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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

GREEKS RETURN TO THEIR COUNTRY

Geneva, September 2, 1954.

On August 17 last, 916 Greek nationals, who had been in Rumania for several years and now desired to return to their native land, arrived in Salonica on board a vessel placed at the disposal of the Greek Red Cross by the Greek Government. This was the conclusion of an extensive repatriation scheme carried out under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies.

Two days before, in the port of Constanza, the Rumanian Red Cross, represented by its Vice-President, M^{me} A. Mesaros, and several of its members, had given these Greek nationals into the care of a Greek Red Cross mission headed by Admiral D. G. Phocas. Mr. F. Ehrenhold, Delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, and Mr. B. Aaman of the Swedish Red Cross, Delegate of the League of Red Cross Societies, were present and gave their collaboration.

Several difficulties which arose at the time of embarkation were overcome, thanks to the goodwill shown by all concerned. The Rumanian Red Cross for instance kindly obtained permission for the Greeks leaving Rumania to take with them (in addition to their luggage and in spite of regulations in force in this connection) some small sums in foreign currency which they had in their possession.

The repatriated persons were received and looked after by the Greek Red Cross Society whose Secretary-General, Mr. G. Mindler, was present, Mr. A. Lambert representing the ICRC and the League on this occasion. During the brief ceremony the Minister for Social Welfare gave an address of welcome and expressed the gratitude of his Government to the International Red Cross.

*THE RED CROSS AND THE REFUGEES
IN INDOCHINA*

Geneva, September 9, 1954.

The Government and Red Cross of the Viet Nam State have recently sent appeals to the international Red Cross agencies in Geneva on behalf of the refugees from Tonking who are flowing into Southern Indochina, especially the Saigon area.

In view of the widespread distress suffered by several hundreds of thousands of persons affected by the direct consequences of hostilities, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the General Secretariat of the League of Red Cross Societies immediately brought the facts to the notice of National Red Cross Societies and asked for their help in organising relief action.

A first appeal was launched by the International Committee to certain of these Societies on August 27 last. On August 31 the League made a similar appeal to the charity of all National Societies. These two messages indicated the most urgent needs, in particular medicaments, clothing and material for building light shelters.

Several National Red Cross Societies—Australia, the Philippines, India, Canada, South Africa, Japan, Norway, New Zealand and Switzerland—have already given a favourable response to the appeals. The Red Cross Societies of Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States and Ireland have stated that the appeals made to them are under consideration.

The practical organisation of the relief work has been planned by the two institutions in the following manner: the delegate of the League on the spot will deal with the reception and the coordination of relief supplies in South Viet Nam, in conjunction with the International Committee's delegate, who is already in Saigon: the International Committee is preparing to assume

similar duties in the Northern Zone, which has suffered the most from the recent conflict.

In this connection the International Committee offered its services to the Democratic Viet Nam Republic, with a view to possible relief action in behalf of refugees and of elements among the civilian population who have been affected by events.

HENRI COURSIER

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THE SLAVE QUESTION

INTRODUCTION

The International Convention for the prohibition of slavery of September 25, 1926, defines slavery as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised". Strictly speaking this is a very narrow juridical definition for such an extensive phenomenon.

A number of institutions or customs similar to slavery continue even today to cause relations between men which appear to us to be incompatible with the respect due to the human being. The explanation is that if all men are "born free and equal in dignity and rights" the facts are still far from corresponding everywhere to this generous formula.

Slavery, which is to be found at the origin of all communities, corresponds to that division of labour which is essential to a uniform organisation. The family itself, the initial cell of human groups, calls for the subservience of its members to the head of the family, and traces of this attitude may still be found in the patriarchal conceptions of a part of humanity.

But it is war, under all latitudes, which has made the greatest contribution to the development of slavery. It should be noted moreover that the fact of reducing vanquished enemies to slavery is a mark of definite progress, compared to the extermination to which they were originally condemned. Reaffirming to some extent this origin of slavery, the *Institutes* of Justinian (Book I, Chapter III, Par. 2) explain that *Servi autem ex eo*

*appellati sunt, quod imperatores captivos vendere jubent ac per hoc servare nec occidere solent*¹.

A division of labour is thus established between the free man who makes war, attacks the enemy or defends the city, and the slave who works to feed the warrior.

But in the course of society's development, and in particular with the disappearance of primitive insecurity, slavery takes on the odious aspect of the exploiting of man by man. Hence the efforts of moralists and legislators to abolish it, or at least to render its practice as humane as possible.

Slavery appears to us therefore as an absolutely general phenomenon. Its extent varies with the stage of evolution of society and this explains its continued existence, in various forms, in many parts of the world, according to the prevalent ethnical and economical conditions, in spite of the measures taken in other, more advanced, regions to abolish it.

The suppression of slavery wherever it exists corresponds to moral and legal requirements as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ; but between law and the practice of law there often remains a painful reality of obstacles to be overcome.

The slave question still exists therefore. It would even seem that since the signature of the 1926 Convention, the Second World War, with the events which led up to it and its subsequent effects, marked a regression which has now to be faced when organising the world of the future.

In order to understand fully the general scope of the question, and to grasp its particularities, it must be studied in chronological order.

We shall see, first of all, that slavery, which was the basis of the economic equilibrium of the old world, eventually became an institution subject to the rules of law. This was the case everywhere, in Egypt, China and India, for the Hebrews and the peoples of the Middle East, as well as in Greece and in Rome.

¹ Slaves take their name (*servi*) from the fact that the generals have the prisoners sold, thus sparing them (*servare*) instead of putting them to death.

The coming of Christianity marked a new stage in the history of slavery. The idea that every human being is created in the image of God—and this is the basis of that human dignity which every man should respect in his fellowman as in himself—is in fundamental contradiction with an institution which assimilates certain human beings to animals or objects. St. Paul's announcement that there were "neither bond nor free" was an indication for the Roman world of a great transformation.

It did not follow however that slavery was immediately abolished. This ancestral practice was linked with interests of all descriptions which were still too powerful to yield immediately to the reprobation of the Church. The latter had at least sufficient influence gradually to inspire a new law which, towards the end of the middle Ages, in the principal States of Christian Europe, took a bold stand against slavery and proclaimed the automatic emancipation of any slave who had entered those States.

The effects of this influence were however limited. As a result of the struggle between Islam and the Christian world, and the raids of Barbary pirates, Christian slaves were to be found until quite recently in the convict prisons of Africa and, reciprocally, Moorish galley-slaves on the Pope's vessels. The discovery of America brought the maritime Powers face to face with economic problems the solution to which was not always sought in conformity with Christian principles. The oppression of the Indians and the slave traffic are historical facts of a gravity which cannot be denied.

It was then realised that Christian ethics alone were not sufficient to check the personal aims which opposed such principles. The campaign against slavery, if it were to be effective, had to become international. Just as the secularization and transposition of Christian ethics within the domain of the law had formed international law, so Christian principles, reviewed by the philosophers of the XVIIIth Century, led to the renowned Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen which, following upon the Declaration of Rights in the United States and proclaimed for all men and for all time, opened a new era in the life of nations.

In 1815 the Declaration of the Congress of Vienna concerning slavery indicated the beginning of a third period during which we shall see international action, by a series of bilateral and multilateral agreements, result finally in the abolition of slavery by the terms of the Convention of September 25, 1926, under the auspices of the League of Nations.

Nevertheless the question is not yet solved, or all forms of slavery suppressed. A final chapter will describe the situation at the present time and the efforts made by the United Nations to deliver humanity once and for all from the scourge of slavery.

I

SLAVERY IN ANCIENT TIMES

Slavery was known and practised by all the societies of ancient times.

It existed in all the great eastern monarchies, such as Egypt, Chaldea and Assyria, and also in China and India.

The Assyrians in particular, who systematically made war a national industry, brought back thousands of slaves after each of their campaigns. The latter appear, in chains, in the bas-reliefs which have come down to us—evidence of a warlike and powerful civilisation.

In China slavery developed with conquests. At first, about the XIIth century before Christ, it was merely a matter of public servitude in carrying out sentences imposed by law. Individual ownership of slaves then increased, either through war in foreign lands, or on account of poverty which forced the poor to sell themselves or to sell their children. At the close of the IIIrd century before Christ the Han Decrees proclaimed the right to sell oneself or one's children.

Although the master had an absolute right of ownership over his slave which allowed him to sell the slave or the latter's children, moral principles in China intervened fairly soon to limit the consequences of this law. In 35 A.D. Kwang-Wu

protected the lives of slaves and prevented their mutilation, stating that " among the creatures of heaven and earth man is the most noble ; those who kill their slaves cannot depreciate their crime ; those who dare to brand them with the iron shall be judged in conformity with the law ; men thus marked shall become citizens again " .

Emancipation was not infrequent and numerous cases are cited where, after deadly combats, the princes liberated slaves *en masse* in order to bring their armies up to strength.

It should be noted that this shows the incompatibility of military conditions with slave labour. For a slave to be allowed to fight, he must first be liberated, for only free men have the right to assume this honour and duty. This was the case in all the ancient civilizations and it will be recalled that, after the disaster of Cannes, the Romans preferred to emancipate a great number of slaves, in order to rebuild their army, rather than make a peace which would have given them back the prisoners taken by Hannibal.

The life of slaves in China was no doubt not too hard a one, for it is recorded that in the scale of theological virtues " to speak harshly to a slave counts as one fault ; not to care for him in sickness and to burden him with work, ten faults ; to prevent him marrying, one hundred faults ; to refuse to allow him to buy his freedom, fifty faults " .

The Chinese being naturally peace-loving, slavery developed more slowly in China than in the territories of warlike nations. It would appear, in any case, that free work had preponderance over slave labour, and that the latter was limited to domestic service only.

In India the Laws of Manu make a distinction between seven types of slave—

- the prisoner of war,
- the man who gives his services voluntarily to another in exchange for food, clothing and lodging,
- the son of a female slave born in the owner's household,
- one received as a gift or purchased,
- one inherited by a son from his father,

one who has been reduced to slavery through his inability to pay the forfeit.

Slavery among the Hebrews dates back to the legendary era of the Patriarchs.

Abraham possessed slaves whom he had purchased or who were born in his household. They were inherited, like a herd of cattle, by his son Isaac.

The slaves' status was governed by the Laws of Moses. As in China, a free man was allowed to sell himself and to sell his children. It was however forbidden to reduce to slavery a Jew who had suffered defeat in a civil war. On the other hand foreign prisoners of war could be sold. The slave was protected by the law. He ranked as a man and the owner who killed him was punished by death. Like his master he had the right to rest on the Sabbath Day. He could marry and have a family and, moreover, he had the right to demand his freedom after six years of service. At the beginning of the seventh year of service, if the slave wished to renounce this right, he went before his master and had his ear pierced as a mark of servitude. This custom shows the warlike origin of slavery—to mark his victory the conqueror originally mutilated his enemy; later he merely made a symbolic gesture; piercing the ear instead of cutting it off¹.

Homer's poems give a wealth of information concerning the origin of slavery and the life of slaves in Greece. They describe how the Greeks raided the shores of Asia and Sicily, and carried off slaves. The Trojan War was an expedition of this type, and the essential theme of the Illiad is Achilles' wrath concerning Briseis the slave. The Odyssey abounds in details which show us the humane way slaves were treated in the patriarchal society of the Heroic Age. The guardian of Ulysses' flocks, Emmaeus, was bought from pirates and was brought up in the house and with the children of his master, Laertes. On the return of Telemachus he embraced him as if he had been his son. He possessed nothing, but disposed as

¹ In the same way the Burmese, who considered themselves to be the slaves of their sovereign, had the custom of piercing their ears.

he pleased of the property in his care ; he even erected buildings of which Laertes and Telemachus had no knowledge.

Wars between Greeks were continuous and were the cause of the rapid decrease in numbers of the free rural population which had still been preponderate in Attica at the time of the Median Wars. The peasants took refuge within the walls of the towns and the owners of land had to cultivate it by slave labour.

The State itself possessed a great number of slaves whom it used for work in the mines or the cultivation of land. Thus a proletariat of slave workers was created and these slaves received far less humane treatment than domestic slaves.

The census taken by Demetrius of Phalera in Athens, early in the IIIrd century before Christ, showed 20,000 citizens, 10,000 foreigners and 400,000 slaves. These figures give some idea of the great importance of slavery in the life of the Greek cities.

The working class was almost exclusively composed of slaves. Demosthenes, whose father was a wealthy manufacturer, possessed two workshops where weapons were made ; one employed 33 slaves, the other 20. He tells us that these slaves were worth on an average 300 drachma each—or the price of thirty oxen. Their market value corresponded to the ransom for prisoners of war, which steadily increased from 200 drachma during the Median War period, to 300 and 500 drachma at the time of Philip of Macedonia.

In law the slave was his owner's property ; he had no civic rights, no married or family status, no property. In actual fact, many slaves attained an enviable standard of living. By engaging in commerce in their masters' names they gained small fortunes which were the property of the owner, but the possession of which enabled them to live in luxury. " It may seem surprising " wrote Xenophon (Republic of Athens, I, 10) " that slaves should be allowed to live in luxury and some in splendour ; this practice is nevertheless based on reason. In a country where the navy calls for considerable expenditure, one is obliged to spare the slaves, and even to leave them their freedom, if one wishes to benefit by the fruit of their labour ".

In the course of time slaves came under the protection of the law. The penalty for killing a slave was as severe as for killing a free man.

When the owner made abusive use of his right to chastise, the slave who had been ill-treated could ask to be sold. He was given a counsel for his defence, and took sanctuary in the Temple of Theseus until his case was tried. It is however true that, except in cases of bad treatment, the slave, having no personal status, could take no action in court. His evidence was worthless and he could be tortured.

This inhuman lot was a source of embarrassment to Plato, who wrote (Laws VI) : " The question of slavery is embarrassing in all respects. The reasons set forth are good in one sense and bad in another, for they prove both the utility and the danger of keeping slaves... It is not surprising that one is undecided in one's choice... I can see but two expedients, the first is not to have slaves of one nationality only... the second is to treat them well, both in their and in one's own interests. This good treatment consists in not allowing oneself to commit offences against them and in being, if possible, even more just towards them than towards our equals ".

Aristotle gives us, in his writings and by his deeds, the fair measure of ancient wisdom in regard to slavery. He agreed to war being waged on inferior races in order to procure slaves, but like Plato, he considered that it was not proper for Greeks to reduce one another to slavery (for fear that, divided, they might themselves fall under the domination of the barbarians). On his death-bed he emancipated five slaves and bequeathed eight.

His doctrine, although it calls for the humane treatment of the slaves, tends to justify by philosophical argument the permanent condition of slavery. He considers that the highest precedence should be given to the developement of intellect and virtue, but this search for moral perfection implies leisure. The citizen must be freed from worry about the necessities of life, and part of the State should undertake agriculture and industry, as well as private service. This part of the State is the slave class. Thus the family necessarily consists of three persons ; the man at the head, the woman who perpetuates

it and the slave who serves it. The slave is as it were therefore part of his master, and Aristotle adds this essential comment : " The master is only the master in relation to the slave ; the slave, on the contrary, is not only the slave in relation to the master, he is one with his master... With an instinct for preservation, Nature created some beings to command and others to obey. By her desire the being endowed with foresight commands with authority, and the being whose physical faculties enable him to obey orders acts as a slave ; at this point the master's interests blend with those of the slave ".

The same conclusion was reached in Roman Law. The *Institutes of Justinian* (I,III,2) state : *Servitus autem est constitio juris gentium* ¹.

In their conquest of the ancient world the Romans, a military race, carried slavery to its highest peak of development. By the victories of Paulus Aemilius, seventy Greek towns were destroyed and their inhabitants reduced to slavery. This also happened after the fall of great cities such as Carthage and Jerusalem. The flow of slave-labour not only supplied Rome with domestic servants (who were in general fairly well treated) but also with the bulk of the gladiators and of the agricultural labourers on the great rural estates or *latifundia*.

In comparison with the domestic slaves, the lot of the rural proletariat tended to be a wretched one. Old Catos' harsh treatment of his slaves has become proverbial. He recommends that they should be sold, like old horses or scrap-iron, when they have lost their youthful vigour, without any regard to the services they have rendered.

Such treatment explains the slave revolts which on several occasions threatened the power of Rome. In Thrace for two years Spartacus, with 70,000 men at his command, held at bay the armies of the Senate, and the capture of Rome by Alric early in the Vth Century was partly due to the revolt of the Goth slaves, of whom there were a great many in the city.

However, the philosophical schools of Rome, and in Greece, were not without some scruples in regard to slavery.

¹ Slavery is an institution of the law of nations.

They taught that slaves should be given humane and gentle treatment and it is certain that in the capital of the Roman Empire, as in Athens, some slaves led a comfortable and even opulent life. Emancipation was moreover frequently practised and under Nero it was freed slaves who governed the Empire. Before then poets and philosophers (Terence, Phaedra) had been emancipated by their masters. It is true that these masters were Augustus and Scipio and the favourable impression created by such examples cannot be taken as a general standard.

All things considered, in Rome the slaves remained what they had been in Aristotle's opinion—persons without legal status, the living part of a master from whom they could receive good or evil but whose absolute authority might well have a corrupting effect.

The Stoics nobly declared that "he who is a slave and accepts his fate is no slave", but this was merely an aristocratic attitude which was in general far above the poor slaves' comprehension. It is however interesting to note, because at the dawn of the Christian era, it already proclaimed a spiritual world, detached from the grasping instincts of the material world, a conception which was to raise a new hope in the hearts of the most unfortunate.

(to be continued.)
