

# Interventions on behalf of victims of natural disasters

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Athens has for some years <sup>1</sup> been making X-ray tests to ascertain the number of detained and interned persons suffering from tuberculosis who require specific treatment. This action was successfully pursued in 1954 ; in addition the delegation supplied medicaments, especially antibiotics, to civilian hospitals and sick persons, and distributed foodstuffs and clothing donated by various organisations in Switzerland or abroad, or acquired locally with relief funds supplied by the ICRC.

During visits to camps, in Aghios Efstratios in particular, the delegate of the ICRC was able to converse freely with detained civilians ; he afterwards made suggestions for the improvement of their living conditions to the authorities concerned.

These interventions were of appreciable help in the medico-social campaign instituted by the authorities and the Greek Red Cross Society on behalf of the entire population.

The ICRC continued in 1954 the tracing of former Greek military personnel who were still in East European countries, of whom 211 were repatriated. It opened individual enquiries with several East European Red Cross Societies and sought the aid of those Societies for the reuniting of displaced families <sup>2</sup>.

On page 44 will be found the details of the relief supplies, amounting to Sw. Fr. 319,977, which were distributed in Greece by the ICRC delegation, in conjunction with the Greek Red Cross Society and the public authorities.

### **III. Interventions on behalf of victims of natural disasters**

#### **DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF SUPPLIES**

In so far as its means allowed, the ICRC associated itself in 1954 with the joint efforts on behalf of victims of floods and earthquakes made by the League and the National Societies of which

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<sup>1</sup> See *Reports on the work of the ICRC*. 1948, p. 100, 1949, p. 71, 1950, p. 65, 1951, p. 62, 1952, p. 45, 1953, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> See below, page 30.

it is the special concern to organise relief measures in such circumstances. The ICRC could not stand apart, however, since it had vehicles available in Geneva for immediate use, it sometimes disposed of the services of a delegate in the disaster area itself, and it was a question of extraordinary measures necessitated by the victims' extreme distress. A sum of Sw. Fr. 52,000 was devoted to the actions of which a summary is given below :

**Algeria.** — *Orleansville earthquake* : despatch of blankets to the French Red Cross, drawn partly from reserve stocks in Geneva and partly from stocks built up in Monaco, sent through the good offices of the Monaco Red Cross.

**Austria.** — *Danube floods* : transport of 1,000 blankets donated by the ICRC, and relief supplies from Swiss donors, by ICRC lorries ; distribution of the relief supplies to the Red Cross centres in disaster zones.

**Greece.** — *Thessaly earthquake* : distribution to the victims of relief in kind drawn from the ICRC stocks in Athens ; presentation of a cash donation from the International Federation of War Veterans Organisations.

**India.** — *Floods in West Bengal and Assam* : Despatch of relief in kind for the victims.

**Iraq.** — *Mesopotamia floods* : Despatch to victims of relief in kind, blankets, sheets and medico-surgical kits.

**Pakistan.** — *East Bengal floods* : Despatch of relief supplies to victims in Dacca.

## GENERAL SUMMARY OF RELIEF SUPPLIES

The table below gives a summary of the relief in cash or in kind distributed by the ICRC in 1954, in connection with its traditional work on behalf of war victims, or following special decisions motivated by post-war events and natural disasters. It gives a detailed list of beneficiaries in each country concerned, and the amount of the relief distributed, by weight or in value, for each category of the beneficiaries.

## RELIEF SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED IN 1954

*Remarks :* The figures in italics represent relief in cash. Weights are not indicated in the case of special relief items (special drugs, orthopaedic supplies, intellectual and individual relief, etc.)

COUNTRIES	BENEFICIARIES	TOTAL			
		By beneficiaries		By countries	
		Kgs.	Sw. Fr.	Kgs.	Sw. Fr.
AFGHANISTAN	Civilian population, adult and child victims of epidemics . . . . .	5	4,650	5	4,650
ALBANIA	War-disabled . . . . .	378	7,193		
	Greek military internees . . . . .	452	2,890	830	10,083
ALGERIA	Disaster victims . . . . .	3,000	23,750	3,000	23,750
AUSTRALIA	War-disabled . . . . .	7	2,600	7	2,600
AUSTRIA	Participation in relief action on behalf of Austrian prisoners of war . . . . .	1,180	2,800		
	War-disabled . . . . .	182	1,854		
		—	1,049		
	Civilian population . . . . .	85	723		
	Disaster victims . . . . .	1,800	12,500		
	" Volksdeutsche " amputees . . . . .	—	11,255		1,049
	Refugees . . . . .	64	1,309	3,311	30,441
BULGARIA	Civilian population . . . . .	5,566	129,057		
	War-disabled . . . . .	—	330	5,566	129,387
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	War-disabled . . . . .	—	108		
		—	152		
	Civilian population . . . . .	788	5,403	—	152
	German detainees . . . . .	3	21	791	5,532
FRANCE	War-disabled . . . . .	41	13,342		
		—	441	—	441
	Displaced persons . . . . .	1	2,108	42	15,450
GERMANY (Federal Republic)	War-disabled . . . . .	23	15,117		
		—	2,476		
	Disaster victims . . . . .	138	1,380		
	" Volksdeutsche " . . . . .	2,102	6,500		
		—	15,525		
	" Volksdeutsche " amputees . . . . .	—	12,865		
	Refugees . . . . .	2,506	25,373	—	18,001
	Disabled refugees . . . . .	—	414	4,769	61,649
GERMANY (Democratic Republic)	War-disabled . . . . .	4	2,120		
		—	279	—	279
	Civilian population . . . . .	161	1,961	165	4,081
GREECE	War-disabled . . . . .	—	1,123		
		—	971		
	Detained and exiled persons . . . . .	39,478	239,209		
	Detained amputees . . . . .	—	6,369		
	Civilian population . . . . .	34,949	67,015	—	971
	Disaster victims . . . . .	3,597	5,290	78,024	319,006
GUATEMALA	Disaster victims, political detainees . . . . .	32	16,558	32	16,558
HUNGARY	War-disabled . . . . .	—	781		
	Civilian population . . . . .	917	26,500		
	German detainees . . . . .	13	140	930	27,421
INDIA	Disaster victims . . . . .	176	4,744	176	4,744

COUNTRIES	BENEFICIARIES	TOTAL			
		By beneficiaries		By countries	
		Kgs.	Sw. Fr.	Kgs.	Sw. Fr.
INDO CHINA <sup>1</sup>	Prisoners and military internees . . . . .	500	6,819		
	Disabled prisoners of war . . . . .	—	435	500	7,254
IRAQ	Political detainees . . . . .	10	360		
	Disaster victims . . . . .	475	5,985	485	6,345
ITALY	War-disabled . . . . .	—	6		
			984		
	Tuberculous war victims . . . . .	2,526	25,494		
	Displaced persons (camps) . . . . .	336	2,200		984
	Trieste refugees . . . . .	116	3,025	2,978	30,725
JUGOSLAVIA	War-disabled . . . . .	9	3,660		
		—	753		
	Civilian population . . . . .	3	159		
	German detainees . . . . .	4	43	—	753
	Rumanian refugees . . . . .	46	280	62	4,142
LYBIA	War-disabled . . . . .	—	506	—	506
PAKISTAN	Disaster victims . . . . .	550	4,621	550	4,621
POLAND	War-disabled . . . . .	—	7,069		
	Civilian population . . . . .	1,521	58,432		
	" Volksdeutsche " . . . . .	670	3,312	2,191	68,813
RUMANIA	Civilian population . . . . .	46	888		
	" Volksdeutsche " . . . . .	16	160	62	1,048
SPAIN	Refugees . . . . .	—	1,004		
		—	626		626
	Aid to emigrants . . . . .		8,621		9,625
SWITZERLAND	Disabled refugees . . . . .	12	252		
		—	1,150		
	Trieste refugees under treatment in Leysin			—	1,150
		500	18,182	512	18,434
U.S.S.R.	Civilian population . . . . .	390	2,750		
	Detained persons :				
	German . . . . .	3,257	27,395		
	Austrian . . . . .	1,044	8,886		
	Spanish . . . . .	669	5,621		
	Hungarian . . . . .	781	6,567		
	Japanese . . . . .	2,241	18,838		
	Rumanian . . . . .	614	5,161		
	Other nationalities . . . . .	1,302	10,930	10,298	86,148
VENEZUELA	Refugees . . . . .	—	91	—	91
OTHER COUNTRIES : BRAZIL, UNITED KINGDOM, SAAR, etc.	War-disabled . . . . .	—	72	50	2,031
	Civilian population . . . . .	—	49	—	49
	Relief in cash . . . . .				24,455
	Relief in kind (weights and value) . . . . .			115,336	895,135
	Total value of relief . . . . .			115,336	919,590
	Value of relief donated by the ICRC . . . . .			76,775	606,968
	Value of relief entrusted to the ICRC for distribution . . . . .			38,561	312,622
	GRAND TOTAL . . . . .			115,336	919,590

<sup>1</sup> In addition the ICRC supervised the distribution of relief supplies placed at the disposal of refugees in Indo China by UNICEF, representing a value of 202,000 Swiss francs.



The scale of distributions was lower in 1954 than in former years, but the total is still considerable. The value of the relief supplied by the ICRC, and that entrusted to its care by third parties for the purpose of distribution, amounted to Sw. Fr. 919,590, as against Sw. Fr. 1,193,285 in the previous year.

The decrease was not general however ; in comparison with the diminution ascertained in practically all instances, it will nevertheless be seen that a considerable increase occurred in three countries, i.e., Bulgaria – Sw. Fr. 105,641 to 129,387 : Italy – Sw. Fr. 9,519 to 31,700 : USSR – Sw. Fr. 10,819 to 86,148, the respective increases being Sw. Fr. 24,000, 21,000 and 76,000, as compared to the previous year.

The operations were carried out in over 29 countries, occasionally in conjunction with delegations and in all cases through the technical services in Geneva which deal with the purchase, despatch and verification of relief supplies. National Red Cross Societies lent their assistance, and the work was facilitated by the understanding attitude of public authorities, and the efforts of persons of good will, which show the confidence placed in the International Committee's action.

## **IV. Central Prisoners of War Agency**

### **1. GENERAL REMARKS**

In 1954 the International Committee's investigations concerning war victims necessitated an exchange of correspondence amounting to 152,161 letters, telegrams and other documents. Photostat copies were made of 7,000 items (certificates of births, marriages and deaths, lists, etc.). The greater part of the Central Agency's work concerns missing military personnel, and prisoners of war whose trace has been lost since the close of hostilities. As in previous years the ICRC dealt with the transmission of family messages and private documents (certificates and extracts of births, marriages and deaths, certificates of captivity, etc.) and the return