

MEMORANDUM BY PROFESSOR G. HEUYER,
PROFESSOR OF CHILD NEURO-PSYCHIATRY,
AT THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE IN PARIS.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY CENTRE FOR CHILDREN.

The need for such a centre is now more than ever apparent in Europe.

The war and the many consequences have had a profound effect upon the intellectual, moral and emotional development of several million children.

The effects are such that it is essential to consider real psychological assistance for such children in addition to the effort to supply food, which was one of the most urgent tasks in the immediate post-war period.

There should be two principal aims:

- (1) to improve educational processes;
- (2) to deal with the problem of delinquency in children.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT.

(a) Normal Children.

During these years of suffering, children have often been unable to attend school normally. A situation has resulted in very many countries for which no solution has yet been found.

The problem is generally still further aggravated in the same countries by the shortage of primary and secondary school teachers and the destruction of large numbers of school buildings.

There is, therefore, a very serious gap in the education of children whose intellectual development is otherwise normal, which may in future make their adaptation to social life and their employment much more difficult.

(b) Handicapped Children:

The problem is still more serious as regards handicapped children. This is not a new question but was occupying the attention of governments even before the war. As the result of a very wide survey carried out in France during the war, it was reckoned that there were about 350 or 400 thousand French children suffering from slight deficiency.

Unless such children are given special educational treatment, they will later on be a useless burden on the community. Moreover, it is well known that many young delinquents come from among mentally defective children.

Thus the consideration of the problem of the rehabilitation of curable defectives is now, even more than before the war, a matter

of some urgency.

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England, France, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries have begun to make efforts towards this end.

It would be very useful for this work to be co-ordinated and for ideas to be pooled to find a solution for the problem.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

The war and the abnormal conditions it brought in its train have enormously increased the number of children suffering from more or less serious defects of character.

Bombardment, destruction, and the break-up of families have caused serious emotional injuries in many children, the consequences of which will be apparent for years.

CHILD DELINQUENCY.

As after every war, the same circumstances have led to a considerable increase in delinquency. The number of delinquents has risen to four times what it was in France before the war and to three times what it was in other countries.

The problem of child delinquency is thus more than ever acute. Various solutions have been suggested in different countries:

In England, the tendency has been principally to treat delinquents by psycho-analysis;

In the Netherlands, work has been specially concerned with education;

In France, the problem has been considered mainly by jurists and magistrates and efforts have been made to improve the "approved school" system.

All these, however, are only partial solutions. The problem of delinquency in children cannot in fact be broken up and must be studied by doctors, psychologists, teachers and jurists working in collaboration. In this way, we may come to consider:

- (a) heredity;
- (b) the psychological or psycho-analytical make-up of the patients;
- (c) the influence on their behaviour of diseases contracted or of glandular deficiencies.

Such research cannot conveniently be carried out except in a large centre where representatives of the various European schools of thought would be able to collaborate with one another.

In addition to this research and observation centre, there would be one or more rehabilitation centres for the patients.

The era of the Children's Court, as the ultimate arbiter of the fate of such unfortunate children, must be regarded as finished, and magistrates can take decisions only with the help of doctors, psychologists and teachers.

/The Child Welfare.....

The Child Welfare Committees which have been in existence for many years in the Scandinavian countries and have produced such good results might be used as a model in this respect to reform the law in other countries.

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Those are the two tasks which seem to face us at the present time if we are to help children whose lives have been profoundly disorganised by the war.

It is obvious that the same problems are encountered in many countries and that it would be advantageous if they were studied at an International Centre which could suggest solutions applicable to all.

It is also obvious that the circumstances resulting from the war are only an aggravated form of phenomena to be observed in normal times, and that the solutions which may be suggested will therefore always be applicable.

The following organisation might be considered for the Centre:

- (1) A permanent Centre in Paris;
- (2) A course of instruction once or twice a year, which doctors, psychologists, teachers and magistrates would be invited to attend;
- (3) In addition to this course, there would be courses of practical work in schools, "approved schools", and special clinics in France and another European country;
- (4) Meetings of experts, doctors, psychologists, teachers and magistrates;
- (5) Exhibitions designed to explain certain aspects of the psychological development of children and to publicise the work of the Centre.

The following experts might be asked to take part in this joint work:

M. Fontes	Lisbon, Portugal
M. Lucien Beauvais	Switzerland
M. Bevin	Switzerland
covering both aspects.	
M. Tramer	Switzerland
M. Mullock-Hoover	Netherlands
M. Runke	Netherlands
Mr. Denis Carol	United Kingdom
Mr. Glover	United Kingdom
M. Beléa	Padua, Italy
M. Dituglio	Italy
M. Torstenramen	Sweden
Mr. Frederick Hallen	United States of America
Mr. Lee Canner	United States of America
M. Heuyer	France
