



**REVUE
INTERNATIONALE
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE**

SUPPLEMENT

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DANISH RED CROSS ACTIVITY IN GREENLAND

By an amendment to the Danish Constitution of the 5th of June, 1953, the colonial status of Greenland was abolished, and the island is now an integral part of the kingdom of Denmark. Its status was recognized by the United Nations in 1954. However, owing to the singular conditions there is still special legislation for Greenland providing for the customs and usages of the population.

Up to about 30 years ago the Greenlanders lived almost exclusively as seal-hunters, but due to a perceptible climatic change—the rising temperature of the sea-water—the number of seals was reduced so that seal-hunting no longer was to form the basis of the inhabitants' existence. However, the change of climate also brought about a large increase in the fish stock so that fishing naturally became the main trade of the Greenland population. This radical change-over of the trading conditions actually led to a reconstruction of the community, i.e. from being a community of seal-hunters whose daily necessities were partially covered by their providing their own hunting, the Greenlanders have now had to switch over to an economy based on money and to some extent dependent on the world market. One of the consequences was that a number of problems, particularly in health and social fields, which had always existed, now became so vital that a rapid rational solution was urgent.

Thus, in 1950 legislation was passed under which a series of

important reforms were to be carried out as soon as possible with the object of fostering trade and industry, education, state of health and social welfare (housing) of the inhabitants. Also their political rights and organisations were extended. The administrative organisation of the Greenland Health Service was determined by Act of the 27th May, 1950.

Eight years have now passed since the passing of these acts, and already considerable results have been achieved. Within the Health Service it may be stated that a number of new hospitals have been built and older ones have been modernized or rebuilt. Since 1950 the number of beds has risen from 342 to 700, of which 200 are found in the new tuberculosis sanatorium at Godthaab. This figure is quite impressive for a population of about 28.000.

The health campaign has been effective and good results have already been obtained. In 1950 the death rate in Greenland was 25,5‰; in 1956 14,6‰. In 1951 the infant mortality was 137‰, and in 1955 78‰. Especially the combat against TB has been extensive and energetic. BCG vaccination has been carried through. An X-ray-boat, the *Missigssut*, specially built for this purpose, was given to the Health Service thanks to a special drive started by their Majesties, the King and Queen, in 1952. The *Missigssut* has now visited all the stations along the west coast of Greenland, whereby it has been possible to detect all cases of TB at an early stage, and at once to give medical treatment to such patients. The outcome of this concentrated work is a fall in TB mortality from 43% in 1950 to 17% in 1955 out of the total number of deaths in Greenland. Yet, there are many problems to tackle in the fight against TB. A favourable post-treatment is naturally to a great extent dependent on housing conditions; further, an effective revalidation and, where possible, a shifting to other occupations, still demand great efforts if a satisfactory result is to be achieved.

As will appear from the above account the Danish Government has undertaken the solution of the sanitary problems in Greenland. However, the Government has also called upon

private institutions to take up such tasks in health and social fields as cannot at present be carried out by the Government. Already for a number of years the Danish Red Cross has supported privately-run children's sanatoria for special care of tuberculous and scrofulous children, by defraying the salary of a Red Cross nurse employed as head of the institutions in question.

In 1946-47 the Central Committee of the Danish Red Cross realized that special aid was required in Greenland. So a Greenland Committee was set up to attend to Greenland problems. In 1949 a member of the committee, who was a Danish doctor familiar with Greenland conditions, was sent on a mission to Greenland to find out which major tasks could be recommended to the Danish Red Cross for their solution. According to the doctor's report it was proposed first and foremost to establish 3 orphans' homes, secondly to start a comprehensive campaign for educational work. Accordingly, in 1950 the Danish Red Cross agreed to build two orphans' homes in Greenland, and for this purpose a sum of 700.000 D.Kr. was set aside. The planning was immediately started, and as early as in 1952 the opening of the first home, accommodating 22 children, took place at Godthaab, the largest town of Greenland. In 1955 a similar orphans' home was built at Egedesminde. Later the establishing of a third orphans' home was decided by the Danish Red Cross which home was inaugurated in 1958 at Julianehaab in the southernmost part of Greenland. All the homes are equipped with up-to-date sanitary installations. While the building of the first Red Cross orphans' home was almost entirely financed by money raised by the Red Cross, the other two were erected by financial aid from other sources, particularly from the funds originating from the drive sponsored by the King and Queen as mentioned above. However, the Danish Red Cross has invested altogether nearly 1 million Kroner in Greenland activities; moreover, the running of the homes claims a considerable annual contribution from the Red Cross, even though part of the expenses is covered by governmental and municipal means. For several years a Red Cross collection of used stamps has been going on in Denmark. The stamps are sold and the proceeds

cover part of the working expenses connected with operating the three orphans' homes. Moreover, the Empress Shôken Fund has placed highly welcome means at the disposal of the latest orphans' home at Julianehaab for the purchase of furniture and equipment, likewise the Red Cross branches in Denmark have given considerable amounts towards the fitting up of this home.

The administration of the orphans' homes is supervised by a special Board appointed by the Danish Red Cross Central Committee and directed from the Red Cross national headquarters in Copenhagen. Each home employs a Danish nurse as matron and she is in charge of the daily routine work. Her assistant is a Danish children's nurse or kindergarten teacher, while the rest of the staff are Greenland women. Medical supervision is undertaken by the local medical officer. The children's homes admit children aged from 3 to 14 years, preferably orphans, or such children who for other reasons might be in need of special care. Even though the normal capacity of the homes ranges from 22 to 24 children, they have at times had to take up to 27, whereby they have met an urgent need for temporary accommodation of children whose mothers, or whose parents, have been in hospital for treatment of tuberculosis in Greenland or in Denmark. There is no doubt that, indirectly these homes act as an aid to the TB campaign. Apart from ordinary colds and children's diseases, the children's state of health has been extraordinarily good. No special frequency of certain diseases has been ascertained even though the children, like the other inhabitants, are more susceptible to diseases brought into the country on account of the highly increased traffic with countries abroad. Thus in 1956 the children succumbed to the serious influenza epidemic which ravaged Greenland and which could be traced back to a boat that had arrived in May of that year. As regards the children there were luckily no complications, even if 'flu up there seems to involve the risk of a recurrence of an inactive TB to a greater extent than the grave epidemics of measles which have also afflicted Greenland.

The matron and her Danish assistant take care that the children become acquainted with Danish culture, on the under-

standing, of course, that they are always in close contact with their own language and culture. They go to the local schools where those who are specially good at Danish have a chance to frequent classes where the teaching is mainly done in Danish. There is no direct teaching at the homes except for assistance with home work, or the like. During their leisure time the children are occupied in various ways so as to prepare them for a future life in Greenland trade or industry. They have hobby rooms, and the boys have a chance to go fishing. One of the homes has a boat, and at the northernmost home, Egedesminde, they do sledge driving, there being a sledge and a dog team available.

As will appear from the above, everything possible has been done to give these children a good chance later to join the Greenland community as skilful and useful citizens, and time and again the inhabitants have expressed their satisfaction that it is just the Danish Red Cross that has taken up this significant social task.

In the medico-social field the Danish Red Cross has contributed also in other ways. In 1947, before the carrying through of the social measures proposed by the Government, the Red Cross placed a large amount at the disposal of the district medical officers so as to allow them, at their discretion, to render immediate aid for which there was otherwise no possibility to get the necessary funds.

The educational work among the population is a highly significant and urgent task which had to be carried out. In 1947 the Danish Red Cross published a First Aid book with text in Greenlandic, later to be supplemented with a similar edition in Danish. These books proved most valuable as a number of courses have been held in the following years, which have undoubtedly been a great help in diffusing knowledge of health and hygiene. The first edition is now nearly out of print, so a second is in preparation. These books are also used in classes given in hospitals and secondary schools.

Educational work in the schools was also carried out over a number of years with success by the Junior Red Cross in close

THE DANISH RED CROSS ACTIVITY IN GREENLAND

cooperation with the authorities. Comprehensive material was published with the object of teaching children the most elementary rules of health and hygiene. In cooperation with the Danish National Health Service a leaflet with Greenlandic text was published as a guide for pregnant women. In 1954 the Danish Red Cross issued another text-book "Child Care and Nursing in the Homes" with text in Danish and Greenlandic, and this book is also widely used at courses. For the sake of completion it may be mentioned that Red Cross First Aid Units have been established in various places, and here much energy is displayed to train their own members and to teach the population to understand the great importance of the Red Cross to humanity.

Finally, many Danish doctors now working in Greenland have enthusiastically appreciated and assisted the work performed by the Red Cross. The Chief Medical Officer in Greenland also takes a great interest in its activities, and acts as adviser and representative of the Danish Red Cross in all the tasks assumed in Greenland.

G. N. BUGGE

Vice-Chairman of the Danish Red Cross
and Chairman
of the Danish Red Cross Greenland Committee

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

COMMENTARY

on

THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION OF 1949

In 1956, the International Committee of the Red Cross published in French a *Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention of August 12, 1949, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*. An English translation of this work, comprising 660 pages, is now available; it was prepared by the late Major R. Griffin and Mr. C.W. Dumbleton.

Members of the staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross worked on this Commentary for several years, under the general editorship of Mr. Jean S. Pictet, Doctor of Laws, Director for General Affairs and the author of a number of publications concerning the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions.

This is the second to appear in the series of Commentaries; that on the First Convention was published by the ICRC in 1952; but whereas the first Commentary drew on the fruits of long experience of the application of an existing Convention—the first Geneva Convention of August 22, 1864, which was revised and supplemented in 1906, 1929 and 1949—the present one concerns an entirely new Convention, and although its provisions are related to the experience gained in two world wars, they have not yet been implemented as rules of law. Yet at the present time seventy-five States have ratified or acceded to the Convention and are bound by its provisions.

It was therefore appropriate that a systematic study should be made of the 159 Articles which make up this Convention,

and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which prepared the first draft taken by the authors of the Convention as a basis for their work, was particularly well qualified to undertake it.

The principal authors are Mr. Oscar M. Uhler, Doctor of Laws and former member of the Legal Department of the ICRC, and Mr. Henri Coursier, Doctor of Laws and member of the Legal Department. Mr. Uhler has published a noteworthy thesis on occupation law, and Mr. Coursier acted as secretary to the Commission of Experts convened by the ICRC in 1947 to draw up a draft Convention, and was subsequently secretary of the Committee of the 1949 Diplomatic Conference which drew up the final text.

Other persons also contributed to the Commentary. Some of them are named : Mr. F. SiorDET, Vice-President of the ICRC, who wrote the commentary on the Articles common to the four Conventions, Mr. C. Pilloud, Assistant Director for General Affairs, who dealt particularly with the question of penal sanctions, Mr. R. Boppe, and Mr. J.-P. Schoenholzer, who dealt mainly with the Articles concerning the Central Agency and relief societies. Contributions were also made by others whose names do not appear, such as Mr. R.-J. Wilhelm and Mr. J. de Preux, who are also members of the Legal Department of the ICRC and assisted in preparing the commentary on corresponding provisions of the two Conventions.

The purpose of this Commentary is not only to clarify the letter of the text, if necessary, but also—and more important—to facilitate its application if and when the occasion arises, by bringing out the spirit of the Convention. To this end, it constitutes a doctrine which is not strictly speaking that of the ICRC, since each of the authors of the Commentary remains personally responsible for his conclusions, but it was prepared under the auspices of the International Committee and reflects the guiding principles of the latter's activity.

In law, the Powers which have signed and ratified a treaty are alone responsible for its interpretation. In the event of any dispute concerning the scope of the provisions of the Convention,

the Commentary would therefore not constitute an authentic basis for settling the matter; in fact however, the International Committee was well qualified to undertake this task by virtue of its own experience, its long-standing humanitarian traditions, the confidence which it enjoys and its participation in the technical work of preparing the draft Convention; and at the very least, the Commentary may be usefully consulted by those who may be called upon to interpret the text of the Convention.

Turning from the strict legal aspect, however, to the innumerable practical problems which may arise in the daily application of the Convention in time of conflict, one realizes that those responsible for applying it need a guide, be it only to enable them to refer easily to any particular clause and to know exactly how the provisions complement each other. This is where a work such as the Commentary is particularly useful; it prevents waste of time spent in vainly searching through the Convention, and throws light on this very detailed instrument.

Constant references are made in the Commentary to the preparatory work and the records of the Conference, and it may enable certain gaps in the text to be filled; in any case, it expresses the intentions of the authors of the Convention. Moreover, it frequently refers to solutions adopted during two world wars, after the International Committee had approached the belligerents; these constitute precedents which may, by analogy, help to solve difficult cases.

Considering the novelty of the Fourth Convention and its tremendous scope, it would be no matter for surprise if, despite the care with which the plenipotentiaries drew up its various provisions, unforeseen cases were to arise which were not specifically covered. The letter of the text must then be complemented by its spirit, and here the Commentary may be of great value.

The XVIIth International Red Cross Conference, held at Stockholm in 1948, stated that the draft Conventions, and in particular the Fourth Convention "correspond to the fundamental aspirations of the peoples of the world and... define the essential rules for that protection to which every human being is entitled". Two world wars, and particularly the second, have

shown how problematical respect for the person still is in times of crisis, despite the progress of civilization. The unleashing of passion and power resulted in massacres, deportation, torture—in short, a host of crimes against humanity which international conscience wished to outlaw.

In this spirit, the Fourth Convention took into account suggestions and experiences aimed at restoring respect for the person, which is the fundamental concept and *raison d'être* of humanitarian law: the protection of civilian hospitals and medical personnel; safety zones; passage through blockades for consignments of food and medical supplies intended for the civilian population; prohibition of the taking of hostages, deportation, pillage, torture, biological experiments not necessitated by the medical treatment of the person concerned; detailed regulations governing conditions of internment; repression of war crimes; the absence of any provision in international law on all these matters made itself cruelly felt during two world wars.

These concepts are now recognized, but if they are to be respected and respect is to be ensured for them, they must be well known. The Commentary on the Fourth Convention, though long, is nevertheless perhaps too brief for this purpose. Much remains to be said, and many more comments will be needed before that result can be firmly established in international life.

In particular, it is important that the Convention should be studied by many people in many countries, and the Commentary may be a useful guide for them.

Historically speaking, the Red Cross was born in Western Europe, but its action is absolutely independent of any purely national consideration of any religious denomination. Its efforts are addressed to everyone, in every part of the world—it is universal. It receives support from every sector of the globe, and proof of this may be seen in the articles published in the *Revue internationale* in the past few years, by authors with the most varied ethnic origin and philosophical background. There is no doubt that if the Commentary on the Fourth Convention

which is of interest to all mankind—could arouse comments and remarks such as would emphasize or enhance its universal character, the whole Red Cross movement—which includes the Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Red Lion and Sun Societies—could not but gain thereby.

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

Lectures on Henry Dunant and the Red Cross. — *The Swiss National "Henry Dunant" Committee is pursuing actively its efforts to collect funds for the erection of two monuments in memory of the man who inspired the Red Cross movement, one in Geneva and the other at Heiden in the Appenzell Canton where Henry Dunant spent the last years of his life.*

As part of the programme organised for the purpose of arousing the general public's interest in the project, three lectures were given at Geneva University on February 24, and March 3 and 10, under the auspices of that Committee.

The first lecture was given by Professor P. Geisendorf of Geneva University who spoke of Henry Dunant's life and recalled the circumstances which led to the foundation of the Red Cross movement.

The next lecture was given by Mr. L. Boissier, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who defined the principles of our institution, emphasised the essential principles of the four Geneva Conventions and gave a general survey of the work of the ICRC.

The third lecture was given by Mr. B. de Rougé, Honorary Vice-President of the League of Red Cross Societies, who explained the tasks which devolve upon National Societies, and the role and work of the League.

The Work of the Central Agency. — *During 1958 the Central Prisoners of War Agency received 104,129 postal items and despatched 93,301. It dealt with 113,928 cases and opened 35,482 enquiries with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ministries, register offices, municipal offices, etc.*

With the exception of the enquiries, these figures are lower than those for 1957, which is mainly due to a decrease in the work of the Hungarian Section. In most of the other Agency sections, however, the volume of work was practically the same as in the previous year. In the German, French, Yugoslav and Stateless Persons Sections the incoming mail showed an increase.

The various sections of the Agency have one feature in common, namely the increasingly complex nature of the cases dealt with, and in particular those concerning the Second World War. Although the conflict ended thirteen years ago, official bureaux and private individuals still apply for the Agency's assistance in settling cases which, after so many years, present great difficulties. In general these applications necessitate a careful study of the case, followed by a thorough search in the Agency card-indexes and files, as well as the opening of numerous enquiries with the various authorities concerned. It is nevertheless encouraging to note the steady increase in the number of successful results of these enquiries which is due to the more and more efficient co-operation of the National Societies and authorities in the various countries.

The Agency's principal task is still concerned with searches for information concerning the missing of armed forces in the Second World War and later conflicts, correspondence with authorities to obtain death certificates and particulars of the graves of deceased combatants and prisoners of war, the establishment of certificates of captivity, etc. Furthermore, as already stated on several occasions, the Agency makes every effort to trace innumerable civilians who disappeared in the post-war period and during the Korean conflict.

Visits to the ICRC headquarters. — *The diplomatic representatives who visited the International Committee's headquarters during the past two months included Mr. Seraphim M. Sousline, Second-Secretary of the USSR Embassy in Berne and Mr. Dimov,*

Attaché to the Office of the Bulgarian Representative in Geneva to the United Nations. Mr. A.S. Mehta, Consul-General, the new Permanent Representative of India in Geneva, also called on the President of the International Committee.

The ICRC had the pleasure of receiving Miss Callou, Secretary-General of the International Committee of Catholic Nurses and Medico-Social Workers, and the following members of National Societies passing through Geneva: Miss Sarah Forssner, Director of the Swedish Junior Red Cross, Mr. Mimoun Boukhrissi, Secretary of the Red Crescent Section in Rabat and Director of the Rabat Central Nursing School, and Mrs. Topsy Molstad, President of the Child Welfare Section of the Norwegian Red Cross. On February 10 a group of Swiss journalists who take special interest in the institution's work were the guests of the ICRC.

For the past few weeks several persons have discussed with the directorate of the ICRC the matter of Koreans residing in Japan.

The President of the ICRC in Milan. — *As part of the celebrations organised in Italy in commemoration of the centenary of the Red Cross movement and Henry Dunant's gesture in the Battle of Solferino, and under the auspices of the Italo-Swiss Association in Milan and the Branch Committee of the Italian Red Cross, on March 19 Mr. Léopold Boissier, President of the ICRC, gave a lecture in Milan, attended by General Guido Ferri, President of the Italian Red Cross, the leading municipal authorities and a large and appreciative audience.*

After recalling Henry Dunant's work and the birth of the Red Cross Mr. Boissier described the activities of the International Committee from its foundation to our times, defined its guiding principles and laid stress upon the continual expansion of its field of work.

During his lecture the President of the ICRC paid a tribute to Dr Ferdinando Palasciano, a surgeon of the Neapolitan Army, who was, so to speak, a precursor of Dunant. During the siege of Messina in 1848 he disobeyed orders by giving assistance to wounded of the opposing side and thus upheld in advance the fundamental Red Cross principles of charity without discrimination.

The International Tracing Service. — *In 1958 the International Tracing Service (ITS), which is under the direction of the ICRC, received 154,481 enquiries and issued 393,023 certificates and reports (the figures for the previous year were respectively 203,801 and 358,842).*

Although the incoming mail received by the ITS showed a decrease in 1958, the Service issued a greater number of certificates and reports.

The ITS was also busily engaged in establishing individual cards for its central card-index. The number of new cards showed an increase of 47% compared to the previous year (343,849 in 1957, 644,817 in 1958).

It continues to examine new documents; during the past year it acquired a considerable number of documents made available by organisations and the authorities in various countries.

Internment centre for Algerians in France. — *It will be remembered that two delegates of the ICRC, Mr. W. Michel and Mr. J. P. Maunoir, visited in December¹ the internment centre for Algerians at Vadenay (Seine-et-Marne).*

Following this visit, Mr. W. Michel and Mr. P. Gaillard visited on March 11 and 12 the centres at Neuville-sur-Ain and St. Maurice l'Ardoise where Algerians placed in assigned residence by the French authorities are interned. Reports were made, as customary, on the visits and the items noted by the delegates of the ICRC were discussed with the French authorities in Paris.

An international bulletin for the study of the refugee problem. — *The first issue has been published of the international bulletin "Intégration" which contains information on the recent work of the two associations concerned with the study of the refugee problem (AER and AWR).*

The publication gives a report on the eighth general assembly of these two associations held at Baden near Vienna in September, and presided over by H.E. Mr. F.K. Gökay, Ambassador of Turkey in Berne.

¹ See English Supplement of the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, March 1959.

"Intégration" is published by the Prince François-Joseph de Liechtenstein Foundation (Nansen Institut-Vaduz) of which the President is the Princess of Liechtenstein. The members are H.E. Mr. F. K. Gökey, Professor K. V. Müller of Nuremberg, the Minister of State H. E. Mr. Stain, of Munich, Professor Waris of Helsinki, Dr. Alois Vogt of Vaduz and Mr. H. Coursier, Member of the Legal Department of the ICRC.

The first meeting of the Foundation, held on January 24, 1959, at Vaduz was presided over by the Prince and Princess of Liechtenstein.

Legal Assistance to Aliens. — *The Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees held its first meeting from January 26 to 30 last.*

The ICRC was represented by two observers, Mr. H. G. Beckh of the Executive Division and Mr. H. Coursier of the Legal Department.

Special mention may be made of one of the items of the agenda, namely, legal assistance to aliens for which provision has been made, for the first time, in the budget of the High Commissioner's Office. Pursuant to the resolutions adopted by the International Conferences of the Red Cross in this connection (Stockholm, Resolution XXXI, Toronto, Resolution 14, New Delhi, Resolution XVI) the ICRC and the League are following the matter with keen interest.

An International Centre for the Co-ordination of Legal Assistance has been founded in Geneva, with the co-operation of the two Red Cross institutions and several other non-governmental organisations interested in migration. Mr. Coursier is at present acting as President-Director of the Centre for which a grant of 3,000 dollars was included in the 1959 budget of the Office of the High Commissioner, which was duly approved by the Programme Committee.

Reuniting of families. — *During his mission to Bucharest in December last, Mr. H. G. Beckh, delegate of the ICRC, was informed by the Rumanian Red Cross and the authorities of the measures being planned with a view to accelerating the examination*

of the numerous cases concerning the reuniting of families submitted to this National Society by the International Committee.

Following this mission, in the course of the last three months the Rumanian Red Cross has informed the ICRC of the issue of 188 exit visas by the Rumanian authorities to the persons concerned of whom the majority, of German origin, wish to join near relatives in other countries.

During his mission in the Balkans last December Mr. Beckh visited Sofia where he was received with great courtesy by H.E. Dr. P. Kolarov, Minister of Health and President of the Bulgarian Red Cross.

Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions. — With a view to spreading better knowledge of the principal provisions of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC has made available for distribution to the ALN forces in Algeria 1,000 copies in Arabic and 1,000 copies in French of the Brief Summary of the 1949 Conventions as well as 200 copies of the illustrated booklet on the subject.

Relief supplies for Indonesia. — In the December issue of the English Supplement reference was made to a gift of 3,000 dollars placed at the disposal of the Indonesian Red Cross by the ICRC as its participation in the relief action in behalf of the Indonesian population affected by internal disturbances. In compliance with this Society's wishes the funds were used for the purchase of 1,000 metres of textiles in Singapore and 125 cases of sweetened condensed milk in Denmark. The relief supplies were despatched to Djakarta in late February and early March.

The ICRC at a meeting of WHO. — The twenty-third meeting of the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation, held from January 20 to February 7 in Geneva, was followed by Dr. M. Junod, Vice-President, and Miss A. Pfirter, Head of the Medical Personnel Section and the War Disablement Section of the ICRC.

Participation of the ICRC in a conference of UNICEF. — The Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) met in Geneva from March 2 to 12, 1959.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

The ICRC has co-operated on several occasions with UNICEF, in particular for relief actions undertaken in Berlin, Viet Nam and Hungary and maintains excellent working relations with this organisation; as a mark of its interest in the work of the Executive Board Mr. J. Chenevière, member of the Committee, was present at the opening session.

On March 11 the ICRC had the pleasure of receiving Mr. J. Ryan, Chairman of the Board, Mrs. Z. Harman, Chairman of the Programme Committee, Mr. M. Pate, Executive Director, Mr. C. Egger, Regional Director for Europe and Africa, and Mr. W. Meyer, also of UNICEF.

During the last plenary session the President of the ICRC, Mr. L. Boissier, spoke to the meeting and paid a tribute to the work accomplished by UNICEF.

Activity of the ICRC in the Near East. — *In February Mr. D. de Traz, General-Delegate of the ICRC for the Near East visited Syria, Israel and Cairo for the purpose of making various representations to the authorities in behalf of interned or stateless persons.*

Two members of the ICRC Delegation in Cairo, Mrs. A. Jaquet and Mr. M. Martin returned to Geneva after a long period of work at the Delegation.

THE ICRC AND THE QUESTION OF KOREANS
IN JAPAN

March 13, 1959. — At the time when representatives of the National Red Cross Societies of Japan and the Republic of Korea are present in Geneva for the purpose of expressing their views concerning the problem of the return to Korea of some of the Koreans resident in Japan, a statement on the attitude of the International Committee of the Red Cross in regard to the facts at its disposal may be helpful.

On February 14 last the International Committee of the Red Cross was invited by the Japanese Red Cross to send representatives to Japan to verify that in expressing a desire to proceed to North Korea, the Koreans concerned were acting of their own free will. This approach was made following a decision of the Japanese Government communicated to the Committee on February 19, 1959. As no Japanese vessels were available for the purpose the ICRC was also requested to lend its services for the organisation of transport. In addition the Committee was asked to intervene in regard to the release of Japanese fishermen interned in the Republic of Korea. However, having learnt of this approach the Government and the Red Cross of the Republic of Korea (South) made several representations to the ICRC with a view to dissuading it from giving effect to a request which they affirm is of an exclusively political nature. On being informed of the Japanese decision, the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North)

approached firstly the Japanese Red Cross—with a view to joint discussion as to the practical means of carrying out the plan—and secondly the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR to ask for its technical aid in the matter. The Japanese Red Cross then proposed to the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to meet its representatives in Geneva, under the auspices of the ICRC, but this Society declined the invitation and renewed its proposal for direct contacts between the two National Societies.

In view of the publicity given to this matter in the Press, the ICRC considers it appropriate to recall the principles on the basis of which it is considering the part it might possibly play if its co-operation proved necessary :

1. Action of the International Committee in any field can be undertaken only on the basis of humanitarian considerations. In its capacity as a neutral intermediary, it is constantly called upon to intervene in situations of a political nature but the sole object of its intervention is to assist the victims of such events.
2. The ICRC is a private and independent institution, subject to no influence and which remains strictly neutral in all circumstances. Its decisions cannot be swayed by representations from any quarter.
3. The international Committee is not concerned with problems of state sovereignty, nationality and other questions of international law which come within the sole competence of Governments. It considers, however, in conformity with humanitarian principles and the resolutions adopted by International Conferences of the Red Cross, that it should be possible for every individual to return to a place of his choice in his fatherland if he freely expresses his wish to do so.

THE MISSION OF THE ICRC IN CUBA

Mr. Pierre Jequier, Delegate of the ICRC, who has been in Havana since early in January, has met various people of consequence in connection with his mission including the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Professor Roberto Agramonte.

During Mr. Jequier's numerous interviews with the new President of the Cuban Red Cross, Mr. Oscar Cossio del Pino, various problems were discussed: emergency relief actions and assistance over long periods, the sending of medical and welfare missions of the Cuban Red Cross to rural districts, reorganisation of the National Society, visits to persons under detention, etc. The Cuban Red Cross has sent 30 tons of various commodities to Santiago de Cuba, which included a gift of 2000 blankets from the ICRC for a first emergency relief action in behalf of the victims of military operations in areas which suffered the greatest devastation as a result of the disturbances.

On February 20, the Minister for Foreign Affairs again received Mr. Jequier and the President of the Cuban Red Cross. During the interview Mr. Agramonte confirmed that the Delegate of the ICRC was authorised to visit all places where civilian or military partisans of the former regime are at present under detention.

In conjunction with the authorities concerned, Mr. Jequier established a programme of these visits which started on March 2, and thus marked a further stage in the International Committee's activities in Cuba.