

World cooperation

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WORLD COOPERATION.

by H. BÖSCHENSTEIN.

The Federal Political Department is now engaged in preparing a new Appropriation Bill in regard to contributions towards international relief work, which it will submit to the Federal Chambers, for the approval of Parliament. The wounds caused by the Second World War are still far from being healed, and yet, there is once more urgent need for relief on a large scale for the victims of another war. This time, international help is required for the restoration of Korea. Switzerland is to participate in this relief work by means of a suitable contribution.

Among former relief actions, which now need renewed support, may be mentioned, in the first place, the work carried out in aid of children and known as the UNICEF. Switzerland became a member of the Childrens' Aid Fund in the Spring of 1947, and has contributed to it regularly since then; moreover, a Swiss, Dr. August Lindt, who is a Counsellor of Legation, has presided over the UNICEF. Switzerland's last contribution to this International Childrens' Aid Fund, for the period 1951-53 amounted to 2.1 million francs, whilst her donations for this purpose during the preceding years totalled no less than 12 million Swiss francs. A further new contribution will be allocated to the Swiss Aid for Europe which maintains Relief Centres in Berlin, in Germany, in Trieste, in Italy and in Austria. Then there is the Swiss Red Cross which also requires a Federal grant. There are still millions of refugees who need helping. The work of looking after them has now been transferred, as a result of the dissolution of the International Relief Organisation, to a Refugee Relief Fund, to which Switzerland will also send a contribution. The Federal Council follows the principle that it is a duty for a neutral State to profess its sentiments of humanity and of solidarity in regard to nations in distress by acts of generosity. This State aid forms only a part of the help which is being given, for that due to private initiative is still more important, and is financed chiefly by means of voluntary collections.

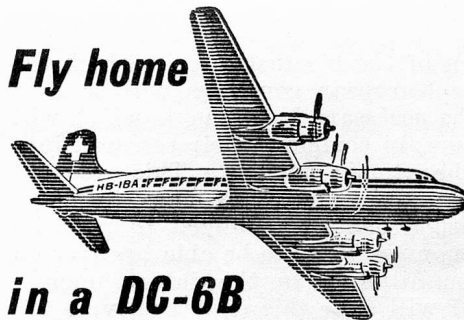
Whenever an international catastrophe occurs, as, for instance when there was the recent earthquake in the Ionian Islands, or when there were such terrible floods in Italy, the Federal Council is always willing to help, at once. This readiness was particularly striking at the time when Holland and Great Britain were ravaged by storms and high water. As the old saying has it: He who gives quickly, gives twice as much. But, in order that help may be forthcoming quickly it is necessary that the means for this are in readiness, and need not be granted by slow parliamentary procedure. It is for this reason that the Federal Council asks Parliament, in plenty of time, to give its approval to the request for credits in respect of a Fund for Aid in times of catastrophe.

Switzerland contemplates the allocation of a further grant of six million francs for the carrying on of this relief work. As the Federal Council reported to Parliament, when it last asked it to approve the granting of such credits, the distress in the world is very great. No one asserts that it is

possible to help all those who are in distress, but, this fact must never lead to a resigned attitude; it must never induce people to think that in view of the magnitude of the prevailing misery, any help given is no more than a drop of water which falls on parched earth. No, the thing to be done is to make a beginning, even if the help thus rendered would seem to be insignificant. Every human life that can be saved is precious and, fortunately, good works have a contagious effect.

For the refugees, alone, Switzerland has already expended more than two dozen million francs, in hard cash. Each year, there is a national collection for Aid to Refugees, and there are always generous donors to be found and also persons who are ready to welcome refugees to their homes. Such relief work finds a warm echo among the Swiss people, who, on the other hand, regard with a certain scepticism any participation in international activities, more especially if they would appear to possess the slightest political flavour. In regard to aid for Korea, other countries have already donated several hundreds of millions of dollars, not to speak of the enormous sacrifices in human lives, and all the gifts in nature which have been sent; Switzerland also contributed to the latter by sending a consignment of medical supplies. She expects that after the Peace Treaty has been signed, a world-wide rehabilitation and reconstruction action will start, in which Switzerland will also be called upon to assist.

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