

Notice

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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

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