

DEATH OF FOUR MEMBERS OF ICRC DELEGATIONS

In the space of two months, the ICRC has lost four members of its delegations, who died while carrying out their humanitarian mission. Three were Swiss and one was African. They were all prompted by that spirit of devotion and sacrifice which impels some people to help their neighbour in distress. They were highly conscious of the responsibility with which they were entrusted and in facing danger they met their deaths, giving a wonderful example of human brotherhood.

Louis Gaulis, who died in an accident on 29 March in Lebanon, was a well-known poet and dramatist. He was born in 1932 and was married with two children. He had undertaken several missions for the ICRC: in Bangladesh in 1972, afterwards in Vietnam and Cyprus. He arrived in Lebanon last January. His artistic gifts were allied to a generous disposition which attracted friendship. His loss is keenly felt by all who knew him.

André Tièche, born in 1947, was an accomplished man. There was nothing academic about him, but he possessed great human warmth and shrewdness, a touch of good-natured mischief and generosity in everything. He had a natural aptitude for humanitarian work and had served the ICRC in Angola in 1976, and in Lebanon in 1977. After some weeks at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, he set out for Rhodesia at the beginning of 1978, full of enthusiasm and courage, for a mission the dangers of which he was fully aware. He was not to return. He leaves a twelve-year old son.

Alain Bieri, holder of three university degrees, was a modest and reticent young man, intelligent, likeable and witty. He was born in 1945, and had interrupted his teaching career to join the ICRC in January 1977 to make his contribution to the work of the Red Cross. He was first assigned to the ICRC delegation in Damascus. He left on 9 May for his new mission in Rhodesia, where he was to meet his death ten days later.

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Charles Chatora was a very young married man from Umtali, where he worked for the ICRC delegation in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. He was very open, intelligent and enterprising, devoting himself utterly to his work, which interested him greatly. He was very happy to have a humane activity in an area and for people he knew well.

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On Thursday 25 May 1978, the Executive Board of the International Committee of the Red Cross, with its President, Mr. Alexandre Hay, in the chair, met to discuss a preliminary report received on the murder of the two ICRC delegates, André Tièche and Alain Bieri, and of their African colleague, Charles Chatora. The report hints that this vile and cowardly act was possibly deliberately aimed at crippling the humanitarian mission of the Red Cross. If so, the situation is of the utmost gravity.

The ICRC will do everything to discover the whole truth regarding this triple crime and the identities of the murderers, who for the moment are unknown. The Director of the ICRC Operations Department, Mr. Jean-Pierre Hocké, who is on a mission to southern Africa, has been instructed to approach the highest authorities of all parties to the conflict and ask them to ascertain the fullest details of this incident and take immediately all measures for ensuring the absolute observance of the sign of the Red Cross and for the safety of the delegates of the ICRC, so that they may pursue their humanitarian activities in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. The Executive Board approved the decision taken by the responsible ICRC officials to send to Rhodesia/Zimbabwe a Swiss expert in criminology and one of its legal staff who has specialized in English Law.

The International Committee of the Red Cross solemnly reminds all States signatories to the Geneva Conventions that, on signing or acceding to these Conventions, they undertook not only to respect, but also to ensure respect for the Conventions. No effort should be spared to ensure that the emblem of the Red Cross and the persons bearing it, continue to enjoy protection even in the midst of combats, failing which the last hope of putting a limit to war's inhumanity will vanish.

The ICRC Executive Board reiterated that it shares the great grief of the families of the deceased and conveys to them its condolences.

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The remains of the dead Swiss delegates were brought back to Geneva. The ICRC paid moving tribute to their memory during the funeral ceremonies. In the absence of the President of the ICRC, Mr. H. Huber, Vice-President, delivered an address at the service for Mr. Gaulis. A short ceremony was held at Geneva airport to mark the return of the delegates from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. In the presence of the families of the deceased, the President of the ICRC, Mr. A. Hay, accompanied by the leaders of the ICRC, of the League and a representative of the Swiss federal authorities, placed a sheaf of flowers on the coffins, which were draped with the Red Cross flag. In Rhodesia the delegation staff attended Mr. Chatora's funeral.

The ICRC will never forget that these delegates gave their lives for the cause of the Red Cross, which they served with devotion, courage and enthusiasm.

After the announcement of their deaths, the ICRC received messages of sympathy from all over the world. The Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. K. Waldheim, governments, Red Cross Societies, international organizations and private individuals, wrote to the ICRC to express their condolences.