

Africa

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I. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

AFRICA

Algeria

After seven long years of fighting, the year 1962 was marked by the cease-fire in Algeria, followed by that country's independence.

This event was inevitably going to raise new and formidable humanitarian problems. However, for the ICRC it was a new important stage in its relief actions on behalf of the victims of conflict. Indeed, as from February 1955, the first ICRC mission, thanks to the authorisation of the French Government, was able to proceed to Algeria in order to visit camps and prisons, to examine the conditions of detention and to make, if necessary, the appropriate suggestions for improvements.

Since then, the ICRC had to send nine other missions to Algeria. It tried to bring relief to the victims of events on both sides, extending its aid not only to military and civilian detainees, but also, ever since 1957 until the League took over this action in 1958, to scores of thousands of Algerian refugees in Morocco and in Tunisia, and next to the people, who, as a result of the hostilities, were concentrated in zones of regroupment. The ICRC also launched relief actions on behalf of prisoners and internees on French territory and in the last phase of the conflict, in favour of detained activists in Algeria and France. During all these years of fighting, it also undertook numerous investigations in attempts to trace missing persons, but, unfortunately, often without success.

The sum total of different relief programmes, distributed and transmitted by the ICRC amounted to 6,311,000 Swiss francs.

But the balance of efforts made, investigations undertaken, risks assumed by the ICRC and its delegates in attempting to bring relief to innumerable victims of conflict, cannot be expressed in figures. It was an activity which, in spite of the enormous difficulties it faced, resulted without doubt in saving a great number of lives and in bringing valuable comfort to many among those to whom the ICRC had extended its solicitude.¹

Aid to Prisoners and Internees

Detainees in French hands. During the weeks preceding the signing of the Evian Agreements and the enforcement of the cease-fire, the ICRC continued its activity mainly in the prisons and internment camps in Algeria and France.

In Algeria the ICRC naturally persisted in its efforts for improving conditions of internment. As soon as the report of the ninth mission was handed over to the French Government, Mr. Pierre Gaillard, Head of the Mission, and Mr. Pierre Boissier, Delegate of the ICRC in Paris, had a meeting with senior officials of the French Government, in particular with some members of the Penal Administration, in order to discuss the following-up of the suggestions made in the report. And, from mid-February, the ICRC started a new series of visits to Algeria. In the course of this tenth mission, which was essentially devoted to visiting activist prisoners and internees of European origin, Mr. Pierre Gaillard and Mr. Roger Vust, Permanent Delegate in Algeria, were received at Rocher Noir by Mr. Christian Fouchet, French High Commissioner. They also had talks with Mr. Aberrahman Farès, Head of the Algerian Provisional Executive, and with Dr. Hamidou, representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

These talks gave the ICRC Delegates the opportunity of studying the most urgent problems which faced them or were going to confront them, especially in the large towns of Algeria. From May 25th on, Mr. Michel Martin, one of the ICRC Delegates,

¹ A complete description of this activity can be found in the pamphlet published in 1962 by the Information Department called: "The ICRC and the Algerian conflict."

visited another nine places of detention—i.e. the camps of Beni Messous, the Police School of Hussein Dey and Tefeschoun, as well as the prisons of Tizi-Ouzou and Maison-Carrée, the hospital of Rouiba, the Transit Camp of Lycée Ardaillon and the Arcole Camp. He also went to the Military Internment Centre of Kzar Thir, where another thousand Moslem prisoners were held, who had been captured with their arms and had not yet been released.

As in previous years, the activity of the ICRC delegates was also extended to detainees belonging to the FLN and to interned French activists in France. They also visited the prisons of Grandes et Petites Baumettes, the internment camp of Thol, and the administrative camp of Larzac. During the second fortnight in February a round was made of the prisons of Périgueux, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Foix and Montauban and the penal centre of Manzac (detainees of the “ Mouvement National Algérien ”). Further, the ICRC continued to transfer to the Social Welfare Fund for Algerians detained in France and Algeria, amounts entrusted to it for that purpose.

The Evian Agreements and the fate of Prisoners.—Article II of the Evian Agreements provided for a delay of twenty days, as from March 19, during which the parties concerned would undertake to release their prisoners and to inform the ICRC of the place of their internment and “ of all the measures taken in view of their release ”. On the date of expiry, the French Authorities had notified the ICRC of the place of detention of 3,600 FLN prisoners, who had been captured under arms, including 115 interned persons, held in camps in South Algeria. They also informed the ICRC of the measures taken for the release of these prisoners and for their return to their homes. At the beginning of the month of April, the release operations had already started.

Prisoners in Algerian hands.—On their side, and in response to the uninterrupted proceedings of the ICRC, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic freed three French Army prisoners, who had been captured during the operations at the fortified barrage along the Algero-Tunisian frontier in spring 1961. These three prisoners belonged to a group of which two had been handed

over to an ICRC representative in Tunis at the end of December 1961. Two other French Army men captured at Klaa in Kabylie in February 1961 were set free by the ALN (Armée de Libération Nationale) and handed over to the local Armistice Commission. Four other releases were effected in Morocco in June. Finally, about twenty legionaries of different European origin were also set at liberty and immediately repatriated with the help of their respective consulates.

Among the enquiries opened, 594 cases concerning 330 French Army men and 264 civilians reported missing at one or the other time during the conflict or assumed to have been made prisoners by the FLN, have up to now had no results.

Aid to Civilian Victims of Events

Regrouped populations: The ICRC is maintaining its aid to regrouped populations up to the end of spring 1963; an aid which, since 1959, had been forever increasing and had continued to do so right through the years of 1960 and 1961. Immediately after the independence of Algeria the League of Red Cross Societies and other organizations took over. The relief directed to Algeria by the ICRC was distributed through the intermediary of the French Red Cross and its mobile teams, often accompanied by ICRC Delegates (Mr. Muralti and Mr. de Heller). These supplies consisted of 320 tons of powdered milk, 17 tons of cheese and 37 tons of sugar. In addition 5,000 tons of different foodstuffs which were American surplus stocks had been remitted to distribution teams through the intermediary of the ICRC. Finally, mention should be made of the consignment of various relief materials (kachabias for children, soap, eye-drops, flour mixed with milk and vitamins), of a value amounting to 3,000 francs.

Emergency medical action.—The declaration of the cease-fire, on March 19, unfortunately did not put an end to outbreaks of violence. In the main towns, the attacks were multiplied and neither the civilian population nor the sick under treatment in

hospitals were spared. The strict separation between the Moslem and European quarters in the large towns soon raised very serious problems from the medical and nursing points of view. The Permanent Delegate of the ICRC in Algiers, Mr. R. Vust, endeavoured to re-establish the freedom of circulation for doctors and the re-opening of pharmacies, but the seriousness of the situation soon forced the ICRC to send out a medical team which, under the leadership of Dr. de Chastonay, Chief Medical Officer, set up its headquarters in Relizane on May 26 (Dr. Foletti, surgeon) and in Oran (Dr. R. A. Egli, Dr. U. Denzler) as from May 30. Dr. de Chastonay distributed medical equipment for blood transfusion centres, medicaments, antibiotics, vaccines and medical equipment, as well as a considerable quantity of milk of an overall value exceeding 125,000 Swiss francs. The ICRC had already previously sent important emergency consignments, comprising blood plasma and blood transfusion equipment in particular, partly provided by the Swedish and Italian Red Cross. The French Red Cross also sent relief to Dr. Egli.

For over a month, the ICRC doctors often worked under difficult conditions, but rendered all the same highly appreciated services. They organized a blood transfusion equipment centre in Oran and undertook very delicate operations. Towards the end of the year the Swiss Confederation, through the intermediary of the ICRC, made a gift to the Mustapha hospital in Algiers of a stock of 143 kgs of antibiotics.

Investigations of the ICRC on behalf of missing persons after the cease-fire.—Since the cease-fire and during the period of the outrages committed by the OAS, the disappearances and kidnapping of persons of European origin had multiplied in Algeria. The French Red Cross and the ICRC Delegates were assailed by pressing demands. The latter immediately undertook further investigations. Thus, Mr. Vust, Permanent Delegate in Algiers, met Mr. Abderrahman Farès, President of the Provisional Executive, and numerous French and Algerian personalities. On August 22, Mr. Jacques de Heller, Assistant Delegate, was received by Mr. Ben Bella, President of the Political Bureau, and informed him

of the ICRC's preoccupations over these disappearances. Besides the usual tracing procedures, the ICRC resorted to the practice, frequent during the Second World War, of sending out radio appeals. Regular transmissions were made in French and Arabic on the France V wavelength.

Finally, on September 13, two ICRC delegates, Mr. J. J. Muralti and Mr. J. Gasser, were present when the prisoners of Maison-Carrée, near Algiers, consisting of 25 European nationals on whose behalf they had intervened for several weeks, were set at liberty. On September 17, the same delegates had been authorized to visit the 34 European detainees of Maison-Carrée. They were able to talk freely with them, without the presence of a witness and to draw up a nominal roll, which was forwarded to the French Authorities. The respective families, on their side, received the messages which were intended for them. On September 25, the Algerian Authorities handed a new list of Europeans recently arrested and interned in Maison-Carrée to the ICRC Delegation in Algiers with the authorization to pay them a visit; that same day the ICRC delegates were present when 7 European detainees were released.

Except for the cases which we have mentioned, the investigations which were undertaken, did not produce any results. The number of missing persons remained quite high, approximately 1,500. Although the Permanent Delegate of the ICRC in Algiers often followed up the tracing of missing persons by personally visiting the areas where the disappearances had been notified and although the ICRC and its delegates intervened in a most pressing manner, by repeatedly approaching the most senior political officials and although the population was requested by broadcasts to give information in order to facilitate the investigations, these, in the majority of cases, met with no success. It was not until the beginning of 1963, as a result of an agreement between the French and Algerian Governments, that the ICRC has been able to take new measures in tracing missing persons.

Detained "Ex-Harkis".—At the beginning of October, shortly after the new Algerian Government was installed, an ICRC mission went to Algiers to establish contact with the Algerian Authorities.

During their talks, Mr. Gaillard and Mr. Vust broached the question of the former Moslem Auxiliaries in the French Forces (Harkis) detained in various prisons and internment camps. They made a request for the authorization of ICRC Delegates to visit them. On November 7, the ICRC approached the Head of State personally to impress on him the Committee's desire to carry out its humanitarian mission in favour of this category of victims of conflict. Later on, further steps were taken of a similar nature, which came to a conclusion at the beginning of 1963.

Mission to Central and Sub-Equatorial Africa

The rapid political and social evolution in most of the African countries sometimes gives rise to serious troubles. There are often numerous victims as much among the Armed Forces as among the civilian population. The ICRC attends to them with all the more interest as the essential principles of humanitarian rights—and especially the Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of war victims—seem still to be very little known in many of these countries. Besides, the action of the Red Cross on behalf of the victims of conflicts of all kinds often meets with numerous and varied obstacles.

Faced with this situation, the ICRC charged one of its members, Mr. Samuel Gonard, with the mission of studying the conditions in some of the countries and territories of Central Africa. Mr. Gonard, accompanied by Mr. Georges Hoffmann, the ICRC delegate, in February and March visited the following countries : the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Ruanda-Urundi, Congo-Léopoldville, and Congo-Brazzaville. The aim of the mission was to study the means by which a certain protection could be ensured without any distinction, especially of race, to military and civilian victims of international or internal conflicts which might occur in Africa, as well as to examine the possibilities of Red Cross action on behalf of the victims of these conflicts. The observations and conclusions of this mission were intended for the use of the ICRC exclusively. As a result of this mission the latter decided to set up a General Delegation for Sub-Equatorial Africa,

with headquarters in Salisbury (Southern Rhodesia). Mr. G. Hoffmann, ICRC delegate, who was part of the above-mentioned mission, was appointed Delegate General. He took up his post at the beginning of 1963.

Mission in West Africa

At the invitation of the Togolese Red Cross Society, which had organised the " World Day of the Red Cross " in Lomé to celebrate May 8, the ICRC sent Mr. François de Reynold, Head of the Liaison Section, as its representative. He received a warm welcome in the Togolese capital where the National Red Cross, officially recognized in September 1961 by the ICRC, is engaged in fruitful activities and enjoys wide public support.

Mr. de Reynold made use of this opportunity to visit three other countries in West Africa, Senegal, the Ivory Coast and Guinea. He was everywhere extremely well received and noticed that these young African States take a keen interest in the idea of the Red Cross. In Senegal, and on the Ivory Coast, he met leading personalities of the National Societies, and in Guinea, the Authorities assured him that they had every intention of encouraging the formation of a National Red Cross in the near future.

Congo

Enquiries into the death of G. Olivet.—It is known that on December 13, 1961, Georges Olivet, Delegate of the ICRC, was killed in Elisabethville during the fighting between the opposing forces of the United Nations and Katanga troops. With him two voluntary aids, Mrs. Nicole Vroonen and Mr. Styts Smeding, also met their deaths. It was only on December 23 that their bodies were found, buried a few yards from the burnt-out ambulance, marked with the protective emblem of the red cross, on a secondary road on the outskirts of Elisabethville. As a result of this tragic event, the ICRC and the United Nations decided by common consent to entrust an independent and neutral Commission with

the task of making a thorough enquiry. This Commission consisted of the following: Judge Björn Kjellin, President of the Court of Appeal at Malmö (Sweden), Colonel Hans Roost, Officer Instructor to the Swiss Army in Lucerne. With the co-operation of the Katanga Authorities and the United Nations, the Commission finished its work in Elisabethville by February 10, and then continued at the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Vienna, where the bodies had been placed for examination.

On June 8, the Commission's report was officially submitted to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to the United Nations. These two institutions officially thanked the members of the Commission for their outstanding work and paid tribute to the professional thoroughness with which they had accomplished their task.

Prisoners and detainees.—Throughout the entire year, the ICRC kept its Delegation in the Congo (Leopoldville) thus complying with the wish expressed both by the Congolese Authorities and the United Nations Force in the Congo. Consequently the ICRC has been in a position to realize its humanitarian action on behalf of military prisoners and political detainees. Mr. J. de Preux, Delegate of the ICRC, on several occasions visited persons captured by the United Nations Forces at the time of the fighting in Elisabethville and succeeded in obtaining various improvements in their conditions of internment. The United Nations finally decided to release the Katangese Army troops who had fallen into their hands, and the Katangese Forces followed suit by releasing at the beginning of the year 1,500 men of the U.N. Forces whom they had captured.

The European military prisoners captured by UN forces were in turn set free at the end of 1962. However, the fighting which broke out once more in Elisabethville, at the end of that same year, led to further captures. Furthermore Mr. G. C. Senn, Delegate of the ICRC, who had replaced Mr. Georges Olivet, killed whilst accomplishing his mission, made numerous and often successful efforts as much in Elisabethville as in Albertville, on behalf of victims of the clashes between the Katangese Forces on the one side and UN Forces and the Congolese National Army on the other side. In

August Mr. Senn paid a visit to approximately one hundred Katangese Army personnel in Stanleyville, on whose behalf Mr. de Preux had already intervened by approaching General Lundula, during the month of April.

Mr. Senn further rendered a visit, also in August, to the island of Bulambemba, near Matadi, to see Mr. Antoine Gizenga, whose fate had preoccupied the ICRC for some months past.

The Delegate also took part in the work of one of the UN's Commissions; its object was to repatriate 25,000 Baluba refugees from Elisabethville to Kasai. Besides, thanks to the repeated efforts of Mrs. J. Egger, ICRC Representative in Leopoldville, the Congolese Authorities released a certain number of political detainees.

Rhodesia and Nyasaland-Burundi.

Mr. G. C. Senn, Permanent Delegate of the ICRC in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, visited Salisbury prison in March, where a group of persons were detained as a result of the disturbances. In September he was able to make similar visits in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The same delegate called on the prison of Usumbura in Burundi in November. On each occasion, Mr. Senn made suggestions to the detaining authorities with a view to improving conditions of internment.

FAR EAST AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Laos.

On December 18, 1961, the ICRC sent a memorandum to various National Societies, which followed up the first appeal launched on August 11 of the same year, on behalf of the Laotian people, sorely tried by the hostilities. At the same time, it decided to continue its activity in that country, at least until the end of the summer of 1962. It finally carried out its humanitarian action in Laos up to 1963. The situation was indeed constantly alarming, in particular