



REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

SUPPLEMENT

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE AND THE REPATRIATION OF KOREANS RESIDENT IN JAPAN

On August 11, 1959, the International Committee of the Red Cross made known its decision to "lend its assistance to the Japanese Red Cross with a view to preparing the repatriation of those Koreans resident in Japan who express the wish to proceed to a place of their choice in their country of origin". On December 14, 1959, at the port of Niigata, in the presence of delegates of the ICRC, a first embarkation took place of Koreans bound for Chongjin in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Since then the repatriation operations have continued and the total number of Koreans who have thus left Japan exceeds 10,000.

As these repatriations under the red cross emblem have grown to fairly considerable proportions, the time seems to have come for taking a first view of the results achieved so far, and considering the position.

It will be remembered that, with a view to defining its attitude in this matter, the ICRC issued a press-release on March 13, 1959, which was widely circulated and published in the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*¹. We will merely quote the last paragraph which is of special importance: "The International Committee is not concerned with problems of state sovereignty, nationality and other questions of international law which come within the sole competence of governments. It considers, however, in conformity with humanitarian

¹ April 1959.

principles and resolutions adopted by International Conferences of the Red Cross, that it should be possible for every individual to return to a place of his choice in his fatherland if he freely expresses his wish to do so ”.

Early in April, a delegation of the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea arrived in Geneva to meet the representatives of the Japanese Red Cross. The meetings were held in a conference room which the ICRC had placed at the disposal of the two delegations, while stating that it would abstain from taking part in the discussions. In addition, the International Committee informed both the parties that it would take no decision as to its possible participation in the proposed repatriations, and the arrangements for these operations, so long as they themselves had reached no agreement on the matter.

Following these negotiations which lasted from April 13 to June 24, the delegations of the two Red Cross Societies (Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) concluded an agreement on the basis of the free choice of residence, and the principles of the Red Cross, in order to proceed with the repatriation of Koreans resident in Japan, in conformity with the freely expressed wish of those concerned. This agreement, signed provisionally in Geneva, was formally ratified in Calcutta on August 13, 1959.

The agreement set forth the definition of the persons entitled to ask for repatriation (*Art. 1*), the general conditions for the deposit (*Art. 2 (1)*) or the withdrawal (*Art. 2 (2)*) of applications as well as the role of observer and adviser to the Japanese Red Cross which both parties wished to entrust to the ICRC (*Art. 3 (3)*). The provisions dealt with embarkation formalities (*Art. 4 and 5*), free transport of persons and luggage, exemption from customs duties (*Art. 6*) and the conditions for the stay at the embarkation port of the representatives of the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (*Art. 7*). Finally it was stipulated that the text of the agreement should be published (*Art. 8*) and that it should be valid for one year and three months from the date of signature (*Art. 9*).

Early in August, the ICRC informed the Japanese Red Cross that it was willing to lend its assistance for preparing the repa-

triation of those Koreans resident in Japan who expressed the wish to proceed to a place of their choice in their country of origin. It also specified, however, that its decision implied no approval or disapproval of the agreement concluded on June 24 between the Red Cross Societies of Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a result of negotiations in which the International Committee itself took no part. It merely ascertained that it was the intention of both parties concerned to base their agreement on the principle whereby every person should be free to choose his place of residence and to return to his country if he so desired.

At the same time the ICRC recalled the assurances received from the Government and the Red Cross of Japan in regard to the conditions in which the free choice of the persons concerned would be guaranteed, and also the position of the Koreans who chose to remain in Japan.

The ICRC referred also to the assurances received from the Government and the Red Cross of the Republic of Korea concerning the repatriation of those who preferred to proceed to South Korea. According to these declarations the authorities in Seoul were prepared to receive Koreans repatriated from Japan as soon as the necessary agreements had been concluded with the Japanese Government.

The position of the ICRC was defined in a press-release issued on August 11, 1959, which also announced the forthcoming departure of a mission to Japan ¹.

This mission was undertaken by Dr. Marcel Junod, Vice-President of the ICRC, who arrived in Tokyo on August 23. In agreement with the Japanese Red Cross and the Japanese authorities, he made arrangements for the International Committee's participation in the proposed repatriation operations. Before returning to Europe, he was joined by Dr. Otto Lehner, who assumed the direction of the special mission of the ICRC in Japan, which a few weeks later was composed of some 20 persons.

¹ See *Revue internationale*, August and November, 1959.

The Japanese Red Cross published, early in September, a hand-book entitled "Guide-book for Returnees" which gave detailed particulars of the procedure for repatriation, set forth the three possibilities open to everyone concerned (to proceed to North or South Korea or to remain in Japan) and made provisions to ensure the freedom of choice. The Guide-book also provided that every applicant for repatriation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should confirm his wish to leave in the presence of a representative of the Japanese Red Cross and a delegate of the ICRC, in an interview without witnesses, just before his embarkation at the port of Niigata on the Japanese coast. It was specified that, in addition to this interview, held in a room set apart for the purpose, every person was entitled to approach a delegate of the ICRC at any time and to speak with him without witnesses. After being approved by Dr. Junod, the Guide-book (illustrated with drawings for a better understanding of the text) was very widely circulated throughout Japan.

In response to an invitation received before he left Switzerland, the Vice-President of the ICRC also went to Seoul, where he met with a cordial welcome. He had occasion to converse with Dr. Syngman Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea, Dr. Chang Whan Sohn, President of the National Red Cross Society, and various other leading figures. During the discussions, these persons stated—as they had previously done—their entire disapproval of any repatriation to the north of the country.

On September 21, 1959, the Japanese Red Cross started to open its 365 centres (situated in all parts of the Japanese archipelago) for the registration of Koreans wishing to go to North Korea. However, as a result of reservations made in various Korean circles in Japan on some points of the procedure for repatriation as provided by the Japanese Red Cross, at first very few Koreans applied to the centres opened in their behalf.

For their part the representatives (all Swiss nationals) of the special mission of the ICRC started their visits to the principal registration centres. Accompanied by representatives of the Japanese Red Cross, they made sure that the poster informing

the Koreans of the choice of residence open to them was duly displayed on the premises. Further, they assured themselves that the organisation of the offices responded to the general directions issued by the Japanese Red Cross and the fundamental principles set forth by the ICRC.

After a few adjustments had been made to the procedure for registration with a view to settling the difference of opinion, the operations commenced in earnest; 4,500 applications had been registered by November 5 and by December 15 the number of Koreans who wished to be repatriated to North Korea had reached 6,200.

As, in the interval, it became necessary for Dr. Lehner to return to his previous duties, early in November he was replaced at the head of the delegation by Mr. André Durand, who had on many occasions carried out important missions of the ICRC in Asia.

The first special trains bringing Koreans registered for repatriation to North Korea (accompanied by delegates of the ICRC) arrived at Niigata early in December from various parts of Japan. The arrangements made for the period previous to embarkation were then put into effect.

After being received at the Japanese Red Cross Centre, the Koreans confirmed, in the presence of a representative of the Society and a delegate of the ICRC, their wish to proceed to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They were then given an emigration certificate, after which they complied with the customs and police formalities. Those who wished to do so still had the possibility of receiving visits in the camp from relatives, or of speaking privately with the delegate of the ICRC.

On December 14, under the protection of a large police escort, the Koreans on the point of departure were taken without any particular incidents to the assembly centre at the embarkation port, where many of their friends and compatriots were able to accompany them, for the last time, to the quay-side; 975 persons embarked on two Soviet vessels chartered by the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; the next day they arrived at Chongjin, on the north-east coast of Korea.

On December 21, a further group of 976 Koreans embarked at Niigata in the same conditions. Mention may be made of two incidents which occurred on that occasion: a young girl of 16 informed the Red Cross representatives that she had been registered against her will and expressed the wish to remain in Japan. She was sent back to her home without further ado. On the other hand, the head of the ICRC mission postponed the departure of two girls under sixteen, unaccompanied, until they could be placed in the care of their parents or guardian.

On December 28, a group of 991 Koreans left Japan in the same manner; before they embarked, the head of the ICRC delegation again kept back a Korean who had not registered in the required manner.

Thus, by the end of 1959, nearly three thousand Koreans had been repatriated to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Their departure took place in conformity with the regulations laid down by the Japanese Red Cross, which gave those who wished to do so the possibility of changing their mind until the last check was made at Niigata. In fact, about sixty of the persons registered did not present themselves for the three first embarkations.

From January onwards the repatriations have been continued without any noteworthy incidents. As stated, by the end of February the number of Koreans who had embarked for North Korea had reached nearly ten thousand. Since then the registrations and departures have continued.

REUNITING OF FAMILIES

Reference has been made on several occasions in the *Revue internationale* to an action by the International Committee of the Red Cross after the end of the Second World War. The purpose of this action is to reunite families or to help towards the reunion of members of families dispersed by the events of war, and up to the end of 1959 it had enabled over 370,000 persons of German origin or "Volksdeutsche" to join their relatives in several other countries. It is being continued in conjunction with National Red Cross Societies: however, as part of this work has now come to a close, we wish to give a brief description of the undertaking and to recall the very great and efficient part played by the Yugoslav Red Cross in this connection.

* * *

Thirteen departures of children from Yugoslavia have been organised by the National Society of that country¹. The last enabled sixteen young "Volksdeutsche" to leave Yugoslavia to join their parents; thirteen went to the German Federal Republic, two to the German Democratic Republic, and one will join his family in Australia. These young people, accompanied by representatives of the Yugoslav Red Cross, arrived on December 13 at Piding, at the Austro-Bavarian frontier, where they were placed in charge of Mr. H. C. Beckh, Delegate of the ICRC,

¹ Six previous departures had been arranged by the Yugoslav authorities.

accompanied by representatives of the Red Cross Societies of Austria and the German Federal Republic.

This departure, as for previous groups, had been organised by the Yugoslav Red Cross and brought to 2,400 the number of unaccompanied children and young people who left Jugoslavia to join their parents. They went to the German Federal Republic, the German Democratic Republic, Austria, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Switzerland and some overseas countries.

This action, which has now come to an end, was started ten years ago, after the ICRC had drawn the attention of the authorities in Belgrade to the urgent nature of this problem. Since then contact has been maintained through various missions between Jugoslavia—where the authorities and the Red Cross adopted a most understanding attitude towards the matter—and the International Committee.

For their part, the National Societies of the countries where “*Volksdeutsche*” families were living, in conjunction with ICRC delegations in various places, maintained contacts between families and transmitted to Geneva requests for their children who were still in Jugoslavia to join them. The requests were accompanied by all the information available concerning these children.

At Belgrade, the delegates of the ICRC examined each case with the Yugoslav Red Cross, which also endeavoured to bring the operation to a successful conclusion. Each child for whom a request had been sent to Geneva and transmitted to Belgrade was able to leave with one of the groups of young people as soon as he had been traced.

Apart from this work in behalf of children, another action (also put in motion in Geneva) was started in 1952 for the purpose of reuniting adults among the German ethnical minority established in Jugoslavia with their relatives in other countries. In this case also it had been possible, through the intermediary of the ICRC, for an agreement to be concluded between the Governments of the German Federal Republic and Jugoslavia, whereby some 60,000 “*Volksdeutsche*” have left Jugoslavia.

According to the terms of this agreement—which was later applied in a similar manner for departures to other countries of asylum—the families concerned took with them their own children or their grandchildren or nephews or nieces.

* * *

The end of such transfers of children does not, however, signify that the transfer of adults from Jugoslavia has come to a close. Although this movement is not being carried on at the same rate as a year ago, nevertheless about two hundred and fifty persons leave Jugoslavia every month and pass through the frontier transit camp at Piding. In fact the Jugoslav authorities keep strictly to the agreement mentioned above, which stipulates that every "Volksdeutscher" who wishes to join his family in another country may leave Jugoslavia.

The action for the reuniting of families (which represents one of the most practical examples of the great humanitarian effort made after the war, under the auspices of the Red Cross, to end the suffering of those who had lost their families and their homes) is therefore still in progress.

AN ICRC PUBLICATION

COMMENTARY

on

THE THIRD GENEVA CONVENTION OF 1949

In 1959, the International Committee of the Red Cross published in French a *Commentary on the Third Geneva Convention of 1949, relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*. The English translation of this work, comprising 764 pages, is now available¹.

The *Commentary* follows on those already published by the ICRC on the First Convention (which appeared in 1952), and the Fourth Convention (1958). The Third Convention embodies rules, some of which had already been set forth in the Hague Regulations of 1907 and were subsequently repeated and expanded in the 1929 Convention; at the present time, seventy-seven States have ratified or acceded to the Convention and are bound by its provisions. Thus it has virtually attained universality, and it was therefore appropriate that a systematic study should be made of the 143 Articles which make up the Third Convention. The International Committee of the Red Cross, which prepared the draft taken by the authors as a basis for the 1929 Convention, and later the draft which led to the 1949 Convention, was particularly well qualified to undertake it.

Under the general editorship of Mr. Jean S. Pictet, Doctor of Laws, Director for General Affairs of the ICRC and the author of numerous publications regarding the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions, the *Commentary* was prepared by Mr. Jean de Preux, Doctor of Laws, member of the Legal Department

¹ Published by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1960. Price Sw. fr. 35.— bound, Sw. fr. 30.— paper-backed edition.

of the International Committee, who is the principal author. Contributions were also made by Mr. F. Siordet, Vice-President of the ICRC, who wrote the commentary on the Articles common to the four Conventions and gave general assistance for the whole study, Mr. C. Pilloud, Assistant Director for General Affairs, who dealt in particular with penal sanctions and repatriation, Mr. R.-J. Wilhelm, who studied questions relating to special agreements as well as the rights of prisoners of war and their relations with the exterior, Mr. J.-P. Schoenholzer, and lastly Mr. H. Coursier, who revised the whole text. The translation into English was prepared by Mrs. A. P. de Heney.

The purpose of this *Commentary* is not only to clarify the letter of the text, if necessary, but also—and more important—to facilitate its application if and when the occasion arises, by bringing out the spirit of the Convention. To this end, it constitutes a doctrine which is not strictly speaking that of the ICRC, since each of the authors of the Commentary remains personally responsible for his conclusions, but it was prepared under the auspices of the International Committee and reflects the guiding principles of the latter's activity.

What is more, the *Commentary* takes account of the experience gained by the International Committee of the Red Cross in the course of two world wars, when its delegates made innumerable visits to prisoner-of-war camps; the solutions adopted following representations made to the belligerents by the International Committee served as precedents during the drafting of the 1929 Convention and, later, the 1949 Convention.

From the Hague Regulations to the 1929 Convention, from the 1929 Convention to the present Convention, the "law of prisoners of war" has thus made considerable progress. It is no exaggeration to say that prisoners of war in present or future conflicts are covered by a veritable humanitarian and administrative statute which not only protects them from the dangers of war, but also ensures that the conditions in which they are interned are as satisfactory as possible. Obviously, rules as detailed as these were drawn up primarily with a view to lengthy conflicts, such as the last two world wars; but they also have the tremendous advantage of defining, in practice and in relation to

certain specific circumstances, the position of the human being as such in the present-day international system. In this respect, the *Commentary* serves a useful purpose, for it sets out the motives for the decisions of the authors of the Convention, specifies the conditions in which the various provisions are applicable, and frequently—without any hesitation—points out shortcomings observed in connection with numerous problems. The determination of the statute of the prisoner of war went beyond the stage of declarations of principle a long time ago, and of all the statements made on the international level with regard to the individual human being, it is this which has been translated into reality to the greatest extent. The fact that men can reach agreement to apply such an advanced and balanced statute to the enemy in war-time should be seen as a good omen for other endeavours aimed at giving the individual his rightful place in the modern world and thus establishing a better equilibrium. It is therefore hoped that the *Commentary* will also serve to enlighten the reader as to the path followed by the authors of the Convention in order to arrive at this result.

CHRONICLE

THE WORLD REFUGEE YEAR

THE PRESENT PROBLEM AND THE ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The following article deals with the refugee problem as it presents itself to the world today and underlines the nature of the International Committee's action in behalf of these victims. It is contributed by Mr. H. Coursier, Member of the Legal Department of the ICRC and Chairman of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations interested in Migration.

In publishing this article, we wish to pay a tribute also to the efforts made by National Societies to alleviate the sufferings of refugees. In regard to the World Refugee Year in particular, the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies co-operate most efficiently with the thirty-four national Committees already constituted; several Presidents of National Red Cross Societies preside also over these Committees. These indications show the contribution made by the Red Cross for the solution of a problem which, as we are aware, has grown to tragic proportions. (Editor's note).

* * *

We know that four young Englishmen first put forward the idea of dedicating a whole year to the refugee problem and we wish to congratulate them, most warmly, for having thus helped us to accomplish a humanitarian task.

Strictly speaking, the suggestion to arouse public interest by dedicating one year to all demographic problems—which have so great a bearing on the future of the world—had already been

raised at the Congress of Catholic Institutions, held in Assisi in 1957, by Mgr. Edward E. Swanstrom, the representative of a great American institution, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, who expressed his surprise that, in regard to charity, no means of propaganda had been found to stimulate men's efforts in this connection, as had been done in the field of science by the institution of the International Geophysical Year.

While the English suggestion restricts the scope of the undertaking, it has at least the advantage of bringing into prominence the most pitiable aspect of human migrations—the problem of the refugees which affects so many unfortunate victims of circumstances, who have been forced into exile through no fault of their own, are sometimes separated from their near relatives, live in constant distress and are often nearly desperate in spite of their courage.

It was fitting that during these twelve months we should be reminded, through numerous manifestations, of the plight of these unfortunate people in order that all of us, governments, private institutions and individuals, may endeavour to play our part by making the greatest possible effort to alleviate their sufferings.

Much has already been done for the refugees, but much still remains to be done and it is worth while, at a time when programmes are being planned in connection with the World Refugee Year, to consider the whole problem as it now stands throughout the world.

Emphasis should first be laid on its universal character ; the problem exists in Europe, as in Africa and Asia ; it concerns also, to an extensive degree, the American and Australian continents, which provide most of the countries of asylum.

Since the Second World War the number of refugees has, on the whole, reached a total of over forty millions ; today one third only may be considered as definitely resettled. And the others ? What classification can be made of these human masses whose common fate is anxiety and sorrow ?

Refugees are divided into two main categories according to the authority qualified to assist them, *i.e. national refugees and international refugees.*

National refugees are those who can claim to be nationals of the country where they have found asylum; although not resettled, they have at least the support of a public authority which can call for the charitable aid of the refugees' compatriots in their behalf. This is the case for four million Koreans, most of whom are in South Korea. Although the economic conditions in that country are improving the refugees' situation is still precarious. Moreover, the above figure does not include some 600,000 Koreans at present in Japan who do not form part of the public community and whose repatriation to Korea meets with difficulties on account of the political division of the country.

Among the national refugees there are also two and a half million in Pakistan although the Government has accomplished the remarkable feat of resettling four and a half million citizens since the exodus in 1947.

The same problem still affects two and a half million persons in India. These Indians were driven from their homes at the time of the partition of India and Pakistan, together with another six million of their compatriots whom India has already resettled in its territory.

There are also 900,000 refugees in South Viet Nam who came from the North five years ago. Thanks to the authorities' efforts in behalf of such a great number of refugees they had the good fortune to find fertile land for cultivation; nevertheless, they still require assistance.

In addition, 175,000 Moslems left Bulgaria and took refuge in Turkey.

The greatest number of national refugees has, however, been received into West Germany which has given asylum to twelve million persons. A striking report on their case was given by the representative of the Ministry of Refugees of the German Republic, Mr. Werner Middelman, during the last General Meeting of the International Committee for the World Refugee Year. He showed that at the cost of a considerable effort imposed on the entire population, the majority of these persons had been resettled and had become, as it were, part of the community. Yet some of them continued to consider themselves as refugees

because they still pined for the country of their birth. Their presence raised a number of problems ; it had resulted in economic advantages of all descriptions for the country, but the normal housing of these people was not yet assured and there still remained open 1,234 camps containing 191,000 " displaced persons " from East German provinces or East European countries, and 800 camps containing 126,000 German refugees from East Germany. The resettlement of 200,000 agricultural families and a great number of artisans raises a particularly difficult problem on account of the shortage of land ; in particular, the constant stream of refugees from East Germany continues to modify the aspects of this problem.

To give a complete picture, mention should also be made of 400,000 Italian refugees in Italy, the majority of whom are former settlers in African colonies, 200,000 Dutch refugees from Indonesia in the Netherlands and 50,000 Greeks for whose maintenance the Greek Government is still responsible¹.

These figures give a grand total of over 23 million national refugees.

The persons classified as *international refugees* are those who do not, as in the first case, enjoy the protection of a State which considers them as its own nationals. Since these persons, fewer in number, were deprived of all natural protection, the international community was of necessity obliged, rather than fail in its duty towards humanity, to assume responsibility in their behalf of a more or less extensive nature.

We will first mention the refugees who are entitled to the protection of the United Nations, through the High Commissioner for Refugees. As the High Commissioner recently explained with great clarity in an article published by the *Revue internationale*², his Office is concerned with some 1,400,000 persons throughout the world, including 132,000 refugees not

¹ It should be noted that 17,000 persons of Greek nationality have already found asylum in the United States through the " Refugee Relief Act ". All the figures quoted were drawn from the excellent publication of the International Catholic Migration Commission — Geneva, 1959, Nos. 18 and 20.

² Auguste R. Lindt: " Le Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés et son œuvre " ; see *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, September 1959.

resettled, in Europe and 9,500 refugees of European origin in the Far East. His Office is not, in fact, responsible for all refugees but only for those who, having reason to fear persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality or political opinions, do not reside in the country of which they are nationals and, owing to their fears, cannot or do not wish to ask for the protection of the country concerned. The functions of the High Commissioner in regard to these persons are defined in the resolution adopted at the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 14, 1950. They do not include, as in the case of the International Refugee Organization which the High Commissioner succeeded, the maintenance and possibly the transport of refugees, but merely international protection and search for permanent solutions of their problems; it is in fact a matter of assisting governments and (with the approval of the governments concerned) private organisations to facilitate the repatriation of refugees of their own free will or their assimilation with new national communities.

For these purposes the High Commissioner, whose action is non-political, humanitarian and social, receives grants which enable programmes for the assistance of the refugees to be put into effect. These programmes are drawn up each year after consideration by an Executive Committee whose discussions are of great importance. At the opening session of this Committee in October 1959 one of the members gave a message from President Eisenhower which stressed that the object of the United States in contributing towards the implementation of the programme was to seek for the human dignity of every individual wherever he might be.

These words give considerable weight to the decisions of the United Nations to entrust the High Commissioner with tasks which exceed the strict limits defined by the statutes of his Office. In November 1958, the United Nations General Assembly placed in the High Commissioner's hands the organisation of relief programmes in behalf of the 180,000 Algerian refugees at present in Tunisia and Morocco. This work, as in the case of the Hungarian refugees in 1956-57, was undertaken in conjunction with the League of Red Cross Societies.

As regards the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, there are nearly one million and they are absolutely destitute. Despite the praiseworthy efforts of the local authorities to assist them, many are homeless and obliged to camp out in the street, in cellars or on the roofs of houses. The United Nations General Assembly has agreed that this problem concerns the international community and has therefore authorised the High Commissioner to lend his offices to facilitate the granting of contributions to assist these refugees.

These are the refugees who, at the present time and for various reasons, come within the province of the High Commissioner.

In addition there are 947,000 Arab refugees in Palestine who are not in the care of the High Commissioner but of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). As the solution of this problem is firstly political, the United Nations are seeking, with the Governments concerned, some means of replacing the present temporary measures, which are in fact inadequate, by a permanent arrangement, agreed to by all concerned, which would probably facilitate the refugees' return to a normal life.

We must not forget, since daily events enlarge this problem, the 6,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon and 17,000 Tibetans who recently took refuge in Nepal and India.

Thus the total number of international refugees has reached 3,550,000 which, with the 23 million national refugees, gives a total of 26,550,000 persons.

Such is the scale of the problem of which the *World Refugee Year* endeavours to make us more conscious every day.

Sixty-two Governments have announced their participation in this great movement and more than half this number have already instituted a national committee for the World Refugee Year. In addition, seventy-six non-governmental organisations have formed an International Committee to share ideas and to help to co-ordinate individual efforts ¹.

¹ The ICRC has made premises available, free of charge, to the Secretariat of the International Committee for the World Refugee Year, thus enabling it to reduce its administrative expenses to a minimum.

What could the various governments, private institutions and individuals do in this connection?

Governments could increase the funds allocated for seeking permanent solutions of the refugee problem, either within or without their territory, make legislation concerning the admittance and establishment of aliens more flexible, in order to receive a greater number of refugees, and take aged, sick or disabled refugees into their institutions and hospitals.

Private organisations could make greater efforts to give material assistance to refugees, seek to increase the legal assistance granted to refugees in their countries, approach their governments on the subject of more liberal regulations for the admission of these immigrants and help towards the resettlement of refugees in the countries of asylum.

With regard to individuals, they should show a personal interest in the refugees, if possible invite them to their homes, correspond with them and help them in their daily difficulties. They should take part in the meetings, exhibitions and lectures which will be organised by the *World Refugee Year* and, lastly, they should contribute, according to their means, to collections opened in the refugees' behalf.

By so doing they will, as it were, grasp the open hand, symbolical of the *World Refugee Year*, which does not seek for alms but for brotherly understanding, the spirit of human fellowship¹.

The International Committee of the Red Cross which, it will be remembered, was called upon to establish the statutes of the first organisation instituted by the international community in behalf of refugees, the Nansen Office for Refugees, is at present engaged, in particular, in supplementing if necessary the work of numerous organisations which give international aid to refugees. Faithful to its traditions, its special task is to intervene in situations where no other body could take action. This is the

¹ Christ said "I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me... I was in prison and ye came unto me". (The Gospel according to St. Matthew 25, 35. Text referred to in the encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII on the World Refugee Year of June 28, 1959).

case when the assistance of refugees is linked with events of war, civil war or internal disturbances and can only be undertaken by a neutral intermediary.

During the past years the International Committee has been engaged in distributing relief supplies to Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco, the re-uniting of families in Germany and East Europe and assisting persons obliged to leave Egypt as a result of events. It is also taking part, through a mission sent to Japan, in the preparatory measures for the repatriation of Koreans in Japan who express the wish to proceed to a place of their choice in their country of origin.

To what extent will this programme be enlarged during the *World Refugee Year*? This will depend upon events. More than ever, however, the International Committee of the Red Cross will continue to be prepared to attempt what others could not do for the alleviation of the sufferings of refugees.
