

American Friends Service Committee

20 South Twelfth Street



Philadelphia, Penna.

BULLETIN ON RELIEF IN FRANCE

Bulletin #37

For the Use of Editorial Comment and Re-publication

January 10, 1942

Reopening of the winter school canteens for 84,000 children in 13 cities of unoccupied France was announced this week by Howard E. Kershner, director of relief for the American Friends Service Committee. In a cable from Marseille he stated:

SCHOOL FEEDING FOR EIGHTY FOUR THOUSAND FRENCH CHILDREN WILL START JANUARY 7.

It is expected that on the basis of present supplies these supplementary rations can be given for a period of 20 weeks, each child receiving 75 grams daily. In some cities the local authorities will be able to contribute additional food for this meal. In other cities, however, officials have neither funds nor supplies.

The present school feeding program is being undertaken with 650 tons of dried vegetables purchased in Marseille, with some quantities of sardines and salmon, and such other foodstuffs as Howard Kershner has been able to purchase. All supplies are, of course, purchased in Europe where it is increasingly difficult to find food and where delay in receiving American Government permissions for purchase sometimes results in the loss of the commodities.

CANTEEN CITIES

Cities in which the school feeding will be carried on, selected on the basis of official and Quaker surveys to determine the most needy areas, will include:

Nice	6,000	Toulon	4,500	Marseille	15,000
Nimes	5,000	Arles	2,000	Montpellier	4,000
Lyons	10,000	Narbonne	1,500	Carcassonne	1,500
Toulouse	6,000	Perpignan	2,000	Montauban	2,500
		St. Etienne	5,000		

and 20,000 in smaller places.

CHOOSING THE NEEDIEST

Something of the problem of making such a selection is reflected in a letter from Marseille dated November 18 which reads as follows:

"From Montpellier comes the report that children under fourteen have lost up to a maximum of 6 kilos in weight. Average losses in that city are from two to three kilos.

From Nice is the record of one hundred children fainting from weakness when they assembled to greet the American Ambassador. Everywhere teachers testify to the

fact that the children are making little or no progress in their studies because of weakness and loss of memory due to undernourishment. Attendance at schools is often not more than fifty to seventy-five per cent because the children cannot come bare-footed in stormy weather. Many, if not most of them, have no breakfast before coming to school. After they arrive they must sit in cold rooms with poorly shod or unshod feet on stone floors. Tuberculosis is increasing rapidly and deterioration of the teeth of the children is far above normal.

"With the possibility of feeding a maximum of 84,000 children, our delegate who investigated Alpes Maritimes and the Var demands that one half of the total number be allotted to these departments. An official delegation from the City of Marseille a few days ago requested that we supply food to 40,000 children in this department. The Mayor of the city of Lyon has urgently requested that we supply food for 35,000 children in that city. It seems that we are in danger of being torn to pieces between the officials from the various departments and our own delegations who demand a larger portion of our small stocks for the destitute children in these places."

SHORTAGE OF COAL, KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

Even with the food in hand, there are difficulties in implementing the program, Howard Kershner explains.

"For one thing there is but little coal to cook the food. It may not be enough. There are very few kitchens sufficiently well equipped and it is impossible to buy kettles in sufficient quantity.

"The City of Marseille has no funds to purchase food in addition to what we supply for the school canteens, even if food could be found."

RATIONS OF AN EIGHT YEAR OLD CHILD

The Quaker feeding program supplements the present ration allowed in unoccupied France. While conditions vary from department to department and even from month to month, the official ration recently announced indicates how inadequate this scanty food is for a child's healthy growth. It is for that reason that the supplementary help of private committees is essential if young lives are to be saved. The theoretical daily ration for a child 6 to 13 years of age is as follows:

Bread	9.7 ounces
Milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ pint
Cheese	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Meat	1.23 ounces
Fat	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Macaroni	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Potatoes	$5\frac{1}{2}$ ounces
Eggs	1 per month
Chocolate	1 bar month

MALNUTRITION IN UNOCCUPIED FRANCE

That malnutrition is deepening as the result of these rations is attested by observations of Service Committee representatives. Vital statistics on an inclusive scale are difficult to obtain, yet the following excerpts from recent reports tell an eloquent story of what is happening to children.

An Inspector of Schools writes:

"All the educators are struck by the arrested growth of the children, their loss of weight or stationary weight, their pale or ashen complexions, their thin legs, and their lack of resistance to lung troubles or contagious diseases; from the point of view of their studies they are unstable and lack memory."

These effects of hunger on school work is attested also by the principal of the Girls School at La Rosiere who writes:

"A rule understood and known the day of the lesson is forgotten the next day, and absolutely forgotten as though they had never learned it, and this by painstaking, studious pupils. There is less gayety. A badly nourished child is a sad child. What will become of our school children if this keeps on? The future of our race is at stake."

MEDICAL REPORTS

Physicians examining children in the schools in an effort to determine the children most in need of supplementary Quaker feeding report continued loss of weight.

From the department of Pyrenees Oriental where physicians have made preliminary examinations of 700 school girls comes this report:

75 per cent of the cases showed a loss of weight between the time of the last examination in February 1941 and November 1941. Most have lost 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilos (4 to 5 lbs.)

Results of the eye test gave, in almost every case, signs of a weakening in the sight.

Illness has been fairly frequent since the cold spell.

Children ask with much greater frequency than formerly to go to the lavatory.

It has been noted that children who should be capable of 20 minutes of undivided attention in class are now incapable of longer than a 10 minute period of concentration.

They also suffer acutely from cold in the unheated class rooms.

In the Marseille area, medical investigators point to the failure of children to gain weight, the declines in weight even over the summer period as indicative of the plight of children. A gain of a kilo - two pounds - for a growing child in a six month period has become a subject of comment, since such gains are increasingly the exception rather than the normal.

ADOLESCENTS

Observers are generally agreed that the health of younger children seems better than that of the older age groups. One of the neediest groups would seem to be the adolescents who at present are receiving no supplementary rations either from Friends or other committees. Their plight is described by Howard Kershner in an appeal for help for this group of young people.

"Our school canteens are for children under fourteen. A very serious situation exists for the adolescent group in the Lycees. These growing youngsters are badly under-nourished and many of them are unable to do satisfactory work on that account. If you can think of any way to permit us to do something for this group and perhaps to obtain funds especially earmarked for it, it would be most useful. I cannot too strongly emphasize the very tragic situations that exist in these Lycees."