

# Switzerland and Europe's starving children

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **8 (1942-1943)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943057>

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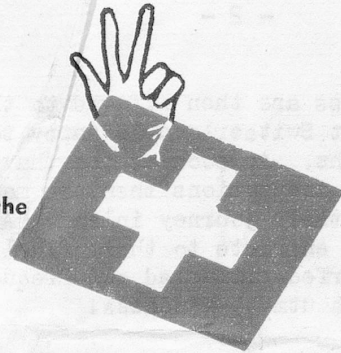
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# HELVETIA



Monthly Publication of the

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY  
in New Zealand

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Group New Zealand of the N.H.G.

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WELLINGTON.  
JANUARY, 1943.

Vol. 4, 8th Year.

## SWITZERLAND AND EUROPE'S STARVING CHILDREN.

Infinite compassion for the sufferings of Europe's child victims of war has inspired Switzerland to establish and carry on a glorious labor of love in their behalf. Plans for the relief of these innocent war sufferers had been made by the Swiss Welfare Association for Child Victims of War shortly before the outbreak of the world conflict.

In conjunction with the Save The Children International Union and the Pro Polonia organization, this Swiss association helped to alleviate the sufferings of Poland's children. It was also active in the Finnish-Russian War and was about ready to take Finnish children to Switzerland for recuperation periods when hostilities in that country came to a stop.

After France fell, and as soon as conditions permitted, the Swiss Welfare Association for Child Victims of War began to establish canteens on wheels in sections of France where the largest number of refugees had congregated. Up to 12,500 French children thus received daily milk, cheese and dehydrated fruit from Switzerland.

Shortly after the tragic days of June, 1940, the Swiss Welfare Association realized that in order to extend still greater help to the child victims of war it had to work out a plan for prolonged vacations in Switzerland for many of these youngsters. A comparatively modest start was made with 2500 children. For a period of three months, either in private homes or in special centers, children from 4 to 14 years old were given nourishing food, medical care and adequate clothing.

Results achieved with these vacations were truly remarkable and by the end of March, 1942, a nation-wide drive was started in Switzerland to expand this work. So magnificent was the response of the Swiss people with contributions of money, food coupons and clothing, that 10,000 underfed children are now at one time enjoying a vacation of three months each in Switzerland, making a total of 40,000 yearly. With the full sanction of the Swiss Federal Council the enlarged program is being carried out by the Swiss Red Cross. It is expected that the Swiss government will finally have to assume half of the expenses of this charity which at present amounts to about 10 million Swiss Francs per year. And there are plans for a still further expansion of this work to benefit Europe's suffering children, regardless of their nationality.

It has been related how the French children upon their arrival at Geneva railroad will first shout a greeting "Vive la Suisse," then sing their beloved national anthem, the Marseillaise. Ladies of Geneva are there to receive them, and Boy Scouts stand in readiness to look after the scanty luggage of these young guests. Each child has a numbered tag fastened to its clothing and a corresponding tag is attached to its belongings. These tags serve at the same time as documentary evidence when the foster-parents apply for the necessary ration cards.

Greetings of the Swiss Red Cross are then offered to the children via a loud-speaker. They are assured that Switzerland is happy to welcome them as her guests for the next three months. As soon as they have left the train they are given refreshments. Sanitary inspections then are made and when these are over the young travellers continue their journey inland. An overnight stop may be necessary in a village or town en route to their final destination, but everywhere on Swiss soil these underfed, ill-clad and frequently highly nervous victims of war are treated with utmost kindness.

Since all child war-sufferers cannot be brought to Switzerland ways and means had to be found to help them in their homeland. A foster-parent system was therefore inaugurated whereby people in Switzerland assume the responsibility to pay ten Swiss Francs per month toward the feeding of a needy child in a war-torn land. To enable them to maintain personal contact with their protege, foster-parents are given a slide with its picture, also the child's address. By August, 1942, about 6000 foster-parenthoods have been pledged in Switzerland in favor of some 3800 French, 600 Belgian, 700 Finnish and 250 Polish children. Foster-parents may be found among single persons, entire classes of schools, groups of workers, etc.

The Swiss Welfare Association for Child Victims of War has also founded a number of homes for these unfortunates in various lands.

Another highly commendable Swiss institution is the Maternite Suisse at Elne, in Southern France. It was founded shortly after the end of the Spanish Civil War, to give help to expectant mothers living in the Spanish refugee camp at Argeles-s.-m. Since the Spring of 1940 this Swiss haven has more or less assumed an international character.

Swiss assistance in various forms is also given in many camps for interned civilians. Children receive milk, cheese and preserves. Milk-rice is cooked for the sick and aged; formulas are prepared for infants, etc. Efforts are now made to provide some schools for the children and the youngsters are taught how to make themselves useful by doing garden work and other chores. In all these camps the Swiss barracks is a place where the depressed and needy find consolation and help. Swiss "sisters" live among these innocent victims of war, suffering untold hardships themselves.

To help those in distress is more than ever the slogan in Switzerland. Deeply grateful that their 651-year-old Democracy has so far escaped the horrors of actual warfare the people, although heavily taxed and strictly rationed, are eager to make sacrifices in order to do good unto others. They are humanitarians and Christians in the finest sense of the word.

"THE WORLD OWES THE SWISS PEOPLE A DEBT OF GRATITUDE".

In her column "My Day" in the World-Telegram of October 22, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, writes:

"Some of you may have read the article on the work that is being done in Geneva, Switzerland, for the refugee children. In groups of 10,000 they are taken in every three months, fed and housed and saved from permanent ill health and then return to occupied France, Belgium, Greece or Yugoslavia. Sometimes they go to individual families, sometimes they live in hotels.

In addition to housing and feeding, many of these children have to be clothed and given medical attention. More important than anything else, whether they are in homes or hostels, is the fact that they are with people who love them and want to help them. For this work the rest of the world owes the Swiss people a debt of gratitude, for these saved children will be of infinite value in rebuilding Europe in the future.