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INFORMATIVE

SENT TO

RUSSIAN COMMITTEE.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE.

July 20, 1922.

AMERICAN RELIEF ADMINISTRATION  
HERBERT HOOVER, CHAIRMAN.

May 31st, 1922.

Mr. Lewis Strauss,  
52 William Street,  
New York City.

Dear Mr. Strauss:-

I have just returned from a short trip to Nikolaev and Kherson, where Colonel and I went on an auto. This is my first experience travelling here on a long distance on a machine, and I must confess, that it was exciting from the start to the finish. To begin with, just as we were leaving the outskirts of the city, we met a group of prisoners. As our chauffeur was not quick enough to turn aside, the guards were pointing at us their revolvers - I do not know why, but I hate to look into a barrel of a gun. The misunderstanding was soon over, and we proceeded peacefully.

The weather was beautiful, and, while the road was bad and was hard on the machine and on the passengers, we made considerable speed. The road from Odessa to Nikolaev was formerly used as an automobile-racing ground- the owner of this track was killed in an accident and is buried on the grounds. His monument is the only spot, that breaks the monotony of the empty fields, but looking up in the sky, you can enjoy the beautiful sight of the most marvellous clouds and in the distance you see water. We met very few people in vehicles, but a number on foot: these are the travelling food-seekers.

After a five hours' trip we arrived to the city of Nikolaev and as soon as we entered the city's limits, we were welcomed by the children, who happened to be on the streets, and were greeted in loud voices: "ARA, ARA."

As I have already informed you, Raskin is taking charge of this district, but he was not there, as he went to Kherson, to organize the work there. We stayed in Nikolaev just a little while and proceeded to Kherson.

The trip from Nikolaev to Kherson took another three hours. We were caught in a terrible shower, and the road became almost impossible. As it was getting dark, we were not losing time and, notwithstanding the most violent skidding, we proceeded on a high speed.

A few miles from Kherson we were met by Mr. Raskin and a representative of the local government. This was not done for any other reason, but because they felt, that we will not be able to find the way and also because they thought, that additional protection would not be amiss: it is not safe, as you see, to make trips on a lonely road in the night.

Kherson is a dead city. Famine played havoc with the population. Typhus is still raging, and there are many cases of cholera. Mortality reaches an unheard maximum. The former population of the city was about 80,000. There are not more than 40,000 left. Thirty percent of the population are Jews. In this particular city the Jewish people suffered most. This is explained mainly by the fact, that most of them were artisans, and this class of people were not in position to get subsistence as other classes did, as the government employees, or speculants. In former years, for instance, the entire laundry trade was in the hands of the Jews. Everyone of these died. To a smaller degree this is true in regard to shoemakers, or even tailors. Politically, the Jews here were also removed from the government centers, and this too had a great effect upon their condition. The Jews' mortality was greater than that of the non Jews and reached daily from 50 to 60. Those, that were able, left the city. Probably, many of them succumbed on the road. At the present time the mortality is smaller, but that probably is due to the diminishing number of population. The community graves on the Jewish cemetery- is the most pathetic sight to behold. They cannot afford to bury the dead individually and so they bury them in masse.

The ARA kitchens were already operating the day we arrived, and by the reception we received from the people, there could be no question, that the ARA has brought a new spark of hope in the broken hearts of the suffering people. The day we were there 9,500 children were fed, of which 1,000 were fed in the institutions and the rest in the ARA kitchens. The administrative expenses of these kitchens are paid by the local government, and, in order to get the means, they had to sell some corn, that they had in their warehouses. But everywhere the recognition of the ARA work has been evident, and especially the children looked upon us with eyes full of appreciation.

During the afternoon we visited a number of closed institutions (internates). The children there are especially in bad shape. Strange, as it may seem, the neglected and hungry children outside the institutions do not look as bad as those, that are presumably receiving care. In one of the institutions, belonging to the Yudosoom, we were especially impressed with the terrible situation; the miserable, ragged and frightened children indicate by their appearance not only the want of necessities, but showed the results of neglect and bad management of their supervisors. It was enough to speak to the director, to realise, that in this case the main difficulty was in the fact, that the Head of the institution had no business to be there. In another institution which is located in a former monastery, with the most beautiful surroundings and a fine equipment, the property of the nuns, the director carried a revolver. The children were well-groomed and dressed, but carried a frightened look. In a separate little yard, behind the buildings, we discovered 20, or more children, of the ages from 5 to 14, of both sexes, the boys absolutely naked below the belt. On inquiry we found, that it is a mode of punishment, invented by the lady-matron for children transgressing the rule against eating unripe fruit. With the rapid growth of institutions for children, it is a difficult matter to get qualified personnel and borrowing the political pressure there is a great want of prepared teachers and managers. This would indicate the advisability of encouraging schools for social workers, and especially for teachers. Efforts of this kind are made everywhere.

In the city of Nikolaev we are already operating 6 kitchens; within a short time we shall have 5 or 7 more and will undoubtedly reach the maximum. While Mr. Raskin is in charge of the work, he has in employ local people, and Elie Gershkovich is his head-manager. Generally speaking, there

are a large number of Jewish employees. They are helping the work along. The representative of the government in the Kherson district is also a Jewish young man, by the name Kapustiansky. He is a hero of the revolution, has many medals for bravery and is now devoting all his time, as liason-officer, to the ARA in this district. He will undoubtedly be of great help to the work.

Nikolaev Gubernia includes the following Uezds: Nikolaev, Kherson, Elisavetgrad and Dnieprovsk. The same day we went to the city of Aleshki. That is the main town of the Dnieprovsk district with a population of 20,000, of which 3,000 are Jews. Here the manager is Dr. Aron Feldboem. The work here is organized the same as in Kherson. We visited a few institutions and everywhere we saw the horrible results of continuous famine.

Late in the evening we returned to Nikolaev. This time we were better equipped for our travel, and, while the weather was threatening, our machines did not skid much, as they were equipped now with chains. On the road we saw a dead body of a man, who probably was killed a few hours before. The wound was still fresh he was shot in the heart.

The following morning we made a thorough inspection of the work of the Headquarters of Nikolaev. In this city we are already feeding about 15,000 children. We visited the institutions and inspected the warehouse. Colonel Grove was exceedingly pleased with Raskin's management, and I could not help, but realize, that whatever Raskin has done, was due to his experience, he has got in Poland.

I hope, that Mr. Rosen will be able to explain to you the exact status of our affairs, and you will then see, what kind of people we really want and whom we do not want.

In the regional districts of the Nikolaev Gubernia the work is being started now. Mr. Raskin made arrangements to do the work through an organization of cooperatives, known as "Selsoyuz". This organization will distribute food in various districts and establish ARA kitchens. Because of the speedy progress, made by Mr. Raskin, and also because of the great need, Colonel Grove had increased the regional allocation from 100,000 to 125,000 portions. He also allocated 60,000 portions for adult feeding.

As I have written to you in the last letter, there are number of Jewish colonies in the neighborhood of Kherson. They are as follows:

Effinger	200
Dobroye	350
Novo Poltavskaya	320
Bobrowii Kutt	80
Bolshaya Sedominicha	100
Malaya Sedominicha	80
Liwova	160
Novo Barislav	100
B. Nagartov	260
M. Ramenovka	80
Israelevka	125
Sagaidach	75
Gramokley	50
M. Nagartov	50

There seems to be no objections to allocate special allowances to these localities. A similar arrangement is made in regard to German colonies.



The farmers need immediately some agricultural implements and horses. I do not think, it would be advisable for me to start an independent machinery for the purposes, nor did I want to attach myself to one or the other organization. I finally agreed with the ORT representatives, that, if they will provide the farmers with horses and scythes, I shall later pay them the amount not to exceed 3000 dollars. The entire work must be done through their own initiative and without my active participation.

In Nikolaev I have arranged for the following supplementary J. D. C. allowances: food for the physicians - \$1,000; food for the needy colonists - \$2,000 (monthly) and I also placed 2,000 dollars worth of food for the needy families in Kherson and Nikolaev, making a total appropriation of 5,000 dollars monthly for the Gubernia. I have engaged a man, who will watch our interest there, and in this way you can be sure, that the two classes, most needy, namely: the intelligentsia and the farmers will get full consideration. In this connection I want to call your attention again to the landsmanschaft situation. It is impossible to have committees appointed in America, to attend to the distribution of food here. If we insist, it may work in some cases, especially, if the committee consists of few people, and they are not altogether - "persona non grata". But to force the organization of a committee of 10 or 20 people, in a time, when our social organizations are still liquidated, seems to be an unreasonable demand. In each case, when the distribution was made, various compromises were to be made, and the results were not satisfactory. I want therefore again to repeat, what I suggested before: namely, that the appointment of committees should be delegated either to the ARA, or the J.D.C. representatives, or the Yudoscom. These are the only three methods, by which the work could be done affectively

I am the 2nd day in Odessa. The Colonel was underweathered yesterday, but he is all right to-day. We expect to go to Moscow for the Conference, which is to take place about the 10th of this month. We may leave here in a day or two and will visit Ekaterinoslav and Alexandrovsk and from there proceed directly to Moscow.

After the Conference I expect to go to Berlin, to attend Jessie's wedding. Incidentally, I would like to have a chance to confer with our people and I wired to-day, asking for this appointment. I need not tell you, that I anticipate with great pleasure to take a little stroll for pleasure. I feel fine, but the work is hard. With best regards,

Yours as ever,

(Signed) Boris D. Bogen.