

REVUE INTERNATIONALE
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

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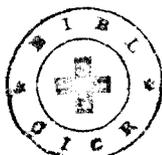
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DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

RELIEF FOR THE CIVIL POPULATION OF GREATER BERLIN AND OF THE SOVIET ZONE OF OCCUPATION IN GERMANY

The International Committee has now received the annual report of its Delegation in Germany on its relief work in behalf of the civil population in the American, British, French and Russian sectors of Greater Berlin and in the Russian zone of occupation in Germany. The "Revue Internationale" has already published, in an earlier number, an account of the extensive work carried out by this Delegation between 1946 and 1947¹.

It should be mentioned that the Committee assembled its delegations in Germany at the beginning of this year in Berlin.

From the end of 1947, the presence of its representatives in certain occupation zones in Germany was clearly no longer necessary. The reason for still keeping, at this date, a large delegation in Berlin itself is because the Committee is the sole international relief organization which is recognized by each of the four Allies, as a neutral intermediary for receiving and distributing relief coming into Germany from abroad. Whereas the Committee has withdrawn by degrees from all parts of Europe where, in the field of relief, it formerly served in its capacity of neutral intermediary, it has stayed where its presence is indispensable and is sought by the authorities. The region of Greater Berlin and the Russian zone of occupation are cases in point.

In this connection, many donations have been made by National Red Cross Societies, in particular those of Australia,

¹ See *Revue*, April, 1948, p. 251.

Canada, Chile, Eire, South Africa, Sweden and Switzerland. Contributions were also made by Governments, official organizations and private individuals; we may mention the Irish Donation, the Swiss Relief Fund, the Society of Friends, the World Council of Churches and Caritas. Yet other gifts came from Egypt, Latin America and South Africa. Relief supplies to the extent of 5,650 tons, with an approximate value of 15,500,000 Swiss francs, were distributed in Berlin and in the Russian zone of occupation in Germany between May 1945 and December 31, 1947.

The purchase and transport of the greater part of these supplies were carried out by the International Centre for the Relief of Civil Populations, Geneva. They filled about twenty block-trains which were dispatched to the Committee's delegation in Berlin.

* * *

Out of the total of the supplies mentioned, the City of Berlin received 2,945 tons, with a value of about seven million Swiss francs. That quantity was made up of 2,950 tons of foodstuffs, 67 tons of medical supplies and 288 tons of clothing material, and various other goods.

Great numbers of the population shared in these issues: as many as 2,437,202 persons received help. Amongst them were about 185,000 patients in the hospitals of Greater Berlin, children in hostels, orphanages and public day nurseries; children in TBC sanatoriums, young people in orphanages and schools, infants in hospitals and homes, children eligible for free meals at school, school children in the overcrowded districts, and pupils in training schools. To these should be added old people, the blind, expectant mothers and maternity cases, consumptives of all ages, persons in holiday camps and many others. Hundreds of relief schemes were successfully carried out. The issue of supplies was managed by the Berlin municipality; the plan of distribution was settled by agreement with the Welfare Service and the Public Health officials of the city

and its suburbs. Relief supplies from Sweden, were handled by the delegation in Berlin of the Swedish Red Cross, which works in the same manner as the Committee's delegation.

* * *

During this same period (May 1945 to December 1947), about 2,700 tons of relief supplies were issued in the Russian zone of occupation. The principal donors to this zone were the Red Cross Societies of Australia, Eire, South Africa and Switzerland, as well as the Irish Donation, the Swiss Relief Fund, the Irish Save the Children Fund, the Swiss Medical Relief Centre, the Society of Friends, German prisoners of war abroad, the Mormons, German residents in South Africa, and the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross. The sum total of the relief supplies comprised 2,217 tons of foodstuffs, 313 tons of clothing supplies and 192 tons of medicaments.

As many as 2,123,630 people (women, children, old people and the sick of all ages) shared in the distribution of foodstuffs, and 353,630 were given clothing. Medical supplies amounting to two million Swiss francs in value were given to 65,930 institutions, such as children's homes, hospitals, first-aid stations, transit camps for refugees, clinics and hostels for children. The significance of these figures will be gauged from the fact that they included 300 million units of penicillin and 9,500,000 units of insulin, which were given to serious cases.

In the Russian zone of occupation, the distribution was made as follows. The supplies sent by the donors were first assembled in the warehouses of the Committee's Delegation in Berlin. The plan of issue was settled in agreement with the Commission for the distribution of Foreign Relief in the Russian zone, whose members were drawn from the six chief political parties. The practical work of distribution is undertaken by the Central Committee of the organization known as *Volkssolidarität*; this includes members of religious bodies and secular associations,

as well as those of all political parties and relief organizations. This distribution is made under the supervision of the delegates of the ICRC.

* * *

Here are some recent figures. From January 1 to May 15, 1948, 610 tons of sundry relief supplies reached Greater Berlin, while the Russian zone of occupation received 486 tons. During the same period over two million food rations were shared out amongst the inhabitants of the Russian zone, out of the supplies entrusted to the ICRC. In addition, 6,615,000 units of insulin were given to 271 hospitals and public health services ; layettes and soap were provided for 835 children's homes and nurseries for newly-born infants ; nearly 50,000 pairs of shoes were given to the poor.

A peculiarly moving incident occurred when more than 36,000 children each received at Easter a half-pound bag of sweets—an unheard-of luxury. This also shows the extent and varied character of the relief work undertaken in Berlin by the Red Cross.

*THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE
RED CROSS IN PALESTINE*

The truce which was observed in Palestine for a period of four weeks, and which unhappily came to an end at the beginning of July, gave the Delegation of the International Committee (ICRC) some respite after the tension they had experienced during the first phase of their work.

It will be recalled that, as a result of the journey of the President of the International Committee to the Holy Land¹, it had been decided to alter the structure of the delegation and to move its headquarters from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv and Amman, in order to keep in regular contact with the Jewish and Arab authorities. Until then, the Delegation had carried on its work in the immediate areas under fire, meeting all the risks of the situation with complete disregard of personal safety. They could now pursue their work with less risk and devote themselves the better to the traditional tasks of delegates of the ICRC, giving first place to their aid for prisoners of war.

Before the armistice came into force, the Delegation was able to arrange the evacuation of Arab women and children, the aged and seriously sick from the civil population in Jerusalem, a course which had already been taken in behalf of the Jews. In three successive operations, at intervals of a few days, the Delegation succeeded in evacuating 130 people to the Arab Old City.

The delegate, in his report on this operation, lays stress on the repeated negotiations that were necessary in order to bring about a result which might appear of minor importance. He points out that difficulties arise from the fact that it is in any case an awkward problem to assemble the people who are to

¹ See *Revue*, June 1948, p. 405.

benefit by being evacuated ; and that these plans often run up against the hesitations of those to be moved : a woman, for instance, is unwilling to run the risk of being separated from her husband. However that may be, such operations do of necessity demand the presence of a neutral intermediary and could not take place without him. On another occasion, one of the delegates was able to hand over to the Arab authorities 1,068 women, children and old people who came from the region of Natania-Haifa.

During the truce, it was the problem of giving aid to the prisoners of war which was of the greatest concern to the delegates. As we know, the two sides had given a written undertaking to observe the principles of the Geneva Conventions for the protection of the sick and wounded, and to respect the status of prisoners of war : they had, moreover, agreed that the terms of the Conventions should be extended to cover the civil population. The delegates of the ICRC were able to verify that these engagements were in general observed. We reproduce here, as an example, the report sent to Geneva after a visit made to the POW camp at Abbassieh, on June 17, 1948.

General description of the Camp.

The camp lies at Abbassieh, on the outskirts of Cairo. It is a small camp of eight hutments built in masonry which serve as accommodation for Jewish prisoners of war : other hutments are for the time unoccupied. The huts are in good condition.

Quarters.

The prisoners are lodged in groups of eight to ten men, according to the size of the huts. There are no beds : the prisoners sleep on a palliase on the ground.

Hygiene.

The camp has an adequate water supply, and installations for showers and laundry. The latrines are perfectly clean. The

prisoners have asked the delegates to arrange with the camp authorities for a supply of DDT powder. This was agreed to.

Food.

Meals are issued after being cooked. At the wish of the PW, we asked the camp commandant to hand over foodstuffs in bulk to them and to leave to them the task of cooking their own food. This request was also agreed to. Every prisoner has eating utensils (tin mess bowl and plate): meals are taken in the huts, which are all provided with a large table and benches.

Clothing.

The condition of the clothing is not very satisfactory. Owing to the season, however, the PW are not in any discomfort from this cause.

Medical care and health.

A medical officer of the Egyptian Army has charge of the sick. On the day of the delegates' visit, several prisoners were being treated at the infirmary. The delegates have asked the camp authorities to allow a PW medical officer to take charge of medical treatment. This request will be agreed to. The question of dental care was not raised.

Work.

The PW have no work. Some men will be employed before long in camp maintenance (kitchen, checking of provisions, and so on).

Pay.

The prisoners have no pay.

Personal Effects.

The case was brought up of spectacles which are alleged to have been taken from some of the PW. It is possible that the Spectacle Section of the ICRC will be asked to supply a few pairs of glasses.

Religious Observances.

It appears that no difficulties are made concerning the free exercise of religion. The PW have asked for prayer books and Bibles.

Correspondence.

The question of correspondence was raised. On condition of reciprocity, the Egyptian authorities are ready to authorize every prisoner to write one letter a week.

Discipline.

Discipline in the camp is good. The camp leader appears to enjoy a position of sound authority with the PW, and is in constant touch with the camp authorities. Each hut has a corporal in charge.

Morale.

The morale of the men seems fairly good.

Complaints.

No serious complaint was presented to us.

Discussion with the Camp Commandant and with Lieut. Colonel Alfi.

The delegates have received permission to visit the camp once a week.

The conditions of internment in this camp are satisfactory. The delegates have been given an assurance by the Egyptian military authorities that the terms of the Geneva Convention on

the treatment of PW will be applied in full. Certain privileges granted to the Jews will however be withdrawn, should Egyptian prisoners in Jewish hands not receive the same treatment.

It should also be mentioned that there are seven women in the camp who are considered as PW. The Egyptian authorities claim that they were combatants, which the women deny. The delegates will attempt to clear up this problem.

* * *

It has not hitherto been possible to obtain reports in equal detail on Arab PW in Jewish hands, but negotiations are in process between the delegates of the ICRC and the authorities. These should bring about the arranging of camp visits, as well as the transmission of nominal rolls: questions relating to the prisoners' correspondence may be regulated, as well as the aid to be given them in the sense of the Conventions. We should also mention that the Jewish authorities appear to be ready to give PW pay equal to that of members of their own armed forces. The final definition of the status of Arab prisoners in Jewish hands seems to be only a matter of time: no major obstacle has hitherto been encountered which would indicate that the prisoners might not be treated in accordance with the Conventions: it was undertaken to apply these without reservation.

Close contact has been kept with the responsible authorities of both sides in the conflict. The head of the Delegation of the ICRC in Palestine was thus able to have discussions with the Jewish authorities at Tel Aviv. He explained the details of the measures taken to re-organize the Delegation and the reasons for dividing it into two parts. In the course of this interview, he laid great stress on the fact that the Delegation would in future keep to the traditional tasks of the International Committee, laid down in the Conventions, or approved by custom and precedent. Obviously, however, the delegates of the International Committee will not shrink from any task or any mission whenever human beings are in peril and could be saved by their intervention.

The problem of a general exchange of prisoners of war was touched on in this interview with the Jewish Authorities. According to the estimates of these authorities, it was possible that there were, at the time of writing (middle of June), about seven hundred Jewish prisoners in the hands of the Arabs and twelve hundred Arab prisoners held by the Jews. These proposals for an exchange had, however, not been confirmed and had not yet, at this stage, been carried out except in a few isolated cases.

The attention of the Jewish Authorities had also been drawn to the importance of maintaining the neutral safety zones in Jerusalem under the flag of the International Committee. These zones were established with the aim of sparing human lives, and the purpose they serve would become even clearer, if the fighting were to take a more serious turn. Whilst on this subject, it might be mentioned that the International Committee had considered whether new zones should not be planned in Jerusalem, and also at Tel Aviv and Amman. The formation of new zones, moreover, it seemed, was in line with the wish expressed by both Arabs and Jews.

In regard to the zones, the truce has given an opportunity for a preliminary assessment to be made and for the first lessons to be drawn from the experiment made in a wholly empirical way under the pressure of events. The difficulties which the International Committee has encountered in carrying through this plan have been many. Showing imagination coupled with a sense of reality, the delegates have sought to enlist public opinion in favour of the safety zones, by appealing for general support and by ensuring that the International Committee plays no part, except that of a neutral intermediary, whose mediation is earnestly desired by all concerned and in all fields.

The site of a safety zones is less important than the settling of its boundaries. The larger the zone, the greater the need of such definition. It is also imperative that the zone be clearly visible, within easy reach and wholly neutralized in the military sense. Safety Zone I (King David Hotel, YMCA, Terra Santa) was all that could be wished. The accommodation and all the international equipment were first-rate, and not only provided appreciable security, but also amenities for those

taking refuge there : large, shady open spaces, playing fields, bathing pools, large and small rooms, and annexes for many purposes. These all made it possible to organize the help needed by the various classes of refugees. It was possible to segregate the different races and people of different religions, the sick, women, children, the wounded, the consular corps, United Nations personnel, and even to shut off the various categories from one another, the space allocated to each being adjusted continuously according to need.

Within the safety zones each belligerent has responsibility on all scores for its own inmates. One Arab director, and one Jewish settle all matters concerning those of their own faith. These men have the most important part to play in the keeping of peace and good order. They represent a higher authority and have extensive powers ; they alone may give orders with complete executive power. They are also the intermediaries between the refugees and the delegate. They are assisted by one or more doctors and nurses of the same faith, and also by some police.

Responsibility is thus allotted to Jews in respect of Jews, and to Arabs in respect of Arabs, while the delegate of the International Committee settles questions of principle in matters of administration, medical attention, preparation of meals and so on, but he has no executive duties of any kind. Any mistake is the responsibility of the representative of one authority or the other, and not of the International Committee.

The external relations of the safety zone, particularly with the senior civil and military authorities, are governed only by the Delegation of the Committee. Questions of entry and leaving, security, supplies, and evacuation are in the hands of the Arabs, the Jews and the ICRC. It falls to the authorities to provide the food and funds, to appoint the police, and so on. At all times the authority with jurisdiction over the area of a safety zone has the right to supervise all that happens within that zone, the controlling agents being approved by the delegate of the International Committee, head of the zone. The delegate, after reference to the information gained in the course of his supervision, makes suggestions which appear to him advisable.

No local authority has powers over the zones superior to those of the Committee's delegate. No internal readjustment may be made without the formal and written consent of both parties. The first consent required is the acceptance, recognition and assurance of the total neutralization of the safety zones which must stand in every circumstance. The International Committee has at no time anything to conceal, but in accepting its responsibilities, it refuses to take orders from any quarter whatsoever. Its object will always be that of ensuring the safety of the refugees, whilst maintaining an absolute neutrality within the safety zones and close collaboration with the Authorities whom it serves as intermediary. As a rule, permission to enter or to leave the zones can only be had on request from the Authorities for a fairly large group of refugees, and with the sanction of the Committee's delegate, who is the head of the safety zone. Only non-combatants may be admitted and the sick and wounded, temporarily, preparatory to their evacuation to a hospital. All the convoys of persons and supplies coming in or leaving do so under the flag of the International Committee.

A nominal census was recently taken of Arabs and Jews, and the lists handed to both sides ; having approved them, they are bound to consider all these people at all times as protected personnel. In a safety zone, there are always some Arabs and Jews for whom the delegate of the ICRC as head of the safety zone is personally answerable. A safety zone formally ceases to exist only when the delegate of the ICRC in charge of the zone has received a request in writing from both parties in conflict. The closing cannot take effect until thirty days after the official announcement by the ICRC of this decision. Any violation or request by one side alone cannot have the effect of closing the zone.

Requirements in the field of relief increase in urgency as time goes on, and reports received by the ICRC from its delegates show the imperative need of aid on as wide a scale as possible. One delegate has the particular task of verifying the exact requirements. The need of medicaments is especially great, but it may be that the question of foodstuffs will also arise, especially at Jaffa, where four to five thousand Arabs are cut off right in

the Jewish Zone, and especially for the refugees, who are living in the most difficult conditions. Some weeks ago, the ICRC sent out an appeal to several national Red Cross Societies, as well as to official and voluntary relief and welfare organizations. This appeal has already met with a favourable response. A list follows of gifts and offers received by the ICRC to date.

Since the fighting has unhappily been resumed and the prospects of an end to hostilities and establishment of peace have become remote, the part of the ICRC in Palestine continues to be even more urgent, if an attempt is to be made to save as many lives as possible.

Donors	Value of gifts	Gifts in money
<i>Turkish Red Crescent Society:</i>		
Surgical equipment for the Arabs	—	—
<i>American Red Cross</i>		\$ 35,000
200,000 bandages, 250,000 dressings	\$ 3,097,44	
50,000 articles of clothing	\$ 73,089,80	
118 medical and surgical outfits	—	
2,000 packages blood plasma 25 cc.	—	
2,000 packages blood plasma 50 cc.	\$ 44,000	
<i>British Red Cross.</i>		\$ 500,—
<i>Swiss Red Cross</i>	Sw. Fr.	5,000.—
<i>International Committee of the Cross:</i>		
Pharmaceutical supplies and surgical instruments drawn from stock	Sw. Fr. 25,120.—	
Serums and vaccines sent by air	Sw. Fr. 5,000.—	
<i>League of Red Cross Societies:</i>		
6,000 amp. anti-diphtheria serum.	—	
7,000 tubes anti-cholera vaccine	—	
<i>French Red Cross:</i>		
Medical relief supplies	Fr. Sw. 4,000.—	(approx.)

Whatever turn events may take, the activities of the ICRC in Palestine remain essential, in order to save as many lives as possible, in the pursuance of the Committee's traditional duties.