



**REVUE  
INTERNATIONALE  
DE LA  
CROIX-ROUGE**

**SUPPLEMENT**

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# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

### News Items

*The Swedish Government has entrusted the Swedish Red Cross with the task of establishing plans for setting up, in case of need, a national Information Bureau in behalf of prisoners of war and protected civilian persons of Swedish or foreign nationality.*

*Early in July the directors of the Swedish Red Cross sent an expert, Mr. B. Palm, to Geneva who made a study during his short visit of the structure of the International Committee's various sections. Mr. Palm made a special study of the working methods of the Central Prisoners of War Agency, founded on experience gained during two world wars.*

*His visit was followed by that of Mr. Munktell, professor at Upsala University, for the purpose of studying the various legal questions involved in the creation and work of an Information Bureau.*

\* \* \*

*Study-visits from members of National Societies to the League and the International Committee are becoming more and more frequent. The ICRC thus had the pleasure of receiving Colonel José Victor Mateus Cabral, Secretary-General of the Portuguese Red Cross, and Mr. Fernando de Soto Oriol, Assistant Secretary-General of the Spanish Red Cross.*

*In October the ICRC received a visit from Surgeon-General Joedicke, Chief of the Army Medical Service of the German*

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*Federal Republic, accompanied by two of his principal assistants, and Lieutenant-Colonel Roesnhauer, Military Attaché to the German Federal Republic Embassy in Berne. These two officers, who were accompanied by Colonel-Brigadier H. Meuli, Chief M.O. of the Swiss Army Medical Service were shown round the International Committee's various departments and took particular interest in their visit to the Central Prisoners of War Agency.*

\* \* \*

*During the summer Mr. André Durand, delegate of the ICRC visited camps in the Jaffna area (North Ceylon) where Tamil refugees who left the southern part of the country after the disturbances in May have been given shelter.*

*Wishing to participate in the relief action on behalf of these refugees, the International Committee sent a gift of 15,000 Swiss francs to the Ceylon Red Cross, to be used for the purchase of foodstuffs, soap and clothing material.*

*The Ceylon Red Cross has opened a branch in Jaffna which will distribute relief supplies to the refugees and help them to start a new life.*

\* \* \*

*The International Commission of the International Tracing Service held its 17th meeting on September 8, at Cologne, presided over by the representative of the Government of Israel. The report for the first half-year, 1958, and the draft budget for 1959, submitted by the Director of the ITS, were approved.*

\* \* \*

*During the third quarter of the year the International Tracing Service (ITS) at Arolsen received over 32,000 enquiries including 2,708 applications for photostat copies (in most cases of hospital records), 7,046 applications for death certificates and 16,506 requests for certificates of captivity or assigned residence.*

*The ITS despatched, during the same period, over 85,000 letters, certificates and photostat copies. It also made out 200,604 cards and*

placed 151,952 in the card-indexes. It was, therefore, a very busy period.

\* \* \*

During the past five months the ICRC has been honoured by visits from several members of the Diplomatic Service. Early in July H.E. Mr. Henry S. Villard, the new United States Representative to the United Nations, paid a visit to the President of the International Committee. Our institution also had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Josef Zimmering, Permanent Representative in Geneva of the German Democratic Republic, Mr. D.N. Chatterjee, the new Representative of India to the United Nations, and H.E. Mr. K. Vellodi, Ambassador of India in Berne: in late August, Mr. Joseph Tekoa, alternate Representative for Israel to the United Nations in New York; in October, H.E. Mr. Victor Jimenez Suarez, Permanent Representative of Columbia to the European Office of the United Nations and H.E. Sir William Montagu Pollock, Ambassador of Great Britain in Berne, accompanied by Mr. H.R. Sawbridge, Consul General in Geneva, and Mr. Athanas Belinski, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria in Geneva.

\* \* \*

Several leading members of the Red Cross movement paid visits to the ICRC when passing through Geneva. During his stay in Switzerland in July H.E. Mr. Djamil Mardam Bey, President of the Syrian Red Crescent, had several interviews with the heads of the International Committee. In late August, Mr. L.S. Robertson, Chairman of the National Executive Committee of the South African Red Cross, and Mrs. Roberston, paid a visit to the ICRC headquarters. In September, Dr. Werner Ludwig, President of the Red Cross of the German Democratic Republic, and Mrs. Gerda Hartmann, Head of the Foreign Relations Department, were the guests of the ICRC for a few days and had numerous talks with the President, members of the Committee and the staff.

Mrs. N. Nielsen, President of the Norwegian Junior Red Cross, paid a visit to the ICRC headquarters on September 15.

During the past months visits were received from Dr. Yoshinori

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*Katou, Director of Wakayama Hospital (one of largest hospitals of the Japanese Red Cross), Dr. Toshio Hasegawa, Deputy Director of the Central Japanese Red Cross Hospital in Tokyo, the Director of the Blood Transfusion Department of the Peruvian Red Cross, Dr. Carlos Munis Baratta, and his wife, Mrs. Adela Amgosta de Muños, Assistant Director of the Relief Division of the Peruvian Red Cross, Dr. Kai Petri, President of the Langeland\*Committee of the Danish Red Cross, Mr. Earl E. Phillips, Preisident of the Seattle County Chapter of the American Red Cross and Mr. G.G. Miasnick, Member of the Hospital Orderlies Division of the Transvaal Branch of the South African Red Cross.*

\* \* \*

*A number of people (too numerous for a nominal list to be given in these pages), who were present in Geneva to attend the 78th Session of the Executive Committee of the League, took part in meetings at the ICRC headquarters. Several of the delegates had conversations with members of the directorate.*

\* \* \*

*The International Committee had the pleasure of receiving a visit from Mr. J.R. Gomez of Castillonès (Lot-et-Garonne), the recipient of the annual prize awarded by the French Red Cross to the most successful recruiter among its members, which consists of a trip to Geneva and visits to the League and the International Committee.*

*Another visitor from France, Mr. Paul Cuisinier, President of the " Fédération nationale des combattants et prisonniers de guerre " was welcomed at the ICRC headquarters and shown round the various departments.*

\* \* \*

*Collective visits were more numerous during the summer months than in previous years and included members of the American Junior Red Cross, students from universities in Los Angeles*

and Mexico and young members of the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A. and the Society of Friends who took advantage of a tour in Switzerland to visit the ICRC headquarters. As customary, students taking summer courses on international organisations, arranged by the Geneva University, also paid visits to the ICRC.

These young people's interest in the principles and activities of the Red Cross is most significant and holds great promise for the future.

The ICRC also had the pleasure of meeting nurses and voluntary aids of the British Red Cross, first-aid workers of the French Red Cross and home-nursing instructors. Further, to show its appreciation of the welcome it received at the ICRC headquarters the year before, the Folklore and Cultural Activities Section of the Spanish Red Cross in Barcelona made another visit and gave a fine display of Spanish dancing and singing.

It may be said that for the majority of the collective groups of members, nurses or voluntary aids of Red Cross Societies who pass through our city, a visit to the League and the ICRC is an important stage, and in fact the purpose of their tour in Switzerland.

In September several visitors from the German Federal Republic belonging to university, cultural and industrial circles, and senior officials of ministries who were making a study-visit to Switzerland under the auspices of Pro Helvetia, came to the ICRC headquarters to collect information on its work.

\* \* \*

In its capacity as a non-governmental institution with consultative status, the ICRC takes part in various meetings organised by the United Nations. Its representatives, Mr. Gaillard of the Executive Division, and Mr. H. Coursier of the Legal Department thus attended the meetings of the Economic and Social Council held in Geneva from July 7 to 30, 1958.

The International Committee was invited to take part in the meeting held at Geneva on October 30 by the Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies working for Refugees; it was represented by Mr. H. Coursier of the Legal Department.

Miss Barbara Coke, Director of the British Junior Red Cross,

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*and Mr. G. Fehr, Director of the Junior Red Cross of the German Federal Republic, took part as experts in the meetings held in Geneva, from November 2 to 12, on the work of the League and International Committee in connection with Resolutions XXIX and XXX of the New Delhi Conference concerning the spreading of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions among young people.*

*The ICRC was represented at these meetings by Mr. F. Siordet, Vice-President, and Mr. C. Pilloud and Mr. H. Coursier of the Legal Department.*

\* \* \*

*The International Committee's collection of documents and mementoes concerning the history of its organisation will serve to build up the Red Cross museum which will be established to mark the centenary of the Red Cross movement.*

*The Finnish Red Cross recently presented the International Committee with a complete set of the various medals, plaques and badges issued by this Society, which will enrich the exhibits of medals struck by National Societies.*

\* \* \*

*The ICRC has made a gift to the Indonesian Red Cross of 15 tons of soap, despatched on November 23 from Marseilles, and a sum of 3,000 dollars, in order to help in this Society's relief action on behalf of the victims of internal disturbances in Indonesia.*

\* \* \*

*Mrs. T. Mathez, Head of Section, Executive Division, paid a short visit to the ICRC Delegation in Madrid, and made a general survey of present activities with the delegate Mr. E. Arbenz.*

\* \* \*

*Miss A. Pfirter, Head of the Nursing Personnel and War Disablement Section, represented the ICRC at the Conference on Legislation concerning Veterans and War Victims. This Confe-*

rence, organised by the World Veterans Federation in conjunction with the Netherlands Government, was held at The Hague from November 16 to 26.

\* \* \*

On October 23, Mr Angst, delegate of the ICRC in Japan, accompanied by Mr. Masutaro Inoue and Mr. Kakegawa of the Japanese Red Cross, visited the Kawasaki Immigration Centre where 52 persons of various nationalities are interned.

\* \* \*

On November 14, the International Committee received through the "Algerian Red Crescent" 29 letters sent by 14 French military prisoners held by the ALN.

These letters were immediately forwarded to the prisoners' families by the Central Prisoners of War Agency in Geneva.

\* \* \*

In November, Mr. Roger Vust, Honorary-Delegate of the ICRC in Algiers, distributed games to the internees at Douera Assembly Centre.

Some inmates of the Arcole Assembly Centre were supplied with dentures by the ICRC.

\* \* \*

Mr. D. de Traz, General-Delegate for the Near East of the ICRC, who had been making a brief visit to Geneva, left on November 18 to return (via Cairo) to his post at Beirut. Reference was made in the English Supplement for August to the International Committee's activities in Lebanon up to July 21; additional information is given below.

On July 24, Mr. de Traz concluded various agreements at Tyr with the leaders of the opposing party in connection with the passage through the lines of medicaments and nursing personnel, the care of the wounded and the evacuation of serious cases. Medical

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*personnel and equipment were supplied by the parties concerned.*

*On August 2 the ICRC Delegation dealt with the despatch of 13 tons of flour to Saïda, a port to the south of Beirut.*

*In August and September Mr. de Traz had several interviews with the leaders of various movements, which resulted in the release of a number of prisoners and other detained persons.*

*During the second fortnight in September, the ICRC sent to the General Delegation in the Middle East an important gift of 7 tons of medicaments drawn from the stocks in the Vienna warehouses of the League of Red Cross Societies. In co-operation with the Lebanese Red Cross the Delegation immediately undertook to distribute the medicaments both in the mountain regions (through the appropriate social services) and to hospitals of the coastal towns.*

*The situation in the Lebanon having become more settled Mr. de Traz will henceforth be able to pursue his usual duties in the various Near and Middle East countries, as well as Cyprus where he has already paid several visits to political detainees.*

\* \* \*

*A vessel loaded with 2,000 tons of wheat, 500 tons of sugar, 13,000 articles of clothing and 20,000 blankets for the Algerian refugees in Morocco left Alexandria on November 24, 1958.*

*The relief supplies were a gift of the Red Crescent in the United Arab Republic and were taken over at Alexandria by a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross who was in charge of the consignment and sailed on board the vessel to Casablanca.*

*The supplies were to be handed over to the Moroccan Red Crescent which will deal with the distribution to the refugees.*

\* \* \*

*On December 3, 1958 at Rabat, eight French prisoners were handed over to the delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Pierre Gaillard and Mr. Camille Vautier, by the representatives of the "Algerian Red Crescent", in the presence of Princess Lalla Aïcha, Honorary President of the Moroccan Red Crescent.*

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*The Moroccan Government granted all facilities to the representatives of the ICRC by whom the released prisoners were taken to the French Embassy which will attend to their repatriation.*

*The Central Prisoners of War Agency in Geneva had previously informed the men's families of their release.*

\* \* \*

*At the end of November the International Committee of the Red Cross was informed that a second group of French military prisoners held by the ALN was shortly to be released in Morocco.*

*In response to an appeal received in this connection the ICRC instructed its delegate, Mr. P. Gaillard, to proceed to Morocco and to lend his services for the prisoners' release.*

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ICRC

As Mr. Léopold Boissier stated in the preface to the Annual Report just published, "the International Committee of the Red Cross was constantly on the alert in 1957. Its essential work closely linked with events which shook the world consisted in assisting the victims of so many upheavals. The Committee's delegates were called upon to take action in unforeseen circumstances and to adapt their duties to situations which could hardly have been imagined a few years ago".

The Report for 1957—published in French, English, Spanish and German—reveals the numerous aspects of the International Committee's work. It begins with a description of the relief actions and missions which the Committee was called upon to perform in various countries, in particular Hungary. During this period the distribution by the ICRC of gift supplies received in behalf of the Hungarian people came to an end although various missions were sent from Geneva later to supervise the final distributions.

The work of the Central Agency, where the card indexes contain over 45 million cards, increased during the year; in the Agency's national sections the number of cases dealt with in 1957 showed a definite increase over the previous years.

Assistance to victims of internal disturbances is one of the most necessary but also one of the most delicate tasks incumbent upon the International Committee at the present time. A

chapter of the Report is devoted to the subject and gives an account of the work of the Red Cross in Algeria, Cyprus, Goa, Kenya and elsewhere. In addition, events in recent years have also led to the dispersal of numerous families and the task of re-uniting families separated by the war raises one of the most difficult humanitarian problems. The ICRC has had to cope with this problem also and the next chapter refers to its intervention in behalf of Greek refugees and people of German origin. Figures are quoted which show the activity of the Red Cross in this field in 1957. In some countries, the ICRC played a leading part in the re-uniting of families by sending delegates and keeping in close touch with this work. By the end of 1957 over 230,000 persons of German origin had thus been united with their families.

Other chapters describe the work of the Medical Personnel Section and the Legal Department. The International Conferences of the Red Cross have entrusted the ICRC with the mission of assisting in the training of medical personnel. The Geneva institution is concerned in particular with the organisation, enrolment and training of professional and auxiliary medical personnel, in order that their services may be available in time of war.

The application and development of humanitarian law has always been the essential concern of the ICRC which, since its foundation, has sought to promulgate the rules on which humanitarian law is based today. The Annual Report sets forth, therefore, ratifications of and accessions to the Geneva Conventions and gives information concerning the Draft Rules established by the ICRC, the development of legal aid to aliens and the co-ordination of efforts in this field.

The last two chapters refer to the Information Department of the ICRC, the Committee's close relations with other Red Cross institutions throughout the world and its contribution to the work of international organisations.

We are publishing a few extracts from the Report which will give our readers an idea of the humanitarian activities of the Red Cross during a period in which the principles which are at the basis of this work were proved to be effective.

The following short summary concerns the work of the Central Prisoners of War Agency in 1957 :

### THE CENTRAL PRISONERS OF WAR AGENCY

The world centre of information for which the Geneva Conventions provide, the Central Prisoners of War Agency, was organised by the ICRC in Geneva during the great world conflicts, its work continues today.

It analyses, registers and transmits to the official countries of origin lists of prisoners of war and of persons released or repatriated. It also collects information from private sources, makes searches for civilians and military personnel who disappeared during conflicts and keeps their families informed of the results.

The Agency draws up certificates of captivity and of deaths.

When all other means of communication have broken down, it forwards messages and transmits news between civilians separated by the events, and prisoners of war and their families.

Its card-indexes contain 45 million cards which represent 15 million cases dealt with.

Although the Second World War came to an end over 12 years ago the work of the Central Agency continues. It is constantly asked to perform new duties; the number of cases dealt with at present shows a definite increase over the previous year. The events in Hungary and the Middle East are not the only reason for the increased activity which is largely due to the flow of enquiries received from Central and East European countries.

\* \* \*

In 1957 the Central Prisoners of War Agency received 148,985 postal items and sent out 160,339. It dealt with 187,429 cases and opened 33,112 new enquiries with National Red Cross Societies, Ministries, register offices, Town Halls etc. These figures are double those of 1956; the Agency had therefore to make a special effort to carry out its work.

**Polish Section.** — A great many Polish families apply to the Polish Section in the hope of obtaining news of relatives who disappeared during the hostilities or emigrated immediately after the war. The Section also receives many enquiries concerning persons resident in former Polish territory which is now under Soviet control. These tracing operations often give satisfactory results; this Section alone received 18,587 postal items in 1957 (9,483 in 1956).

**Baltic Section.** — The renewed activity of the Baltic Section notified in 1956 increased still further in 1957. Many persons were able to renew contact with near relatives from whom they had been separated since 1944.

**USSR Section.** — The mail from and to the USRR is continually increasing. The USSR Section has renewed contact between persons resident in the USSR and others living abroad who, in some cases, had lost touch with each other for the past 15 to 20 years.

**Jugoslav Section.** — The Jugoslav Section is mainly engaged in searching for former Jugoslav combatants and prisoners of war who did not return to their homes after the Second World War.

**Spanish Section.** — The Spanish Section continues to deal with enquiries concerning deported Spanish persons who died in concentration camps in Germany, and for whom proof of death is required to enable the families to claim compensation.

Numerous Spanish nationals recently repatriated from the USSR apply to the ICRC to obtain news of their wives, in most cases Soviet nationals, who stayed behind in their country. The Spanish Section also forwards to the Soviet authorities applications from some of the repatriated persons who suffered accidents at work and wish to have their pensions in this connection transferred to Spain.

**Greek Section.** — In the past few years the Greek Section has increased its enquiries to National Societies for information concerning Greek nationals who were transferred to East European countries during the civil war. In 1957 the ICRC received from the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR over 3,000 replies which it forwarded

to the Greek Red Cross; 134 replies gave positive information while the others reported negative results of the searches undertaken by the Alliance.

**French Section.** — The events in Algeria caused an increase in the work of this Section which, at the request of French families who are without news of men missing in Algeria, makes enquiries through authorities which may be in a position to supply information.

**Italian Section.** — The principal work of the Italian Section still continues to be the identification of combatants, prisoners of war and civilian internees who died during the Second World War. At the request of the Italian authorities, this Section devotes its efforts to this work with satisfactory results. The Section also searches for combatants who disappeared during the hostilities on the Eastern Front. The Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, which deals with these enquiries, gave replies to many of them in 1957.

**German Section.** — In 1957 the German Section received 43,746 postal items (i.e. 12,000 more than in the previous year), relating to searches for the missing, identification of deceased persons etc. In 1957 it issued 12,568 certificates of captivity to former prisoners of war. As a consequence of mass movements and transfers of the population and the shifting of frontiers, much of its work is also concerned with the tracing of civilians.

The Section also deals with numerous cases of "Volksdeutsche" living in various East European countries who wish to join relatives in Germany, Austria and other parts of Europe, and abroad. In 1957 this work was also carried out on behalf of "Volksdeutsche" in Rumania.

**Korean Section.** — In the last months of 1956 and early in 1957 the Korean Section sent to the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Pyongyang 7,034 enquiries concerning South Korean civilians who disappeared during the hostilities. This National Society sent 337 replies to the ICRC which were forwarded to the Red Cross of the Republic of Korea in Seoul. It also transmitted 14,132 enquiries concerning North Korean civilians, which were sent on to Seoul through the Central Agency.

**Middle East Section.** — This Section, set up in November 1956 following the Suez conflict, continued to seek for Egyptian military personnel missing or captured during hostilities and the transmission of civilian message forms (containing 25 words concerning family news only) sent through the Central Prisoners of War Agency of the ICRC. As a result of the renewal of postal communications and the repatriation of prisoners the Section has less work. It continues nevertheless to receive enquiries from Egyptian families who are without news of men who disappeared during the fighting.

**Stateless Persons Section.** — During the last quarter of 1956 the Central Agency set up this Section for the purpose of assisting stateless persons leaving Egypt. This Section was very active in 1957 and assisted numerous persons wishing to emigrate.

**Hungarian Section.** — With the cooperation of National Red Cross Societies in the countries of asylum, the Central Agency made a census of Hungarian refugees and set up a central card-index which, at present, contains over 310,000 cards. With the information thus collected, the enquiries opened and the transmission of civilian messages, the Hungarian Section was able to place in contact thousands of persons who were without news of near relatives.

In addition 27,000 civilian messages were broadcast over the ICRC wave-length during the interruption in postal communications with Hungary.

This Section received 55,303 postal items in 1957 and sent out 61,588.

\* \* \*

The Central Agency's other Sections are still engaged in activities on a more limited scale but for an equally useful purpose.

Enquiries are still received concerning nationals of various countries enrolled in the French Foreign Legion who have ceased to give news. Enquiries are opened to obtain news of these men and inform their families.

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