



REVUE INTERNATIONALE
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

ET

BULLETIN DES SOCIÉTÉS
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

SUPPLEMENT

First Year, 1948

GENÈVE

1948



SUPPLEMENT

VOL. I

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No. 2

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

*NEW PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS GENEVA*

Geneva, February 9, 1948.

M. Carl Burckhardt, Minister in Paris, has just relinquished his position as President "en congé" of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, while retaining membership. The important functions to which he was assigned in Paris by the Swiss Federal Council in 1945 preclude his release from that post at the present time.

The International Committee announce that M. Paul Ruegger Minister in London, has agreed to fill the vacancy. M. Ruegger has had considerable experience of the Red Cross, in particular during the war, when he participated during 1943-44 in the Committee's work in Geneva. The Swiss Federal Council have again consented to dispense him with his diplomatic services until further notice, thus allowing him to devote himself entirely to the interests of the Red Cross.

The International Committee will issue a circular at an early date to all Central Committees of National Red Cross Societies, as soon as M. Ruegger has taken up his duties in Geneva.

UNITED NATIONS APPEAL FOR CHILDREN

It is nearly three years since the second World War ended on the field of battle. The victims of the war are still counted in tens of millions. Amongst them are many millions of children, bereft of their parents. Some of them have a family, it is true, but those relatives are inhabitants of, or foreigners living in a country where there is not even the minimum sustenance necessary for a young human creature.

The second World War has ended, but one sees the passions that provoked it and which it, in turn, has inflamed, still unassuaged.

And yet, even whilst the struggle continued, the voice of humanity was never quite silenced and there have been those amongst

the people of the nations, who have kept alive in the midst of the strife, the vision of ultimate reconciliation.

It follows then, that some at least of the principles of humane conduct must be kept unimpaired. Judgment on those who have resorted to war must be eschewed, but there remains the duty of carrying succour to the most pitiable of the victims of war. For long, the voluntary organizations have, single-handed, assumed that task. The Red Cross has found at its side, in the vanguard, the Churches, the international associations for youth, and the organizations for the relief of the victims of racial persecution. Where children were concerned it has always had the co-operation of the "International Save the Children Union", (now called the "International Union for Child Welfare"), which was founded after the first World War under the patronage of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and which has amongst its members a number of National Red Cross Societies. The Governments of neutral countries, too, have played a great part in this same effort of bringing relief to the victims of war ; they have set on foot, and even subsidized, such enterprises as the Irish, the Swedish and the Swiss Funds for the victims of war.

Let us turn to the belligerents ; there we see that the prosecution of the war compelled them to resort to economic blockade, the object of which was to keep from civilians who were engaged on making the weapons of war all that strengthened them for that work. Such measures meant that the children of the enemy, as well as the children of the friendly countries occupied by the enemy, were inevitably deprived of much that they vitally needed. And at the same time the belligerents clearly had to use every effort to give the best possible food and other supplies to their own citizens and those of their allies.

The greatest enterprise in relief organized by the Governments was undeniably UNRRA. It was created before the war ended, with the purpose of giving assistance to those member countries of the United Nations which had endured the severest hardships of the war. However, when the fighting ceased, the first limited plans were soon exceeded and UNRRA also brought its aid, moderate in degree, but vital, to the people of some of the enemy countries.

Meanwhile, in 1946, UNRRA had to be wound up when supplies came to an end, and when the private charitable organizations had exhausted the means at their disposal. The international situation was still chaotic and the economic reconstruction in the various countries had hardly made a start.

* * *

At that moment the United Nations Organization made the decision to carry on part of the work of UNRRA in the form of the "International Children's Emergency Fund", to which would be assigned the unexpended balances of UNRRA. The Fund would be further strengthened by the gifts of the member States of the United Nations and, if possible, also of other countries.

The question arose : would it not be wise to make an appeal to private benevolence and so give the enterprise a fresh inspiration ? The Economic and Social Council shared this view and in March, 1947, gave its sanction to the plan for a World Appeal, which would pool all the private and unofficial contributions for the relief of children. Thus the great undertaking of Mr. Aake Ording began in the "*United Nations Appeal for Children*".

The International Committee of the Red Cross, for whose collaboration in this work of mercy M. Trygve Lie had asked on May 13, wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations thus :

" The International Committee is glad to hear that the Economic and Social Council has given its approval to the suggestion that a special World Appeal be made in behalf of children *without distinction of race, creed, nationality or political doctrine...* It wishes to record its satisfaction that the United Nations Organization has set its hand to this great undertaking for bringing together all the resources that are most fruitful for the succour of children in distress. The Committee also especially welcomes the decision, since its motive derives from those principles of humanity which are the mainspring of its own efforts. It therefore identifies itself with this endeavour, which it hopes may meet from every quarter of the world a great response "

During the summer of 1947, the scheme for the Appeal was developed. In September Mr. Ording sent his assistant, Mr. Lubbock, to Geneva, to convey the request of the United Nations that the International Committee might make its own contribution to the work for the child victims of the war throughout the world.

The International Committee felt it a duty to respond to such a request; its chief task is to mitigate the suffering of those whom war afflicts, and it is dedicated to the attempt to give the new generation greater promise of life in a world that has found reconciliation. When the question arises, as it has done in recent years, of aid for civil populations affected by the war, the first principle of the Committee remains to devote itself before all to helping children and mothers. Finally, the United Nations Appeal to all peoples for the well-being of children of all peoples is the first manifestation since the war of an act of peace by the community of nations.

The Red Cross, born of war, is also the symbol of reconciliation. At the height of the conflict, it proclaims that in face of suffering there are no longer either friends or enemies. Amidst those passions that are unleashed it appeals to the combatants to accept limits to their power. It can demand with all the more reason in the post-war period, that every work of charity shall be done without any distinction of nationality, above all where children are concerned. Thus in December 1945, the International Committee joined with several of the chief organizations for international relief who have their headquarters in Switzerland, in order to launch the first appeal in behalf of those victims of the second World War who had been the most severely afflicted, namely the children. At Christmas-time, 1946-47, the Committee was associated with the same organizations in issuing further appeals of a similar kind: in 1946, in behalf of war victims among the civil populations, in 1947 in behalf of all victims of the war. On each occasion it laid stress on the importance of succouring the younger generation.

The International Committee had to assure itself that the United Nations Appeal in behalf of children should have that world-wide character which informs the work of the Red Cross.

The letter from Mr. Trygve Lie already quoted, and the later statements of Mr. Aake Ording gave the highest guarantees on this score.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council however, had made the provision on December 11, 1946, that the " International Children's Emergency Fund " should serve principally to give relief to the children of the countries who had suffered aggression, or of those who had, until then, been given relief by UNRRA. Whilst approving the United Nations Appeal in behalf of children the Council declared that its primary object was to supplement the " International Children's Emergency Fund ".

The question now arose : would the International Committee be justified in holding the view that a considerable part of the funds collected under the Appeal should be used to aid children in countries other than those nominated to benefit by the Fund, or should it be placed at the disposal of Governments or national and international organizations for the purpose of general relief ? Would the fruits of the Appeal, considered as a whole, in this way be employed in a manner entirely in keeping with the spirit of impartiality of the Red Cross ?

Mr. Aake Ording was able, when passing through Geneva at the end of 1947, to hold discussions with the International Committee, as a result of which he wrote on December 29 as follows :

I would like to comment briefly on our fundamental principle of universality. The keynote of the Appeal is that it should represent the whole world as one community, acting in concert. This applies as much to the help given as to the actual collection of money. It is true that the Economic and Social Council in its discussions in March and August expressed the clear hope that the ICEF should be the major beneficiary, and this is still our policy. This is natural, since the ICEF is itself a creation of the United Nations, and therefore the latter would clearly wish its own agency, established for the express purpose of helping children in need, to benefit largely by its own Appeal. At the same time, the Council's Resolution stated that the Appeal was for the benefit of children in need generally; thus the way is open for the proceeds of the Appeal to benefit and reinforce materially any established agency devoted to children in distress.

This is emphasized by the fact that originally it had been proposed to devote the entire proceeds of the Appeal to the ICEF only. But the Council decided in March that it should be of wider scope, in order that

all those working for the common purpose should be able to participate in the results of the campaign. In this way the true universality is maintained both in collection and operation, and the principle of non-discrimination is given practical effect.

Thus, both the voluntary organizations taking part in the Appeal, and the public who, on International Children's Day, February 29, 1948, will be making sacrifices in behalf of child victims of the war, will have the assurance that they are helping to make a world where children may look forward with confidence to the years ahead of them, in spite of differences of religion or of social and political systems, in a region beyond the memories of the struggle and beyond the hatreds kindled by the war.

* * *

The International Committee had hoped that a closer collaboration would be established between the United Nations Appeal and Fund, and those voluntary Societies who had been working for many years in the cause of child relief. It now seems that in future the United Nations Organization, in making its appeal for children, will not insist that it must reserve its humanitarian efforts exclusively for particular Governments. The proceeds of the Appeal will be considered by it as an offering to demonstrate the share of all peoples in the work of peace. At the same time, in accordance with agreements being prepared by Mr. Ording with several of the National Appeal Committees, at least half of the sums or merchandise collected in each country will be set aside at the disposal of national relief organizations. These bodies may therefore, inspired by the world wide appeal of February 29, be able to look forward to the realization of schemes to which they have been devoting all their efforts for years past.

The International Committee of the Red Cross hopes that the Appeal, addressed to the whole world in behalf of all children in distress, will not only allow voluntary organizations, especially the National Red Cross Societies, to extend their work, but will also ensure for still more countries the benefits provided without

stint by the International Fund of the United Nations for the relief of children.

Thus, from all countries of the world resources will come, at the earliest possible moment, to the help of the children of all nations, without distinction of race, creed, political doctrine or nationality: "The United Nations Appeal for children", as Mr. Aake Ording wrote in the *United Nations Bulletin* of January 15, "can neither remove nor run away from the fact of conflicting ideologies, of racial hatred, and of clashing power politics. But it can point to one simple fact which is even stronger and more important—the suffering of children. The voices of governmental representatives at Lake Success can for the most part only reach the average citizen now and then, from far away, and on complicated issues. But the voice of the children is constantly heard, in their own homes. To agree to save children needs no persuasion. It is already the concern of the average citizen, and an appeal for common action to save them is an appeal out of his own heart".

G. Dunand.

DEATH OF MAHATMA GANDHI

M. Paul Ruegger, Swiss Minister in London, was recently instructed by the Federal Council to visit the Governments of India and Pakistan, with a view to establishing direct contact and diplomatic relations between the two Dominions and Switzerland.

During his trip, M. Ruegger was received by Mahatma Gandhi on January 16, during his fast.

On this occasion Mahatma Gandhi asked M. Ruegger to convey to the International Committee his best wishes for its further development, and that of the Red Cross as an instrument of concord and mercy.

A few days later, the entire world was moved by the news of the Mahatma's tragic death.

Sharing the emotion created by the untimely disappearance of this great world figure, the International Committee cabled

to the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, and to the Red Cross Societies of both these countries, to express its heartfelt sympathy and sorrow at the death of the Mahatma, the apostle of the doctrine of non-violence, who devoted his entire life to the defence of human rights and liberties.

MISSION TO INDIA AND PAKISTAN

In reply to urgent messages received in Geneva the International Committee instructed Dr. O. Wenger, former delegate in India, to travel to that country.

Dr. Wenger left Geneva at the end of December. On arriving in New Delhi he was received by the Governor General, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and by the leaders of the Indian Red Cross Society. He also made contact with the Government of Pakistan and with the Pakistan Red Cross, which was constituted on January 25, with Governor General Jinnah as chairman.

Dr. Wenger has since then been requested to travel to Jammu (Kashmir), where 250,000 refugees were cut off in various areas. Dr. Wenger managed to cross the fighting zone at the frontier, and safely reached Jammu.

ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE'S DELEGATIONS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD ¹

To play the part of intermediary between belligerents in wartime, in what concerns the work of mercy, calls, at least to some extent, for direct personal contacts. The Committee's activities are sustained from outside sources, and are likewise wholly directed towards the outside. Liaison, therefore, with the National Red Cross Societies and with Governments is indispensable. This is the task of the special missions and permanent delegations.

¹ See *Revue*, Jan. 1948, p. 44.

If the Committee's role were exactly defined by the Conventions, a corps of delegates—or at least a skeleton staff—could be built up beforehand, and its duties, including relations with authorities, defined in advance. But this is not the case, and it is left to circumstances and governments to decide.

At the outset of the war the situation was fairly simple. A few countries only were affected, most of them within easy reach of Geneva. As soon as the "Blitz" against Poland was ended, the war became more or less static. The earliest and, for a time, the sole concern of the ICRC was to ensure the functioning of the Central Prisoners of War Agency, and to visit the camps. Appropriate arrangements had to be made on the spot with the authorities and the national Societies, to speed up the transmission of lists and other information to the Agency. Visits to the camps, a practice begun during the first World War which proved of immense benefit to the inmates, had to be resumed. In 1914 prisoners of war had no more protection than that given by the inadequate provisions of the Hague Convention: in 1939, on the other hand, their situation was covered in detail by a complete legal code, namely the 1929 PW Convention. It fell to the Committee's delegates, and to the representatives of the Protecting Powers, to watch how this Convention was applied. The task of visiting the camps was entrusted preferably to doctors, because of their special qualifications. Knowing just how much trained men can endure without undue risk, medical practitioners are less easily impressed than laymen by apparent deficiencies, not detrimental to health. On the other hand, they are able to recognize defects which would escape the inexperienced eye. What interests them is to find out not only whether rations are "good", but whether they have sufficient nutritive value.

As the conflict spread, the tasks of the ICRC rapidly increased. The Agency had to exchange correspondence with all countries, precisely at a time when communications were paralysed. In all theatres, the number of prisoners of war mounted with great speed. In Europe, in the Axis countries alone, they already numbered several million. Those taken by the Allies, until the last few months of the war, were less numerous, but

were scattered far and wide ; from the battlefields of Europe and North Africa they were sent to camps as far away as India, the United States and Australia. Each new declaration of war, even in the case of the countries farthest away from the theatre of operations, led to the internment of hundreds, if not thousands, of civilians, in America, the Far East and South Africa, as well as in Europe. For visits to be made to these widely scattered camps, delegates were needed.

The war had spread wide over a great extent of the world. Graver was the fact that each day its ravages went deeper and continued to make fresh classes of victims. To the prisoners of war and civilian internees, ever growing in number, were added millions of other victims, all the populations suffering from starvation and persecution, from bombing and forcible separation from their homes. Prisoners and internees were not always adequately protected by the Conventions, or failed to have the benefit of their proper application. The ICRC interceded and negotiated ; it endeavoured to fill existing gaps by particular schemes. The Committee tried to do what it could for the persons who enjoyed no treaty protection ; it suggested projects, organized, and above all improvised. This work required a still larger number of delegates.

With each phase, the war brought new problems and at the same time destroyed the means of solving them. The belligerents not only used weapons such as bombs and shells that shattered the lines of communication and forced the ICRC constantly to seek fresh routes and means of transport ; they also resorted to blockades, the censorship, and other restrictive measures. The medical delegates had an increasingly valuable part in the work, and it became necessary to have the help of legal advisers to carry on negotiations, commercial agents to buy relief supplies, shipping agents to transport the goods, and experienced business men to organize the work. In a small country like Switzerland, which was concentrating all its energies on national defence, it was not easy to find all the help needed in such exceptional circumstances. The ICRC was unable to send out the requisite number of delegates as promptly as it could have wished, since the belligerents were not always

disposed to receive them. Weeks, often months, were wasted in attempts to secure travel permits.

The few delegates who were available, had to undertake the most varied tasks. They had to represent on the spot all the departments of the Geneva organization. The allocation of duties could be easily settled in Geneva and in those countries which were far from the scene of the fighting and where problems were few and unvaried. But this was not possible in Germany, nor in the occupied countries. Here, in consequence of bombing and shortage of supplies, the daily cry was for immediate relief of all kinds; here, above all, the need was for prompt and decisive action in emergencies. At such times the organizer had to act as lawyer, the legal expert as public health officer, the doctor as merchant and diplomatist. In some of the oppressed countries, where everything was destroyed, pillaged or laid waste, the delegate was obliged to undertake, over and above his official duties, yet other tasks, arising out of his very presence in the country. The mere sight of a sign-plate bearing the Red Cross raised boundless hopes; in their distress, people credited the delegate from Geneva with almost superhuman powers.

If the whole tale cannot be told here, a few extracts, taken from diaries and reports, will throw light on often remarkable features of the life on service of the ICRC delegate.

In the Mediterranean, October 27, 1943, evening.

Under a leaden sky the freighter *Padua* was ploughing its way doggedly through the dark water. The holds were loaded to capacity with sacks of mail and parcels being shipped from Lisbon to Marseilles. The ICRC delegate asked the vessel's position, "Where are we, captain? We should have passed Sète by now..."

The skipper was an old sea-dog, a Portuguese, tough and grousing and yet not insensitive. Not a landmark, not a lighthouse, not a gleam to be seen along the French coast...

Towards midnight the delegate went to his cabin and was soon fast asleep. He was awakened by a terrific explosion. He sprang from his bunk, turned the switch, but there was no

light. Groping his way forward, he opened the cabin door. The water had reached the gangways ; groans and cries rent the night. A rush of water forced him back into his cabin. He was quite cool, but felt curiously detached. His mind was working clearly and he filled his lungs with all the air they could hold, then held his breath. As the sea water flooded the cabin he swam his way out. The current dragged him under water and forced him along the gangway. He reached the stern of the vessel and the companion-way leading up between decks, but he could no longer struggle against the suction of the ship which was dragging him down. It was the end.

Artificial respiration was bringing him back to life... The captain and some of the crew, whose cabins were in the fore-castle had managed to cut the lashing of the life-boats. Hearing the delegate's calls for help, they had finally discovered him and fished him up, naked, as he clung to the bars of a hen-coop afloat in the water.

So he was saved, the sole survivor of the eight men in the *Padua's* stern. But there were still five miles to the shore...

Salonika, 1944.

For over a year, at an extremely awkward time, the ICRC delegation had been carrying on relief for the inhabitants of the town and province. Oppressed by the victors, the country was constantly the scene of skirmishes, assassination of members of the occupying forces, reprisals and executions. Constant vigilance was required, because of the military patrols, the partisans and the mined and destroyed roads.

As he was returning from one of these relief expeditions at the beginning of August, a delegate learned that the little town of Naoussa, situated on a plateau on a spur of the Vermion range, had been liberated by the partisans. The Germans had fallen back to the railway station six kilometres from the town, and the population was without food. He decided to make a detour by way of Naoussa to examine the situation on the spot.

Before turning off on the Edessa road, at Verria, he gave the driver careful instructions. The road was mined in places, and

it was essential not to exceed twelve miles an hour, and to slow down still further if fighting was going on between the Germans and partisans, as the sporadic shooting seemed to prove. Finally, he told him that if the car was attacked, he must stop at once.

The car went forward cautiously. The driver fixed his eyes on the road, while the other occupants kept a look-out over the country. To their left was the Salonika-Florina railway, to the right a small plain stretching to the foot of the Vermion, a stronghold of the partisans from which the Germans had never managed to dislodge them. The travellers were now quite close to the place known as *Aghios Nicolaos*, barely two miles from Naoussa. Suddenly, a burst of firing, doubtless aimed at the car. The driver hastily pulled up, the passengers sprang out and into a ditch at the right of the road, and lay down in eight inches of water. In front of them the car was half concealed by a field of maize. That might just save the engine. The firing was coming from the direction of the partisans. Hadn't they seen the Red Cross on the car? Or did they take it for a ruse? For half an hour the bullets rained down. The car was hit; windows were broken and a tyre burst. Now the shots were coming from the other side, from the railway. The Germans in the station replying, no doubt. The travellers were caught in the cross-fire. Fortunately, the German's firing showed that they had recognized the Red Cross emblems and were trying to spare the car whilst they aimed at the partisans.

After half an hour the firing stopped suddenly. Was the skirmish really finished? Repairs were made hurriedly. The delegate decided to go on foot with his secretary to the village of Aghia Marina, three miles away. From there he would try to telephone the partisan headquarters. The car was left in the care of the driver.

Finally, at nightfall the travellers arrived at Naoussa, which was bedecked with Greek and Allied flags and where they were given a grand welcome. At partisan headquarters, apologies were made and everyone was glad that the incident had no serious consequences.

The food situation was indeed very precarious, and relief was needed. As the German had control of the Salonika-Verria-Naoussa road, there was no direct route for supplies to be brought up. But there were tracks through the mountains between Naoussa and Verria, where there was a depot of ICRC food and medical supplies. A mule train could convey them.

Paris, August 15, 1944.

The ICRC representatives had learned that the hospital at Orleans was asking urgently for medicaments, pharmaceutical stores, and special foods for diets, and that the "Stalag" was running short of food supplies.

Five tons of relief goods were loaded on to a truck furnished by the French Red Cross, and two of its men, the driver and his mate, accompanied the delegate.

The party was off next day at 15 hours. On reaching Etrechy, five miles from Etampes, the truck was stopped by SS men, who inspected the delegate's credentials for his mission. Disregarding their permit, they ordered him to return to Paris. The party made some show of acquiescence and the truck turned back. Half a mile on the road it turned off towards Douray, reached La Ferté-Alais, and then proceeded on its way towards Malesherbes, using secondary roads to by-pass the town. In the neighbourhood of Pithiviers it came out on highway 51, and continued in the direction of Orleans.

After a few wayside incidents, the travellers reached Voinbert, nears Orleans, towards 9 hours. Civilians waved and made signals to warn them that fighting was going on near by. Apparently an American armoured column had attacked Orleans that afternoon. The crackle of machine-guns could be heard, and at short intervals rifle-fire and artillery. The delegate decided to park the truck in the courtyard of a farm for the time being. At night fall rifle-fire ceased, but the bombardment continued.

At dawn on August 17, the car pursued its way, soon reaching Orleans, where all the inhabitants, in spite of injunctions, were rejoicing and thronging the streets, which they had decked with the French and Allied colours.

At the St. Aignan Hospital the delegate was given a warm welcome by the President of the local Red Cross Committee, and by the two doctors, a French senior officer and a British captain, who had been prisoners of war. The German guard had just surrendered, and the prisoner patients had been freed. The French officer told them that on August 14, all the prisoners of war were to have been sent by train to Charleville, via Paris, but that the Resistance, warned in time, had blown up the line a few miles from Orleans. The prisoners managed to escape and hide in the woods.

The food and medical supplies were handed over to the hospital, where injured civilians were being brought in constantly. The situation was most alarming. From Olivet, a district occupied by the Germans on the left bank of the Loire, the artillery was shelling Orleans without a pause. All along the river bank the streets were under constant fire. At the request of the town authorities, the delegate and his two companions used their truck to take relief supplies to people cut off in certain quarters. Bullets whistled about their heads. German soldiers hidden on the roof-tops were firing down into the streets; Americans answered their fire, and so did the civilians. The house from which women and children were to be taken was in a street running down to the quay along the Loire, and exposed to gun-fire. A shell passed over the heads of the rescuers; civilians shouted, but all the occupants were unharmed.

In the afternoon the bombardment stopped. His work done, the delegate decided to return to Paris. He called at American headquarters, where a Colonel received him very courteously and asked him to remain in Orleans until the Allies arrived in Paris.

"Is that an order, Sir?" the delegate asked. "No, but it's for your own sake."

The Red Cross representative thanked him, then pointed out on the map the route he wished to follow. They showed him approximately the positions of the spearheads of the American armoured columns along the road to Pithiviers. The three men started off at once for the capital, which they reached in the afternoon of the following day, after an eventful journey.

Germany, February, 1945.

Military events on the Eastern front had led the German authorities to move the prisoner camps from the regions threatened by the Russian advance and place them nearer the centre of the Reich. The withdrawal was made in headlong haste. In long columns, the exhausted men were obliged to make forced marches, often sustained by only a single slice of bread daily. They suffered from cold, as well as hunger, and hundreds died by the roadside in the Government General of Poland or the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

After many attempts, the delegation in Berlin at last succeeded in finding out the route these columns were following and the approximate time-tables. It got permission to try and reach them with supplies. Plans were made for transport by road. Simultaneously an attempt would be made to send parcels by rail, to reach them at certain points on the way. One column, marching towards Carlsbad and Marienbad, was reported; it included about fifteen thousand prisoners of war, mostly British, together with three to four thousand Russians, whom, in theory, the ICRC was unable to help.

One delegate was given the task of taking four truck-loads of parcels, which had been held up at Weissenfels near Leipzig, to Carlsbad and Marienbad. This was his story:

“We set off towards Weissenfels, along the autostradas constantly patrolled by the formidable “Tiefflieger”¹. The little 5 h.p. car did marvels. It even climbed, without chains, the snowy passes of the Sudeten mountains, though not, sometimes, without the help of a sturdy horse, and thanks also to the driver, a man of skill as well as of never failing good humour—one of the most precious qualities you can have in war time.

“In my pocket was a special pass from GHQ of the Armed Forces of the Interior, under whose authority the prisoners of war had recently been placed. This document gave formal permission to supply food to prisoners of war on the march, and requested all civil and military authorities to assist in this task. It would help me to use persuasion when meeting officers

¹ Aircraft, hedge-hopping and dive bombing, ordered to patrol the railways day and night.

behind the lines who wanted to abide strictly by regulations. For instance, the commandant at Weissenfels refused to hand over the parcels for the prisoners, on the grounds that he had not received orders to do so. Waved my pass and threatened to return to Berlin forthwith, unless he gave the necessary orders immediately to arrange for their transport to Carlsbad. The threat went home. Next, I tackled the railways. There was a shortage of rolling stock and only the transport of vital war supplies was allowed. Once more, scared them declaring I would go off to Berlin at once to complain to those who gave me the permit. Within a few hours, cars were found, loaded, sent on their way towards Carlsbad under responsible military escort (for thefts were already frequent) and some were even coupled to passenger trains. They arrived in time, after only four days' journey. A real achievement it was for a line badly knocked about by constant Allied bombing.

At Carlsbad, military HQ responsible for the PW columns ordered a forty-eight hours' rest and the prisoners were quartered in neighbouring villages within a distance of about six miles. Trucks were found to distribute the relief supplies. Needless to say how we found the petrol, except that the method resembled rather closely that of the black market gentlemen.

At last the moment came for the distribution. Each of the Allied camp leaders had received their share, and I wanted to see them give out the supplies. The sight really defied description. Imagine men who had been on the march for five weeks, in the snow and cold, on empty stomachs, with feet bleeding. That is no exaggeration, but the actual, brutal truth. Now they were each going to receive eleven pounds weight of supplies, including 100 cigarettes, a tin of powdered coffee, biscuits, meat, chocolate, soap. Their delight at these gifts which seemed to have descended from the skies was rapturous; they had to be stopped from stuffing themselves with the whole lot at once. The scene was too much, and I left them to get on with the distribution alone.

The next day a British R.A.M.C. Major told me that his men sang as they covered the last few miles before the distribution. The Red Cross had arrived—they were saved! And the

next day, too, passing alongside the column which was on the march again, I saw it wreathed in a cloud of smoke from thousands of cigarettes. The British camp leaders had not forgotten Russians, who had received one parcel for every three men.

That day I realized more than ever before what a great privilege it is to act as delegate. An easy task, because one never asks anything for oneself, one is always doing something for neighbours in distress. I realized too, that material help that saves the body goes with the encouragement that raises men's spirits. The British major whom I have mentioned, confirmed this by telling me that the very word that we had arrived gave new strength to the whole column. They no longer felt themselves abandoned in enemy country, under the cold eye of armed guards, a prey to the cruelty of some. The Red Cross had succeeded in tracking them, and hope was reborn.

April, 1945 in Vienna.

The city was encircled and on fire. It was being battered by "Stalin's barrel organs", the famous Russian guns. Street fighting had begun in the suburbs. Soviet planes were all the time on reconnaissance duty in the incredibly blue spring sky. For some days the ICRC representatives had been living in cellars, without water, proper shelter, or hot food. Civilians crowded round their doorway, women, young girls, children, a few old people, asking for shelter and protection. All squeezed in and huddled together with us.

A shell fell on the house opposite, the injured came to ask for help. A dressing station was improvised with haphazard gear. Several volunteers, young Frenchmen, "conscript workers", and Austrians, undertook a search among the still smoking wreckage. In a half demolished room they found an old man, badly hurt, beside the dead body of his wife. He was carried back to the first aid station, where he was nursed and his life saved.

This episode was hardly over, when again there was a knocking on the door of the refuge. This time it was a woman about to give birth to her child. A Dutch doctor, a deportee, examined her. He gave his opinion, she could only be saved by a Caesarean operation. But there were no surgical instruments,

only a pair of scissors and forceps, from a small first aid kit. Outside the battle was raging and the nearest hospital was half an hour away. The discussion was carried on by candle-light. Volunteers came forward, offering to risk the trip to the hospital. They decided to take the chance. In the darkness, the bold trip succeeded. The operation was performed, and mother and child saved.

But the fighting was coming nearer. It had now reached the street of the shelter. A Russian soldier, seeing the Red Cross emblem, brought in his officer who had been hit by machine-gun fire at point-blank range, and was dying. It was a hopeless case, but all the same the officer was taken to a German military hospital. The next day the soldier came for news. As he didn't see his officer in the shelter, he accused the delegates of making away with him and threatened them with his revolver. So the delegate, with the soldier's weapon against his ribs, went along to the hospital. There he learned that the officer had died. Fortunately for the delegate, a Russian prisoner patient saw what had happened, and intervened. The soldier was shown the body of his officer and the marks of the operation by which they had tried to save him at the last moment. The soldier burst into tears and kissed the hands of the man whom he had been threatening to kill only a moment before.

On the way back, a man whom the ICRC delegate had taken under his protection was hit by a fragment of a shell which burst over their heads. His injuries, apparently superficial, became infected and three hours later he was dead. The delegate hadn't even a scratch.

However, Vienna had fallen. The most amazing rumours were flying round. The authorities had vanished, everyone was a law unto himself. People came to the delegation one after the other, for hours on end. The mere sight of the Red Cross emblem aroused boundless hopes, sometimes foolish ones. A man came to ask the delegate to arrange to send him to South America as quickly as possible ; another insisted that he should take his race-horse under his protection.