

# Three 'Brothers'--A Good Neighbor Story

By GERTRUDE SAMUELS

New York Times (1857-Current file); Sep 29, 1946;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. 126

## Three 'Brothers'—A Good Neighbor Story

**Tonny and Appie, war waifs, now have the same 'parents' as Linky, an American boy.**

By GERTRUDE SAMUELS

young. To Linky it has become a living and personal adventure, and as he grows older it will be hard for anyone to talk to him of "superior" and "inferior" races

**T**HE broad general story of Europe's war children had been as incomprehensible to him as to any adult who has not actually seen them. Now, he thinks in terms of Appie, who needs a pair of shoes or a winter coat, of Tonny, who has written shyly for a soccer ball. Formerly, Linky received a 25-cent-a-week allowance. Now he has formed a "bottle concession" in his home—methodically lining

up milk and coke bottles in the garage and collecting up to 55 cents a week on the refunds. His mother may characteristically think in terms of vitamins and fats for the supplementary food packages. Linky, with his new esprit de corps, scornfully insists on "kids' things"—marbles, a "walking penguin," hard candies. "Kids have to play," he says. Finally, he is learning to speak Dutch, just as his foster brothers are learning to write in English. And the letters from Amsterdam speak for themselves:

"Dear Daddy," writes Tonny, who, now that he has no father of his own, has

"adopted" Linky's. "You write about Appie. Do you know where he lives in Holland? Please let me know so we can meet. I thank you for all you are doing for me. When I go to Volendam I shall get a souvenir for you which I shall send. Then you are always thinking of me."

And from Appie: "Since January, 1946 I am back in Holland again. I have had a nice time in England but I was glad when I came home. I hope you like my drawing—'Vroolijk paaschfeest'—and I thank you so much for all the things you have sent. We were very glad with the soap and food."

**T**HE Foster Parents' Plan which made this "adoption" possible was born in Spanish Civil War days. It was formed by John Langdon-Davies, author and correspondent for The London News-Chronicle and now a major in the British Army; Eric Muggeridge, another Briton, and Mrs. Blue, a Forest Hills housewife and mother of two children, to aid "the Tomases; Marias and Teresas who were sleeping under bushes" near the Loyalist lines.

One of the first to respond was Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. She "adopted" a Spanish boy, Lorenzo Nurias, and in the war years later, five more children—Janina Dybowska (Polish), Kerman Iriondo Galrale (Spanish), Thomas Maloney and Rosemary Lilian Hayward (English) and Paulette le Mescam (French).

As the war engulfed Europe, Foster Parents' colonies of children opened and closed like chapters of a book. When the Nazis overran a country, a colony was moved out, until at one time during the war more than forty projects were going in England. Trained social workers, with the encouragement of the President's War Relief Board, had gone into European homes to find those children who most needed help. These became foster children and lists were compiled as a preliminary to finding "foster" parents. Where "parents" were not available the children were cared for—in private homes, in barracks, in deserted castles and hostels—out of a "general fund."

**T**HESE are typical of case histories cabled to American headquarters:

"Georges Herskowitz, 3 years old, Czechoslovak-Jewish, born in Brussels. Father a shoemaker, joined the Czechoslovak Army in France and in 1941 the Army of Partisans. Arrested and thrown into Buchenwald. \* \* \* Mother worked but ill and aid insufficient for Georges and his sister Eva, 7 years old. On Allied liberation, this mother and her children were living in one wretched room in Brussels, suffering terribly from malnutrition, clothing in rags, no shoes."

"Germaine Delcorte, 13 years old, Belgian. Her father and brother seized by the Gestapo and taken for slave labor in Germany. \* \* \* Mme. Delcorte and young Germaine half-starved from the German policy of looting. The child has a bad heart, needs medical attention and rest. Strain of terror and privation worsened her condition. Now, with Plan aid, she will improve: her thin body has begun to fill out."

"Jeannot Calver, 12 years old, French. During nightly air raids on their home off the Brittany coast, Jeannot's father was killed. The family forced to journey to a wooded area. After the Allied occupation, they returned to their home which, remarkably, still (Continued on Page 50)



"Foster Child—Her only recollection of 'home' is a concentration camp."

**T**ONNY, an only child, was born in Amsterdam eleven years ago. His father was taken by the Nazis as slave labor and has never been heard from. He and his mother lived on sugar beets and tulip bulbs under the German occupation—until Tonny developed a hunger edema. His growth was stunted, his body covered with sores because of malnutrition.

Appie, or Abraham, was likewise born in Amsterdam eleven years ago. One of four children of a Jewish tradesman father and a non-Jewish mother, towheaded, scrawny, snub-nosed, Appie temporarily lost his speech during the bombings. He, too, saw his father, an underground worker, taken away to a concentration camp. He and his family moved to the ruins of the Jewish quarter where they lived in dread of deportation.

Linky was born nine years ago in New York. Linky is of average build, average weight, average tricks—about like your son or mine who were spared the bombings, the starvation, and the agony of hunter being hunted.

Tonny, Appie, Linky—three boys who normally might never have known each other. Yet today, because Linky has parents who believe that children should not only be seen and heard but should also live like human beings, they are "brothers."

**T**HIS is the way it began. Linky's father, a war photographer, came back last December from an overseas assignment shocked and depressed at "Americans who didn't want to expose themselves to responsibility" for a sick Europe which needed everything. Linky's mother, a career woman, found that her husband was "somehow even resentful of me, as if I, too, couldn't comprehend." She tried to make herself "see with my husband's eyes" the misery, the indescribable short-ages and, above all, the children.

She found herself thinking about Linky. "Somehow, it seemed terribly important for him to understand the problems of other children. It didn't seem right for him to have everything. All children are born selfish and have to be educated out of it." She began looking "for what one small individual could do; being depressed was no answer."

So she looked up the Foster Parents' Plan for War Children. She talked with Mrs. Edna Blue, its executive chairman at the American headquarters, 55 West Forty-second Street. She examined its lists of sponsors and committees which range from members of Congress and Parliament to Presidents' wives, educators and actors, schools, civic groups and Greek letter fraternities. And she "took two children at one wallop." That night she announced to her husband, "Well, you're the father of three children now." Tonny and Appie, who during the war had been flown to England where they remained for a time with other Dutch evacuees, were "assigned."

**D**OES what Linky's mother did sound terribly easy? It is. It is perhaps the simplest and most gratifying conscience balm for Americans with a guilt complex about bounty in the midst of world want—and that should include practically everyone. It goes farther, of course, paradoxically making possible the fulfillment of a great war President's dream—to build international peace through extension of the Good Neighbor Policy and to build it

## A Story of Three 'Brothers'

(Continued from Page 26)

stood but little else. The Plan arranged for the boy's entrance into a near-by children's colony and the weak, drawn, nervous boy is still under care today."

**H**OW does the Plan work? A foster parent "adopts" a child by agreeing to pay \$15 a month for at least a year, and to keep a personal correspondence going with the child through the American headquarters in New York. Age, sex, religion may be specified, but the Plan prefers to choose from the most urgent cases. Thus Margaret Sullivan recently wired the Plan from Hollywood: "I am sending \$180 which I understand will feed and care for a war child for a year. I leave to your judgment the age and sex of the child." The child "assigned," now in England, is Eva Traub—5 years old, Jewish, parentless, "probably Austrian," who bears a tattooed number on her left arm as an enemy of the German Reich, whose only recollection of "home" is Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

Food and clothing parcels are bought, and cash subsidies range from \$4 a month upward. Tonny and Appie, now reunited with their families—or what's left of them in Amsterdam—receive, as an example, \$12 in cash as well as supplementary food packages—while the 200 children of the Paris "colony," now with their relatives or placed in French foster homes, receive desperately needed food and clothes.

Within a few weeks after the "adoption" the new parent receives "his" child's photograph, name and case history. The child is told about his new foster family. Correspondence begins, and the wheels of benefaction are in motion.

**I**N this way, numerous professional and theatrical people, housewives, clubs, schools, church and civic groups have "adopted" a child. Fred Allen has "adopted" an English child, as has his favorite foil, Jack Benny. Helen Hayes first took a Spanish child, later a Maltese whose father returned from the war, and she now is "mother" to a Dutch child. Mrs. Stephen S. Wise contributed to several German and Spanish children.

To date Foster Parents have cared for 44,000 children of fourteen nationalities, of whom 31,000 have gone into industry, farming and the armed forces. Colonies are gradually being re-established on "home soil." Last week the Czechoslovak colony moved from Britain to Prague, and with it, 9-year-old Vlastimira Zidlicka, who was "adopted" in July by a "group, foster parent"—the

(Continued on Following Page)

## A Story of Three 'Brothers'

(Continued from Preceding Page)  
Women's Society of Christian  
Service of Haddon Heights,  
N. J.

**W**HILE various philanthropic agencies dispense charity along traditional lines, the Foster Parents have throughout the Plan's history clung stubbornly to its belief

— OH, SAY . . . —

When a representative (American) of the Foster Parents Plan recently visited the Plan's colony at Brabant, Belgium, she was surprised and delighted to be met by a lineup of 60 children all loudly humming The Star-Spangled Banner. (The children, of Belgian, French and German nationality, hummed the tune because they don't speak English). The Brabant colony lives in a 44-room converted castle, raises pigs, chickens, fruits and vegetables to supplement the diets of other children aided by the Plan.

—that these children not only need beds, blankets, medicine, clothes, shoes, food, but also families. Thus it insists on the correspondence—letters from the new "parents" to show that they care and understand.

This has worked where physical nourishment failed. It has brought psychological and emotional rebirth to communities of children who had grown to hate and fear an adult world that had robbed them of their own parents. It affords a step toward readjustment of the most difficult group of all European children—the "thankless children" who resist social workers because they have "lived so long foraging for themselves without discipline that they don't want to settle down, and have no religious belief or regard for anyone else's religion."

**T**ODAY there are 4,000 children in the Foster Parents' Plan—a small number compared with the tens of thousands of homeless and orphaned children of post-war Europe. But until the United Nations come along with a better plan, the Foster Parents will plug along on the theory that Americans, traditionally generous, will also act out of self-interest to help international peace and give some numbers of Europe's children a new start.

It is not a question of a family's "going without"—for Americans can say with old Socrates as he went his rounds at the auctions, "How many things there are which I do not need." What can an individual do to make his single act mean something? Perhaps what this writer has done—"adopt" a child.