

Assistance to other civilian victims of events

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ASSISTANCE TO OTHER CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF EVENTS

CHILD WELFARE AND THE RE-UNITING OF FAMILIES

The ICRC continued to give its aid on behalf of children and adults displaced through the events of war and its direct consequences ; hence, during the year, the re-uniting of families was carried on between countries of Central, East and South-East Europe¹, and other countries in Europe and overseas², according to the conditions prevailing in each State. Up to the present day, 19 countries in East and West Europe have taken part in this action, carried out with the efficient co-operation of the countries of departure and destination, and thanks to the understanding attitude of the Governments interested. It has often led to successful results on behalf of Greek nationals, " Volksdeutsche " and Yugoslav nationals. It is to be hoped that further results will be achieved, in order to allay the anxiety suffered by the families concerned.

GREEK NATIONALS

In previous reports the ICRC described the efforts made by the two International Red Cross institutions, in accordance with the mandate conferred by the United Nations General Assembly, in connection with the repatriation of Greek children ; their work in 1955 was once again the subject of a very detailed report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, drawn up by the League and the ICRC.

In the past year 157 Greek nationals (children and adults) from Poland and Rumania were able to join their families in Greece and Australia. The efforts of the International Red Cross made it

¹ Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Rumania and the USSR.

² Argentine Republic, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, German Federal Republic, Greece, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and Venezuela.

possible, in March, to unite twelve Greek children from Poland with their families, in Australia. In May and June, 43 adults and children proceeding from Rumania to Australia, where their families had already settled, passed through Austria in transit. With the help of M. G. Joubert, ICRC Delegate in Vienna (who, in that instance, also represented the League), and through the understanding attitude of the Austrian authorities, the emigrants were able to receive, within a very brief delay, the individual documents necessary for them to continue their journey. In August the International Red Cross sent to Belgrade M. P. Jequier, member of the Direction of the Central Agency, to take part in the repatriation of 23 children from Rumania, returning to Greece in transit through Yugoslavia. The special delegate of the ICRC, who also represented the League on that occasion, joined forces with a delegation of the Yugoslav Red Cross, and met, on the Rumanian frontier, the convoy which he then accompanied to the Greek frontier, and on to Salonika, where the Greek Red Cross Society had made all the necessary arrangements for the children's reunion with their parents. On November 15, the delegate of the ICRC in Vienna gave his services on behalf of another group of 38 persons travelling from Rumania to Australia, in transit through Austria. Some 21 persons from Poland and Rumania, whose cases had been the object of prolonged negotiations by the ICRC, were authorised to leave Poland during the year and to proceed to Australia by their own means.

Since the action was first started, over 9,200 Greek adults and children have thus been united with their families.

“VOLKSDEUTSCHE”

The present report has already referred to the interest shown by the ICRC in Germans in Eastern Europe, or German-speaking persons, sometimes designated by the technical term “Volksdeutsche”¹, who have, in many cases, been established in Central or East European countries for several generations. They are not

¹ See *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge*, October 1955.

necessarily of German origin, for instance, some can trace their descent to other countries, such as France, the Netherlands and Switzerland ; it was merely because they were German-speaking that they were often wrongly considered to be German.

On November 4, 1955, a tenth convoy of children of German origin or German-speaking left Yugoslavia ; it was composed of 17 children who joined their families in Austria, 83 who were awaited in the German Federal Republic, and 2 children who later proceeded from that country to the United States, and Canada respectively.

Thanks to the active help of the Yugoslav Red Cross Society, and the Red Cross Societies of countries of transit and reception, also the understanding shown by the authorities, 2,254 " Volks-deutsche " children have been able to join their families, or relatives, since the scheme was first started.

On the whole, since 1949, the action on behalf of the German ethnical minorities has been crowned with success, in the case of 109,000 persons, as on December 31, 1955.

JUGOSLAV NATIONALS

At the request of the Yugoslav Red Cross, and with the co-operation of National Societies and public authorities, the ICRC continued to search for Yugoslav children and adolescents separated from their families during the world conflict and presumed to be living in thirteen different countries.¹ The ICRC opened enquiries in 1,209 cases ; the results were communicated to the Yugoslav Red Cross when received. In the course of the past year, reports were made on 800 cases.

For this work lengthy negotiations were necessary with the countries of departure, transit and reception. On various occasions the work was facilitated by the presence on the spot of permanent representatives of the ICRC or delegates sent specially from Geneva. It gave rise to a considerable amount of correspondence (letters-telegrams, index cards, lists), the issue of photostat copies of

¹ In particular, Austria, Germany and Italy.

identity documents and certificates, careful checking of applications for repatriation, the verification of information and lists with the special card-indexes set up by the ICRC in Geneva, the issue of individual documents (vaccination certificates in particular), and many negotiations in connection with exit, transit and entry visas, and air, sea and land transports.

In the legal field, the ICRC continued to work on the development of the Geneva Conventions which it had originally brought into being, with a particular view to increasing the protection accorded to children and young people in time of war and political unrest, and their improvement. In this connection, schemes were prepared for the adoption of identity discs, especially in the case of Belgium and Sweden ; the same subject is being studied in Germany and other countries, and the ICRC is following the question with the closest attention.

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF THE RE-UNITING OF FAMILIES FROM 1951 TO 1955

YEAR	BENEFICIARIES (adults and children)		PROCEEDING FROM :	DESTINATION :
1955	<i>Greeks</i>	157	Poland, Rumania	Australia, Greece
1954		3,927*	Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Rumania	} Greece
1953		4,611	Jugoslavia, Rumania	
1952		153	Jugoslavia	Greece
1951		364	Jugoslavia	Australia, Greece
and prev.		Total as on December 31, 1955		
		<u>9,212</u>		
1955	<i>" Volksdeutsche "</i>	15,024	Austria, Czechoslovakia, Ger- man Federal Republic, German Democratic Repu- blic, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Rumania, USSR,	} Argentine Republic Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, German Democratic Rep., Swit- zerland, United King- dom, United States, Venezuela
1954		12,040	do	
1953		12,981	do	
1952		7,240	do	
1951		61,434	Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland	
and prev.		Total as on December 31, 1955	do	
		<u>108,719</u>		
1955	<i>Jugoslavs</i>	800**	Reports on enquiries opened in Germany, Austria and Italy, in particular	} Yugoslavia
1954		—		

* Including 165 former military personnel.

** The ICRC made enquiries concerning 1,209 cases ; in 1955 it sent reports to the Yugoslav Red Cross on over 800 cases.

STATELESS PERSONS AND REFUGEES

The scheme for the admission to hospitals in Leysin (Switzerland) ¹ of 102 tuberculous refugees from Central or Eastern Europe, previously given shelter in Trieste, and the installation of 72 members of their family in Morzine (France) had already reached the stage, in 1954, where emigration had become possible for patients who had recovered, and their relatives. Negotiations with this object were pursued in 1955 ; permission was obtained from the French authorities for refugees who had been cured to join their families in Morzine, where a group of 55 persons was still residing, and for some thirty persons to be resettled in various parts of France, in particular the Landes district. With the agreement of the Belgian Government, ten refugees (including six who were too aged to work) left Leysin after fifteen months' treatment, on May 5, to be given definite homes in Belgium. After eighteen months treatment in Switzerland, a child aged five years on his arrival in Leysin, was returned, in the care of a social worker, to Yugoslavia, where he was handed over to his parents who had fortunately been found in the interval. Negotiations have been opened with success in other countries, in Europe and elsewhere, in regard to the definite resettlement of refugees who have recovered their health. Special mention should be made of the generous and favourable nature of the replies received from Australia and New Zealand where the regulations for emigration usually prescribe long waiting periods for former tuberculosis sufferers.

With regard to financial resources, an agreement was concluded with an American organisation (USEP), which opened a credit in dollars on the International Committee's behalf, equivalent to 235,000 Swiss francs ; moreover, the *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration* (which had already made a substantial contribution to this scheme) made a supplementary grant of Sw. Fr. 150,000 to the ICRC. The Swiss Government also contributed to the successful issue of the work by allocating the sum of 150,000 Swiss francs. In addition, the Swiss Government has granted permanent asylum in eleven chronic cases, the cost being

¹ See Annual Reports for 1953, p. 36, and 1954, p. 32.

borne by the Confederation and Swiss charitable institutions. These contributions towards the humanitarian work of the ICRC are not only a valuable proof of the confidence shown by the authorities, but also a great encouragement to the Red Cross movement.

At the close of the year the ICRC was still providing for 96 refugees of different nationalities, of whom 34 are in Switzerland awaiting emigration visas for the country of resettlement (two are still under treatment in Leysin), and 62 in France.

In countries where the refugees have found shelter, the ICRC still takes an active interest in them, by taking steps to facilitate enquiries on behalf of families, and to give them official standing. It has given special aid to sick refugees and aged persons whom it is difficult to settle in a new life. A few issues of the ICRC Travel Document were made during the year.

This work has led to useful collaboration with Red Cross organisations, international agencies, the High Commissioner for Refugees, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration and other governmental or non-governmental organisations concerned with the refugee problem.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES AND STATELESS PERSONS

As in the past, the ICRC continued to follow the question of the co-ordination of legal assistance granted to stateless persons and refugees. It took part in the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations interested in Migration, and in the preparation of the report approved by that Conference during its General Assembly held in New York, early in May 1955. The Working Party of that Conference, entrusted with the preparation of the report, was requested to follow the question, in order to maintain and, in case of need, to improve the conditions whereby legal assistance is at present granted to migrants, and especially to refugees and stateless persons, by non-governmental organisations, professional Bar Associations and governments, with the assistance of specialised international agencies.

The ICRC sent a representative to the Vth Congress of the European Association for the Study of Refugee Problems (Helsinki, August 10-12, 1955), where he had the opportunity of discussing the question of legal assistance with the Chairman of the Legal Committee (Professor Schätzel, Bonn), and the Chairman of the Committee for the study of international conventions relating to refugees (Professor Folberth, Salzburg) ; those two Committees submitted a joint resolution concerning the legal status of refugees and the termination of the stateless condition, which was unanimously adopted by the Conference.

INTERNEES AND POLITICAL DETAINEES

In 1955 the delegates of the ICRC paid 117 visits (28 in 1954) to various places of detention (camps, prisons and hospitals) where civilian internees were held, in nine different countries.¹ Details will be found on p. 13 ff.

From the experience gained throughout the two hemispheres, during the year the ICRC was again able to collect valuable information which will be of service in drawing up regulations for the protection of the victims of internal disturbances.²

VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS

Relief activities in natural disasters doubtless go beyond the usual scope of the International Committee's work ; it should be understood that, in the circumstances, it is merely a gesture of solidarity in view of the victims' great distress.

In 1955, the ICRC made a point of associating itself with the relief action undertaken under the auspices of the League on behalf of the victims of floods in *India* and *Pakistan* during the summer. It sent to the Red Cross Societies of those countries two consign-

¹ Algeria, Cyprus, Costa Rica, Greece, Morocco, Nicaragua, Spain, Tunisia, Viet Nam Republic.

² See p. 48.

ments of medicaments, representing a total value of about 13,000 Swiss francs, and supplemented this assistance by sending another consignment, valued at 46,000 Swiss francs, donated by Messrs. Hoffmann-La Roche, Basle. These relief supplies were shared equally between the Red Cross Societies of India and Pakistan.

Reference should be made here to the *International Relief Union*, in memory of its founder, the late Senator Giovanni Ciraolo, who passed away last year.

During the meetings held in Geneva in 1955, at which observers from the ICRC and the League were present, the Members of the *Vth General Council* and the *Executive Committee of the Union*, who represented fourteen countries of America, Asia and Europe, reaffirmed the conviction that "in the case of disaster intergovernmental aid, in the spirit of the Convention of July 12, 1927, is the duty of States", and expressed the wish to remain in working relations with the ICRC and the League in that field.

SUMMARY TABLE OF RELIEF SUPPLIES

The following table gives a classified summary of relief supplied in connection with traditional activities on behalf of war victims, or as a result of special decisions made to meet post-war events or natural disasters.

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF RELIEF SUPPLIES AS ON DECEMBER 31, 1955 AND DECEMBER 31, 1954

	1955	1954
ASSISTANCE TO MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES	Sw. Fr.	Sw. Fr.
War disabled	62,519	63,470
Prisoners of war	—	9,913
Wounded and sick	—	—
Total . . .	62,519	73,383
ASSISTANCE TO CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF EVENTS		
Sick and disabled persons, disaster victims	414,668	391,882
Interned and detained civilians	170,673	348,694
Refugees and stateless persons	52,820	105,631
Total . . .	638,161	846,207
ORIGIN OF RELIEF SUPPLIES		
Relief supplied by the ICRC	497,183	606,968
Relief in kind entrusted to the ICRC for distribution (see note)	203,497	312,622
Total . . .	700,680	919,590

Note : The relief in kind was donated by National Red Cross Societies, various organisations and private individuals. In addition, the ICRC supervised, through its Saigon Delegation, the distribution of gifts valued at 600,000 Swiss francs (202,000 in 1954), placed at its disposal by the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund, on behalf of refugees in the Republic of Viet Nam.

The relief supplied in 1955 to members of armed forces and civilian victims of events reached a value of 700,680 Swiss francs (919,590 in 1954).

The ICRC wishes to express once more its deep gratitude to the donors for the generous, and tangible, interest shown in its work.

Relief was supplied to thirty countries¹ of Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Australasia, with the assistance of the ICRC services in Geneva concerned with purchases and transport formalities, and in some cases the ICRC Delegations, the support of public authorities and National Red Cross Societies, and the efforts of all the men of goodwill who have again showed their confidence in the work of the ICRC.

EMPRESS SHÖKEN FUND

The Fund, instituted in 1912 on the initiative of the Empress of Japan, has for its object the allocation of funds to National Red Cross Societies for their relief work in peace-time, in particular, the prevention of contagious diseases, and assistance to victims of disasters.

The Joint Commission (composed of three representatives of the ICRC and three representatives of the League) met on February 22, 1955, in Geneva, to discuss the 34th allocation of income from the Fund. It gave favourable consideration to applications from five National Societies, and made the following allocations :

Red Cross of the German Federal Republic .	Sw. Fr.	2,000
Ceylon Red Cross Society	»	» 3,000
Chilean Red Cross Society	»	» 2,500
Jordan Red Cross Society	»	» 3,000
Nicaraguan Red Cross Society	»	» 2,500

¹ Albania, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, German Federal Republic, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jugoslavia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Rumania, Spain, Switzerland, USSR, Viet Nam Democratic Republic, Republic of Viet Nam.