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FEEDING
SPAIN'S CHILDREN



Extracts from Report of EDITH M. PYE.

CHILD FEEDING IN CATALONIA

TO anyone revisiting Catalonia after several months it is clear that the effort necessary to live at all is much greater than before. In Barcelona the children are no longer able to learn properly in school and there is no doubt that those who are in poor health suffer greatly from the absence of food. It is not easy to live on a diet of chick peas and dried beans. The rationing is very strict and the food shops appear completely empty. Throughout the whole of Catalonia there are hardly any cats left, all have been eaten. As time goes on the conditions described as applying to refugees become generalised and already in some of the small towns there are a number of inhabitants who are without resources, because the bread winner is at the front or dead.

A typical refugee ration for ten days consists of 1,000 grammes of food (oil, rice, dried vegetables and a little tinned meat). This is given out in bulk, and where there is so little there is naturally a tendency to eat more during the first days, leaving little or nothing for the last two or three days. This ration is meant as a supplement to what can be obtained by the

An anxious queue outside a Barcelona Canteen.



refugees themselves, but the truth is that there is practically nothing that can be obtained. The larger the centre, the worse conditions appear for the refugees. Where no feeding has been done by foreign relief organisations, the condition of the children is really serious. This is shown not merely by their thinness but by their lifelessness and quietness. It appears to take about two months' feeding before they regain their liveliness and even after four months they are not fat. It was stated that the death rate is very high and in one of the large refuges in Barcelona there were 100 people sick and four deaths the day we were there. The Municipalities do not give figures of the death rate. To see the tragic faces of the mothers in some of the centres is a haunting experience, as is the sight of silent listless rows of little white faces waiting for their porridge. But there is no listlessness over the eating!

Other conditions contribute to the state of the children, such as overcrowding and insanitary conditions and the absence of soap. The mothers make enormous efforts to keep the children clean, but the conditions are such that it is amazing that the children have survived at all. In spite of all these hardships, there appears to be undaunted courage and often cheerfulness, even gaiety. The Asturians especially have an energy and determination to overcome difficulties that is marvellous in the face of what they are called on to endure.

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION CANTEENS

An immense organising effort was made during the months of May and June to carry out, as a temporary arrangement, the work of the Commission and bring help to the maximum number of children at the earliest possible date. On May 1st there were already 18 canteens feeding about 4,500 children. By June 20th the number had risen to 54 canteens feeding 11,936 children.

The hopelessness of the mothers at the fate of their children in the centres where no help is being given is in vivid contrast to the cheerfulness of those mothers who bring the tiny children to the canteens and have seen the consequent improvement in health. There can be no doubt that coming to the Canteens twice daily where the children spend at least some time in decent and orderly surroundings is a great help, in addition to the food they get. They are obliged to come clean and tidy and any who are not are sent back to wash by the "responsible". Arrangements are now being made for small quantities of soap to be given out in the canteens.

The co-operation with the local authorities is excellent and they provide the premises, the kitchens, the fuel for cooking and in general the equipment. The helpers themselves are all refugees and they work with great devotion and capability. They welcome visitors with the utmost friendliness and enthusiasm and they appear to take a real and personal interest in the children. Every child has its number, which is marked off on entry on a printed attendance sheet. Each week the "responsible" sends in an account of the numbers being fed and the amount of stores used. We are now receiving letters from unvisited places pleading for help. Though the scheme is that of a large scale relief, the spirit in which it is carried on is one that should satisfy Friends. The personal relationships are on a basis of equality and friendliness and of a united desire to help the children to the utmost.



Barcelona—
Patria Canteen
—the cocoa
is coming!

The number of children being fed in Catalonia by the Commission ought to be increased to 20,000, and then as soon as further funds are forthcoming increased again up to 40,000. The estimated cost of feeding is well covered by £100 per 1,000 children per month, including transport and overhead charges, i.e., 2/- per child per month.

BARCELONA CANTEENS



Pueblo Nuevo Barcelona Canteen

I have been very much struck with the difference between the appearance of the Barcelona children and the refugees. The former, who have been having milk from us through the Spain Committee over a long period, look to me in normal health and not more underfed than the poorest section of the population in any large town. The Calle Carmen Canteen is changing its locality as it is in a dangerous area, and it is intended to give breakfast to the children (mug of milk and piece of bread) on the lines of the new canteen in Pueblo Nuevo, which is very

Distribution
at a
canteen in
Barcelona



satisfactory, giving breakfast to an immense number of tiny children.

I visited the Parks' Milk Bar (financed by the General Relief Fund) and saw the 3,000 children served with milk and water and a biscuit, and was really astonished at the good condition of the greater proportion of them. The organisation is remarkable and the children come from a long way off, which means that the drink is really appreciated. In the Baby Canteen milk of the proper strength is given to children under two. The string of aged men and women who are served last is very pathetic, most of them belonging to the poorest classes.

I also visited a canteen and infant welfare centre carried on by Ayuda Infantil with a complete system of medical care and visiting nurses, in which we are giving milk for 200 children. It is hoped to transfer some of the more sickly children from the Canteens to this centre where they can be under medical supervision.

THERE IS A WAITING LIST AT EACH CANTEEN, AMOUNTING TO SEVERAL THOUSAND NAMES, AND THIS INVALUABLE HELP COULD BE INCREASED INDEFINITELY.

FRIENDS' WORK IN SPAIN

CANTEENS in Barcelona

CHILD FEEDING in Madrid

COLONIES —4 in Barcelona

MEDICAL WORK in Murcia and
Polop

RELIEF WORK in Nationalist Spain

RELIEF WORK in Valencia

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Cheques for Friends' Relief Work in Spain should be made payable to FRIENDS SERVICE COUNCIL and crossed Barclays Bank.

Gifts of warm clothing in good condition are also urgently needed, and should be addressed to :

Messrs. Davies, Turner & Co., Ltd.,
Carrier House,
4, Lower Belgrave Street,
London, S.W.1

marked clearly "For Friends Service Council", and enclosing name and address of sender.

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