

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1965)

Rubrik: Latin America

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: 15.04.2026

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

Liberia, the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Ghana, Togo, Niger, Dahomey, Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Spanish Guinea and Gabon. He had many interviews with government and National Red Cross Society representatives. One of his main objectives was to stress the importance of the Geneva Conventions and the necessity of making them widely known to the armed forces and the public.

The head of the ICRC Nursing Personnel Section, Miss A. Pfirter, went on a special mission, from February to May, which involved visiting National Societies and officials in Ghana, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea, Gambia and Mali. In four of these countries she was accompanied by Miss Y. Hentsch, directress of the League's Nursing Bureau.

The ICRC representative, who was welcomed wherever she went, examined in conjunction with the National Red Cross Societies the possibility of organizing voluntary nursing services in each country. She visited many Red Cross establishments, hospitals, dispensaries, nursing schools, nurseries, orphanages, maternity and child welfare centres. She also attended first-aid demonstrations and Junior Red Cross meetings. During her discussions with officials of the National Society and of the authorities, she observed that the training of nursing personnel constitutes one of the major problems besetting the new African States.

In addition, the ICRC was represented by Miss Pfirter, Mr. Hoffmann and Mr. Laurent Marti, assistant to the Executive Director, at the seminar organized by the League at Abidjan (Ivory Coast) for West African Red Cross Societies. They addressed the participants on the ICRC's rôle in the event of conflict and they emphasized the need to know and apply the provisions of the Geneva Conventions.

4. LATIN AMERICA

Dominican Republic

At the outset of military operations in the Dominican Republic, the ICRC informed the Red Cross of that country that it was

prepared to intervene at its side in order to assist the victims of the civil war. This offer was accepted and the ICRC delegate-general for Latin America, Mr. Pierre Jequier, went immediately to Santo Domingo. He was welcomed by the leaders of the Dominican Red Cross and he contacted the heads of the opposing forces, General Imbert and Colonel Caamano, who assured him the Geneva Conventions would be applied.

However, hostilities continued to reap their crop of victims; wounded remained without care and corpses lay about the streets. Accompanied by Dr. Fernandez Martinez, President of the Dominican Red Cross, the ICRC representative urged the belligerents to conclude a truce to enable the wounded and dead to be collected. His endeavours were supported by the United Nations and the Organization of American States. These efforts were successful on May 21 ; a truce was concluded for 24 hours and was respected by both sides. The point of view of the Red Cross had prevailed. Not only was the truce maintained; hostilities were not resumed in Santo Domingo after the end of the time-limit, except for some sporadic firing.

The following notes taken from the delegate-general's diary show how the ICRC carried out its action during the most critical days of the Dominican crisis:

“ When I arrived at the Dominican Red Cross on the afternoon of May 16, 1965, its President, Dr. Luis F. Fernandez Martinez, showed me a draft appeal which he wished to broadcast by radio to the two parties involved in the struggle in Santo Domingo, in order to obtain an interruption in the fighting for a few hours. Such a truce would enable Dominican Red Cross volunteers to go to the northern section of the town to collect the wounded and the sick and also the dead.

I personally believed that his intervention would have the more value if based on the Geneva Conventions, which lay down precisely the terms of agreement for a truce between belligerents, as well as for the designation of safety and medical areas. At my request, the President had added to his draft a paragraph to the effect that his appeal was based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions and that it was approved by the ICRC delegate on a special mission to Santo Domingo.

On Monday, May 17, the radio broadcast his appeal ; it went unheeded, the fighting continued. At midday I was personally received by General Imbert, whom I tried to convince of the necessity for a cease-fire. His response was negative.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 18 May, I went with the President of the Dominican Red Cross to the staff headquarters of Colonel Caamano, in the area controlled by the Constitutionalist Government. I took the opportunity to remind the Colonel of the existence of the Geneva Conventions and to give him a summary of its articles in Spanish; I emphasized that these referred to the arranging of a cease-fire and neutral zones. Colonel Caamano declared his agreement in principle to a possible 12 hour truce.

The next day, Dr. Mayobre, special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, received the President of the Dominican Red Cross and me together with the WHO representative. He suggested the drafting of the terms of a cease-fire. Shortly before our interview with Dr. Mayobre, we had again approached General Imbert. He asked whether a two hour truce would suffice. The President of the Dominican Red Cross explained that such a limit would not enable even a start to be made on the work envisaged and that 12 hours was an absolute minimum. General Imbert was won over to our arguments.

On Thursday, May 20, after having drawn up two separate documents for each of the parties, as we were requested, we again went to the Government headquarters accompanied by two United Nations representatives. The truce we proposed was to start on Friday, the next day, at 6 a.m. and to terminate at 6 p.m. Mr. Mayobre reminded General Imbert that the Security Council was eagerly awaiting the decision which would be taken. General Imbert replied that his Government could take no decision without first consulting the military leaders. The President of the Dominican Red Cross said this truce was absolutely essential to enable his Society to carry out an indispensable humanitarian task. I for my part reminded General Imbert that the Dominican Republic was a signatory to the Geneva Conventions. He was unmoved ; the military leaders would be consulted ; no reply would be given before 4 p.m. that day.

After leaving General Imbert's office we went to see Colonel Caamano. He, with his advisers, received us immediately and raised

no objection to our proposals. He signed the truce agreement after the President of the Dominican Red Cross promised to destroy it if the opponent did not sign too.

At 3.45 p.m. we left Colonel Caamano's headquarters to keep our appointment with General Imbert. We were led to a room where all the members of the Government as well as five colonels and generals of the Dominican Army were meeting. General Imbert told us immediately that the military leaders considered they had not sufficient time to advise all army advance posts before 6 o'clock next morning. He suggested deferring the decision for 24 or 48 hours. Mr. Mayobre then drew the Government's attention to the unfortunate impression his hesitation would not fail to have on the Security Council. I suggested account be taken of the arguments advanced by the military leaders, since it was materially impossible to arrange for a cease-fire at dawn next day, and that the beginning of the truce be delayed for a few hours. It was essential for the Red Cross to be able to carry out its work without incident.

Finally, it was agreed to arrange a truce for 24 hours instead of 12 as originally intended, starting next day at noon. General Imbert signed the document in the name of the Government of National Reconstruction."

It will be recalled that the two parties did in fact observe the truce and respected the Geneva Conventions. The twenty-four hour cease-fire obtained by the ICRC representative became an armistice.

The ICRC's task remained very difficult however. It therefore despatched an assistant delegate, Mr. Serge Nessi, to help Mr. Jequier.

The ICRC representatives visited most detention centres on both sides. They addressed numerous requests to the authorities in order to obtain various improvements in internment conditions. On subsequent visits to the same detention centres, the delegates observed that both on the side of the "constitutionalist Government" of Colonel Caamano and that of the "Government of National Reconstruction" of General Imbert, their interventions had generally had good effect and that conditions for detainees had distinctly improved.

We would also mention, in relation with the Santo Domingo events, that certain facts caused the ICRC delegation to warn the

population against misuse of the red cross sign. At his request, the radio station broadcast these warnings, announcing that anyone misusing the sign was liable to penalties.

Brazil

In 1965, at the request of the Red Cross Society of China in Peking, the ICRC continued its representations in favour of the nine Chinese nationals who had been interned in Brazil since the change of government in April 1964. Following the intervention of the ICRC delegate in Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian authorities granted entry visas to the wives of four of the internees. These four women came to Brazil, accompanied by a representative of the Chinese Red Cross and an interpreter. Three other Chinese women had been able to visit their husbands in detention in Brazil the previous year as a result of ICRC intervention. Moreover, thanks to the ICRC delegate, these internees were able to receive parcels from China.

The nine Chinese nationals were finally able to leave Brazil on April 17, in the presence of the ICRC delegate who negotiated their release. They passed through Geneva on their way home.

Mexico

In June 1965, the ICRC President, Mr. S. A. Gonard, spent a week in Mexico, where he was received by the President of the Republic, Mr. G. Diaz Ordaz and by the Secretaries of State for Defence, Health and Foreign Affairs.

During these interviews, the ICRC President particularly stressed the importance of disseminating knowledge on the Geneva Conventions among the army and medical services. He was told that the army had organized courses on the Geneva Conventions for officers and army doctors. The Mexican authorities are prepared to extend these courses to lower ranks. The ICRC President visited the headquarters of the Mexican Red Cross and its hospital and dispensary. He was keenly interested in the plans for a new building to house these various services of the Mexican Red Cross. A one-

day visit to Guadalajara enabled the ICRC President to become acquainted with the activities of one of the National Red Cross Society's State branches.

5. EUROPE

Reuniting of families.—Throughout the year the ICRC continued its work with a view to reuniting families whose members had been dispersed as a result of past and present conflicts and tensions in various parts of the world.

This activity, of which the ICRC was the promoter shortly after the Second World War, has altered somewhat over the years. At the beginning, the ICRC itself undertook most of the negotiations with the authorities and handled the practical aspects of travel arrangements, whereas nowadays it only deals with the many individual enquiries which it receives from the families involved. Thanks to its wide experience of the problem and of circumstances in each country, it has been able to handle these requests by negotiations with the relevant authorities on the basis of its 1962 appeal on behalf of this category of victims.

With this experience behind it, the ICRC co-operated in the drawing up of a draft resolution on the reuniting of dispersed families. This draft was submitted to the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross in Vienna which accepted it unanimously. It urges that human contacts between members of dispersed families be facilitated until family reunion is achieved.

From the outset of this activity, the ICRC has co-operated closely with National Red Cross Societies in the countries concerned. As a result, over 15,000 persons previously separated from their families by barriers which were insuperable for them alone, have been reunited with their relatives in the course of the year under review.

Poland

The ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary for the remittance of financial assistance which the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany offered to victims of pseudo-medical