

EFFORTS TO HAVE THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS RESPECTED IN THE CONGO

A solemn appeal to President Kasavubu. — The International Committee of the Red Cross was all the more dismayed on hearing of the acts of cruelty committed in the Congo, since it had, from the beginning of the events in that country in the summer of 1960, attempted unceasingly to spread the knowledge of the Geneva Conventions and to impose a spirit of humanity. It published, on November 17, the following press release on the subject :

Questioned about its attitude towards the recent acts of cruelty perpetrated in the Congo, the International Committee of the Red Cross wishes to define the limits of its present activity in that country.

The International Committee has constantly reminded the Congolese authorities de jure or de facto of the minimum requirements proceeding from the application of the Geneva Conventions and it has frequently intervened, and often with success, in saving numerous lives. However, in areas given over to disorder, it is not possible for it to accomplish its mission with complete effectiveness. The prevention of outrages against human dignity and life is the sole responsibility of the civil or military authorities, whose task it is to assure public order and to see that national and international laws are observed.

On the other hand, the President of the ICRC addressed to Mr. Kasavubu, President of the Republic of the Congo, a telegram expressing his deep concern over the outrages which had recently been reported in various parts of the country, and reminded him



At Vientiane. — *Distribution of ICRC relief to Meo refugees (Right, Mr. Muralti, delegate of the ICRC.)*

LAOS

Laotian refugees waiting for the distribution of ICRC relief at the That Khao camp at Vientiane.

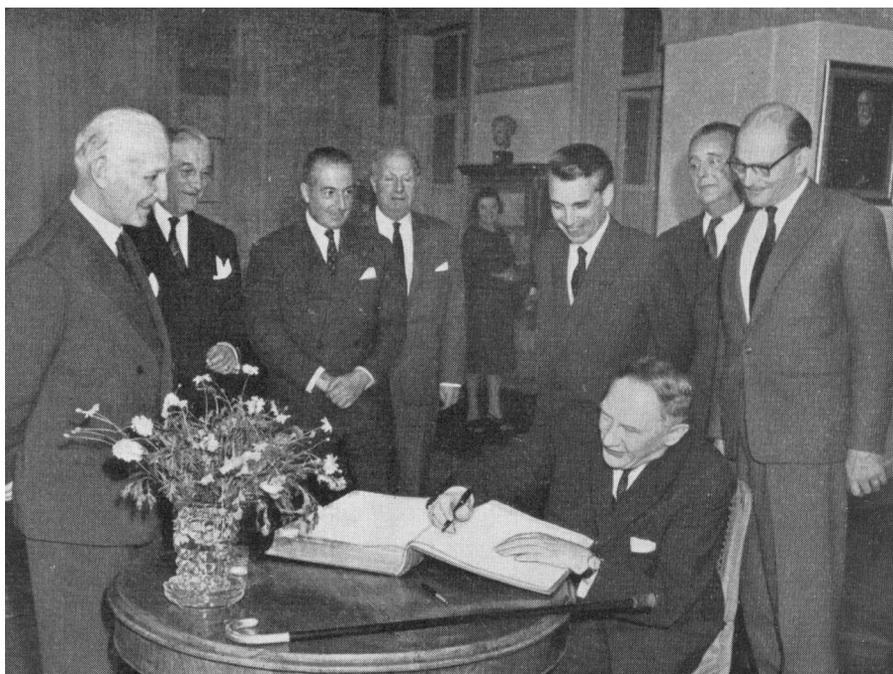




Mr. A. Moisescu, President of the Red Cross of the Rumanian People's Republic, signing the ICRC gold book...

GUESTS OF THE ICRC

...also Mr. H. von Lex, President of the German Red Cross in the German Federal Republic.



that his Government, by acceding to the Geneva Conventions, had undertaken to have their provisions respected. In this telegram, the President of the ICRC made a solemn appeal to the Congolese Head of State, so that all measures shall be taken to prevent a recurrence of such acts, which were contrary to recognized humanitarian law.

The dissemination of the Conventions amongst the Congolese forces.—The ICRC has instructed its delegates at Leopoldville and at Elizabethville to undertake fresh measures to ensure that the precepts of the Geneva Conventions become better known amongst the forces opposing each other in the Congo. In 1960 it had despatched 6,500 illustrated booklets, in various languages, on the Conventions, with the addition of a version in Lingala, which is the language generally spoken in the Congolese army. It requested its delegates to see that the booklet had a greater circulation amongst the troops.

In this connection, it should be noted that the ICRC is considering the publication of a new edition of the booklet in Swahili, a language which is current in Katanga as well as in large areas of Central and East Africa.

Following on the military operations which have recently been carried out on the Katanga frontier and since the outbreak of further hostilities can be expected, the delegates have been instructed to make special representations with the Central Government at Leopoldville, as well as with the Katanga authorities, so that the troops respect the essential provisions of the Conventions. On the other hand, they have attempted to make enquiries about prisoners who may have been captured during the recent operations in order to bring them the aid of the ICRC.