

American Friends Service Committee

20 South Twelfth Street



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BULLETIN ON RELIEF IN FRANCE

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For the Use of Editorial Comment and Re-publication

July 15, 1940

REPORTS FROM FRANCE

From Paris - July 15, 1940

"Having the opportunity to send you this letter, with some hope that it will reach you fairly quickly, I hasten to send you some news about the Paris Centre and its work since the beginning of June. I have not much time beforehand, so you will kindly excuse me if I am obliged to use a "telegraphic" style....

"I stayed alone in Paris, firmly determined to keep the Centre open as long as possible, for I felt there would be a great amount of work to do. A few members of the Paris group of Friends, who had also remained in Paris, kindly helped me to carry on the work, and here is in short what we have done:

- Serving soup in the open on the Place Jussieu, near the Centre, to refugees waiting for an opportunity to leave Paris (there were hundreds of them in the neighbourhood).

- Serving meals twice a day at the Centre, either to Refugees or to people - French or alien - left suddenly without a penny because of the recent events (this service still goes on, and I expect it will be more and more useful, especially next Winter). About 1500 meals have already been served.

- Helping (either with a very small financial assistance, or with food parcels) ex-German or ex-Austrian refugees, who are now in a desperate situation; the committees which used to help them have all fled away from Paris, with the cash, and these people (mostly women, children and old people) are strictly without a penny and, of course, without work; they cannot apply to French authorities for help, as they are foreign, and are of course too much afraid of German authorities to apply there. I have tried to get in touch with the American Joint Distribution Committee in Bordeaux about this subject, but have not yet got any answer. Something must be done, and quickly; each week I can notice the change in the physical appearance of the children who come with their mother, and I should not be surprised if some of these people committed suicide....I have been using much more money than I ought to have used, although I only give 10 or 20 Frs. a week to these people, but it is impossible to let them entirely starve.

- Distributing sandwiches, condensed milk, chocolate, etc...on the main-roads (with 2 cars lent to us by some friends) to the refugees.

This has ceased now, the refugees being less numerous, and also for lack of petrol.

- Transporting food (meat, grocery, etc...) in some villages around Paris, from which all trademen had fled, leaving the population without hardly anything to eat.

- Distributing clothes, medicaments and food to several "Centres d'Accueil" for refugees; these clothes, etc...had been given to us by the "Secours National", to which we belong. This organization has also helped us with a small financial help (7000 Frs.) without which we should not have been able to go on serving the meals at the Centre.

As you see, all these things are small things, but I did not feel free to start anything on a larger scale until I knew if you would be able to help us, and in what measure. There is now, and will be, more and more, an immense amount of work to do, and I am sure American Friends will feel interested in it; but it would be necessary to know, as soon as possible, what your plans are, especially now that, as I suppose, the Paris Centre, like the German and Dutch ones, will be depending on you..."

MARGUERITE CZARNECKI

From Bordeaux

"So far our relations with the new authorities have been good and we have today gotten the necessary authorizations for Howard Kershner to join us here, also the Belgian high official in the occupied zone has asked us to collaborate but we'll need to be sure he is prepared to spend some money too.

"There is starvation now and what it will be like later I hate to think. The trouble, you see, is that official services have never really swung into operation and many private organizations with paper plans have now folded their tents and gone home. We'll get the program down to something which we can reasonably expect to carry as soon as possible. I've put the field offices on budgets and we will, I believe, get something like four million francs from the Belgian Red Cross to feed the 85,000 Belgian boys and set up some kind of service for those returning to their homes."

MARGARET FRAWLEY