

American Friends Service Committee

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BULLETIN ON RELIEF IN FRANCE

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Report on Relief work in France

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by

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Margaret Frawley was in charge of all A.F.S.C. relief work in France in May and June during the absence of Howard E. Kershner, A.F.S.C. Relief Director.

The picture of relief in France changes so sharply from week to week that this current picture of activities is presented to give something of an overall summary of the needs as the Quaker units are meeting them.

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

BORDEAUX - The only office in occupied territory has for the past month been operating an emergency canteen and refuge in three school houses near the station. Here we have facilities to house 600 people. Sometimes when it is not too crowded we are able to give a large family a room in privacy - primitive, yes, only mattresses stuffed with straw, but clean. The canteen gives three meals a day, for which refugees are able to pay from their allocation. Their two, three or four francs pay for the food, and we assume the modest overhead charges. It is a pleasant, self-respecting canteen in a covered courtyard. Most of these refugees stay only a day while they wait for trains which will carry them north to their homes.

The A.F.S.C. canteen has been the only one performing this service and has therefore met an important emergency need. The small truck at the Bordeaux office has in many cases gone out on the roads to the south to pick up tired women and children who were turning north in the hope of reaching their homes. It is possible that this canteen will not be needed after 1st September, when the rush of refugees will be over in this area.

COLONIES IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY

1) - La Sansonnerie

This is a small colony near Poitiers for French and Spanish children, and is under the supervision of the Bordeaux office. Our Committee has been supporting 40-60 children in this colony.

2) - Pax Colony

Approximately 50 Spanish children are cared for in Pax Colony. This is a unit in a large colony group maintained by the "Comite Francais

de Secours aux Enfants". Our responsibility here is only for the 50 Spanish children.

3) - Cagnotte

This group of approximately 50 children is being supported partially from funds which the New York Relief Campaign has been providing. It has been under Basque administration and includes a number of Basque children.

4) - Cadaujan

This colony, with approximately 100 Spanish children, was formerly under the administration of the National Catholic Committee. This Committee has now ceased to function and the colony is under the direct supervision of our Committee. The children from the Enghien colony, supported by the New York Relief Campaign, are here.

5) - Foster-Parents

350 children, eight colonies, chiefly Spanish, but including some French, Polish and German children. These colonies had until last month been under the direction of the Foster-Parents Plan but will now be cared for from A.F.S.C. funds.

In occupied territory also are two feeding stations for Central Europeans in Paris - one at the Friends Center and the other operated by the Save the Children Union both subsidized by us.

UNOCCUPIED TERRITORY

TOULOUSE - The largest relief job which we have undertaken has been in Toulouse, where population figures have doubled and even trebled with the influx of new refugees. Approximately 75 per cent. of the relief has been for Belgians. Since these refugees are now returning home, our large canteen which formerly fed 5,000 persons a day has now been closed and we are opening two smaller canteens in the railroad stations. We are also helping to supply food to refugees who are returning north. This office has also been making large distributions of food to the camps of Belgian boys, numbering 85,000, scattered over Southern France as well as to the small communities near Toulouse where refugees have been housed. The shortage of gasoline has necessitated the curtailment of this service since the only possibility of large-scale distribution at the moment is by train.

This office has administered three and a half million francs for the Belgian Red Cross in the last month.

MONTAUBAN - This office is operating a canteen, has a day nursery for children, is distributing fresh milk to families with children and is caring for several hundred mutilated Spaniards in the area, also teaching them new trades.

PERPIGNAN - The Perpignan office has direct supervision over our work in the camps of Argeles and Bram where there are at present some 30,000 Spaniards, including 1,500 children. Our work is primarily schools for the children, hospital and maternity units, provision of sewing materials.

It is more than likely that clothing distributions will be needed in the winter.

This office has also done emergency relief for French, Belgian and Luxembourg refugees in the departments of Pyrenees Orientales, Herault and Aude.

MARSEILLE - The Marseille office has been operating only a little over a week. As indicative of the needs here, our waiting-room was full half-an-hour after we opened Monday morning. Many of the people desiring to emigrate to America have come to Marseille and need help in finding relatives in the States, in securing financial affidavits, or in loans to enable them to reach Lisbon. This office is needed for advice on American emigration requirements as well as information as to the applications for exit visas from France. Appeals are coming from men and women of every nationality and of many walks in life.

COLONIES IN UNOCCUPIED TERRITORY

Condom - (near Toulouse) - 50 Spanish children
La Rade - " - 62 children French and Spanish
also day nursery.

Marseille colonies

Mouries - 20 Spanish children
Lagnes - 18 Spanish children
Les Caillols - 65 children (14 French)
La Rouviere - 9 French children, 28 Spanish

ANNECY - 76 children left Marseille Saturday, August 17th, for the MacJannet Colony at Annecy. It was a pleasant leave-taking and we are glad to enclose clippings and pictures of their departure from the station. Another 25 refugee children from the Lyon area will go to Annecy within the next few weeks. The Swiss Committee "Service Civil" are willing to pay half the cost of this colony for refugee children if we assume the other half.

Summary

Special programmes for feeding and caring for children will be needed in the next few months, because reports from the various departments indicate that something like eighty per cent. of the children in France are already suffering from under-nourishment or badly balanced diet.

The advice and help on emigration which we are setting up from the Marseille office will and should be an important feature of our continuing programme and we shall hope that you can give us help in finding financial guarantees for those individuals whom officials are willing to have leave the country and who very much need this assistance.

A third programme which we are considering and may well have to undertake is the visiting of such camps as Vernet, where three thousand men are interned, Reucros, a women's camp, and Gurs. The reports from all centres of internment are most distressing and it is increasingly clear that we need to establish relations in the departments to enable us to make visits and to control distributions of food and clothing.