

American Friends Service Committee

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Conditions of Life

The following summary of malnutrition and starvation in France is based on a nation-wide survey completed in October 1942, by the Food Commission associated with Secours National and investigations made by the National Committee for Childhood, the Pediatric Society, and the Institute of National Health as well as more recent studies in the cities of Marseille, Toulouse, Montauban and Perpignan by qualified medical and health authorities.

These reports indicate the most seriously undernourished groups as the following:

Pregnant and nursing mothers
Children up to 13 years
Adolescents
Elderly people over 70 years
Foreign refugees in internment camps

The serious discrepancies between the amount of calories available through ration cards and those needed for health are for the four classes of civilians as follows.

	<u>Pregnant Women</u> <u>4th-9th month</u>	<u>Nursing</u> <u>Mothers</u>	<u>Children</u> <u>6-14</u>	<u>14-20</u>	<u>Aged</u>
Calories Needed	2800	3000	2100	3000	1800
Calories provided on ration card	1920	1725	1425	1465	1086
Supplement needed	880	1275	675	1535	714

(Refugee rations are estimated at only 1,000 calories daily.)

Supplementary Rations Needed for 2,273,000 Civilians

If supplementary feeding were to be undertaken to maintain those suffering most severely, that is city dwellers and residents of the most poorly provisioned departments, especially those bordering on the Mediterranean, it would be necessary to provide daily supplements for some 2,273,000 French civilians. These are estimated as follows:

	<u>Unoccupied Zone</u>	<u>Occupied Zone</u>	<u>Total</u>
Pregnant Women	80,000	150,000	230,000
Nursing Mothers	40,000	75,000	113,000
Children 6-14	300,000	500,000	800,000
Adolescents	500,000	100,000	1,500,000
Aged	280,000	350,000	630,000

To this figure should be added supplementary rations for at least 30,000 foreign refugees.

February Rations Lower

Conditions have continued to deteriorate throughout the winter as attested by the rations for the city of Marseille in February:

<u>Children</u>				<u>Adults</u>		<u>Pregnant</u>	<u>Old People</u>
<u>0-2</u>	<u>2-7</u>	<u>8-12</u>	<u>13-19</u>	<u>20-69</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Over 70</u>
1115	1288	1209	1313	1129	1226	1906	1165

Deficits:

<u>7-9</u>	<u>9-11</u>	<u>11-12</u>	<u>13-19</u>	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Pregnant</u>	<u>Aged</u>
						<u>Women</u>	
121	361	601	737	1,021	1,424	1,094	885

These deficits are compiled on the assumption that an average of 350 calories of vegetables are obtainable at irregular intervals as unrationed foods, and on the basis of minimum standards of the Committee on Health at Geneva in 1936.

The most serious diet deficiencies are in fats, proteins, and carbohydrates. Vitamin deficiencies are common, particularly A, although doctors report that these are seldom of a clinical nature. In Marseille, during January civilians received less than 4 oz. of oil, 8 oz. of butter and less than 1 oz. of margarine. In the same month the Perpignan area was limited to 50 gr. of oil, 200 gr. of butter and 60 gr. of margarine.

Children between the age of 6-13 are entitled to a half pint of unskimmed milk daily but it is seldom obtainable.

Vegetables are unrationed but difficult to obtain. One housewife reported her entire quota of vegetables for the month of December consisted of two pounds of turnips.

Infant and Child Mortality Increased

Health has been seriously impaired as a result of protracted undernourishment. Infant and child mortality in Marseille has increased 50% in 1942 over 1939. The figures are:

	<u>0-1 year</u>	<u>1-4 years</u>	<u>5-9 years</u>	<u>10-14 years</u>	<u>Total</u>
1942	711	216	65	83	1,075
1941	594	201	94	64	953
1940	494	204	121	111	930
1939	401	146	93	80	720

Premature births have increased and the weight of newborn infants is frequently less than normal. Undernourished mothers cannot nurse their babies.

Rickets have reappeared among children.

Tuberculosis continues to increase among children and young adults. Dr. Lesne of the National Committee for Childhood emphasizes the increase in incidence of this disease due to generally lowered resistance. The Medical Health Inspector of Marseille reported in January that 50% of the children in one large school showed a positive "cuti" reaction. In another school the figure rose to 65%.

This summary picture of the suffering people of France gives one a deep sense of concern. It underlines for Americans the necessity of finding ways to bring help promptly to these innocent victims of war. Amid all the confusion of ephemeral political arguments, the moral issues are clear. Food sent now for supervised distribution will save lives, be the best of all foundations for the years of peace ahead.