

Major emergency relief actions

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I. MAJOR EMERGENCY RELIEF ACTIONS

It is the role of the ICRC, in its capacity as a neutral institution, to take special action in time of war, civil war or internal disturbances, in order that the military and civilian victims of such conflicts, and their direct effects, may be given protection and assistance. The following is an account of the efforts made to this humanitarian end during the events in Hungary and Suez.

THE WORK OF THE ICRC IN HUNGARY

The events in Hungary have aroused great emotion throughout the world. From all sides the most generous and spontaneous offers of help are pouring in to the central bodies of the Red Cross said the President of the ICRC during his broadcast from Radio-Genève on October 29, 1956, when he described what the Committee would do to help the victims of the events, throughout the whole of the Hungarian territory. He said that the Committee's delegates were already in Budapest; that the information collected by them on the spot would make it possible to provide the victims—whatever their origin or opinions might be—with abundant relief supplies arriving from all parts, in particular from the National Red Cross Societies, guided by their federation, the League. The universal impulse to help would thus be transformed

into an effective and rapid relief action based on the desire to help all those who were in distress.

However, although the ICRC wished to give the Hungarian people immediately an aid commensurate with its great needs, it was also aware that the seriousness of the situation would probably make it difficult for the Committee to carry out its traditional work of assistance and protection. In order that at least some of the principles of humanity might subsist when violence was unleashed, it reminded those concerned, over the wave-length assigned to it, of a few of the fundamental principles of the Geneva Conventions by which all peoples are bound. This appeal to the combatants was broadcast from Geneva from October 31, 1956, onwards.

The action taken by the ICRC during the last nine weeks of 1956 was the following :

Inauguration of an Air-Lift Vienna-Budapest. — On Sunday, October 28, the ICRC received an appeal for prompt assistance to several thousand victims from the Hungarian Red Cross.

The Committee sent out an urgent appeal to twenty-six National Red Cross Societies. After arrangements had been made with the Swiss authorities and the Swiss Red Cross—which was to play a very active part in all these events—it chartered a plane with a crew of volunteers. The flight was arranged for the evening of that day. During the night, on Sunday, October 28, the aircraft loaded with relief supplies and bearing the red cross emblem, with a delegate of the ICRC on board¹, left Kloten for Vienna. Two Hungarian aircraft, also loaded with relief supplies, were to escort the plane from Vienna to Budapest. On Monday, October 29, the first ICRC consignments arrived in Budapest. Throughout Monday and Tuesday the ICRC air-lift between Vienna and Budapest continued satisfactorily and in the evening of October 30 the Hungarian Red Cross announced that it had already received (by means of the ICR aircraft and the two Hungarian planes) 90 tons of blood plasma, dressings, medicaments, foodstuffs and blankets for which it was very grateful.

¹ Mr. R. Bovey.

Another return flight took place on Wednesday morning; on Wednesday evening, on its sixth flight, the ICRC aircraft was unfortunately obliged to turn back, when half-way to Budapest, as permission to land had not been given.

From that time onwards the Budapest airport could no longer be used; no air-lift took place on Thursday. Nevertheless the DC3 remained at Vienna airport in case the sending of supplies might again be made possible; the aircraft was ready but the route was no longer open, and on Saturday, November 3, the ICRC finally decided to send the aircraft back to Switzerland.

The Delegates of the ICRC. — In Geneva the ICRC remained in permanent contact with Vienna, where the Austrian Red Cross was untiring in its efforts to help, and with Budapest. The ICRC already had a permanent representative in Vienna ¹; a special delegate was sent from Geneva ² and arrived in the afternoon of Sunday, October 28; another delegate ³ followed immediately by the ICRC aircraft and arrived in Vienna on Monday morning. The mission of the two special delegates was to accompany to Hungary the consignments sent from Geneva by the ICRC, and relief supplied from various sources sent to Budapest from Vienna, where they had been stocked by the Austrian Red Cross.

On October 29 the delegates took part in the first flight of the ICRC aircraft to Budapest-Ferihegyi; they handed over the relief supplies to members of the Hungarian Red Cross. Information collected on the spot enabled them to draw up a first list of the Budapest population's requirements. The Swiss and Hungarian planes flew back to Vienna to pick up further supplies which were, on each occasion, immediately taken over by the Hungarian Red Cross.

The delegates of the ICRC thus made several journeys by air between Vienna and Budapest to accompany relief consignments. They also visited, in Hungarian hospitals, the wounded of the recent conflicts; they then endeavoured to expand their action.

¹ Mr. G. Joubert.

² Mr. H. Beckh.

³ Mr. R. Bovey.

One of the delegates ¹ drew up a complete list of people's needs in the Western area of Hungary. In the area close to the Austro-Hungarian frontier, at Győr, his presence prevented summary executions and he obtained a promise in writing from the chief of the Hungarian combatants to respect the Geneva Conventions; at Sopron he entered into contact with detained persons; he then returned to Austria to look after the refugees who had started to pour into the country. After the closing of the frontier he visited various large refugee centres and camps, so that, by November 3, the ICRC representatives were able to make the needs known; on November 7 he returned to Geneva.

The other delegate ² remained in Budapest, in liaison with the Hungarian Red Cross and the representatives of other Red Cross Societies. A great deal remained to be done in supplying hospitals with medicaments, foodstuffs and medical equipment. The general strike had interrupted transport and the food supplies of 1,500,000 inhabitants were threatened. In these circumstances he was joined by another delegate ³ sent from Geneva to Vienna who succeeded on two occasions, after October 30, in crossing the Hungarian frontier with a convoy of medical supplies and foodstuffs from the Austrian Red Cross.

On Sunday, November 4, the Russian troops re-occupied Budapest and the delegates could no longer give news; communication with Geneva was only re-established on November 12.

The Flow of Relief Supplies into Vienna. — On November 30 the ICRC received in Geneva the following telegram from the Hungarian Red Cross "Thanks for ICRC assistance to people affected by events". The telegram continued with a list of requirements, stating "On account loss all our mobile equipment have need if possibilities allow of ambulances, lorries and all types motor vehicles, surgical and X-ray instruments, aureomycin, antitetanic serum, vitamins, infants food, condensed

¹ Mr. H. Beckh.

² Mr. R. Bovey.

³ Mr. J. de Preux.

milk, fats, building materials, timber, cement, window-glass". The Hungarian Red Cross also requested that its needs should be made known to National Societies.

A further appeal to National Societies was immediately sent out.

While cash donations and offers of help from numerous organisations were being received in Geneva, collections were being made in many countries and Vienna became the centre to which most of the relief supplies for Hungary flowed.

The head of the Relief Section at the ICRC headquarters¹ had interrupted a relief mission he was carrying out in Greece, and a former delegate who had placed himself temporarily at the Committee's disposal² arrived in Vienna to strengthen the delegation staff. On October 31 they estimated the amount of the relief supplies *received in Vienna* at some 1,200,000 Swiss francs. Other consignments, valued at 1,500,000 Swiss francs had been promised. A month later the gift supplies had reached over 1,730 tons, comprising 810 tons of foodstuffs, 510 tons of medicaments and clothing and 410 tons of equipment for relief camps, sent by the National Red Cross Societies of some fifty countries. By December 31 the value of the relief supplies distributed was over 15,000,000 Swiss francs (over 8,000 tons in weight). At the time of publishing this report (June 1957) the total amount of contributions (about 50,000 tons) had reached about 80,000,000 Swiss francs in value.

The relief supplies sent by the National Red Cross Societies and other organisations approached by the ICRC and the reserve stocks which donors wished to set up in Vienna, increased at such a rate that it became difficult to cope with the continual flow of arrivals; it was necessary, in the shortest possible time, to unload, check and sort for despatch thousands of bottles of penicillin containing several million units, thousands of bottles of blood plasma, human albumen and ether, a considerable amount of morphine and various medicaments, thousands of rolls of bandages and adhesive tape, hundreds of tons of dressings, blankets, clothing, foodstuffs, and blood

¹ Mr. C. Ammann.

² Mr. W. Meyer.

transfusion equipment; parking space had to be found for the motorised relief columns and lodgings procured for the accompanying personnel. The receiving, sorting and preparation of parcels to be forwarded as soon as the frontier was open was carried on unceasingly. The delegates of the League and the ICRC had set up an effective system of checking to avoid loss. It was, of course, inevitable that some losses should occur, in view of the risks to which the transports were exposed; the percentage was kept extremely low, however, by means of the precautionary measures taken.

Agreement between the ICRC and the League. — An agreement was concluded between the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, on November 2. It specified that the international relief action in Hungary would be carried out by the ICRC, while the League would assemble and sort, in Vienna, the relief consignments received from National Red Cross Societies on behalf of the Hungarian people.

The text of the agreement, and of the amendments of November 27, were as follows :

1. In consideration of the troubled conditions in Hungary at the present time, and in accordance with the Statutes of the International Red Cross and the Agreement concluded between the League and the Committee in 1952, all operations connected with the forwarding, allocation, and distribution in Hungary of gifts of National Societies are placed under the direction of the ICRC Delegation in Hungary, acting in cooperation with the Hungarian Red Cross and possibly with other qualified relief organizations.
2. As circumstances have made it necessary that a large part of the relief supplies from National Societies intended for Hungary should first be assembled in Vienna, the handling of gifts from National Societies already in Vienna or which may subsequently arrive in Vienna, is placed under the direction of the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies, acting in cooperation with the Austrian Red Cross.
3. The ICRC Delegation in Hungary and the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies in Vienna will exchange Liaison Officers in order to ensure the coordination of their respective operations.

4. In pursuance of the above, it will be for the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies to coordinate gifts of National Red Cross Societies on their arrival in Vienna, and to arrange for their safe-keeping, warehousing and sorting, and for the taking of a daily inventory, by category of article.
5. It will be for the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies to place at the disposal of the ICRC Delegation in Hungary whatever relief supplies it may request according to needs, and in conformity with a plan established in agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross or other qualified relief organizations. These relief supplies will be handed over to the Representatives of the ICRC either in Vienna or at a frontier post for forwarding by them and subsequent distribution by the Hungarian Red Cross or other qualified bodies under the auspices of the ICRC.
6. The transport vehicles of the National Societies, with the exception of those belonging to the Hungarian Red Cross, will be assembled in a car park under the management of the League Representative in Vienna, who will make available the vehicles required by the Delegation of the ICRC in Hungary for the forwarding of relief supplies in that country.
7. If the relief supplies assembled in Vienna or promised by the National Red Cross Societies are not adequate to meet the requirements of the ICRC Delegation in Hungary, the latter will inform the ICRC, which will send the necessary appeals to the National Red Cross Societies for additional relief.
8. It is understood that the delegates of donor National Red Cross Societies shall be given the opportunity, whenever circumstances permit, of personally observing the manner in which their gifts have been utilised on the spot.
9. It is also understood that, as soon as circumstances permit, the ICRC will facilitate the establishment in Hungary of any medical units which the National Societies may desire to send there. Their establishment on Hungarian territory will however have to be arranged under a plan drawn up by agreement between the ICRC and the Hungarian Red Cross, in order to ensure their most efficient use.
10. In order to ensure as perfect a balance as possible between supply and demand of relief for Hungary, the International Committee and the League will endeavour to centralise in Geneva as much information as possible on non-Red-Cross relief.
11. The above provisions constitute the general principles on the basis of which the ICRC Delegation and the Representative of the League will settle practical details of application.

Addendum

- (a) The provisions of the present Agreement relating to gifts from National Societies shall also apply to any personnel and relief equipment which Societies may send to Vienna for Hungary.
- (b) Action on requests concerning individual cases, news transfers, etc., shall come within the competence of the ICRC.
- (c) The present Agreement shall remain in force as long as the disturbed situation which led to its conclusion continues to exist. The ICRC and the League will subsequently examine the situation jointly.
- (d) As regards the Hungarian refugees in Austria, the Austrian Red Cross is primarily responsible for assisting them at the national level. If supplementary relief supplies have to be drawn from the general reserve in Vienna, the representatives of the League and the ICRC in Vienna shall jointly decide upon the measures to be taken, in conjunction with the Austrian Red Cross.
- (e) National Societies will be kept regularly informed about the action taken by the ICRC and the League. Since the present agreement has been concluded with a view to ensuring the smooth running of the relief action undertaken for the benefit of the Hungarian people, the ICRC and the League request National Societies to consult Geneva before despatching further consignments of relief supplies, but without, for that reason, suspending any present or future national collection of contributions.

AMENDMENTS OF NOVEMBER 27

Following the joint decision to entrust the League with the relief work on behalf of refugees from Hungary in Austria, it has been agreed to make the following amendments to the Agreement concluded on 2 November 1956 between the ICRC and the League :

1. The ICRC shall undertake not only the forwarding, allocation and distribution of relief in Hungary (as provided for in the Agreement of 2 November), but also the handling in Vienna of gifts earmarked for the relief operation in Hungarian territory.
2. The League will undertake, in Austria, the handling and distribution of relief assigned to Hungarian refugees on Austrian soil. This work will be carried out with the cooperation of the Austrian Red Cross and in accordance with the undertakings entered into by the League.
3. The gifts in cash or in kind which have not been earmarked for a specific purpose, will be allocated by common agreement ac-

ording to needs, by the representatives of the ICRC and the League representative at Vienna. They will determine the share of this relief to be sent to Hungary and placed at the disposal of the ICRC, and the share to be used for the refugees, for whom the League is responsible.

4. The ICRC and the League will consult together on the appeals to be addressed to National Societies in order to obtain additional relief supplies for the above-mentioned operations.
5. The technical measures relating to the execution of the present Agreement will be the subject of a special arrangement.

Negotiations of the ICRC for the Protection of Delegates and various Relief Missions. — At Geneva, where all were working at full pressure, the ICRC immediately took the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the delegates; it also wished to safeguard the members of the relief missions of various nationalities which remained in Hungary, and in particular the mobile hospital unit of the German Red Cross which rendered such great service before being obliged to withdraw.

In the afternoon of Friday, November 2, the President of the ICRC sent to the USSR Delegation to the European Office of the United Nations, and to the Hungarian Minister at Berne, a memorandum concerning the relief action undertaken by the ICRC since October 29, at the request of the Hungarian Red Cross. The Committee called their attention to these operations, undertaken in conformity with the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the International Red Cross and carried out on the spot by its delegates, all of whom were Swiss citizens, and requested the Soviet and Hungarian authorities to facilitate the execution of the International Committee's humanitarian mission, and to take all necessary steps for the protection of the persons and property engaged in that undertaking. Next day the ICRC sent a copy of the memorandum to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, accompanied by information concerning the assistance given to the ICRC in its relief work by mobile medical units and transport columns of various National Societies placed under the protection of the Red Cross flag which required to move from place to place in Hungarian

territory in carrying out their humanitarian duties. The ICRC gave as an example the presence in Budapest of its delegates and a mobile medical unit of the German Red Cross, and also, in the West and South-West areas, of two relief columns of the Austrian Red Cross; it requested the Minister to take steps to ensure that the Soviet diplomatic and military authorities would provide protection for the delegates and persons of any nationality in the service of the Red Cross in Hungary.

Following these messages the ICRC telegraphed to the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, requesting it to ascertain whether the delegates were safe and to enable them to carry out their mission.

ICRC APPEAL FOR A TRUCE. — The situation having become serious, on November 4 the Hungarian Red Cross appealed, during one of the last telephone calls from Budapest, to the ICRC to intervene in order that the provisions of the Geneva Convention for the protection of civilians should be applied during the fighting which was then going on in the capital.

The ICRC immediately launched a further appeal to the Hungarian and Soviet authorities. At the same time it broadcast (over the wavelength assigned to it and those of the transmitting stations which were lending their services) a message to the responsible leaders and combatants in Budapest, asking for the conclusion of an armistice to enable the wounded of recent combats to be collected and cared for; this message was sent out by the ICRC in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the first of the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949.

The Forwarding of Relief Supplies. — The distress of the Hungarian people, described by the refugees who were flowing each day into Austria, made prompt action more and more necessary. Every effort had to be made to resume the distribution of relief supplies drawn from the large stocks provided the National Societies.

In Vienna the delegates were planning to make up for the stoppage of the air-lift.

The ICRC had given its approval to a plan whereby the vehicles of the Austrian Red Cross and other National Societies which had sent teams to Vienna would be grouped in three mobile units which would endeavour to cross the frontier at the different points, and to penetrate as far as possible into Hungarian territory. These medical and relief columns, under the responsibility of the ICRC and directed and escorted by its delegates, would first of all supply hospitals with foodstuffs and medicaments. But the frontier between Austria and Hungary still remained closed. On Sunday, November 4, the ICRC discussed with the Yugoslav Red Cross the possibility of sending relief supplies to Hungary via Yugoslav territory. Similar discussions took place with the Czechoslovak authorities.

On November 6 the President of the ICRC also appealed to the President of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR. Recalling the principles on which the Committee's intervention in Hungary was based, and the practical steps envisaged, he stressed the need for the consignments to be despatched and distributed at the earliest possible moment. In his letter the President said that, with this end in view, land convoys were being prepared in Vienna which, he hoped, would take the road to Hungary in the very near future.

DESPATCH OF THE FIRST CONVOY. — On November 8, the ICRC Delegation in Vienna informed the ICRC in Geneva that preparations had been completed.

The convoy consisted of a transport column of 15 vehicles, leaded with 25 tons of foodstuffs and 2 tons of medicaments, and manned by 38 persons; a medical unit (Danish) of 35 vehicles, accompanied by 78 persons and an Italian unit of 15 vehicles, accompanied by 50 persons, i.e. a total of 65 vehicles and 166 persons, including delegates, doctors, nurses, interpreters, drivers and mechanics. Both persons and vehicles were internationalized under the Red Cross flag.

The ICRC sent other delegates ¹ to accompany the transport units. The head of each convoy received the necessary instructions to the effect that the relief supplies were to be carried to

¹ In particular, Mr. J. Châtillon, Mr. R. Haas and Mr. H. Willener.

Budapest and handed over to the delegates of the ICRC, if they were still there or, if they were not, to the Hungarian Red Cross. Should it not be possible to reach Budapest, distributions could be made on the spot by the delegates and escorts, in accordance with the Red Cross principles of impartiality, and taking into account the most urgent needs. In order to prevent misappropriation or requisitioning of supplies, strict instructions were given that they should not be left in the hands of non-qualified persons.

The ICRC then made a choice between the various routes suggested, and decided that the first unit of 15 vehicles, escorted by a delegate ¹ should try to cross from Austria to Hungary at Sopron. The same evening it informed the Hungarian and Soviet authorities that the departure would take place the following day, November 9; the telegram for Budapest could not be despatched, on account of the interruption in postal communications, and the information was therefore communicated to the Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires in Switzerland. In Vienna, the ICRC Delegation remained in contact with the diplomatic representatives of the USSR and Hungary.

The convoy—all the vehicles had been painted white and bore the red cross emblem—arrived at the Hungarian frontier on Friday evening. It was held there until Monday morning, November 11. On that day authority to cross the frontier was granted and, at 11 a.m., the first ICRC relief convoy penetrated into Hungarian territory and continued on its way to Budapest.

On Monday, November 12, the delegates who had remained in Budapest telephoned to the ICRC in Geneva to confirm the safe arrival of the convoy and the unloading of the supplies. During the day the convoy returned to Vienna to fetch further relief supplies.

The ICRC at once decided to send a second relief column, with another delegate in charge ². This second convoy of 38 vehicles, carrying 120 tons of foodstuffs and medicaments,

¹ Mr. Willener.

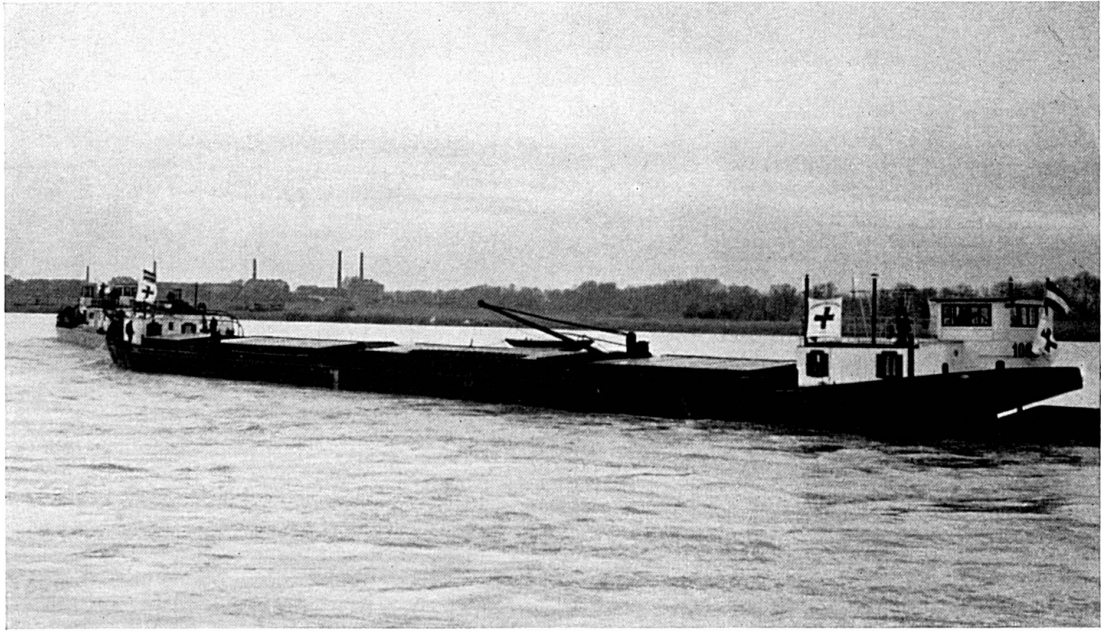
² Mr. R. Haas.

THE ACTION OF THE ICRC IN HUNGARY



ICRC relief convoy arriving in Budapest

THE ACTION OF THE ICRC IN HUNGARY



Shipment by the Danube of ICRC relief supplies on their way to Hungary

THE ACTION OF THE ICRC IN HUNGARY



A field-kitchen set up by the ICRC in a Budapest street supplied daily meals for 300 persons

THE ACTION OF THE ICRC IN HUNGARY



A distribution centre of the Hungarian Red Cross in Budapest

THE ACTION OF THE ICRC IN THE NEAR EAST



Cointrin Airport, Geneva : November 11, 1956 : five tons of medicaments for Egypt being stowed on the plane chartered by the ICRC



*Cointrin Airport, Geneva : November 18, 1956 ; loading a plane placed at the disposal of the ICRC
by the Danish Red Cross*

THE ACTION OF THE ICRC IN THE NEAR EAST



Delegates of the ICRC making final arrangements for the repatriation of prisoners of war



Delegates of the ICRC handing over a sewing-machine to the Port Said victims' camp workshop

had to be split up into two units, which crossed the frontier at Nickelsdorf and reached Budapest.

From that time onwards, all convoys under the International Committee's responsibility were allowed to enter Hungary.

Relief supplies, likewise escorted by a delegate¹, were also shipped by the Danube.

Between November 9, when the first column was despatched, and December 4, sixteen journeys were made to and fro between Vienna and Budapest, enabling the transport of 570 tons of relief supplies; 1,057 tons of flour were sent by river. By December 31, over 6,300 tons of sundry relief supplies had been handed over to the ICRC delegates in Budapest, who supervised their distribution by the Hungarian Red Cross.

Agreement between the ICRC, the Hungarian Red Cross and the Hungarian Government. — At the start of the second phase of the relief action, the ICRC gave to its Executive Director² the task of making contact in Austria with the new leaders of the Hungarian Red Cross. The meeting took place on November 15 and 16 in Vienna, when the conditions were stated under which the ICRC would undertake the supervision of the relief operations entrusted to it. These conditions were accepted and an agreement embodying them was signed at Vienna on November 16, 1956, and was immediately ratified by the Hungarian Minister, by direct authority of the Hungarian Government.

The terms of the agreement were as follows :

1. The International Committee of the Red Cross assumes the control of the distribution in Hungary of relief supplies for the Hungarian population, which have been or which will be entrusted to it by national Red Cross Societies, either directly or through the League of Red Cross Societies.
2. The International Committee of the Red Cross will also assume the control of the distribution of donations made on behalf of the Hungarian population which have been or which will be entrusted to it either directly or through the Secretary-General of the United Nations acting in agreement with the Hungarian Government.

¹ Mr. J. Châtillon.

² Mr. R. Gallopin.

3. The distribution of these supplies through the neutral intermediary of the International Committee of the Red Cross shall be carried out in accordance with the fundamental principles governing its work, i.e. with strict impartiality and without any discrimination whatsoever other than that based on the urgency of the needs of the persons to be assisted.
4. Towards this end the International Committee of the Red Cross shall, in agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross, draw up various programmes of assistance which shall be carried out progressively according to the urgency of the needs to be met and the supplies available. As an example, it is planned to give assistance in the first place to the sick, the wounded, infants, expectant mothers, the aged and the infirm.
5. All facilities shall be given to the International Committee of the Red Cross to enable it to establish a delegation in Hungary which will include the staff immediately required to :
 - (a) draw up, in agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross, the programmes of assistance mentioned above,
 - (b) ensure the protection and running of the warehouses which the International Committee of the Red Cross will set up in the principal distribution centres,
 - (c) transport supplies to or from these warehouses,
 - (d) be present during the actual distribution of supplies and to report to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva on these distributions for the information of donors.

This staff, consisting mainly of Swiss citizens, shall be placed under the orders of a Delegate-in-Chief, with Headquarters in Budapest, who will act in close liaison with the representatives designated by the Hungarian Red Cross for this purpose.
6. In order to allow the ICRC to carry out its strictly humanitarian action efficiently, the Hungarian Red Cross and the Hungarian Government shall ensure that in the exercise of its functions, the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Hungary receives all aid and protection from all authorities, civil or military.
7. The general provisions of this agreement shall be supplemented by a practical working plan drawn up by agreement between the representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross and the Delegate-in-Chief of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Budapest.
8. The sole object of this agreement being the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population, it cannot be interpreted

as restricting the other humanitarian activities which the International Committee of the Red Cross may be called upon to exercise in Hungary in conformity with the statutes of the International Red Cross or the provisions of the Geneva Conventions.

THE PLAN FOR SUPPLYING FOODSTUFFS FOR HUNGARY. — On the basis of the agreement concluded with the Hungarian Government and Hungarian Red Cross the ICRC drew up a food programme, firstly on behalf of *175.000 children under 6 years of age*, to whom were distributed powdered milk and cod liver oil (one distribution per week was made as from December 5 in the Infant Welfare Centres) and, secondly, for *school children from 6 to 16 years of age* for providing a hot meal daily, consisting of 10 gr. fats, 50 gr. meat (or cheese or tinned fish), 50 gr. cereals (rice, flour, pasta, oat-flakes, barley, pulse and farinaceous foods), 50 gr. powdered milk, 1 roll of bread, or 10 gr. sugar, 50 gr. cereals, 50 gr. powdered milk, 1 roll of bread. The programme was to have started about December 8 in the schools and to have applied at first to children in parts of the city which had suffered the greatest damage; it was then to have gradually expanded to include all school children of the ages mentioned above. The third part of the programme concerned *gift parcels to persons in distress* (about 100,000 recipients, consisting of those whose dwellings had been partly or entirely destroyed, families deprived of their breadwinner, disabled infirm and aged persons and families with more than four children), who received one standard food parcel per fortnight, sufficient for feeding one to four persons, each individual ration consisting of 500 gr. meat or fish, 250 gr. fats (butter, cooking-fat, oil, margarine), 250 gr. powdered milk or a tonic preparation, 50 gr. soap, as well as, when available, cheese, eggs, tinned vegetables or fruit, chocolate, coffee, tea, etc.

ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES. — Assistance to refugees was the concern, firstly of the Austrian Government, assisted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, and, secondly, of the Austrian Red Cross, supported by the Red Cross movement throughout the world.

It was a very important matter, since it involved accommodating, feeding and giving medical treatment and assistance of every description to thousands of persons, whose numbers were to continue to increase until they could begin to leave Austria for other countries of asylum. The ICRC and the League therefore entered into an agreement, whereby the Red Cross relief supplies stocked in Vienna were divided. One portion, taken over by the League was to be used for assisting refugees in Austrian territory, the remainder, handled directly by the ICRC, was to enable the relief action in Hungary to be continued.

Reference should be made to the great effort on behalf of the Hungarian refugees made by various National Red Cross Societies and the League of Red Cross Societies.

The ICRC, through its Central Prisoners of War Agency, was in a position to give valuable assistance to Hungarian refugees who wished to keep in touch with members of their families.

The broadcasting of the names of persons wishing to receive news of their relatives was started on November 13 over the Radio Intercroixrouge short wavelength. These persons were requested to make use of the Red Cross Civilian Message Forms, for transmission to the ICRC, which could be obtained from the National Societies. By December 31, 1956, the ICRC had already broadcast some twelve thousand messages.

A special card-index established by the Central Agency enabled a census to be made of the Hungarian refugees and a record to be kept of those who had gone abroad. This procedure met with the warm approval of the National Red Cross Societies to which the ICRC sent cards printed in four languages (Hungarian, German, French and English) to be filled in by all refugees on their arrival in countries of asylum. These measures enabled the ICRC to perform one of its traditional duties—the re-uniting of dispersed families.

Agreement with the United Nations. — It will have been seen that the agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross also mentioned the possibility of the International Committee assuming the control of the distribution of relief supplies entrusted to it through the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The

President of the International Committee of the Red Cross concluded an agreement with the United Nations on December 4, 1956, whereby the ICRC assumed responsibility for the distribution in Hungary of relief given by the United Nations to the people of that country in accordance with the resolution of the General Assembly meeting of November 9.

The terms of the agreement were as follows :

1. The Committee, at the request of the Secretary-General, agrees to use such funds as may be transferred to it by the United Nations for the exclusive purpose of providing immediate aid to the population of Hungary, in particular by furnishing medical supplies, foodstuffs and clothing. The responsibility assumed by the Committee in this respect will commence upon receipt of any such funds and will terminate after the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population or, in the event of cessation of the programme, upon return to the United Nations of any unused portion of such funds or of supplies purchased with such funds.
2. The Committee will undertake responsibility for the distribution of such supplies as may be furnished by the United Nations. The Committee may indicate to the United Nations the types of relief goods regarded as most appropriate for the purpose of the programme.
3. In accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, the Committee will distribute relief under this programme without discrimination and on the basis of need alone.
4. While making every effort to carry out this programme as rapidly as possible, the Committee will retain sole responsibility for the schedule (French : " cadence ") of distribution of relief supplies. In the event of difficulties or obstacles arising in the execution of the programme, the Committee will, if necessary, report to the United Nations but it will be solely responsible for taking appropriate measures.
5. The Committee will supply all organizational, supervisory and technical personnel, services and equipment required for the operation of the programme.
6. The United Nations will defray such administrative and operational costs of the Committee attributable to the execution of the United Nations relief programme as may be agreed between the United Nations and the Committee.
7. The Committee will be the sole agency to carry out the relief programme on behalf of the United Nations with the contributions

made pursuant to resolution 399 adopted by the General Assembly at the Second Emergency Special Session on November 9, 1956. This shall not be construed to limit the right of other United Nations agencies to carry out assistance programmes in accordance with their terms of reference and in agreement with the Hungarian authorities.

8. The United Nations recognizes the Committee as an independent and autonomous organization which undertakes to perform the services envisaged in this agreement. The performance of such services will not in any way place the Committee in a subordinate position towards the United Nations, and the Committee will not be required to carry out any other task than those set forth in this agreement.
9. The Committee will submit to the Secretary-General monthly operational reports and financial reports of costs incurred in the performance of its responsibilities under this agreement.
10. The United Nations and the Committee will act in close collaboration in regard to the planning and the implementation of the programme. In particular, the Committee will extend full cooperation to any representative who may be sent to Hungary by the Secretary-General in connexion with the programme.
11. Nothing contained in this agreement will affect any of the other activities which the Committee is already carrying out or may carry out in Hungary in the performance of its traditional role.
12. This agreement may be terminated by either party on one week's notice subject, if possible, to prior consultation. The termination of this Agreement will not affect the responsibilities of either party under the Agreement with respect to the completion of the distribution of supplies still outstanding at the date of termination.

In view of the relief action's considerable proportions and complex nature (it involved rail and road transport, warehousing, supervision, distribution, etc.) the ICRC decided to enlist the services of a particularly qualified Swiss citizen, Mr. G. Rutishauser, National Councillor, who was appointed as General-Delegate for the relief action in Hungary. Mr. Rutishauser organised a delegation which developed rapidly and of which the staff, in Vienna and Budapest, numbered some 670 persons. Under his efficient leadership the delegation continued to pursue, in 1957, the relief programme on behalf of the Hungarian people. A final report will be published at the close of the programme.

THE SUEZ CONFLICT

Early in 1956, a special representative of the ICRC¹ was sent to the Near East, who has unceasingly given devoted and intelligent service in his liaison work with public authorities, General Burns, and leading members of National Societies. In the course of the year he has constantly worked to assist the victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict; in Syria, in particular, he continually drew attention to the significance of Article 118 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, and also gave useful co-operation in the repatriation operations between Israel and Syria, carried out under United Nations auspices.

When he had successfully completed his mission, the delegate was requested by the ICRC to take over the duties of General-Delegate for the area (Beirut, October 1956). Thus when the events occurred which were to have such widespread repercussions, the ICRC already had a representative on the spot.

Representations made by the ICRC to the belligerent Governments. — On the outbreak of the Suez conflict, the ICRC appealed, on October 29, 1956, to the Governments of the four countries involved in the hostilities, to take the necessary measures to ensure the application of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Three of the Governments—Egypt, France and Israel—were already bound by these Conventions, while the United Kingdom, though bound by the two Geneva Conventions of 1929, had signed the new Conventions of 1949, but had not so far ratified them. Nevertheless, in reply to a telegram from the ICRC, the Prime Minister stated that, pending their formal ratification, the British Government accepted the Conventions and fully intended to apply their provisions, should the occasion arise.

¹ Mr. D. de Traz.

For its part, the ICRC was prepared to assume its traditional duties. As a neutral institution, it enjoyed the trust of the countries involved in the conflict, and could endeavour, with every chance of success, to ensure that the military and civilian victims of the events were given protection and assistance, and intervene, on humanitarian grounds, between the parties concerned. It therefore drew the four Governments' attention to the duties assigned to it by the Geneva Conventions and to the existence in Geneva of the Central Prisoners of War Agency, which collects the names of members of the armed forces and civilians, detained or interned, transmits this official information to the belligerent Governments, and arranges for the exchange of correspondence between prisoners and their families. Two representatives sent on a special mission from Geneva to London ¹, and the resident delegate of the ICRC in France ², were appointed to act as information and liaison officers with the authorities in the United Kingdom and France and with the leaders of the British and French Red Cross Societies.

The General-Delegate of the ICRC in the Near East went immediately from Beirut to Israel, to receive the authorities' confirmation of their decision to apply the Geneva Conventions and their agreement to the nomination of a doctor-delegate ³ from Geneva, whose headquarters were fixed in Tel Aviv where Egyptian wounded were held; the General-Delegate recalled to those concerned the provisions of international law which provide for the rapid repatriation of the most seriously wounded; he left immediately afterwards for Egypt. The *Cairo Delegation*, set up at the beginning of the Second World War, had been closed down at the end of 1952; but a Swiss national ⁴ continued to act as correspondent for the ICRC. The conflict brought the delegation back into existence once more and its activities expanded rapidly.

¹ Professor P. Carry, Member of the ICRC, and Mr. M. Borsinger.

² Mr. W. Michel.

³ Dr. L. Gaillard.

⁴ Mr. E. Muller.

ICRC APPEAL TO THE COMBATANTS. — The International Committee also made a point of summarizing for the benefit of the combatants some of the main rules of conduct arising from the Geneva Conventions. On Friday, November 2, it broadcast on its own special wave-length—and in several languages—the following appeal :

The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva wishes to recall that the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of war victims are applicable to the armed conflict which is now taking place on Egyptian soil. These Conventions impose on all combatants duties which may be summarized as follows :

1. The wounded and the sick, whether members of the armed forces or civilians, friends or enemies, shall be collected and protected and shall receive without delay the treatment their condition demands.
2. The following may never, under any circumstances, be attacked, but should always be respected and protected by the combatants : fixed or mobile medical establishments, namely hospitals, ambulances, vehicles used for carrying the wounded and the sick (i.e. hospital trains, hospital ships, medical aircraft) and the members and the equipment of Army and Red Cross or Red Crescent Medical Services responsible for treating the wounded and the sick.
3. To permit the enemy to recognize their medical status, such establishments, vehicles and personnel are authorized to clearly display the red cross or the red crescent emblem on a white background; this emblem must always, and under all circumstances, be respected and never be employed for any other object whatsoever.
4. Every enemy soldier, non-commissioned officer or officer surrendering, or otherwise captured, must be treated as a prisoner of war, and may not, therefore, be killed, or molested in any way; he must be treated as regards food, lodging clothing etc., in the same way as the military personnel of the detaining Power. As soon as possible he must be evacuated to the rear, where the appropriate authorities will become responsible for him.
5. Non-combatants, especially women and children, must never be attacked by the armed forces, but should, on the contrary, always be respected and humanely treated.
6. Torture, cruel or degrading treatment, and the taking of hostages are and remain forbidden at all times and in all places and in respect of all persons.

APPEAL TO NATIONAL SOCIETIES. — At the same time the ICRC invited the Egyptian Red Crescent to make known its needs of material relief and informed other National Societies of this action.

On Wednesday, November 7, the Egyptian Red Crescent accepted the Committee's offer of assistance and made an urgent request for large quantities of medicaments and medical supplies.

The International Committee at once appealed to a large number of National Societies, requesting them to take part in this action. The response was immediate and favourable. The National Societies, although their assistance had already been asked in connection with the events in Hungary, announced further important gifts for the Near East. Organisations other than the Red Cross also sent relief supplies. As we have said, all the parties to the conflict were willing to apply the Conventions, and the ICRC took the necessary action on this assumption. We will now give a few details of this action in Egypt and Israel.

A. EGYPT

Assistance to Prisoners of War and the Wounded. — In Geneva, the ICRC, through its Central Prisoners of War Agency, whose activities had greatly increased during the previous few weeks, continued to assist the nationals of the countries involved in the events. It analysed and registered lists of prisoners (and information concerning releases, repatriations and deaths) received in accordance with the Geneva Conventions; it forwarded family news and civilian messages sent through Geneva and investigated cases of death and disappearance.

Most of the communications concerning Egyptian prisoners of war led to considerable correspondence with the delegations. In many cases the names given did not agree with those on the lists supplied by the detaining Powers, this trouble arising from the difficulty of rendering Arabic names phonetically, which caused extra research work. To Port Said, completely cut off

from the rest of Egypt, the ICRC sent one of its former delegates¹ who had given distinguished service during the Second World War. From November 12 onwards, the delegate took over with great competence the Committee's traditional tasks on behalf of the victims of events, in particular the prisoners of war at Port Said and Port Fuad, forwarded family messages and opened enquiries concerning the missing, in conjunction with the General-Delegate. The two delegates made urgent representations to the British and French Commands, calling attention to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions concerning the repatriation of prisoners of war. As is known, the Egyptian prisoners at Port Said, and the British civilian internees at Cairo were released and the exchange took place on December 21; on that occasion the authorities concerned expressed their gratitude for the assistance received from the ICRC.

Relief to the Civilian Population. — The gifts in cash from the National Societies enabled emergency relief supplies to be purchased. The interruption of communications, however, made the despatch of supplies to Egypt subject to many difficulties, and extremely careful preparation therefore proved necessary. A DC-4 aircraft was specially chartered by the ICRC for the Geneva-Cairo run. Instructions from Egypt, received on Saturday, November 10, indicated that the Swiss aircraft had to be marked with the red cross emblem and follow a specific route in the Egyptian air space. The aircraft left Geneva on Sunday evening, November 11, loaded with four and a half tons of relief supplies and with a delegate of the ICRC² on board; it landed in Egypt twenty-four hours later. The following week, a second plane, also from Geneva and placed at the Committee's disposal by the Danish Red Cross, carried to Cairo three tons of medicaments and dressings.

The best possible care and precautions were taken in receiving, forwarding and distributing these consignments to

¹ Mr. M. Thudichum.

² Dr. R. Grosclaude.

make sure that they were used in conformity with the donors' wishes and the Red Cross spirit. Large quantities of goods were involved, since the first two consignments by air alone weighed 7 tons and were worth 300,000 Swiss francs.

In agreement with the Egyptian Red Crescent, the ICRC Delegation decided to allocate some of the relief supplies to meet the needs of the people of Port Said and, on November 14, sent a train loaded with medicaments and clothing to that city. The ICRC obtained permission for the trains to cross the lines held by the occupation forces and, on Friday, November 16, the first convoy arrived at its destination.

During that period, the delegate in Port Said also strove to co-ordinate and develop the work of the various philanthropic societies working at Port Said, who elected him Chairman of their Committee. Thus, he directed the distribution of relief to the families in greatest need, as part of the assistance to the civilian population and in agreement with the medical authorities.

At the end of November, the General-Delegate of the ICRC received permission to go from Cairo to Port Said, where he arrived on December 2 with sufficient quantities of vaccine to immunise 100,000 persons against epidemic diseases. The two delegates discussed with the High Command and the Egyptian Government the steps to be taken to send relief and authorisation was given on condition that the convoys travelled under ICRC auspices; the delegates also succeeded in having the ban lifted on the entry of Egyptian Red Crescent personnel into Port Said.

Under the protection of the ICRC, the trains organised by the Egyptian Red Crescent arrived at Port Said on Saturday, December 8, and Thursday, December 13, and then at regular intervals until December 22, the date on which the last contingent of the Anglo-French expeditionary force left the port. On the return journeys the trains were used to evacuate Egyptian wounded and sick requiring special treatment in Cairo hospitals.

The Cairo Delegation also undertook, at the request of the Egyptian authorities and of embassies and consulates, to assist the nationals of various countries without news of their families

because of the events, and to reply to requests for information received from all sides. Thus, up to December 31, 1956, the ICRC transmitted 65,000 messages between Egypt and the occupied territories of Port Said, Port Fuad, Gaza and Sinai.

On Tuesday, November 20, the ICRC telegraphed to the Cairo Delegation, asking it to take under its care all the categories of persons interned as a result of the events. According to these instructions, the delegation's first task was to obtain lists of the persons of various nationalities, detained or in assigned residence, together with the reason for their internment; secondly, to visit the places of detention and, thirdly, to give the necessary assistance to internees after consultation with Geneva. From November 24 onward the delegation, of which the staff had been increased¹, sought to give material aid to the internees. Relief actions were started, often in cooperation with the Protecting Power. Whenever it was necessary, the delegates informed the authorities of suggestions for improving the internees' living conditions.

Assistance to Stateless Persons. — The delegates also dealt with the cases of stateless persons, particularly Jews, and the ICRC offered to take over the humanitarian tasks which would have been incumbent on the Protecting Power if stateless persons were not, by definition, deprived of the benefit of such protection.

Several thousands of these persons had been obliged by circumstances to leave Egypt, and the ICRC took steps to help them; in the early days of the year it arranged for their transport by sea from Alexandria to Greece and Italy; in both of those countries the stateless persons in the Committee's charge were assisted by the National Red Cross and by charitable Jewish organizations, until they left for a country of asylum, in most cases Israel.

¹ Mr. R. Haas, Mr. E. Jaquet, Mr. R. Porchet and Mr. E. Robert, sent from Geneva; Mr. M. Busser recruited locally in Alexandria.

B. ISRAEL

The doctor-delegate of the ICRC¹ sent specially from Geneva to Israel at the beginning of the conflict, took steps to co-ordinate relief measures and to ensure the application of the principles of the Geneva Conventions.

Assistance to Prisoners of War. — From November 13 onwards he gave all possible material assistance to the Egyptian prisoners of war in Israeli hands, made regular visits to the camps where the members of the armed forces captured during the Gaza fighting were detained and to the hospitals where wounded and sick prisoners were being treated; he sent a nominal list of those prisoners to Geneva.

REPATRIATION OPERATIONS. — On November 18, the doctor-delegate informed the ICRC that the Israeli authorities were considering the repatriation of a first group of seriously wounded Egyptians. The final arrangements, made in conjunction with the ICRC delegates in Egypt, involved delicate negotiations. Two medical aircraft, kindly placed at the Committee's disposal by the Italian authorities, flew from Cairo on December 3 to Lydda in Israel; on Wednesday, December 5, the aircraft brought back to Cairo 26 seriously wounded, accompanied by the doctor-delegate of the ICRC in Israel, an Italian doctor and two Swiss nurses. A further repatriation was made several days later; the two medical aircraft flew from Cairo to Tel Aviv with a cargo of individual and collective relief supplies, which the ICRC delegate in Israel arranged to have distributed among the Egyptian prisoners of war. On their return journey, the aircraft brought back to Egypt a second group of seriously wounded, 22 in all, who were repatriated under the same arrangements as the first group. These flights of the medical aircraft between Israel and Egypt constituted the first direct air link between the two countries since the beginning of the war in Palestine in 1948.

¹ Dr. L. Gaillard.

At the end of the year the Government of Israel offered to the ICRC to repatriate the 5,000 or so Egyptian prisoners of war in its hands. This offer was immediately submitted to the Egyptian authorities and the handing over of the prisoners to the United Nations Forces took place a few weeks later, in presence of the ICRC delegates.

Assistance to Civilian Victims. — The ICRC delegate in Israel also undertook several relief missions to make objective enquiries into the living conditions and needs of the inhabitants and the refugees in the occupied regions of Gaza and Sinai. In Gaza itself, he enquired particularly into the treatment of persons protected by the Fourth Convention and arrangements were made for him to pay regular visits to Egyptian nationals placed in assigned residence in a residential quarter of the city. At El-Arish and Rafah he assisted persons in need and children by distributing powdered milk and eggs. In the Sinai peninsula, he made sure that the people had not suffered from the events. The delegate of the ICRC also took part in the repatriation of the Egyptian civilians interned in Gaza.

The conflict, short though it was, is very characteristic of the way the International Committee carries out its work under the Geneva Conventions, and in accordance with the Fourth Convention which was, on that occasion, applied for the first time.