

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

The work of the Red Cross in the Congo — The International Committee of the Red Cross has continued to assist persons under detention in the Congo, by visiting on March 1 the eight Belgian soldiers who were taken prisoner in January after crossing the Congo frontier, coming from Ruanda-Urundi. The delegate of the ICRC was allowed to speak with them, to hand over correspondence and to give them a few comforts.

Two delegates of the ICRC, Mr. P. Delarue and Dr. P. Kiefer left Geneva for Elisabethville on March 15; the main purpose of their mission is to visit places of detention in Katanga.

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Mr. J. Bomboko, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Leopoldville, has sent to the Federal Political Department in Berne a declaration to the effect that the Congo will abide by the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

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The Congo Delegation of the ICRC continues to make every effort to support the Red Cross medical teams¹ in their work. In February and March three more teams were installed by the delegates; a Canadian team in Gemena (Equator), a Pakistani team in Luosi (Leopoldville) and an Australian team in Bunia (Or. Province).

¹ See *Revue internationale*, February 1961.

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By the middle of March the Red Cross teams in the Congo had been posted to the following districts :

Australia	<i>Bunia (Or. Prov.) and Oshwe (Leopoldville)</i>
Canada	<i>Gemena (Equ.)</i>
Czechoslovakia	<i>Banningville (Leopoldville)</i>
Denmark	<i>Matadi (Leopoldville) and Boma (Leopoldville)</i>
Finland	<i>Luisa (Kasai)</i>
Germany (Fed. Rep.)	<i>Bakwanga (Kasai)</i>
Iran	<i>Thysville (Leopoldville)</i>
Ireland	<i>Beni (Kivu)</i>
Jugoslavia	<i>Bukavu (Kivu)</i>
New Zealand	<i>Luisa (Kasai)</i>
Norway	<i>Popakabaka (Leopoldville)</i>
Pakistan	<i>Luosi (Leopoldville)</i>
Poland	<i>Stanleyville (Equ.), Kikwit (Leopoldville) and Idiofa (Leopoldville)</i>
Sweden	<i>Lisala (Equ.)</i>

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In response to an appeal from the Leopoldville Delegation, the International Committee sent to it emergency supplies of medicaments and dressings which were lacking in various hospitals in the Congo. These relief supplies, valued at 80,000 Swiss francs, were made available through a gift of £ 30,000 placed at the Committee's disposal by the British Red Cross.

Other consignments will follow until these funds are exhausted ; this donation has enabled the ICRC to place £ 5,000 at the disposal of its delegation for sending foodstuffs to some hospitals, in order to prevent patients in course of treatment from leaving the hospitals on account of the scarcity of food.

Intellectual relief supplies (books, etc.) have also been sent by the ICRC to the wounded and sick in the Kintambo Military Hospital (Leopoldville).

Relief actions. — France — *With the help of various contributions received, the ICRC has undertaken relief action in the form of clothing for Algerian political detainees in assigned residence centres. These relief supplies included underclothing and socks and reached a total value of 30,000 Swiss francs.*

Greece — *Early in March the Czechoslovak Red Cross despatched 210 individual parcels for Greek political detainees. A delegate of the ICRC went to Trieste to take delivery of the parcels and to deal with their forwarding, by sea, to Greece.*

Laos — *Mr. André Durand, delegate of the ICRC, engaged in a mission to Laos, has continued the action undertaken in behalf of the victims of the recent events. In addition to the relief supplies referred to in our January issue, supplementary aid has been made possible, through an important gift of the Australian Government, in behalf of the refugees in Vientiane. The distribution of these further relief supplies (valued at 16,000 dollars) was made by the Laotian Red Cross.*

Nepal — *An aircraft bearing the Red Cross emblem arrived in Katmandu on February 14 last.¹ This means of transport placed at the disposal of the delegates of the ICRC (who, as is known, are working in this country in behalf of the Tibetan refugees) has made it possible to transport and to distribute foodstuffs and clothing in the upper valleys in Nepal, in particular in the Khumbu and Takkhola areas.*

The ICRC Delegation in Nepal has been reinforced by Dr. C. Billod and his wife, both of whom will deal with medical aid to refugees in the Takkhola Valley.

Spain — *In February, the Relief Section despatched various relief supplies (valued at 2,000 Swiss francs), a gift of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR on behalf of Spanish nationals repatriated from the USSR. The distribution of these supplies to the beneficiaries was entrusted to Mr. Eric Arbenz, delegate in Spain of the International Committee.*

Mission to Germany. — *Mr. H. G. Beckh, delegate of the ICRC, made a further visit to West Germany from February 27 to March 4,*

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during which he saw Mr. Güde, Attorney General of the Federal Republic, and Mr. Bauer, Attorney General of Hesse.

He also visited Butzbach Prison, where he spoke with the five political detainees held in this establishment. In Frankfort-Preungesheim he visited the women's prison, and the prison for men awaiting trial; in both cases he spoke with one of the persons under detention. After these interviews, which took place without witnesses, Mr. Beckh had talks with Mr. Johans, Director of Butzbach Prison, and Mrs. Einsele, Director of the Frankfort prison for women.

Study-visit to the ICRC — Mr. K. Seevaratnam, the new Assistant-Director of the League Junior Red Cross Bureau, and Miss Alina Kusmiercyyk, of the Polish Junior Red Cross, made a one day study-visit to the ICRC headquarters on January 24. After hearing several talks on the structure, organisation and activities of the International Committee, the development of international humanitarian law and other subjects of a juridical nature, the two visitors were shown round the Central Tracing Agency.

Re-uniting of families — Reference has been made on several occasions to the successive phases of the action undertaken by the ICRC with a view to re-uniting, or helping to re-unite, members of families dispersed by the events during the Second World War.

In 1960, over 15,000 persons (adults and children) were able to join relatives who had left their country of residence. This figure brings to over 388,000 the number of persons — mostly of German origin ("Volksdeutsche") — who have thus been re-united with their families.

This action is being pursued in conjunction with the National Societies concerned. Some of them deal with this matter and keep the International Committee informed of the results. In other countries, however, the work is carried out with the active participation of the ICRC.

Furthermore, the action for the re-uniting of "Volksdeutsche" children from Yugoslavia with their families was brought to a successful conclusion in 1960, which was largely due to the efforts of the Yugoslav Red Cross Society and the facilities granted by the authorities in that country.

Visits to the ICRC — *From mid-January until early in February, the ICRC had the honour of receiving visits from Mr. H. Ritgen, Head of the Relief Section of the Red Cross in the German Federal Republic, and Mr. F. K. Lüder, industrialist, Hamburg; Professor John S. Morgan, Chairman of the Canadian National Disaster Relief Services, the new Head of the United States Permanent Mission in Geneva: H. E. Mr. Graham A. Martin, Ambassador, accompanied by the Assistant Head of the Mission, Mr. Charles W. Owsley; the Chairman of the Irish Red Cross, Mrs. Tom Barry, accompanied by Miss M. B. Murphy, Head of the Irish Junior Red Cross; H. E. Mr. E. Lotz, Minister, Permanent Delegate of Belgium in Geneva; Miss Jutta Ibing, a German Red Cross nurse (German Federal Republic) on her way back from a mission in Morocco; Dr. K. Benz and Dr. F. Peltzer, members of the medical team of the German Federal Republic in Kivu Province (Congo)¹; the new Ambassador of Turkey in Berne, H.E. Mr. Zeki Kuneralp, accompanied by Mr. Sadun Terem, Consul-General in Geneva; Dr. S. Haughton and Mr. A. Thompson (male nurse) both members of the Australian medical team in the Congo; Miss L. Masson, in charge of the Blood Transfusion Section of the Central Secretariat of the French Red Cross; the new United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Felix Schnyder; H.E. Mr. Morio Aoki, new Permanent Delegate of Japan in Geneva; Dr. Wolfgang Weitbrecht, Vice-President of the Red Cross in the German Democratic Republic, accompanied by Mr. Beling, Permanent Representative in Geneva of that country; Miss Karin Wielsen, Vice-President of the Norwegian Red Cross, passing through Geneva on her way to the Congo on a mission; Mr. Walter Hartmann, former Secretary-General of the Red Cross in the German Federal Republic; Mr. G. Rosén, Assistant Secretary-General of the Information Department of the Finnish Red Cross.*

The ICRC also had the pleasure of receiving a few groups of visitors, in particular young diplomats and future diplomats of various African and Asian countries, taking study-courses at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. These groups also

¹ We referred in our issue for February (1961) to the operations for the release of these two doctors who had been arrested in January while performing their duties.

included students of the "Bon Secours" Nursing School (Geneva) and pupils of the German School in Geneva.

World Refugee Year Conference — *This Conference, under the auspices of the Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies working for Refugees, was held from January 17 to 20 in Geneva. It was presided over by Dr. Elfan Rees, Chairman, and Mr. Charles H. Jordan, Co-Chairman, of the Executive Committee of the International Committee for World Refugee Year (ICWRY). The International Committee of the Red Cross was represented by Mr. H. Coursier, member of the Legal Department.*

The Conference first discussed the achievements of World Refugee Year (WRY). This vast campaign not only enabled considerable funds — 88 million dollars according to the latest estimates — to be collected, the legal status of refugees to be improved and the closing down of a number of camps ; it had also made the general public understand the plight of refugees and encouraged it to extend its charitable aid to needy people living in remote areas. In addition, WRY had led to closer, more active and fruitful co-operation between the various organisations concerned, on both the national and international levels.

The Conference then studied the current needs of various refugee groups, in particular the Algerian, Chinese and Tibetan refugees, the Arab refugees in Palestine, displaced persons in the Congo, etc. A study of the legal problems relating to refugees, their emigration, resettlement in countries of asylum, etc. was also made by Working Parties set up within the Conference. The Working Party concerned with legal questions was presided over by Mr. H. Coursier.

On the close of the discussions the Conference stated that it " draws the attention of Governments to the necessity of their continuing their concern for the on-going needs of the refugees " ; furthermore, it expressed the hope that " the national initiatives of private citizens and Voluntary Agencies for World Refugee Year will continue in some organised form, with the support of Governments, to carry on their activities in an appropriate manner... "

Statistical figures for ICRC mail — *In 1960 the ICRC received 112,853 postal items and despatched 161,523 ; the figures for the previous year were respectively 118,343 and 167,007.*

Although the percentage of correspondence concerning individual cases shows a decrease, it should be noted that the number of letters received concerning general matters is increasing steadily owing to the events in various parts of the world.

The figure for the staff at the ICRC headquarters in 1960 reached an average of 157 (178 in 1959).

“ The Doctor in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 ” — *A new edition of this work, first published by the ICRC in 1953, will shortly be available.*

The decision to issue a new edition is due to the interest shown (especially by various National Societies and in medical circles) in this work, of which the author is Mr. J. P. Schoenholzer of the Legal Department.

English version of “ La Croix-Rouge internationale ” — *We have already drawn our readers' attention to this work by Mr. Henri Coursier, member of the Legal Department of the ICRC, published in 1959 by the “ Presses universitaires de France ”. In view of the great interest taken in this book the ICRC decided, in agreement with the publishers, to have it translated into English.*

Visit to the Portuguese Red Cross Society — *While he was in Portugal last year, Mr. Carl Burckhardt, member of the International Committee of the Red Cross, paid a visit to the Portuguese Red Cross. He was received very cordially by the President of the Society and members of the Central Committee.*

After visiting this Society's various sections, Mr. Burckhardt was invited to attend some of the training and refresher courses for Portuguese Red Cross nurses.

A tribute to the memory of Mr. William Michel — *Wishing to honour the memory of Mr. William Michel, whose untimely death occurred recently, and in recognition of the work accomplished by the late delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross during his missions to the Far East, a posthumous award of the Order of Merit has been made to him by the Japanese Red Cross.*

*A little ceremony was held at the ICRC headquarters on February 20, during which H.E. Mr. Morio Aoki, Minister, Permanent Delegate of Japan in Geneva, handed to the President of our institution the medal and diploma awarded to Mr. W. Michel by the Japanese Red Cross*¹.

The work of the International Tracing Service — *In 1960 the International Tracing Service (ITS), under the administration of the ICRC, received 114,900 enquiries and issued 271,887 certificates and reports. The figures for 1959 were, respectively, 125,871 and 320,072.*

There was an increase in the number of individual enquiries (concerning missing or dispersed persons) namely 41,259 in 1960 (31,273 in 1959), while applications for death certificates (17,646 in 1960, 22,885 in 1959) and certificates to obtain compensation (49,029 in 1960, 64,280 in 1959) showed a decrease.

During the past year the ITS made out 782,214 individual cards (719,275 in 1959) for its central card-index. During this same period 840,471 cards (725,601 in 1959) were classified.

As a result of efforts pursued in this connection, originals of photostat copies of new documents (individual cases or lists) were made available to the International Tracing Service by National Red Cross Societies, authorities and various bodies in several countries.

Artificial limb workshop in Sarajevo — *This workshop, set up with funds donated by the Yugoslav Red Cross, and with the assistance of the Yugoslav Ministry for Social Welfare and the Yugoslav Federation of Ex-Servicemen, has been working on an independent basis for some years past. As, however, the National Society wished to install more modern methods of manufacture, in particular for producing a special type of artificial limb, it asked the ICRC in 1957 if it could supply the machines and tools required for this purpose which were not available in that country.*

In response to this request the International Committee equipped the workshop with a number of machines and tools for a total value of 20,000 Swiss francs. Furthermore, with the assistance of the ICRC, two Yugoslav orthopaedic technicians went to the German Federal

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Republic to make themselves familiar with modern manufacturing methods ; the valuable experience thus gained will enable them to make the best use of the new apparatus. According to information received from the Yugoslav Red Cross, since the machines supplied by the ICRC have been in use, the Sarajevo workshop has increased its production and it can now offer a wider choice of models including various orthopaedic apparatus and artificial limbs¹. Negotiations are now pending to obtain the material required for the manufacture of plastic limbs.

The Sarajevo premises will also include a room where the disabled will learn to walk, a room for use as an infirmary and another where a disabled person being fitted will stay until he has become accustomed to wearing an artificial limb. The building will be finished in July 1961.

Mission to Asia — As stated in our February issue, Miss A. Pfirter, Head of the Medical Personnel Section, arrived on January 9 in Beirut, where she had several meetings with the directorate of the Lebanese Red Cross Society and representatives of the Army Medical Service and the Civil Defence Service. During her stay in Lebanon Miss Pfirter gave talks to nurses and student-nurses².

On January 20, she went to Amman where she had several interviews with the directorate of the Jordan Red Crescent Society and various other persons. After visiting the Nursing School, maternity hospitals, children's centres, etc., Miss Pfirter gave lectures, in particular on the Geneva Conventions, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and the organisation of voluntary medical service, to audiences composed of Army Medical Officers, Police officials and student-nurses ; she also made a broadcast from the Amman broadcasting station.

Miss Pfirter then went to Baghdad on February 6, after another short stay in Beirut. Discussions with the directorate of the Iraqi Red Crescent, and representatives of the Medical and Civil Defence services, were followed by a visit to the military hospital and an interview at the Baghdad broadcasting station. Miss Pfirter also gave talks to members of the Ladies Committee of the Iraqi Red Crescent, first-aid workers, nurses and student-nurses of the Nursing School.

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² Id.

Miss Pfirter arrived on February 19 in New Delhi, where she had conversations with the Indian Red Cross, the Professional Nurses Association and the directorate of the Nursing Services of the Ministry of Health.

On leaving India, Miss Pfirter proceeded to Nepal, where she arrived on February 27. Her discussions with members of the ICRC Delegation in Katmandu were followed by several interviews with representatives of the Army Medical Service and the Public Health Service ; she also visited a hospital and gave a talk to student-nurses at the Nursing School.

As we have already said, the main purpose of Miss Pfirter's mission is to examine with the National Societies of the various Asian countries various questions relating to the recruitment and organisation of voluntary medical personnel. In addition, the International Committee's delegate will contribute, by a series of lectures, towards the dissemination of the principles of the Geneva Conventions.

At every stage of her journey Miss Pfirter has met with a most cordial welcome and the directorates of the National Societies have done everything possible to assist her in carrying out her mission.

Visits to places of detention and internment in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland — *In December 1960 and January 1961, Mr. G. C. Senn, delegate of the ICRC in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, made further visits to several places of detention and internment in Southern Rhodesia. Mr. Senn thus visited the Gokwe Restricted Area (which was shut down later), Marandellas Prison and three re-establishment centres where a number of persons arrested after the disturbances which occurred in the second half of 1960 are interned.*

Israeli detainees in the United Arab Republic — *Nine Israeli nationals, including a young girl, who were arrested in Egypt following their clandestine crossing of the frontier were released recently by the UAR authorities.*

Through the good offices of the ICRC Delegation in Cairo, these persons left Egypt on March 15 ; they embarked at Alexandria on board the s/s " LYDIA ".

Visits to detained persons in Laos — *In pursuance of its efforts to assist victims of the events in Laos, the International Committee of the Red Cross obtained authority from the Government in Vientiane for making several visits to military prisoners and civilian detainees. The Committee's delegate in the Far East, Mr. André Durand, was thus able to visit recently four camps, where about 500 persons in all are interned, with whom he was able to converse freely. As customary, the delegate's report on these visits was handed to the detaining authorities. It contained various suggestions for improvements in the detention conditions. Mr. Durand also distributed a few comforts in these camps.*

Visits to places of detention and internment in France — *Two delegates of the ICRC visited, on March 17 and 18, the prison in Châlons-sur-Marne, and the assigned residence centre in Vadenay.*

As customary, they were able to converse freely with detained and interned persons of their choice.

A thousand packets of cigarettes were distributed in these establishments to mark the "Aït-el-Seghir" celebrations.

Red Cross Centenary — *Since October last, the various groups dealing with the organisation of the celebrations have held several meetings. The Exhibition Sub-Committee was more particularly engaged in obtaining the participation of the Army Medical Service, setting up a general plan of the Exhibition, and financial matters. The groups concerned with history and philately also held meetings. The Committee of Experts in charge of the programme of lectures, study-courses and technical displays held five meetings and drafted a general programme in this connection.*

With regard to information, contact has been made with the Press and the Broadcasting and Television Services. The Working Party, set up in the interval, met on three occasions. The groups dealing with propaganda and financial questions held a first meeting to define their field of action.

The Festival Committee met on December 14, 1960, and March 17, 1961 for general discussions. It noted with pleasure the Federal Council's decision to strike a coin to mark the Centenary celebrations.

Contacts were made with representatives of National Societies visiting Geneva and specialists concerned with museums and exhibitions.

The Geneva Conventions in Pictures — *As stated in a previous issue, the ICRC recently published a new edition of this booklet. The National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies, Army Medical Services and Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the countries parties to the Geneva Convention were informed that subscriptions for this booklet were open until February 28, 1961, at the cost of Sw. Fr. 0,70 per copy. The new edition met with great success; about twenty National Societies and some government departments responded to the International Committee's offer. Thus the 10,000 copies of the new edition (which included Hindi as the ninth language) have already been distributed. The 15,000 copies in which Lingala (the most widely spoken dialect in the Congo) was substituted for Hindi were distributed more particularly in the country concerned. Several National Societies have expressed a wish for the language of their country to be included in this booklet. In order to meet their wishes and thus to promote a general knowledge of the main principles of the Geneva Conventions, the section concerned in Geneva is now considering the publication of a third edition of the booklet which would include the other languages required. A circular letter on the subject will be sent to all the National Societies.*
