

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

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everybody's duty therefore to fight against rising prices, and to refrain from seeking exaggerated profits or increased wages.

Although the recommendations of the Federal Council were unanimously agreed upon and followed, the rise in wholesale prices and the cost of raw materials, which rose from 196 points in June, 1950, to 230 points at the beginning of 1951, affected the cost of living, which by the end of May had reached the figure of 166.1, thus exceeding the maximum recorded in November, 1948, which had been called the "danger figure."

This development of the situation led workers to demand increases in wages to which the employers were opposed, pointing out that a certain stabilisation would set in since the increase in wholesale prices appeared to have reached its highest peak, and that it would be dangerous to create an inflationary movement by increasing wages. In support of this theory, it must be pointed out that the real wages of Swiss workers have increased by about 20 per cent. on an average as compared with 1939.

Another cause for anxiety is the question of obtaining supplies of raw materials, Switzerland's particular position and its statute of neutrality being the cause of serious difficulties in this respect. Dependent on the markets of the world for all products of prime necessity, she feels keenly their present scarcity, which is due to the intensive re-armament programmes that are being carried out all over the world. Moreover, some countries producing raw materials have certain measures of control and applied a system of quotas, which are a continuous source of anxiety to Switzerland. The Federal Council in its turn has had to issue certain decrees involving the control of imports and exports. It is obvious that the demands of a strict neutrality prevent Switzerland from acting exclusively according to the criteria of simple expediency or immediate interests. It is in the economic field that the carrying out of a policy of neutrality presents the greatest difficulties and demands the vigilance of the authorities, in so far as decisions of economic significance taken by foreign governments pursue political ends. But over and above this vigilance and prudence there reigns in Switzerland the profound conviction that collaboration between countries and their governments is the only path leading to a state of peace. For her own part, Switzerland is doing everything in her power to facilitate this collaboration.

SWITZERLAND'S HELP TO WAR-DAMAGED COUNTRIES

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

(Continued.)

The occupation authorities regard the refugee question for the time being as an internal German affair. The easing up of the dismantling policy nevertheless shows a willingness to contribute indirectly to an alleviation of the difficulties.

That is the position in Western Germany. In Austria—in relation to the situation there—conditions are nearly as bad, and in Greece there is even greater distress.

Help from abroad for the refugees is therefore essential, and should be as speedy and effective as possible. Appropriate action has already been initiated and will be carried out. Switzerland, too, is participating, partly through the collaboration of the "Schweizer Europahilfe," and recently with the Swiss Red Cross clothing collection on behalf of the refugees in Bavaria, as well as by the sponsorship and the transport of children.

This emergency relief must not be interrupted. By sending medical supplies and household articles, by furthering the construction of dwellings in the affected areas, by sending medical staff and welfare workers, by helping in the work of tracing missing persons, by providing identity papers for those without them, by hospitalising refugee children, and by setting up workshops where new trades can be learnt, it is possible to alleviate much individual distress.

But, you will object, all these and similar measures are only palliatives and not solutions. You will perhaps argue that a successful fight can only be waged against the misery of the refugees and its accompanying dangers either if suitable living and working premises are provided for the refugees in the receiving country itself, or if they are enabled to proceed to countries which are able to offer them both. To give effective help in that respect would, however, be beyond the resources and strength of Switzerland. Only powerful and influential states would be in a position to undertake such measures with any prospect of success.

Such an objection is, however, only partially valid. It is correct in that a true solution of the refugee problem can in fact only be reached on the international level. On the other hand it ignores two things: first, that Switzerland, if she wishes to remain true to her traditions, simply must not avoid an issue of such extreme importance for the maintenance of peace and the future of Europe; and secondly that the possibility really does exist for our country to take an active part in mastering the problem.

This last assertion may strike you as presumptuous. I am quite certain, however, that your scepticism will largely disappear when I tell you, if only briefly, about a Swiss undertaking now in progress which is confidently expected to provide 100,000 refugees—Danube-Swabians, who are at present living in Austria—with a permanent home in a country overseas. This scheme was initiated and is being carried out by one of our Swiss relief organisations. Its implementation is being greatly facilitated by the international connections of the organisation in question. The negotiations with both states, Austria and the receiving country, are about to be completed. The necessary financial support has already been largely secured. All precautions have also been taken to ensure that any necessary assistance will be given to the emigrants in their new home. Two representatives of the refugees themselves are at present in the receiving country, in order to clear up various questions of detail on the spot. The "Schweizer Europahilfe" has made it its business to get the other Swiss relief organisations interested in the undertaking too; in addition, it is endeavouring to initiate further schemes of this kind wherever possible, even if on a smaller scale.

That is the one, practical, form of help which Switzerland can give towards a lasting solution of the refugee problem. It is only a modest contribution, but nevertheless one which sets a challenging example.

To this practical activity should be added moral assistance. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the "Schweizer Europahilfe" the remark was made that Switzerland now faced a very similar situation to that in 1863, when the International Red Cross was founded at Geneva. Now, as then, it is a question of awakening the conscience of the world, and of appealing to the nations to abandon their more or less negative attitude to events which represent a constantly greater and graver danger.

Our Swiss relief organisations are ready to help in giving such moral assistance too. They count, moreover, on the understanding of their sister organisations in other lands, and they already know that they can rely on the support of the Oecumenical Council and the American Churches. The lively interest taken by the Vatican in this question is reflected in the particularly active work done in the field of refugee relief by the international Caritas organisation. The Swiss Red Cross

has the opportunity of approaching its fellow members of the League of Red Cross Societies, and the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation hopes for support from the International workers' organisations.

But besides all this, it is up to every Swiss citizen to create a feeling and to launch a movement in his own land which will, if further developments make it necessary, place the Federal Council, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, in a position to intervene with the powers in the name of the Swiss people in favour of action to ensure a real solution of the refugee problem. The prospects of success for such a demarche have improved considerably since the General Assembly of the United Nations on 3rd December adopted a resolution, by 35 votes to 7 with 13 abstentions, proposing that when the activities of the IRO came to an end, a High Commissioner's Office should be set up to deal with the protection of refugees and displaced persons. It will, however, be essential and of decisive importance that this measure of assistance should not again be granted to a portion of the refugees only, but that it should have a general and all-embracing character. Switzerland must work for this above all, for only then can we expect the whole scheme to be a success.

NOTICE

The time limit for joining the Voluntary Old-age Widows' and Orphans' Insurance ("Freiwillige Alters- und Hinterlassenversicherung") for the Swiss citizens residing abroad who were born between July 1st, 1883, and December 31st, 1920 (which had expired in 1949) has recently been extended to the end of 1951. After December 31st, 1951, no applications from persons born on or before December 31st, 1921, can be taken into consideration. Before a formal application can be accepted the applicant has to be duly registered with the Consulate. If he is not able to submit adequate Swiss identification papers for registration, it will be necessary to procure a confirmation of citizenship. Because of this prerequisite and for other reasons, persons interested in the scheme should communicate with the Consulate of Switzerland, Box 386, Wellington, the sooner the better.

The annual premiums, which are payable until the age of 65, are to be assessed and paid with retroactive effect from January 1st, 1948. Persons gainfully occupied are liable to contribute 4 per cent. of their income in cash and in kind. The contributions of persons not gainfully occupied are levied according to the fortune and income from life annuities. The old-age pensions are paid out from the age of 65 onwards, however only those who have contributed for 20 years will receive the full pension. The single old-age pension is 480 francs per year at least and 1500 francs at the highest. The married couple's old-age pension amounts to at least 770 francs and not more than 2400 francs per year.

NOTICE CONCERNING SWISS CALENDARS FOR 1952

To enable our compatriots to procure a pictorial calendar from Switzerland for 1952, the Consulate is prepared to pass a collective order. Applicants are asked to write to the Swiss Consulate, P.O. Box 386, Wellington, C.1., and to remit at the same time the amount in question. The following calendars are offered:—

- (a) THE ALPINE CALENDAR, 1952 (Stehli), price 10/-. Size 11½ in. x 11 in., with twelve monthly sheets, each showing a fine Swiss scene in natural colour lithography. This calendar is also published in German under the title "Berge und Taler der Schweiz."
- (b) SWITZERLAND, 1952, a Novos product, price 10/-. This calendar can also be had in German, "Die Schweiz," and in French, "Ma Patrie." Orders for these calendars will be received until September 29th, 1951.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

You are invited to subscribe to the well-known "Schweizer Illustrierte" or "L'illustre" issued weekly. This popular magazine has greatly improved in size and interesting pictorial reports in recent years and brings you topical news, not only from our homeland, but from many other parts of the world. The subscription for this magazine is 54/- per annum, and the fee can be sent to the Secretary in Auckland.

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to announce the enrolment of the following new members during recent months:—

- Mr. Jos. Kriger, c/o Mr. H. V. Steiner, Kereone No. 1 R.D., Morrinsville.
- Mr. J. Villiger, c/o Mr. J. Werder, Springdale, Waitoa.
- Mr. J. Hangartner, 19 Tennyson Street, Wellington.
- Mrs. C. P. Slack, 572 Ferry Road, Christchurch.
- Mrs. A. Blackburn, 156 Aldwins Road, Christchurch.
- Mr. E. Streuli, 10 Cremona Street, Herne Bay, Auckland, W.1.
- Mr. J. F. Gabriel, Red Hill Road, Massey R.D., Henderson.
- Mr. L. Burgener, 57 Edenvale Road, Mt. Eden, Auckland, S.1.
- Mr. P. Thut, Mt. View Hospital, Eltham.
- Mr. W. Fierz, 388 Rose Road, Grey Lynn, Auckland.
- Dr. F. Kaegi, 306 Broadway Ave., Palmerston North.
- Miss E. Kummer, 232 The Terrace, Wellington.
- Mr. P. Holzgang, c/o Mr. Gattin, Te Kauwhata, Rangariri.
- Mr. C. Sidler, c/o U. Trutsch, Hanghawera R.D. No. 5, Morrinsville.
- Mr. J. Krummenacher, c/o U. Trutsch, Hanghawera R.D. No. 5, Morrinsville.
- Mr. P. Jutzi, 192 Bealey Avenue, Christchurch.
- Mr. L. Butler, Seacliff Hospital, Seacliff, Otago.
- Mr. R. Keller, c/o Mr. Camenzind, Box 14, Putaruru.
- Mr. F. Gilgen, P.O. Box 2875, Auckland, C.1.
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