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Montreux: a symposium on the development of the Red Cross in Africa

A symposium on the development of the Red Cross in Africa, organized by the League of Red Cross Societies, took place in Montreux (Switzerland) from 24 February to 8 March. Dr. Eric Martin, President of the ICRC, and a number of ICRC officials, took part.

In his opening address, Dr. Martin voiced the International Committee's faith in the future of the National Societies in Africa.

On 7 March, an "ICRC Day" was the occasion for African delegates to get to know better the activities of the ICRC in general, and more particularly its work in Africa, especially in helping political detainees.

Food aid sent by the ICRC and distributed by the National Societies, and matters relating to the diffusion of humanitarian law and Red Cross principles were among the subjects of lectures and discussions.

Belgrade: the Red Cross and peace

The World Conference of the Red Cross on Peace was held in Belgrade from 11 to 13 June 1975. Dr. Eric Martin, President of the ICRC, represented the institution, in the company of three delegates.

The ICRC presented two reports, one dealing with alleviation of the suffering of war victims as a contribution to peace, the other discussing the development of international humanitarian law and the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions.

A "programme of action of the Red Cross as a factor of peace" was drawn up by a drafting committee. Pursuant to suggestions in the ICRC reports, this programme provides for measures to strengthen the practical operations of Red Cross bodies, especially those to help victims of conflict and to encourage the development of international humanitarian law.

The Belgrade Conference provided the opportunity for constructive contacts with the National Societies represented.

Missions by the President of the ICRC and other members of the Committee

The President of the ICRC, Professor Eric Martin, went on six missions in 1975, with the aim of strengthening the ties between National Societies and the ICRC:

- 4-9 May: Budapest (Hungary) — a visit to the National Society on the occasion of World Red Cross Day;
- 9-12 May: Paris (France) — National Congress of the French Red Cross;
- 25-31 May: Discussions with the President and the Foreign Minister of the French Republic (on ICRC activities and financing);
- 9-15 June: Belgrade (Yugoslavia) — Centenary of the Yugoslav Red Cross, World Peace Conference, Standing Commission of the International Red Cross;
- 19-25 June: Federal Republic of Germany — Congress of the National Red Cross and a visit to the International Tracing Service (ITS) at Arolsen;
- 25 November - 3 December: Nouakchott (Mauritania) — Visit to the Mauritanian Red Cross on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of national independence.

Professor Gilbert Etienne, who is a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the ICRC Executive Board, went to Angola and the neighbouring countries from 30 August to 13 September. Professor Etienne had been directed by the Executive Board to discuss the details of ICRC activities in Angola with the various parties to the conflict and with the Portuguese authorities.

Shôken Fund: fifty-fourth distribution

The Red Cross Societies of Burma, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Nepal, Panama and Paraguay received allocations—amounting altogether to 145,000 Swiss francs—from the fifty-fourth distribution of the income of the Empress Shôken Fund.

Applications for allocations were examined by a Joint Commission composed of representatives of the League and ICRC. (The 1974 balance sheet and statement of income and expenditure of the fund, with details of allocations, were published in the June 1975 issue—No. 171—of the "International Review of the Red Cross".)

V. RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The ICRC delegate to the United Nations and their specialised agencies, especially those of a humanitarian nature (High Commissioner for Refugees, UNDRO, UNICEF, etc.), was put under considerable pressure in the spring by the events in Indo-China. In New York, he had to attend daily meetings convened by the Co-ordinator for United Nations Relief Operations in Indo-China, who had been appointed by the

Secretary-General. Later in the year, he was in very close touch with those concerned with developments in Angola.

From the autumn to the end of the year, the delegate to the international organisations and his colleagues were kept busy mainly by the discussions of the thirtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The main subjects discussed were Timor and Western Sahara; the human rights situation in Chile and the territories occupied by Israel; Cyprus; racial discrimination and problems in southern Africa; disarmament and the question of napalm and other incendiary weapons; and the work of the Diplomatic Conference. During the same period, ICRC observers were closely following the deliberations of the Security Council on these matters.

Among the other meetings, conferences, assemblies or congresses followed by the ICRC were:

- the 31st session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Human Rights Committee (discussing human rights in Chile, the Israeli occupied territories, Rhodesia, South Africa and Namibia);
- the 58th session of ECOSOC (report of the Human Rights Committee);
- the General Assembly of the World Health Organization (medical situation in the Israeli occupied territories where an ICRC medical delegate carried out a long mission in 1975 (see p. 22));
- the 5th United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Delinquents;
- various meetings of non-governmental organisations concerned with human rights and the problems of disarmament and international humanitarian law.

The Congress on Crime Prevention, held in Geneva and attended by a thousand experts (criminologists, police, heads of prison services, etc.), offered the ICRC a chance to make some useful contacts and to explain to the delegations present the ICRC activities in prisons especially in connection with political detainees. The Congress also discussed torture and the President of the ICRC took the opportunity offered by a meeting of Amnesty International to deliver an address on the subject of "Torture, the application and diffusion of minimum rules".

The ICRC delegate to the international organisations also followed the work of the second session of the Diplomatic Conference in Geneva before returning to New York to see what effect those discussions had in the United Nations.

VI. INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public opinion, which in 1975 had been stirred by the conclusion of the wars in Cambodia and Vietnam, by the conflicts in Angola, Timor and Lebanon and by the events in Eritrea and Iraqi Kurdistan, had many opportunities to observe the opera-

tions being carried out by the ICRC around the world on the scenes of both new and earlier conflicts or events, such as those in the Middle East, Chile and Cyprus.

The Press and Information Division in Geneva also had its rush periods, especially during the final stages of the conflicts in Cambodia and Vietnam. They issued nearly 40 press releases and held four press conferences at headquarters.

Information delegates were sent to Phnom Penh, Saigon and Angola to gather information for the ICRC and donors and to act at the same time as spokesmen to inform the many journalists who had come from far and wide to cover those events. Photographers, too, were sent to Indo-China and Angola.

Two 16 mm films showing relief operations in Cambodia (produced by INDSEC) and in Vietnam (shot by the Swiss TV) just before the end of the conflicts have been added to the ICRC film library.

Publications and other productions

The "ICRC in Action", a publication meant mainly for Red Cross Societies and governments but also distributed to the press, appeared regularly throughout 1975, as did "Contact", a joint League-ICRC publication for the press services of National Societies.

On the occasion of the September collection among the Swiss public, the ICRC published an information leaflet entitled "The ICRC in 13 questions" of which more than a million copies were distributed to Swiss households.

Information to National Societies on current operations was accompanied by many photographs illustrating all the aspects of ICRC activities.

Apart from radio reports on current operations, the ICRC Broadcasting Service continued throughout 1975 to transmit a series of programmes meant mainly for the Third World and transmitted every two months on a frequency of 7,210 kHz, which is reserved for the Red Cross, and also over the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation's short wave frequencies via Swiss national transmitters.

Finally, a film entitled "In the beginning . . . Solferino", put together from records in the ICRC film library and the Swiss film library, was made by the ICRC and has been included in the catalogue of films that may be purchased or borrowed. It exists in Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish.

Public relations

The main instrument of ICRC public relations in Switzerland was the widely distributed leaflet, "The ICRC in 13 questions".

ICRC representatives took part in many Red Cross meetings organised in Switzerland by the Central Committee of the Swiss Red Cross or by local sections.

Headquarters was visited by 4,558 persons who attended 220 film shows. The film showing the activities and history of the ICRC was shown 177 times.