

FRIENDS' RELIEF WORK IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

The Scope of the work of the Mission in Vienna.

*Sept report
with revisions*

Not only is the collapse of National life and the distress due to starvation and lack of clothes etc, greater than in Vienna than in Germany, but the break up of the Austrian Empire into States which are economically dependent on each other, makes recovery absolutely impossible for the State of German Austria without assistance. Recovery can only come through the renewal of economic relations between the new states and while racial and political obstacles to this are being overcome assistance is needed to save the lives of the inhabitants and can only be given by members of the more fortunate allied countries.

One form of this help is similar to that required in Germany, namely simply to give the necessary food and clothing as a matter of urgency to save the lives of the children who are dying in such large numbers, and to place the hospitals in a position to carry on their usual beneficent work. This is being done on a large scale by the Americans, who are feeding over 10,000 school children in Vienna alone, and who are also giving food to the Children's hospitals.

Friends and the Save the Children Fund are also sending supplies which are being distributed mainly through a new organisation specially built up for the purpose, known as the Internationale Spitalhilfe Aktion. This committee has American, English and Dutch representatives as well as Austrian members, the supplies so far have mainly come through English channels. The distribution has been to the hospitals and to Infant Welfare Centres and outpatient clinics and has been made with a view of giving food to those not helped by the Americans, clothing and medical supplies.

We have had particularly in view the needs of the children under five years of age who are not helped by the Americans. These children are in a very serious condition of rickets and stunted growth and all need help, especially fats. Only 21,000 out of a total of 133,000 are helped by the Americans.

Another emergency measure is the distribution of clothes and this we are also undertaking through the Infant and Welfare centres. In the case both of food and clothing we find that where it is advisable to give in the home, the people are willing and able to pay--a price which though far below present cost, is about the pre-war price, and we consider that this arrangement avoids the dangers of demoralising the individual. It is however, true that it demoralises the State which has to let foreigners help it in this way in its internal organisation. Probably in the case of Germany, the help needed is of a more temporary character and the State is in a more independent position so that this danger is not so great.

It is however, just in the case of Austria, as we have pointed out, that help in the organisation of relief is for the moment quite essential and it is therefore of the very greatest importance that it should be done in the right way and with full knowledge of the local conditions. This brings us to a branch of our work which is probably rather different from what is required in Germany. First, we must co-operate in such a way that we stimulate the Austrians to do what they can, and the scheme must be on lines which help the economic position and do not hinder it. Secondly, on account of the disorganised state of affairs and the weakness of the government outside the town we have to look out for opportunities where British influence may overcome difficulties which were insurmountable to the Government.

Thirdly, we find many ways in which British influence can be used to overcome the barrier between the National States, through the medium of Mr. Butler of the British Food Commission, and Colonel Sir Thomas Cunningham of the British Military Mission, with both of whom we work in close association. We have made special reports at Mr. Butler's request for this purpose.

In order to carry out the work that opens up in the various directions which I have outlined, we need workers to come out who have initiative and good judgment, preferably with good German, though much may be done by experienced people without.

Besides the need for people with initiative there is scope for a number of workers who would be willing to carry out the suggestions of the former, as, although our work is all done through Austrian organisation, there is a great deal of work in connection with it which we have to do ourselves, and if we are to make any attempt to convey a message of fellowship to the people, we are among, each person must have sufficient leisure from practical work. For this sort of work a knowledge of German is particularly needed.

We should like to lay great emphasis on the desirability of visiting in the homes of the people we are trying to help. We feel very strongly that we need to get this personal touch among different classes of society, in order to know much about the problems of the town. We think it is through this that we shall get information as to how things are going and where help is most needed.

The main branches of the work are as follows:

- 1) HOSPITAL RELIEF. For this we have representation on the I.S.A. and visiting of the hospitals is necessary in connection with it, as well as much work needing enterprise and initiative in planning ways to secure help.
- 2) INFANT WELFARE CENTRE RELIEF. Through these centres we distribute milk, cocoa and other foods, and clothes in the homes. The nature of this work requires a similar staff to (1) but larger.
- 3) CLOTHING SCHEME. The first stage is the manufacture which is carried on by the Austrians under supervision of one of our members. The second stage, distribution, is carried on in connection with (1) and (2) and a scheme is being arranged for selling clothing also to middle class families.
- 4) MILK SCHEME. The organisation of a better supply of milk is being made by the Kleinkinder Hilfsaktion which is composed of two Austrians and three of our members. This is a very big business and entails a great deal of work and several more workers than we have. The distribution is through the Infant Welfare centres.
- 5) GENERAL ENQUIRY. Into (a) the economic position with a view to fresh branches of work and propaganda in England and America; (b) special institutions. To these we generally make a small gift and some are given substantial help i.e., Arbeiter Rat, Frauen-und Kinderheim which we helped during September and October, so as to enable the Arbeiter Rat to take advantage of barracks which had been offered them for a convalescent home. This was a temporary matter and was very successful.
- 6) BUDAPEST AND HUNGARY. Some help has been sent and much enquiry made. Work will be taken up as soon as workers come out.

7) PRAGUE AND CZECHO-SLOVAKIA. Enquiry has been made. Help is being sent to the Erzgebirge. It is proposed to give help in the mining districts in order to increase coal out-put.

8) HELP IN OTHER PARTS OF AUSTRIA. It is proposed to give relief in the mining districts in order to increase the yield of coal. Help has been sent to hospitals in Salzburg and Wiener Neustadt and is to be sent to Graz and Linz, and probably other places. It is proposed also to establish a system of selling certain goods required by the peasants in the dairy districts in order to encourage the delivery of milk.

9) Another proposal under consideration is to assist the Austrian schemes for training boys and girls in agricultural work with a view to helping the necessary exodus from Vienna and the increase of agricultural production which are both so imperative.