

# American Friends Service Committee

20 South Twelfth Street



Philadelphia, Penna.

## BULLETIN ON RELIEF IN FRANCE

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Human beings, many of them without a country, all of them penniless, live behind the barbed wire of concentration camps in unoccupied France. In summer these camps are a sea of sand, in winter one sinks ankle-deep in mud. Physical conditions are hard, yet more corrosive to the spirit are the long days of idleness.

Americans are sometimes surprised to know there are children and babies in these internment places, as well as women and men. Here are the figures of three typical camps:

	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Children</u>
Camp de Gurs	14,000	500
Camp de Argeles	18,000	2,000
Camp de Agde	5,489	1,200

Many of the French commandants are kind and do their best.

"Yet how can the French have a margin for charity when their own are suffering so?" writes Howard E. Kershner, Director of Relief.

GURS: Until a few weeks ago, there were approximately 6,500 Czech, Polish, German, and Austrian refugees interned here. Recently 7,500 Jews were sent down from Germany. The French commandant had only a few hours' warning of their coming. Many of them were ill, newly released from hospitals; some insane or feeble-minded had been in institutions; thousands are over 60 and had been living in homes for the aged, including the oldest, who is 106 years.

Crowded into unheated barracks, subsisting on rations which provide about 844 calories, many of them wearing only thin summer clothing, they are easy prey to disease and to death. Last month there were 300 deaths, now the daily mortality ranges between 15 and 25. An unused barrack has been torn down. They make coffins from the lumber.

ARGELES: Some of the women and children interned here have not been outside this camp in 2 years. Here, as in the other camps, children receive the same rations as adults. Now with the recent increase of the camp population from 11,000 to 20,000 the least habitable shacks have been pressed into use.

This is a Spanish camp and human initiative wars with squalor. The children have a school, the men a library and language classes, and a shop to fashion toys for the children. The French commandant is enlarging the sewing room so that not 30 but 150 women may work. The prisoners are asking tools to set up an apprentice school for boys between the ages of 14 and 18. They want to be busy and useful.

AGDE: Here there are 50 blankets for every hundred men, not even straw mattresses--just straw on the dirt floor.

Lack of medicines here as elsewhere is a factor in the high mortality figures and because hospitals in the nearby towns of Sete and Bezzer are crowded, patients are transferred from camp too late for medical science to help them.

WHAT WE ARE DOING:

- 1) Equipping schools for the children, workshops, libraries, for the adults.
- 2) Giving supplementary food to the children and the sick.
- 3) Setting up soup kitchens for the old. Distributing what clothing, food, and medicines we can purchase abroad.

IT IS HELP WHICH IS SAVING LIVES, GIVING MEN BACK CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES. THIS HELP SHOULD BE EXTENDED.

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THE MATERIAL USED IN THIS BULLETIN HAS  
BEEN CONDENSED FROM EXTENSIVE REPORTS  
RECEIVED FROM A.F.S.C. HEADQUARTERS  
IN FRANCE.