

REVUE INTERNATIONALE
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

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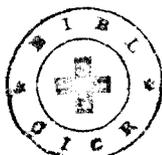
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CONTENTS

	Page
The International Committee of the Red Cross in Palestine	144
Events in Hyderabad: An Appeal by the International Committee of the Red Cross to the Parties in conflict	153
“Fellowship. The Moral Significance of the Red Cross”. By Jean-G. Lossier	154

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS IN PALESTINE

In the course of the last few weeks the delegation of the International Committee in Palestine has been particularly engaged with two problems : (1) the violation of No. 2 Security Zone in Jerusalem, which included the former Government House, the Arab College and the Jewish Agricultural School, and (2) the situation of the refugees in Palestine and in the neighbouring countries.

It will be recalled that one of the Security Zones had to be given up during the month of July ; a similar fate threatened Zone No. 2 in August. On August 16 in the evening, rifle and machine-gun fire started on all sides near Government House. About 11 p.m. Egyptian artillery went into action and commenced bombarding the zone outskirts. At 1 a.m. troops crossed the zone boundary and fighting went on for several hours between Arab and Jewish forces almost under the walls of the main building. The Jewish troops occupied the houses situated on the northern limit of the zone and blew them up, after the women and children had been removed to Government House. On August 16 and 17 the situation was most confused and the Delegation considered abandoning the security zone, unless a prompt return to former conditions was made.

After the fighting on August 16 and 17, the situation in the zone was as follows :

(1) — The Jewish forces occupied the Arab College and the Jewish Agricultural School ; the Red Cross flag had been taken down from the School, but could not be removed from the Arab College on account of incessant rifle fire, which would have made any attempt to do so extremely risky.

(2) — About fifty metres of no man's land lay between the first Jewish lines and the entrance to the gardens of Government House, where the Committee's delegation was still in residence.

(3) — The Government House grounds and premises were not occupied by Arab troops, who considered them however as " Arab territory " and had taken up their positions all round the garden, which was thus practically an enclave in the Arab lines and was often crossed by armed men.

In addition to the military occupation of the zone, the situation was made worse by several incidents, in particular the capture of eleven Jewish combatants inside the building and frequent raids within the zone itself by armed Arabs.

The delegates then present in Jerusalem took immediate steps to ensure the safety of the refugees and endeavoured to restore the zone and its former boundaries. After the above incidents, the Delegation in Palestine sent the following letter to the Arab High Command.

" The Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Palestine have the honour to place the following facts before the Arab High Command.

" In the night of August 16 to 17, 1948, Security Zone No. 2 in Jerusalem, which is under the safeguard of the International Committee and is known as the Government House Area, was the object of serious violations by Arab and Jewish armed forces. Fighting took place in the territory of the zone, but Government House itself was spared by both sides. At the present moment, our Delegation has no exact information concerning the buildings of the Arab College and the Jewish Agricultural School, which also form part of Security Zone No. 2.

" Further, in the afternoon of August 17, 1948 armed forces of the Arab Legion and irregular troops entered the territory and even the building ; they left however in good order a few hours later.

" The Committee's Delegation in Palestine is compelled to enter a strong protest against these incidents, which are contrary to the agreement made between the Arab and

Jewish authorities and the International Committee for the integrity of the security zones. The Delegation requests the Arab authorities to guarantee that incidents of this nature will not occur in future and await their views on the subject. An interview regarding the matter took place on August 17, 1948, in the evening, between Colonel Abdalla Tell, Commander of the Arab Forces in Jerusalem, and Dr. Pflimlin and Dr. Calpini, delegates of the International Committee.

“ Similar protest is being made to the Jewish authorities concerned.”

This written protest was followed by a series of negotiations and talks, with a view to restoring former conditions in Security Zone No. 2. The Committee's delegates requested the Jewish authorities to evacuate the two schools and to return the refugees in the Arab College.

The responsible Jewish authorities agreed in principle to withdraw their troops, on condition that the Arab forces abandoned the positions they occupied round the security zone. The refugees in the Arab College would be handed over unconditionally. Lastly, the Jewish authorities proposed a meeting with the Arab officers and the United Nations observers to determine the military positions and the conditions for the evacuation, the delegates of the International Committee to assist as observers at the meeting. The proposals were accepted by the Arab authorities and the meeting took place on August 20, in the no man's land between Government House and the Jewish Agricultural School. General Landstroem, the United Nations representative, proposed the removal of all troops and the creation of a large demilitarized area to encircle the security zone and to be placed under the protection of the Red Cross flag.

We cannot give here a detailed account of the negotiations which ensued, or the subsequent exchange of telegrams between the Committee's delegation and headquarters in Geneva, also between the Committee and the Arab and Jewish authorities. It will suffice to say that the Security Zone was finally restored to its former condition and is now fulfilling its initial purpose,

namely, to serve as a refuge for civilians of all categories and a transit centre for the removal or exchange of populations. The incidents which threatened to imperil this particular undertaking have increased the Committee's experience in this field and will serve to shape future policy with regard to Security Zones.

* * *

In spite of the concern and anxiety caused by the occupation of the security zone, the Committee's Delegation in Palestine has pursued its task of helping prisoners of war and all victims of the conflict. Efforts to supply food for Jerusalem hospitals have been continued. Several visits have been made to camps for prisoners of war in Jewish and Arab hands. On several occasions the Delegation has acted as an intermediary to facilitate the removal or the exchange of non-combatants. In this respect mention should be made of the attitude of one of the delegates, Dr. Fasel, who had offered his services to help the evacuation of three villages surrounded by Jewish troops, and whose car was blown up by a landmine when passing the lines to carry out his duties as a neutral intermediary. Fortunately, although the car was completely destroyed, the occupants were unhurt.

In order to avoid incidents of this nature, whenever possible, and to prevent the delegates being needlessly exposed to danger, the head of the Delegation issued instructions regarding the routes to be followed by exchanged or repatriated persons and relief supplies. To this effect, he sent the following verbal note to the civil and military authorities concerned.

“ Up to the present and in order to gain time, it has been customary in Palestine to send repatriated or exchanged persons and relief supplies for prisoners of war through the fighting lines. These operations could only be effected, in each instance, through the intervention of the Delegation and involved the presence in the fighting area of the delegates themselves.

“ The frequent and systematic passage through the lines implies considerable risk, both for the persons and supplies

conveyed under our flag, which should afford them a maximum degree of protection. The practice is in fact wholly contrary to the laws and customs of war, and to the usage of the Red Cross and of the International Committee in particular. Only military personnel and enlisted medical personnel have any business in the fighting line.

“ Representatives of National Red Cross Societies or of the International Committee have no call to be in the fighting line ; their task is to help the wounded and sick behind the lines and to assist war victims.

“ As a matter of principle and in view of the many accidents sustained within the fighting area by the Committee’s delegates and nurses, we must resume the methods usually followed for these operations. On principle, the delegates will no longer cross the lines. The Delegation will confine itself to its customary task as intermediary between the two sides, in all cases where a written request to this effect has been made, giving all necessary information as to the exact place where the lines are to be crossed. Application must be addressed exclusively to the head of the Committee’s Delegation in Palestine, who is the only person competent to handle matters in which both sides are involved.

“ The head of the Delegation will fix the date and hour of the passage, after having received the formal agreement in writing of the adverse party. Two delegates, one on each side, will supervise and control the operation, but will on no account go further than the first military post of the armed forces with whom they are in contact.

“ The passage through the lines will take place under the escort of military medical personnel, under the supervision of the Committee’s delegate and carrying a Red Cross flag. Should the competent authorities not wish to risk the lives of their medical personnel, the Committee’s Delegation has no reason for not sharing the same views.

“ It may be recalled that the habitual method of exchanging prisoners or forwarding relief supplies is to pass behind the lines and work round belligerent areas. The normal route in future will therefore be by a vessel of the

International Committee from Haifa to Beyruth, and vice-versa, then by train and road for the journey Tel Aviv/ Haifa and Beyruth/Amman. Transport from Amman and Tel Aviv will be effected by the usual means towards the centre of Palestine. This route will of course be used for all war victims without distinction.

“ If the authorities, for their own reasons, wish to follow another route and to cross the lines, the Delegation remains at their service, subject to the conditions above-mentioned.”

The reasons for these security measures will be readily understood. They by no means signify that the International Committee is anxious to restrict its activities in Palestine ; its sole desire is to do its duty with the least possible risk for both delegates and nurses.

* * *

In addition to its traditional activities, the International Committee aims at improving conditions for the refugees. The Committee was thus led to make the first appeal to National Red Cross Societies, and through the latter to the public in general, for relief supplies to be sent to Palestine. We have shown in a previous report the results of this appeal.

It is difficult to give an exact estimate of the number of refugees who require help. The data gathered by the Committee's Delegation are as follows :

Ramallah and district	125,000
Nablus and district	50,000
Gaza and district	80,000
Nazareth and district	17,000
Lebanon	50,000
Syria	60,000
Egypt	12,000

Who is to look after these refugees, is still an unsolved problem. Public opinion has been stirred by the United Nations

mediator, who stressed the refugees' tragic situation and asked for relief supplies to be sent at once.

The International Committee is in duty bound to pursue its efforts to help this category of war victims, in which the League of Red Cross Societies is equally interested.

For this reason, M. Paul Ruegger, President of the International Committee and Mr. Basil O'Connor, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the League, were able to state at Stockholm, on September 1, 1948, that with a view to implementing the recommendations of the XVIIth International Red Cross Conference, the two organisations had developed a working plan for relief in the Middle East.

This plan, designed to spread and extend Red Cross assistance to the victims of warfare, is synchronised with the general relief scheme developed by the United Nations mediator in Palestine, and with the relief activities of all other official or private organisations in this field.

The International Committee will pursue its present activities in behalf of civilians in Palestine and will assume the responsibility of distributing Red Cross relief in this area. As in the past, the Committee will continue its work in favour of prisoners of war. The League of Red Cross Societies, acting for the sixty-six National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, will co-ordinate relief shipments to countries which are outside the fighting zones and where National Societies are already functioning.

To illustrate the vital necessity for sending relief supplies to Palestine, we quote a few passages from a report received by the Committee from the Ramallah district :

“...Birzeith, which usually numbers about 1200 inhabitants, now shelters roughly 15,000 persons ; the population of Jifna has grown from 500 to 10,000 people. In Birzeith most of the refugees camp out under the trees where they have set up emergency shelters, part canvas, part tin and wood. In many places fires are lit, showing an attempt to keep tidy and clean... The refugees are however in great distress ; all they receive is a meagre daily ration of flour.

All have been vaccinated against typhoid, but there is no infirmary where they could have regular treatment... At Jifna, near the road to Ramallah, we saw a pitiful sight—about fifty refugees trying to draw water from a spring which was hardly visible. At this same place, a woman approached the car to ask for help and advice for her infant in arms, a living skeleton, which at the present time must surely have died. The poor child was not a lone case, others are dying... All the goodwill, all the resources of the country should be employed to try and improve the refugees' present condition... A problem of this magnitude cannot be settled by the Palestinians alone; surely the civilised world will contribute in face of this general distress. Extensive and urgent measures are required; this cannot be sufficiently stressed."

From another report received, it seems that the most urgent requirements are DDT powder in large quantities (at least 20 tons are needed), tablets for the disinfection of drinking water, blankets, food for infants in arms and expectant mothers, rice, maize, powdered milk, sugar, farinaceous foods and fats which would allow for minimum rations for hospital patients.

The delegate of the Committee, who sent the above report, states that "thousands must be fed who at present receive "practically no food. They need clothing and medical attention; "they have lost their homes, possessions and land. They have "settled in emergency camps which may be their only refuge "during the coming winter. In view of this critical situation, "it is not too much to ask for the help of all, Governments and "individuals; we must call upon the goodwill of all who are still "affected by human misery, apart from any political quibbling, "in order to improve conditions for these refugees."

The International Committee was fortunate in being able to give the alarm and to start enlisting the aid of the charitably inclined.

The recommendation passed by the Stockholm Conference for the synchronization of Red Cross relief confirms the magnitude and urgency of the Committee's appeal.

The Committee's means of action are confined to the donations it receives. The gift supplies provided up to the present have allowed it to grant emergency aid in the medical field, but Geneva has no funds enabling it to deal with the immense task with which it is faced. Needless to add that the Committee is prepared to make every effort to carry out, to the best of its ability, its traditional work as neutral intermediary, with a view to assisting the victims of the Palestinian conflict by distributing the supplies entrusted to its care.

*EVENTS IN HYDERABAD: AN APPEAL BY
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE
RED CROSS TO THE PARTIES IN CONFLICT*

Geneva, September 17, 1948.

With the earnest desire to protect to the greatest extent the humanitarian principles which it is their duty to maintain, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva have today launched the following appeal to the Indian and Hyderabad Governments :

“ In conformity with their traditional humanitarian mission, the International Committee of the Red Cross are prepared whenever hostilities are impending to place their services at the disposal of the authorities concerned, in all cases where a neutral intermediary based on the stipulations of the Red Cross Conventions is required. The International Committee view events in Hyderabad from this standpoint. The International Committee’s services would in particular include the exchange of lists of captured army personnel, the visiting of places of internment by the Committee’s delegates, the exchange of news and the distribution of relief supplies placed by donors at the Committee’s disposal. Similar activities could be exercised in behalf of other victims of the conflict, in particular civilian internees ”.

(Signed) Paul Ruegger

President of the International
Committee of the Red Cross

*"FELLOWSHIP. THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
THE RED CROSS". BY JEAN-G. LOSSIER*

We have pleasure in quoting a few pages of the work entitled "Solidarité", first published in French in 1947¹, then translated into Spanish and German and now published in English under the title "Fellowship. The Moral Significance of the Red Cross"².

The author, Jean Lossier, a member of the International Committee's staff during the War, has aimed at giving a general idea of the moral principles on which the Red Cross movement as a whole is founded, and pointing the reasons for serving this cause. In the present day world where men are becoming more and more interdependent and where distances are growing less, it is vital that we should have a clear notion of the links which bind us together and which the constant and world-wide efforts of the Red Cross are strengthening daily.

The task of helping all who suffer, which the Red Cross has assumed, covers a very wide field and may even coincide with work undertaken by the social services of some States. By stressing that Red Cross work implies self-sacrifice the author explains the difference between a State social service and the work of the Red Cross, which springs from charitable motives.

Chapters entitled: Law, Ethics, Reasons for Action, Personal Commitments, Dignity, Humanity, Suffering, Communion, Solitude, Liberty and Civilisation are governed by the thought which always brings us back to the main theme:—the Red Cross has a moral significance that is enhanced by the threatening collapse of our present-day civilisation. It is today

¹ La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

² Geneva, 1948.

the only means by which men of all creeds, race and opinion can unite in deep human fellowship.

We now quote the chapter entitled "Suffering".

* * *

The Red Cross asks no question other than whether there is suffering uncared for or distress unassisted. The need of help is the only passport it requires, for the only nationality it recognises is that of suffering, which all may come to share sooner or later.

When all suffering is a call that must be answered, discrimination as to country, class and creed disappears, giving place to a neutrality without reserve. This is a difficult moral position to acquire and uphold, especially in time of war, for it means victory over hatred and the ability to consider a human being apart from the nation to which he belongs, and his individual drama separately from the collective drama of the war. The stretcher-bearer doing his merciful duty on the battlefield ceases even to notice the uniform of the man he picks up, whether it is the enemy's or not, and the Red Cross, in its peacetime work, does not look to see whether the victim of epidemic or disaster is wearing a whole coat or a ragged one. Both are there to save the lives of human beings who in their eyes are all alike.

If we declare our fellowship in a way that the man we wish to help can see and feel and understand, he will take a new hold on life and glimpse a better world. A new Columbus, he will find himself in sight of an unguessed shore where he can land at last and build another life after long hardship and despair. No sign of sympathy on our part is unimportant; a trifling act sows the seed of an infinite harvest; the least word of comfort spoken to someone in misfortune awakens echoes near and far.

People will only matter to us if we are thoroughly aware of them as living presences, not phantoms.

So long as we only vaguely sense them about us like obstacles to be skirted or removed, humanly non-existent, our whole attitude towards them is negative. But as soon as we move out of our own light and see them clearly, they regain all their true substantiality.

The successive shocks suffered throughout the moral world during recent generations have brought mistrust and apprehension in their wake. We have become like travellers in unknown country, driving for caution's sake with headlights extinguished. When we forget to be mistrustful we turn on their beam again, and find that we are illuminating not only our own road, but also the wayfarers upon it. We had fancied that the shadows were full of hostile presences, but suddenly they come into view making friendly signs as we go peering among them with needless anxiety, for there is nothing terrifying about them. On the contrary, they comfort us with their unexpected companionship. We thought we were alone, and here we are among a crowd of kindred beings. A ray of sympathy turned in their direction was all it needed to rouse the same response in them, and make them our guides towards the goal to which all of us are bound.

Each one of us is part of the light that shines in darkness. If we let it go out, we shall make unseen victims all the way, and we ourselves, steering blindly into the solitary night, will leave the road and go hopelessly astray for want of someone to warn us that we have lost our bearings. The light that saves some from hurt and others from getting lost, is the same ; in its radiance all are joined, and all are both the leaders and the led. Between the giver and receiver of light there is the same communion as between the anxious seekers of the way and those who show it them.

This thought recalls the Greek view that the petitioned is inferior to the petitioner, the victim

of predestination over whom broods the eternal figure of suffering. It was a true conception, and its real power lay in the consciousness of the gods' omnipresence in all things. The triumph of human intelligence over the forces of nature blurred its meaning, until later generations came to think that to implore was to abase oneself. But is this not an error? Surely the implorer, not only as the symbol of suffering, but as the reminder of our mutual dependence, is clothed with dignity. Across the boundaries of space, his beseeching hands exhort us to remember that he does not need our help more than we need his appeal, for the understanding of suffering and the desire to alleviate it is the only true criterion by which to judge whether succeeding civilisations progress towards justice and humanity, or recede from them.

The ancient world placed the petitioner above the petitioned, the modern world places him below. But a time will come when both will be considered equal. Each gives the other opportunity to fulfil the best in him. They are united in equal fervour to build a social order in which relief will not be almsgiving, but the concrete form of fellowship deeply felt, not called forth by exceptional emergency, but permanently active and extending beyond specific suffering to every social need. Askers and asked being equal, they will have equal rights and receive equal respect, whereby they will recognise themselves at last as one and indivisible. Material aid is not at issue here. The petition we allude to is for the relief—over and above and far beyond mere rights and duties—of the two worst forms of suffering which can befall us: to be alone, cut off completely from all human contact, and to be subjected to wilful bodily torture. In hardship, one must have somebody to talk to, in abandonment one longs for the gesture of help, however slight, that will make one feel again that life is not utterly in vain.

The spirit of fellowship towards those in distress is of the very essence of the Red Cross. Dunant, pondering over the sufferings of the sick and wounded in the Chiesa Maggiore, dwelt longest on their infinite loneliness. In joy we are never alone, but in our suffering, that outside comfort can do little to assuage, who will seek us out ?

The young corporal will die more calmly because Dunant promises to write to his parents, break the sad news carefully and console them with his personal sympathy. We fear to die alone. As the body lets life out, a great need for human contact fills the soul. When nothingness engulfs the flesh, a hand gropes upward out of the depths, to touch the watcher's hand. In that moment of ultimate experience, a chain is stretched taut between the one who goes and those who stay, the helpers and the helped.

Suffering is slow to cry out, but its appeal is the more impassioned for having been restrained so long. When the hope of an answer is all that still remains, even the least sign that it has been heard is a token beyond price. Such signs must therefore always be tangible and real enough for the sufferer to receive them as true symbols of the better world they promise. It then becomes impossible for the helping deed or word to offend against dignity. Proffered and accepted as between equals, condescension on the one side and humiliation on the other will be unthinkable in such exchanges.

Utter simplicity in this respect will enable those in whom suffering and indignity have engendered an exacerbated consciousness of self, to find their way back to normal contact with others. The injured body, mended at last, once more becomes part of the mobile universe ; the heart, ceasing to overflow with its own tears, yields to the enlarging influence of knowing that one can reach the suffering of others

through one's own. Invalids have been known to overcome their maladies through the healing energy derived from a feeling of unity, not with invalids like themselves or, as often happens in moments of particular discouragement, with the dead whom they expected soon to join, but with the living who go about their occupations under the sun.

The despairing, all those whom war or the other hardships of life have crushed and broken, even the mutilated and the victims of the most hideous outrages, all can regain confidence and start afresh. But they must be helped, and the task requires much patience. The Red Cross, amongst other organisations, has taken up this work in several countries, mainly in the form of institutes for the rehabilitation of war victims, offices for aid and advice to those whom the war has robbed of their home ties, home nursing services, and so forth.

In this connection, it is worth quoting the especially valuable initiative of the British Red Cross in bringing the world's great paintings to patients in hospital by means of good reproductions, left hanging in each ward for a certain time and then replaced by others. The results have been unusually encouraging. The newly awakened interest in art, and eagerness to know more about the various masters and their schools have already drawn out talent. Patients have themselves taken up the study of art, and exhibitions of their work have been held in various places. The miracle of art, together with a creative use of enforced idleness, has strengthened the will to recover, and brought about a renewal of the spirit.

If joy calls forth a clear, high melody within us, suffering stirs our souls to graver tones, richer in content because through pain we reach farther into life. Its value lies not in pain itself, but in its power to widen even the narrowest horizon, increasing the

scale of sensibility and endowing the heart with a part of life's wealth, which we only never coveted before, because we did not guess that it existed. Something constructive can be made of every human suffering if we recognise those who have been through it as having a special contribution to make in their greater maturity and ability to let others share in the moral riches they themselves have acquired at such cost.

What has been learnt by men and women who have suffered in their flesh, their heart, their dignity and their faith in human kind must not be wasted, but put to its full use as a ferment in the sluggishness of those whose daily lives are full of ease. The martyred, the ill-treated who have come through such experiences unbeaten, reveal humanity to us through their witness to the self-respect that emerges triumphant out of the bitterest trials. Then there is the lesson of confidence taught us by those who escape from death only to remain bed-ridden, but find words perennially fresh to tell the beauty of life given back to them. The contribution of cripples is the more impressive for all their disability deprives them of. Their very dependence upon others is the image of the dependence of each on all.

Thus the sick, the injured, the infirm whom we are accustomed to look upon as diminished human beings can signify something altogether different, seen from another angle. In a society sufficiently enlightened to cultivate and use instruction in human values, they will give enough and to spare in return for opportunities, whereby they may show how suffering can be a pilgrim's progress onward and upward towards a more fruitful life. We do not mean to glorify suffering as such, but to point out the need to see that all the elements of existence, promising or unpromising, are turned to good account.

No work built on this view and purpose can dispense with the devotion of individuals, but neither can

individual efforts, however devoted, be effective unless co-ordinated. Red Cross initiatives in this direction cannot be too warmly welcomed. In some countries special departments for the medical and professional after-care of convalescents have been established. Paralysed children receive training with appliances, many regaining complete or partial use of their limbs. Unaided, they would never find the courage to make the exhausting effort such training requires, but games and singing make their hard way less painful. This is but one of the new activities for which the Red Cross, with its special character and the means at its disposal, is particularly well fitted.

Contact with suffering is good for humanitarian workers; it helps them to put the well-being of others before their own and not to flag in their effort to lend moral as well as material aid, by weaving ties of sympathy and hopefulness between the victim of disease or violence and the world about him. Those whose task is the alleviation of suffering do not connive at its causes, but neither do they seek to efface its mark. On the contrary, they know that certain scars can be like the fruitful furrow which in good time the slowly germinating seed will fill to overflowing with the bread of life.

No man alone is ever as strong as we think. In the long run the stress of intense suffering will crush rather than strengthen him. He will only be able to bear it and see its meaning, if others help him to carry a burden whose very weight calls forth unsolicited aid. What inspires his helpers to give the best that is in them, is not so much his tribulation as their own sympathy. In the fight against suffering this is the strongest arm, and when he and they emerge victorious they celebrate a common triumph. The remembrance of every such conquest gives courage to go further and do more.