



SUPPLEMENT

VOL. VII

REVUE INTERNATIONALE
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

ET

BULLETIN INTERNATIONAL
DES SOCIÉTÉS
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

SUPPLEMENT

Vol. VII, 1954

GENÈVE

1954

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May 1954

Vol. VII, No. 5

CONTENTS

	Page
International Committee of the Red Cross	
Recent Activities	112
A Tribute to Florence Nightingale	
A Birthday Memento: Florence Nightingale and the Crimean War, by Louis Demolis	115
Florence Nightingale and Henry Dunant, by Jean-G. Lossier	120

Published by
Comité international de la Croix-Rouge Genève
Editor: Louis Demolis

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Accommodation of Trieste Refugees in Morzine. — An account was given in the January issue of the "Revue" of the arrival in Leysin of about one hundred tubercular refugees from Trieste. Their accommodation in Switzerland was carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the help of many persons of good-will, and with funds specially allocated for the scheme by the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migrations (ICEM) and the Allied Military Government of Trieste. A question remained, however, which was of the highest importance for the refugees' moral well-being—that of their relatives, also stateless refugees, who had been left in Trieste. For the refugees to know that their families were safe from want, and for the latter to have the possibility of visiting them, was one of the most important factors for the success of their cure.

When the plan was put into action, the transfer of the sick persons' relatives, and their accommodation as near as possible to the Swiss frontier, was envisaged. The International Committee immediately made approaches in this connection to the Italian and French authorities; it chose the village of Morzine (Haute-Savoie) where, after receiving the necessary authority for the refugees' accommodation from the French Government and the Prefect of the Haute-Savoie, all arrangements were made for the refugees to be received, and for them to be housed in two hotels.

In order to organise the transfer of the families (65 persons in all), Miss Rothenbach, the social welfare worker for the refugees under treatment in Leysin, and M. Schwager, appointed by the International Committee to carry out similar duties in

Morzine, proceeded to Trieste. Their work was greatly facilitated by the kind offices of the French, Italian and Swiss consular services, and by the valuable assistance afforded by the Allied Military Government in Trieste, particularly in attending to the refugees' clothing requirements. Before the departure a thorough medical examination of each refugee took place, after which they were all certified to be free from contagious diseases, in particular tuberculosis. They travelled from April 11 to 13. At Domodossola they were given a meal by an Italian Red Cross team. A second medical examination was made on their arrival. Seven tons of luggage, sent by train to Geneva, were carried to Morzine by the International Committee's motor lorries.

The stateless persons' accommodation in the Haute-Savoie also gave rise to numerous problems of a practical order which have been dealt with by the International Committee. For instance the question of work for the refugees, which can only be arranged in so far as it would not be prejudicial to local workers ; also the question of education for the children. French courses for the latter have already been started. The International Committee has also made all necessary approaches for the refugees to be authorised to visit their relatives in Leysin at regular intervals. A first general meeting was arranged on May 9. It should be mentioned here that in taking those practical measures—which have such a great bearing upon the refugees' physical and moral well-being—the International Committee highly appreciated the comprehensive attitude of the French authorities towards its efforts.

Indochina. — From March 9 to April 1, the delegate of the ICRC in Indochina visited six camps for prisoners of war in French hands, in North Viet-Nam.

In Geneva, the International Committee renewed on April 28 its appeal to the belligerents of April 9, of which particulars were given in these pages. The appeal, sent simultaneously to the High Command of the People's Democratic Republic of the Viet-Nam and to the French Commander-in-Chief, read as follows—

Greatly alarmed by news according to which the medical units and convoys of the People's Army of the Viet-Nam and the medical air transports of the Franco-Viet-Nam Armed Forces would both appear to have been attacked in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva feels that it is its duty to address an urgent appeal in order that those persons who are placed legitimately under the protection of the Red Cross emblem may be granted full immunity. The International Committee believes that it is necessary to recall that the members of armed forces, who have been put out of action for any reason whatsoever, and especially the sick and the wounded, must be spared and that in implementation of the principle laid down in the Geneva Conventions, hospital establishments and medical convoys clearly marked with the sign of the Red Cross must be respected. To attack them constitutes a grave infringement of the laws of war and each of the parties to the conflict is bound to abstain from taking offensive or defensive action which would have the consequence of endangering, even indirectly or unwittingly, such establishments and convoys. The International Committee of the Red Cross therefore appeals to the belligerents on both sides to take all appropriate steps to allow of the evacuation of the wounded who have remained in the front line and to guarantee the absolute respect of medical establishments, units and means of transport bearing Red Cross emblems of sufficient size to avoid all possible risk of error. It further suggests that consideration be given to the possibility of setting up neutralized zones for the accommodation of the sick and wounded as provided for by the Geneva Conventions.

Iraq. — In order to assist the victims of floods which recently occurred in Iraq, the International Committee of the Red Cross presented the Iraqi Red Crescent Society with two surgical kits for carrying out emergency operations in first-aid posts; 250 blankets were despatched at the same time.

A TRIBUTE TO FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A BIRTHDAY MEMENTO: FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AND THE CRIMEAN WAR (1854-1855)

In March 1954, France and Great Britain went to war with Russia.

Soon afterwards the allied armies landed in Gallipoli, and then in May and June at Varna ; a British medical base was set up in Scutari, a large village situated on the eastern shores of the Bosphorus.

The troops who were quartered in the Dobrudja marshland were however soon decimated by typhus and cholera. In September they re-embarked, in shocking medical conditions, to attack Sebastopol, the great Russian naval base in the Crimea.

A hundred years have passed, therefore, since the tragic events of that period of history, when the courage of men and the cruelty of war reached their highest peak, a period illuminated by the pure image of Florence Nightingale, the British nurse, whose remarkable exploits remain a cherished memory.

Florence Nightingale was born on May 12, 1820, at the Villa Colombaia in Florence. She received a good education, was attracted at an early age by the study of medicine and felt the urge to devote her time to visiting the sick in hospitals. At that early stage she already deplored the fact that doctors were not assisted by better trained and more conscientious nurses.

In 1845, with the parents and sister, Florence Nightingale travelled extensively in Germany, Italy, France, Egypt and Turkey. Everywhere she went, she sought to obtain details of the efforts made in those various countries to look after the

sick poor. She then decided to take a personal study course with the Sisters of Charity in Paris, followed in 1849 by a similar course with the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth, about whom she published an article in English, in 1850. As her plan for founding an institution for Evangelist Deaconesses in her own country could not be realised, she gave her time, strength and money, on her return to England, to the reorganisation of a home for sick governesses at 90, Harley Street, London.

In October 1854, Florence Nightingale and her group of voluntary nurses—the Band of Angels—who belonged like her to the upper classes of Society, were called upon by the British Government ¹ to look after the wounded and sick in the Scutari hospitals, at the time of the so-called “Scutari disaster” ², the serious nature of which had been brought to public notice by the Press, and the “Times” ³ in particular. At the time the death rate in the hospital centre amounted to 60% of the wounded. Florence Nightingale, the “energetic dreamer”, who rose from her dreams and plunged into action with burning enthusiasm, accomplished there a superhuman task, thanks to her courage, intelligence, willpower and perseverance; thanks also to her high ideal.

Faced with the abominable state of the British medical service, and the negligence which prevailed in the Scutari military hospitals and later at Balaclava ⁴, where she organised the hospital services and herself contracted cholera, Florence Nightingale accomplished the miracle of putting order into what had been a hideous and evil chaos. She had a genius for general planning and an orderly grasp of details; she knew how to set up her services and to stimulate the zeal of authorities; in disaster she was the first to become fully aware of the real situation.

Owing to her natural benevolence, her astonishing capacity for work and her remarkable intuition of the real motives of other persons' conduct or character, only Florence Nightingale

¹ See below Page 192.

² See below Page 195.

³ See below Page 191.

⁴ See below Page 198.

could have successfully unravelled the threads of such an intricate problem in organisation, and continued her course in spite of the many obstacles in her path. She had the thoughtful restraint and good sense of a mind which was governed by reason.

A eye-witness of those admirable and distressing scenes stated that each day brought further complications which were always overcome by the administrative genius of the "head"; each day brought its particular problem to one who had shouldered the burden of an immense responsibility in an unknown field and whose staff, of her own sex, were unaccustomed to the work. When drafts of sick men were brought in, she was often seen to remain on duty for twenty-four hours at a stretch, allotting accommodation, distributing rations, superintending the sisters' work, attending the most distressing operations where her presence could be a help and solace to the patient, or watching for hours by the bedsides of men dying from cholera and typhus. The image of Florence Nightingale, lamp in hand, pacing at night through miles of wards, noting the condition of each patient, and procuring them their most essential needs, will ever remain in the hearts of those who received or who witnessed her charitable efforts, and the tradition of her devoted care will be for ever recorded in history.

Completely exhausted by her vigils and stupendous effort, she fell ill, but insisted on remaining although she was suffering from "Crimea fever"; her sense of duty and great love for the wounded gave her the heroic force to remain at her post, loyally and keenly continuing her work until the campaign ended in 1856. She had succeeded in saving great numbers of lives.

Thus involved in the tragic events of that unhappy period in man's history, Florence Nightingale brought to the suffering men of the British forces not only moral comfort, in its most direct and simplest sense, but also the boon of her humanitarian ideals and stirring example to others.

Although born in wealthy circumstances and of high social rank, and in spite of her parents' opposition, she had the courage to mingle (in the XIXth Century) with nurses in British hospitals and to be concerned with all suffering. Her desire to help

suffering people became the basis of her existence and her essential aim in life. She had a philosophy of charity which was rarely met with in her time. Her humanitarian ideals greatly surpassed the understanding of the majority of her contemporaries. She carried the spirit of charity to all places where men toiled and suffered—in alms-houses and shelters, in prisons and orphanages—wherever charity led her, she gave her services. For Florence Nightingale charity had become a spiritual habit ; by giving herself up to charity, she found in action essential elements of the intense inner life which was necessary to her.

She was humane, even in her imagination ; she was able by her example to encourage the vocation of secular nurses in great numbers whose help in war, as in peace, was soon found to be indispensable. Her charitable action gave remarkable impetus to the feeling of esteem and gratitude of the public for " nurses ", who had formerly been regarded with an apparent indifference inconsistent with what reason and common-sense demanded. She thus played a great part in ennobling and promoting their conception of charity.

On account of her leadership in presence and in action throughout her long life, the Red Cross considers Florence Nightingale as the leading figure in the field of relief to the wounded, as one of the propagators of the Red Cross movement and the International Council of Nurses, and as the mother of all voluntary nurses.

When Florence Nightingale returned to her country in August 1856, she was received with countless tokens of gratitude. The sultan sent her a valuable bracelet ; Queen Victoria presented her with a diamond-studded cross and invited her to visit Balmoral. A public subscription was opened on her behalf, the proceeds being handed to her for a charitable object of her choice. Florence Nightingale used the fund of £ 43,400 first for founding the nursing school which bears her name, and is attached to St. Thomas' Hospital in London, secondly for the upkeep of a midwives' school at King's College Hospital. From that time on until the end of her life, this generous friend of the sick gave all her devoted care to those two establishments. Her advice had also a marked influence on the reorganisation of

British ambulances, the setting up of nursing schools according to her system and the formation of Red Cross Societies.

In 1908, on the occasion of her eighty-eighth birthday, Florence Nightingale received the freedom of the City of London.

She passed away in 1910, a legendary figure who had been able to reconcile the harshest realities of history with the greatest compassion.

In 1910, at a few weeks' interval, the deaths occurred of the three persons who were most closely connected with the birth of the great Red Cross movement, and whose thought and action remain engraved in our memory. Florence Nightingale, one of the most prominent among the precursors, the great forerunner of the Red Cross died on August 13, aged 90; Gustave Moynier, the "Architect" of the institution died on August 21 in his 83rd year, and finally Henry Dunant, who conceived the idea, followed them to the grave two months later on October 30, at the age of 82.

Florence Nightingale and Henry Dunant, the nurse and the voluntary worker, had the same mental attitude to the idea of suffering, an attitude which Gustave Moynier embodied, as it were, in the 1864 Convention.

And with the widening of the legal horizon, through the knowledge and development of humanitarian law, there blossomed forth for the first time what could be termed a civilisation of the human being which is undoubtedly one of the finest moments in history.

In the midst of the brutal conflict of primitive instincts, the individual conscience of man was formed, it has been said, and at the same time charity and the notion of human fellowship became manifest.

Florence Nightingale was one of those graceful beings, charitable in heart and in mind, who passed through life leaving a radiant trail.

Let us do homage to her memory.

Louis Demolis

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AND HENRY DUNANT

The anniversary which we are celebrating this year is an important one for the cause of humanity, and in particular for the Red Cross.

Although it is doubtful whether the Army Medical Services were any worse during the Crimean war than they had been during earlier wars, the human conscience in 1854 was more sensitive than before to deficiencies and failures to cater for the needs of man, look after his health and respect his personal dignity. Public opinion, enlightened by newspapers, lampoons, pamphlets and publications of every description, paid greater attention than it had done to injustices and failures to provide mutual aid.

At the time the lamentable situation of the sick both in Scutari and in the Crimea was not fully realized in Europe. Little was known, in particular, of the difficulties which Miss Nightingale was encountering in carrying out the task entrusted to her by the British Ministry of War ¹. For how could anyone imagine the way in which she would be constantly obstructed and attacked day after day by the head of the medical services of the British Expeditionary Force, a typical example of the type of doctor who systematically rejects new ideas and bold initiatives, as others were to do later in the time of Semmelweiss and Pasteur.

But Miss Nightingale's fame had spread and reached the ears of Henry Dunant, a young, ardent man, who was concerned about human suffering and took part in the religious movement of the *Réveil*. We must not forget that at that time everything

¹ Mrs. Cecil Woodham-Smith, in her splendid book on Florence Nightingale, quotes the following remark made by Stafford: "The nature of her difficulties is not understood and perhaps never will be" (p. 215). A translation of this work into French has just appeared (Albin, Michel, Paris, 1953).

English was the rage in the town in which he lived : the English language had to be learned, surnames and Christian names were anglicized and books which appeared in London were read. Dunant must certainly have learnt very soon of the prodigies accomplished by Florence Nightingale. Songs about the heroic actions of the " Woman with the Lamp " were being sung in Great Britain and a small book about her and her exploits was actually published and sold throughout the country ; it had an enormous circulation and her fame was such that it is bound to have spread to Geneva. Besides, Miss Nightingale had already stayed in Geneva several years before ; she had come there with her parents and moved in cultured Genevese circles, where she had the opportunity of meeting the economist Sismondi, the botanist de Candolle and other personalities. Dunant must have already heard people speak of her even then.

But when he learned of Miss Nightingale's achievements, he must have experienced the feeling which was to animate him throughout his life, and which Florence Nightingale herself experienced in the highest possible degree, that of our personal responsibility in the presence of suffering. When they spoke of sick and wounded soldiers, they expressed themselves in similar terms and described what they had seen and heard with the same indignation. Florence Nightingale, referring to the Crimean war, wrote in February 1857 in a moment of discouragement : " I have had to see my children dressed in a dirty blanket and an old pair of regimental trousers, and to see them fed on raw salt meat. And nine thousand of my children are lying, from causes which might have been prevented, in their forgotten graves ".¹

The very same tone is used in *A Memory of Solferino*. And in personal notes which the author of that great book wrote at Heiden towards the end of his life, and which have never been published², we find some lines where, after recording the influence his mother had on him, he adds that he should also

¹ Quoted by Mrs. Woodham-Smith in her book on Florence Nightingale, page 278.

² Manuscripts of Henry Dunant, Public and University Library of Geneva.

mention the influence of three ladies of Anglo-Saxon origin for whom he always had the greatest admiration: "Mrs. Beecher Stowe, the admirable author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to whom we owe the abolition of slavery in the United States. Then Miss Florence Nightingale, the devoted heroine of the Crimean war, *the Woman with the Lamp*, as Longfellow called her. Finally Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, the rich quakeress, who devoted her life to improving prison conditions both in England and on the Continent..."

* * *

The connection between Henry Dunant and Florence Nightingale was only an incidental one; both had the same enthusiasm and the same resolute faith which made them live their whole life with one single idea, always imperative, always the same one: to help the suffering and, for that purpose, to build up organizations and introduce new customs.

We should, however, say at once—and the differences between them will then become apparent—that it was above all action in the national field that Florence Nightingale envisaged, while Dunant considered that any solution must be on the international level. "*The Woman with the Lamp*" saw continually before her, like a nightmare, the terrible misery of her country's soldiers in the General Hospitals of Balaclava and Scutari. It was the British soldier she thought of, and the administrative services of her own country. The splendid efforts she made on returning from the hell of war, her untiring approaches to the War Ministry, her requests to Sydney Herbert, the struggles which she maintained to the day of her death and the incessant projects she put forward—all these were aimed at helping the British soldier. A work like this which succeeded in improving the condition of the military wounded and sick beyond all recognition and in establishing the dignity of the nursing profession on a basis of facts, naturally had repercussions beyond the British frontiers.

But in his enthusiasm "*the Man in white*", the visionary, ignored all frontiers. He was not concerned with the soldiers of one nation or of another, but with men whose only common

bond of fellowship was suffering. That was why Florence Nightingale, devoted as she was to the great cause of the victims of war, did not, when she read the *Souvenir de Solferino*, see at first the essential idea contained in the book, the idea which was nascent there—that of the internationalization of the wounded ; or at least, to be more exact, although she approved of the idea of a permanent organization for bringing aid to the wounded in time of war, she did not believe in the possibility of founding an international society for the purpose. This is clear from the letter written at her behest in January 1863 to the person whom Dunant had asked to give her his book, published three months before. Mr. B. Gagnebin, keeper of manuscripts at the Public and University Library of Geneva, has already published the letter in question in this review ¹, but it may be of interest to reproduce it here :

Dear Mademoiselle,

Miss Nightingale has read with attention and great interest the horrible recital of the battle described by Mr. Dunant and considers it all too faithful a picture of reality.

She has no doubts in regard to the object aimed at by Mr. Dunant, but has nevertheless certain objections to raise :

1. A society of the nature described would assume duties which are in fact the responsibility of the Government of each country, and any attempt to absolve Governments of a responsibility which is really theirs, and which they alone are fully able to assess, would give them increased opportunities for undertaking new wars.

2. It is proposed to establish *in time of war* means of action which should *always* exist if they are to be truly effective, and which now, after much care and anxiety on the part of the military authorities, exist in England.

The completest possible system of hospital treatment, including paid and unpaid nursing and nursing by women, which would in case of war constitute the essential basis of a system which appears to be as perfect as possible, has been established here, and no further extension of this system appears necessary.

I am sorry to send you a message which appears bound to damp the ardour of a philanthropist, but I am sure that he will recognize the importance of the objections raised by Miss N... ²

¹ See *Revue internationale*, June 1950, pages 419-429.

² Translated from the original French.

It will be noted that Florence Nightingale did not immediately perceive the essential genius of Dunant's proposal—namely the idea of organizing the relief of the wounded on a basis which was at the same time both permanent and international. History, however, was to show that Henry Dunant was right, as the signature of the first Geneva Convention a year later proved.

Time passed, and Dunant left his native city, without however losing interest in the great cause which he always regarded as his own. Always in advance of the times, he had launched another generous idea at the International Red Cross Conference held in Paris in 1867—that of relief to prisoners of war. He put it forward publicly a second time in London on 6th August 1872 in a lecture to members of the "Association for the Development of Social Sciences" on the subject of the "unification of conditions concerning prisoners of war".

In Dunant's personal notes we find the wording of the summary which was proposed as a preliminary basis for discussion. He calls it a "special draft Convention in favour of prisoners of war". The text reads as follows: "A draft diplomatic Convention, as short as possible and composed of general Articles, will be drawn up on the basis of the Convention relating to Russian prisoners which was signed between England and France during the Crimean war. The draft should, in so far as possible, stipulate a uniform standard of treatment for prisoners of war (officers and other ranks) in all civilized nations. It should place them, in each of the belligerent countries, under the high protection of the diplomatic or consular corps".

The lecture was a very great success; it was discussed in the newspapers and Lord Elcho, who presided, promised his support. The speaker began his discourse with a tribute to Miss Nightingale, saying that all the honour of the Geneva Convention was due to her. He added—forgetting, it seems, the real reasons for his journey—that it was the memory of the work accomplished in Crimea which had inspired him to go to Italy thirteen years before.

This tribute, which is to be found in a pamphlet which Dunant circulated and which he sent to Florence Nightingale, was expressed in the following words:

I would first remark that I was inspired with the idea of this work by the admirable devotion and the immense services rendered by Miss Nightingale to the English army in the Crimea. Her noble spirit, her generous heart, called forth the gratitude of the whole of England; but her lofty mission, in a patriotic point of view, has had results far greater than are generally supposed and surpassing even the imagination of the self-sacrificing heroine herself...

To so many who pay their homage to Miss Nightingale, though a very humble person of a small country, Switzerland, I beg to add my tribute of praise and admiration. As the founder of the Red Cross and the originator of the diplomatic Convention of Geneva, I feel emboldened to pay my homage. To Miss Nightingale I give all the honour of this human Convention. It was her work in the Crimea that inspired me to go to Italy during the war of 1859, to share the horrors of war, to relieve the helplessness of the unfortunate victims of the great struggle of June 24, to soothe the physical and moral distress, and the anguish of so many poor men, who had come from all parts of France and Austria, to fall victims of their duty, far from their native country, and to water the poetic land of Italy with their blood.

These words must have reached the ears of the lady to whom they referred, since Dunant wrote on August 10th from the St. James Hotel, Picadilly, where he was staying, to his brother Pierre in Geneva, saying: "Miss Nightingale has arranged for me to be invited by her brother-in-law, Sir Henry Verney, M.P., to spend 2 or 3 days at Claydon (which is an hour by train from London)." He does not appear to have gone to Claydon and thus missed seeing Florence Nightingale. A few days later, however, on September 4th, she wrote him the following letter from London:

Dear Sir,

May I express my very sincere gratitude to you for having sent me the Lecture which you gave in London at the meeting presided over by Lord Elcho. Permit me to congratulate you at the same time on the success of your noble work—a true work of God and of God's civilization. I am pleased to note your kindness in associating my poor name with the great Work, because it seems to me that this recognizes the way in which all English women, from the very poorest to the very richest, have worked during the last war—under your patronage, we must say, and under that of the Cross—(sic). They have given not only what they could spare, but even what they themselves needed.

You will be kind enough to excuse me for writing only these few poor lines. My niece Emily Verney, the only daughter of Sir Henry Verney, died yesterday. She it was who worked more than any of us here in 1870. She was truly the presiding genius of the Work for the wounded. God has called her back to Him—so lovable, so loving and so loved. The incessant business and the illnesses with which I am overwhelmed prevent me, dear Sir, much to my regret, from doing more than offering you an expression of my profound admiration.

(signed) Florence Nightingale ¹

Henry Dunant was to remain for more than another year in England. He gave lectures at Plymouth and Brighton, and later returned to London where he wrote a new pamphlet on the condition of prisoners. He does not appear to have exchanged any further correspondence with Florence Nightingale, but he continued to feel a veneration for her of which we find traces in the notes he wrote throughout the course of his life and, finally, at Heiden: notes, memories and detailed descriptions which he intended to use as a basis for a history of the Red Cross. He wrote of her, many years after his stay in London, as a "noble woman who has inaugurated a new era, a new spirit of universal charity".

Jean-G. Lossier.

¹ Translation from the original French.