

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1958)  
  
**Rubrik:** America

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to leave their homes. With the approval of the authorities this mission took place in June and July.

The ICRC made available, as in previous years, ten thousand Swiss francs from its own funds for assisting political detainees in Cyprus.

## AMERICA

### Cuba

On July 4, 1958, the International Committee received an appeal from Mr. Fidel Castro, the head of the rebel forces in Cuba, proposing to hand over the wounded and sick of the regular armed forces in his hands to a Commission of the Cuban Red Cross. He requested the ICRC to get in touch with the Cuban Red Cross and to arrange for this delicate operation to be carried out as soon as possible.

The ICRC transmitted this message immediately to the Cuban Red Cross, offering at the same time to lend its services and those of the delegate whom it was ready to send at once to Havana for the purpose of facilitating any humanitarian action consistent with its customary activities and the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. Communication with the rebel chief in the Cuban "maquis" had to be made through the Swiss Short Wave Service, as his exact address was unknown.

The delegate of the ICRC, Mr. P. Jequier, arrived at Havana on July 10. After numerous discussions, he obtained the consent of the Government to the proposed operation and was afforded the necessary facilities by the military authorities and the Cuban Red Cross.

The place and date of the transfer of wounded and sick prisoners had then to be arranged and approved by both parties concerned. This was a very difficult matter since on account of the mountainous and inhospitable nature of the area, the seriously wounded were likely to suffer great discomfort during their transport. It was seen that in the circumstances the Cuban Red Cross would be unable to undertake the operation alone and that the assistance of the Government army services would be required.

Since the essential aid of the army services would result in a meeting of the Parties to the conflict, special care had to be taken in choosing a spot where the needs of safety and of humanity could be guaranteed.

As he was not in direct contact with the insurgent forces, Mr. Jequier was unable to carry out the negotiations himself and they were conducted by the ICRC in Geneva, which acted as intermediary and transmitted to each Party the other's proposals and counter-proposals. Thus, a truce was arranged and it was decided to carry out the operation on July 23. On the date, accompanied by another delegate, Mr. J.-P. Schoenholzer, who had arrived from Geneva in the interval, Mr. Jequier set out for Las Vegas de Jibacoa, where the meeting was to take place. The delegates were accompanied by units of the Cuban army and the Cuban Red Cross, which flew the Red Cross flag; the insurgents carried white flags.

The truce was respected by both sides throughout the operation. The wounded, numbering 57, were evacuated by helicopter. In addition, to the great satisfaction of the delegates of the ICRC, the rebel forces released 196 other prisoners who were in poor health, bringing the total number of victims evacuated to 253.

This action is an event in the history of the Red Cross. It is in fact, the first time that opposing sides have met during a civil conflict to effect the release of prisoners under the auspices of the ICRC. This operation in Cuba marks a step forward in the protection of victims of internal disturbances and is a good example of the application of Article 3 which sets forth the humanitarian provisions to be observed in internal conflicts and is common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949.

A little later, hostilities were resumed with still greater force and on August 8, 1958, the rebels proposed another evacuation of 170 wounded and prisoners. On August 12 and 13, a further intervention of the ICRC enabled the rebel forces to hand over to the representatives of the Cuban Red Cross 15 wounded and 155 prisoners. During this operation, at the request of the ICRC, emergency medicaments were handed to the rebel forces who had asked for these supplies.

Numerous Cubans in exile and various groups supporting the rebel movement approached the ICRC, asking it to intervene in the conflict and to undertake its customary humanitarian activities. The Cuban Civic Revolutionary Party in Exile, which grouped all the parties opposed to the Batista regime, sent a delegate to the ICRC, Professor Agramonte of Havana University, who later became Minister for Foreign Affairs in the new Government. He submitted a detailed report of the situation and asked the ICRC to intervene. Other Cubans in exile had formed relief committees in various countries and offered the ICRC gifts of medi-

caments and foodstuffs for transmission to their compatriots in the territories held by the rebel forces.

In view of these repeated appeals for assistance, the International Committee decided to send a further mission to Cuba and reopened negotiations with the Cuban Red Cross in this connection. On September 9, its delegate, Mr. M. Thudichum, left Geneva for Havana to study the situation on the spot and to ascertain on what basis the ICRC could lend its assistance to the direct or indirect victims of a conflict which was becoming more and more serious.

On his arrival in Havana, the delegate made numerous approaches to the authorities in order to put the proposed relief action into effect. However, as his efforts met with no response on the part of the Government then in power, Mr. Thudichum was obliged to leave Cuba without completing his mission.

In spite of these unfavourable circumstances, the ICRC persevered in its efforts to give effective assistance to the victims of the conflict, since it continued to receive numerous appeals from various parties opposed to the regime. Several meetings and discussions were held with representatives of the Fidel Castro movement and with those of the Government still in office at Havana. Nevertheless, all its efforts to obtain permission to assist (in accordance with its principles of neutrality and impartiality) the victims of the conflict in the areas held by the two parties in opposition, met with a flat refusal.

On December 30, the day before the collapse of the Batista regime, the ICRC again launched an appeal by cable and radio to the two Parties, urging them to respect the letter and the spirit of the Geneva Conventions. It emphasized once again the importance of Article 3 applicable "in the case of armed conflict not of an international character", that is to say the situation existing in Cuba.

Since then the ICRC has sent further missions to Cuba to which reference will be made in the next Annual Report.

### **Other countries in Latin and North America**

With the exception of Cuba, the ICRC did not undertake any special activity in the American continent in 1958. As in previous years its resident delegates in Latin America, Mr. J. de Chambrier in Argentina,

Mr. E. Haegler in Brazil and Mr. W. Roethlisberger in Colombia, helped to maintain the good relations of the International Committee with the Governments and Red Cross Societies of these countries. On his way back from his mission in Cuba, Mr. Jequier paid a visit to the Red Cross of the Dominican Republic. A number of visitors from North and South America were received at the ICRC headquarters in Geneva, where they visited the Central Prisoners of War Agency. These visits supplied the opportunity for a useful exchange of views and for a better knowledge of the International Committee's work in this part of the world.

## ASIA

### Far East and South East Asia

In this vast region, which contains almost half the population of the world, the ICRC carried out various but not extensive activities in 1958. Most of the work undertaken was connected with the after-effects of the Second World War or armed conflicts which have occurred since then in this part of the world.

*Compensation for former prisoners of war in Japanese hands.* — Article 16 of the Peace Treaty between Japan and the Allies stipulates that former Allied prisoners of war in Japanese hands are entitled to compensation for the hardships suffered during their captivity. The ICRC, which was entrusted with the task of determining the portion of the funds received from the Japanese Government to be allocated to each of the Allied Powers, made a first distribution of funds in 1956 in all the countries which had submitted complete lists of former prisoners.

In 1958, the International Committee continued the checking operations undertaken in the Philippines to enable the National Society to establish a complete list of beneficiaries in this country. By the end of the year, the registration formalities were practically finished in the Philippines and United States (where former Philippine prisoners of war who emigrated to the USA were able to register applications for compensation with the American Red Cross).