipments to Germany. Only when the worsening signals coming in from all sides could no longer be ignored, did the administration adjust its policy.

Other reasons contributed to the difficulties German Americans were having with their demands as well. In the senatorial debate in January it became apparent that many senators thought that the president was not distinguishing between participants in the Nazi regime and the great number of other people who lived in Germany and needed help. The senators felt that their government should not punish the innocent. In comparison, Truman expressed the belief that the two groups could not be separated and thus any shipment to German civilians was not worthwhile.

On the other hand, some of the difficulties which German Americans faced they could only blame on themselves. Their own ethnic organizations were reluctant to speak as a group. As a consequence, German Americans did not wield the political clout which, as in every democracy, is the way to cudgel leaders into action. Without political influence their attempts were laborious but unlikely to meet with much success. It would ultimately take other events to bring about a change.

— Martin Lorenz-Meyer
University of Kansas

NOTES

- ¹*New York Times*, May 17, 1945.
- ²*Ibid.*
- ³The following description is based on Hal E. Wert, "The Fat of the Land: Voluntary Food Conservation Programs of the Truman Administration, 1945-1948," (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1972), 1-29.
- ⁴Report, "Urgent Food Problem," May 14, 1946, FAO, quoted in *ibid.*, 6-7.
- ⁵"Report to the Director General," May 8, 1946, FAO quoted in *ibid.*, 9-10. Autochthonous refers to possible production in the country.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, 15-22.
- ⁷The part of the JSC 1067 related to Economic Policy is printed in Department of State, Occupation of Germany: Policy and Progress, 1945-46 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1947), 155-158.
- ⁸Christoph Weisz, ed., *OMGUS-Handbuch: Die amerikanische Militärregierung in Deutschland 1945-1949* (München: Oldenbourg, 1994), 11-23. The USGCC was consolidated into the Office of Military Government for Germany see *ibid.*, 28.
- ⁹Military Government of Germany: *Monthly Report of the Military Governor U.S. Zone*, Number 1 (July 1945), 9. These reports were issued until the United States decided to transfer the authority of the Military Government to the office of the High Commissioner for Germany in 1949.
- ¹⁰*Ibid.*
- ¹¹*Monthly Report of the Military Governor U.S. Zone*, Number 3 (October 1945), 9. (There was no September report issued.)
- ¹²*Monthly Report of the Military Governor U.S. Zone, Food and Agriculture*, Number 4 (November 1945), 1. ¹³*Ibid.*
- ¹⁴*New York Times*, May 17, 1945.
- ¹⁵See, for this policy, Alien J. Matusow, *Farm Policies and Politics in the Truman Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 3-5.
- ¹⁶See also Meg Jacobs, "'How about Some Meat?': The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from (US) (OMGUS) at the end of September 1945, the Bottom Up, 1941-1946," *Journal of American History* 84 (1997), 932.
- ¹⁷*New York Times*, May 7, 1946.
- ¹⁸Wert, "Fat of the Land," 33.
- ¹⁷*New York Times*, May 7, 1946.
- ¹⁹Wert, "Fat of the Land," 33.
- ¹⁹Jacobs, "'How about Some Meat?'" 912.
- ²⁰Chester Bowles to the President, November 2, 1945, Folder (June 1945-1946), Official File (OF) 174, Truman papers, Truman Library (TL).
- ²¹Memorandum for Clinton P. Anderson from the President, November 5, 1945, *ibid.*
- ²²Harvey C. Mansfield, *Historical Reports on War Administration: Office of Price Administration*, vol. XV: *A Short History of OPA* (Washington: GPO, 1947), 195; see also attachment to letter from Truman to Dwight W. Morrow. December 14, 1945, Folder (1945-1946), OF 426, Truman papers, TL; Wert, "Fat of the Land," 45-48; Matusow, *Farm Policies*, 15-16.
- ²³Barton J. Bernstein, "The Postwar Famine and Price Control, 1946," *Agricultural History* 38 (1964), 237.
- ²⁴The paper had been published continuously since 1834. Its circulation figures were for 1940: 48,000, for 1944: 27,596; for 1950: 25,840. In the 1940s the editor of the paper was Victor F. Richter. See Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *History and Bibliography 1732-1968: United States of America*, vol. 1 of *The German Language Press of the Americas*, (München: Verlag Dokumentation, 1976), 399. The importance of the paper is also underlined by the fact that Thomas Mann, probably the best known German emigre, choose the *New Yorker Staatszeitung und Herold* to clarify his position about his return to Germany. See *New Yorker Staatszeitung und Herold*, October 18, 1945.
- ²⁵"Deutschland steht vor dem schlimmsten Winter, Obdachlosigkeit und Hunger droht deutschem Zivil," *New Yorker Staatszeitung und Herold (NYSH)*, May 18, 1945; A report about Clay's press conference was not published because it had been exclusively covered by the NY Times.
- ²⁶*NYSH*, May 13, 1945.
- ²⁷"die Gefahr [einer Hungersnot] [könne] Deutschland im wesentlichen nur durch eigene

To Feed the Hungry, Notes

Anstrengungen barmen, da bei den UNRA-Aktionen vor den notleidenden Deutschen erst die bedürftigen Volksmassen in alien anderen, bis vor kurzem von den Nazis ausgeplünderten Ländern an die Reihe kommen würden," *NYSH*, May 13, 1945.

²⁸*NYSH*, June 23, 1945.

²⁹See, among others, "Munich is Hungry," June 2, 1945; "For Berlin Difficult Winter Lies Ahead," June 11, 1945; "Good Harvest in Reich is not Sufficient," July 24, 1945, *NYSH*.

³⁰See "Food conditions in Reich are to be Improved," June 26 1945; "More Calories for Germans," July 7 1945, *NYSH*.

³¹See, among many others, "Europe Needs Millions of Tons of Food," September 17, 1945; "Berlin Digs Graves for Starvation," September 18, 1945; "Misery in Europe Without Countermeasures," September 24, 1945; "Hunger and Bitter Cold Threatens Europe in This Winter," September 30, 1945; "Germany Before the Winter of Hunger," October 7, 1945; "Quaker Describe German Misery," November 2, 1945; "The Frightful Ghost of Winter in the German Reich," November 4, 1945; "Millions in Germany are in Danger of Hunger," November 10, 1945; as the main headline: "Intervention of the Army in Reich or Mass Starvation, Quaker Appeal for U.S Help for German Children," November 30, 1945; "Death Looms for Thousands in Reich," December 21, 1945; "The Saddest Christmas in Europe," December 25, 1945; *NYSH*.

³²"Das amerikanische Volk muß gewillt sein, die Einschränkungen, die es sich in der Kriegszeit auferlegte, noch für ein weiteres Jahr zu tragen, wenn es nicht nach unserem militärischen Sieg den weitaus gefährlichsten Feind der Demokratie, des Weltfriedens und der bürgerlichen Ordnung in Europa inthronisieren will—den Massenhunger." *NYSH*, May 23, 1945.

³³"Schon die Vorstellung einer winterlichen Ernährungs-katastrophe in den Ländern jenseits des Atlantischen Ozeans, mit denen viele Millionen von Amerikanern durch Bande des Blutes verbunden sind, genügt jedenfalls für einen jeden gutartigen Menschen in unserem Lande, die Tatsache des so überraschend bekanntgegebenen Endes der Fleisch- und Fetttrationierung nur mit gemis-

chten Gefühlen aufzunehmen," *NYSH*, November 26, 1945.

³⁴"In den letzten Tagen haben sich in auffallender Weise Briefe aus dem Kreise unserer Leser gemehrt in welchen Klage darüber geführt wird, daß die Postverbindung mit Deutschland noch nicht wiederhergestellt sei, obwohl die Waffen bereits vier Monaten lang ruhen," *NYSH*, September 5, 1945.

³⁵*NYSH*, March 28, 1946.

³⁶In June Louis E. Alewel of the Steuben Society in St. Louis had already, unsuccessfully, written to the President asking for an appointment for Mr. Hoffmann, see Alewel to Harry S. Truman, June 7, 1945; Alewel to Charles Ross, June 15, 1945; Connelly to Alewel, June 20, 1945, Folder (1945-1946), OF 426, Truman papers, TL.

³⁷As mentioned, UNRA did not supply in Germany. "Memo to Mr. Connelly," October 11, 1945, the President noted on the memo "not in favor of it should go through UNRA;" Matthew J. Connelly to Theo J. Hoffmann, October 16, 1945, Folder (1945-1946), OF 426, Truman papers, TL. Unfortunately, the letter Hoffman wrote to the president was not in the files; for Hoffmann's attempts see also *NYSH*, November 7, 1945.

³⁸Theo J. Hoffmann to Matthew Connelly, November 9, 1945; **Connelly to Hoffmann**, December 11, 1945, Folder (1945-1946), OF 426, Truman papers, TL.

³⁹Harry [S.Truman] to Burt[on K. Wheeler], October 6, 1945, Folder Misc. (1945), OF 198, Truman papers, TL.

⁴⁰Harry S. Truman to Senator Albert **W. Hawkes**, December 21, 1945, Folder Misc. (1945), OF 198, Truman papers, TL.

⁴¹November 9, 1945, *NYSH*. At the same time also other organizations must have been formed. Their existence, however, is difficult to establish. One, at least existed in Milwaukee in the beginning of November called "Committee for Relief to Austria and Germany." A resolution signed by "three thousand five hundred Americans in mass meeting assembled" was sent to the president on November 10, 1945. The *Milwaukee-Herald*, the local German American newspaper does not mention this organization. For the telegram see Folder (1945-1946), OF 426, Truman papers, TL.

Lorenz-Meyer

- ⁴²"hinsichtlich der Hilfsaktion für Deutschland wird das State Dept. von einer bestimmten Politik, die die Regierung festsetzt, geleitet, und zwar ganz besonders durch die Potsdamer Vereinbarungen, nach der Deutschland allein für sich sorgen muß," *NYSH*, November 16, 1945.
- ⁴³*NYSH*, December 28, 1945.
- ⁴⁴This was a point the government always made in reply to requests to supply relief to Germany. See, for example, Harry S. Truman to Senator Albert W. Hawkes, December 21, 1945; Matthew J. Connelly to Congressman Lawrence H. Smith, November 27, 1945, both in Folder Misc. (1945), OF 198, Truman papers, TL.⁴⁵Announcement of President Truman, February 19, 1946, in Folder B (CRALOG) OF 426, Truman papers, TL.
- ⁴⁶*NYSH*, May 11, June 6, 1946.
- ⁴⁷The following description combines Matusow, *Farm Policy*, 17-37 and Wert, "The Fat of the Land," 62-90; see also Bernstein, "The Postwar Famine," 238-240.
- ⁴⁸*Monthly Report of the Military Governor U.S. Zone, Food and Agriculture*, Number 8 (March 1946), 3; *Monthly Report of the Military Governor U.S. Zone*, Number 9 (April 1945), 14; for rations in June see *NYSH*, June 9, 1946.
- ⁴⁹Congressional Record, 79th Congress, 2nd session, 1946, vol. 92, pt. 1:514,518.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 512; see also *NYSH*, November 14, 1945. ⁵¹ *Congressional Record*, 79th Congress, 2nd session, 516; see also *Milwaukee Herald*, December 19, 1945.
- ⁵²Memorandum [the report] by Byron Price to the President, November 9, 1945; Press release, November 28, 1945, both in Folder (1945-April 1950), OF 198, Truman papers, TL.
- ⁵³See, for example, *Milwaukee-Herald*, October 31, 1945.
- ⁵⁴Letter to the President by Representative William Lemke, November 22, 1945 and Letter by Lemke to Matthew J. Connelly, December 11, 1945, in Folder (1946), OF 198; Letter by Representative Lawrence H. Smith to the President, November 13, 1945; Letter by Senator Milton R. Young to the President, December 5, 1945; Letter by Senator Wheeler to the President, December 11, 1945, Folder (1945), OF 198, Truman papers, TL.
- ⁵⁵*Congressional Record*, 79th Congress, 2nd session, 518.
- ⁵⁶Memorandum for Mr. Hassett from Dean Acheson, January 4, 1946, Folder (1945-1946), OF 426, Truman papers, TL.
- ⁵⁷See *NYSH*, March 6, 1946; *Milwaukee Herald*, March 5, 1946.
- ⁵⁸See, for example, Donald R. McCoy, *The Presidency of Harry S. Truman* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 16-17; Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 218-239; Matusow, *Farm Policies*, 3.
- ⁵⁹Harold F. Gosnell, *Trumans's Crises: A Political Biography of Harry S. Truman* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 257-258.

