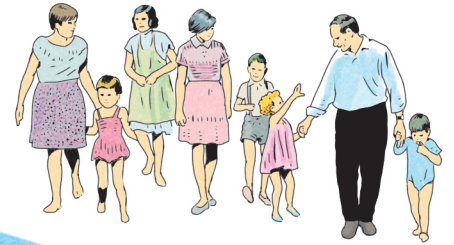




HERMANN GMEINER

An idea travels the world



Hermann Gmeiner is born in 1919 to a large family on a farm in Alberschwende, in the Austrian Vorarlberg. He is five when his mother dies in childbirth. His childhood is marked by the economic and social hardship of that time.

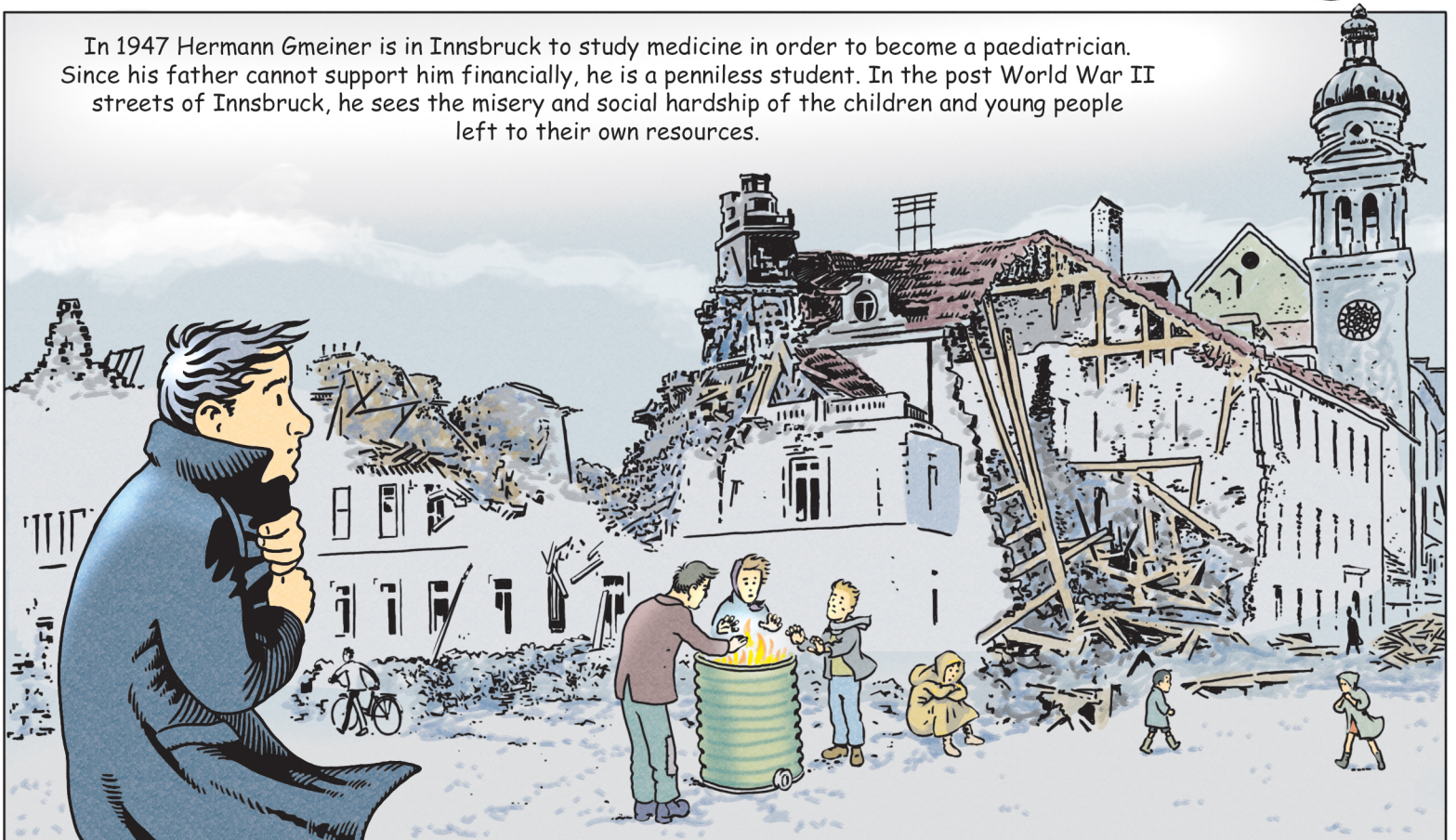
Fortunately, Hermann's eldest sister Elsa takes over the housekeeping and the care of her siblings so that the children can stay together in their home.



With the help of his teacher, Hermann - an intelligent inquisitive child - gets to attend a grammar school in the city. From now on, he needs to make his own living. But that wasn't keeping him from further conceptualising his plans.



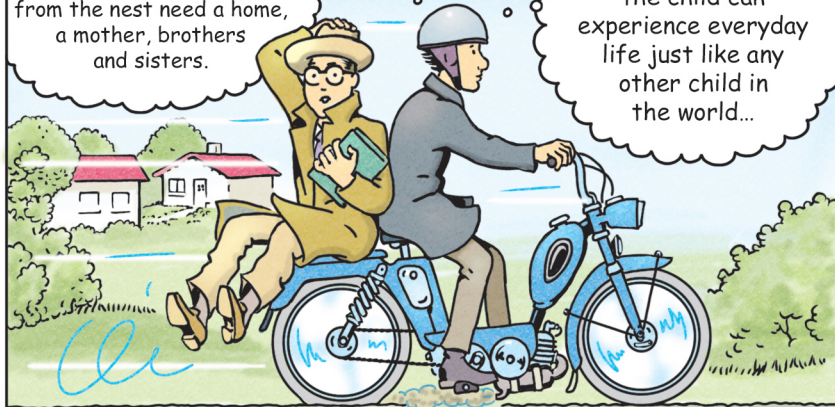
In 1947 Hermann Gmeiner is in Innsbruck to study medicine in order to become a paediatrician. Since his father cannot support him financially, he is a penniless student. In the post World War II streets of Innsbruck, he sees the misery and social hardship of the children and young people left to their own resources.



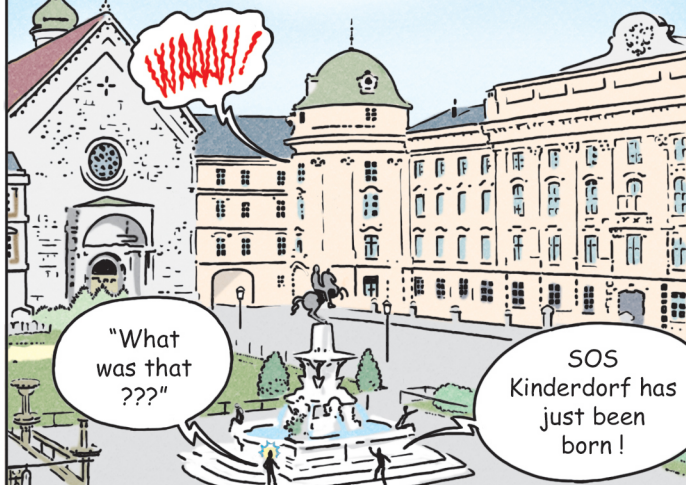
With his organisational and fundraising talents and his ability to motivate staff, Hermann dedicates himself more and more to helping these children. He stops his studies of medicine for lack of time. A vision begins to take shape: the vision of SOS. To make his vision come true Hermann roams the villages around Innsbruck with his faithful companion Fritz in search of SOS mother candidates.

These children and youngsters who have fallen from the nest need a home, a mother, brothers and sisters.

So that the child can experience everyday life just like any other child in the world...



On 25 April 1949 at Innsbruck's Imperial Palace, five men and two women found Societas Socialis, which will later be renamed SOS Children's Villages.

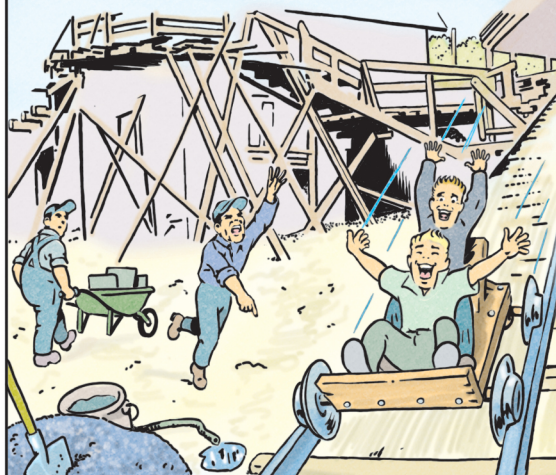


In 1949, the SOS idea is first implemented in Imst, Tyrol, with the construction of the first family house named Haus Frieden - the House of Peace.



© du selige, o du feöhliche ...

It is financed mainly by proceeds from the distribution of Christmas cards.



In 1951, five family houses are inaugurated, providing a new home for 40 children. By 1954, ten additional houses are built.



In 1963, after the Grain of Rice campaign, the first SOS Children's Village outside Europe is built in South Korea.



Today, SOS Children's Villages provides a range of services to support children and young people in difficult circumstances and advocates for the realisation of child rights around the world. In 2018, we reached 1,085,800 vulnerable children, adolescents and adults through a total of 2,601 programmes.



"SOS Children's Villages are the friendliest post-war miracle." Albert Schweitzer