

American Friends Service Committee

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BULLETIN ON RELIEF IN FRANCE

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Newspaper headlines, statements of government officials and of relief administrators emphasize shortages of food in unoccupied France. The undernourishment of winter deepens to famine as spring approaches. It is the story of ruthless famine which is the aftermath of war.

Howard E. Kershner, director of the American Friends Service Committee relief program in France writes from Marseille:

"Twenty million bushels of wheat are needed to meet the deficiencies which will become acute in April. Unless wheat comes, many departments will be without bread."

Conditions vary from department to department, yet a detailed study which has just been completed by our committee in the department of the Pyrenees Oriental is indicative of the widespread shortages. This department with a population of 265,000 persons including some 30,000 refugees living in camps, is the Pyrenees vineyard country. The soil is sandy, the terrain hilly. In normal times food must be imported not only to feed the residents but to support the cattle and poultry. With present inadequate supplies and crippled transportation, the little food imported must frequently be reserved for the hospitals and maternities. The food available is far below the minimum rations for subsistence.

Fat - The department receives only 233,000 rations of fat for a population of 265,000.

Meat - Deliveries of meat are sometimes delayed many days. Tinned meats and fish are unobtainable.

Milk - In January the department received 785 cases of milk. Most of this was necessarily reserved for hospitals, maternities and the neediest children. Children between the ages of 9 and 12 have had no milk for months. Installation of the new camp for approximately 3,000 refugee children at Riversalte will create new needs.

Butter - Monthly minimum needs are estimated at 30,000 kilos. This would mean approximately a tenth of a kilo for each person a month. In January the department produced 500 kilos, imported from other departments 6,700 kilos. The supply was, therefore, about a fourth of the estimated minimum.

Cheese - This dairy product is no longer available even within the limits of the ration cards.

Infants Food - Baby foods containing milk or cocoa are not obtainable in the department due to the lack of cocoa and difficulties of obtaining flour. Even baby biscuits are now rationed. Manufacturers curtail their output since they are unable to obtain the necessary ingredients. Poor families subsisting on small bread rations frequently buy bread instead of the more expensive biscuits.

Chocolate - A factory in the department formerly supplied local needs. Floods last October swept away the factory building, damaged reserve stocks of cocoa and chocolate.

Vegetable Flour - This food used for smaller children cannot now be obtained.

Potatoes - No distributions of potatoes were made during January.

This is the reason the American Friends Service Committee is feeding children in France, because its extra supplies purchased abroad are vital to the health of children. Milk, rice, sugar, cocoa, chocolate made with vitamin "A" are included in the additional rations which supplement the noon-day meal of 30,000 French school children. A liter of milk a day to 10,000 babies reaches the very young whose mothers cannot nurse them because these mothers, too, have not had enough to eat. Another 1,000 children live in Quaker houses in the country where they forget the horrors of war. This program needs support for its maintenance, support for its extension, for it is a bulwark against the scourge of famine.

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