



**REVUE  
INTERNATIONALE  
DE LA  
CROIX-ROUGE**

**SUPPLEMENT**

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## SOCIAL PROGRAMME OF THE RÂMAKRISHNA ORDER

*The ideal from which the Red Cross draws its inspiration is also that of other institutions in the world, which work under various emblems and for the main purpose of serving their fellow-men. The Hindu concept defines in lofty and noble terms the relations of the believer with his fellows, whoever they may be; with regard to Buddhism, its concepts are based, as we know, on active and constant compassion which embraces all nature.*

*Today India is one of the countries which takes the keenest interest in social work and its development. A tangible proof of its concern with this matter is that the VIth International Conference on Social Work was held in Madras in 1952. It seems all the more appropriate, therefore, that Swâmi Nityabodhânanda should pay tribute in these pages to the social work of the Râmakrishna Order, of which he is a monk; in this capacity he sets forth these problems as they are seen from the religious point of view and the aspect of direct concern to him. (Editor's note.)*

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When Swâmi Vivekânanda formed the Order of Râmakrishna after the name of his spiritual teacher Srî Râmakrishna, he laid down social service by the monks of the order as an integral part of their lives, and as an essential programme of

the order. In this, he was basing himself entirely on the traditional Hindu teaching that work is a way of self-purification. All work is spiritual, say the sacred Books of the Hindus; all work is a worship offered to the divine. The impulsion for work comes from the divine. The inner urge we feel to work comes from the divine in us; the body and the senses are only cooperating with this inner urge to realise something in the external world, either of a spiritual nature or of a material nature. Thus work offers us an opportunity to contact the divine in us. That is why work followed with a purpose becomes an aid to the development of personality.

It is in this aspect of work as a means to contact and to awaken the divine in us, that all work is spiritual. When Vivekânanda said that the monks of the order of Râmakrishna should view work as a meditation and should harmonize work and meditation in their lives, he was emphasizing on the spiritual aspect. On the surface, we see a fundamental difference between these two, because of the ordinary tendency in us to consider work as secular, and meditation as spiritual, and also because of the usual notion that meditation is a state of inactivity. Vivekânanda taught, as we have already seen, that the division of work into sacred and secular is completely unwarranted, because the doer cannot be sometimes secular and sometimes sacred. By thinking like that we impose on ourselves a bondage which we do not merit.

Vivekânanda also wanted to correct the ordinary notion that meditation is a state of inactivity. Meditation is a state of supreme activity, but without agitation. The one who is doing a great amount of work but at the same time with great concentration and with great control over himself is, in spite of his external activity, really in meditation. By mastery over himself, he is fully conscious of the subject that is himself and by concentration he is dominating his external surroundings by his mental power. And so the work he does is only a way of manifesting his inner spiritual condition over his external surroundings. Real meditation is the domination of the subject over the object, object being one's own external surroundings or one's own opposing state of mind.

From the above, two things are clear : by viewing all work as spiritual or all work as meditation we stop dividing ourselves into two compartments as sacred and secular. This is bound to work in us a great transformation because all weakness comes from the sense of duality or division in us. The second conclusion that comes in on us is that work does not necessarily involve us in breaking the integrality of our being. If we have mastery over ourselves, work with body and senses is only a canalization of that integrality which is being felt inside. Here lies a great possibility of transforming the world. By bringing to bear on the external world and its material condition the spiritual power of inner peace and equilibrium one achieves more than what is achieved by mere social work. That is what the great sages and saints did. Their work was not of a mere social character, but of a spiritual nature because they influenced the environments by the equilibrium and peace which they felt in themselves.

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By considering all work as sacred Vivekânanda gave it a spiritual character. By asking it to be applied in society, he gave it a wider scope. When we serve people in society, Vivekânanda wanted that we should see God in man and serve Him, in and through man. This inspiration he got from his master. We are giving here the conversation between Râmakrishna and Vivekânanda which contains the words of inspiration on which Vivekânanda built this doctrine of service. "One day, some time in 1884, the talk drifted to the Vaishnava tenet. In the course of it the Master said, " This religion enjoins upon its followers the practice of three things—delight in the name of God, compassion for all living creatures and service to the devotees of Vishnu." Hardly had he finished when he fell into a trance. Then in a semi-conscious mood he said to himself, "compassion for creatures ! Compassion for creatures Thou fool ! An insignificant worm crawling on the earth, thou to show compassion to others ! Who art thou to show compassion ! No, no, it is not compassion for others,

but rather service to man, recognising him as the manifestation of God!" All heard this, but Vivekânanda understood its implication. Outside the room he said to others, "What a strange light I have discovered in those wonderful words of the Master!"

When Vivekânanda ordained that the monks of the Order and the lay disciples should serve in hospitals and in educational institutions looking on men and women as manifestations of God, he was translating in action the words of his master. He put as the motto of the Order: realization of the Self and welfare of the world. So, we are asked to progress towards our goal of self-realization working along lines of social welfare. That is to say, we stop conceiving salvation as personal; we have to take the whole world along with us. The mystics and saints cannot go and enjoy in any Paradise. They have to come and be born again and again till the whole world is liberated. We must set aside the search for personal salvation and in this consists the real salvation. This seems to be the peak of Râmakrishna's teaching: we should renounce our desire for personal salvation and work for the salvation of the world. Râmakrishna himself gave the promise that he will come again and again on this earth so long as there is a single man to be liberated.

Vivekânanda in the beginning was not well convinced of the grandeur of this idea. One day, Râmakrishna gave Vivekânanda the experience of supreme ecstasy, when Vivekânanda lost consciousness of the body. When he came down to the normal plane and when Râmakrishna asked him how it was, Vivekânanda replied that it was wonderful and that he would very much cherish to remain in that state always. "Fie upon you, said Râmakrishna. I thought you were greater than that. Do you want to remain enjoying the ecstasy in a selfish manner? I thought you were like a big banyan tree floating on the Ganges on which many people can cross over. I will keep this wonderful experience you have under lock and key. You will have to work for the welfare and salvation of the world; and then when you have finished, you will have it back again."

Vivekânanda in ordaining after the teaching of his own

master to set aside personal salvation and in wanting to work for the salvation of others was strictly following the tradition of the Upanishads and also of Buddha. The Upanishads teach that liberation is here and now in the human body, that it is not a condition after death. Liberation is in the realisation of unity with all beings, the state of harmony created by love for all that exists and lives. Evidently, when the goal is unity with the whole existence all sense of personal salvation and all search for compensation should be left behind. Buddha also taught the same thing. Buddha's whole teaching comes from his compassion towards beings. Buddha taught that we should not commit violence or kill a creature because every act is charged with cosmic responsibility even though we are not conscious of it. That is to say, according to Buddha, at no time can we separate ourselves from the totality. We commit violence when we are separated from the totality. Feelings of selfishness or of personal gain and self-preservation come to us when we lose contact with the totality. That is what Buddha taught by his notion of cosmic responsibility. We are always one with the world. We can do violence to somebody only when we lose contact with that fundamental feeling of oneness. There is a touching incident in the life of Buddha when he nursed a sick monk who was uncared for outside the monastery and said that he who serves the sick is serving the Buddha. All this inspiration has flowed into the mind of Vivekânanda when he instituted the social service, service to man seeing God in man as an integral part of the programme of the Order.

Questions like merit which may give us an easy entry to paradise or personal gains of name and fame do not at all enter into play when we serve man seeing God in him. The service is entirely spontaneous and total. Suppose we see a leper on the road, there may be people who give him charity thinking that it will bring him merit to go to heaven; there may be others who give out of fear that one day he may also become a leper and by being charitable he has some possibility of escaping that destiny; and there may be still others who may give in the hope that his actions may be appreciated by others.

But all these miss the most precious moment in their lives of feeling complete oneness with the leper, a oneness which is poorly translated by the word sympathy or charity. The one who feels the oneness may or may not give a charity. What is an act of charity beside the feeling that the leper is my brother? Those who issued out in giving him charity for merits or out of fear did not permit this feeling of oneness to pervade their interior. Those who are capable of seeing God in the leper will take it as an opportunity given them to serve.

The fact that they want to gain merit presupposes a state of demerit which they are trying to liquidate. When life is conceived as a state of opposition between merit and demerit or as a state of sin, one is always pushed to search for merit. But can one conceive on that plane, of a state where all demerit is liquidated? The only way to do so is to posit the spiritual principle in man which is divine and which is above the relativity of demerit and merit. Râmakrishna, when he asked us to see God in man, he was asking us to see the spiritual principle above the plane of merit and demerit.

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Only that vision of God in man will give us the correct perspective for service. Until we have that vision, we are not pure, and so long as we are not pure, our service may show itself but we come back from the service the same unregenerate beings that we were. But once we educate ourselves to see God in the leper we also become God, that is to say, our nature is transformed. Self-transformation is the beginning and the end of service, transformation of the one who gives and the one who takes. Clarifying this idea, Vivekânanda in a context says: There are three types of service:

- 1) Giving food or material help to those who are in want.
- 2) Giving education to the illiterate.
- 3) But there is a third kind of service which is the most lasting, namely to give spiritual knowledge and destroy ignorance by opening the eyes of the souls of men. Hunger and disease return; education also has a comparative value; but those

who have received the spiritual food are illumined for ever and become a lamp unto their feet and a light unto the world. We cannot give spiritual food so long as we remain on the planes of merit, or moral values of charity. We can give spiritual food only when we feel the divinity in ourselves and see all men and women as images of that same divinity.

Thus the programme of the Râmakrishna Order falls into three categories :

- 1) Help for those who are diseased and distressed.
- 2) Giving education through schools and colleges.
- 3) Spiritual ministry.

For giving statistics we take the year 1957 as a specimen year.

In December 1957, we had 42 + 15 + 29 Centres which were distributed as follows : 33 in West Bengal, 12 in Uttar Pradesh, 11 in Madras, 7 in Bihar, 6 in Kerala, 4 each in Assam and Mysore, 3 each in Bombay and Orissa, 2 in Andhra and 1 in Delhi. In addition, there were 11 Centres in East Pakistan, 2 in Burma, 1 in Ceylon, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius, 1 in England and Argentina, 11 in the United States of America.

*Medical service:* 13 indoor hospitals, which accommodated 26,665 patients, and 67 outdoor dispensaries which treated 2,749,065 cases including old ones. And the Veterinary section of the Shamala Tal Ashrama treated 2,272 animals.

*Education work:* colleges, training colleges, engineering schools, technical and industrial schools, Students' homes or hostels, orphanages with 33,015 boys and 15,104 girls in 259 institutions.

*Relief work:* famine, flood, cyclone and tornado, sanitary, refugee, earthquake and landslip, riot, malaria relief.

We do not mention the spiritual and cultural activities because we are only concerned in this article about the special programme of the Râmakrishna Order.

Swâmi NITYABODHÂNANDA

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

### News Items

**Relief actions.** — Algeria: *The sending of relief supplies in behalf of the resettled population in Algeria*<sup>1</sup> was continued by the ICRC in January. A further consignment of 35 tons of powdered milk, placed at its disposal by the Swiss Confederation, was sent to the General-Delegation of the French Red Cross in Algeria, and will be distributed by the mobile teams of this Society. In view of the medico-social work carried out by these teams they can distribute only part of the milk and the General Delegation of the French Red Cross has therefore arranged for several of the local Committee to take part in the work by organizing canteens or milk distribution centres in the resettlement areas.

*In addition, the ICRC plans to extend this assistance by means of voluntary contributions received from various sources and by drawing upon its own funds. It expects to send patent medicines, tonics, clothing and soap.*

France: *Following visits made by its delegates to various prisons in France, the ICRC sent intellectual relief supplies to Algerians under detention. These supplies, valued at 6,500 Swiss francs, consisted of text-books in French (in particular grammar, geography, history, literature and science) and in Arabic (grammar and literature).*

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<sup>1</sup> See English Supplement to the *Revue internationale*, December 1960.

*This material will be used for the study courses held in prisons on behalf of Algerians under detention.*

*Greece: The ICRC recently despatched to Greece a consignment of tinned food, dressings, garments and clothing material made available by various donors.*

*These supplies, of a total value of 20,000 Swiss francs, will be employed partly in connection with the relief action of the Greek Red Cross and partly in behalf of persons exiled, political detainees, and their families.*

*Nepal: The ICRC continued its relief action in behalf of refugees who include a great many women and children. This action was started at the request of the Government of Nepal; it is in the hands of Mr. Toni Hagen, who has been in Kathmandu since November last. In December he was joined by Dr. Jurg Bâr who is in charge of medical assistance to the refugees. The relief supplies, which have to be distributed in the upper valleys in difficult conditions, are made available by some National Red Cross Societies and other voluntary institutions.*

**Assistance to political detainees.** — *In mid-December, Mr. H.G. Beckh, delegate of the ICRC, went again to Germany where he had an interview with Mr. Güde, Attorney General of the Federal Republic, in Karlsruhe. He was then shown, by one of Mr. Güde's assistants, the current roll of political detainees (lists giving all information concerning the detained person's identity, duration of sentence and place of imprisonment).*

*Before leaving Germany, Mr. Beckh again visited Bruchsal Prison where he spoke without witnesses with two political detainees. Before leaving he had a talk concerning them with the Director of Bruchsal Prison who did everything possible to assist the delegate in his work.*

**Compensation for former prisoners of war in Japanese Hands.** — *On November 25, 1960, in London, Mr. R. Gallopin, Executive Director and Mr. J.P. Maunoir, Delegate, took part in the meeting of the Working Party of the beneficiary Powers under Article 16 of the Peace Treaty with Japan.*

*The Revue internationale has referred, on several occasions, to the various stages of the work undertaken by the ICRC for the allocation and distribution to ex-prisoners of war in Japanese hands (nationals of the Powers parties to the Treaty) of the compensation provided for in Article 16.*

*It will be recalled that when the first distribution of funds was made in 1957 no precise information was available, through the lack of official records, concerning the number of former Philippine prisoners of war. The International Committee therefore placed a certain amount in reserve while a thorough check throughout the country was undertaken by the Philippine Red Cross Society, acting as the national agency. When the work was done this Society sent the lists of beneficiaries to Geneva. On the basis of these lists, duly approved by the ICRC, the latter paid to the Philippine Government in August a sum equivalent to about 11 million Swiss francs for the payment of compensation to 44,000 former prisoners of war.*

*The balance of the funds placed in reserve (the equivalent of about 10 million Swiss francs, plus the interest accrued) will be employed for a further and final payment to all the Powers party to the Treaty in proportion to the number of their nationals, ex-prisoners of war in Japanese hands, acknowledged as eligible for the first distribution.*

*The main purpose of the meeting in London of the representatives of the States concerned was therefore to examine measures for the distribution and employment of the funds to be remitted to their respective Governments in behalf of former prisoners of war. The funds will be used to pay the cost of medical treatment and convalescence, and artificial limbs for the disabled. They can also be used for the payment of compensation to former prisoners who had not been able to substantiate their claims at the time of the first distribution.*

**Two films on the Red Cross activity in the Congo.** — *In cooperation with the Red Cross, the ICRC has produced two films on Red Cross work in the Congo; these were filmed on the spot last autumn by Mr. Roger Bovard and Mr. Pierre Molteni of the Swiss Television Service.*

*One of these documentaries is a black-and-white film, of about 25 minutes' projecting time, showing the activities of the ICRC delegation, the Swiss Red Cross medical unit and other teams sent by a number of National Societies. This film, entitled "SOS Congo", has already been transmitted by the Swiss Television Service in its German and French versions.*

*The second film, called "Congo, année zéro", duration 10-15 minutes, is more particularly intended for young people.*

*After being shown on the Swiss Television, the film "SOS Congo" has been adapted to be made available to National Red Cross Societies, television stations in various countries, as well as the general public.*

**New ICRC Broadcasts.** — *Since the beginning of November 1960, the Broadcasting Section of the ICRC has considerably expanded its activity, thanks to the co-operation of the Swiss Short-Wave Service. A series of weekly broadcasts in English has thus been started.*

*These programmes are being broadcast on about 10 wave-lengths between 13.89 m. and 48.66 m., directed towards Australia, Japan, India and Pakistan, the Middle East, Great Britain and North America.*

*The first few broadcasts gave general information on the Red Cross, its history and international organization, as well as on the ICRC and its main activities. The present programmes deal more particularly with Red Cross principles. The texts of the broadcasts are afterwards sent by post to the National Societies of countries where English is understood, and thus form a sort of "Radio Bulletin" of the ICRC.*

*Furthermore, the broadcasts in Spanish are also making progress: after being transmitted for a long time once a fortnight, they are now broadcast each Sunday, since November, on the following wave-lengths: 19.59 m., 25.28 m., 31.46 m. They deal with the same matters as the English programmes and are directed towards Spain and Latin America.*

*In addition, similar broadcasts are to be made regularly in French as part of the Second Programme of Radio-Genève in frequency modulation. This new series will begin in the spring.*

*It should also be pointed out that the length of the weekly broadcasts in Arabic has been increased from 15 to 30 minutes during the competition organized by the ICRC Radio Section for listeners in Arab countries<sup>1</sup>. For this purpose, the Swiss Short-Wave Service has put a further wave-length for North Africa at the Committee's disposal.*

**Publication of the illustrated Handbook on the Geneva Conventions.** — *As soon as it was published, the illustrated Handbook on the Geneva Conventions<sup>1</sup>, edited jointly by the ICRC and the League, met with keen interest, especially on the part of leaders and members of National Societies and Junior Red Cross groups visiting Geneva.*

*The ICRC and the League hope to receive prompt replies from the National Societies consulted on the number of copies to be printed. This handbook is to be distributed in French, English, German and Spanish.*

**English edition of the Commentary on the Geneva Conventions.** — *To complete the publication of the English edition of the Commentary on the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, published under the direction of Mr. Jean S. Pictet, the International Committee has recently brought out the last volume on the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea.*

*Thus the ICRC has achieved, in this particular field, its effort for the dissemination on an ever-wider scale of the Geneva Conventions.*

**A further translation of the Geneva Conventions.** — *The Federal Political Department in Berne has sent the International Committee the official translation in Turkish of the Four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, published by the Turkish Government. We should point out in this connection that the Geneva Conventions have now been translated into more than twenty-five languages.*

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<sup>1</sup> See English Supplement to the *Revue internationale*, December 1960.

**Swiss Higher Grade Nursing School.** — *The Swiss Red Cross held a ceremony on November 17 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the foundation of its school in Zurich for nursing refresher courses, and the inauguration of the new headquarters of this institution. The ICRC was represented by Miss A. Pfirter, Head of the Medical Personnel Section.*

*It will be remembered that this school, the first of this description founded in Switzerland, gives certificated nurses the possibility of qualifying as heads of nursing schools, hospital matrons, tutor-sisters and ward superintendents.*

**Organization of voluntary medical personnel.** — *Having been invited to attend the XIIth Quadrennial Congress of the International Council of Nurses, to be held in Melbourne from April 17 to 22, the International Committee has appointed Miss A. Pfirter, Head of the Medical Personnel Section, to represent it on this occasion.*

*The ICRC has taken advantage of this circumstance to instruct Miss Pfirter to visit various countries, in particular Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Pakistan, Burma, Thailand, the Federation of Malaya and New Zealand, in order to discuss with the National Societies of these countries all matters in connection with the organization of voluntary medical personnel. Miss Pfirter left Geneva on January 9 for Beirut, the first stage of a mission of several months duration.*

**Social Service Conference in Rome.** — *During the 10th Social Service Conference held in Rome from January 8 to 15, the delegate of the ICRC, Mr. H. Coursier, in his capacity as Chairman of the Liaison Committee of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations Interested in Migration, presided over the meeting on January 12 in connection with migrants and refugees from European countries. He was assisted by Mr. J. Chenard (National Catholic Welfare Conference), Vice-President.*

*Monsignor Castelli, Director of the pontifical services concerned with refugees, and Mr. M. Storchi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Italy, in special charge of refugee and emigration matters, took part in the meeting.*

*Reports were submitted by Mr. M. Daly, Director of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, Dr. T. Stark, Head of the Information Centre of the International Catholic Migration Commission, Geneva, Mr. Ch. H. Jordan, Director of the American Joint Distribution Committee, Geneva, and Mr. G. Lucrezio Monticelli, Secretary-General of the Giunta Cattolica Italiana per l'Emigrazione. Two working parties were held in the afternoon, one on European emigrants, presided over by Mr. B. Ch. Sjollema, Staff Consultant for Migrations, World Council of Churches, Geneva, and the other on assistance to refugees, presided over by Mr. J. Chenard.*

*Through the good offices of the Giunta Cattolica Italiana per l'Emigrazione, which organized the meeting, delegates to the Social Service Conference were able to obtain detailed documentation on all questions relating to migrants from Europe to other European countries or overseas.*

**XIIIth meeting of the Council of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration.** — *At this meeting, held in Geneva from December 1 to 10, the ICRC was represented by an observer, Mr. H. Coursier of the Legal Department.*

*The meeting was opened by the American Representative, Mr. Francis E. Walter, Member of the United States Congress, who has played an important part during the past few years in drawing up American legislation concerning migrants and refugees.*

*The observer for the United Kingdom, Mr. Edward Sniders, informed the meeting of his Government's intention to form part henceforth of Government members of the ICEM which, with the admission of Bolivia during the meeting, brought the total number of Government members of this organization to thirty.*

*The meeting gave an opportunity of defining a new policy for the ICEM, necessitated by present circumstances; on the one hand, the economic situation in Europe has become stabilized at a high level and, on the other hand, countries of immigration (especially South America) have an increasingly greater need of skilled labour.*

*Mr. Marcus Daly, Director of the ICEM, gave a summary of the organization's activities for the past ten years of which the*

result had been the resettlement in countries of asylum of over a million refugees, migrants and their families.

The ICEM will make a special effort in future to accord technical aid to governments in Latin American countries in connection with the professional training of migrants.

**Study-visit to the ICRC headquarters.** — *On his return from the Congo where he had been acting as interpreter for the Japanese medical team, Mr. K. Watanabe, of the Foreign Relations Department of the Japanese Red Cross, stayed in Geneva from November 21 to 28 to make a study-visit to various sections of the ICRC.*

**Visits to the ICRC headquarters.** — *From mid-November 1960 to early in January 1961, the International Committee had the pleasure of receiving the following visits:*

*Mr. E.J.D. Cross, Director of the Sierra Leone Branch of the British Red Cross; Mrs. B. Azari, of the Nursing School of the Red Lion and Sun Society in Teheran, Iran; Mr. M. Rinaldi and Mr. L. Calpicchio of the Ministry of the Treasure, Italy; Mr. S. Gavritchev, new Counsellor to the USSR Delegation in Geneva, Mrs. F.O. Blake, former member of the American Red Cross units in the Far East; Mrs. M. Molinet de Fontecilla, voluntary nurse of the Chilean Red Cross Society; Rev. Father B. Tonko, member of the General Secretariat of CARITAS, Vienna; Count A. Pietromarchi, Vice-Consul and Second Secretary to the Italian Delegation in Geneva; Mrs. Katsuro Hirose, member of the Central Committee of the Japanese Red Cross Society and Vice-President of the Voluntary Service Section; Mrs. von Scheele, social worker of the Swedish Red Cross; Dr. O.K. Schmauss, head of the new medical team of the Red Cross of the German Democratic Republic, on his way to the Congo; H. E. Mr. A. Koch, Ambassador, Delegate of the Order of Malta to the international organizations in Geneva, accompanied by the new Deputy-Delegate, Count E. Decazes; Mrs. N. Sevic, Secretary of the Serbian Red Cross Society and member of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Red Cross Society; Mr. Thiri Maung Gyi, member of the National Council of the Burma Red Cross Society, Mr. J.L. de Urruelo, Secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Spanish Red Cross,*

*Barcelona; Mrs. W.H. Landon of the Canadian Red Cross, H.E. Sung Yong Kim, Minister Plenipotentiary, new Permanent Delegate in Geneva of the Republic of Korea and Mr. Doo-Sin Choi, new President of the Red Cross of the Republic of Korea, Mr. P. Canon, President of the Provisional Committee of the Red Cross of the Congo, Leopoldville; Mrs. H. Rose, member of the Orange Committee of the Australian Red Cross Society.*

*The ICRC was pleased to meet experts and representatives of National Societies who took part in a Study Group on Social Welfare for medico-social personnel of Red Cross Societies of the European area, organised by the United Nations Technical Assistance Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies. The participants were accompanied by Mrs. L. de Bray, former head of the Brussels Social Welfare School, Mr. H. Beer, Secretary-General of the League and several other members of this institution, Mr. M. Milhaud, head of the European Office of the United Nations Technical Assistance Committee and Miss K. Midwinter, Chief of the European Social Welfare Programme.*

*The International Committee also had the pleasure of receiving some fifteen members of the Geneva Section of the Swiss Red Cross Society, including Mr. Pierre Audeoud, President, Dr. Aloys Werner, Vice-President, Mr. Pierre Pechkranz, Treasurer, and fifteen student-nurses from the Bois-Cerf Clinic, Lausanne.*

## THE RED CROSS IN THE CONGO

*International and national Red Cross institutions intervened as soon as the internal disturbances broke out in the Congo and the Revue internationale has kept its readers informed on many occasions of the various actions which have been undertaken in behalf of the victims. Mention will now be made of the present position regarding medical aid and aid which is being given to political detainees.*

### MEDICAL AID

**New appeal by the International Committee and the League.** — Having been requested by the World Health Organization to continue the medical aid action in the Congo—a request which was also supported by the Government of the Congo through the ICRC delegation—both the ICRC and the League came to the conclusion that in spite of the difficulties which such an extension would involve, although it could be considered an emergency measure, it was the duty of the Red Cross to continue to give such aid to the people of the Congo, in view of the health and medical conditions existing there.

In fact, contrary to expectations, WHO had been unable to reach its recruiting target which would have enabled medical teams of the National Red Cross Societies to have been withdrawn. WHO is making however every effort to succeed and to extend recruitment. In the meanwhile, it has been obliged once again to request that the medical aid given by the Red Cross should continue.

For this reason, the International Committee and the League launched an urgent appeal on January 4, 1961, to the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, asking them to send or to maintain their medical teams in the Congo for a further period finishing on June 30, 1961. During the second half of 1960, the services of over a hundred medical personnel were made available to civilian hospitals in the Congo by National Societies of the five continents.

At present, sixteen National Societies have teams in the Congo and they are being asked to prolong their stay as long as possible in order to avoid any interruption of medical service in the hospitals.

In the beginning, the services of the Red Cross medical teams in the Congo were to come to a close at the end of January 1961 on the expiry of the second three months' period for which Red Cross medical personnel had been supplied at the request of the World Health Organization and the Congo Government. The teams were sent for one or both of the three months' period by the National Societies of Australia, Austria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, German Democratic Republic, German Federal Republic, Greece, India, Iran, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, United Arab Republic, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

When asking the International Red Cross to continue making the services of medical personnel available, Dr. M.G. Candau, Director of WHO, paid a tribute to the work achieved by the medical teams of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies sent to the Congo since July 1960. He said that through the devoted efforts of these international teams, together with those of the Congolese medical personnel, a serious calamity in the health situation in the Congo had been averted.

Furthermore, Mr. Tshibamba, General Commissioner for Public Health in the Congo, in submitting a similar request to the ICRC, stated that the Red Cross was making an efficient contribution towards the protection of public health in the Congo.

**League and ICRC agreement.** — It has been decided that the medical action will be continued until June 30, 1961, on the

basis of the agreement of July 27, 1960, between the ICRC and the League, establishing their respective sphere of action as follows:

- 1) *In view of the present situation existing in the Congo both institutions agreed that the ICRC should be responsible for all international Red Cross action in that country.*
- 2) *The League and the ICRC will call upon a certain number of National Societies jointly chosen by them to make medical teams available for the Congo.*
- 3) *The medical teams which will be provided by the National Red Cross Societies in response to the League's appeal, will be under the direct control of the ICRC which will co-ordinate their activities.*
- 4) *In order to ensure the well-being of the members of medical teams and to deal with internal administrative matters, it has been agreed that the League will send a representative to the Congo. This liaison representative will act in conjunction with the ICRC delegation which he will keep fully informed of his activities. He will confine himself there to the object of his mission as defined above.*
- 5) *Medical teams of the National Societies in the Congo will retain complete independence in all medical and scientific matters. They will, however, receive general directives from the ICRC delegation regarding their work in accordance with agreements which it will make with the local authorities, representatives of WHO and, if necessary, with the United Nations forces.*

**Response of the National Red Cross Societies to the new appeal. —**

Services of 34 Red Cross medical personnel from ten countries have now been announced as available for Congo duty in response to the urgent appeal launched on January 4 by the International Committee of the Red Cross and League of Red Cross Societies. The appeal asked selected National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies to provide a minimum of 50 surgeons and doctors, preferably with expe-

rience in tropical diseases, for a new period terminating June 30, 1961, to staff civilian hospitals.

The National Societies announcing that they will provide medical personnel for the extended period are those of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the German Democratic Republic, the German Federal Republic, Iran, New Zealand, Poland and Sweden. The Societies are in most cases providing one to four teams, each team composed of a general surgeon and a general medical practitioner. At the instance of the German Democratic Republic, German Federal Republic and Polish Societies, the assignments of personnel at present in the Congo are being prolonged.

Seven other National Societies with teams still in the Congo are examining the possibility of prolonging the assignment of these personnel, or replacing them, in response to the latest appeal of the two international institutions of the Red Cross. These are the Austrian, Czechoslovak, Indian, Irish, Norwegian, Pakistani and Yugoslav Societies which at present have a total of 16 medical personnel at work in Congo civilian hospitals.

**Safety of medical teams.** — The safety of medical teams can no longer be guaranteed to the same extent or under the same conditions as previously. With the reduction in the strength of United Nations' forces it is no longer possible to maintain troops in areas in which the medical teams are working. The ICRC Delegation has therefore had recourse to adopt other protective measures by obtaining every possible safeguard from the local authorities and this it will continue to do in future. It may however not be possible, in view of the troubled conditions in certain areas, to ensure that medical teams will be given full protection. In fact, practical difficulties, such as transport, communication, medical and food supply, etc., which have arisen as a result of the economic chaos prevailing in the country, have added to the confusion brought about by political changes in the Orientale and Kivu provinces.

An incident which could have had serious consequences vividly illustrates the lack of security which teams are finding.

Communications having been completely disrupted, there

had been a total absence of news since January 16, 1961, of two doctors belonging to the medical teams of the German Federal Republic, Dr. K. Benz and Dr. F. Peltzer, who had been stationed in the province of Kivu. These two young doctors had been working at the Lubero civilian hospital for several months past.

Having been informed that these doctors were missing, United Nations forces immediately sent out a patrol which finally succeeded in locating them. They had been under detention but were at once released and escorted to Goma, seventy-five miles from Lubero. A third doctor from the German Federal Republic, Dr. E. Bechmann, who was stationed at Goma civilian hospital and who took part in the search for and rescue of his two colleagues was referred to in a brief military communiqué received in Leopoldville from Goma, as having given "an outstanding example of courage and endurance". The two doctors arrived in Leopoldville in good health. They stated that they had not been ill-treated whilst they were under detention. On their release, money and luggage which had been taken from them when they were arrested were returned.

Messages of reassurance for the families of the two doctor were relayed through Geneva on January 24, 1961, to the German Red Cross headquarters in Bonn.

#### AID TO POLITICAL DETAINEES

As we have already reported<sup>1</sup> a delegate of the ICRC was able to visit two prisons in Katanga in which there were more than a thousand persons detained for political reasons. Other delegates also visited a prison at Luzumu in the province of Leopoldville and another near Stanleyville.

Finally, as reported by the Congolese authorities, a representative of the ICRC was given permission to investigate conditions in the Hardy military detention centre, near Thysville. This delegate was entrusted by those undergoing detention

<sup>1</sup> See *Revue internationale*, January 19, 1961.

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with personal messages to their families, with the approval of the authorities.

In addition, the ICRC continues to make every effort to obtain authorization to visit all persons under detention without distinction or discrimination.

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