

AMERICAN RELIEF FOR NORWAY, INC.

By Birger Osland

It is apparent that conditions in Norway are improving. We have received word not to send any more foodstuffs for free distribution; but shoes and clothing are needed. The Norwegian Government has been foresighted in that it made large purchases during the war of foodstuffs of various kind which are now being delivered. Furthermore, so much is being sent by parcel post and freight by private individuals that it really is noticeable in the pantries over there.

I believe it will be of interest now to see a summary of the aid that American Relief for Norway has been able to get into Norway during the war and the German occupation.

It will be understood that this help from Americans during the war was secret help, and the only way to get it into Norway was to send it in through Sweden disguised as Swedish help, as America was at war with the Germans. We owe a deep gratitude to the institutions and committees in Sweden which assisted us in this work without any remuneration. I shall mention the Swedish Donors' Committee, the Swedish Red Cross, the American and Norwegian legations and, last but not least, our own Swedish committee of three in Stockholm.

Now, there may be some who will deplore the fact that we had to send the help in as Swedish help. But would these people prefer that our Norwegian countrymen should have been without this help during the war years? The origin of the help is known in Norway now, and their thanks are pouring in to us in America.

What was it, then, that the Norwegian Americans, through their organization, American Relief for Norway, accomplished for our distressed countrymen while the war was on? Here is the list:

In 1941

32 ready built houses	\$	48,000
Ascorbic acid (citrus fruit)		23,000

In 1943, 1944, 1945

Medicines for hospitals and pharmacies	228,000
Milk for 175,000 children, daily portions	574,200
28,000 pairs of new children's shoes	59,000
For Norwegian refugees without means in Sweden	100,000
Aid to families of executed or imprisoned Norwegians	88,750
Norwegian prisoners of war in Germany	67,362
Norwegian students in concentration camps (for books)	1,000
The Norwegian Church in Sweden	10,000
Yarn and cloth for the Norwegian Sewing Room in New York	160,000

In all \$1,359,312

To this must be added 125 tons of used clothing collected in 1941-42, which were shipped to a temporary storage place in Yorkshire, England, and from there sent to Finmark as soon as the Germans were driven out of that part of Norway. The value of this clothing, at the low rate of one dollar a pound, is \$250,000.

At the beginning of year 1944, American Relief for Norway received word from the Norwegian authorities that the lack of clothing was great and that the Swedes had given so much clothing both to Finland and Norway that little was left to give. Could we help from America? These clothes could not bear any American labels and had to be sent into Norway as Swedish gifts.

American Relief for Norway has had only one purpose: to help our Norwegian countrymen regardless of what kind of labels the clothes bore as long as they reached Norway, and our ready answer was, yes. It was expensive to send freight across the Atlantic on safe conduct ships during the war. One shipment of 200 boxes and 400 bags of clothing and shoes cost \$5,900 for freight from Philadelphia to Gothenburg. But the help had to be sent, and it was sent and reached destination and was delivered in Norway.

In this manner used clothing and shoes of a total weight of 150 tons were shipped through Sweden during the war; valued at one dollar a pound, they represent a sum of \$300,000.

Since the liberation on May 8, the work of collecting used clothing was at once accelerated and increased manifold. From Seattle, Portland, Ore., San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, Fargo, Eau Claire, Milwaukee, Beloit, Ann Arbor, Mich., in short, from everywhere where Norwegians have settled the bags and boxes were pouring in to the storage places. In Minneapolis there were three storage places filled to the ceiling, which I personally saw and I wondered how in the world they were going to obtain workers enough to examine and pack all these pieces of clothing. It was just as jampacked here in Chicago, in Boston, in Brooklyn, and elsewhere on the East coast. But volunteer workers came, and the clothing was sent to the pier in New York, where Norwegian ships loaded the boxes and bags and carried them to Oslo, freight free.

It was our good charity-minded men and women who day and night, often into the small hours of the night, did this work without letup and without any pay. We thank them all.

I believe the best proof of how well this work was going during this period, will be to give dates of sailing and quantities carried on the various ships after May 8:

May	8	S/S Margrethe Bakke	20,450 lbs.
"	12	S/S Lista	19,770 "
"	19	S/S Sir James Clark Ross	47,616 "
"	"	S/S Buenos Aires	14,670 "
June	5	S/S Thorshammer	119,570 "
"	28	S/S Ole Bull	234,103 "
July	10	S/S Slemmedal	280,799 "
		Since the above shipments, there have been sent on various ships	179,357 "
		On hand in New York awaiting shipment	71,780 "

This represents a total weight of used (also some new) clothing and shoes shipped since May 8 of this year of 988,115 lbs., which at the rate of one dollar a pound is worth at least \$988,115.

Since the end of the war, American Relief for Norway has purchased 50,000 pairs of reconditioned army shoes to an amount of \$103,500 which are already delivered in Norway. They are strong boots which we understand will be worn by policemen, mailmen, lumberjacks, etc.

In addition, American Relief for Norway has purchased, but not yet received export license for, underwear to a value of \$50,000 and 3,000 pairs of new shoes to a value of \$6,000.

The grand total of all these figures up to date amounts to \$3,056,927.

American Relief for Norway has just received a letter from Nasjonalhjelpen in Oslo, dated Sept. 27, which tells how the 28,000 pairs of children's shoes which were sent to Norway during the war (see list above) were distributed. The letter states, "The 28,000 pairs of shoes were sent to Oslo via Sweden during the occupation thanks to intervention of Donors' Committee (Swedish) in Oslo. A distribution was immediately arranged here, through the schools all over the country. This was a very just method, which was facilitated by the cooperation of the teachers in the various places. The shoes were distributed in proportion to the number of inhabitants in each town."

But there are other values which are not shown in the summary given above. And these values were created by the indefatigable work of our capable women.

As shown by the list above, American Relief for Norway paid \$160,000 for yarn and cloth which were delivered to the Norwegian Sewing Room in New York. These materials were, in turn, sent out by the Sewing Room to sewing and knitting clubs all over America and by them converted into knitted sweaters, stockings, mittens, etc. and into dresses, coats, layettes, etc., which have been estimated to have a market value of over one million dollars. The work of these women has thus increased the value of the purchased materials as finished articles of clothing by more than \$800,000. And all this has become new clothing which has been sent to Norway together with the used clothing. We owe these women a debt of gratitude.

Our task now is to support the collection of funds by National War Fund which is taking place during the entire month of October. American Relief for Norway has received another appropriation for the coming months of one million dollars which, to a certain degree, is dependent upon National War Fund's reaching the goal set for its campaign; namely, one hundred and fifteen million dollars. This is the same amount which was collected in previous years. Let us all do our share.

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