



REVUE  
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DE LA  
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SUPPLEMENT

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# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## THE ICRC AND THE ALGERIAN CONFLICT

Since 1955 the *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge* has frequently published articles concerning the various activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross in connection with the Algerian conflict. We think it will be of interest to our readers to have a general and more detailed view of the International Committee's action over the past three years on behalf of the victims of events in Algeria.

### I. ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS UNDER DETENTION IN ALGERIA

In January 1955, when the events in Algeria first started, the ICRC considered that it was its duty to offer its traditional humanitarian services to the French Government, in order to assist the victims of the disturbances. The International Committee's offer of assistance referred to visits by its delegates to places of detention in Algeria, to ascertain the conditions of detention for persons under prosecution or interned as a result of the events.

The French Government having acceded to the Committee's request on February 2, 1955, a first visit to Algeria was made from February 28 to April 18. The mission, composed of three delegates, made a thorough inspection of 43 prisons in Algeria. During their visits the delegates were able to converse freely

with detainees of their choice. They submitted, as customary, remarks and suggestions concerning improvements in the conditions of internment, whenever this appeared to be necessary. On the return of the mission to Geneva, a detailed report was sent to the French Government by the ICRC on May 25, 1955.

The number of persons arrested having increased, however, since the last inspection, the ICRC again asked the French Government for authority to continue and to complete the work accomplished during the first mission.

When replying to the ICRC in December 1955, the French Government, without denying the principle of future missions of this nature, stated that imperative reasons of public security made it necessary for the sending of a further mission to be deferred.

New approaches to the French Government were made in 1956, and on March 26, Mr. Leopold Boissier, President of the ICRC, had an interview in Paris with the French Premier, Mr. Guy Mollet, whom he informed of the Committee's request to again send delegates to visit places of detention in Algeria; the French Government gave its approval a few days later.

The second mission, composed of five delegates, again inspected the principal prison establishments visited in 1955 and, for the first time, assembly centres set up since then; in all 57 establishments were visited. Books and games (for the value of 700,000 French francs) were despatched to the internment centres and distributed to the inmates.

After the delegates' return to Geneva, a full report on their visit was, as previously, sent to the French Government on July 6, 1956, and comments were made on the subject by the head of the mission during an interview granted to him by the French Premier on August 29, 1956.

A third mission of the ICRC was sent to Algeria in October 1956 and remained there until November 3. Its purpose was to inspect once more the 7 assembly centres where persons placed in assigned residence by the French authorities were held. Relief supplies (school stationery, books, etc.) to a value of 350,000 French francs were handed over to the internees

by the delegates whose remarks and suggestions were set forth in a written report to the French authorities, handed over personally by the head of the mission to the French Premier in Paris on November 15, 1956.

In pursuance of its activity in North Africa, the ICRC sent a fourth mission in May and June 1957, after having applied for and obtained permission from the French authorities. The object of this mission (composed of two delegates of whom one was a doctor) was to make further visits to places of detention in Algeria.

From May 15 to July 6 the delegates inspected 48 places of detention. In addition to prisons and assembly centres, they visited for the first time screening and transit centres under military control where prisoners or suspected persons are held temporarily during military operations.

As in the case of previous missions, the International Committee's delegates were able, during each of their visits, to speak without witnesses with detainees of their choice. Games, school stationery and mosquito nets valued at 1,500,000 French francs were also distributed by the delegates in a number of assembly centres. All remarks and suggestions relative to this fourth mission were set forth, as customary, in the detailed report submitted to the French Premier in Paris on July 9, 1957.

A fifth mission, the last to date, visited Algeria from November 23, 1957 to February 28, 1958. The two delegates of the ICRC who carried out the mission made 115 visits, mainly to military screening and transit centres, and assembly centres, and also ten hospitals where prisoners wounded during the fighting were receiving treatment. In the course of this mission the delegates covered over 15,000 kilometres throughout the whole of the Algerian territory.

On this occasion, further relief supplies (for a value of 2,500,000 French francs) were handed over to detainees by the delegates. The ICRC sent detailed reports on each of the centres inspected to the French Government on March 15, 1958.

It will be seen from the foregoing that a system of inspection — based on frequent visits to the principal places of detention in Algeria — has gradually been instituted by the ICRC with

the authority of the French civil and military authorities. So far the International Committee's delegates have made 270 visits to various centres. If present circumstances continue to prevail, further missions to Algeria for the same purpose will undoubtedly be required.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that Mr. Pierre Boissier, delegate of the ICRC, visited Mr. Ben Bella at the Prison de la Santé, Paris, on December 11, 1956.

The French authorities have also given their consent to a visit, in the near future, to the assembly centre set up at Mourmelon (Seine et Marne) a few months ago.

## II. ASSISTANCE TO FRENCH PRISONERS HELD BY FLN FORCES

With a view to assisting French civilians and military personnel captured by the FLN forces, the ICRC got into contact for the first time, early in 1956, with the representatives of the " Front de Libération algérien " in Cairo. It was requested that the Red Cross should be allowed to receive and to transmit news of prisoners, and that the latter should be permitted to correspond with their families and to receive parcels. The ICRC asked to be given authority to visit, in case of need, French prisoners held by the FLN forces.

For nearly two years the International Committee had tried — through numerous approaches made in Cairo, Morocco, Tunisia and Switzerland — to obtain the names of French prisoners in the hands of troops of the " Armée de Libération nationale ".

A first successful issue was reached early in 1958 when the special delegate of the ICRC in Tunis was authorised to pay a long visit to four French prisoners captured at the beginning of the year in the Sakiet Sidi Youssef area, and to provide them with a few relief supplies. The delegate was able to speak with the prisoners who handed him letters for their families which were duly forwarded from Geneva by the ICRC.

The delegate also obtained from the representatives of the " Front de Libération nationale " a list of ten names of French

combatants taken prisoner by the "Armée de Libération nationale" in February 1958. Since then the ICRC has received nine other names of French prisoners held by the FLN, thus bringing to 23 the total number of prisoners notified.

Following the execution of prisoners in May 1958, the ICRC was led to make the most urgent representations in order to ensure, on either side, the safety of prisoners and persons detained and to prevent the occurrence of further irreparable acts.

New proposals have been put forward by the ICRC with a view to increasing its humanitarian assistance on behalf of prisoners held by both parties concerned.

### III. ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED PERSONS

On various occasions, limited distributions of emergency relief supplies were made by the delegates of the ICRC in Algeria to civilians who had taken refuge inland on account of the events.

Distributions were made in the Bordj-Bou Arreridj, Kessabia, Ain-Hamiane and Duperré districts and consisted, in particular, of clothing and condensed milk, for a value of about 4 million French francs.

### IV. ASSISTANCE TO ALGERIAN WAR-DISABLED IN MOROCCO

In June 1957 a delegate of the ICRC in Morocco supplied a number of war-disabled with artificial legs and eyes.

Moreover, following the report of a delegate on a recent visit to a hospital in Oudja (East Morocco) the ICRC allocated funds to provide another group of Algerian war-disabled with artificial limbs.

### V. ASSISTANCE TO ALGERIAN REFUGEES IN MOROCCO AND TUNISIA

**Morocco.** — During the third mission to Algeria in November, 1956, the delegates of the ICRC noted that the Algerian

population was fleeing from the fighting area and taking refuge in East Morocco.

By the end of March 1957 the situation was becoming more and more serious and the delegates estimated that some 40,000 Algerian refugees without means of existence were living in groups scattered along the Algero-Moroccan frontier. The refugees (including 5,000 women and 10,000 children) were living in most distressing conditions.

The ICRC therefore made available to the delegates, from its own funds, about five million Moroccan francs for a first emergency relief action. This credit (which gradually rose to over 15 million Moroccan francs) made it possible, as from April 20, 1957, for the delegates to make several distributions of foodstuffs at Martimprey, Oujda, Bou-Beker, Berguent and Figuig. The relief supplies consisted of barley flour, semolina, tea and sardines.

The needs were still great however, and a further sum of ten million Moroccan francs was made available by the ICRC for a second relief action. A third special mission visited the Oujda district in July 1957 and distributed barley, hard wheat, sardines, oil and sugar.

Later, through the help given by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and private organisations (donations amounted to about 22 million Moroccan francs) the delegates of the ICRC were able to purchase locally hard wheat, dried peas, sugar, oil, condensed milk, tea and soap for distribution to Algerian refugees in Saida, Berguent, Figuig, Ahfir and Berkane.

Thanks to donations received from various National Societies further distributions on behalf of Algerian refugees were organised by the delegates, in co-operation with the " *Entraide nationale marocaine* ", and took place at intervals between February 2 and March 18, 1958, in 17 refugee centres scattered along the Algero-Moroccan frontier. Assistance was thus given to 9,500 families, i.e. about 55,000 refugees.

In addition, 5,000 food parcels, 5,000 blankets and 2,000 articles of clothing, sent by the Egyptian Red Crescent, were distributed in Morocco, as well as 84 tons of hard wheat and

13½ tons of sugar-loaves purchased locally with gift funds (about 6 million Moroccan francs).

In April 1958, the refugees' needs for food and clothing having been momentarily covered, the Moroccan authorities asked the ICRC to discontinue the distributions, while leaving them the possibility of making a further approach to Geneva should the need arise.

Up to the present six missions have been sent to Morocco by the ICRC. Foodstuffs represented a quarter of the relief supplies distributed and clothing three quarters; the total value amounted to about one million Swiss francs.

**Tunisia.** — At the request of the Tunisian authorities and the Tunisian Red Crescent, the ICRC had already sent a delegate to Tunisia in June 1957 to ascertain the situation and needs of the refugees and to see what measures could be taken for their assistance.

A second mission followed for the purpose of organising a first distribution of relief supplies to Algerian refugees, in conjunction with the newly formed Tunisian Red Crescent Society and after the necessary contacts had been made with the Tunisian authorities. This relief action was made possible through gifts received from the High Commissioner for Refugees, the French Government and various National Societies.

The first distribution consisted of food parcels; the ICRC then purchased clothing and blankets in view of the approach of winter.

Following the resolution adopted by the XIXth International Conference of the Red Cross at New Delhi, in December 1957 the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies launched an appeal on behalf of the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco. The favourable response made to the appeal by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and numerous other organisations made it possible to increase, to some extent, the amount of relief supplies distributed to these refugees, who include women, children and aged persons.

This relief action was organised by the delegates of the International Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies, and the representatives of the Tunisian Red Crescent, working in close co-operation.

When the distribution of emergency supplies for relief in winter (undertaken for the account of the High Commissioner for Refugees) came to an end, the ICRC considered that the Tunisian Red Crescent could deal with future needs, with the help of the League representatives. Since March 15, 1958, therefore, the distribution to Algerian refugees of relief supplies still donated by National Societies has been undertaken by the League and the Tunisian Red Crescent.

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THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS HELD BY FIDEL CASTRO  
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE ICRC

*July 31, 1958.* — On July 4, the International Committee of the Red Cross received a message from Mr. Fidel Castro, leader of the rebel forces in Cuba, stating that he was prepared to hand over to a commission of the Cuban Red Cross the wounded and sick of the Cuban Government forces who were in his hands.<sup>1</sup>

In order to give the Cuban Red Cross all possible assistance in carrying out this difficult task, and in accordance with its traditional duties, the ICRC offered the services of one its delegates, Mr. P. Jequier.

Mr. Jequier, who arrived at Havana on July 10, obtained permission from the head of the Cuban Government for this urgent humanitarian task, and received all the assistance he needed from the Cuban Red Cross and the military authorities for carrying it out.

Agreement had to be reached by the two parties as to the time and place for the transfer. This was a particularly difficult problem. The region is mountainous and difficult and the journey would be a great ordeal for the severely wounded. It was quickly realized that, in these circumstances, the Cuban Red Cross could not effect the operation alone, and that assistance must be requested from the Government forces. Since the opposing parties would therefore meet face to face, it was essential to find a place which would meet the requirements both of humanity and of security.

As he was not in direct contact with the insurgent forces, Mr. Jequier was unable to carry out the negotiations himself, and they were conducted by the ICRC in Geneva which acted

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue internationale*, July 1958.

as intermediary and transmitted to each party the other's proposals and counter-proposals. A truce was arranged, and the ICRC several times enjoined both parties to take all necessary measures to safeguard persons escorting the wounded.

On July 20, after two evacuation plans had been successively abandoned, it was finally agreed to carry out the operation on July 23. It began at the scheduled time at Las Vegas de Tibacoa, in the presence of Mr. Jequier, assisted by another ICRC delegate, Mr. J. P. Schoenholzer, and took two days to complete. The units of the Cuban army and the Cuban Red Cross flew the red cross flag, while the insurgents carried white flags. The truce was respected by both sides throughout the operation.

The wounded, numbering 57, were then evacuated by helicopter. In addition, to the great satisfaction of the ICRC, the rebel forces released 196 other prisoners who were in poor health, bringing the total number to 253.

Unfortunately a serious accident must be reported. Shots were fired on a private car, carrying the President of the Cuban Red Cross and the President of the Santiago de Cuba section of that society, the former was slightly injured, and his companion was seriously wounded. This regrettable incident occurred outside the neutralized zone before the convoys formed up to proceed to the reception point.

The humanitarian action carried out in Cuba is an event in the history of the Red Cross. This is the first occasion on which the opposing sides have met face to face to effect the release of prisoners, under the auspices of the ICRC. It marks a step forward in the protection of victims of internal disturbances, pursuant to Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which sets forth the humanitarian provisions to be applied in the case of armed conflict not of an international character.

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## THE ACTIVITY OF THE ICRC IN THE LEBANON

The disturbances which broke out in the Lebanon in May 1958 caused suffering among the civilian population and the forces taking a direct part in the struggle. It was the International Committee's duty, as a neutral and independent body, to offer its services to the parties in conflict in order to perform its traditional mission of lending assistance and protection to the victims.

Its first concern was to recall to the opposing parties through its General-Delegate for the Middle East, Mr. D. de Traz, the essential humanitarian principles as set forth in Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which makes specific reference to internal disturbances. The full text of the article was published in the Lebanese Press under the auspices of the Lebanese Red Cross and the International Committee.

Mr. de Traz who was already in regular contact with the Lebanese Red Cross and the authorities in Lebanon, succeeded in getting into touch on several occasions with the heads of the adverse party in various parts of the country, in particular at Beirut, Tripoli and the Chouf mountain region which made it possible for him to give the assistance of the ICRC where it was needed.

He was thus able on several occasions to facilitate the evacuation of the seriously wounded. In addition he saw that there was a great need for medical supplies. By drawing upon the few relief funds available to it the ICRC sent various consignments of relief supplies by air to Beirut, in particular blood plasma, surgical equipment and medicaments.

Mr. de Traz who for some time has been assisted by Mr. P. Courvoisier, twice visited the Chouf mountain region held by the Druse insurgents where, through lack of means, the wounded

could not be cared for. He took with him equipment sufficient for setting up an operating theatre and a field dressing station. Two voluntary workers, a Lebanese doctor and a nurse, agreed to accompany Mr. de Traz and will run this emergency unit.

The relief activities of the ICRC delegation in Beirut have also been extended to the civilian population, particularly in the encircled area of Tripoli. On July 7 a fleet of lorries loaded with medicaments and thirty tons of flour crossed the lines and entered this area where the situation had become critical, owing to the lack of food and medical supplies. A second relief convoy was sent to Tripoli on July 21, carrying condensed milk for children, twenty tons of wheat and another consignment of medicaments.

Other consignments of relief supplies are foreseen and some National Red Cross Societies have already announced their intention of sending important gifts to support the ICRC relief action which will be continued so long as the situation and needs make it necessary.

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## A MISSION OF THE ICRC IN THE GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC

At the end of June Mr. H. G. Beckh, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, visited the German Federal Republic with the object of continuing his visits to political detainees in various prisons<sup>1</sup>.

On starting his mission, the International Committee's representative had an interview with the head of the department concerned at the Federal Ministry of Justice in Bonn. After discussing several points in connection with conditions of internment for political detainees, arrangements were made by the Ministry (in co-operation with the Ministries of Justice of the "Länder" in Saxony-Anhalt, Bremen and Schleswig-Holstein) for the visits to be made in accordance with the programme proposed by Mr. Beckh.

Following his interviews with the authorities concerned in the three "Länder", Mr. Beckh visited prisons in Hanover, Celle, Obslebshausen-Bremen, Neumünster and Lübeck, where he was able to converse freely without witnesses with twenty-six political detainees, some of whom were serving sentences and others awaiting trial. It was thus possible for him to ascertain that the detention conditions in the places visited were in conformity with normal humanitarian practice.

After each visit the delegate talked with the director of the prison and informed him of the prisoners' requests. The directors, as well as the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, took note of Mr. Beckh's comments. Some of the requests could be given favourable consideration immediately, while for others the directors promised that everything possible would be done.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue internationale*, April and June, 1957.

In the course of his mission Mr. Beckh was accompanied on several occasions by Mr. Leusch of the General-Secretariat of the Red Cross of the German Federal Republic. At the end of his tour, which lasted about a week, Mr. Beckh had a final interview at the Federal Ministry of Justice during which he referred to the various points noted during his visits and was given the assurance that his comments would receive careful consideration. The representatives of the various Ministries whom Mr. Beckh met during his mission duly confirmed that a delegate of the ICRC could again inspect all the prisons visited so far, as well as any other prison establishment.

In addition, Mr. Beckh had several talks in Bonn with Dr. Schlögel, Secretary-General of the Red Cross of the German Federal Republic, and his staff, on various matters of interest to this Society and to the ICRC.

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## TRIBUTES TO Mr. MAX HUBER

With the approval of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, President of the British Red Cross Society, the Council of that Society has just awarded its highest distinction, the Certificate of Honour Class I, to Mr. Max Huber. The International Committee learnt of this award with a sense of great satisfaction and pride, for it honours Mr. Huber in a special manner: in the first place, it is rarely bestowed—the number of holders at any one time is limited to twenty-five; secondly there is reason for pride and satisfaction at the text of the citation, which includes the following principal passage:

“ His wise judgment, his outstanding qualities of kindness and generosity, combined with a strong sense of justice and great personal modesty fitted him particularly well for this post. Under his strong leadership the International Committee was able to alleviate the sufferings of millions of many nations during the Second World War.

Mr. Huber has also made an immeasurable contribution to the Red Cross through his great intellectual ability. His writings embody the high principles he brought to every aspect of his work with the Red Cross and which will continue to guide the Red Cross movement in all its activities ”.

This tribute by a National Society to the Honorary President of the ICRC is to some extent also an honour for all those who

during the dark years of the last war, worked under the Red Cross emblem, for it cites the great common effort which, for all those working at Geneva, was accomplished under the illuminating leadership of Mr. Huber.

By a happy coincidence, Mr. Huber has also been honoured by his own compatriots. In July, at an official ceremony attended by a large number of persons well-known in university and political life, the University of Zurich accepted a bust of Mr. Huber, who has played such an important role in his own country as well as at international level. A number of speeches were made at the ceremony, at which Mr. Huber was present.

These marks of esteem and recognition for its Honorary President are a source of great satisfaction to the International Committee, and the *Revue Internationale*, to which Mr. Max Huber has contributed on many occasions, is happy to report them to its readers.

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# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## THE RED CROSS CONVENTIONS<sup>1</sup>

*by*

G. I. A. D. DRAPER

Colonel Draper, who was formerly Assistant Director of the British Army Legal Services, is now Lecturer in the Faculty of Laws, King's College, London. He has a wide knowledge of the law of war and of military organization. In 1956, he was one of the experts whom the ICRC consulted regarding the repression of breaches of the Geneva Conventions. More recently, as a member of the United Kingdom Government's delegation, he took a very active part in the work of the XIXth International Conference of the Red Cross.

This book by Colonel Draper concerning the Geneva Conventions is of interest in more ways than one. Before examining the substance of each of the Conventions, he rightly examines the background and general principles on which they are based, and concludes that "they are a worthy and dignified reply to the challenge of horror and brutality with which, unfortunately, this generation is only too familiar".

The author then considers the situation of civilians, prisoners of war and, lastly, the wounded and sick, with special reference to the improvements which have been made to the status of these different categories of war victims.

The last chapter of the book is devoted to the contribution of the Conventions to the law of war. Among the very inte-

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<sup>1</sup> Stevens and Sons, London.

resting considerations stated by Colonel Draper, one should note the following passage in particular :

“ As we shall see in considering the Geneva Wounded and Sick Convention, the use of nuclear weapons causing deleterious effects on the wounded and sick, or the destruction of protected medical installations, will be illegal. If their use inevitably involves such consequences the use of the words “ in all circumstances ” in Article 1 will eliminate, or at least considerably restrict, lawful recourse to such weapons.”

Finally, the conclusion regarding the Geneva Conventions shows the generous and profoundly humane outlook of the author :

“ They are, at the same time, an emphatic avowal before the world that the humanitarian principles of justice and compassion must govern and determine the treatment of man by man if our civilisation is to be worthy of the name.”

Appended to this work are the texts of the four Geneva Conventions, 1949, the list of States which are party to them and the “ Geneva Conventions Act, 1957 ” by which the British Parliament authorized ratification by the United Kingdom and laid down certain implementing regulations, particularly with regard to penal matters.

Colonel Draper's book is without any doubt a most interesting work for all who wish to acquaint themselves with the Geneva Conventions or who may be called upon to apply them.

*C. P.*