

# Switzerland's help to war-damaged countries

Autor(en): **Ludwig, Carl**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **16 (1951)**

Heft [4]

PDF erstellt am: **24.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942720>

## **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

## **Haftungsausschluss**

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

Gods that this reproach were justified! Alas, this is not the case. Switzerland remains neutral without restriction, and sticks to that principle, which is, moreover, constitutional. In case the "typhoon" should rage one would assist at this extravagant adventure; the allied contingents formed somewhere or another would laboriously try to stop the invasion, whilst 500,000 of the best soldiers of Europe would placidly wait to be attacked in their turn. Is it seriously thought in the Parliament in Bern that after the whole world were reduced to servitude, Switzerland would be left alone like an article in a museum as the Dean of the Democracy? Of course not; it is why that for the very safety of Switzerland, the Swiss Government should reconsider the situation."

## SWITZERLAND'S HELP TO WAR-DAMAGED COUNTRIES

Address by Prof. Dr. Carl Ludwig, President of the "Schweizer Europahilfe."

Our Association has, in its articles, adopted as its aim the study and discussion of questions of political economy and statistics on a scientific basis and also the promotion of economic and statistical knowledge. Some of you, therefore, may quite likely have wondered how your Executive Committee came to allow a talk to be given in your circle on Switzerland's help to foreign countries—that is to say, on a subject which has nothing to do with statistics, and is only connected with political economy in so far as the latter was substantially used in financing the relief work.

You may also perhaps think that Swiss help of foreign countries is a subject which has largely lost its topical interest, as there has after all been a decided all-round improvement in the countries hit by the war, so that there would appear to be no reason for continuing such help.

There are two answers to the first objection: one is the fact that Switzerland's help to war-damaged countries, in addition to its primary, charitable character, is also of outstanding political importance, as during the actual war this work was particularly well suited to making the neutrality of our country comprehensible to other States, and in the post-war period it has contributed substantially to the maintenance and strengthening of Switzerland's position in spite of her remaining outside the United Nations. These two results have also been of some benefit to the Swiss economy.

It should also be remembered that Switzerland's help to foreign countries did not end with relief to war victims, but was completed in a most effective fashion by the assistance which our country gave to a whole series of States which had suffered from the war, by granting them important trade credits for economic reconstruction; the idea behind this assistance was the same as that which the United States later put into effect—on a much greater scale—in the Marshall Plan.

This evening, however, I should like to leave these political and economic aspects entirely in the background. My true task, as I see it, is first of all to remind you very briefly of the charitable work done in Switzerland for war victims during and after the war, and, following on that, to speak of the new problems in that connection which have arisen for our country as a result of present-day conditions in the outside world. That will suffice to show how unfounded is—unfortunately—the view, that the time has now come to wind up Swiss action in aid of foreign countries.

This is a subject which should in my estimation be discussed without hesitation by an association interested

in political economy. For, just as the sole justification of the State lies in its quality as an indispensable organiser of the life of the community, economics too are not an end in themselves but merely have an auxiliary function to perform. In the centre of all activities and events stands neither organisation nor business, but the living human being.

If private help to war victims started in many forms in Switzerland very shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, that was in accordance with a tradition of our country which is very much older than the recognition of its neutrality by the Powers—a tradition which goes back for centuries and has always found living expression again whenever a new emergency has arisen. May I remind you of the granting of asylum to those who were persecuted for their religion and politics at the time of the counter-reformation, and again in the 18th and 19th centuries; of the internment of defeated troops at the time of the Baden rising of 1849, the Italian war of Liberation in 1859, and the Franco-Prussian war; of the founding of the International Red Cross Committee by Henri Dunant in the year 1863, and, finally, of Swiss care for civilian war victims, for instance the help given in the war of 1870 to our old friend Strasburg, where a Swiss relief committee took more than 2500 old men, women and sick people out of the besieged city and brought them to our land. This tradition was expressed by the Federal Council during the First World War in a message to the Federated Assembly, in the following words:—

"It is one of the privileges of a neutral country to raise the voice of humanity amid the fearful strife of nations, and to help to alleviate the distress caused by war."

In the First World War, Swiss relief work assumed proportions greater than anything previously experienced. As soon as war broke out, several foreign governments entrusted the protection of their nationals to the Federal Council, and during the course of the war this representation of foreign interests was continually extended. Our country then dealt with the repatriation of civilian internees and the care of evacuees. From the end of October, 1914, to the middle of May, 1915, over 20,000 French, German, Austrian and Hungarian nationals who had been detained by the enemy, returned home through Switzerland. The care of evacuees assumed an even greater importance. In the summer of 1915, 70,000 deportees from France passed through our country; in addition, there was the return transport of army doctors and medical personnel, who had been detained in enemy territory contrary to the Geneva Convention; and, above all, there was the exchange of the seriously injured and the hospitalisation of invalid prisoners of war. From the spring of 1916 until the end of the war, Switzerland sheltered 68,000 internees, partly in hotels, and partly in sanatoria and hospitals.

To this State assistance was added the help of private organisations and the entirely personal help given by individuals. It could be said, indeed, that the whole Swiss nation at that time was caring for those in distress—through active collaboration in some work or other, by taking delicate children into their own homes, by gifts of money or by some other manifestation of a philanthropic attitude.

The end of the First World War was by no means the end of private charitable activity. On the contrary, help for child war victims increased still further, and the aid given within our frontiers was most helpfully supplemented by means of relief work carried out abroad, the sending of charitable gifts to distressed areas, and the establishment of relief committees for districts which had suffered particularly severely, especially the relief committee for Vienna, to which gifts flowed from all parts of the country.

Swiss relief activities received a new impetus with the coming into existence of the dictator-States, political persecutions, the persecution of the Jews, and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. In 1933, refugees

began to pour into Switzerland. Various relief committees, some of which already existed while others gradually came into being, looked after them, and joined together to form the Swiss Central Office for Help to Refugees. In addition, the efforts to help the victims of the Spanish Civil War led for the first time to the union of the relief organisations engaged therein, in the "Work Association for Spanish Children."

Thus it was, that in the summer of 1939, when the new catastrophe overtook Europe and the world, there already existed a large and efficient cadre, which was able and ready to undertake the fresh tasks of relief on behalf of victims of the war, which were confronting our country.

Immediately after the Germany army marched into Poland, and Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross began, with its interventions and inspections, its care for wounded and sick soldiers, and its help to prisoners of war, refugees, civilian internees and the inmates of concentration camps. In particular, large numbers of men and women in Switzerland volunteered to help in the work of the Central Agency for Prisoners of War. In addition, during the winter of 1939-40 there was the private aid to Finland, which from the spring onwards took the form of sponsoring Finnish children. In January, 1940, there was founded, as a successor to the Work Association for Spanish Children, the Swiss Work Association for Child War Victims, which was able to do particularly successful work right on until long after the war, first as an independent organisation, and later affiliated to the Swiss Red Cross as the "Swiss Red Cross Children's Aid." It was, until the founding of the "Schweizer Spende" (Swiss Gift), really the great national work, which united all sections in our land in the will to help, and was able, particularly in France and Greece, and also in Belgium, Finland, and Yugoslavia, to carry out relief work on a large scale, and arrange, during the war itself, for over 50,000 children to be received into Switzerland.

(To be continued.)

## SWISS MARINER

A compatriot who certainly has a spirit of enterprise and adventure is Mr. Jacques Markwalder, who has been sailing the South Seas for the last few years in his ketch. He landed in New Zealand where he lived for many months, and then set sail for Tahiti. As everybody in Switzerland puts the Swiss flag on his bicycle or motor-car, our sailor did the same thing on his small yacht. But in navigation it is a different matter, and in order to fly the flag a boat must be registered and comply with the maritime laws, and no provision is made for small craft such as Mr. Markwalder's to have the privilege of flying the flag, and probably without knowing it, he was breaking the law, which is very strict on this matter.

Some years ago his yacht was grounded and sunk at Pitcairn Island, where the harbour was shallow and rocky. He lost his boat and all his belongings, as well as a certain quantity of mother of pearl shell. This apparently did not prevent him from starting another odyssey. He crossed the Pacific and arrived in San Francisco, where a newspaper published the following interview:

### SWISS MARINER IN HAWAII TO SAN FRANCISCO CRUISE

By William P. Walsh (San Francisco Call Bulletin)

Take the word of Jack Markwalder, there wasn't anything unusual in his 3,000-mile solo voyage from Hawaii to San Francisco in the 43-foot ketch "Te Hongi."

True, the diminutive Swiss sailor admits, he made it in 29 days, two weeks to a month under average time

for the cruise. True also that he weathered three gale-ridden days with winds singing in the rigging at 60 miles an hour.

#### Expects Such Things.

But then one expects such things, doesn't one? The infectious grin on his face tells you plainly that one does.

And the "Te Hongi," her tackle scaly and rusting from the elements, her white hull stained from wind and weather, nods gently on the swell of San Francisco's Yacht Harbour in mute agreement.

Markwalder brought his tough Kauri woodcraft through the Golden Gate with philosophical resignation of the globe-trotter completing one saga and preparing for the inevitable next one.

For that's the kind of man he is, this 5 foot, 6 inch, 140 pound native of the Swiss canton of Neuchatel who left home at 18 and has since been a banker in Morocco, a stevedore in New Zealand and the proprietor of a 120-acre Tahitian cattle and copra farm.

#### Work Not Everything.

"I was a wayward boy," he says thoughtfully. "My father worked in a factory in Switzerland. He was lucky if he could get two days off a year for a holiday in the Alps. I don't mind work. I've done plenty of it in my time. But work isn't everything. You must have time to live."

It was such sentiments as these, plus his natural aversion to the rigours of Switzerland's long, cold winters, that set him off on his career as soldier of fortune. And it has paid rather well, considering the fact that he is lord and master of a boat that couldn't be built today for less than \$60,000.

Markwalder can't stay put any place very long.

His latest adventure began a year ago with his departure from a New Zealand port. He arrived in Hawaii after a leisurely six-month cruise that touched at Tahiti and Christmas Island. During this phase of the voyage he was always accompanied by someone he just "picked up" along the way.

#### Six Months in Hawaii.

He spent six months in Hawaii—it was his first visit there—and finally shoved off from Kauai, a northerly island in the Hawaiian group.

Was he lonely on the solitary voyage to San Francisco?

"You don't have time to be lonely. There is always too much to do. And besides, you don't meet many people you care to be with, do you?"

"What brings him to San Francisco?"

"I have never been in the United States before. I wanted to see what it was like."

And where does he go from here?

He tosses his black skipper's cap on a bunk in the "Te Hongi's" tiny cabin and runs a weather-beaten hand through a shock of unruly iron-gray hair.

"I haven't been home to Switzerland in fifteen years," he says. "Maybe I'll sell my boat and go home for a visit. And then I'll build another boat—a special one. You know, I really can't stay away from the tropics."

## NOTICE

MR. FRANK IMHOF,

42 Vogel Street,

HAWERA.

Is Agent of the

SOUTHERN CROSS ASSURANCE CO., LTD.

CORRESPONDENCE: Please address to the Secretary,

MR. E. MERZ,

P.O. Box 85, Auckland.

Printed by McKenzie, Thornton, Cooper Ltd., 126 Cuba St., Wellington, for the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand (Inc.).