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## VII. — Relief to War Victims

### Relief to Civilian Populations

*Germany* — The reorganisation of Red Cross branches in the principal *Länder* of Western Germany allowed the ICRC to concentrate on Berlin and Eastern Germany, where, in virtue of agreements with the Allies in 1945 and 1946, it was still the only international relief agency licensed to operate.<sup>1</sup>

For this relief work alone, the Berlin Delegation had a staff of three Delegates, three secretaries and ten local employees.

Those mainly assisted, during the Winter, were 100,000 destitute old people and some 140,000 children in Eastern Germany. In Summer, support was given to holiday camps which housed 58,000 children.

Expenditure exceeded three million Swiss francs. Relief came from a great many quarters: several Governments, National Red Cross Societies, and lay and religious organizations—notably the *Don suisse* and Swiss Relief to Europe. Germans living abroad likewise contributed.

*Poland* — During the ten months before it was closed down, the Warsaw Delegation issued relief worth 1,250,000 Swiss francs to the civilian population in Poland.

*Other countries* — In co-operation with the National Societies, the ICRC, on a number of occasions, assisted in case of public disaster. In August, 1949, 620,000 French francs were used from its own funds, for emergency relief to those made homeless by forest fires in the South-West of France.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Report 1947-1948*, pp. 81 and 84.

Several Delegations—Paris and Prague especially—gave foodstuffs, children's clothing and toys to necessitous families at Christmas.

#### **Relief to Prisoners and War Invalids**

*Poland* — Among the countries which had ratified the 1929 Prisoners of War Convention, Poland still held, in 1949, several tens of thousands of prisoners. The Committee's relief for prisoners was accordingly directed principally to Poland.

The Warsaw Delegation distributed food, clothing, under-clothing, footwear, sleeping-bags, toilet articles, soap, supplies for cobblers and tailors, and cigarettes—a total weight of 160 tons, valued at 350,000 Swiss francs—as well as medicaments, bandaging, dental material, spectacles, and medical literature, valued at 21,800 Swiss francs.

Equipment handed to the camps by the ICRC allowed German dentists to give dental treatment, under the supervision of Polish medical officers.

*France, Belgium and Holland* — Germans imprisoned or awaiting trial in France, Belgium and Holland were given underwear, soap and toilet articles—3249 kilos of relief, worth 20,450 Swiss francs. Each man received two articles of under-clothing, two pairs of socks, and ten pieces of soap. Medical relief to the value of 22,750 Swiss francs, and including vitamins, spectacles and dental material was also given.

Intellectual relief was provided for prisoners, repatriates and invalids. More than 20,000 books were distributed, and 295 subscriptions, made the previous year, renewed to various scientific, literary, artistic and general periodicals. Writing-paper was provided. About a hundred individual requests were also met, especially those from lecturers or others conducting classes.

*Germany and Austria* — The ICRC made large consignments to Germany and Austria for the repatriation camps, hospitals, sanatoria, and homes for war invalids. Most of these

supplies came from prisoner of war camps in France. As these camps were shut down, the prisoners handed over material, new or part-worn, which they could not or did not want to take with them : medicaments, books, wireless sets, musical instruments, games, records, sewing-machines, sleeping-bags, etc. This provided 7500 kilos of medical supplies, worth 80,000 Swiss francs. More than 10,000 books, and three complete workshops for binding were handed over to the German Red Cross for the benefit of war invalids. Cigarettes, toilet articles, under-clothing and soap, to a total value of 64,038 Swiss francs, were sent to prisoners repatriated from Poland and Czechoslovakia.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the above, relief was distributed to war invalids for a total value of 150,000 Swiss francs ; it included medical supplies, tonics, Braille watches, crutches, surgical appliances, and equipment for workshops.

*Soviet Russia* — While German postal traffic with Soviet Russia was held up, the ICRC received more than 50,000 parcels at Geneva and forwarded them to prisoners of war in Russia.

*Greece, Poland, India, Pakistan, Indo-China and Indonesia* — Relief to these countries is shown in the Sections on each of them in Part II.

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<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 14-15 and 41.