

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1962)

Rubrik: Europe

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 02.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Irrespective of the Cuban crisis, the ICRC renewed its efforts in the course of the year to resume contact on the spot with the Cuban Red Cross and to perform its specific tasks for the benefit of civil and military prisoners. However, as in previous years, these efforts have so far led to no result.

The Puerto Rico Conference

Two ICRC observers, Mr. Pierre Jequier, Delegate on mission to Latin America, and Mr. Henri Coursier, adviser in the legal department, attended the VIIth Inter-American Red Cross Conference, held in San Juan de Puerto Rico from November 4 to 10. At a plenary session they presented a report on the application of the Geneva Conventions in non-international conflicts. This was of great interest to the National Red Cross representatives, certain of whom had already had occasion to carry out their functions in collaboration with the ICRC in the course of local disturbances. During the last session the meeting unanimously adopted two motions expressing the Conference's sympathy with and support for the ICRC, which was at that time being requested by the United Nations to undertake, in connection with the Cuban crisis, a difficult mission for the maintenance of peace.

After the Conference at Puerto Rico, Mr. Coursier went to the United States, at the request of the American Red Cross, in order to describe to numerous personalities and several important Chapters of the American Red Cross (San Francisco, Denver, St. Louis and Washington) the present-day activities of the ICRC within the framework of the Geneva Conventions.

EUROPE

Compensation to Victims of Pseudo-medical Experiments

At the request of the Government of the German Federal Republic, the ICRC, in 1961, agreed to undertake the mission of

intermediary for forwarding financial assistance which that Government wished to remit to victims of pseudo-medical experiments practised in German concentration camps under the Nazi regime. Persons to whom this offer was addressed are the surviving victims residing in countries with which the German Federal Republic does not maintain diplomatic relations.

After first having attended to 73 Polish and 63 Hungarian cases, the ICRC delegated to Budapest, in 1962, a new mission composed of Mr. Ernest Fischer, Dr. Oscar Caprez and Mr. Jean-Pierre Maunoir. The purpose of this mission was to investigate further cases in Hungary, whereof 108 were drawn to its attention. For each individual, the ICRC delegation and the Hungarian Red Cross made out a case-sheet which was then submitted to a commission of neutral experts in Geneva, meeting under the chairmanship of Professor Jean Graven, Rector of Geneva University and President of the Court of Appeal. This commission approved all the cases submitted, with one exception.

At the end of the year, 105 persons residing in Hungary who had been victims of pseudo-medical experiments during the Second World War received, thanks to the funds made available to the ICRC by the German Federal Republic, compensation in proportion to the gravity of the experiments to which they had been subjected and the harmful effects still suffered. The ICRC made it clear that no financial indemnity, however appreciable, could adequately compensate for the suffering inflicted.

At the end of 1962, further cases of victims living in Poland and Czechoslovakia were being investigated. The ICRC was pleased to observe that the files constituted by the National Red Cross Societies in the countries involved showed a remarkable concern for objectivity.

Yugoslavia

In May, 1962, Mr. Léopold Boissier, President of the ICRC, accompanied by Mr. Herbert G. Beckh, delegate, paid visits to the Red Cross Societies of Bulgaria, Rumania and Yugoslavia. He first stayed for two days in Belgrade as the guest of the Yugoslav Red

Cross, at whose headquarters he delivered a lecture to a large audience on the activities of the ICRC.

On returning from Bulgaria, Mr. Beckh had discussions with representatives of the Yugoslav Red Cross on questions of common interest. In the office of the Secretary of State, he had interviews with highly placed government officials, during which views were exchanged on important reforms which had been introduced in matters of penal administration.

The Secretary of State agreed to the ICRC delegate's visiting the places of detention of his own choice. Mr. Beckh called upon two penal establishments, one in Serbia and the other in Croatia, accompanied by a representative of the Red Cross of the Yugoslav regions concerned. The main purpose of these visits was to observe the effect of the innovations introduced by the new legislation, particularly as regards holidays (fifteen days a year) and an extra holiday of eight days which the prisoners may spend with their families. These extra holidays are granted to some of the prisoners, including political detainees. In addition, prisoners may freely leave the establishment after work, particularly at Valtura Pula. The delegate of the ICRC was able to talk with ten civilian detainees in the establishments visited without any witness being present.

Bulgaria

At the invitation of the Bulgarian Red Cross, Mr. L. Boissier, President of the ICRC, together with Mr. Beckh, delegate, went to Bulgaria in May, 1962. The programme arranged gave the visitors the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the manifold activities of the National Red Cross, not only in Sofia, but in several parts of the country. Wherever they went, the ICRC representatives visited the local sections of the Red Cross, as well as various hospitals, sanatoria and schools, and they were present during first-aid exercises.

During their stay in Bulgaria, where they were extremely well looked after, Mr. L. Boissier and Mr. Beckh had lengthy discussions with the leaders of the Bulgarian Red Cross, and also with Mr. Baschev, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, who received the President of the ICRC on behalf of the authorities.

Rumania

After their visit to Bulgaria, Mr. L. Boissier and Mr. Beckh spent a few days in Rumania, at the invitation of the National Red Cross. They were able to acquaint themselves with the numerous activities of that Society and to observe its remarkable growth.

Excursions to two regions of the country enabled the ICRC representatives to take cognizance of the outstanding work of the regional Red Cross with respect to hospitals. This visit provided an opportunity to bring up all the problems of common interest and later Mr. Boissier called upon Mr. Maurer, President of the Council of Ministers.

Hungary

As has been mentioned¹ an ICRC mission went to Budapest at the beginning of June, 1962, essentially to examine, with the Hungarian Red Cross, the problems connected with the victims of pseudo-medical experiments inflicted during the Second World War.

The ICRC delegates took the opportunity of this journey to Budapest to visit the artificial limb factory which was financed by funds from the ICRC and other donors, and which was to start production towards the beginning of 1963, for the benefit of Hungarian disabled. The decision to set up this factory was the subject of an agreement entered into in October 1957 by the Hungarian Ministry of Health, the Hungarian Red Cross and the ICRC. This agreement also provided for an exchange of technicians between Hungary and the German Democratic Republic. Under this arrangement specialists from the artificial limb factory of Eisenberg-Königsee (Thuringia) were transferred for a time to Budapest and later, in their particularly well-equipped factory, they received technicians from Hungary.

Finally, the ICRC mission raised various other matters, particularly the reuniting of families dispersed as a result of the events of 1956-1957 in Hungary. Since the beginning of 1962, 33 children

¹ See p. 36.

and 6 adults have been authorized to leave Hungary to join their relatives in western countries. The delegates also broached the matter of some Hungarian refugees in western countries who have expressed the desire to return to their own homes.

Austria

The Austrian Red Cross, which fully appreciates the importance of the study and dissemination of the Geneva Conventions, organized a course at its headquarters in Vienna, on May 18 and 19. It was attended by members from its various provincial branches and by delegates from the government departments concerned. Two ICRC representatives, Mr. J. Pictet, Director for General Affairs, and Mr. J.-P. Schoenholzer, of the Legal Department, were invited to take part, and they delivered five lectures on humanitarian law and the activities of the ICRC.

A short time prior to this, Mr. H. G. Beckh had also been to Vienna for discussions with the Austrian Red Cross on problems concerning the regrouping of families. He visited the transit camp at Piding on the Austro-German border.

Greece

In 1962 the ICRC handed over to the Hellenic Red Cross, relief parcels for detainees condemned for their participation in the civil war or to their families in distress. The ICRC also delivered to the Hellenic Red Cross 21 tons of powdered milk and three tons of cheese as a gift from the Swiss Government.

Spain

During the first few months of the year the ICRC closed its delegation in Madrid, its delegate, Mr. Eric Arbenz having reached the retiring age. Since the civil war in Spain, Mr. Arbenz has been performing signal service in the cause of humanity, in close co-operation with the Spanish Red Cross.

West Germany

In West Germany Mr. Beckh, the ICRC delegate, together with members of the Red Cross of the German Federal Republic, examined various questions of common interest, particularly problems connected with the regrouping of families and with political detainees.

He also went to six places of detention where he was given facility to interview about thirty political detainees indicted or condemned for acts committed against the security of the State.

These visits were preceded by interviews with senior government officials in the Federal Ministry of Justice and of the "Länder". The representatives of these Ministries told the delegate that he would be authorized at any time to visit the places of detention which he might choose.

Berlin

Mr. Beckh, ICRC delegate, undertook three missions to Berlin in 1962. Their main purpose was to emphasize the ICRC's interest in humanitarian problems raised by the division of the town into two parts. Mr. Beckh had lengthy discussions with the leaders of the two Red Cross Societies of the Federal and Democratic Republics of Germany. He also talked to senior officials.

Following these talks, the ICRC informed the relevant government authorities of its point of view on a possible solution to these problems and in particular on the possibility of family visits. Furthermore, the ICRC was able to keep the door open to resume these talks at any time and to put forward fresh proposals until the most urgent of the humanitarian problems are settled.

Several incidents having occurred in Berlin and on the outskirts, the International Committee instructed its delegate to take steps in both East and West Berlin in order to have provision made for immediate medical assistance to the injured in the event of any recurrence. Following the steps taken by the delegate, the ICRC issued a communiqué reflecting the point of view of the authorities of both zones as follows :

After the recent incidents in Berlin and its suburbs, a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. H. G. Beckh, has, for several days, had talks with leading personalities of both the East and the West. He spoke, in particular, with Dr. Werner Ludwig, President of the German Red Cross in the German Democratic Republic, and with Dr. Dietrich Blos, President of the Berlin Section of the German Red Cross in the German Federal Republic.

“ In the course of these conversations, undertaken with a view to resolving the humanitarian problems arising from these events, the ICRC was informed by the two parties of the measures they had decided upon to aid the wounded. After hearing both points of view on this subject, the International Committee of the Red Cross was pleased to note that each party recognizes the obligation to bring immediate assistance and first-aid to the wounded on its own territory, it being understood that such aid must not be hindered by the other party.

The ICRC welcomes the declarations made by the two parties who have thus confirmed their intention to conform to the letter and to the spirit of the Geneva Conventions of which they are signatories.

The ICRC trusts that these declarations, made by the responsible authorities concerned, will furnish the necessary basis to allow for first aid to be given to the wounded in the event of similar incidents.

Such a guarantee will without doubt help to ease the situation and corresponds with the desire of the International Red Cross to contribute towards the lessening of tension and to mutual understanding.”

As previously, the ICRC delegate, with the agreement of the West Berlin Senate, visited two places of detention where he was able to talk freely and without witness with some thirty prisoners condemned for political offences. He was given every facility to study conditions of detention and he paid particular attention to certain cases.

Reuniting of Families

Since the end of the Second World War some five hundred thousand persons, thanks to the joint efforts of the ICRC and the National Societies concerned, were able to obtain the necessary authorization from their Governments to cross frontiers which would otherwise have been closed to them, thus enabling dispersed families to become reunited. Nevertheless, the number of persons still separated from their families is numerous, very numerous,

and all too often the desperate efforts of those who take matters into their own hands in order to join their families end up in tragedy. In this respect, the ICRC has received many urgent appeals to intervene. During the year, therefore, in co-operation with several National Societies, the Red Cross has sought a practical solution to the problem, mainly in cases where the countries concerned do not maintain diplomatic relations with each other.

Pending effective steps for the reunion of dispersed families in places of their choice, the Red Cross has proposed that members of such families be authorized to meet at regular intervals at an appointed place and that they then return whence they came. The Red Cross has offered to study how such meetings could be arranged and on November 9, 1962, it published the following appeal :

“ As a result of conflicts and tensions prevailing in different parts of the world, many families are still dispersed. The desperate efforts they attempt to become reunited by their own initiative end only too often in tragedy.

During the past 12 years the International Committee of the Red Cross has actively contributed towards re-establishing the union of many dismembered families. Thus about five hundred thousand persons, in possession of all the necessary permits, have been able to traverse frontiers which had hitherto been closed to them, and to find their own close relatives once more, thanks to the understanding shown by National Red Cross Societies and the governments concerned. Several tens of thousands of other persons, however, are waiting to be able to do the same and their requests flow in daily to the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

No one should remain indifferent to the suffering caused by such separation. The ICRC therefore seized the opportunity offered by the recent meetings in Geneva to examine this question with the delegations of several National Red Cross Societies. Together they tried to find ways in which the Red Cross could bring a practical contribution towards solving this problem, chiefly in cases of those countries which do not maintain diplomatic relations with each other.

Basing itself on the results which have already been achieved in several countries, the ICRC appeals to the competent authorities to take concrete measures in favour of the reuniting of dispersed families in a place of their own choice.

In the meantime, or failing such a regrouping taking place, towards which all efforts should essentially tend, the International Committee suggests that members of the same family, who express their desire to

do so, be authorized to meet each other at regular intervals at a place then to be decided upon, each one returning whence he came. The ICRC offers its services to the appropriate authorities to study methods for the realization of these meetings.

By making this appeal, the International Committee of the Red Cross is speaking for men, women and children separated from those closest to them, who no longer intend remaining the innocent victims of disagreements for which they can in no way be held responsible."

THE CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

The activity of this important service of the ICRC was as intense as ever in 1962. In the course of the year under review, the Central Agency received 44,000 communications and sent out 35,000. It handled 60,500 cases and instituted 15,700 enquiries of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, governmental departments, the Registry Offices of the International Tracing Service and other institutions. Some 42 % of such investigations gave positive results.

The investigations undertaken in many cases concerned the fate of persons posted missing during the last World War and of more recent conflicts, although some enquiries necessitated recourse to files relating to the First World War.

Those cases which refer to the Second World War gave rise to a particularly voluminous exchange of correspondence with countries of Eastern Europe. The Agency continuously receives enquiries about military or civilian persons who were native of these countries and who disappeared whilst hostilities were going on. These requests, coming from the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR and even from individuals, concern Soviet military personnel posted missing during the war or held in captivity, as well as civilians who were deported to Germany.

Sometimes enquiries originating from the USSR refer to Russians who emigrated a long time ago and whose families remaining behind in the Soviet Union desire to renew contact. Enquiries are not all one-way ; people of Russian origin turn to the Agency to obtain news of their relatives who remained in their own country or who were deported to Germany during the war.