

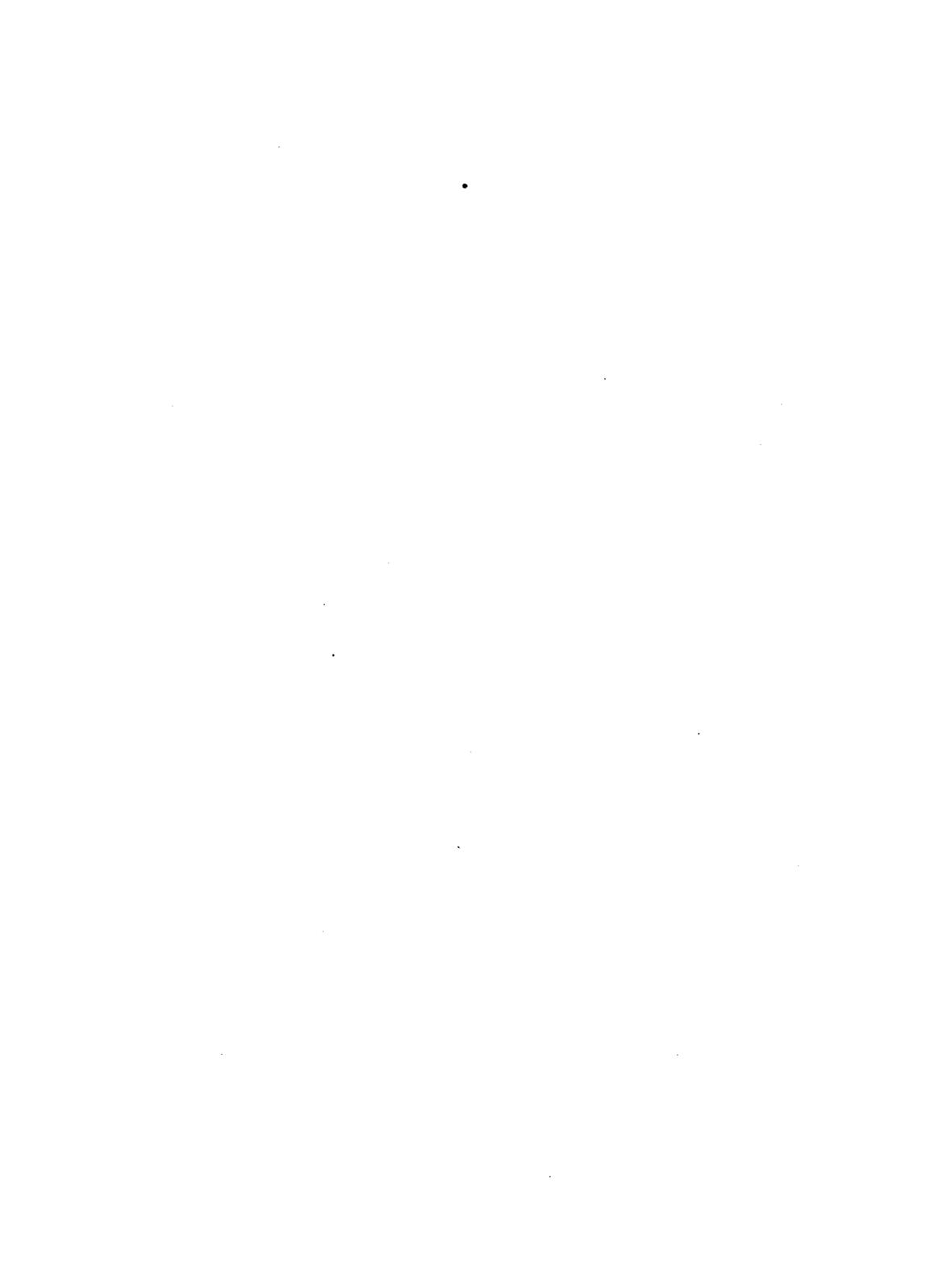


REVUE  
INTERNATIONALE  
DE LA  
CROIX-ROUGE

SUPPLEMENT

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# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## News Items

*On June 6, in Bonn, the Chancellor of the German Federal Republic, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Ambassadors of eight countries placed their formal signature to the agreements (initialled on May 5, 1955) which transfer to the ICRC, for a period of five years, the responsibility of administering the International Tracing Service (ITS), whose headquarters are in Arolsen, near Cassel.*

*This Service, which was last administered by the Allied High Commission, was created in 1945 for the purpose of making searches for civilians interned in concentration camps under the National-Socialist regime, or forcibly deported to Germany during the last war; its archives contain over 20 million index-cards and at the present time it receives about 10,000 enquiries per month.*

*Having been called upon to assume the direction of this important tracing centre, the ICRC will maintain a staff there, consisting of German nationals and refugees. Further, one of the agreements concluded in Bonn institutes an International Commission on which, together with the nine Powers concerned, the ICRC will be represented. In agreement with the latter, the International Commission will lay down the general directives governing the work of the ITS.*

*The Revue internationale will shortly publish an article on the International Tracing Service and the agreements which have just been signed.*

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*In its 409th Circular, the ICRC recently informed National Societies of the recognition of the Republic of Korea National Red Cross. This Society, whose headquarters are in Seoul, applied for recognition early this year and provided the ICRC with all relevant information on which to base a decision regarding its admission to the International Red Cross. Examination of the documents furnished, in conjunction with the League Secretariat, showed that the conditions laid down for the recognition of a new National Society by the ICRC had been duly fulfilled.*

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*From January 1 to March 31, 1955, the War Disablement Section of the ICRC sent relief supplies, in the form of medicaments, Braille watches, new and used clothing, to 92 war-disabled of 12 different nationalities, in 9 countries.*

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*This year, for the first time, television played its part in the celebration of the anniversary of Henry Dunant's birth on May 8. The programme, organised with the participation of the ICRC, the League, eleven countries and their National Societies, was shown over the Eurovision network. It took place at the same time as a multiplex broadcast, entitled "Five countries under the same flag", in French, German, Italian, Flemish and Serbo-Croat. Nine countries and thirteen National Red Cross Societies took part in the broadcast.*

\* \* \*

*M. Robert Moll, ICRC delegate in Caracas, took part in a ceremony organised by the Venezuelan Red Cross Society, to commemorate the anniversary of Henry Dunant's birth. After an address by the Society's new President, Dr. G. Machado Morales, and by his predecessor, Dr. Valencia Parparcén, who read out a*

message from the United Nations Secretary-General, M. Moll emphasised how greatly the inheritance of mankind had been enriched, throughout the years, by the Red Cross movement.

\* \* \*

The International Committee's action on behalf of tuberculous refugees from Trieste and their families—the former receiving sanatorium treatment in Leysin while the latter are accommodated in Morzine—is being continued. It has already been possible for a certain number of the refugees to proceed to a new country. After the installation of several families of agricultural workers in the Landes, to which our April number referred, five aged refugees (after fifteen months' treatment) left Leysin on May 5 for final resettlement in the "Centre de Solidarité" at Félenne, near Namur, a home founded by the Belgian Mutual Aid Association for Trieste refugees whose age renders them unfit for work. A short time before, an aged person, who was awaited by relatives in Venezuela, was accompanied to Genoa. The only child among the sick refugees, aged five years on his arrival in Leysin, has just been returned, in the care of a social worker, to his native village in Macedonia (after a stay of one and a half years in Switzerland), where he was handed over to his parents who had fortunately been found in the interval.

\* \* \*

M<sup>lle</sup> A. Pfirter, who directs the Nursing Personnel Section of the ICRC, took part in the work of the 9th Congress of the International Hospital Federation, which met in Lucerne from May 30 to June 3. The Congress was attended by 550 delegates—including several Ministers of Public Health—from 27 countries. The discussion, of which the central theme was the mental welfare of sick persons, dealt with the study of all practical and psychological questions, whose satisfactory solution is liable to contribute to the moral comfort of the patient.

M<sup>lle</sup> Pfirter had previously visited the Swiss Red Cross Society's exhibition held at Zurich Town Hall, on the subject of the nursing

*profession, with the object of overcoming the serious difficulty in the recruiting of nursing personnel which Switzerland, like the majority of other countries, is experiencing.*

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*In our previous article under this heading, we referred to the forthcoming arrival in Vienne of a group of Greek nationals from Rumania, who held immigration permits for Australia, where they were awaited by their families. The Rumanian Red Cross Society had asked the ICRC and the League to make the arrangements for the remainder of their journey. The group, consisting of 35 persons, arrived in Vienna on May 24, and was received by the ICRC delegate, M. Joubert—who on that occasion also represented the League—and by members of the Austrian Red Cross Society. The delegate of the ICRC had to settle various difficulties which were holding up these persons' immediate departure. For instance, the emigrants were all included in a collective passport, whereas they were to continue their journey in separate groups. Thanks to the understanding attitude of the authorities, Austrian passports for aliens were issued for each person concerned. Vaccination certificates, with which they had not been provided, had also to be procured.*

*M. Joubert also made arrangements for their journey and the refugees left, on June 3 and 8, either by sea from Trieste and Genoa, or individually by air.*

\* \* \*

*In Hanoï, on May 13, M. de Reynier handed over to the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, on behalf of the ICRC, a gift consisting of one ton of medicaments and pharmaceutical products.*

\* \* \*

*M. J. de Preux, the International Committee's new delegate in South Viet Nam, arrived on May 16 in Saïgon where he will*

replace M. André Durand, who has been called upon to take the place of M. de Reynier, as the ICRC delegate for North Viet Nam.

Shortly after his arrival, M. de Preux was received by the President of the Council, M. Ngo Dinh Diem, and by the President of the Viet Nam State Red Cross, Dr. Kieu.

M. N. Burckhardt, who had been assisting the Saïgon Delegation for the past six months, returned to Switzerland on June 4.

\* \* \*

From the outset of the conflict between the forces of the Government of Viet Nam State and those of the Binh-Xuyên Party, and in particular since April 28, the work of the delegates of the ICRC in Saïgon on behalf of the civilian and military victims of these tragic events was most strenuous. They supported, with advice and representations, the action of the South Viet Nam Red Cross, which was faced with a difficult situation. This Red Cross was thus enabled to set up a first aid post, of which the first available equipment—a surgical kit donated by the ICRC—gave invaluable service.

It may be mentioned, in particular, that on April 28 and 29 the International Committee's representatives visited on several occasions the hospital centres where the wounded were undergoing operations, often in the most precarious conditions, and called for the assistance of the mutual aid associations represented in Saïgon, with a view to obtaining relief supplies. On May 3, they took part in an expedition by water-way, organised by the French Red Cross, to search for wounded in the territory held by the Binh-Xuyên. By means of two craft, bearing the Red Cross emblem, 57 wounded men were taken through the fighting zone and sent to hospitals in Saïgon.

In conjunction with their practical action, the delegates of the ICRC drew the attention of the Viet Nam Government, and General Le Van Vien, Commander of the Binh-Xuy n forces, to the protection to which the victims of the events, and the civilian population, were entitled.

\* \* \*

*On April 29, representatives of the World Medical Association, the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy, and the ICRC met at the latter's headquarters, to make a joint study of certain questions connected with international medical law. The object of the meeting, held at the request of the World Medical Association and attended by two observers of the World Health Organisation, was to find the best means of facilitating the work of the WHO in its study of this branch of the law.*

*The representatives of the three organisations were of the opinion that the principles set forth by the Code of Medical Ethics adopted by the World Medical Association and in the Declaration of Geneva may be considered as one of the important moral bases of the study of the question; they also recognised the need for the ratification and universal application of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 to be made effective. Moreover, they recommended that WHO, when tabulating suitable material for international regulations, should give priority to certain subjects, in particular to the maintenance of the possibility of medical work and assistance in all circumstances, especially in time of war and of occupation (the duties and corresponding rights of medical practitioners).*

*In the name of the three institutions, the ICRC communicated the conclusions of this exchange of views to the Director-General of WHO.*

\* \* \*

*With the assistance of the Iraq Red Crescent Society, the International Committee was able to organise relief action on behalf of detained persons in Iraq, to whom it has been possible to send family parcels, despatched from Geneva. In Baghdad the Red Crescent services kindly undertook to distribute the various consignments.*

*As is known, these detained persons are allowed to communicate with their families, outside Iraq, by means of Red Crescent Civilian Messages, exchanged through the offices of the ICRC in Geneva.*

\* \* \*

*The ICRC associated itself with the international relief action undertaken under the auspices of the League of Red Cross Societies, on behalf of the earthquake victims in Volos, Greece, by sending 1,000 prophylactic and 25 curative doses of anti-tetanic serum.*

*The consignment was despatched from Greece, on April 28, by an American Air Force plane, placed at the League's disposal for emergency transports.*

*\* \* \**

*On May 25, the Japanese Government remitted to the ICRC the equivalent, in pounds sterling and US dollars, of four and a half million pounds sterling, in execution of the obligations devolving upon it under Article 16 of the Peace Treaty with Japan. This sum is intended to cover the payment of compensation to former prisoners of war (members of the armed forces of the Allied Powers party to the Treaty) who suffered undue hardship during their captivity.*

*Work is now being done to determine the share of the funds received from the Japanese Government which should be allocated to former prisoners of each nationality, taking as a basis for distribution the total number of prisoners of war of each country benefiting by the provisions of Article 16.*

*It also falls upon the ICRC to fix the basis, in agreement with the competent authorities of each of the beneficiary States, upon which the compensation will be distributed within individual countries.*

# C H R O N I C L E

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## THE "RED CROSS OF MONUMENTS"

*In the May issue of the Supplement an article appeared under the title The Red Cross of Monuments, concerning the new Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property of May 14, 1954, in which the author gave a detailed explanation of the significance of the Convention in regard to the Red Cross as a whole.*

*Having made clear that it is a confirmation and a justification of the Red Cross campaign against indiscriminate methods of warfare, in the last chapter published below the author examines the question whether the Convention will have a beneficial influence, and to what extent, on the work now being pursued by the International Committee of the Red Cross in connection with the legal protection of civilian populations.*

### THE HUMAN BEING — A WORK OF ART

We have seen that the new Geneva Conventions were a valuable encouragement to those who laboured to produce the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property. Does not the latter, in its turn, provide a reason to hope for the successful issue of the efforts pursued by the International Committee with a view to increase the legal protection of civilian populations and other defenceless persons against the new

weapons and aerial warfare in general? It is certainly reasonable to presume that if Governments have been able to reach an agreement with the object of the respect of cultural property in the event of war (provided, of course, that they ratify the new Convention), they should, *a fortiori*, be willing to reinforce the respect due to civilian persons, since the human being, according to the axiom previously admitted, is of greater value than a work of art.

That is another, and important, aspect of the new Hague Convention, the last to which we shall refer here.

It is not, however, as obvious or as logical as it appears to be at first sight. Objection may be made to the *a fortiori* argument on the grounds that it is more difficult to protect the civilian population than works of art; unlike the latter, civilians are sometimes able to make an important contribution towards the defence of their country, a role which the enemy will endeavour to suppress.

That difficulty, which cannot be denied, is not, however, our main reason for caution in drawing hope from the *a fortiori* argument. Our doubts relate rather to the axiom itself, according to which human beings take precedence over works of art; is its validity still generally accepted, and recognized in all sincerity and not by mere force of habit or as a matter of lip service? Nothing is less certain. What have we before us? On the one hand, there has been a remarkable increase, since the XIXth Century, in the importance attached to works of art, or more precisely to their preservation. Is this due (according to the current but debatable belief) to the feeling that our epoch is not capable of producing such noble works as those of the past; is it due to our consciousness of the dangers to which our cultural heritage is exposed by modern warfare; or, lastly, is it the result of the progress achieved in exploring the past and in presenting its artistic treasures, in particular by the development of museums, as the writer Malraux so aptly pointed out? Whatever the causes may be, the respect paid to works of art is undeniably greater and more widespread than formerly.

On the other hand, can the same be said of respect for the

human being? In times such as ours which have witnessed Auschwitz, Coventry and Hiroshima, the conclusion is quickly reached that, on many points in any case, this respect is evolving in a sense contrary to that of works of art.

The result is a reversal of values, which is moreover accentuated by the ideological nature of conflicts. This latter factor has no effect upon works of art, those of past ages in particular; neither belligerent regards their possession by the enemy as a reason for their destruction; he still looks upon such works of art as being to some extent "neutral"; when confiscated he considers them rather as evidence of artistic efforts of past centuries, to which all may lay claim, than as an aspect of the abhorrent visage of the enemy.

The position is quite different for human beings, not only as regards combatants—which would still be a natural attitude—but also for persons who are not, or no longer, involved in hostilities; the civilian population, wounded military personnel, and prisoners of war. In the case of such persons, warfare as it becomes more ideological renders more uncertain the "neutralization" which has been secured for them by the efforts of past centuries and the Red Cross movement; the respect to which they are entitled as unprotected persons becomes less and less recognised. And a child comes to be regarded, no longer as innocence personified, but as a germ, which must be destroyed, of the evil against which one is contending.

We find some actual proof of such a reversal of the respective values of art treasures and the human being (an image as it were) in pictures of many cities which suffered destruction during the war: a magnificent cathedral—the work of art—may be seen still standing, after having been deliberately spared; it gains in height because it dominates the desert of ruins where thousands of innocent beings came to their death.

The new Hague Convention also gives us an instructive example of this reversal of values by granting special protection to the personnel employed in looking after cultural property. Their mere status of civilians should normally have sufficed

to ensure the respect and protection of such personnel in time of war. It was desired, however, that such respect, referred to as being "in the interests of such property" should be explicitly specified. Their connection with a work of art was therefore considered to be a greater safeguard than the mere status of civilian.

In face of this tendency and the point to which the pre-eminence of the human being is contested, it seems difficult to build too great a hope upon the possibility that the protection accorded to cultural property will, by virtue of this pre-eminence, necessarily imply increased protection for defenceless persons.

On the other hand, should not the importance, indeed the priority, which is so often accorded to works of art in the order of values, provide in fact one means for the respect of the human being, as such, to re-emerge, at least to some extent. This applies, in particular, to those who do not recognise or who no longer perceive in such respect the moral imperative of a transcendental, religious or philosophical truth. As the somewhat paradoxical title of this last chapter indicates, they must be brought to believe that the elements of a work of art contained in the human being, that is to say the qualities which make the latter akin to a work of art, demand that the defenceless person in time of war be given consideration which is, at least, equal to the consideration they are prepared to show for art treasures.

It may be asked, what are those elements, and how can they be ascertained?

To make the matter clear, let us suppose for a moment that States are obliged to set up special services within their armies for the purpose of supervising the protection of defenceless persons, and let us imagine a dialogue which might take place between the heads of these services and some of those in command.

"So you are prepared to consider the death of these thousands of civilians as an ineluctable necessity of warfare, whereas you intend, on the other hand, to spare their temples and monuments. That is really a curious sign of "Civilisation"!

But those monuments and temples are of untold value to humanity. Your civilians, on the contrary, can be easily replaced, more speedily even than would be necessary!

Don't you believe it: those persons are also unique and irreplaceable. Not only in the eyes of their near relatives—and this alone would justify their being respected—but also from your point of view, that is to say in the interest of humanity and, in particular, of the civilisation to which you are apparently so attached. In each of those human beings, whose possible destruction leaves you unmoved, may be a potential genius, the potential bearer of a new aesthetic or moral message which may be of capital importance for the evolution of humanity.

Nonsense! You really cannot claim that there is a host of potential Michelangelos or Henry Dunants among those whom military exigencies do not allow us to spare.

Even if only one of them had such a vocation—and there is a far greater number—could you single him out beforehand, to spare him and his future creation which you claim to respect? You do not answer me. You see for yourself that you cannot do it, and that in order to save that exceptional being and the wealth of which he is the bearer, you must perforce spare all the civilians among whom he is to be found, or at least the greatest number possible, and consider them all as potential bearers of this unique message for humanity.

That may be so. But you forget one other point. All those persons whose cause is championed by you are inextricably tied to the ideology, to a class, of which the suppression is in effect the aim of our combat. On the other hand, their monuments and temples are of a beauty which rises above those contingencies and thereby justifies our interest and respect.

On this point also you are greatly mistaken. Are those persons irremediably marked by the conditions of the present time? Is there not, on the contrary, in each of them, the latent possibility, even among those who are the most deeply involved, of a change of mind, a gradual process of development which has by no means reached its final form. This is a quality of man which, like beauty in the work of art, rises above the contingencies in which such persons are temporarily involved.

You yourselves are the first to acknowledge the situation ; is not your propaganda, like that of your enemies, concerned with that very quality of man, with the possibility that each of those persons may, some day, no longer be an enemy but one of the strong supporters of your cause ?

All the human beings—civilians, prisoners or wounded—whom it is our duty to protect are, to a certain degree irreplaceable, in the same way as works of art and, like the latter, independent of the contingencies which make them hateful to you at the present time. For this reason we request that each one of them should be accorded respect at least equal to that you are prepared to grant those works of art ”.

Words such as these might be spoken by the heads of army services for the protection of defenceless persons—were such services to exist.

Is the idea utopian ? The new Hague Convention, nevertheless, by affirming in Article 7 a practice followed by numerous belligerents, makes it compulsory for the signatory States to set up, within their armed forces, services whose purpose will be to secure respect for cultural property. Is it not high time that this commendable innovation should be taken as an example for setting up similar services in all armed forces, on behalf of civilian populations and war victims in general, both friends and enemies. And would it not be highly desirable for the views of those responsible for such services to be made known in time of peace, as forcibly and as widely as those of their colleagues in other army services.

*R. J. WILHELM*

Member of the Legal Department  
of the International Committee  
of the Red Cross