

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1981)
Heft: 1773

Artikel: Rifle group celebrates successes
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687078>

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Opening door to the refugees

By Elsbeth Danzeisen

THERE are believed to be between 10 and 15 million refugees in the world, and terror, war and natural catastrophes constantly drive more people from their homes. Switzerland is trying to help some of these refugees by giving aid abroad and launching resettlement programmes within Switzerland.

By the end of last year about 35,000 refugees were living in Switzerland. They included 3,000 people from Indo-China who the government decided should be resettled in Switzer-

land, and nearly 5,000 from the same area who have already been given new homes in many parts of Switzerland.

Other refugee groups who arrived in Switzerland during the past 25 years are from Eastern European countries such as Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, from Latin American states including Chile and

Argentina, as well as from Tibet, Uganda and Vietnam.

Many are fairly well integrated into Swiss society, although full integration is hardly possible, particularly for people from entirely different cultural environments. Although the Swiss do quite a lot to help refugees materially, many refugees complain — like other foreigners living in Switzerland — about a lack of warmth in human relations.

The current resettlement programmes for Indo-Chinese refugees underline the problems involved for the refugees themselves as well as for those who are looking after them. Private voluntary teams have been set up all over the country and look after individual families or groups of refugees during their first months or years in Switzerland.

They often encounter difficulties when looking for apartments or jobs for the refugees, and sometimes their work is

hampered by a sceptical attitude on the part of the local populations.

This attitude is in contrast to a usually generous response in Switzerland to fund-raising campaigns. In 1979 aid to refugees within Switzerland alone cost about Fr. 25 million (nearly 15 million dollars), about two-fifths of which was paid by charity organisations which get their funds from voluntary donations.

Large scale fund-raising campaigns were under way again recently, with the participation of charity organisations such as the Red Cross, the Workers' aid group, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish relief organisations and many others. Swiss radio and television opened their Goodwill Chain, which has given aid on many occasions during the past 30 years.

The fund-raising campaign by the Goodwill Chain for Indo-Chinese refugees raised Sfr. 12 million — that is about two francs for every man, woman and child living in Switzerland.

● This article was first heard on Swiss Radio International.

Rifle group celebrates successes

THE well attended final meeting of the season of the Swiss Rifle Association took place in good weather at Bisley. There was an encouraging participation by the ladies and the day's events concluded with a fondue party organised by Armin Loetscher.

The season's successes were acknowledged at the annual dinner and prizegiving at the Devonshire Restaurant in the City of London. The principal achievements were the award of the challenge trophy and senior

cup to vice president Peter Fischer, the ladies' trophy to Gertrud Tresch and the winning of four of the remaining five rifle trophies by Traugott Schaffner. The General Guisan pistol trophy was won by Urs Schaerer.

The association's rifle activities resume in March. Applications for membership to the secretary, 58 Dickens Rise, Chigwell, Essex.



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