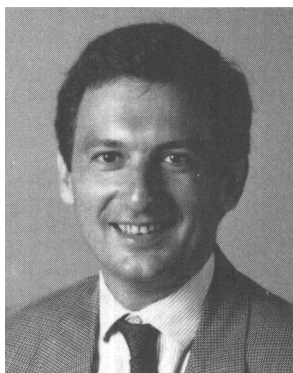


Bosnia-Herzegovina: ICRC delegate dies in Sarajevo



On 19 May 1992, early in the morning, a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Frédéric Maurice, 39, died at the civilian hospital in Sarajevo of injuries received the previous day.

Mr. Maurice had been injured together with two other ICRC staff in an attack on a Red Cross convoy carrying emergency medical supplies for the civilian hospital in Sarajevo.

Mr. Maurice, who was married and had two children, joined the ICRC in 1980. During his twelve years with the institution he carried out humanitarian missions in Israel, Iran, Angola and Ethiopia, in the course of which he assumed responsibilities of great importance. Recently assigned to the ICRC Directorate of Operations, he had volunteered to replace the head of the ICRC delegation in Sarajevo.

The ICRC, deeply saddened by Mr. Maurice's death, conveys its profound sympathy to his family.

A TRIBUTE TO FREDERIC MAURICE

In September 1990 Frédéric Maurice became my assistant at the Directorate of Operations. His keen intelligence, his vast experience of operational matters and his communicative nature, coupled with a sense of constructive criticism, were always of invaluable help. Yet he found that his role as adviser, centred as it was on theory and analysis, was too inactive, too far removed from the decisions which shape the actual course of operations; because of this, every so often he felt

the need to take the lead on an assignment in the field. In April 1991, for instance, he went to Iraqi Kurdistan and the Basrah region to assess needs in the aftermath of the Gulf war and launch major relief programmes there; in July 1991 he was in charge of prisoner exchange operations in Slovenia.

One of these many missions in which his creativity, commitment and courage found their full expression, cost him his life. Frédéric was on his way to Sarajevo, where he was to take over as head of delegation, when his convoy came under heavy attack as it entered the town. In all, three ICRC staff members were hurt in the attack; Frédéric died of his injuries.

Of course the ICRC is highly indignant at what has happened. Losing a delegate on mission, especially in such circumstances, is a terrible thing. But we must not forget that nearly all ICRC missions carry a certain amount of risk. Frédéric's mission to the Angolan Planalto, at the height of the civil war in the country, was also hazardous. In war-torn and famine-stricken Ethiopia, too, where he worked from 1985 to 1987, organizing food convoys was not without danger. What is more, it was in Frédéric's nature to assume fully his responsibilities as head of delegation even in the most difficult conditions. His missions to the Middle East may have seemed less risky, but although the intensity and the nature of hostilities were not comparable to the savagery of the fighting in Bosnia, tension was permanently running high.

Frédéric was no humanitarian adventurer. His love of action was not prompted by a taste for danger or for things exotic; it was rather an ethical motivation, buttressed by a certain idea of humanitarian law and its underlying philosophy.

His single-mindedness in transforming his ideas into action may sometimes have given the impression of intransigence. But these uncompromising opinions of his were perhaps simply the logical outcome of personal steadfastness to which he attached great importance. A few months ago Frédéric spoke to me with great enthusiasm about the biography of Marcus Aurelius, which he was reading at the time. An ardent believer in free will, Frédéric was fascinated by the Stoic philosophy of this great emperor, and had been struck by phrases such as: "We must therefore make haste, not only because with each passing moment we are closer to death, but also because as we get older we lose our understanding of problems and the ability to attend to them."

Frédéric had a clear and ambitious concept of ICRC work and he strove to turn it into fact. A distinctive feature of this concept was

realism. Every humanitarian operation occurs at a certain point in the history of international relations and in the context of a balance of power which cannot be ignored. It must also take into account the realities of the situation on the spot. Frédéric abhorred abstract theory unrelated to actual fact. In that sense he was against all dogma, considering that policy always had to be adapted to the specific situation and circumstances.

His concept of ICRC work was also characterized by **openness**, for he thought in terms of “humanitarian” action rather than “ICRC” action. Although he was deeply attached to our institution, he often railed against stubborn institutional narrow-mindedness and pressed for what he judged to be an efficient and comprehensive operational approach. He thought that everything possible must be done in order to gain access to the victims, be they prisoners, displaced persons, the sick or the wounded, and his determination to use all diplomatic and logistical means available to attain that goal knew no bounds.

Frédéric’s concept of humanitarian work was also marked by an **integrated approach**. He was engaged in developing a veritable philosophy of international humanitarian law. His analysis led him to explain the underlying reasons for this branch of law. After making a sort of phenomenological study of war, he concluded that it was necessary to have a “system of legal substitution” specially designed for war situations. He saw it as the “essence of protection”, which itself is thus nothing other than the self-imposed compliance by States with the rules of international humanitarian law in time of armed conflict.

In addition to the collapse of legislative and administrative structures, war leads to a flood of violence which, according to Frédéric, prompted the ICRC to “develop an operational approach combining all specialized services and activities needed to meet the requirements of all the victims”. Law, diplomacy and activity in the field thus form a coherent whole.

Pursuing this integrated, global approach, Frédéric was studying the great challenges currently facing the ICRC. On the subject of **communication** and the media, he stressed that the ICRC’s communication strategy should be an integral part of its operational approach, and not merely incidental to it. He had already drafted broad guidelines regarding the changes to be made in the content of the ICRC’s message and its methods of communication.

He also devoted much time and thought to the question of humanitarian **intervention**. In more than one forum he had already stressed the clear distinction, which he saw as crucial, between intervention

that could be termed political and arose from the joint responsibility of States in humanitarian matters, and direct operational intervention, which was subject to specific constraints. Frédéric had also intended to undertake a study on a question which has thus far been largely neglected, that of relations between human rights and humanitarian law.

This brief tribute evokes but a few of the many qualities which characterized Frédéric's personality and thinking. We are deeply saddened by his premature death, but his memory and his ideas will live on, for many of them will be taken up and transformed into action at the ICRC.

We are all with Frédéric's family, his wife and his two children in our thoughts, and convey to them our deepest sympathy.

Jean de Courten
ICRC Director of Operations
