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OUR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD WAYWARD YOUTH IN WAR-TORN EUROPE AND ASIA

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This is being written during the days when the news of the liberation of Paris is electrifying the peoples of the United Nations. The time has arrived when discussion of postwar reconstruction and planning for it is not only justifiable but imperative. Workers in the correctional and related fields must be prepared to cope with the numerous problems which are likely to arise after hostilities have ceased. The economic and emotional difficulties of a transition period from war to peace will require increased services, qualitatively and quantitatively, on the part of probation officers, parole officers and custodial officers in cooperation with practitioners in the fields of psychology, education, mental hygiene and vocational guidance. Although this country, fortunately, has been spared the experience of actual warfare within its own territory, the impact of total war has deeply penetrated the social, economic, cultural and spiritual spheres of every individual, family and community of this land.

Delinquent behavior and family disruption which will accompany the process of human "reconversion" after the war in many individual instances, will call for understanding and skill in prevention, cure and treatment. A difficult and exacting job, therefore, lies ahead in our various communities throughout the United States. This pre-occupation with our own tasks, however, shall not keep us from looking abroad; and presently we shall recognize the existence of needs in other countries which fall within the field of our common endeavor, although they may differ in origin and scope from those engendered here at home. This great and challenging problem is presented by the child and the adolescent in the countries overrun with war by the Axis powers.

The Mass Suffering of Youth in Europe and Asia

The American public has during recent years received sufficient visual education regarding the plight and misery of Europe's and Asia's youngsters. Newsreel and still pictures from all theatres of war, the collection of photographs in Therese

Bonney's book "Europe's Children"¹, reproduced in numerous magazines, the illustrated book by Otto Zoff, "They Shall Inherit the Earth"², the motion picture "The Battle of Russia," and many other similar documents speak an all too eloquent language.

Still, it is difficult for us in America to fully visualize, understand and evaluate the consequences of modern total war upon children and adolescents in Europe where it has raged since September 1939, and in Asia where it started in July 1937.

What are some of the facts?

Families have been torn apart by death of the father on the battlefield or by his capture as prisoner of war, by death of the parents through bombings and through mass killings in "extermination centers," by deportation of parents and older brothers and sisters for slave labor and into concentration camps. Many of the younger children do not even know their own names and birthdates. Children have seen their loved ones killed as refugees during the flight from the enemy, as hostages, and in houses and streets which became battle scenes and bombing targets. They have seen their brothers and sisters die of malnutrition and diseases. Children have been in the midst of the heroic resistance and underground movement with its sniping, spying and sabotaging. Living for years under the yoke of ruthless occupation by an intensely hated enemy they have developed a double standard of moral values. Children, with or without their parents, have for years been living in bomb shelters, natural caves and subway stations, in concentration camps or other inadequate mass refuges. They are undernourished; many of them do not remember a family dinner table, but only know the standing in line for mass feeding. They have had no adequate clothing. They have not gone to school for years. They do not know the pleasures of a child's play and recreation. They do know violence, they know how to steal bits of food, they fight each other for a piece of bread or even some potato peel left in a garbage can. They wander around as vagrants. They form gangs to roam through the countryside in search of something to eat. What does the moral code mean to them who during their most formative years have daily witnessed cruelty, torture, killing, and the apparent triumph of human badness?

This does not mean that in all countries involved the picture is identical. Conditions vary according to the degree of a nation's agricultural self-sufficiency, or according to the extent of

¹Plantin Press, New York, 1943.

²This book, published by John Day Co., New York, 1943, not only describes most aptly the plight of children all over the world due to war and Fascism, but also contains a valuable list of source material on this subject.

bombings and actual fighting in a given territory, or according to the particular brutality visited by the enemy upon a country through mass killings and deportations. But as a composite picture of the youth of war-torn Europe and Asia it is accurate,—and very probably it is inadequate, as words can hardly do justice to the stark reality of this phenomenon.

A few statistical figures will help to interpret the scope of the problem. More than half a billion people in 35 countries are suffering hunger, according to Herbert H. Lehman, Director General of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.³ It is estimated that between 20 and 30 million people in Europe and about 40 million people in Asia have been driven from their homes.⁴ As a characteristic and, at least for a number of countries typical instance, it was reported in February 1943 that at four of the International Red Cross canteens in Athens, feeding a total of 2117 Greek children, 1370 came without shoes or coats, many of them travelling long distances through rain and cold weather.⁵ China estimates that 34.5 million people (children, particularly war orphans, aged and disabled) out of a total of 84 million war victims are in need of special care. Czechoslovakia reports a million people needing special care; that is more than 6% of her total pre-war population. In Belgium, tuberculosis, it is estimated, has increased 300% since the Nazi invasion in May 1940. In the metropolitan area of Paris, during 1942, the actual death rate from tuberculosis rose 51% over pre-war figures, and children are the most frequent victims of this disease.⁶ The amount of food obtained for ration coupons for Polish children covers approximately 15% of the food requirements, according to a statement by the Polish Embassy in Washington.⁷

The world is thus faced with an appalling spectacle of mass juvenile dependency and neglect, calling for help on an international basis.

The United Nations' Plan for Help

The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration⁸ which was established on November 9, 1943, after the representatives of 44 United Nations signed the UNRRA agreement

³*New York Times, Magazine*, January 30, 1944.

⁴See Dr. Eugene M. Kulischer, *The Displacement of Populations in Europe*, prepared for the International Labor Office, Montreal, 1943; and Francis B. Sayre, *Binding Up the Wounds of War*, in *The Annals*, July 1944, pp. 28, 33.

⁵See Clarence E. Pickett, *Europe Today*, in *The Annals*, July 1944, pp. 22, 24.

⁶See Clarence E. Pickett, *ibid.*

⁷See Clarence E. Pickett, *ibid.*

⁸Details about UNRRA see in: "UNRRA—Gateway to Recovery", pamphlet No. 30/31 of the National Planning Association, Washington, D. C.; and in: "Helping the People to Help Themselves—The Story of UNRRA", published by United Nations Information Office, 610 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

at the White House, has shown that it is well aware of this urgent need. In reports and statements presented by the governments of occupied countries to the first meeting of the UNRRA Council in Atlantic City in November 1943 (immediately following the signing of the agreement), "special emphasis was placed on the serious effects of war upon children of all age groups and upon pregnant and nursing mothers. Nation after nation called the Council's attention to the urgency of establishing priorities for these vulnerable groups in order to assure prompt provision of appropriate health and welfare services."⁹ Welfare services which are to be coordinated with the health and other related services, were defined by the Sub-Committee on Welfare¹⁰, as including the following: "Social relief such as food, clothing, shelter, and other basic necessities of life made available to persons unable to provide for themselves or their dependents, and services for the personal rehabilitation of individuals requiring special help." The Sub-Committee on Welfare recommended specific measures dealing "with the particular health and social welfare problems of orphan children and those who are lost or separated from their families" as well as "those within families displaced as a consequence of war." The Sub-Committee on Health, in addition to plans for the prevention of epidemics and the setting up of nutritional standards, called attention to the "serious effects of war experiences upon the emotional development of children" and "recommended that UNRRA should be prepared to assist member governments, upon their request, in dealing with the conditions of anxiety, fear, and emotional disturbances which will have arisen in peculiarly great frequency among children and youth of occupied territories."

There are three fundamental principles upon which UNRRA's program and future activities are based. They should strike a responsive chord in the minds of the American social worker and correctional worker. (1) Welfare services administered by or in cooperation with UNRRA shall be provided without discrimination because of race, creed or political belief. (2) The usual method of operation will be for UNRRA to help national governmental agencies to meet their own welfare problems rather than for UNRRA itself to administer welfare services. Of course, UNRRA should be prepared to administer welfare services directly, when called upon either by the military

⁹Martha Branscombe, *A Promise to Children in War-Torn Areas*, in: "The Child" (published by U. S. Children's Bureau), March 1944, p. 133-134.

¹⁰The most important recommendations of the Sub-Committees to the UNRRA Council are quoted in Martha Branscombe's article (see footnote No. 9) and in Donald S. Howard's article "International Relief and Welfare Program of UNRRA", in "The Compass" (published by the American Association of Social Workers), January 1944, p. 3-6.

authorities of the Allied forces or by a government or recognized national authority which for any reason is unable itself to administer these services. (3) Welfare services should be designed to help people to help themselves. They must permit recipients to maintain their self-respect.¹¹

The enunciation of these principles should not only dispel any accusation against UNRRA as a potential "international WPA," but should also be recognized and appreciated as the adoption on an international basis of fundamental tenets of American social work and modern correctional work.

The Problem of Wayward Youth in Particular

We who work in probation departments of juvenile, domestic relations and criminal courts, in parole boards, or in training schools and reformatories, are, of course, interested in the plans for provision of general social services (such as food, shelter, clothing, medical care) for the youth in war-torn areas. Our particular concern, however, centers around the needs of children and adolescents who under the immediate impact of war, occupation and tyrannical oppression have developed forms of behavior which is manifestly delinquent or which tends into that direction. While the approximate scope of physical needs can be guessed even at a time when the suffering countries are still under Axis domination¹², the full psychological effect of total war, witnessed in close proximity, upon the mind of children and adolescents will only be revealed after the victimized countries have been actually and totally liberated by the advancing Allied armies. That is the reason why so far hardly any studies on this subject have been published, except in England.¹³ Only a few scattered reports on growing juvenile delinquency as the

¹¹In his message to Congress asking for appropriations for UNRRA, the President of the United States pointed out: "UNRRA will be able to make only a beginning in the vast task of aiding the victims of war. The greatest part of the job will have to be done by the liberated peoples themselves. . . They do not want charity. They seek the strength to fight and to do their part in securing the peace. . ."

¹²The reports and plans of the governments-in-exile, the Chinese government in Chungking, and international organizations, like the International Red Cross, the International Labor Office and UNRRA are based upon such estimates.

¹³For the effects of air-raids and its attendant factors, such as destruction, family separation, evacuation, on children, see: Anna Freud and Dorothy T. Burlingham, "War and Children", International University Press, New York, 1944. For the increase of juvenile delinquency in England due to war conditions, see: Basil L. Q. Henriques, *The Wartime Delinquent in England*, in *Yearbook 1943 of the National Probation Association*, p. 86-100; Margery Fry, *Delinquency in Wartime England*, in *Yearbook 1942 of the National Probation Association*, p. 74-79; Eleanor T. Glueck, *Wartime Delinquency*, in *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, July-August 1942, p. 119-129; Marjorie Bell, *Delinquency in War Time England*, in *Probation*, April 1942, p. 97-115; Elsa Castendyck, *Juvenile Delinquency in War Time*, in *Federal Probation*, July-September 1942, p. 45-46; also see: *Federal Probation*, October-December 1943, p. 40.

direct result of Nazi occupation and its accompanying factors are, for instance, available from France and Belgium.

Dr. Marie Helen Mercier and Dr. J. Louise Despert, writing in *Psychosomatic Medicine* for July 1943 (as quoted in *Probation*, February 1943, p. 90, under the heading, "French Children Steal with Honor") discuss the psychological effects of the war on French children, as observed during 1939-1941; from their reports the following may be quoted:

"An increase in delinquency and stealing was noted in adults and children, especially in adolescents, in occupied France shortly after the beginning of the scarcity of food. Individuals who, from the beginning of the German occupation showed resistance to the enemy, developed a double standard of moral values. Gradually it became more evident that German occupation caused modifications in the children's psychology. To steal eggs from the dairyman is dishonest, but to hide eggs in the farm before the Germans come and seize them is an act of courage. . . The child himself understands that to deceive the Germans is to win over them. Many heroic acts of this nature have been accomplished by French children. . . At the time when feeding became a matter of life and death, thefts from shop windows were explained by need. Soon, however, children who had begun to steal through necessity began to bring home the most extraordinary things of no use whatever, and stealing thus became a fairly frequent occurrence. . ."

James Wood Johnson, in his article "Hunger Takes Revenge", in *Common Sense*, March 1943, says (p. 83-85):

"'News from Belgium', the official organ of the Belgian government-in-exile, recently carried a short item on the increasingly large number of children in Brussels, Antwerp and other cities who constantly ride the trains (i.e. the rods or undercarriages of railroad cars) back and forth to places where they have heard that there is a better chance of getting a little food from farmers. This is not limited to Belgium. It has been going on for some time all over occupied Europe. . . As long ago as the spring of 1941, directors of the French Red Cross in Lyons pointed out to me that criminality among French children was already assuming alarming proportions. . . As the European child finds at home hunger, sorrow and despair, he gradually loses his own normal childish hopefulness. This is the beginning of a sinister transformation. He sees that life in his family is no longer good and his needs are not satisfied. . ."

The author then describes the formation of groups of children in search of food which develop into neighborhood gangs who do not hesitate to knock over women, attack stores and commit other serious offenses. "Aided by conditions of hunger and misery, the author continues, the child gang takes on the characteristics of a mob. . . . A gathering of several hundreds goes easily to extremes."

We can reasonably assume that these observations will be multiplied many times as soon as accurate reports from all countries involved will be available.

It is this problem of wayward youth in Europe and Asia which will require a most skillful job of rehabilitation in the

sense of the word as we in the United States employ it in the behavior clinics of our courts, in probation and parole supervision on a case work basis, and in education and classification units of training schools and reformatories. This does not mean that our methods can be applied in other countries without modification or adaptation. The Sub-Committee on Welfare of the UNRRA Council rightly considered it a cardinal principle "that welfare services must be carefully related to the customs, ways of life and standards prevailing in the countries of operation. . . Account must be taken of the various cultural and religious as well as social sensibilities."

A few general rules, however, may safely be mentioned: Since family disruption and disintegration as a result of the war seem to be the main factors in the waywardness of youth, a special effort should be made to enable children to live within family units. In the cases of youngsters who were separated from their parents and who over a protracted period of time lived in mass refuges and camps, the re-integration of the child into his family might in many instances need special outside guidance. Children who lost their parents will find new natural surroundings in foster families. Many couples who lost their own children as victims of the war will be anxious to prepare a home for orphaned children with the eventual prospect of formal adoption. Life within a family, accompanied by the steady improvement of general social and economic conditions and the return of a peacetime psychology, will in the majority of cases bring about the full rehabilitation of the wayward youngsters. It might be desirable to provide a form of friendly outside supervision and counselling in those cases where the individual readjustment process is retarded due to peculiarly serious traumas which the child had suffered.

Still, there will remain a sizable number of children, and particularly of adolescents, who will require specialized institutional treatment. Into that group belong those youngsters whose delinquent tendencies have developed to such a degree that placement within their own families is not feasible, the more so, as in numerous instances families who had been broken up for many years and who only recently were reunited may not yet be sufficiently consolidated to accept an adolescent son manifesting serious delinquent attitudes. There are, furthermore, those youngsters who lost their families and for whom no foster family can be found due to the difficult behavior problem which they present. Particularly those who for years have been vagrants and members of gangs will need a period of supervision in a controlled environment.

Institutions will possibly be available to a limited degree

only, either because some of them were destroyed during the hostilities or because in various countries other means of caring for juvenile delinquents sufficed before the war. It might, therefore, be advisable to establish work camps for wayward youth (in addition or in lieu of institutions) where such factors conducive to rehabilitation as good leadership, education towards group responsibility, vocational training and the healthy atmosphere of out-door life can be provided. Soviet Russia, which in the Twenties, after years of revolution, war and famine, was faced with a similar problem of thousands of waifs roaming through the vast areas of the country in gangs and terrorizing the population, successfully used this method; the most impressive motion picture "Road to Life"¹⁴, shown in this country in January 1932 for the first time, depicted the story of such a camp for Russia's "Besprizorni" (i.e., "without guidance") as these children were called. Our own Forestry Camps for delinquent boys in California and, to a certain degree, our CCC Camps have yielded valuable experiences in the field of human reclamation.

The Role of American Correctional Work

Beyond this utilization of experiences in the treatment of delinquent youth in our own country, what can we as correctional workers contribute towards the solution of this particular problem of international postwar reconstruction?

A highly qualified staff will be needed by UNRRA which, of course, is being recruited not only in the United States, but among citizens of the other United Nations as well. The Subcommittee on Welfare of the UNRRA Council made the following recommendations with respect to personnel: "To insure effective administration of its program UNRRA will require qualified welfare personnel. . . Among the types of welfare personnel likely to be needed are specialists in the care of children . . . specialists in the operation of welfare institutions." Technical competence, sympathetic understanding of the economic and social situation of the people among whom welfare work is to be done, knowledge of languages, and the ability of carrying out responsibilities without fear, prejudice or discrimination, are considerations to be kept in mind in the selection of personnel. Because of the pressure and difficult conditions under which relief work must be carried out, sufficient physical vigor and stamina, flexibility, adaptability and resourcefulness are imperative pre-requisites. A training program for UNRRA work-

¹⁴See the author's article on "Films of Social Significance", in: "Prison Journal", July-October 1938, Philadelphia, p. 477-478.

ers has been set up at the University of Maryland.¹⁵

UNRRA can not do the whole job alone. It will, therefore, not only cooperate with local officials in the liberated territories pursuant to the fundamental principles cited above, but it has already enlisted the cooperation of voluntary agencies. A field in which according to Fred K. Hoehler, Director of the Division of Displaced Persons, UNRRA, the services of private agencies will be singularly useful, are such complementary services as "special programs for the care of mothers and children, the provision of occupational activities for young people, . . . in short, services to meet particular needs which neither UNRRA nor the governments may be prepared to meet."¹⁶

In the United States, UNRRA cooperates with the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, which, among others, consists of the International Migration Service, the American Friends Service Committee, the YMCA, the YWCA, the Church Committee on Overseas Relief and Reconstruction, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Rehabilitative work with wayward and delinquent youth might partly belong within UNRRA's jurisdiction, partly within the assignment of voluntary agencies, especially if it is to be done on a long-range basis.

Individual workers in the correctional field, meeting the mentioned requirements might find their way into the ranks of UNRRA personnel or the staff of voluntary agencies, due to their special training and experience in handling dependent, neglected and delinquent youth.

Beyond such individual work opportunities which of necessity are limited in numbers, the writer feels, our profession as a whole has a stake in this great undertaking of the United Nations which can be called the first large-scale plan of international social service. The following suggestions are made¹⁷:

(1) "As individuals or through our various professional organizations we should make available our knowledge of practical experience and of research in the correctional and related fields, to government offices, inter-governmental agencies and semi-public and private international organizations, thus acting in an advisory capacity to these bodies.

¹⁵See details in "After the Armies—UNRRA", by George Soloveytschik, in *Survey Graphic*, July 1944, p. 312.

¹⁶From the address of Fred K. Hoehler, formerly Executive Director of the American Public Welfare Association, before the National Conference of Social Work in May 1944, published in *Survey Graphic*, July 1944, p. 336.

¹⁷In order to translate these various proposals into practice and to coordinate them with already existing services in allied fields, it might be contemplated to collaborate with such groups as the International Save the Children Fund and the World Education Service Council (reference to the latter was made by the *New York Times*, Section 4, of August 20, 1944).

(2) Through our periodicals, through papers presented at our national and regional conferences, we should keep ourselves informed of the new problems arising in other countries in our field and the methods employed to solve them.

(3) In particular, we should closely follow the work which UNRRA and its cooperating agencies will undertake for the rehabilitation of wayward youth in war-torn areas and the results which they will achieve.

(4) As a long-range program, we should endeavor to establish direct contacts with our colleagues in the various countries of the United Nations in order to exchange ideas and experiences. Hopeful beginnings in this direction have already been made over a number of years by such organizations as the National Probation Association which has maintained fruitful contacts with corresponding groups in Canada, England, Australia, etc. These connections should be strengthened and extended to include all United Nations.

United Nations' cooperation not only in the military, political and economic spheres, but also in the realm of social welfare, is necessary for the establishment of justice and peace, freedom and security, in the world. Being engaged in work for human welfare, we in the correctional field should do our share toward attaining this goal.
