

Switzerland's help to war-damaged countries [continued]

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

Objektyp: **Article**

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

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

Heft [5]

PDF erstellt am: **08.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942723>

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.

of the mountain forests are prevalent in the vegetations as far down as the bottom of the valleys.

The winds from the west convey the damp air from the Atlantic into our country. That air finds its first obstacles in the chaines of the Jura Mountains. While rising along their slopes it cools, and its humidity is simultaneously converted into fog, rain and snow. That is why the north-western side of the Jura is much richer in precipitations than the south-eastern slopes. Even stronger is the influence of the Alpine range. The closer to the Alps a region is, the more precipitations it gets. On the north side of the Jura the precipitations total from 55 to 63 inches per annum, while on its flanks sloping towards the Midlands, their annual total fall is below 39 inches. Most of the Midlands average from 35 to 43 inches of rain. In the sub-Alpine and the Alpine regions the falls reach from 80 to 118 inches.

Vegetation is also greatly affected by winds. The peculiarity of a number of valleys can be traced back to the FOHN. When descending from the southern mountains into the valleys, this warm wind increases in temperature steadily, particularly in spring and autumn. The outcome is to be seen in the expansion of fruit-growing and wine-growing and of land under maize. The more a region is exposed to the wind from the north and east, the so-called Bise, the greater is the danger from frost. This latter is mitigated by the vicinity of lakes acting as storage reservoirs for warmth.

The Soils available to agriculture in Switzerland originate on the one hand from the cristalline rock of the Alpine regions and, on the other, from the limestone of the sub-Alpine range and the Jura. The best soils are those which have been formed by the rubble carried down by the glaciers. In a general way, these soils are moderately heavy and very rich in nutritious matter. The soils of alluvial land vary greatly in their content of clay and are prevalently lighter soils, a sort of clayey sand or sandy clay. Sand soils in the true meaning of the term are rare in Switzerland. In this way the whole of the Midlands is particularly suitable for arable farming from the point of view of both the climate and the soil. The decaying soils of the Alpine and the sub-Alpine regions are generally rather heavy, though very rich in nutritious matter. Both the soils and the climate there, favour fodder crops. The extensive moor soils of the Midlands and the sub-Alpine regions formerly used in general way as rushland, have been ameliorated to a great extent, and have been converted into arable land, while the areas with more abundant precipitations have been used for growing foddercrops.

The Economic Structure.

In the course of the 19th century, Switzerland changed from an agrarian land into an industrial and trading country. A considerable proportion of the land population moved to the towns. The following table shows the trend of population-movement, relative the farming inhabitants:—

Years.	Total Swiss population.	Of which agricultural population.	%
1888	2,917,754	1,076,713	36.9
1900	3,315,443	1,033,418	31.2
1910	3,753,293	967,584	25.8
1920	3,880,320	954,854	24.6
1930	4,066,400	867,123	21.3
1941	4,265,703	866,720	20.3

The increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of the Swiss has created new conditions in agriculture.

The DEMAND for agricultural products has grown. Although the farmers reduced their own requirements to a considerable extent, and although their workers earned less wages in kind and more wages in cash, agriculture in Switzerland has been unable to cover all requirements of the population. Particularly bread cereals were in-

creasingly imported from abroad, and Swiss agriculture got more interested in fodder crops and livestock.

The industrialisation of Switzerland resulted in higher costs of production as far as agriculture was concerned. Wages and taxes rose. Craftsmen no longer came round to work at a customer's house. Many installations and repairs became, thereby, more expensive. Building cost increased to a marked extent. Industrial workers, craftsmen and capitalists were acquiring agricultural estates, the farmers tried to expand their holdings, agricultural land was lost to road and house building. Hence, increasing prices were paid for the purchase of land.

The greatest effect, however, resulting from industrialisation was brought to bear on the wage claims of the workers. Since wages in industry and in the crafts were always ahead of those paid in agriculture, many agricultural workers, including also sons and daughters of the farmers, left the land. In due course, agriculture experienced an increasing shortage of man-power. Thus, in addition to the policy of the prices, the question of the workers has become the great problem of the future of Switzerland's agriculture.

(To be continued.)

SWITZERLAND'S HELP TO WAR-DAMAGED COUNTRIES

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

(Continued from last issue)

After the events of the spring of 1940, an immense field of work opened up for relief work on behalf of the civilian population in the countries to which the war had then spread. Various Swiss relief organisations were already working abroad, such as the Basel Relief Committee in Alsace, and "Caritas" and the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation in France and the north of Italy.

A year later, in July, 1941, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies established the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross, which undertook the task of providing refugees, women, children and old people, with medicine, food and clothing.

Not only did our people show the greatest sympathy for all these undertakings, but when appeals for money were made to the community, the necessary funds were always forthcoming.

A new situation arose in 1943: for it was then that it first became fully apparent how horribly hostilities had affected the civilian population in the belligerent and occupied countries.

In December, 1943, UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, was set up, with the object of helping war-damaged countries—on the one hand, by providing food, medical supplies, clothing, agricultural equipment, industrial machinery and raw materials for the reconstruction of what had been destroyed; and on the other hand, by repatriating sections of the population which had been deported, prisoners of war and refugees.

It was out of the question for Switzerland to join that organisation. She therefore decided, in view of her tradition, to go her own way, and—with the means at her disposal—to help the victims of the world catastrophe on parallel lines to UNRRA. On 25th February, 1944, the Federal Council informed the public in an official

communiqué that, "within the frame-work of the country's strict policy of neutrality, it had approved all measures of a nature to bring immediate and voluntary relief at this time, in particular to the population of our neighbours. For this purpose all means of relief and well-intentioned efforts should be combined, so as to make the relief work of the Swiss nation fully effective."

Efforts were made on the part of the private relief organizations to establish a central office for post-war relief. This function was taken over by the Swiss Association for Social Work. Independently of this, certain organizations in Switzerland had already begun to prepare for the post-war period. In Geneva, for instance, a "Study Circle for Post-war Questions" had been formed to which the World Council of Churches' Aid to Refugees, the Swiss Workers' Relief Organization, the O.S.E. Union (Oeuvre de secours aux enfants), the Jewish Agency, the Quakers, the "Aide aux Emigrés" and other organizations belonged. The practical results achieved were the preparation of the return journey of refugees who were then in Switzerland, cadre courses for relief workers abroad, and the "Cours de Moniteurs" in Geneva.

In the course of the year 1944 the "Schweizer Spende" (Swiss Gift) was founded, and on 1st September, 1944, the Federal Council placed a motion before the Federal Assembly, proposing that the latter "approve, as a contribution by the Confederation to the assistance given by the Swiss people in relieving distress abroad resulting from the war, a contribution of 100 million francs to the Swiss Gift to War Victims." This motion was unanimously approved in the councils. The sum of 100 million francs corresponded approximately to the contribution which Switzerland would have had to make to UNRRA if she had joined the latter.

In the following years the "Schweizer Spende" and the activities under its auspices received a further 52,850,000 francs from Federal funds. Contributions from the cantons and communes amounting to some 10 million francs were devoted to the same objects.

In addition to all this, the Confederation renounced very considerable revenues by granting free transport and freight. Further, the expenditure by the Confederation on aid to refugees and the care of internees should be recalled in this connection; and, finally, mention should also be made of the 250 million francs which were collected in Washington as a contribution from Switzerland to the reconstruction of Europe—a contribution to which yet further sums will be added when German property in Switzerland is wound up.

However, the great moral value—we should use the expression without conceit—of the Swiss aid to other countries lay in the fact that, in spite of the tremendous work accomplished by the authorities, it was not only a state undertaking, but to the widest possible extent was firmly rooted in the hearts of the Swiss people themselves. Not only were some 50 millions of the 206 millions at the disposal of the "Schweizer Spende" found by private individuals; not only did our people again in 1948 and 1949 give 8.50 million francs for similar purposes of Swiss aid to Europe; the individual relief organizations too, which were devoting themselves to relief work abroad and aid to refugees, constantly appealed with the greatest success to the community's generosity for financing their special tasks, and—as in the first world war—countless individuals, by sending gifts abroad, and in particular, by their personal efforts, showed their desire to help in a way which was often very moving.

From a survey—which, however, is unofficial—of the Political Department, it can be seen that the Confederation in the years 1940 to mid-1949 (not counting the 250 million granted under the Washington agreement for European reconstruction and excluding trade credits) raised a fonds perdu 350 million francs for foreign relief work. To this must be added advances of 220 million francs, in particular for the internment of military personnel. Expenditure by private indi-

viduals during the same period, including gift parcels, is estimated by the Political Department at least 610 million francs. The total effort of our country thus amounted to nearly 1.2 milliards, that is to say, 283 francs per head of the population.

An exhaustive account of the way in which the "Schweizer Spende" fulfilled its task is given in the recently published report on its activities. I will only recapitulate the following facts.

It was from the start an established principle that the "Schweizer Spende" was only to pursue charitable aims, and that there must be a clear distinction between its activities and the economic participation of Switzerland in the reconstruction.

A further fundamental rule governing the work of the "Schweizer Spende" was the principle of impartial aid in the spirit of the Red Cross. Neither religious nor political beliefs, nor any other such consideration was to play a part, but solely the extent of the need. Accordingly, relief action was always undertaken in so far as the means of transport allowed in those places where the need was greatest. Attention was paid primarily to neighbours and the countries with which Switzerland had always been particularly closely linked. Later it was also possible to give help to more distant areas.

The help given first took the form of sending food, clothes and medical supplies to rescue those in distress from hunger, cold and disease. It was soon realised, however, that considerably greater success could be achieved by carrying out relief work on the spot; by erecting temporary shelters, children's settlements and homes, organising hospitals and setting up first-aid posts, by supplying agricultural equipment, etc.

The "Schweizer Spende" maintained close relations with existing Swiss relief organisations. They served it primarily as the instruments for specific relief campaigns. Sometimes, too, a particular form of relief was handed over to them entirely; for instance, the Swiss Red Cross children's Aid was made responsible for the accommodation of children in Switzerland, and the Swiss Red Cross for the care of the mutilated. It was only at a later stage that the "Schweizer Spende" began carrying out the campaigns to an increasing extent with its own teams.

The "Schweizer Spende" also maintained good relations with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Joint Commission and its successor, the "Centre d'entraide internationale aux populations civiles" (International Centre for Relief to Civilian Populations), UNRRA and the organisations which later took over from it, in particular the International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), and UNESCO as well as with the foreign National Red Cross Societies and other relief organisations.

(To be continued.)

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.).