

# American Friends Service Committee

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## BULLETIN ON RELIEF IN FRANCE

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Work among British civilians interned in occupied France and French civilians in prisons was initiated last year by a representative of the American Friends Service Committee, Josiah P. Marvel. When Mr. Marvel returned to the United States last June, the work was turned over to French Friends in Paris. Since that time and as the result of gifts from non-American sources, the service has trebled.

The following report covering the period from June 1 to August 31 has been written by Maurice Fleury, the French Friend, who has continued it:

### REPORT OF WORK IN THE PRISONS OF THE SEINE DEPARTMENT

At the time of the departure for the United States of our American Friend, Josiah P. Marvel, toward the end of May 1941. I have been asked to carry on his work in the prisons of the Seine department; this work consists in distribution of clothes and under things to the civilian prisoners interned in the prisons of "La Santé", "le Cherche-Midi", and Fresnes. Besides these three prisons, I am also visiting the Fort of Romainville and the British Internment Camp at Saint-Denis. Everywhere, the authorities in charge of these prisons and camps have displayed a very understanding spirit and have made my task easier; I have thus been able to carry it in the spirit of the society of Friends. The giving out of clothes and food parcels in the Paris prisons are greatly appreciated, not only by the prisoners themselves, but also by the authorities.

### Need of Food Parcels

While visiting the prisons, I have been able to realize that the food-allowance to civilian prisoners is decidedly too small (400 gr. of bread, thin soup twice daily and some coffee, are all that they get each day). Truly the needs for linen and clothes, are great, but those for food, in my opinion, still greater. I have, therefore, been led to think that my work would not be complete if it were only limited to linen and clothes distributions. Prisoners were in urgent need of food parcels, and a special permission has already been granted to me for the prisoners of Fresnes, the Sante and the Fort of Romainville. I am hoping to get it soon for the "Cherche-Midi".

### Distributions During Three Months

This work in the prisons is done in connection with the "Secour National" organization and the French Red Cross. It is thanks to both these big organizations, which kindly supply me freely on this work.

From June to August 1941, I have delivered in the above mentioned prisons and camps:

750 shirts	350 tooth brushes
650 drawers	350 pieces of tooth paste
210 pairs of socks	100 kg. of soap
620 towels	150 combs
300 handkerchiefs	books
50 pieces of clothing	shaving razors
hair clippers	postage stamps
writing-pads	envelopes
400 food-parcels (biscuits, tinned goods, chocolate, sugar, jam)	
100 kg. of powdered malted milk	
50 boxes of synthetic vitamins	

Fruits have been regularly delivered only since August; in September, linen and clothes being rather difficult to get, and also in view of making a small stock for the winter, I have been obliged to reduce the number of these distributions; on the other hand, food and fruit deliveries have been greatly increased.

The fruits, biscuits, dry milk and sugar are given to the sick; the clothes and other food parcels to needy prisoners, i.e. to such as have no money to buy things at the canteen, who do not get visits or parcels, or whose families are not in position to help them. There are also some prisoners, who, without being needy, have not enough clothes, having left them at home for some reason or other; a special form has to be filed by such people, giving the list of the pieces of clothing they want, and authorizing us to go and fetch them at their homes. This work is rather complicated and takes a lot of time, but is very useful.

#### Families of Prisoners

Another task, which I had very much in mind, was to help the needy families of prisoners. This piece of work is done in cooperation with a section of the French Red Cross, the "Service d'Aide aux Internés Civils et à leurs familles". Through my frequent intercourses with the prisoners, I am able to know each individual case and the situation of their families; as soon as I hear of an interesting case, I point it out to the Service d'Aide, which, in its turn has an inquiry made by a qualified social worker, and gives some kind of help when the result of the inquiry is known.

Another part of the work, which is gradually increasing, is the delivery of food parcels to prisoners whose relatives are living far away from Paris, and are, therefore, unable to bring these parcels themselves. In certain sections of the prisons, the remittance of parcels sent by post or by railway is not allowed; they have, therefore, to be sent through my medium. I have started this system at the Prison of Fresnes a month ago, and I am hoping to be able to do the same in the other establishments. I am actually in touch with about 50 families, who are sending me regularly one or two parcels a week for their prisoners.

With regard to the washing of the prisoners' linen, Josiah Marvel had presented the Prison of Fresnes, a short time before his departure, with an electric washing-machine, which is functioning regularly each week. The machine is handled by prisoners and does the washing for over 500 men. It is to be wished that every prison should receive such a useful contrivance!

Personal Visitation

At the beginning of my work, last June, I was not allowed to see the prisoners myself, and to deliver them personally their parcels. I had to hand them over to the officer in charge. The prisoners checked their names on a special book, which was the only means of control I had at that time. Now I have been authorized to see the prisoners and to give them personally their parcels.

In my opinion, it is the only satisfactory way of working; I am sure that the parcels reach their destination, and it also gives me the opportunity of seeing the prisoners, talking with them and bring them some words of comfort, which are always of great help to them.

Plan of Work

As a rule, my visits to the prisons are only in the afternoons, the mornings being used for office work, answers to verbal or written inquiries, steps to be taken, preparation of the parcels, etc.....

The number of letters received and written is increasing every week. Over 30 are now sent to me every week, from Paris and the provinces (Brest, Nantes, Rouen, etc...). Most of these letters are written by people who are left without news of some prisoner, or who want me to help in some way. I am acting as a kind of medium between the prisoners and their families.

A certain number of people call at my office every day, generally people who are unable to see the prisoners themselves and want some kind of help.

Monday afternoon: Distribution of linen and clothes at the Cherche-Midi Prison. -As a rule each parcel bears the name of the prisoner to whom it is destined. Each parcel consists of:

1 shirt	1 pr. of drawers	1 handkerchief
1 tooth-brush	1 towel	1 face cloth

A list of the neediest prisoners has been established beforehand by the officer in command of the division. The parcels are delivered by myself to each prisoner.

Tuesday afternoon: Distribution of food and linen parcels at Fresnes. In this prison, I am only allowed to visit the 3rd division, about 2,000 men, and the Central Infirmary, which has 150 beds. 3rd division, German section: Each parcel bears the name of the prisoner to whom it is destined; they are distributed in the ground-floor hall, in front of the chief of the division. The parcels sent to me by relatives of the prisoners are distributed in the same way.

Wednesday afternoon: Distribution of fruits, vitamined biscuits, powdered milk and sugar in the Central Infirmary at Fresnes: 125 sick prisoners benefit by this distribution; each week, 50 kg. of fruits, 10 kgs. of powdered milk, 10 kgs. of sugar and 4 kgs. of biscuits are thus given, in front of the Sister in charge and of a guardian. The prisoners who are able to walk come and receive their parcels from my hands; the others get them from the Sister, under my supervision.

Thursday afternoon: Distribution of food parcels at Fresnes, 3rd division French section: About 50 parcels are delivered each week in this section: biscuits, jam, chocolate, sugar, ginger bread, etc. I am allowed to take the parcels right into the cells.

Friday afternoon: Distribution of linen and food parcels at the Sante: In this prison I am particularly helping the female prisoners, but underclothes are also given to the men. In the section for women, the parcels are given under the supervision of a German wardress, outside the cells. Each parcel includes:

1 petticoat	1 pr. of knickers	1 towel and face cloth
1 shirt	2 sanitary towels	1 handkerchief
1 pr. stockings	soap	tooth paste
1 tooth brush	1 comb	

Biscuits, powdered milk and sugar are given to the women who are ill, pregnant or feeding their babies.

Saturday afternoon: Distribution of underclothes and food at Romainville. The Fort of Romainville, now used as a prison, has no cells, but a certain number of wards, each with a dozen beds. There, the prisoners are allowed to take some exercise in the prison yard; the delivery of parcels takes place in the same yard. They are dealt with by a German officer, under my supervision. About 40 parcels are given there every month, to needy prisoners.

Every three weeks, I am also visiting the British Internment Camp at St. Denis; I have taken linen and clothes there to needy internees; I have also helped in the supplying of food to the canteen, which is run by a special committee elected by the prisoners themselves.

Maurice Fleury

Paris, September 23, 1941