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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE ASSISTANCE
OF CHILD REFUGEES IN SPAIN

This intergovernmental effort began its actual work in Spain on May 1st. The giving of a daily meal to 14,000 children has been authorised, the larger number in Catalonia where the need is greatest, but canteens in Huesca and Tardienta have already been opened in Nationalist Spain. The governments which are taking part are Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand, Belgium, South Africa, Switzerland, Australia, France. A small gift was received from the Dutch Red Cross, but the Government of the Netherlands has not contributed. The total amount received or promised amounts to £25,726, but several countries who may contribute have not yet replied.

The need is terrible and there are something like a quarter of a million children who ought to be helped. It is hoped that when the International Commissioner, who is a Swedish citizen, Mr. de Lilliehöök, returns from his tour in Spain he will be able to persuade governments, associations and individuals to give more generously. The amount received is about one sixth of what was calculated as likely to be the needs for a meal a day for four months of the refugee child population in Spain.

Here is a picture from the Bulletin of the Friends Service Council of one of the canteens already organised:-

"Vich. Five hundred children normally; maximum 800. The children come in three shifts for porridge in the morning from 8.30 on. They are checked off the list as they enter one by one and show their metal numbers, usually pinned to their clothing. They take their places at long marble-topped tables. The porridge is served from a central table into earthenware dishes and is carried to the children by five little girls who at the end of the week receive a cake of perfumed soap for their services... The children eat with great gusto and considerable orderliness, and the five little girls collect the plates as they are emptied and take them to be washed ... In another room mothers with very small children were fetching milk for their feeding bottled. Everything is carried on with great calm and friendliness on the part of the refugee girls who manage it, though they have to work from six in the morning till seven at night to prepare and serve to so many children. But they are glad to do it, and take great pride in showing their daily and weekly records."

It is on these or similar lines that the canteens of the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees in Spain are being run, and this is a picture of the need from the same source:-

"Conditions have gone from bad to worse in ways difficult to imagine. The hopelessness of the search for food affects everybody. Nothing is available in the shops, not even the omelette powders, soup cubes and sugar beets there used to be ...

"Only one meal is given in the day. This the refugees go to fetch. It consists of beans, chick peas or greens. We saw the ration for a family of four. It just filled the little plate we use for the children's porridge, with some left over. This is all they get in the day, except for one pound of bread per week, unless the Asturians or Basques get something from their respective governments."