

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

### News Items

#### **The ICRC in Laos**

The military operations which took place at Muong-Sing and Nam-Tha, in the province of Laos bordering on Burma, China and Thailand, have led to a further influx of refugees into areas controlled by the Vientiane Government.

Dr. Jürg Baer, doctor-delegate of the ICRC in Laos, therefore proceeded to make further relief distributions at Luang-Prabang, the Royal capital. He then went to Houei Sai, on the banks of the Mekong, facing Thailand territory, where he supervised, together with Mrs. Noupbat Chounramany, President of the Women's Committee of the Laotian Red Cross, the distribution of clothing, blankets, condensed milk and concentrated soup to the Meo refugees who had arrived from the mountainous regions to the north of the town. On this occasion a provisional provincial Committee of the Laotian Red Cross was set up at Houei Sai.

Furthermore, the ICRC delegate handed over relief there. In particular he gave condensed milk for the wounded and sick undergoing treatment in the hospital founded by the late Dr. Tom Dooley, the American doctor in whose memory a foundation had been created to continue the splendid humanitarian work to which he had devoted his life.

Shortly before Easter, Dr. Baer made distributions of clothing, food and domestic utensils to refugees from the Plaine des Jannes area, newly arrived in Paksane, about 90 miles to the east of the administrative capital of Vientiane:

These relief supplies were chiefly purchased locally thanks to credits drawn on ICRC relief funds. Further supplies, also destined for the Laotian refugees, left Trieste on April 20 on board M.S. "Cellina".

On the other hand, the action of the International Committee of the Red Cross, exercised also on behalf of the civilian population in areas controlled by the Khuang-Kahi Government, continues to receive the support of the National Red Cross Societies which alone have supplied until now about 300,000 Sw. frs. worth of contributions in cash and in kind. It is true to say that the number of refugees is now six times greater than ten months ago, and that considerable resources are required to meet all their needs.

More recently, Dr. Jurg Baer, doctor-delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, arrived at the Plaine des Jarres (Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government). He discussed various humanitarian matters with the Vice-President of the Laotian Red Cross and with the Khang-Khay authorities.

Shortly before this the ICRC had sent relief consignments to this part of Laos consisting chiefly of pharmaceutical products and surgical equipment for the hospital at Xieng-Khouang. These supplies were donated by the Swiss, Polish and Indian Red Cross Societies.

Dr. Baer also intervened on behalf of the victims of recent military operations which had taken place in the Nam Tha region in North Laos. In co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross he distributed relief parcels at the four hospitals at Vientiane to the military who had been wounded during the fighting.

At Paksé and at Thakhek in South Laos, he handed over food and clothing to refugees.

### **Aid to Dutch Nationals**

Mr. Pierre Vibert, delegate of the ICRC, returned to Geneva on May 5 from Djakarta where he dealt, together with the Indonesian Red Cross, with the payment of pensions and allowances which the Netherlands Government makes to a number of Dutch nationals who have remained in Indonesia. About 800 had already received a first payment in December 1961 from Netherlands funds transmitted by the ICRC to the Indonesian Red Cross. The second payment is at present being made.

During the course of his mission in Indonesia, the ICRC delegate also dealt with the assistance given by the Red Cross to Dutch nationals wishing to leave Indonesia for the Netherlands. In this connection the Indonesian Red Cross chiefly assists the aged and sick, or persons with insufficient resources to reach Djakarta.

This action was undertaken by the ICRC in 1961 following on the breakdown of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands, and because of the absence of the protecting Power. Postal communications having also been suspended, the Central

Tracing Agency of the ICRC transmits family messages in both directions between the two countries.

### **Repatriation of Koreans**

The 90th boat-load of Koreans returning to their country of origin left Japan on April 21, with 351 people, which brings to 76,219 the total number of people who have returned to North Korea since the beginning of the operation in 1959.

At the request of the Japanese Red Cross, the ICRC special mission is continuing its work in Tokyo and at the embarkation port of Niiga in order to ensure that the people concerned are not subjected to any pressure to compel them either to leave or to remain.

### **Release of French Prisoners**

Mr. Camille Vautier, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Morocco, assisted in the release, made by virtue of the Evian agreements, of four French military prisoners of the ALN. They were released on May 16, 1962 at Rabat. The ICRC has made a number of representations over the past three years on behalf of these prisoners whose whereabouts had been reported on the Algero-Moroccan frontier.

### **ICRC to remain in Congo**

The International Committee of the Red Cross will not be closing its delegation in Léopoldville for the time being. As the work of this delegation had been noticeably diminishing, the ICRC had recently considered closing it. However, following ICRC member Colonel S. Gonard's visit to the Congo during his recent mission in Africa, and from the observations which this mission was able to make on the spot, the ICRC considers it necessary to remain in the Congo.

It arrived at the same conclusion after hearing M. Jean de Preux, its delegate in Léopoldville since February 12, 1961, who returned to Geneva in April. In his absence, the ICRC has asked Mr. Geoffrey C. Senn, its delegate in Elisabethville, to extend his activities to the whole of the Congolese territory.

In addition to this, the Congolese authorities and UNO High Command in the former Belgian colony have also urged the ICRC to remain in the Congo.

In a letter to the ICRC President, Mr. Léopold Boissier, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, wrote "I

would like to say that I attach very great importance to the existence of an ICRC delegation in the Congo. Over the course of the last two years and particularly in periods of crisis, your representatives have carried out a remarkable work. As you know, there are in the Congo many situations of humanitarian importance which require constant attention of the type which only an ICRC representative can give. The presence of an ICRC representative is also extremely important for the carrying out of the very delicate mandate which the UN has been given in the Congo”.

It should be added that ICRC delegate G. C. Senn has just returned to Léopoldville to contact the Central Congolese Government and the United Nations authorities. Together they reviewed the current humanitarian problems in the Congo.

### **Enquiry into the Death of G. Olivet**

The Commission charged with conducting an impartial and independent enquiry into the circumstances of the death of Georges Olivet, Mrs. Vroonen and Mr. Smeding, Katanga Red Cross workers, has decided to meet in Geneva at the beginning of June, to complete its final report. It will then hand the report to the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the two institutions which appointed the members of the Commission.

### **In Memory of Georges Olivet**

The Belgian Government has decided to award posthumously the Belgian Medal of Gratitude to Mr. Georges Olivet, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who fell at Elisabethville on December 13, 1961, while carrying out a humanitarian Red Cross mission. This Medal is a small artistic medallion in gilded bronze  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, framed in a case.

The first year class of hospital nursing students of the French Red Cross Nursing School at Limoges has been named after Georges Olivet, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, killed while carrying out his duty in Katanga, in December 1961. In a letter to the French Red Cross, Miss Madoumier, President of the first year class, made the following comment on this decision:

“ Our first year class has taken the name of Georges Olivet because we wanted it to signify an awareness of current events; the Congo is one of the world's nerve centres, where two civilizations face each other in a most terrible manner and which for many months has been the scene of much devoted Red Cross action. Georges Olivet has been a great example to us.”

### **Mission in Austria**

ICRC Delegate H. G. Beckh carried out a mission in Austria during April. He was received by Mr. Sevcik, Secretary-General of the Austrian Red Cross, with whom he had talks on questions concerning the work of the International Committee's delegation in Vienna, as well as on problems relating to the reuniting of families.

During his stay at the ICRC delegation's headquarters, Mr. Beckh dealt particularly with this latter question and it was in connection with this that he visited the transit camp at Piding near the Austro-German frontier.

### **Compensation to Ex-prisoners of War**

The International Committee of the Red Cross has just transferred a sum of three million Swiss francs to the Philippine Red Cross. This is the last payment made to this country under the terms of article 16 of the Peace Treaty with Japan. This article provided for financial compensation to be paid to ex-prisoners of war in Japanese hands for the hardships endured during their captivity.

The ICRC was designated by the Peace Treaty to carry out this humanitarian task, and in 1957, it proceeded with most of the distributions in the signatory countries, with the sums set aside from the Japanese funds. But in the Philippines, the absence of archives destroyed during the war delayed payments. The Philippine Red Cross therefore made a series of public appeals which enabled a list of 44,000 beneficiaries to be drawn up, for whom, in 1960, the ICRC transferred a sum of 13 million Swiss francs to the National Red Cross Society.

The second transfer which the ICRC has just made is intended for beneficiaries who did not make themselves known within the time limit.

### **Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions**

As part of its efforts to disseminate knowledge of the Geneva Conventions as widely as possible the ICRC, in co-operation with the League of Red Cross Societies, has brought out a book entitled "The Robinson Family".

Written with humour and in story form, this booklet (43 pages) describes the adventures of a family in war-time. The rules of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 are shown in practice in many instances of the daily life of the Robinsons and the protection afforded by the Conventions is illustrated by many examples.

The author of the book is Mrs. Barbara Warburton, a former Director of the Junior Red Cross in the United Kingdom ; it is illustrated with skill and humour by the Swiss journalist Pierre Leuzinger.

For the time being this book is available in a limited English language edition. It will shortly be sent to all the National Red Cross Societies.

## Red Cross Centenary

During the first months of the year, the work of the Centenary Commission and its various Sub-Committees has continued. The Commission was most interested to learn of the offer by the General Navigation Company of Lac Léman, to include a portrait of Henry Dunant and a fresco amongst the fittings for the vessel *Henry Dunant* which will be launched at the beginning of next year.

The Exhibition Sub-Committee has approved the plan for the Exhibition proceedings, as well as a second model showing the layout of the sectors. These have been distributed amongst the designers and the "sets" are in the process of being established. The Historical Group has continued to study its programme up to the present time, and the Topical Group has drawn up a catalogue of ideas.

The programme of courses and conferences has been settled and the Sub-Committee for Commemoration Day has studied a preliminary list of themes for the procession.

The Swiss press has shown great interest in the Centenary Celebrations and the XXth Conference and has assured the Commission of its support. A second consultative meeting of editors has taken place in Berne, at Swiss Red Cross headquarters, and the final programme for the press campaign has been drawn up. Working groups will shortly be set up to keep the public informed.

The text of the first press communiqué and the report which Mr. Siordet gave in Prague on the Centenary Celebrations have been sent to the National Red Cross Societies. Finally, in the publicity sector, an advertisement plan has been drawn up and the first advertisement projects have been examined.

## Guests of the ICRC

From mid-April to May 15, the ICRC received several personalities, in particular the following : Mr. Nedim Abut and Mr. N. Tchikalenko, Under-Secretary-Generals of the League of Red Cross Societies ; Mr. J. de Noue, chief of protocol of the European Office of the United Nations ; Mrs. Banks, of the Cambridge branch of the

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British Red Cross, accompanied by Mr. Banks, professor of law, in charge of courses in the Universities of Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir ; Mr. Coron, assistant regional manager of the American Red Cross ; Mr. Dan Hartly, executive member of the South Carolina branch of the American Red Cross ; Dr. Giri, Nepalese doctor, attending a course of studies in Europe ; Mr. Carlo Fedele, head of the external relations department of the World Health Organization ; Mrs. Frank L. Packard, member of the Quebec division of the Canadian Red Cross ; Mr. Blackstock, national director of water safety of the Ontario Chapter of the Canadian Red Cross ; H.E. Mr. Georges Cattand, Minister Plenipotentiary, Permanent Delegate of France in Geneva ; H.E. Mr. R. D. Kinzounza, Minister of Public Health and Population in the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), accompanied by Dr. Samba Dehlot, Director of that Ministry, and the Hon. M. E. Majekodunmi, Nigerian Minister of Health ; Mrs. Maria Madriaga, President of the Association of Catholic Nurses in Spain.

The ICRC also welcomed several groups of visitors comprising Yugoslav students accompanied by Mr. Jean Moppert of the University Group of International Relations of Geneva, instructor-nurses of the cadre schools of Paris and Marseilles, as well as young jurists from Munich.

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