

Coordinating War Relief Efforts in Shanghai

By JOHN EARL BAKER

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WITH the destruction visited upon Hongkew and Chapei in 1932 vividly in mind, the residents of those districts began to stream into the Settlements even before the first shots were fired on August 13. Since that day, the incoming stream has continued almost steadily, the numbers being augmented by farmers from the surrounding rural districts overrun by troops.

The appearance of these shelterless hordes upon the street did not fail to awaken the sympathies of all beholders, and every organization with the slightest philanthropic bent began the task of finding empty buildings, erecting mat sheds, and in other ways providing cover for the scores of thousands who had neither friend nor acquaintance with whom to find a haven. Most conspicuous in work in this kind were the provincial guilds, and the established benevolent societies. But the facilities offered by these institutions were not sufficient; new organizations had to be formed.

Probably no organization had in hand funds sufficient to accomplish its work; hence each one was compelled to make appeals to its friends and to the general public. No matter how many refugees were taken in and fed, thousands still remained without a place to lay their heads, or sources from which to fill their rice bowls. A very few weeks of this experience made it evident that a tremendous duplication of effort had occurred in the solicitation of the relief funds. And while probably no district was furnished with more shelter than was needed, others seemed to be almost overlooked. Certain special types of relief in some camps appeared to be neglected; in others, to be almost overdone, due to the ability or inability of the supporting organizations to command the funds or personnel for such particular needs.

Furthermore, situations like these are made to order for the bogus solicitor and the professional mendicant. Certainly if funds were to be raised abroad, some agency, representative of Shanghai as a whole, must make the appeal. Thus it became apparent that some co-ordinating agency was necessary to eliminate much useless hurrying to and fro, to give a certificate of genuineness to all solicitors for funds and relief supplies, and to eliminate a certain destructive competition which inevitably accompanies unrelated efforts of this sort. Thus it was that during September, a group of prominent citizens representative in large part of the organizations already giving relief, but augmented by a number of prominent leaders whose energies and abilities can be available for relief purposes only during an emergency, met together to consult on ways and means. These eventually formed the Shanghai International Committee which secured a provisional charter from the Chinese National Red Cross Society.

The Shanghai International Red Cross plans not to give relief direct to individuals, but rather to co-ordinate the work of the organizations already giving relief. The

plans to do this come under several different heads, each of which is in charge of a special committee, the members of which have been chosen because of special experience.

Because of the season and crowding, the danger of epidemics was recognized—a danger for which the municipal authorities were willing to accept a degree of responsibility, but which also depended considerably upon the sanitation within the concentration camps and the hospitals for the wounded. A Committee on Epidemics under the chairmanship of Dr. R. C. Robertson was formed, which, in this way, took jurisdiction without being hampered by political boundaries or restrictions imposed by the limitations of the various societies supporting the 200 camps of refugees.

The question of medical supplies concerns not only soldiers and wounded civilians, but also the medical service being rendered to the population at large, and to the camps; so, a Committee on Medical Supplies under the chairmanship of Dr. Sze-ming Sze was formed.

To co-ordinate the appeals for funds and to give them a weight and dignity which would insure confidence and respect at home and abroad, a Committee on Appeals was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Sao-Ke Alfred Sze. No less important than the obtaining of funds are the methods of handling the funds after they have been obtained. As treasurer and chairman of its Finance Committee, the Shanghai International Red Cross appointed Mr. C. R. Bennett, for many years manager of the National City Bank of New York, and now financial advisor and treasurer for the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture.

The Finance Committee has drawn up a set of regulations designed to safeguard the funds in its custody. Among these regulations are the provision that funds are paid out only after an appropriation by the Executive Committee. Only funds actually in hand may be appropriated and payments are made against actual bills certified by the Chairman of the Committee to whom the appropriation has been voted. In this way, no unspent balances may be retained for long periods in the hands of any Committee which may have no use for them for the present but hangs on to them in the belief that it may need them at some indefinite future time. Wong, Tan & Co., Chartered Accountants, conduct a continuous audit.

Actual relief work falls into two categories: wounded soldiers and civilian refugees; hence a separate committee was formed for each. No more than 5,000 wounded soldiers may be admitted into the Settlements at any date but these must be distributed to available hospitals and these hospitals must be staffed, supplied and supported. That is the task of the Wounded Soldiers Committee under Dr. F. C. Yen.

A committee under the chairmanship of Mr. W. H. Plant has, from the first, been evacuating from Shanghai

as many of the refugees as could give assurances that homes in their native provinces were available. But upwards of 700,000 still remain in Shanghai, of which only 100,000 so far are to be found in the registered camps. These are the care of the Refugees Relief Committee under Father R. Jacquinet.

Daily records of the numbers admitted and the numbers evacuated are submitted by the officers of each camp, so that a current picture of the situation is constantly before the responsible authorities. For the time being, the support of these camps is entirely at the expense of those sponsoring them. But the time will come when the number will become so large, or the exchequer of the supporting societies so depleted that assistance of some sort will have to be extended to the sponsors of some of the camps. Furthermore, because of the dislocation of business and the presence of a large number of professional men and women in Shanghai who cannot get to their posts in the interior, a large number of volunteers are available for particular services to camps. In order to prepare for the time of subsidy and to assign to duty these available volunteers, a Board of Visitors under the direction of Mr. N. B. Doodha has been created which calls at the camps, observes conditions and makes reports to Father Jacquinet with recommendations.

One of the great needs for the coming winter is clothing. Certain societies have been able to furnish sufficient materials to clothe practically all of the inmates of their camps; others are not so fortunate. Mrs. W. S. New, with the help of the Ginling Alumnae Association, is receiving clothing which, upon application from camps either direct or on the recommendation of the Visitors, is distributed where most needed.

But in addition to physical needs, the refugees, like all other human beings, have spiritual needs. Occupation

for the mind and for the hands is almost as important to intelligent people as food in the stomach or clothes to the back. Furthermore, the preservation of manual skill is of prime importance to artisans and craftsmen. Nor to be overlooked is the fact that in many respects the refugees can help themselves to a very considerable extent if they are given the opportunity to do so. For this purpose, one of the most interesting committees in the process of formation is that on Labor Projects, or Camp Activities, as some prefer to call it. Under the chairmanship of Dr. H. C. Chen, primary education is to be organized among the children of the camps so far as teachers can be found. Already this subject has had the attention of the managers of some of the more prominent camps. The camps not so fortunate will now have attention.

The making of shoes is being provided for. Certain materials have been donated and others will be bought as needed. An attempt is being made to enumerate all the skills possessed by all of the adult inmates of different camps so that if labor under various crafts is needed it can be made available without delay.

Some consideration is being given to the possibility of cultivating vacant lots so as to raise the more speedily growing vegetables necessary to supplement the diet of rice and beans which now is practically all that is available in most of the camps.

This work of co-ordination requires the use of many hands and feet, telephone wires and typewriters, much inquiry, much looking ahead and discussion. The office staff required for this work is being furnished principally by the China International Famine Relief Commission, assisted by volunteers and certain other staff serving the Executive Committee, and by the chairmen of various committees, who normally are engaged upon professional work in their respective lines.

In A Refugee Camp

An Interview with Father R. P. Jacquinet

By V. T. BANG CHOU (彭望荃)

IT was chow time for the refugees. As the bell rang, hundreds of refugees sat in the huts, family by family, their earthen jars in front of them and their bowls in hand. Soon the food-carriers came in with big bamboo baskets filled with hot steaming rice and large tin containers holding vegetables, potatoes and soya beans. Then one by one the earthen jars were filled with the stew, and the bowls with rice. A happy smile came over the faces of these refugees as they munched eagerly their evening meal....

Such was the scene presented to the reporter of the Shanghai International Red Cross as she trudged from one hut to another in the refugee camp at Aurora University, Shanghai. The day was fine, one of the loveliest days that Shanghai had known since a fortnight of rain and wind. But through the tranquil air guns roared and bombs thundered, as if reminding the reporter that all was not well in spite of the weather!

So we watched the refugees eating—2,624 in all, some men, but mostly women and children. Perhaps the food

was not as tempting as what they used to have at home—but home? where was it? Then their smile would vanish and they seemed to recall the night when under pale moonlight they left their lodgings in breathless hurry, turning back only to see bombs and shells rain on the roofs of their houses. They ran without pausing until they reached the south side of Soochow Creek and then they beheld their homes a blaze of fire!

Today they are living in matsheds with only the clothes they have on. What they eat depends upon charity; and, what is worse, they have no folks to go to. "I worked in a factory in Yangtsepo before the fighting broke out", said a fifteen-year old girl. "I earned 30 cents a day. My mother also helped in the same factory, and we managed to live fairly comfortably—my mother, two brothers, a sister and myself. Then one night we heard the bombs roar, and our house caught fire. We ran, leaving everything behind!"