



THE
CHILDREN OF SPAIN

“The problem of the feeding of the refugees is a mass problem; with the approach of winter, the time-factor is all-important. This alone precludes us from contemplating the setting up of an independent organisation of relief distribution. The only practical course is to utilise and reinforce the Government machinery that exists, enlisting the collaboration of and assisting the expansion of all voluntary relief organisations, such as the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees in Spain, the Society of Friends and the Swiss Relief, whose work, wherever we have had an opportunity of seeing it on the spot, has commanded our admiration.”

Report by Sir Denys Bray and Mr. L. Webster
on their mission of enquiry into the needs
of the refugee population in Spain, undertaken for
the League of Nations.

October 9-27, 1938.

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF CHILD REFUGEES IN SPAIN

November 1938

THE CHILDREN OF SPAIN

THE war in Spain is entering its third winter. To us it has become a commonplace. If we notice at all the reports given in the newspapers we hurry over them, stopping perhaps at sensational accounts of bombings and offensives. These seem real for we can visualize them. But we know that we can do nothing about them — we cannot stop the slaughter, we are in no position to conciliate, to bring an end to the war — and so we had best keep clear of it.

We may be justified in keeping out of these military and political matters but, apart from them, there is much that we can, and indeed *must* do. Very little news seeps through to the outside about the conditions of illness, starvation, and lack of clothing from which the population is suffering. The censor deletes the descriptive, tell-tale passages from news despatches, and it is also a breach of confidence for those eyewitnesses who have been in Spain to describe the things they have seen. For these reasons we do not know the full extent to which disease and mortality have increased.

Even if we take no sides in the political struggle, refusing to support either side with materials of war, or to help the armed forces, we *cannot* refuse help to the civilian population, and particularly to the children — victims of a struggle of which they have no understanding and in which they certainly play no part. Their homes may be destroyed, they may be living in streets and cellars, they may have lost their parents. We have no means of saving them from these miseries. But young children with sound bodies and normal health are often mercifully spared comprehension of terrible events, even when these come very close. We can make this possible for the Spanish children by sending them — because they are children and we *care* about them — food, and clothing, and medicines.

They, when the war is over, will be building a new Spain.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Since the beginning of the war various bodies have tried to help and have performed admirable work within the narrow limits of their means. The immense increase of suffering during the prolonged war, however, made these efforts altogether insufficient. The work had to be organised on a much broader basis, and in April, 1938, the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees in Spain was formed.

The Commission is composed of representatives of benevolent organisations working in Spain, and other persons experienced in large-scale relief. It is *non-political and non-partisan* — making supplies available on both sides, wherever is the greatest need. The authorities in both Republican and Nationalist Spain appreciate the efforts of the Commission and rely on its integrity to the extent that goods entering Spain under its auspices are exempted from customs duty and given free transport. Thus the impartiality and humanitarian objectives of the International Commission are recognised and approved by both sides in Spain.

The work of distributing food is carried out in canteens, directed by representatives of the Commission who remain in close collaboration with the Spanish authorities.¹ Thus about 50,000 children are nourished, and the food is given in one or two "additional" meals a day — additional, that is, to whatever the children can obtain by scavenging or from the meagre civilian ration. The standard daily ration at the canteens, necessarily based on the strict minima of existence, is as follows :

| | | |
|-----|-------|--------------------------|
| 200 | grams | bread |
| 40 | " | milk (powdered, skimmed) |
| 10 | " | sugar |
| 2½ | " | cacao |
| 5 | " | codliver oil |
| 22 | " | peanut oil |

¹ The representatives of the Commission in Spain are members of the Society of Friends in Great Britain and the United States, the Swiss "Service Civile Internationale" and the International Save the Children Union,

Parents accustomed to providing the best possible foods for their own children will recognise the absolute inadequacy of this diet, both for physical growth and resistance to illness, and, of course, for enjoyment. It is, however, as testified by medical advisers on the spot affiliated with the Commission, sufficient to save the children from starvation and from irreparable bodily breakdown.

WHAT IS NEEDED

The first step taken by the International Commission was to make an appeal to governments for financial support, and some contributions were received permitting the immediate start and organisation of the work.¹

It was expected that governments would respond generously to this constructive and humanitarian appeal and that their contributions would support the Commission's work. Had all governments contributed on the same scale as did, for instance, Great Britain and Sweden, this might have been the case and the work of feeding the children could have been placed from the first on a broad and efficient basis.

Unfortunately, these hopes have been disappointed and the Commission faces this winter with funds practically exhausted.

New income must be found, for the work must go on. Further, it must be extended from the 50,000 now being fed to all the children who otherwise during the winter will suffer cold and starvation. In the age group 2-4 years alone, there are 500,000 such children in Republican Spain.

Recently the work has come into a new position by the generous gift of 6,000 tons of wheat from the people of America to the people of Spain (arranged by the American Red Cross with the United States Government), which is to be delivered free of charge at European ports. The Commission has been invited to handle the distribution of this wheat in cooperation with the American Friends Service Committee.

¹ The following governments have so far contributed :
Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany,
Great Britain, India, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, South
Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, United States.

The work of helping the children is enormously facilitated by this gift. It presents, however, a challenge and raises new problems. Children do not live by bread alone, and at the same time that the Commission must expand its outlets in Spain, it must also find additional foods to supplement the bread ration.

If the Commission is to feed only the 500,000 children between the ages of two and four years, for instance, the following foods are required for the next seven months:

| | |
|---|----------|
| <i>Milk</i> — The most essential food for children. To give 100 grams of dried milk per day to each child will cost | £210,000 |
| <i>Codliver oil</i> — A teaspoonful a day to each child will cost | 21,656 |
| <i>Cacao and sugar</i> — The necessary amounts will cost | 21,913 |
| Total | £253,569 |

These are the minimum needs; the prices are minimum quotations. In addition:

Other foods, particularly dried fish, meat, fruits, etc., and *soap* can be distributed in whatever amounts they are received.

Clothing has become as essential as food in many cases. There is desperate need for warm clothing of all kinds, shoes, and blankets.

APPEAL

In order that it may provide these necessities for the coming winter, therefore, the International Commission solicits the *immediate* cooperation and active support of governments, benevolent organisations, industrial concerns, and individuals.

From *governments* the Commission asks new and continued contributions in money and in kind. The American gift of surplus wheat offers an example of how they may liberate excess products of their countries without harm to the market for these goods. It is hoped, further, that governments will support the appeal to be made by the Commission to the general public.

From *benevolent organisations* the Commission asks contributions in money and in kind, urging them also to stimulate public awareness of the need of the Spanish children and of the work of the Commission in relieving it.

From *industrial and commercial establishments* the Commission asks such goods as they will spare — particularly excess stocks, and outmoded styles in clothing and shoes.

Above all, assistance is needed from *individuals*. No contribution can be too large for the need, but if a million people the world over will give as little as 5 shillings (\$1.25) apiece, the continuance of the Commission's work for the next six months will be assured.

*Two shillings (fifty cents) will feed a child for a month.
What will you give? How many children will you feed?*

Contributions and requests for information should be addressed to :

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE ASSISTANCE
OF CHILD REFUGEES IN SPAIN

52, Rue des Paquis
GENEVA (Switzerland)
Postal cheque 1.292



DELEGATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Republican Spain

Barcelona
Madrid
Murcia
Valencia

Nationalist Spain

Burgos
Bilbao

ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION IN SPAIN

Friends Service Council, London
American Friends Service Committee
Service Civile Internationale
International Save the Children Union