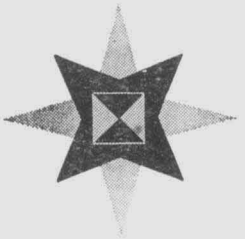
FOREIGN SERVICE BULLETIN



VOL. IV, NO. 6 **JUNE, 1947**

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Our Mission in India

by STUART NELSON

In India the work of the Friends Service Unit continues in a solid but unspectacular way. Behind the Unit activities is the purpose to deal with some of the chronic ills of Indian social life in small ways which can be adapted and expanded by Indians to meet similar problems throughout the country. In villages devastated by rioting, Unit members bring their impartial concern for human need. Food and drugs are dispensed, schools and clinics set up, village sanitation systems encouraged, cooperatives among farmers, fishermen and weavers established. In the heart of Calcutta itself a midwife training course for Indian women is under way.

The British and American Unit members also work closely with the Central and provincial governments of India and with other relief bodies in the purchasing, shipping and distribution of food and drugs.

Byways in India

During our first weeks in India it was arranged for us to begin the most thorough acquaintance possible with the work of the Unit and with Indian life in Bengal. Our visit to Raghabpur, where weaving cooperatives are being organized, followed a heavy rain. The last three miles had to be traversed on foot, bare foot, through cool, deep, slippery mud. We will never forget the moment when we slung our shoes over our shoulders and placed uncertain feet in the muddy road, but we arrived in the village much the better for our intimate acquaintance with the soil of India.

In Raghabpur we visited the villagers' homes, made of mud with thatched roofs, dirt floors and the barest minimum of articles for living. In the one-room house of a widow we saw nothing but a bundle of rags and a few earthen pots.

The curiosity of the villagers was as marked as their warm welcome. The rather open bamboo structure in which we were housed afforded little security from public gaze, and at almost no moment of our indoor life were the apertures free from gazers. Here we received our first lessons in sitting on the floor at meals and eating with our fingers. But the floor was clean and the food, some of it furnished by the villagers in honor of our visit, was good.

During this trip we also visited the industrial and cooperative farm projects in Basirhat. It was inspiring to see the lovely fabrics being woven by Indian hands and feet, and to walk across the fields of our cooperative farm. The farming project is undoubtedly full of difficulties, but strikes us as pointing the way to one of the solutions of India's great agricultural problems.

The road from Calcutta to Basirhat was the roughest road over which we have driven and the most peopled of any rural road we have seen. There is no better way to feel the full force of India's population problem than to travel the roads of Bengal. Calcutta, of course, is crowded to the last square inch, her streets in constant jam and her busses and streetcars overflowing perilously. But you never quite understand the meaning of four hundred million people in India's space until you travel mile after mile along a country road and never lose sight of people walking or driving their bullock-carts. The nights are like the days—filled with travellers going to and from the markets, to and from the city, to and from the fields.

Where There is Reconciliation

Our visit to the North Hamchadi project, where Hindu and Moslem communities have been at variance, was most significant. It was a source of deep satisfaction to us that the beginnings of our work seemed to be successful. The Moslem leaders, whose community had been responsible for the disturbances in that area, were cooperative beyond our expectations, making every effort to encourage Hindus to return to their homes.

The house in which we lived, deserted by fleeing Hindus, nestled among the tall graceful cocoanut palms and betelnut trees. At night the queenly palms were etched with extraordinary grace against the blue-black skies and their shadows fell as if it had been day. And matching the beauty of the place was the simple warmth with which the people received us. They sensed that we had come to help, and joined us with a spontaneity that was inspiring.

Our Mission to Heal

The day we left North Hamchadi we held a meeting for worship. Benches and chairs were arranged in a square out of doors, sheltered by the shade of the house from a soft morning sun. As we sat in silence the villagers, Moslem and Hindu, gathered around. And at the close of the meeting, the Moslem Red Cross worker in our party stood and spoke in the language of the village, offering a prayer for the return of peace and happiness to the community.

On one side of us was the office where we worked out the details making it possible for people to return to their homes. On another side was the infirmary which was ministering to the health of the villagers. And on the third side was the room from which we rationed food to those returning home. In the center was the meeting for worship. Here, compressed within a few square yards, was the concrete expression of our mission to heal and reconcile in the name and under the guidance of the God of all.

Six Years in China

by GRIFFITH G. LEVERING

The following picture of Quaker services in China since 1941 is by Griffith Levering, Chairman of the Unit for the past eighteen months.

On March 31, 1947, in Shanghai, appropriate mummery and ceremony in the light spirit which has always characterized the Unit in China, marked the transition from the Friends Ambulance Unit—China Convoy to the Friends Service Unit in China.

Thus came to an end nearly six years of Convoy work through the period of the war against Japan, rehabilitation work in Honan Province following the war, and a period of planning for long-time work of the Unit.

At the Fighting Front

During the war years the two principal jobs consisted of the transportation of drugs and medical supplies, and the operation of medical teams near the fighting front. First at Rangoon, Burma, and then at the United States Army airfield at Kunming, thousands of tons of drugs and medical supplies donated by the Americans, British and Canadian Red Cross societies, piled up before there was any way to transport them to the hospitals in Free China. During these four years the Convoy, with its fleet of trucks, delivered about ninety per cent of these supplies.

The Medical Service of the Chinese Army was most inadequate. Under the sponsorship of the Chinese Red Cross the Unit medical teams along with other organizations nibbled at the edges of the vast medical and surgical needs among soldiers and civilians near the fronts.

Rehabilitation in Honan

With the Japanese surrender, the Unit felt that its best services lay in helping with the rehabilitation of Honan, the province which had suffered most during the Japanese occupation.

In addition to the normal ravages of war and bombing, Honan had suffered three special losses. Millions of her people were made homeless by the flooding of millions of acres of rich farm land when the Yellow River dike was blasted to stop the advance of the Japanese in 1938. In the winter of 1943-44, Honan suffered one of the bitterest famines in the history of modern China. And since the Ping Han Railway running the length of the province from north to south was the life line of the Japanese, it was a special target for American bombers, and the cities and towns along the line were badly wrecked.

In Honan the Unit took over and rehabilitated three mission hospitals, and set up a hospital mechanics school.

The Unit also undertook to clear an area of the dread Kala-azar, a disease nearly one hundred per cent fatal unless treated. It helped in the rehabilitation of two of the hardest hit villages near the Yellow River, and helped establish and maintain sanitary living conditions for thousands of workers rebuilding the destroyed dike. It gave emergency service when refugee-borne diseases such as malignant malaria and relapsing fever raged among people who had built up no immunity against them.

With a View to the Future

In the Autumn of 1946, the three Honan hospitals, in satisfactory operation, were about ready to be turned back to the missions, and the dike repair was nearly completed. With a view to the future, the work which seemed to continue over a period of years was sorted out.

Included was the treatment of kala-azar. Our teams had cured only two to three thousand of the million or more children who had the disease. And while the National Health Administration and others were taking up the work, the coordinated effort of all was needed. The villages seemed to need at least five years' further assistance in rehabilitation before they could be well on their feet. And it seemed that the Mechanics School could best be made a part of the Institute of Hospital Technology in Hankow, which could take up the work on a permanent basis only if our men gave them a hand for a year or two.

During this period of planning the Unit was able to place a medical team in Communist territory on the staff of the International Peace Hospital at Yenan, where educational work will be needed for many years.

During the war the thirst of Chinese young people for practical education intensified, but the teaching staffs of the government universities were depleted by the lack of opportunity for teacher-training. The Unit made a small effort to help the situation by placing three of its members on the staffs of two of the universities. And with the end of the war, the Shanghai Friends Center and the Receiving Home for delinquent children under the Center's care, were faced with wide opportunities in which the Unit found chances to help.

The British, Canadian, New Zealand, Australian and American people who have worked in the program of the Friends Ambulance Unit through this six year period, have felt richly rewarded as they have worked beside able and concerned Chinese. They are well-equipped to continue their work. And they feel that continuation of the work in China will widen the field of friendly understanding between the East and the West.

Barrack City of St. Nazaire

British and American Quaker workers in France are distributing food to children and adults through French institutions, running vocational retraining courses for refugees and French people in Toulouse, Montauban and Perpignan; and have recently opened a center in St. Nazaire. They are providing services for university students, German prisoners of war, delinquent boys in Caen, and for teacher-training schools. The following report is taken from letters written by team members in St. Nazaire.

St. Nazaire today is a collection of active shipyards, a scattering of ruined buildings and neatly piled debris, and a swampy plain on which hundreds of prefabricated barracks have mushroomed up. Along the bombed streets there are only a few stores.

Near the railroad station is the German submarine base, a block-long edifice of steel and concrete. It was eighteen months in the building, while British scouting planes watched from the air. Then the bombers came. British and American bombs wiped out most of the business and residential districts and crippled the shipyards. The workers fled to their shelters, then returned to repair the damage. They watched a few heavy bombs fall on the submarine base and bounce off. The same bombs a year earlier would have delayed completion of the structure for months. Why had they not been dropped then? Why did the destruction continue to rain on the homes of the workers?

Some French people found their own explanations—that the United States hoped to gain a free port of entry after the war and wanted it in good condition; that British and American refining companies had wiped out a post-war competitor by destroying empty oil tanks in Nantes, about thirty miles from the St. Nazaire dock areas. These theories left much bitterness.

A Gesture of Atonement

Reconstruction activities are now well underway. The Ministry of Reconstruction has erected hundreds of barracks on the edges of the city to accommodate shipyard workers who had been evacuated to shelters ten to thirty miles away and had to commute from these distances. The sudden demand for transport to move families into the new barracks was more than the local trucks could cope with, and Quaker transport for the neediest was begun as a gesture of atonement for the destruction.

While loading trucks with stoves, bicycles, rabbit hutches, bedding and fire wood, we Quaker workers got acquainted with many of the families and learned how desperately some lived. Through other contacts we learned that practically no social services could be established by the city for the barrack communities, beyond minimum medical care. This in itself is a tremendous job, for there are only two doctors for this city of over fifty thousand, and medical supplies are difficult to find.

There is no other foreign relief organization in St. Nazaire; there are no public buildings except damaged schools, no recreation spots other than cafes. Yet these barrack communities will have to serve as homes for five and six years.

The Heart of a Community

The need for a neighborhood center in such a community was obvious. We began plans for one. We sent three community workers to St. Nazaire and ordered a specially suitable barrack from Switzerland to house the program. The city, enthused with the idea, loaned us a temporary barrack base.

One day a Unit member saw a small boy who was badly in need of a haircut. With permission of the boy's mother, he took the boy to our headquarters and cut his hair. Soon there was a group of customers for free haircuts, and a gallery of brothers and sisters. To keep this gang occupied, a play group was started. Though our own barracks had not yet arrived, about forty-five children came to play, and a kindergarten for the littlest ones was set up for two mornings a week. A sandbox filled with four jeep-loads of white sand and a see-saw became very popular among these children who had known few toys. The weekly movies, the sewing rooms, and the library—the only one in St. Nazaire—appeal to the older people.

Many small items must yet be collected—films, books, curtains, sewing machines, paints, light bulbs, and games. There is a great demand for good French books, but we have no funds with which to purchase them.

Though our services will be directed toward the needs of children and young people, a number of community leaders have asked whether the center would be open for philosophical and religious discussions, and were very pleased when we said yes. Community centers are a new idea for France. But this community is already accepting the idea of the center and of us as neighbors.

What Have We to Offer?

St. Nazaire's war experience leaves her people with a strange mixture of feelings. And it leaves Quaker workers with little to say. We are trying to find what we have to offer these people in the way of hope or faith or a pattern of recovery. In this searching we have learned what it means to be humble before that which war has done. Our best message is cheer and patience as we carry stoves and clothes-closets into new homes, and a friendly welcome as people gravitate to our center.

Impressions from Germany

by CLAUDE SHOTTS

British and American Quaker workers in Germany are distributing food and clothing to more than three hundred thousand people in need. A student center in the French Zone and five neighborhood centers in the American and British zones have rooms available for shoe and clothing repair, for study and discussion groups and children's activities. Refugee work, workshops for displaced persons, youth camps, assistance for tuberculosis hospitals are also part of the program in the British Zone. Claude Shotts, chairman of CRALOG (Council of Relief Agencies Licensed to Operate in Germany) in the American Zone, and Service Committee representative, recently returned from Germany.

Our world is a world of power—atomic power, economic power, political power. Governments may use their economic power in the form of food to promote their ideologies; groups and agencies may use it to strengthen their influences; but food, when given because other men are hungry, becomes symbolic of the inter-dependence of people.

Germans, who have relatives in America, expect them to share their abundance. Germans, whose country is occupied by military governments, expect those governments to feed them. But the voluntary supplies sent by relief agencies feed spiritual as well as material hunger, for they testify to the concern of man for man.

Unwanted Strangers

When the CRALOG mission arrived in Germany in April 1946, every railroad station seemed filled with refugees moving from eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and other points to the east. The problem of transporting these twelve to fourteen million refugees involved much suffering; the problem of resettling them was as difficult. It is reported that an influx of nine million refugees has been added to the pre-war population of thirty-four million in the American and British zones.

These refugees are unwanted strangers. In some cases their religious affiliations, their cultural and economic backgrounds are quite different from those of the communities in which they are settled. They take up valued living space and require their portion of the carefully rationed food.

In the Midst of Scarcity

These refugees' problems emphasize the plight of all Germans. In one of the cities, records of food rationing for the two years preceding the end of the war show that German civilians were then on a ration of less than two thousand calories a day.

This indicates that some of the people were already undernourished at the end of the war. And in the past two years it has been impossible to maintain the theoretical standard of fifteen hundred calories a day. In the past six months the acute food situation has been the chief concern of military government and of the German people. Available food has often fallen below the ration of a thousand calories a day.

In consequence, there has been a rising tuberculosis rate among the children, an increase in the death rate, and an alarming breakdown in the physical and spiritual stamina of the people.

But in spite of these conditions the German people seem eternally at work cultivating small tracts of land, gathering twigs for fuel, journeying far into the country to collect food from the farmers. And in destroyed areas of the cities a great deal has been accomplished in cleaning up debris and improvising crude shelters with limited materials. They have a great concern to work for their living.

Importance of America

The importance of America to German people is significant. It is due both to the fear that Russia may occupy all Germany, and to the fact that many Germans have relatives in America with whom they correspond and from whom they receive food and clothing.

There is great interest, especially in high schools and colleges, to know more about America and American democracy. There is a hope, not only that America will help Germany out of her present plight, but that democracy may become her political pattern.

After two years of occupation, one finds in Germany much disillusionment and discouragement. Disillusionment because many people hoped that liberation from Hitler would lead to the early setting up of a democratic government; discouragement because two years later they see no plan affecting their future.

Berlin a Laboratory

Optimistic people look on Berlin as the laboratory for working out the problems of world government while others see the four powers maintaining separate divisions in Germany, not one of which is economically self-sufficient.

As one lives in Germany in the midst of the aftermath of the second world war, it becomes clear that we must soon achieve some form of world unity to avert the threat of a third war. There is no job more important than that of creating a sense of world community which transcends all national, racial and political lines; of creating a world government that will give expression to this spirit.

Service to Hungarians

by JOAN FREETH and REBECCAH L. TAFT

Here in Hungary where whole families must share a single pair of shoes, where the food situation has become progressively worse this spring and many children and young people never have breakfast nor more than two or three slices of bread a day, we have been distributing Quaker food and clothing supplies. In Budapest we are providing apprentices and young workers, fourteen to eighteen years old, with supplementary rations and clothing in cooperation with the trade unions and the Government. Clothing distributions are also under way in small outlying communities.

In Budapest

A thousand pairs of girls' shoes and twenty-five bales of women's clothing were allotted to one distribution in Budapest which took five days. The distribution took place in a warehouse which had been a clothing workshop and was equipped with shelves, coat hangers and rods. The first room was a waiting room, with a long mirror. Here the apprentices' credentials were checked on entry and their receipts taken as they left. In a second room downstairs the shoes were tried on in front of a counter of packing boxes. One or two young people had spent most of their week's wages on a pair of new socks in honor of the occasion. Others shared one pair of socks between several persons. We made them all try on their shoes to be sure they fitted. There was some sadness because the more popular shiny shoes did not go around, but the helpers were firm that each took what chance offered. Only the size mattered.

Upstairs in another room the girls who received clothes came two at a time. There they received overcoats, underwear, pajamas, stockings or socks. The distribution went smoothly and well. The girls were happy and had much fun out of what they drew, for the underwear varied from wisps of chiffon to voluminous cotton nightgowns with high necks and long sleeves.

They came in groups from an industry or a large factory at one time. The lists and checking of credentials were handled efficiently and carefully by a seventeen-year-old textile worker on the central feeding committee.

In Other Communities

In Szeged our first distribution was of one hundred and fifty layettes to a maternity and child welfare organization. These layettes were then loaned out, as baby clothes are too precious and scarce to be given away. We also divided three bales of infant clothing among three nurseries, sent two hundred diapers to the hospital, and blankets to several institutions.

Our first personal distribution was to sixty unemployed men, selected as the neediest by the three thousand unemployed men in the community. We found that they needed everything and fitted them out completely, hoping that it might enable some of them to get work. It is not unusual for men to be unable to look for work because they have not enough clothes to be decent. We saw one man in a woman's cotton skirt because he had no trousers. There is a point where patches will no longer hold together.

It is very distressing to see so many desperate people that we cannot help; it is also a great joy to see the radiant faces of the children when they are dressed in their new clothes. As the weather was bad during one of the distributions, we stopped to dress the coldest and wettest of the little ones. One charming rain-soaked and ragged little girl came alone because her mother was ill, and left a totally different child completely reclad and dry-shod, carrying a bundle of her discarded garments.

One woman refugee who lived with two others had to wear their total stock of clothes in order to have enough to go out, and even then her coat was only a sack around her shoulders.

Among the older people was the widow of a university professor. She is nearly blind. She is fed by the charity of the hospital kitchen, and sleeps on two hard chairs on the landing of a staircase, for she has no bed and cannot afford a room.

Absorbed in Shoes

On a trip to deliver eleven layettes to a small maternity home, we were confronted by a crowd of more than a hundred persons who had heard we were coming and hoped we might have clothing for them. The children were barefooted and ragged, shivering as they stood in the snow. One man, recently widowed, had carried two of his children more than three miles, the other five children walking with him. He left with tears of disappointment in his eyes. We sent him a parcel later that day, and two weeks later returned to make a distribution to the community. Among other things we took along a box of children's shoes, one of our very scarce and precious boxes of little shoes. It was fascinating to watch the little ones absorbed in them. They walked up and down, staring at their feet, oblivious of the rest of the world.

Editor's Note: There will be no July or August issues of the FOREIGN SERVICE BULLETIN.

Demonstration of Solidarity

Quaker International Voluntary Service

"Your idea of brothership of all people is very interesting. It would mean the heaven upon the earth. You have shown that it isn't quite impossible."

This paragraph, written by a Finnish student, expresses the receptive eagerness with which young people, both in Europe and the United States, have met the idea of international work camps.

The Quaker International Voluntary Service of the American Friends Service Committee, plans to work with the Service Civil International and to help develop seven work camps in Finland and three in Italy this summer. These plans grew out of experiences of a year ago when the Committee maintained a small voluntary work camp program in which young people from six European countries helped rebuild houses in Finnish Lapland and in a small Italian hill town. The spirit of dedicated idealism and international cooperation generated in the camps was unique in a Europe torn by hatreds, bitterness and disillusionment. And the international composition of each camp was a practical demonstration of human solidarity.

At the end of the summer the Committee joined with five like-minded European organizations in adopting as a common aim the "furtherance of the international work camp movement as a means of international reconciliation." And at a meeting in Brussels last November representatives met with members of organizations from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Great Britain to coordinate future plans.

As this Bulletin goes to press, fifty young Americans will be on their way to participate in the work camps in Italy and Finland, where they will help construct a day nursery, a community house, a hospital, a clinic and maternity center, and a public laundry. They will also help to remodel an abandoned convent into a community-owned hospital. Some are also to work with the Service Civil International which is sponsoring voluntary work camps in Belgium, Holland and France.

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European Reconstruction

THE BIG 4 IN GERMANY, by David L. Glickman, National Planning Association pamphlet, Nos. 54-55, 80 pp; THE FUTURE OF GERMAN REPARATIONS, by David Ginsberg, Nos. 57-58, 80 pp. Available on request from the American Friends Service Committee.

In May 1946, the American Friends Service Committee felt that it should be determined what "political, economic, and social policies must be pursued if Europe as an entity is to achieve some measure of well-being," and proposed that the National Planning Association undertake a "realistic study of the conditions that impede the recovery of Europe."

THE BIG 4 IN GERMANY, by David L. Glickman, is the second in this series on European Reconstruction. It is based on the premise that "Germany is the economic as well as the strategic nerve-center of Europe. (and that) It is in Germany that the East and the West are really testing their abilities to formulate a framework which will be mutually satisfactory to their different ideologies and conceptions of security."

Following a review of the positions of Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States through the Yalta Declaration up to the present, David Glickman makes recommendations designed to lead to the economic unification of Germany and proposes a revised reparations policy under which German economic recovery and reparations deliveries would aid the economic reconstruction and development of the European countries devastated during the war years.

THE FUTURE OF GERMAN REPARATIONS, by David Ginsburg, is the third pamphlet in the series. It is primarily concerned with the most difficult reparations issues—disagreement on the withdrawal of reparations from current production. Convinced that a program of reparations from current industrial production in the amounts demanded by the Russians would be economically disastrous, politically unwise, and difficult to administer, David Ginsburg urges the insistence of the United States on compliance with agreements entered into at Potsdam and Berlin.

David Ginsburg, during 1945-46 served as Deputy Director of the Economics Division of the Office of Military Government and as United States alternate on the four-power Economic Directorate in Berlin.

David Glickman was assistant to the Economic Advisor to the Bureau of Supplies of the Foreign Economic Administration and consultant to the Bureau of the Budget during the war years.

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AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
20 SOUTH TWELFTH STREET
PHILADELPHIA 7, PA.

Within the Eternal Now

As we look toward the future of the Service Committee there is a quite understandable concern on the part of many of us that the present crisis is of such a critical nature that we must bend all our efforts to prevent the catastrophe which another war would mean.

Certainly we must work for peace and reconciliation. Yet we must retain our perspective. Do we not feel that our main effort should be made not for an immediate political or social program, nor to win for ourselves the advantage of a far-off eternity, but rather that we should work within the Eternal Now? Is it not the chief business of Friends to work for a quickening of the spirit, to seek to bring the Eternal into our lives and the lives of others here today? If a work camp changes the life of one person, if through the activities of a relief mission the spiritual life of even a small group is deepened, then is not the whole effort justified? And were this not happening, how much of our work would be justified?

In our anxiety about the crisis of our civilization, we must not forget the crisis which each one of us faces, which each man has faced in every age, not merely the atomic age. Each of us has the choice between Life and Death. Either we turn to God, open ourselves to His transforming power, and become a center of joyful, radiant Life, or else we go on within our private walls of selfishness, indifference and materialistic desire to live that life which is Death.

To be sure, we must each feel the urgency of the moment. Eternity is at hand. Eternal Life is ours for the willing. And for each of us the choice is now.

* * *

—Statement by Irwin Abrams at the Thirtieth Anniversary Meeting of the American Friends Service Committee, held May 10 at Haverford College.