



REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

SUPPLEMENT

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

THE ICRC RELIEF ACTION IN HUNGARY

Following the general survey of the International Committee's relief action in Hungary published in the December issue, the reader will find below the texts of the press releases concerning the relief measures on behalf of the Hungarian people put into effect by the International Committee during the past few weeks.

A further item of interest is that M. Roger Gallopin, Executive Director of the ICRC, arrived in Budapest on the evening of Sunday, January 6, on a visit of inspection. He has studied, in particular, the measures taken by the ICRC Delegation and the Hungarian Red Cross in Budapest for the distribution of relief supplies sent to Hungary by or through the International Red Cross.

December 14, 1956. — *The general strike which has affected Hungary during the last two days has not stopped the transport of Red Cross supplies between Vienna and Budapest. These have continued to move through Hungary at the planned rate under the direction of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Telephone communications between Geneva and Budapest have also been maintained.*

The ICRC, at the suggestion of its general delegate, Mr. Rutishauser, has strengthened the organization for distributing relief supplies in Hungary by appointing three more delegates,

all of Swiss nationality: Mr. Heinrich Bircher at Vienna and Mr. Ernst Fischer and Mr. Marcus Redli at Budapest.

The Hungarian doctors who are members of the Management Committee of the Hungarian Red Cross, have organized at Budapest under the direction of the ICRC a centre for distributiong insulin to diabetics. To ensure the steady functioning of this centre the Hungarian Red Cross will need to receive every month 4,000 ampoules of 200-unit unmodified insulin and 30,000 ampoules of 200-unit protamine zinc insulin.

December 19. — *The third programme of the International Committee of the Red Cross for the distribution of relief in Budapest started yesterday. It consists of supplying food parcels containing a fortnight's ration to 100,000 adults. The food value of this important additional food ration is between 800 to 1000 calories per head per day.*

The sending of supplies is being continued by means of lorries for the transport of blankets, powdered milk and light equipment; as regards coal, the transport by rail is now, apparently, becoming normal. A first goods train of 22 trucks, carrying mainly 375 tons of coal and 150 tons of clothing was able to reach Budapest early in the week.

December 21. — *Mr. E. W. Meyer, formerly ICRC Delegate in Berlin and now Director of the Foreign Relations Service of UNICEF in Paris, which kindly put his services at the disposal of the International Committee to direct the beginnings of the Red Cross relief action in Hungary, has just returned to Geneva to report on his mission before going back to his post in Paris.*

During his stay he replied to questions put by Radio Geneva and the National Broadcasting Corporation, dealing in particular with certain mistaken information which has appeared in the Press with regard to the ICRC relief action.

He stated that at no time had this action been hindered by the Hungarian authorities or by the Soviet troops, and that the relief had been distributed by the Hungarian Red Cross under the supervision of the ICRC Delegates and their assistants, num-

bering about twenty, so that donors could have every confidence with regard to the distribution of their gifts among the victims of the events.

December 28. — As is known, the International Committee of the Red Cross has been entrusted with carrying out in Hungary itself the great effort of international solidarity which events have called forth. It has to bear the considerable cost incurred in the transport of commodities and the supervision of the distribution of relief supplies by the Hungarian Red Cross, in accordance with the agreement signed by the Hungarian Government.

So far the greater part of the relief supplies distributed has been given by National Red Cross Societies, but several governmental and non-governmental organisations have also contributed to this charitable work.

Nevertheless, although enormous resources have been placed at the International Committee's disposal, it has only been possible to assist the most needy victims. In Budapest where the situation is by far the most serious, the lack of coal and milk in particular affects the general public, especially children and old people. For that reason the International Committee's first concern has been to supply fuel for hospitals and milk for infants. However, the daily ration of about 1 litre of milk supplied to 173,000 children under three years of age in the Hungarian capital represents some 600 tons of powdered milk per month, and about 9,000 tons of coal are required to heat hospitals only over the same period.

The ICRC is also arranging for school-children in the most damaged parts of Budapest to be given one hot meal daily. Since December 9, 50,000 children have been receiving this daily meal, and by about January 15 some 150,000 school-children will benefit. Moreover, since December 18, 100,000 needy persons have been given an additional ration equal to a food value of 800 to 1000 calories per day. The ICRC has already supplied 25,000 woollen blankets to hospital patients and the homeless, and is now preparing the distribution of another 200,000, but what are these figures against a background of 1,500,000 people living in a capital where broken windows and the lack of fuel make every dwelling cold? With the winter just begun, one cannot

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view without anxiety the huge task of international aid which still remains to be undertaken in Budapest.

At a time when New Year wishes are usually being exchanged, the ICRC wishes to call attention to the need for continuing and intensifying its action in Hungary, while expressing its warmest thanks to the Red Cross movement and all those who have already enabled it to alleviate the suffering of those in the greatest distress.

THE WORK OF THE ICRC IN THE NEAR EAST

Since the last issue of the *Revue internationale* appeared, the following press releases have been published by the ICRC concerning its humanitarian activities in the Near East.

December 14, 1956. — *In agreement with the Egyptian authorities, a few Israeli prisoners of war were visited by the delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross. These prisoners were included in the official list handed over by the Egyptian Government to the International Committee.*

The ICRC Delegation in Cairo continues its visits to civilian internees; blankets and clothing valued at 20,000 Swiss francs, a gift of the British Red Cross, have been distributed to 474 British internees.

December 14, 1956. — *Two medical aircraft, placed at the International Committee's disposal by the Italian authorities, will leave Cairo tomorrow, Saturday, for Tel Aviv, with a consignment of individual and collective relief supplies which will be distributed to Egyptian prisoners of war by the ICRC Delegation in Israel.*

On the return journey, the aircraft will take back to Egypt a second group of thirty seriously wounded Egyptian prisoners of war, who are being repatriated unconditionally. Like the first group of seriously wounded prisoners transported under the same conditions last week, it will be escorted by Dr. Louis Gaillard, delegate of the ICRC.

December 26, 1956. — *After visiting the Gaza area towards the end of November to ascertain whether the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 was being duly applied, Dr. L. A. Gaillard, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Israel, has just carried out a similar mission in the occupied areas in Sinai. On Christmas Day he was able, in particular, to visit the famous monastery of St. Catherine of Sinai which, according to some reports, had suffered in the events.*

Monsignor the Archimandrite Christophoros, who received Dr. Gaillard, stated that the monastery had been treated with respect and had suffered no damage; he assured Dr. Gaillard that there had been no looting and that all manuscripts were intact.

The delegate of the International Committee found that the occupying military authorities were supplying the monastery and the nomad or settled civilian population in the neighbouring region regularly with food.

December 28, 1956. — *Continuing his visits in occupied territory, Dr. Louis Gaillard, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, has been to El Arish, between Gaza and Port Said.*

According to information received, none of the 20,000 inhabitants of that area had been interned, and the population's food supplies were assured. The civilian hospital, now directed by Israeli doctors, apparently has the necessary medicaments it requires.

During his visit the ICRC delegate distributed milk and egg powder to children and to persons in need.

January 4, 1957. — *A certain number of stateless Jews having been led to leave Egypt by present circumstances, the International Committee of the Red Cross took steps to help by arranging for their departure and their transport by sea from Alexandria to Naples.*

Nearly a thousand stateless Jews, including about a hundred infants, embarked on January 2 on the Egyptian vessel « MISR », partly chartered by the ICRC and with one of its Delegates on board; they are due to arrive on Sunday, January 6, at Naples. Italian Red Cross officials will meet the passengers at Naples, and charitable Jewish organisations which are arranging for

their maintenance and temporary accommodation in Italy will help them to continue their journey.

January 7, 1957. — *On January 1 Dr. Louis Gaillard, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Israel, visited the town of Rafah in the Gaza area. He found that the Palestinian Arab refugees obtaining assistance from the United Nations were still receiving UNRWA help, and that the native Arab population of about 5,000 was, as persons of standing among them acknowledged, being humanely treated by the occupying authorities. Nearly 2,000 of these inhabitants are being assisted by Israel.*

As regards the six hundred civilian employees or workmen of Egyptian nationality, they are free to move about the city but suffer from lack of food. Following a meeting between the ICRC delegate, the representatives of this section of the population and the Israeli military authorities, Dr. Louis Gaillard distributed 15 tons of flour and three weeks' supplies of milk—and egg—powder among them. These relief supplies came directly from Geneva or had been purchased locally by the ICRC.

THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE IN ALGERIA

The *Revue internationale* has already had the occasion to describe the circumstances in which, as early as 1955 and later in May 1956, the ICRC sent delegates to Algeria whose duties were to visit places of detention where persons deprived of their liberty as a result of present events were being held.

In continuance of this work, the ICRC sent a third mission to Algeria from October 16 to November 3, 1956, consisting of M. Pierre Gaillard, Delegate, and Dr. Louis Gaillard, Medical Adviser. Between October 19 and 31, 1956, these delegates visited the centres where persons placed in assigned residence by the French authorities had been assembled, i.e. Berrouaghia, Lodi, Saint-Leu, Bossuet, Aflou and Djorf Centres, as well as Oran Hospital.

As on previous missions, the delegates of the International Committee were able to converse freely with the representatives of the persons in assigned residence ; games and sports requisites were sent by the ICRC Delegation to each of these centres. The French authorities, as on the previous occasions, gave the delegates every facility for carrying out their mission.

The points noted by the delegates and a few suggestions were included in the report on the visits intended for the French authorities. This report was handed over in Paris, on November 15, by M. Gaillard to M. Guy Mollet, Prime Minister, during the interview he was good enough to grant to the International Committee's delegate.

The ICRC has never ceased to endeavour, in particular through contacts with various prominent Algerians, to give assistance also to French military personnel and civilians held by the insurgents, and is pursuing its efforts in this connection. Last November two messages sent by French prisoners arrived in Geneva and were immediately forwarded to the addressees. The ICRC still hopes, with the co-operation of all concerned, to achieve something more substantial, such as the despatch of a mission which could visit the military or civilian prisoners and give them assistance.

THE RE-UNITING OF FAMILIES

On December 22, 1956, in Belgrade, 56 "Volksdeutsche" children were entrusted by the Yugoslav Red Cross Society to the care of Mr. H. Beckh, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the representatives of the German and Austrian Red Cross Societies, Mr. H. Christen and Dr. Kriemeswenger. Fifty-two of the children were joining their families in Germany and four in Austria.

It was the eleventh excellently organised convoy by the Yugoslav Red Cross for sending Volksdeutsche children back to their families. The total number of these children in Germany, Austria, France, the United Kingdom and other countries is now 2,328. It may be recalled that departures of adult "Volksdeutsche" take place regularly from Yugoslavia, and that Poland and Czechoslovakia give every facility for collective departures, with the object of re-uniting families.

THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS IN PICTURES

The illustrations in the January number of the "Revue internationale" are taken from an illustrated booklet just published by the ICRC. This booklet contains 30 pictures, each illustrating fundamental principles of the Conventions. The accompanying texts are printed, as may be seen, in 9 languages. The booklet is intended for distribution all over the world, through the Red Cross, Red Crescent und Red Lion and Sun Societies, governmental bodies and other organizations concerned. It may be obtained now from the ICRC headquarters in Geneva at the price of 1 Swiss franc. The ICRC will accept subscriptions for the booklet until 30 May, and if the number of orders received by then enables the ICRC to arrange for a second printing, the price could then be lowered to a figure to be announced later.

MACHINES IN THE SERVICE OF THE RED CROSS

In June last Mr. Thomas J. Watson, President of the International Business Machines Corporation, died in New York. The International Committee of the Red Cross sent a message of sympathy to the I.B.M., and asked for its sincere condolences to be conveyed to Mr. Watson's family. The message also recalled the extremely valuable help he had given to the Central Prisoners of War Agency during the Second World War. The Revue internationale wishes in this article to call to mind the work of the Section known from the beginning as the Watson Section in honour of the generosity of the President of the I.B.M.

The fact that the Central Prisoners of War Agency and the ICRC Relief Division were able to bring to a successful conclusion the overwhelming task which had fallen to their lot was, from the technical point of view, partly due to the kind gesture of Mr. Thomas J. Watson who, on learning in October 1939 that the ICRC was examining the possibility of using Hollerith machines, instructed the European Branch of the I.B.M. to place the equipment (Hollerith machines) and the necessary operators at the disposal of the Red Cross without payment.

These machines, designed mainly for statistical work (industrial and commercial statistics, censuses of populations, etc.), were, however, to be put to a new use by the ICRC, and to prove amazingly efficient in tabulating on a wide scale and with the strictest accuracy the millions of items of information (capture cards, telegrams, lists, evidence on regimental enquiries)

which soon began to flow in from all quarters to the Central Prisoners of War Agency in Geneva.

The Watson Section of the ICRC was set up in December 1939, and consisted of I.B.M. technicians who were to train the new personnel recruited by the ICRC and to direct and organise the work. The machines placed at the International Committee's disposal were mostly perforators, sorters and tabulators. After the preliminary work of encoding¹ information concerning prisoners of war or men missing in the front line, the perforating machine operators punched the encoded information on the cards, that is to say, by using a keyboard similar to that of an electric typewriter, they made a series of perforations in the card which corresponded to the figures or letters to be reproduced.

The perforated cards then passed through the sorters which, by means of an ingenious high-speed mechanism automatically separated and classified the cards of prisoners of war or missing according to unit (regiment, battalion, company), camp, army number, prisoner-of-war number, etc.

Finally, after being sorted into a given order the perforated cards were fed into the tabulators, which automatically drew up alphabetical or numerical lists, and reproduced in plain language the items of information punched on the cards.

The extraordinary rapidity of the machines (a sorter, for example, could handle and classify 24,000 cards per hour) enabled the Agency to devote itself, as from January 1941, to the enormous task of making regimental enquiries for the purpose of obtaining information on 40,000 French combatants missing after the campaigns of May and June 1940.

By means of the Hollerith machines, whose work we have just briefly described, the following lists were made out :

- (1) lists of 40,000 missing French combatants, classified by unit,
- (2) lists of 570,000 French prisoners of war, also classified by unit.

¹ In order to compress as much information as possible in the limited space of the perforated card, part of it has to be abridged by means of a cipher.

To each of the 570,000 prisoners the Agency sent a list of the missing of his unit, accompanied by a circular letter, requesting him, in a spirit of good-comradeship, to search his memory and to supply any information which might help in tracing the missing men mentioned on the list. This vast undertaking was not without result. The ICRC received in this way over 170,000 items of information from which it was able to extract valuable details enabling the tracing of more than 30,000 missing men, most of whom had been killed during the fighting.

But the *French Section* was not the only one to benefit by the ever-increasing activity of the *Watson Section*. The Agency's other national sections (British, American, Italian, etc.) also had recourse to the Hollerith machines to draw up alphabetical lists of names and numerical lists of army numbers and prisoner-of-war numbers.

For example, the *British Section* found that the drawing up of numerical lists of army numbers was of invaluable assistance by enabling it to identify numerous prisoners reported under mis-spelt names by the Detaining Power. In addition to alphabetical or numerical lists the British Section also had lists made of prisoners of war classified by their country of origin (United Kingdom, Dominions and Colonies) which were of great assistance in the work of filing and tracing, which was made particularly difficult by the fact that the units fighting with the British forces came from so many different countries.

The *American (USA) Section*, set up in December 1941, had the immediate benefit of the experience acquired in this field; its card index was built up exclusively of cards made out by the Hollerith machines. The lists of prisoners classified by army numbers were also to prove most useful in identifying American prisoners of war.

The lists made out by the *Watson Section*, whether alphabetical or numerical, were then, and still are, remarkably efficient aids to the work of the Agency's national sections, for rectifying errors in filing which are always possible in ordinary card-indexes, reconciling items of information which appear contradictory, guiding searches and directing enquiries.

It was not only to the Central Prisoners of War Agency that the *Watson Section* gave the efficient assistance described above. It was also a valuable auxiliary to the International Committee's Relief Division. Thanks to the Hollerith machines, this Division was able to exercise constant and strict control over the tons of commodities which the International Committee received and distributed, to make out statements of stocks of goods classified according to their origin, destination or nature, to issue accurate statistics of the distribution of parcels in the camps, and to ascertain by the automatic checking of receipts, whether the gifts had duly reached those for whom they were intended.

At the peak of its activity, the *Watson Section* was run by some 70 to 80 workers only, including 4 technicians placed at the International Committee's disposal by the I.B.M. ; nevertheless, between 1939 and 1946, 7,515,073 cards were perforated and 66,440,399 were sorted, of which 24,462,741 went through the tabulators.

For over a century many thinkers have stressed the inhuman nature of machine work. Nevertheless, while technical progress increased a hundredfold the destructive force of weapons used during the last world conflict, machines in Geneva worked unceasingly in the service of the Red Cross to alleviate the anguish born of war.

After the close of hostilities, Mr. Thomas J. Watson visited the International Committee on several occasions. Having seen for himself the good use made of machines designed for a different purpose, he could rest assured that by his generous gesture he had made a real contribution to the accomplishment of a great humanitarian undertaking.

M. K.