

## Help for Hospitals of China

THE current project of CORSO to provide specialised personnel to help in the reconstruction of China's hospital system is one which I am sure will meet with a ready response from the people of this Dominion, for it will only be evoking on a wider scale the practical interest and sympathy which one province in particular has shown towards medical work in Southern China. Situated 13 miles inland from the river city of Canton, the institution whose picturesque Chinese name, literally translated, means the "Hospital of Universal Love," is a direct link with the Otago district, dating back to the old gold-mining days. The incidence of Chinese among the miners was high, and though many did not live long enough to enjoy their hard-won wealth (the records indicate a large number of deaths at a comparatively early age, probably due to the privations attendant on gold-digging at that period), those who eventually returned to their homeland were so appreciative of the comfort and guidance they had received from the Rev. Alexander Don during his ministry among them that they requested the establishment of a mission in their own villages. The present pastor to the Chinese community in Dunedin was the man who undertook this important task, and not only were the bulk of his assistants drawn from Otago, but the "Hospital of Universal Love," founded a few years later by Dr. John Kirk, was under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church of Otago. Ever since its inception 40 years ago the hospital has rendered inestimable service, especially among the poor. Moreover, it has been responsible for the training of numbers of nurses and midwives, and the resident doctor, usually a New Zealander, has also assisted with the instruction of the students at the Medical College of Canton.

When Japan commenced hostilities bombs frequently fell wide of the railway target and hit the hospital instead, and after Pearl Harbour the New Zealand staff was interned, leaving their Chinese colleagues to carry on alone. This they did, despite bomb damage, the depredations of bandits, and a dwindling drug supply. When the Japanese took possession of the buildings they accepted the invitation of a nearby town to continue their ministrations in the "Hall of Ancestors," so the work of healing by modern methods went on while the ancient gods looked down benignly from the walls. At the end of the war the peasants painstakingly assembled the hospital equipment in wheelbarrows and trudged back with it to its original quarters, where up to 500 returning refugees were daily given food and medical treatment as had formerly been the case at one stage of the Japanese occupation. In having a building to come back to, also a New Zealand doctor to take charge—he had been waiting in Free China for this opportunity—the "Hospital of Universal Love" was more fortunate than a good many others which were wiped out of existence altogether.

The International Relief Committee set up by missionaries and influential Chinese at the outbreak of the war arranged for drugs and surgical supplies to be flown in from India, and the Friends' Ambulance Unit (a British organisation which included 13 New Zealanders) dealt with the difficult problem of distribution, utilising charcoal-burning trucks, mules, buffaloes, wheelbarrows, and even men's backs to deliver the precious drugs wherever there was a hospital functioning. Their resourcefulness was proverbial. For instance, they put the heating and water system of a bombed-out hospital into commission again by the ingenious use of 40-gallon oil drums and bamboo pipes, and they kept their trucks in running order by "cannibalising" one when necessary and using the spare parts to patch up the rest of the convoy. They risked death time and again when skirting enemy-occupied territory, and their contribution to Chinese morale was invaluable.



School of nursing, Shanghai, China.

Chengtu, 300 miles west of Chungking, the wartime capital, was a main depot for the medical supplies arriving via the "hump." It was also the centre for the West China University and Medical College, and various refugee universities, such as those from Tsinan (Shantung) and Nanking. The University campus covered three-quarters of a square mile, and the grey brick buildings with their semi-pagoda shaped roofs of green tiles were set off to advantage by the graceful ginkgo trees and different varieties of Chinese hardwoods. Some of the classrooms and dormitories were damaged by bombing; not a door or a window in the place would shut properly because of the blast, and an unexploded bomb buried itself in the ground outside the library and museum. Yet this did not prevent work from proceeding as usual, and an extensive building programme was embarked upon, even though all the equipment had to be made locally. The evacuation of the Peking Union Medical College brought to Chengtu the Peking Nursing Unit, which was noted for its exceptionally high standard of training, as most of the trainees were university graduates.

The demand for nurses is insatiable in China. There is only one doctor for every 90,000 people—a liberal estimate, this; the equivalent here would be 20 doctors for the whole of New Zealand. Vast rural areas are without any hospitals whatever, and dirt, disease, and superstition are rife. The old tradition which precludes the scholar from doing manual work is breaking down, but with inflation adding to the misery caused by 10 years of continuous warfare, and many students having to provide for and educate the younger members of their families, the forgoing of the better-paid occupations entails very real sacrifice as well as the highest ideals of service on the part of those who enter the nursing profession. Surely it is for us to do our utmost to support CORSO's campaign to send them the doctors; instructors to train nurses, laboratory assistants, and dispensing chemists; hospital technicians; medical administrators, and other experts they so urgently require that their desire to relieve the sufferings of their people may be realised. There are many ways in which we can help—by monetary gifts; by donations of clothing, linen for dressings, wool, sewing materials, toilet requisites, first-aid kits, fat for soap-making; by making husks, bandages, and peggy-square blankets.

*The need is great. Whatever the nature of our contribution we count it a privilege to assist our gallant friend and ally, China.*

*Many*