



"The enemy inside the frontier": The Friends' Ambulance Unit in Bengal was diverted to fight famine and disease

(continued from previous page)

usual work of encouraging our own members and of bringing persons of different nations and philosophies together for mutual interpretation when—as usual—we found other immediate jobs as well. During the 'thirties, for example, thousands of European refugees had crowded into Shanghai in addition to all the White Russians of a previous period. We found so many sweating around in clothes suitable for snow conditions—and Shanghai is the same latitude as Cairo—that we had to cable abroad for summer cast-offs and finally got 70 tons of them!"

"And do the sixty million refugees in the West need this kind of help?"

"Not precisely. There is lots of land available, and, when machinery can be brought in to utilise it, lots of water-power. But new villages frequently need a kick-off. Bailey's Boys—which is what we call the young fellows whom a missionary named Bailey recruited from good jobs to do dirty and dangerous work under Rewi Alley in the Industrial Co-operatives—have done a lot. The Society of Friends is of course a religious

body. We never have cut-and-dried relief schemes. They are just the particular response to some particular situation of need. This is why, being already established in West China for 60 years, we were able to put an Ambulance Unit on the Burma Road. With the Road closed, these men are either stretcher-parties on the jungle front or else are transporting medical supplies inside Szechwan. Don't think the second job is the easier. Free China is running on trucks, converted to charcoal, that would be on scrapheaps anywhere else."

Personnel

"Your men are local Chinese?"

"Only partly so. The largest single group, some 70, are British conscientious objectors. And the other Friends' Ambulance Units, in the Middle East and elsewhere, are mainly staffed by these volunteers, who are not all Quakers, of course. In the U.S.A., Pacifists are required to spend the duration, plus six months, in Civilian Public Service Camps run by the Churches—not as punishment but as work of a sort they can readily give—but some have been allowed to come to China instead."

Control

"The object of a Friends' Ambulance Unit, we suppose, Mr. Silcock, is to help repair war damage without supporting the war itself? But do not your Units in practice have to operate under military orders?"

"Yes, indeed. But in practice again we have found the military authorities sufficiently understanding of our position not to ask us to do things which we would have to refuse. Of course Ambulance Work is not our only possibility. In Bengal as I came through I found that the Unit from Britain, which had come out on Quaker funds to teach A.R.P., had been diverted to fighting the worst enemy inside the frontier—I mean famine. They were, in fact, organising both the relief and the rationing measures for the Governor."

"And what about future plans?"

"Large-scale relief after this war, I am glad to say, will be a government and not a private undertaking. But there is always a need, we have found, both inside and alongside big schemes, for persons with a religious call to supply what it provides and what no government machinery pretends to be able to provide."



Members of the F.A.U. in China operate on a wounded soldier

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, APRIL 28



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