

The International Committee in Cyprus

Last month International Review gave a summary of the work being carried out in Cyprus by the Red Cross since the outbreak of hostilities, in order to provide protection and relief to the civilian population and prisoners, seek the missing and forward messages. As that account went only so far as the end of July, we continue here in chronological order the ICRC's action since the beginning of August, starting with the first fortnight which ended with the renewed flare-up of fighting.

I

General situation

ICRC delegates obtained a number of facilities enabling them to reach the populations in the zone controlled by the Turkish army and the Turkish communities in the south of the island. They were also given permission to visit prisoners detained by the Greek Cypriot forces and by the Turkish army and they escorted convoys of emergency supplies to populations in the two zones.

In Turkey, where the Government again assured the ICRC of its intention to apply the Geneva Conventions and its willingness to grant all necessary facilities for humanitarian action, two delegates, one of them a doctor, visited 385 prisoners of war in Adana. The list of names and the capture cards of these prisoners were sent immediately to the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva.

The ICRC's work has been facilitated, in some cases made possible, by the moral and material support of the Turkish Red Crescent and the Cyprus Red Cross.

The Greek and Turkish populations are scattered over the island, making it difficult to move from place to place, and hampering the communications which the ICRC is trying to set up between its delegates and the inhabitants affected by the hostilities.

The responsibilities devolving on the United Nations and the ICRC in Cyprus led to very close co-operation between the two institutions from the outset. At one point, the United Nations asked the ICRC to escort, under the Red Cross flag, the convoys usually accompanied by UN forces.

Evacuation of casualties

On 1 August, after delivering 5½ tons of relief supplies to the island, the DC-6 aircraft chartered by the ICRC flew 28 severely burned casualties from Cyprus to Greece¹. Two doctors and a delegate accompanied the patients, who were met in Athens by the Hellenic Red Cross and taken to a special burns unit.

Repatriation

One week later, on 8 August, the new head of the ICRC delegation in Cyprus, Mr. Laurent Marti, brought back from Turkey to Nicosia five prisoners released by the Turkish authorities. Among them were four wounded. In addition, on 11 August, sixteen Turkish Cypriot soldiers in Nicosia were released under ICRC auspices.

Activities of the Tracing Agency

From the beginning of the events in Cyprus, the Central Tracing Agency has been inundated with enquiries from families worried about the fate of their loved ones. The National Red Cross Societies too sent many enquiries to Geneva. By radio link at first, then by telex, the delegates on the spot are immediately informed of these enquiries.

Lists of civilian and military prisoners from the Turkish Cypriot community have already been supplied by the authorities concerned. These detainees, numbering about 3,000, have been visited by ICRC delegates in Paphos, Limassol, Polis, Nicosia, Larnaca, Famagusta and Morphou. A Central Tracing Agency specialist was sent from Geneva to help the Turkish Red Crescent to organize a national information bureau in conformity with Article 122 of the Third Geneva Convention. With locally recruited staff, this bureau will carry out the traditional work of a national information bureau.

¹ *Plate.*

Relief

By August 5, the ICRC had received from the League, National Societies and various organizations gifts in kind—medicaments, blankets, tents, sheets, powdered milk, other foods and clothing¹ to a value of more than a million Swiss francs.

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To sum up, between 20 July and 14 August, the ICRC initiated the following activities in favour of the victims of the conflict :

- (a) visits to prisoners of war and civilian detainees on both sides ;
- (b) the drawing up and forwarding of lists and capture cards for prisoners and detainees ;
- (c) forwarding of correspondence from prisoners and detainees ;
- (d) distribution of about 12,000 family message forms ;
- (e) 1,500 positive replies to inquiries for missing persons ;
- (f) distribution of material relief to wounded persons, detainees, displaced persons, and Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities cut off in their villages.

II

Conditions changed when, on 14 August, fighting flared up again.

Safety Zones

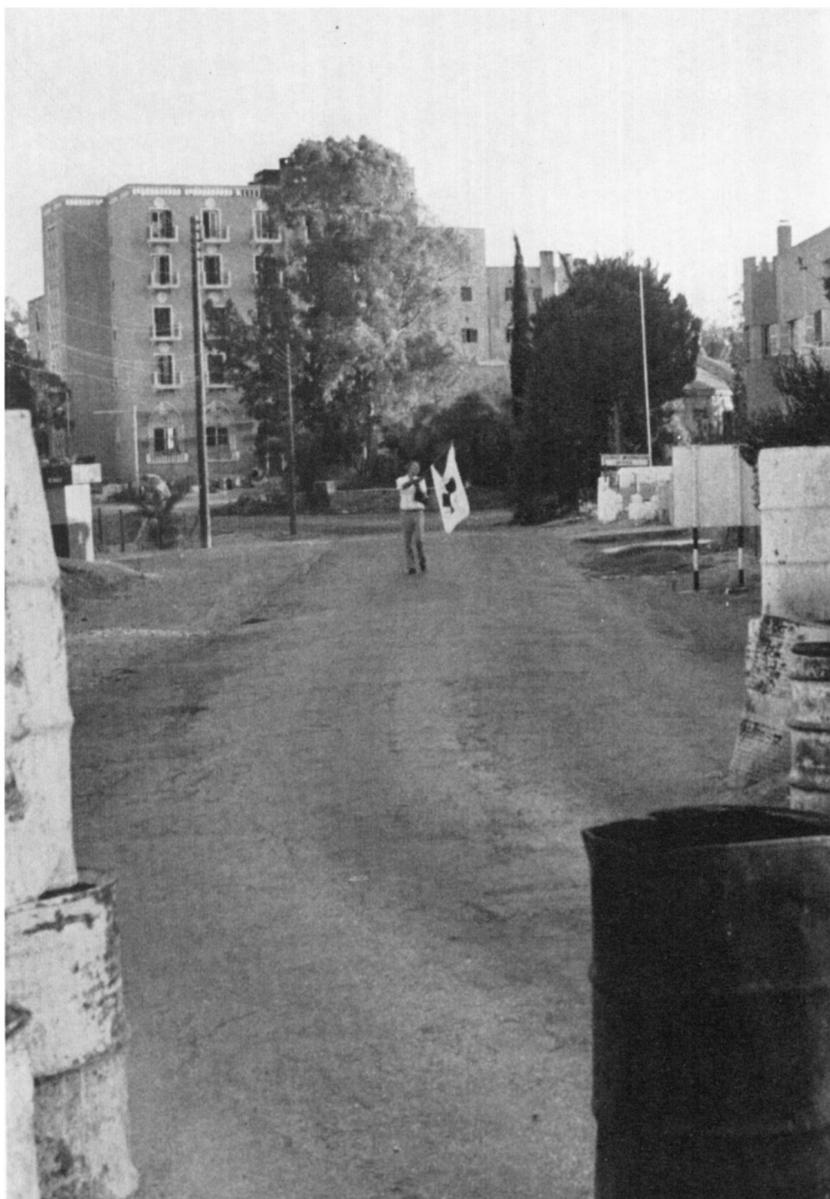
The ICRC was particularly concerned for the safety of the civilians directly exposed to danger and on that same day the ICRC delegation designated three buildings as safety zones in Nicosia. The parties to the conflict gave their agreement¹.

Additional delegates

On 16 August, in view of the new situation created by the advance of the Turkish armed forces and by the flight into the

¹ *Plate*

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE IN CYPRUS



In Nicosia, an ICRC delegate crosses the "green line".



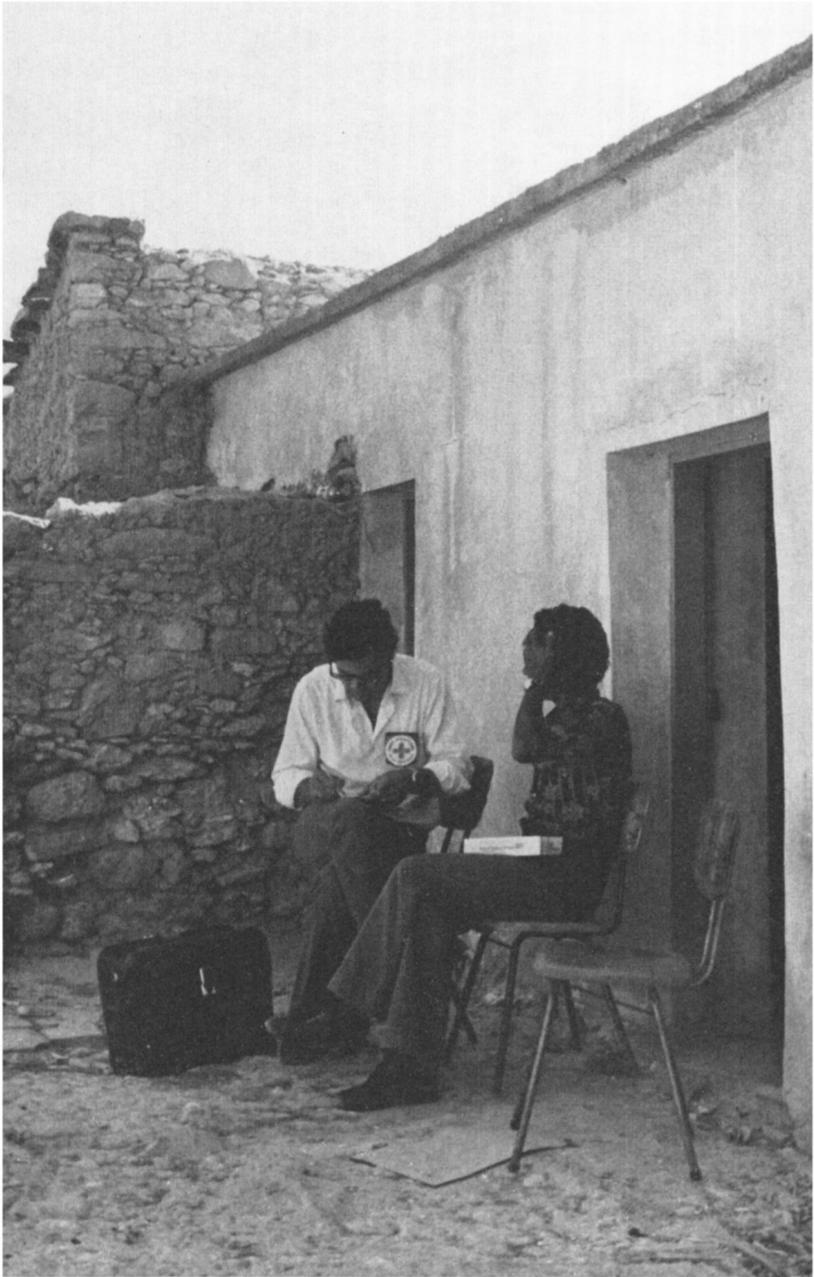
In Nicosia's Hilton Hotel, Red Cross flags are hastily improvised ...



... to indicate the neutral zone.



Severely wounded men taken from Cyprus to Greece by the ICRC.



An ICRC delegate helping a Greek Cypriot, stranded in a village in Turkish controlled territory, to fill in a civilian message form.



In Nicosia, local Red Cross volunteers sorting clothing donated by National Societies and preparing parcels for displaced persons.

Six Photos Vaterlaus/ICRC

Greek zone of tens of thousands of refugees, the ICRC decided to double the number of its representatives in Cyprus. In the next few days they were increased to 40 persons.

Family messages

By 20 August, the Cyprus office of the Central Tracing Agency had distributed more than 20,000 family message forms to people who wished to receive news of their kin. ¹

Visits to military and civilian prisoners and internees

These are continuing in both zones.

Relief

The stocks of relief supplies sent to Cyprus before the resumption of hostilities (about 130 tons of tents, blankets, camp beds, jerrycans, medical supplies, food, including baby food, etc.) meant that the ICRC was quickly able to start operations for displaced persons. On 21 August, one-third of the relief supplies had already been distributed. As part of this huge operation, ICRC delegates were able to visit all the villages and districts in the Limassol area where there were refugees.

On 22 August, a DC-8 loaded with 20 tons of food (tinned meat and fish) provided by the German Red Cross (Federal Republic of Germany) left Hamburg for the British base at Akrotiri. The same day, a medical team of the Danish Red Cross flew to Cyprus. It was joined shortly by another from the Finnish Red Cross.

By 26 August, large quantities of relief goods had reached Cyprus :

20 tons of foodstuffs (10 tons of milk and 10 tons of flour) donated to the ICRC by UNICEF. The aircraft chartered at Beirut by that organization also carried one ton of tinned food and 4,500 blankets (weighing five tons) which the ICRC had purchased in Beirut. Also from Beirut, 45 tons of foodstuffs (dried vegetables, preserved meat and fish) were shipped to Limassol. In addition, 33 tons of preserved foods, dried vegetables and baby food, and two vehicles donated by the German Red Cross (Federal Republic) had been delivered to Cyprus.

¹ *Plate*

Appeal to Governments and National Societies

As just described, the International Committee has in the course of recent weeks set up large-scale humanitarian operations for the civilian and military victims of the conflict. Visits to prisoners of war and civilian internees, the drawing up and forwarding of lists of names and capture cards, the distribution of correspondence from prisoners and detainees, the search for missing persons, the transfer of wounded, are among the priorities of the 40 ICRC delegates now in Cyprus, assisted by numerous local workers. In addition, since the resumption of hostilities in mid-August, urgent measures have been begun to bring relief to some 200,000 civilians driven from their homes or isolated in their villages as a result of events.

The overall relief requirements and the traditional tasks of the ICRC have now been estimated as costing almost 12 million Swiss francs, of which 4 million represent the operational and logistic costs. The ICRC has again appealed to Governments and to National Red Cross Societies for the support necessary to enable it to meet immediate needs until other bodies, especially the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, can take over. The appeal was repeated on 26 August 1974 by Mr. Roger Gallopin, President of the Executive Council of the ICRC, at a meeting attended by about 25 government representatives.

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An eye-witness account

Miss F. Bory, ICRC press attachée, was present when the Hilton Hotel in Nicosia, where a thousand persons took refuge, was declared a neutralized zone. In the following article, she describes some of the aspects of this operation.

The sound of aircraft, then a dull explosion: Nicosia wakes with a start to an air raid by the Turkish armed forces. It is 5 o'clock in the morning. For the ICRC delegates, the most urgent need is to protect the civilian population by creating neutral zones which must at all cost be kept out of the fighting and which can be notified as such to all the authorities concerned.

The first of these zones is established in the Hilton Hotel. This building has several advantages in such circumstances: 158 bedrooms with the corresponding services, to meet the needs of civilians forced to flee their homes, and large public rooms where people can settle in with the few belongings they have been able to snatch up. Finally, the Hilton stands in the highest part of the town, and is easily identifiable by the Turkish air force, whose raids are more and more frequent.

The other two zones are the Hotel Cleopatra, where some of the ICRC delegates have their headquarters, and on the other side of the street, the clinic of Dr. Kibis, which may prove invaluable in providing medical care for some of the refugees.

ICRC headquarters in Geneva is immediately informed of the creation of these three zones, so that it may obtain all the necessary guarantees from the Governments. The President of Cyprus, Mr. Clerides, states that he has noted the Red Cross action and has given orders that all military personnel and installations must be removed from the zones in question and from adjacent areas. The authorities in Ankara assure the ICRC that the safety zone will be respected by the Turkish army.

At 6.30 a.m., a group of delegates arrives at the Hilton, already full of families. In the hall, suitcases and bundles pile up; people mill about. In the basement, several hundred people, most of them Cypriots, sit in suffocating heat. Doctors and others offer their services to provide medical attention. In the laundry, women sew sheets together to make huge flags on which the red cross is to be painted.

Just after 9 o'clock bombs are dropped all round the hotel. We go up to the roof to fix the flags, over 4 yards in length and in breadth. We hang several down the façades of the building and spread one on the roof itself. The raid goes on all round us for some time, then moves farther away.
