

# American Friends Service Committee

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Philadelphia, Penna.

## BULLETIN ON RELIEF IN FRANCE

Bulletin #43

For the Use of Editorial Comment and Re-publication

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Continued food shortages in unoccupied France are taking their heaviest toll among children. A recent report from the Inspector of Public Health in the department of the Herault indicates that not only do children appear smaller for their age, but they show less resistance to infectious diseases. Loss of weight among young people who should be gaining seems to average as much as 15%. There is general debility, less resistance to fatigue, and among adolescents deficiencies are such that there is a marked decrease in capacity for physical and intellectual work. The daily ration of 1,000 calories retards the young child. For the adolescent for whom it represents a deficit of approximately 1,100 calories it is most serious. Observers report a marked increase in the incidence of tuberculosis among this group.

The same report reveals that mortality figures in one of the communities studied showed a 20% increase over the corresponding period for the normal year of 1938.

While it is increasingly difficult to obtain supplies in Europe to feed the hungry in France, representatives of the Service Committee are making every effort to get supplies to the most needy.

### CARE OF CHILDREN

School Feeding - During the winter months the Committee had been providing supplementary rations in school canteens for 84,000 children. Earlier reports from the Quaker office in Marseille had indicated that these would have to be discontinued after April because of lack of supplies. New reports just received explain that the Committee has been able to purchase 40 tons of barley, 17 tons of sugar and 20 tons of fruit. These supplies permit continuance of this important feeding service in the most needy departments.

Vitamin Distribution - 100,000 children are now receiving a 7-weeks' treatment of Vitamin D, which was obtained in Denmark. Distributions are being made to 40,000 children in the Var, 30,000 children each in the Gard and the Herault. All have been selected by local medical authorities in these departments.

Milk Distribution - The present milk supply in Committee warehouse in Marseille is sufficient for distributions for 5,000 babies until June 1. It is hoped that American permissions may be granted so that the Committee may purchase additional supplies in Switzerland.

Colony Care - Over a period of 3 years the Committee has been selecting the neediest children in France for protected care in spacious houses in the country. In these hospitable houses they find food, shelter and loving care. Because this

program is more expensive and does not reach such a large group of children, efforts have been made to reduce the numbers of children coming to the colonies, and to care for them in other ways.

There are at the present time 623 children in Quaker colonies. The greater number of these are French children, and approximately 60 are refugees from the concentration camp of Rivesaltes.

Home Colony Care - Thousands of French children from homes which have never before known economic hardship are today in great need. Because the family life is so essential to the morale of both parents and children, it has seemed wiser to give help to these children in their own homes rather than in colonies. Weekly packages providing extra food and weekly allocations of money to enable the mother to buy a few extras in the market ease hardships.

The Committee is now caring for 243 children under the home colony program, and plans to increase this number to 400.

#### REFUGEE SERVICES

The plight of aliens in unoccupied France continues to be a serious one. Approximately 16,000 Spanish, Czechs, Poles, Germans and Austrians are interned in camps. Other thousands outside the camps are without funds. Although migration to the New World is now greatly reduced, the Committee continues to give help and counsel to those able to leave France.

Camp Feeding - If the rations available to the French civilian are barely 1,000 calories, it is easy to understand that without outside assistance camp residents could not survive on the scanty meals provided them. The Committee is distributing rations in 6 camps, to approximately 7,000 persons. These include approximately 650 children at Rivesaltes, the old and the sick.

As indicative of the plight of internees there is the statement of Howard Kershner, director of the service, that he saw in one of these camps a man who weighs barely 66 pounds. Of the camp situation Kershner says,

"The death rate from undernourishment is already appalling, and most of the 7,000 people whom we are feeding there would not survive many weeks were our program discontinued."

Plan To Take The Children From Concentration Camps - More than 2 months ago the French government granted permission to the Service Committee to remove all children from concentration camps.

First estimates had seemed to indicate that there would be approximately 2,500 children involved. A cable received today reports that there are 35 Central European children and 600 Spanish children still in camps. Only 60 children have been removed to date. The difficulty has been that it is almost impossible to find suitable housing in those departments where there would seem to be enough local food to support the children. Some of the departments where housing is available are so inadequate in their food supply that it would seem most unwise to bring the children into them.

Clothing For The Camps - Some weeks ago the Committee received a navicert to ship from the United States 50 tons of clothing to the camp internees. There were disappointing delays due to lack of shipping facilities. It is encouraging to report that 38 tons have already left New York consigned to the International Red Cross. It is hoped that the additional 12 tons may be shipped shortly.

Money Transfers - Approximately 4,000 persons have received money during the past year from relatives and friends in England and America under the licenses granted to the Service Committee. The total amount received from England is 5,300,000 francs. The total from America is approximately 4,000,000 francs.

Small canteen services in some of the cities where the Committee has field offices have assisted families where the husband and father have been pressed into work companies. It is estimated that there are about 200 of these companies, totalling 45,000 men.

#### REHABILITATION PROJECTS

Village Resettlement - Bulletins #41 and #42 describe the rehabilitation and resettlement programs which are under way in the two French villages of Penne and Puycelci.

A Foundation for village reconstruction has been organized by the Committee and will operate for Penne and Puycelci and for any other village projects sponsored by the Committee. The Foundation is a French organization having the right to purchase, improve, lease and sell real estate. It will buy old houses and remodel them for occupancy, permitting the tenants to pay rent until they are able to purchase. As new funds are available for the two original villages they will be added to the Foundation fund to permit the resettlement of additional refugee families.

The Committee is now awaiting further details with relation to a project for a third village, Bourg d'Oeil, in the Haute-Garonne. It has been suggested that the Committee cooperate in efforts to revive the wood-craft, dairying and sheep-raising, which have declined in this and so many other villages in the Pyrenees, due in part to the migration of young people to the cities.

Orthopedic Workshops, Montauban - The success of the Montauban workshops, where appliances are made for disabled men and which afford employment to disabled refugees, is such that the Committee has decided to patent certain improvements which have been made in these shops and to expand the present output.

Farm Projects - The Committee now operates a small farm near Montauban which, in its first six months, has produced almost enough to cover the cost of operation. The Committee is now exploring the possibilities of two other proposals for farm activities.

#### NEEDS WHICH ARE NOT BEING MET

The concern for adolescents mentioned at the opening of this bulletin is such that the delegates in France believe that feeding service for adolescents must soon be undertaken.

They have also expressed concern over the situation of the men in work companies and of their families. The men earn only maintenance and their families are destitute.