

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

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thereby saving time when making the round among the farmers.

In addition to finding for young men apprenticeship places in well-conducted farms, the Swiss Agricultural Association also organises apprentice examinations, as well as examinations for the master's certificate. The master's certificate and title is regarded by the farmers as a distinction of particular importance. The professional Press also contributes towards general knowledge. The papers have a very wide circulation and comprise 61 publications in the German language, 33 in French and five in the Italian language.

## SWITZERLAND'S HELP TO WAR-DAMAGED COUNTRIES

The first work done by the "Schweizer Spende" in the winter of 1944-45 was in France, in Belgium, and in the Netherlands which at that time were not yet fully liberated. Immediately after the armistice the work was extended to Luxemburg, and later to Norway. In the middle of 1945 Italy and Austria—first only the frontier areas in both countries—were brought within the field of activity of the "Schweizer Spende." Conditions in Belgium and Norway rapidly improved. It was therefore possible for the "Schweizer Spende" to withdraw from those areas after only a few months, and Luxemburg, too, recovered quickly. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, relief work went on until 1946, and in France, Italy and Austria right up to the time when the "Schweizer Spende" was finally wound up. The last neighbouring country to be included in the programme of the "Schweizer Spende" in the spring of 1945-46, after some understandable opposition in Switzerland herself had been overcome, was Germany—and this was done in full agreement with the Occupying Powers. More distant countries in which the "Schweizer Spende" took an interest were Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, and Finland. Great Britain was also helped, particularly as regards hospitalisation.

Of the 177 millions spent by the "Schweizer Spende" on relief abroad, 35.7 millions went to Germany, 29.5 million to France, 26.9 million to Austria, 22.6 million to Italy, 14.2 million to Poland, 12.8 million to the Netherlands, 11.2 million to Hungary, and 4.5 million each to Belgium, Yugoslavia and Finland.

The "Schweizer Spende" was never intended to be a permanent institution. When the last credit was approved in October, 1947, the Federal Assembly therefore decided that the organisation was to be wound up by 30th June, 1948. In a report dated 6th June, 1947, however, the Federal Council had already indicated the desirability of forming, as a successor to the "Schweizer Spende," a differently constituted central office, which would be in a position to unite the various relief organisations in an integrated whole, and which would have as its real basis, those same associations, which were in such close touch with the population. This recommendation of the Federal Council was in conformity with the views and wishes of the main Swiss relief organisations themselves, which had been the main instruments of the "Schweizer Spende," and which, in the light of their accurate knowledge of conditions regarded a cessation of relief activities as irresponsible. It was clear to them that it was their task, after the "Schweizer Spende" was wound up, to carry on the work in foreign countries and for foreign countries within a more modest framework and without state assistance, and they also all agreed that there must be some central body which would not only have certain technical functions, such as obtaining visas, making transport arrangements, etc., but the main duty of which would be

to co-ordinate Swiss aid to foreign countries and at the same time ensure that it retained its character as something above party, and representative of the whole of Switzerland. Thus, on 22nd August, 1947, after a series of preliminary discussions, the "Schweizer Europahilfe" (Swiss Aid to Europe) was founded. There participated in this act as founders, in addition to the "Schweizer Spende" itself, the relief organisation of the Evangelical Churches of Switzerland, the Swiss Workers Relief Organisation, the Swiss "Caritas" office and the Swiss Red Cross.

The aims of the "Schweizer Europahilfe" as indicated in its statutes are, first of all, the planning and co-ordination of Swiss relief activity; then, the representation of Swiss relief bodies when dealing with authorities and organisations; next, the grouping of technical functions when winding up relief schemes; and, finally, co-operation in the sphere of individual relief activity (hospitalisation, gift parcels, etc.). Unlike the "Schweizer Spende," the "Europahilfe" is organised on an entirely federal basis. Its business is done by an Executive Committee—whose members are, of course, honorary and by a secretariat, which is housed in Bern in the former offices of the "Schweizer Spende," and consists of only a few persons. The actual individual relief tasks are carried out, in accordance with the decisions and under the supervision of the Executive Committee, by the individual organisations belonging to the "Schweizer Europahilfe" with the staff and technical equipment at their disposal. Administrative costs can thus be reduced to a minimum. Expenditure of all common funds is subject to verification by the Federal Audit Department.

Since the "Schweizer Europahilfe" was founded, it has been joined by a number of other associations dealing with relief to war-damaged countries. At the present time, seven regular and fourteen associate members belong to it. The "Schweizer Spende's" membership ceased after its winding up was completed on 30th June, 1949.

The financial resources at the disposal of the "Schweizer Europahilfe" come partly from what was left by its predecessor, the "Schweizer Spende" and partly from the collections which have already been mentioned, of 1948 (6.4 million) and 1949 (2 million). Altogether there were 13.7 million francs available to the "Europahilfe" for relief work.

The work done by the "Schweizer Europahilfe" to date may be briefly summarised as follows. The proceeds of the 1948 collection, which was carried out within the framework of the United Nations world appeal, was devoted exclusively to aid for children and young people, and for expectant and nursing mothers. With the amount available to the "Schweizer Europahilfe" it was possible to give effective aid to some 20,000 children in 14 different countries. The help given consisted mainly of consignments of supplies to creches, children's homes, orphanages, schools, sewing-centres, refugee children's hostels and social welfare centres; and in supporting holiday colonies, children's preventoria, children's sanatoria, and hospitals, establishments for the care of delicate children, and workshops for youthful refugees; as well as in providing contributions for work in Switzerland itself, such as the hospitalisation of children, therapeutic courses and rest camps. Special mention should be made of the feeding of children in the Eastern Zone of Germany, help to crippled children in Poland, and many different forms of assistance to Italian organisations for the rehabilitation of neglected youth. Where circumstances allowed, care was taken not to send finished clothes, linen and shoes, but simply to provide the necessary material and utensils for making them. In that way, many inmates of camps and homes were given a most welcome opportunity of working and earning something.

In proportion to the size of population, most help was given to Austria, and then came Hungary, Poland, Finland, and Germany. I would like to stress the fact

that it was possible to carry out the work in the so-called people's democracies too, in an absolutely neutral manner, owing to the presence of Swiss delegates. When later on the governments of those countries adopted the attitude that foreign help was no longer necessary, we naturally at once complied with the wish thus expressed.

The amount collected in 1949 was devoted to similar purposes to that of 1948. In addition, the "Schweizer Europahilfe" was also in a position to carry out various measures to help the aged and the sick. Thanks to the co-operation of the International Committee of the Red Cross it was possible, for instance, from December, 1948, to May, 1949, to give a daily meal to 100,000 old men and women in Berlin. In addition, a sum of 500,000 francs was devoted to helping refugees in Germany, Austria, and Greece.

The measures to relieve material distress were completed—in connection with the work of the "Schweizer Spende"—by assistance towards the moral recovery of the peoples who had suffered from the war. Most important in this connection was the endeavour to enable doctors, nurses, children's nurses, teachers and social workers from war-damaged countries to receive the necessary completion of their training. Particularly successful in this respect were the various courses for foreign children's doctors given by the Zurich pediatrician, Professor Franconi, and the training which various Italian doctors received in lung surgery—a most important medical art, which was previously scarcely known in Italy. The high value to be attached to this form of assistance is to be seen not only in the reforms directly due to it in the various countries, but is also shown by the fact that these measures served extensively as a guide in the establishment of a plan by the Social Activities Service of the European Office of the United Nations—namely, the plan to organise in this field too an exchange procedure which would make it possible for individuals and groups to pass periods in other countries in order to study social welfare. Mention should also be made in this connection of the work (which was assisted by a contribution from the "Schweizer Europahilfe"), of the SEPEG, the "Semaines Internationales d'Etudes pour l'Enfance victimes de la Guerre" (International Study Weeks for Child Victims of the War), in particular the SEPEG Conference held in Naples in 1949, which led to an entirely new orientation of Italy in the campaign against youthful delinquency—an evil from which the south above all has suffered to an extent which we can scarcely imagine. How great the need of youth is, at the present time, not only in Italy, but in nearly all European countries, was shown with appalling clarity at a SEPEG-week held in Basel last September. This need is mainly due to the fact that it is everywhere impossible to find jobs for young people leaving school. Anyone who had the opportunity of hearing the various talks given at that meeting realised once again the privileged position in which Switzerland finds herself in this respect also; and must, at the same time, have become convinced that it is, for our country, an imperative human duty to give further help, regardless of what has already been done.

We shall be very substantially strengthened in this resolve to press on with Swiss relief abroad when we learn of the exceptionally difficult situation in which those who are old and out of work still find themselves in many war-damaged countries, and especially when the conditions prevailing in greater Berlin and the Eastern Zone of Germany are described to us. There is a particularly pressing and urgent need for help to tubercular and pre-tubercular sufferers. The distress in Eastern Germany today is little less than that which still existed in Western Germany a year and a half ago. It is due in no small measure to the fact that about three-quarters of the population lives in the districts to the south of Berlin, where there is little agriculture and that there is the very greatest difficulty in obtaining essential supplies from the north owing to the lack of transport.

The decisive factor, however, in favour of continuing—and at the same time intensifying—Swiss relief work is the fact that an as yet entirely unsolved problem is becoming ever more pressing—a problem which not only represents an immense sum of the direst human misery, but which, moreover, threatens increasingly to grow into a grave danger for the whole of Western Europe—the refugee problem.

If this problem is mentioned to you in connection with Swiss relief work abroad, you may perhaps object that one can hardly expect Switzerland to take on the refugees as well, and in particular you will probably express the view that to relieve the distress of the refugees is entirely beyond the resources of our small country, that it really is a task which should be tackled by the great Powers, particularly as it is primarily of a political character, and that nothing very substantial could be achieved by charitable measures alone.

Allow me to say this to you in reply. If we disregard the conditions in Palestine and the Far East, and consider only those conditions which exist nearer to us, in Europe, we can distinguish four categories of refugees: the displaced persons, the people driven from the East, the Greek refugees, and the political emigres from countries with Communist regimes.

(To be continued.)

### 1st AUGUST CELEBRATION

The Consul and Mrs. Blanchard will receive the Swiss Colony on the 1st of August, from 8 p.m., at their home, 16 Wesley Road, Wellington, C.1. (at the top of Bolton Street). Everyone should bring good humour with them, and any musical instruments they may have, or social games, in order to make the party gay and amusing. A buffet supper will be served. Individual invitations will be sent, but in case of omission, please accept this as an invitation to come.

The 1st of August badges have arrived and are for sale at:

The Swiss Consulate,  
P.O. Box 386, Wellington.  
Mr. E. Merz,  
P.O. Box 85, Auckland.  
Mr. R. Stuckie,  
Springdale, Waitoa.  
Mr. Walter Risi,  
"Renwick Farm," Ohangai, Hawera.

The price has been fixed at a minimum of 2/- but as the proceeds of the sales, this year, will go to needy mothers, any additional amount would naturally be welcome.

The "Helvetia" bulletin sends its greetings to the Helvetia Farm in Pukekohe, and its congratulations to Mrs. J. Schlaepfer, 88 years old, and a great-great grandmother. She settled on a 447-acre farm in 1886, where, now, one can sometimes meet a gathering of four generations of her descendants. We wish Mrs. Schlaepfer and her relatives continued happiness and good luck.

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