

XVIIth INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS CONFERENCE  
Stockholm, August 1948

REPORT  
of the  
International Committee of the Red Cross  
on its activities  
during the Second World War  
(September 1, 1939 ~ June 30, 1947)

VOLUME III  
RELIEF ACTIVITIES



GENEVA  
May 1948

No. 3A

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## INTRODUCTION

The relief work carried out by the ICRC during the Second World War can, quite fairly, be held as without precedent. Although the enterprise as a whole was a novel one, it nevertheless followed certain traditions which should have at least brief mention.

Not many years after the foundation of the ICRC in 1863-1864, during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871, an Information Bureau for Prisoners of War was opened at Basle, with the object of assembling information on men reported missing. This office, which in a way anticipated the future Central Prisoners of War Agency at Geneva was, it is not surprising, called upon to send on not only news but also medicaments, dressings and even a few food parcels and packages of books made up in Switzerland. As the Franco-Prussian war lasted only a few months and was moreover fought over a limited area, these early relief schemes set afoot by the ICRC were very limited in extent.

Contrary to the general impression, relief schemes were still on a reduced scale in the first World War. The conflict, it is true, lasted for much longer than in 1870 : it also affected many more countries and caused far greater slaughter. The number of prisoners taken, however, cannot be compared with the vast number of men and women captured or arrested for various reasons during the Second World War. In 1914-1918, too, the relative stability of the fronts enabled belligerents to maintain intact most of their railway and postal systems. Thus, National Red Cross Societies and other humanitarian organizations

could themselves undertake to aid both the wounded and sick, and the prisoners of war. The help of the ICRC was not required in this field, as relief supplies arrived at their destination direct by the normal channels. In Switzerland, too, it was the shipping agencies that undertook the despatch by rail of relief supplies to the belligerent countries. The ICRC merely entrusted to them the transport of 1,813 wagons of collective gifts. The Committee further organized, by arrangement with the Swiss Postal Service, the despatch by mail of 1,884,914 individual parcels. This was a straightforward job and did not even require a separate department to deal with it.

During the three armed conflicts of the years 1918 to 1939 — the Abyssinian War, the early stage of the Sino-Japanese War, and the Spanish Civil War — the belligerents turned to the ICRC for relief in kind. This was a new departure which may be welcomed or regretted ; it may be thought, on the one hand, to carry an implicit recognition of the great part international organizations may play in saving lives ; on the other, it might be regarded as a foretaste of " total war " which, clearly, makes necessary a recourse to such organizations.

The ICRC, whose invariable policy is to support all schemes with a humanitarian purpose, did not give much thought to the theoretical and legal aspect of the problem put before it. Its sole wish was to respond to these appeals, to the best of its ability, either by soliciting and collecting gifts in aid, or by itself purchasing and distributing relief supplies on its own account. The ICRC thus sent medicaments and medical equipment to the value of some 76,000 Swiss francs during the Abyssinian War, and during the Sino-Japanese War made use of 86,525 Swiss francs for a similar purpose. In the Spanish Civil War, a large number of donors made their gifts for the benefit of both sides, and the ICRC was therefore able to purchase not only medicaments, but also food-supplies and garments. The Committee handed over to both Government and Nationalist forces goods to the value of 337,921 and 332,923 Swiss francs respectively. Immediately after the Civil War those districts which had suffered most in the fighting received 17,980 Swiss francs worth of relief in kind.

Some of these consignments were not on a large scale, but they served the purpose—and therein lay their importance—of drawing the attention of the ICRC itself and of other humanitarian organizations, in particular the National Red Cross Societies, to the necessity of similar schemes. The Purchase Section set up during the Spanish war was, it should be noted, not dissolved; in 1939 it formed the nucleus of the Committee's Relief Department.

No comparison, however, can be drawn between the operations, limited in scope, to which reference has just been made, and the vast work of relief undertaken by the ICRC between 1939 and 1947 in behalf of unprecedented numbers of prisoners of war and internees of every category, as well as of the civil population in many countries. This work immediately took on almost alarming proportions for those on whom it devolved. When it reached its peak between 1943 and 1944, with 2,000 wagons coming and going each month, the ICRC had become the biggest relief distribution centre on the continent.

The Committee's relief work during the Second World War may be divided into four main headings.

(1) Regular bulk consignments in Europe, from 1939 to 1945, to some two million Allied PW and civilian internees placed on the same footing as PW. These consignments amounted to close on 400 million kilograms, valued at about three thousand million Swiss francs. Smaller relief consignments were also sent to Allied prisoners and civilian internees in the Far East.

(2) Occasional consignments, whenever the need became urgent, to about one million German and Italian PW and civilian internees, out of a total number of two and a half to three million. Such consignments were most frequent in the period immediately after the end of the war in 1945 and 1946.

(3) Relatively small consignments to some 300,000 civilian deportees and internees of all kinds, the exact number of whom is unknown, but estimated at well over a million.

(4) Large consignments to civilian victims of the war, particularly those supplies despatched by the ICRC in co-operation with the League of Red Cross Societies through the Joint Relief Commission. The recipients were either specified categories of persons (children, women, the aged, the sick and disabled), or inhabitants of areas that had particularly suffered as a result of military operations: such were the Channel Islands, the French Atlantic coast after the Allied invasion in 1944, and the western provinces of Holland at the beginning of 1945. Relief was also sent to Pruzskow Camp, which held a large proportion of the Warsaw population, to the children of Paris in 1940, to those of Berlin and of Vienna from 1945 to 1947, and to other victims of the war. The principal relief scheme in behalf of civilians was certainly that carried out in Greece, when all normal supply routes by the Mediterranean were cut off after the campaign of 1940-1941.

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## PART I

### RELIEF WORK BY THE ICRC FOR PRISONERS OF WAR AND DETAINEES OF ALL CATEGORIES

#### GENERAL PROBLEMS

##### *Chapter 1*

#### **From the Polish Campaign to the Invasion of Western Europe**

The first phase of the hostilities which opened on September 1, 1939, with the lightning campaign against Poland, entailed the capture of over half a million men in twenty-two days. At the end of only a few weeks, the ICRC and the National Red Cross Societies found themselves faced with an unprecedented task. It immediately became clear that this mass of Polish prisoners would need relief supplies, despite the provisions of Article 11 of the 1929 Convention relating to the treatment of PW<sup>1</sup>. In order to give them practical help, their identity, number and places of internment had to be known. Without waiting for information on these points, the ICRC sent trial consignments for the first three or four months.

At the same time, many other war victims called for the attention of the Committee, namely (1) some thousands of British, French and German prisoners taken on the Western

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, p. 253.

Front, along the Franco-German boundary line from Basle to the Belgian frontier ; (2) civilians of enemy nationality interned in belligerent countries, whose status, under bilateral agreements made in 1939 and 1940, was equivalent to that of PW<sup>1</sup> ; (3) sick and wounded combatants. It was also necessary to collect, despatch and distribute gifts for civil populations, and to seek and co-ordinate the support of National Red Cross Societies in neutral countries. The rapid march of events called for prompt measures. The ICRC was, as a rule, obliged to improvise relief schemes which could only later be organized on the juridical basis of the 1929 Convention, or of common law.

### INDIVIDUAL CONSIGNMENTS

The work of relief began with the despatch of individual parcels addressed by name to PW. As soon as they were able to get in touch once more with the outer world, thousands of Polish officers and men in captivity asked for food, tobacco, medicaments, underwear, footwear and uniforms. Hardly three or four weeks after the outbreak of war their names became known to their relatives, to some National Red Cross Societies and to several private relief organizations.

There was no question as yet of averting starvation for masses of people whom the Detaining Power could no longer feed as required by the Conventions. The International Committee was simply giving individual help to prisoners who looked for some alleviation of their lot. The first camp visits carried out in October 1939 showed, however, that a very large number of PW who had lost their belongings at the time of capture were extremely short of underwear. They also needed medicaments and pharmaceutical supplies. Most of them also asked for extra food and tobacco.

A first achievement was made when the ICRC, either direct or through National Red Cross Societies or Government authorities, was able to inform relatives and relief organizations of

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, p. 573.

the articles that could be sent to the camps and the routes by which they should be despatched.

In accordance with the Cairo Postal Convention of 1935, the Swiss Post Office carried free of charge all parcels originating in, or in transit through Switzerland, which were intended for PW in Germany, France and the British Commonwealth. Individual parcels could be sent in two ways: (1) they could be forwarded direct by post. The Swiss Postal administration states that as early as the year 1939, 388 parcels were posted in Switzerland and 3,478 passed in transit <sup>1</sup>. (2) Parcels could also be sent through the ICRC. The Committee stated at the outbreak of war that it was prepared to accept parcels from prisoners' families bearing only the address "ICRC, Geneva", and to forward them after checking, completing or correcting the postal addresses of the recipients.

The Postal Transit Section set up by the ICRC forwarded 47 parcels in October 1939, 377 in November (an increase due to Christmas parcels), and 99 in December. These figures include parcels from Switzerland and abroad. In 1940, the work of the Section grew steadily but continued to be on a very small scale (34 parcels despatched in January and 1,295 in December 1940). In succeeding years, figures for monthly despatches varied considerably, for reasons which will be examined below <sup>2</sup>, but between 1941 and 1945 an average of 1,000 was maintained.

The following figures give the annual totals of postal despatches, comprising parcels in transit, those sent from Switzerland and those forwarded by the ICRC:

1940 . . .	1,224,614 parcels
1941 . . .	8,110,756 "
1942 . . .	14,690,625 "
1943 . . .	13,823,295 "
1944 . . .	5,719,956 "
1945 . . .	555,101 "

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<sup>1</sup> Figures given in the 1945 Postal Yearbook.

<sup>2</sup> See below p. 181.

This shows that the number of parcels increased considerably between 1940 and 1942, remained at a very high level in 1943 and subsequently declined. During 1944, the individual parcels sent from France decreased in number and then stopped entirely after the Allied landings in France. Generally speaking, there was an increase in collective parcels as against those addressed to individuals, which were exposed to greater risks. The sharp decrease in 1945 was due to the dislocation of railway transport, and, above all, to the ending of the war in Europe in May.

Such matters as the maximum weight of parcels, methods of packing, form of address and prohibited articles were the subject of negotiations pursued by the ICRC with the authorities and Red Cross Societies of all belligerent and neutral countries concerned. These negotiations lasted from October 1939 until April 1940, and on certain disputed points continued until the war ended. Moreover, the rules adopted had to be revised on several occasions, when events had brought about a change in the conditions governing the despatch and receipt of relief supplied.

Parcels up to five, and, in exceptional cases, twenty kilos in weight were accepted for transit through Switzerland for PW and civilian internees. In Great Britain 5 kilos was the maximum weight allowed; in France it was at first two kilos and later increased to five kilos. The German military authorities who wished to fix the maximum weight at 20 kilos, reduced it to 5 kilos also. This standard of 5 kilos established by common consent, was successfully maintained throughout the war. At the beginning of 1942, however, it was somewhat relaxed in order to enable heavy articles to be sent, such as winter clothing, greatcoats, books in several volumes; parcels of this kind were thenceforth allowed up to 10 kilos.

A few months after relief work had begun, all belligerents were induced to adopt a standard list of prohibited articles, likely to facilitate escape or sabotage; these included:

Coins and bank-notes.

Civilian clothing, and underwear which could be used as civilian clothing (except sweaters and pullovers).

Arms and instruments which could be used as weapons  
(large knives, scissors, etc.).

Duplicators, carbon paper and tracing paper.

Compasses, maps, cameras, field glasses, magnifying glasses,  
electric torches, telephone apparatus.

Wireless transmitting and receiving sets, and spare parts.  
Alcoholic drinks.

Acids and chemical products.

Books and newspapers of a political or military character,  
or of suspect contents.

Used wrappings ; books with maps ; matches.

Whilst all the above articles were forbidden by the common consent of the belligerents, others were the subject of controversy. The following were the main articles in dispute :

(1) Since lemon juice can apparently be used as invisible ink, bottled liquids and in particular fruit juices were at first under the ban, but this was later raised in the case of standard collective parcels.

(2) Unlike the Allied authorities, who never made objections to this sort of article, the German authorities prohibited tubes of toothpaste and cream, as possible receptacles for secret messages. Protests against this decision proved fruitless ; the Italian authorities, however, were more reasonable.

(3) Tin openers, at first classified as edged and therefore banned tools, were finally allowed in collective parcels.

(4) Salt and pepper at first went through without trouble, but were later often confiscated in German camps, because escaping PW sometimes used them to blind their guards. They were subsequently allowed in collective, but not in individual parcels.

(5) Medicaments called for special precautions. A PW in free possession of drugs runs serious risks, if he takes them without medical supervision ; there is also a temptation to traffic in them, or to hoard them for no particular purpose, whilst some fellow-prisoners might be in urgent need of them.

The ICRC observed that these objections were often well-founded. After consultation with the Detaining Powers, the donors and certain neutral experts, the Committee proposed to belligerents that they should forbid the direct despatch of medicaments in individual parcels and, above all, in those sent by next of kin. This was, in a sense, a restriction of the right given to PW under Art. 37 of the Geneva Convention, but the men were not in fact the losers thereby. Though parcels of this kind had to be addressed to the senior medical officer, the camp leader or the representative of a Red Cross Society, they could also bear the name of the real addressee. Furthermore, this rule did not prevent many PW from receiving throughout their captivity boxes labelled, for example, "Cough Lozenges", or bottles of supposed "Anti-flu" which actually contained some kind of alcohol. These articles were distributed or confiscated according to the strictness of the camp censorship.

While consignments from Red Cross Societies and other relief organizations were in general carefully packed, the same could not be said of family parcels. Damage and loss due solely to defective packing were therefore heavy. Foodstuffs and clothing were too often mixed up together, and the state in which these parcels arrived after a long journey, which included several trans-shipments, can easily be imagined. Thus losses were as much as 20 per cent for the parcels containing uniforms, honey and salami sausage, sent by Italian families to their men in India, and carried in the hold through tropical waters. Such misfortunes were not wholly due to negligence or inexperience on the part of the senders; after 1942, they had increasing difficulty in obtaining packing materials, especially in the countries occupied by Germany and Italy.

Several National Red Cross Societies attempted some improvement and undertook the onerous task of forwarding all family parcels themselves, after checking the contents and re-packing. This method, which had excellent results, was used throughout the war by the American, British and German Red Cross Societies. It could not be adopted, however, by the Italian Red Cross, nor in Poland, Yugoslavia or occupied

Greece. The French Red Cross preferred an intermediary system described in Chapter 2.

While all belligerents vouchsafed the postal address, i.e. the exact place of detention, of civilian internees, the location of PW camps was kept secret. In Germany and Great Britain, collective and individual parcels for PW had therefore to be addressed to camps described merely by numbers. Thus, the first German camps heard of outside that country, and to which parcels were sent, were "Oflags" (*Offizierslager*) X A and XI A, and "Stalags" (*Mannschafts-Stammlager*) III and IV A, where on October 19, 1939, there were 4,545 Polish PW in all<sup>1</sup>. This relatively small number was due to the fact that, at this period, very large numbers of men were still temporarily held in the territory at that time called the "General-Government of Poland".

In Great Britain, there were at this time two German PW camps, described as No. 1 and No. 2. In France, all parcels had to be addressed to a postal centre in Paris which forwarded them to their destination.

It can legitimately be argued that PW are entitled to receive an unlimited number of individual parcels, since Art. 37 of the Convention says nothing to the contrary. There were, however, such vast numbers of Polish prisoners after the capitulation of their army that the German High Command, in order to avoid congestion in the post offices and censorship, as it stated, placed an arbitrary limit on the number of individual parcels sent from occupied Poland to PW transferred to Germany. All parcels therefore had to bear labels previously issued to each PW and sent by him to his relatives. This system was soon known outside Poland, but when the ICRC questioned the German

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<sup>1</sup> In its letter to the German High Command, of October 19, 1939, the ICRC gave these facts and asked for full lists of camp strengths and for confirmation of the fact that camp numbers represented an adequate address to which relief supplies could be sent. In their reply of October 25, the German Command gave precise details on the following points: (a) acceptance in principle of the despatch of books; (b) form of address for parcels; (c) free carriage for consignments; (d) extension where applicable of these facilities to consignments for civilian internees. The place of detention of the internees would be communicated later.

Authorities the latter answered that the measure applied exclusively to senders residing in the "General-Government" <sup>1</sup>.

### COLLECTIVE CONSIGNMENTS

During the first weeks of the war individual consignments from private donors greatly exceeded other types. It soon became obvious to the ICRC, to National Red Cross Societies and several other organizations, that it was essential to supplement these by collective relief. Of the Polish PW in Germany at the beginning of December 1939, some 250,000 could expect no help whatever from their relatives, since these either had lost their lives or were themselves destitute. It also seemed likely that a high proportion of the 150,000 Poles captured by the Soviet forces were no better off.

During the trial period of consignments, no clear distinction was made between individual and collective relief. The ICRC realized at the outset, however, that the despatch of thousands of individual parcels in lots, and of tens of thousands of collective parcels, besides goods in bulk, required the most careful preparation and involved not only technical, but also economic and political considerations. Before even studying means of transport, the ICRC had to know to what extent the countries concerned would find it compatible with their war economy to export large quantities of foodstuffs and clothing, for humanitarian purposes.

The first collective relief consignments were despatched from Switzerland. For these, the Polish PW were indebted to the Polish Consulate in Geneva, the Ukraino-Swiss Committee and Working Centre, and the "Pro Polonia" Association in Geneva, as well as to many individuals who gave funds to the ICRC for this purpose. The first gift for French PW was provided by the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in France, and a second by the Swiss Chocolate Convention. It was due in the

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<sup>1</sup> For further details of labels, see pp. 281-283. For complaints which the ICRC had to transmit on the non-arrival of parcels, see pp. 177-179.

first place to the British Women's Wartime Work in Geneva that the ICRC was able to assist British prisoners, and the same applied to German prisoners, thanks to the German Consulate-General in Geneva. The Brazilian Red Cross was the first overseas donor. In February 1940, this Society sent the ICRC thirty tons of sugar, of which fifteen were for Polish prisoners and fifteen for hospitals in Poland. In March 1940, eighteen tons of coffee followed, half for sick and wounded PW still in Poland and half for the civilian population of that country.

These first donors requested the ICRC to send either lots of individual parcels, or collective shipments addressed to camp leaders. Thus, at the request of the German Consulate-General, on December 21, 1939, 40 Christmas parcels of a total weight of 47 kilos and 160 parcels weighing 187 kilos were sent to Camps No. 1 and No. 2 in Great Britain, whilst 100 parcels of a total weight of 117 kilos were sent to the Postal Centre for Prisoners of War in Paris, which had charge of their distribution in France. The next day, December 22, 100 parcels, of a total weight of 249 kilos, were despatched; they were sent by the Polish Consulate-General to the camp leader of the Polish PW in Stalag XVIIIB in Germany. Finally on December 23, 4,000 parcels provided by the Ukraino-Swiss Committee and Working Centre were sent to the camp leader of the Polish PW in Oflag X B in Germany.

All these shipments were made by transport firms and arrived safely. In October and November, the ICRC satisfied itself that a camp leader had been appointed in each camp and that he was authorized to receive and distribute collective consignments, under Art. 43 of the 1929 PW Convention. The ICRC Delegation in London forwarded the receipts from German PW to Geneva at the beginning of 1940; the Poles acknowledged receipt direct on January 8 and 16. These consignments are quoted as an instance and were followed up by others no less successful.

The first difficulties arose over the despatch, on April 15, 1940, of 300 parcels bought with funds entrusted to the ICRC for Polish PW in Oflag II C. The camp leader informed the

ICRC on April 23, that this camp would in future bear the number XI B ; the receipt which reached Geneva on May 24 showed that a certain Oflag IX B had been transferred to Oflag XI A. As the receipt was signed by the same leader, it at least proved that the consignment had reached its destination, despite these changes in numbering.

Similar incidents occurred frequently, and showed at the outset the importance of accurate and up-to-date information about the strength and location of PW camps. The Detaining Power was bound to supply such particulars, but when, as in Germany, it had to deal with some hundreds of thousands of men captured within a few weeks, the task proved indeed formidable.

The relief supplies referred to above were bought in Switzerland and exported with the consent of the Swiss Government. It was, however, further necessary to obtain certain exemptions from the measures of economic warfare introduced by the belligerents. The measures taken by the British and American blockade authorities subsequently had such far-reaching effects on food supplies for Allied PW in Europe that it has been held preferable to review them as a whole in the following chapter.

The first collective parcels contained mainly foodstuffs and toilet articles. The ICRC also transmitted, from 1939 onwards, books and games supplied by the World Alliance of YMCA. Consignments of clothing soon followed. One of the first requests for relief came from the German commandant of Oflag II D, who reported on September 18, 1939, that a thousand French officers in that camp needed uniforms and expected them either in individual parcels from their relatives or in collective parcels from the French Government. It should be remembered in this connection that although Art. 12 of the 1929 PW Convention lays on Detaining Powers the obligation to supply PW with clothing, it makes no mention of spare under-clothing, nor of regulation uniforms. However, Germany on the one hand, and France and Great Britain on the other, always agreed tacitly that prisoners could receive these articles individually or collectively from their home country.

In 1939 and in the early months of 1940, there were but few British PW, and the number of British civilian internees in Germany did not exceed 120. Nevertheless, in November 1939, the British Red Cross submitted to the German High Command, through the ICRC, a list of various types of standard collective parcels, on the model of those adopted during the years 1914-1918. Both the British and the American Red Cross made the widest use of these subsequently. They were as follows :

Large-sized case of medicaments for camps.

Medium-sized case of medicaments for camps.

Standard food parcel of seven kilos, made up according to four types A, B, C, D.

Medical parcel, type E.

Standard clothing parcel.

Without expressing any opinion on these proposals, the German military authorities confined themselves to supplying a list, on November 20, 1939, of prohibited articles. In 1940, when postal consignments were limited to a weight of 5 kilos, the types of parcel on the 1918 model had to be somewhat modified.

Thus it may be said that, four months after the outbreak of hostilities, the steps taken and the initial practical experience gained by the ICRC had already determined the general shape of future relief schemes. The individual and collective relief consignments provided for in the 1929 PW Convention had the consent of all belligerents. The French, British and German Authorities and Red Cross Societies were aware that it was their responsibility to send uniforms, underwear, foodstuffs, tobacco, medicaments, toilet articles, books and games to their own nationals in PW or internment camps. They also knew that the ICRC was able to forward all these items, either by individual postal packages or by collective parcels, and in all cases post free.

Moreover, relief organizations, and especially the National Red Cross Societies, were fully aware of the aid vitally required

by the hundreds of thousands of Poles who were in the hands of the enemy. A note dated December 19, 1939, specified the following needs in this connection per man :

- 1 shirt
- 2 pairs of socks
- 1 pullover
- 1 face towel
- 1 cake of soap
- 1 pair of heavy boots for every ten men (high boots were preferable for officers).

The men further needed supplementary food, such as preserved meat and fish, chocolate and condensed milk. Finally, books and games were required, especially for the officers.

The note in question contained the following recommendations to donors : remove all manufacturer's labels or other indications from clothing ; prepare collective shipments according to camps ; send linen according to kind in cases or bales showing the number of articles ; limit the weight of parcels to 50 kilos. Those who did not wish to send parcels through the ICRC were asked to inform the Committee of the number, nature and date of their consignments, so that gifts from different sources might be shared out as fairly as possible. The note finally stated that, under Art. 43 of the Convention, the camp leaders appointed had the right to receive and distribute collective relief consignments and that, in particular, the clothing issued by them became the absolute property of the recipients. The latest list of camp strengths transmitted by the German military authorities was attached ; this recorded that 19,102 Polish officers and 370,164 NCOs and men were detained in Germany.

The success of this relief scheme was, however, mainly dependent on the help to be expected from the Polish Red Cross, re-organized on Allied territory, from the Red Cross Societies of countries allied to Poland, and from other relief organizations. After the trial consignments which, as stated above, were most encouraging, it became unhappily evident to the ICRC that

donations for the benefit of Polish prisoners were far below their needs. They did not reach a relatively satisfactory figure until after 1941, when the Polish Red Cross in London was set up, and relief societies in the United States had collected large quantities of money and goods.

It should be remembered that reciprocity always carried great weight in negotiations on assistance to PW and civilian internees. It was effective in the case of German prisoners and civilian internees in France and the British Commonwealth, and vice-versa. It was, however, absent from the outset as regards Polish prisoners, and the task of aiding them was, in consequence, far more difficult. However, this disadvantage only became apparent after some time, and especially after 1941 <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This subject is further discussed in the next chapter, where the case of similarly placed PW and civilian internees of other nationalities is reviewed.

## *Chapter 2*

### **The Influx of Prisoners of War after the Campaigns in the West**

During the first winter of the War, the ICRC had already launched its relief schemes. Those chiefly benefited at that time were the Poles captured in September 1939. The events of 1940 and 1941, such as the invasion of Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and France by the German forces, Italy's entry into the War, and the campaigns in the Balkans and Africa, soon made the Committee's work far more complex and onerous. The number of prisoners taken rose to about 1,700,000 French, 30,000 British and several hundred thousand Belgians, Dutch, Norwegians and Jugoslavs.

Very early, even before the need became urgent, it had been decided in all parts of the world to supply PW from outside, since it was to be presumed that neither Italy nor Germany would carry out in full the obligations laid upon Detaining Powers by Article 12 of the Geneva Convention. By the summer of 1940, however, it was manifest that the governments of these countries could not supply adequate food and clothing over an indefinite period to the two million men who had fallen into their hands, and whose pressing needs were apparent both from the reports by the Committee's delegates, and from countless appeals for help.

In response to the public concern, the Allied Governments, including those who had been forced to take refuge abroad, did all that was possible, with the help of the National Red Cross Societies, to protect their captive nationals from the hardships

and perils of cold and starvation. Their work, supported by donor groups in every continent, was of course not everywhere pursued along identical lines. One very important feature, however, was common to all schemes ; the fact that the ICRC and its delegates in belligerent countries were almost invariably entrusted with the task of taking delivery of relief supplies in Europe, of warehousing them on neutral soil, and of their distribution. This distribution, one should add, really involved only two channels of supply, since all Allied prisoners were in the hands either of Germany or of Italy.

From the outset of the war, reciprocity had been assured by the fact that there were German PW and civilian internees in the hands of the enemy. This circumstance benefited, however, only a small proportion of the military personnel who fell into the hands of the Axis forces in 1940. In fact, until the Allied landing in North Africa and the total occupation of France in November 1942, complete reciprocity only existed for German and Italian PW, on the one hand, and for the British and later, the Americans, on the other.

The French (after the Franco-German armistice), the Belgians, Dutch, Norwegians, Jugoslavs and Greeks, and in fact all those PW whose countries had been wholly or partially occupied by the enemy, found themselves in the same unfavourable conditions as the Poles had already experienced.

This situation led to difficulties which will be described below. In the first place, without compromising in any way its work for PW recognized as such, the ICRC claimed the right to give similar assistance to those who did not enjoy PW status, or who had been deprived of it by various expedients, such as so-called "release", followed by internment as civilians, or "conversion" into civilian workers.

Moreover, although the German authorities did not wholly prevent the despatch of relief to prisoners of this category, they could impose stricter regulations and hinder it to a great extent. Thus, as was remarked in the case of the Poles, the Germans introduced the unilateral label system which limited the number of individual parcels for any one man. Unauthorized consignments, too, had little chance of escaping con-

fiscation. Finally, camp leaders were refused many facilities which, although not stipulated in the Conventions, were nevertheless accorded to British and American spokesmen. These included the right to witness the arrival of consignments at railway stations, to check stocks, to be in touch with their colleagues in labour detachments and hospitals attached to their own camp, and to confer direct with the ICRC and the donors. Conditions varied greatly from one camp to another, according to the strictness of the commandants and censorship officials. But it may be said that, on the whole, Allied prisoners, who should all have received equal treatment, were in fact divided into the following categories :

- (1) British and American PW, who were privileged ;
- (2) French PW, who, in default of any reciprocity, had the benefit of special agreements deriving from the armistice (right of supervision by the Vichy Government, supervision and supply of relief by the Scapini Mission, etc.) ;
- (3) Norwegian PW, without the benefits of reciprocity, but treated with a certain amount of consideration, since they were classified as members of the Teutonic race ;
- (4) Belgian and Dutch PW, whose status was practically the same as that of the French ;
- (5) Greeks, Jugoslavs, Poles, and Jewish prisoners not of British or American nationality. These could not count on any reciprocity, and were moreover exposed to every kind of victimization, on grounds of racial policy.

In principle, every PW had the right to receive parcels, to sign receipts and to present complaints to the ICRC or its delegates, when the latter visited the camps. The camp leaders, however, in carrying out the distribution and supervision required by the ICRC and the donors, met with difficulties that varied according to their nationality.

The Allied authorities made no discrimination as between German and Italian PW, or between civilian internees of different nationalities, but they also on occasion resorted to vexatious measures. They held prisoners, for example, for an indefinite period in transit camps, thus preventing them from giving a permanent camp address to their next of kin ; they also sent PW to isolated regions, such as Morocco or East Africa, where they were cut off from any postal or other means of communication with the ICRC and its representatives, so that the camp leaders were unable to carry out their duties and the normal distribution of relief supplies was stopped.

In general, a distinction should be drawn between individual and collective relief consignments. The first encountered difficulties which were almost entirely technical, and arising chiefly from postal failures and the problem of verifying the addresses of some two million men. This question will be referred to again later <sup>1</sup>.

Collective consignments, on the other hand, raised many questions of principle, the most important of which will be broadly considered here, whilst technical details are dealt with in relation to the individual cases noted below <sup>2</sup>.

These questions were the following :

- (1) Organization of collective relief by the donors.
- (2) Effects of economic warfare upon the work of relief.
- (3) Role of the ICRC as a trustee and neutral intermediary for the forwarding and distributing of funds and relief supplies. This role involved :
  - (a) The right of ownership and the right to allocate and distribute goods ;
  - (b) The receipt of consignments ;
  - (c) The storing of supplies in Switzerland ;
  - (d) The storing of supplies in belligerent countries.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 281 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 207 et seq.

- (4) The arrival of relief supplies in camps, unloading, stocking and allocation.
- (5) Supervision of distribution.

### **1. Organization of Collective Relief by the Donors**

When consulted on the subject by the donors, the ICRC, without entirely barring the non-standard parcel, advised them in their own as well as the prisoners' interest, and also to facilitate its own work, to standardize packing methods as far as possible.

The Vichy Government and the French Red Cross at first sent relief to their prisoners, numbering over a million, in very large bulk consignments. The Committee thus received entire wagonloads of foodstuffs in cases, some with homogeneous, others with assorted contents, and consignments of clothing which was simply stacked in the wagons. Gradually, the local branches of the French Red Cross organized the packing of standard or semi-standard parcels <sup>1</sup>. Although the contents of these parcels varied according to the state of the market, they nearly all included wartime bread, cigarettes, tinned meat and fish and a few other articles such as sugar, concentrated fruit juice, dried fruit and vegetables.

Medicaments were sent in the form of first-aid kits, made up according to instructions received from army medical officers in captivity, and from medical advisers to the Government and to the French Red Cross. Toilet articles were supplied as and when available.

The problem of clothing French PW was particularly intractable. The German authorities certainly distributed part of the stocks of French Army uniforms which they had seized as war booty, but on the several occasions when they were ques-

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<sup>1</sup> The term "semi-standard" applies to parcels for which the packing material and the greater part of the contents were supplied to local branches of the Red Cross by the Government, and which could be supplemented by the families, up to a total weight of 4.6 kilos (roughly 10 lb).

tioned by the ICRC, they refused to give exact information, only stating that they had provided for the needs of 46 per cent of the prisoners. This figure was in any case inadequate. The French Government did their best to make good the shortage of which they were fully aware, but stocks were almost exhausted and the quantities purchased overseas were too small to balance the steadily diminishing production at home.

Thus, as early as 1942, a critical situation had arisen, as the clothing worn out by the prisoners during two years of captivity could not be replaced.

It will have been seen from the previous chapter that the British Red Cross had, in 1939, begun the distribution of collective or communal standard parcels. In 1940 and 1941, it decided that all British Commonwealth prisoners should receive one standard parcel a week, and that complete outfits of clothing should be sent regularly to the camps, according to recommendations made by the camp leaders. It also instituted a whole series of special standard parcels, such as "Invalid Comfort Parcels" and "Medical Parcels", of two different types, one for camps and one for hospitals, the needs and sick roll of which were known; parcels for Indian PW, for airmen and seamen; and parcels for civilian internees, the contents of which varied according to the sex and age of the recipients.

The system adopted by the American Red Cross differed only in detail from the British. The Argentine Red Cross preferred standard bulk consignments and shipped foodstuffs according to kind in cases of 35 kilos, and clothing packed according to garment. Smaller donors used methods identical or similar to those described. For instance, the Brazilian Red Cross, and welfare organizations in Africa, the Near and Middle East long continued to send consignments on French lines, whilst the British Dominions and Colonies used precisely the same methods as the British and American Red Cross<sup>1</sup>.

Relief supplies were purchased with funds from public or private sources, or by financial arrangements between States, chief of which was the American "Lend-Lease". The ICRC

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<sup>1</sup> For fuller details see pp. 211 et seq.

had in general no knowledge of the financial agreements made by national organizations. This simplified its duties as trustee, and created difficulties only when goods were lost or damaged, or when contradictory instructions were received from donors bearing on the blockade, on export permits, or on priority of transport.

## **2. Effects of Economic Warfare on Relief Consignments for Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees**

The term "economic warfare" describes all measures taken by a belligerent to prevent the enemy from acquiring supplies from abroad which may contribute directly or indirectly to its military resources. Accordingly, from 1939 onwards, Great Britain and France on the one hand and Germany on the other reduced and supervised the international movement of goods. Unless accompanied by a "navicert" or "landcert" issued by the Ministry of Economic Warfare, in London, acting for the Allied Governments, no goods could pass from Allied to enemy territory, or even into neutral countries, the imports of which were thus fixed by quota.

Relief supplies, whether sent from Allied or neutral territory, were of course subject to the same regulations; these need not, however, be described in detail here<sup>1</sup>, since consignments for PW and civilian internees, with which this chapter alone deals, were always looked on with favour and even held to be necessary by the Allied Governments. It will therefore suffice to record the difficulties that arose between the blockade authorities and the ICRC, in applying a principle which in itself was not disputed: the Allies claimed that shipments should be limited to categories of prisoners and goods likely to give rise to least abuse, whilst the Committee refused to take these restrictions as final.

From the outset, the ICRC made application to the British authorities for "navicerts" and "landcerts" for supplies sent from Allied territory, especially from overseas, and for

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 366 et seq.

export permits off the quota for goods to be re-exported from Switzerland for PW. The Committee had no difficulty in obtaining permits for individual parcels addressed by name. In a letter dated August 29, 1940, the Ministry of Economic Warfare also authorized collective consignments of standard parcels or bulk supplies addressed to camp leaders of specific camps, on condition that the ICRC should supervise their distribution. The letter referred to camp visits by the delegates of the ICRC, without however at this stage making such visits an indispensable condition. In this way, the ICRC had little difficulty in forwarding the first gift supplies from the Brazilian Red Cross and the relief consignments from the British Commonwealth as a whole, directed during the winter of 1940-41 to British PW and civilian internees, of whom there were about 40,000 in Germany and some thousands in Italy. The ICRC also sent some smaller consignments from Switzerland itself.

At the same time, supplies had to be sent to about one million French PW in Germany. These goods were dispatched mainly from unoccupied France, through the care of the Vichy Government and Red Cross, and the French Red Cross Society and other benevolent organizations in North Africa. In view of the inadequacy of resources available in France, the Vichy Government tried to obtain extra supplies by purchases overseas and in Portugal.

The Ministry of Economic Warfare, however, were opposed to the unrestricted dispatch of such large quantities of goods to Germany, especially in view of the unstable political situation in France after the armistice. They also objected in principle to bulk shipments, the supervision of which they considered more difficult than that of standard parcels, and they authorized the distribution of goods from overseas only to camps visited by the Committee's delegates. They had, moreover, already shown an inclination to prohibit all consignments not exclusively intended for base camps. The ICRC was thus in each case obliged to re-open long and troublesome negotiations in order to secure "navicerts" or "landcerts" for specified purchases by the French Red Cross or by some French Government agency, and for goods which it bought itself with the funds

placed at its disposal. One instance of the results achieved was an increase in the monthly meat ration for French PW, which, thanks to the efforts of the Committee, was raised from 300 to 500 tons.

Whilst the ICRC was obliged to conform to these regulations, it always disputed the principle that the issue of "navicerts" should be dependent on camp visits as an indispensable condition, in the first place because it wished to help war victims in the camps and prisons which it had not yet been authorized to enter<sup>1</sup>, and secondly, because it feared that its relief work as a whole would be compromised, should military operations bring about the temporary suspension of visits to PW camps.

Discussions on this point led to no positive result, but the ICRC was more successful concerning bulk consignments. It was able to prove to the blockade authorities, by several examples, that it was neither practical nor even possible to convey in parcel form the large quantities of goods intended for hundreds of thousands of French PW, and that, moreover, foodstuffs packed in cases of 30 to 60 kilos could be inspected just as efficiently as standard parcels. With certain provisos, the Ministry of Economic Warfare then authorized shipments in bulk and, in 1941 and 1942, granted "navicerts" and "land-certs" for which, however, the ICRC had to make application as and when they were required.

British PW and civilian internees in Germany received monthly from 20 to 30 kilos of foodstuffs per head, that is, three times the quantity allotted to a French prisoner, even taking into account the parcels sent to him direct by relatives, which averaged 7 to 10 kilos per man. The nutrition value of standard parcels for English-speaking PW was also higher than that of bulk consignments and family parcels sent to Allied PW of other nationalities.

Consignments intended for British PW had of course to pass through French territory; they were therefore dependent upon the goodwill of the Port Authority of Marseilles and the

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<sup>1</sup> This applied to detainees in concentration camps and also to Soviet PW. See pp. 77 et seq.; pp. 55 et seq.

railway personnel, and upon the vigilance exercised by the police against thefts. The ICRC, voicing public opinion in France in this regard, used the above facts as arguments in negotiating with the blockade authorities in London and Lisbon, when the latter proposed to place still further restrictions on shipments from overseas for French prisoners.

From 1942 onwards, shipments of meat were supplemented by tinned fish and other foodstuffs purchased in Portugal and the Portuguese colonies in Africa.

The ICRC had also to procure the necessary permits for sending supplies to Belgian prisoners, whom the Belgian Congo was making increasing efforts to assist. Dutch, Greek, Norwegian, Polish and Yugoslav prisoners were assisted by their own Governments and Red Cross Societies set up in London ; these sent standard parcels under the terms of arrangements made direct with the British and United States authorities. These measures simplified the formalities, but the donors had some difficulty in finding goods in adequate quantities within the British Commonwealth and the American hemisphere.

During 1942, the United States also instituted a strict control over their exports <sup>1</sup>, and, generally speaking, economic warfare was intensified. The German authorities continued the regular recruiting of additional civilian workers in occupied countries, and ever greater numbers of PW were " converted " into civilian workers. The British and American blockade authorities, who were aware that a large proportion of the relief supplies entrusted to the ICRC passed on from PW base camps to labour detachments, feared that these groups might not be clearly distinguished from the groups of civilian workers ; they were also afraid that supervision by the camp leaders and the ICRC delegates might not be sufficiently strict, and finally, that the enemy might not rigidly conform to Art. 31 of the 1929 Convention, which stipulates that the work of PW shall in no way be directly connected with the war effort. To provide against

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<sup>1</sup> The United States controlling authority was the Board of Economic Warfare. All formalities had, however, as hitherto, to go through the Ministry of Economic Warfare in London, which carried out the instructions of the Inter-Allied Blockade Commission.

these risks, they were prepared henceforth to allow relief only on a limited scale to base camps. The effect would have been disastrous, as at that time 90 per cent of Allied PW were in labour detachments. Moreover, the question of abolishing bulk consignments was again raised.

With regard to the first point, a representative of the ICRC was sent to London to discuss the position. He pointed out that the very great number of British and American PW scattered amongst the labour detachments would also suffer severely under the proposed restrictions. He made it clear to the blockade authorities that the distribution and supervision procedure provided all guarantees that could be desired, since PW who had been "converted" into civilian workers were struck off the lists by the camp leaders, so that no confusion was possible. As a result, "navicerts" were granted in August 1943 for 600 tons of tunny fish and 300 tons of jam, with the option of distributing these foodstuffs also among the labour detachments. This success was, unfortunately, but short-lived.

The ICRC also finally gained its point on the question of bulk shipments; the British and American authorities had to recognize that relief work could not admit of any discrimination in nationality, and that by impeding this mutual aid, they would inevitably harm their own men. Since British and American PW received relief supplies in bulk from Latin America and the Near East, other Allied PW ought to have the same facilities, especially as their supplies were not in any case equal in quantity to those of the PW from the British Commonwealth and the United States. Polish and Yugoslav prisoners, for instance, received aid only in proportion to the funds and foodstuffs available; the number of French prisoners was so great that available transport did not allow more than a monthly average of 10 kilos per man to be sent. For these reasons, the Ministry of Economic Warfare agreed, providing certain additional measures of supervision were taken, to allow "navicerts" for goods from North Africa in particular, which were urgently required for some 40,000 French Colonial prisoners held in "Front Stalags" in occupied France. The same applied to cocoa-beans and sugar sent in bulk from South America

to Switzerland, for export in the form of chocolate to countries holding prisoners.

In 1943, the blockade authorities decided to withdraw the right the ICRC had frequently used, to purchase goods on behalf of the donors or to make application for "navicerts" and "landcerts". This decision unfortunately caused great loss of time, for when donors failed in getting the authority required, their final resort was to request the ICRC to intervene in London or Washington. The Committee was thus apprised of some urgent matters that had been held up for three or four months, and still further time was required before any settlement could be reached.

The financial agreement for the release of frozen funds, which the provisional Free French Government in Algiers had made with the United States and the American Red Cross at the end of 1943, caused a further change in the conditions governing the feeding of French prisoners. Thenceforth, French PW who were in labour detachments had the right to receive American standard parcels in the same way as their comrades in the base camps, and like the Greeks, Poles, Jugoslavs and others, provided there was no infringement in this respect of Art. 31 of the Convention. At the same time, the ICRC had at last obtained authority to increase the number of its delegates in Germany, and since these men were able to visit not only base camps, but several of the labour detachments attached to them, effective supervision was ensured.

The regulations concerning PW also applied to civilian internees. Almost insuperable difficulties arose, however, in applying the measures of inspection required by the blockade authorities not only to internees in fenced camps, but also to those who were interned alone (*isolati*), or simply confined to their homes (*confinati*). This applied in particular to the Allied *isolati*, mainly British, who were to be found scattered all over Italy. These persons had been given the status of civilian internee by the Italians, who allowed them, although dispersed, to receive aid by the same procedure as that applying to PW. The British Red Cross were also anxious to help these people as it did the civilian internees of the big

camps in Germany and occupied France. The ICRC, however, when asked whether it could guarantee the meticulous supervision of distribution, had to reply that this was out of the question, if only because its delegates in Rome were too few in number, and because military operations made travel increasingly difficult. However, after discussions which lasted for several months, the British Red Cross persuaded the Ministry of Economic Warfare to make an exception to the blockade regulations, and regular consignments of provisions and clothing were thus sent to British and American *isolati* through the care of the Committee. In respect of the *isolati* of other nationalities, promising replies had been received, but before the ICRC could be duly authorized to distribute relief from overseas, the events of the summer of 1943 and the Italian armistice put a stop for the time being to all relief work in Italy.

The Germans had set up a counter-blockade in opposition to the Allied blockade, whereby all exports from Switzerland required a *Geleitschein* issued by the German Legation in Berne. This was, however, a mere formality, as it was to the interest both of the German Government and of the Military High Command to promote the despatch of relief consignments to PW and civilian internees. Supplies sent by the German Red Cross to German PW naturally obtained *Geleitscheine* without any difficulty.

The ICRC was authorized on several occasions to import raw materials into Switzerland, off the quota, for export after conversion by manufacture. This was so for the cocoa beans already mentioned, and for various shipments of textiles, from which underwear was made in Allied working centres.

Finally, it is only just to mention that, thanks to special facilities granted by the Allied blockade authorities, medicaments and medical stores were not subject to the regulations in force for foodstuffs and clothing.

### **3. Role of the ICRC as a trustee and neutral intermediary in the forwarding and distribution of funds and goods for relief.**

The ICRC accepted all funds and supplies entrusted to it for transmission to third parties, and in so doing assumed by implication the role of a trustee. At the end of the war in Europe, the value of the goods it had handled amounted to some three thousand million Swiss francs. The above function was not, however, and could never be made subject to a contract in law. The Committee confined its action to informing those concerned of the regulations in force, both in the belligerent countries and in Switzerland. The donors who entrusted the funds or the goods to its care accepted, by so doing, the risks of the operation involved. They were free to provide against these risks, and especially against war risks, by insurance of all kinds. This precaution was only taken as a rule in respect of gifts from private sources, for when relief goods were supplied by Governments, compensation was only nominal, since it consisted merely of an adjustment of book entries as between two Ministries. Moreover, it was not within the power of the ICRC to avoid losses incidental to the war, or confiscations and misuses of all kinds. It did, however, require a protective guarantee that all goods forwarded through it would be accepted by the Detaining Powers. As shown in the preceding chapter, agreements in this respect had been concluded at the outbreak of hostilities, and others were made, as and when required by new relief schemes.

The Committee also had to take into account the laws and regulations in force in Switzerland. The Swiss authorities allowed the warehousing of goods, and thanks to their goodwill, any difficulties which arose were quickly resolved.

(a) *Rights of ownership; right to allocate and distribute supplies.* — The ICRC claimed proprietary rights only in regard to relief supplies purchased by it with funds given, but not earmarked for any purpose. These funds were too small to justify statistical records; they were chiefly derived from small gifts of two to five Swiss francs, or the equivalent in foreign

currency, received in letters, or with sums due for invoices, with remarks such as " For PW relief ", " For the children of Europe ", " For the victims of the war ", " For charity ", and so on. Only very rarely did the Committee itself make any decision on the allocation of these monies: in general, they served to make up the balance required to meet the cost of a purchase which slightly exceeded the amount available.

By far the greater part of the relief entrusted to the ICRC was intended for a certain nationality or category of war victims, sometimes even for one particular camp. In such cases, the donors retained full ownership rights in respect of these goods or funds, and the Committee had to follow their instructions. If these could not be carried out, it had to ask for others. Since this right held good from first to last, the function of trustee passed from the ICRC to one of its delegates in belligerent countries, or to a camp leader. In point of fact, only the final recipient (that is, the prisoner for whom the joint relief action was undertaken) could become owner of the gift. In consequence, the camp leader himself was bound strictly to observe the instructions given by the donors, which he usually received from the ICRC, or in exceptional cases, direct.

This procedure entailed no difficulties in the case of food-stuffs, which were in general for immediate consumption. Otherwise, however, collective reserves were accumulated, under the camp leaders, as all personal hoarding of provisions was prohibited by the Detaining Powers.

Medicaments were, of course, entrusted to the sole charge of the medical officers who alone were qualified to administer them, rather than to the camp leaders or the patients. In any case, controversy on this question was rare and unimportant.

On the other hand, ownership rights to clothing gave rise throughout the war to negotiations with the German authorities, with the legal representatives of the prisoners, and with the donors. Since these rights had no foundation in law, those concerned had usually to be satisfied with a compromise. The facts may be given in a few words.

All articles of clothing which could not be distributed immediately on arrival and all winter clothing recovered during

the warm weather were placed in camp stocks. By a wide interpretation of Art. 43 of the Geneva Convention, camp leaders should have had the sole right to dispose of these stocks, in accordance with the donors' instructions. Since the rights of trusteeship in this matter were, however, from the outset claimed by the German authorities, camp leaders retained mere supervisory rights, which depended for their effective use upon the perspicacity of the camp leader and the goodwill of the commandant. As a mutual guarantee, the storehouses were in principle provided with two separate locks. In addition, the marking of clothing either by the donors, or at least at their expense, or by the Detaining Power, prevented any later claims that stocks given by the ICRC had been supplied by the Detaining Power, or belonged to it as booty.

The continual transfers of prisoners caused further complications and very often made the supervision by camp leaders meaningless. Since only part of the men in a camp were moved elsewhere, part of the clothing stocks should have been moved with them. It was obviously easy for the Detaining Power to make these circumstances an excuse for controversy, and for pleading shortage of rolling stock, lack of warehousing space or the events of the war, to evade their obligations.

Various special measures were taken which also impaired ownership rights: for instance, the military authorities only issued new clothing to the men in exchange for used garments, without troubling to enquire if the used clothing had been drawn from their own stocks or from collective consignments sent by the ICRC. In order to provide against escapes, the men were not allowed to have two garments of the same kind (for instance, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of shoes, etc.). Here too, surplus garments were withdrawn from use, whatever their origin. Finally, the principle generally enforced in Germany, to distribute clothes where most urgently required, was not easily reconcilable with the instructions from donors, who wished their gifts to be reserved for men of their own nationality.

The ICRC approached the German Government on several occasions, either direct or through its delegation, in the hope

of adjusting these questions. At the beginning of 1944, in particular, they sent a Memorandum to the Government summarizing the whole subject, but this attempt, like others, led to no result.

No negotiations of this kind were necessary with the other side. The Italian Red Cross did not send clothing to Italian PW, while the issue of uniforms supplied by the German Red Cross to the German officers and men held throughout the British Commonwealth was satisfactory. These PW also had the benefit of supplies from the Detaining Power, who as a rule were both willing and able to observe the stipulations of Art. 12 of the Convention, although unfortunately this treatment was, as we have seen, not reciprocated.

The ICRC never refused its good offices when a dispute arose between the Detaining Power and camp leaders. The camp leaders did, however, sometimes have differences with the prisoners themselves, over proposed steps for reducing waste, the fixing of dates for the distribution of winter clothing or the recovery of reserve clothing that had already been issued, for redistribution to newcomers. In such cases, the Committee refrained from taking action, even when asked to do so by those concerned or by the Detaining Power : it simply passed on complaints to the donors, who took whatever steps they wished.

A most delicate question was that of communal camp furnishings. This covers all articles used in the equipment of a camp or hospital, such as bedding, crockery, kitchen utensils, and stoves ; lorries and petrol for taking supplies to labour detachments ; tools and gear used by gardeners, cobblers, tailors and barbers, as well as musical instruments, books, games, sports gear and so on. The camp leaders, as trustees, had the custody of all this material, which remained in theory the property of the donors. For several reasons, however, and especially because of frequent transfers of camps, no effective check was possible. When camp material had passed through several hands, neither the ICRC nor the camp leaders knew exactly where it was to be found, and they could then rely only upon the willingness and good faith of the German authorities.

Lastly, blankets were the cause of frequent controversy in camps in Germany. When received in family parcels or in individual consignments from Governments or Red Cross Societies, they were the men's own property. When sent in collective consignments, however, blankets remained in charge of the camp leaders as communal stores, and when supplied by the Detaining Power they were considered to be its property. In the absence of any general system of distinctive markings, it was almost inevitable that blankets from different sources should be confused ; prisoners were moreover unwilling to give up their own blankets when changing camp. From this sprang a host of claims which it would be tedious to describe in detail. It is enough to say that the ICRC did its best to settle these differences, and that some of the donors so far lost patience that they gave up sending blankets, even when asked to do so by the men themselves.

(b) *Receipt of Supplies.* — It should first be recalled that large quantities of supplies reached the prisoners direct through the post, without the ICRC acting as intermediary<sup>1</sup>. As far as individual parcels were concerned, the exact number sent was never known to the Committee. It did, however, usually receive from the donors lists of the collective postal consignments for checking by their delegates on arrival. Shipments of this kind did not as a rule cause any difficulties.

Three different methods, according to the origin and destination of the goods, were used for taking delivery of supplies sent through the ICRC for PW and civilian internees.

(1) Overseas shipments arrived in *Lisbon*, the only neutral port through which goods coming from the Western hemisphere, Australia and Africa could enter Europe. Delivery was taken by the permanent delegation of the ICRC, which had been set up in this port in June 1940.

The goods were stocked, under the supervision of the delegation, in bonded warehouses and had the benefit of a special import duty which was only one per cent of the normal rate.

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<sup>1</sup> See above pp. 10-11.

The shipments varied considerably in tonnage, sometimes amounting to as much as 3,000 tons.

A firm of specialists examined the condition of the goods on arrival, and its reports were forwarded to the Red Cross Societies concerned, with the exception of the British Red Cross, which checked its own shipments. Damaged parcels were repacked sufficiently to allow transport to Geneva. Damage which occurred after despatch from Lisbon was recorded either at Marseilles, Genoa, in Switzerland, or on arrival of the supplies at the camps. Thus, the donors often received several reports in succession concerning a particular consignment, especially in case of damage. All documents relating to the cargo passed through the delegation in Lisbon (postal way-bills showing the number of mail-bags, bills of lading and accompanying documents, and so on).

The shipments were forwarded through an official customs agent who handled the work with great care and at very moderate cost, throughout the war. Goods were re-shipped as and when space was available, on vessels sailing under the ICRC flag, and in the same ratio as the stocks held by the respective organizations using the shipping space. Handling costs at Lisbon and carriage to the port of destination were charged direct to the donors.

(2) At *Genoa* the ICRC had no permanent delegate ; when large deliveries were expected, a representative was sent for a few weeks only. Otherwise the Committee made use of the services of shipping agents who supervised the loading of goods into railway wagons for Switzerland, via Chiasso or Domodossola.

(3) At *Marseilles*, the chief port of arrival, a permanent ICRC delegation was set up during the winter of 1940-1941. Assisted by forwarding agents, it looked after the discharge of cargoes and the loading, on the same vessels, of relief supplies intended for German and Italian PW in countries overseas. The delegation staff superintended the warehousing of goods which were held up owing to the shortage of wagons. Lastly, they took the necessary steps, in agreement with Geneva, to obtain rolling stock, and supervised the loading of the wagons.

Once the shipments from overseas had been warehoused in Switzerland, the ICRC took final delivery of the goods.

Relief supplies from France itself, usually sent by the *Direction générale des prisonniers de guerre* at Lyons, were received in direct transit by the ICRC, in the form of shipments already grouped for despatch to specified camps. In such cases it sufficed to make a quick tally of the wagons, to check their contents, as far as possible without unloading, and to make out fresh way-bills. The goods then left for Germany in the same condition as that in which they had arrived in Switzerland.

Finally, relief supplies which the German and Italian Red Cross Societies sent overseas, and 70 to 80 per cent of which went by the ordinary postal service, were addressed to the ICRC delegations in the countries where the prisoners were held, — for instance to Montreal for Canada, and to Simla and New Delhi for India. Nearly all were addressed to the camp leaders as the ultimate consignees.

The delegate generally placed the entry formalities for the goods in the hands of a forwarding agent, after which he passed the goods through the customs, obtained free carriage to the camps, and in certain cases, when a transfer of prisoners had taken place meanwhile, altered their addresses.

(c) *Warehousing in Switzerland*. — After the Franco-German armistice, which abolished any Western Front in Europe between 1940 and 1944, relief supplies intended for French PW were almost all kept in stock in the unoccupied zone of France, until November 1942. At the same time, it became imperative to build up stocks in Switzerland, on behalf first of the British Red Cross, then of the Allied Red Cross Societies which had been re-formed in London, and finally, of the American Red Cross, when the United States came into the war. This was, in fact, the only means of ensuring an uninterrupted flow of supplies for the prisoners, in view of the fact that shipments arrived at irregular intervals.

At first, the ICRC rented premises for this purpose, but it was later obliged to have warehouses built, which were

managed by its own staff<sup>1</sup>. The conditions of warehousing in Switzerland were known to the donors and the Detaining Powers; the goods were not insured unless the senders had taken out a policy before despatch.

Most of the National Red Cross Societies had representatives in Switzerland; these made regular visits to the warehouses and settled all technical matters with the ICRC. The goods remained on an average for three months in Switzerland; it sometimes occurred, however, that they were held up for a far longer period, in which case the Committee had to take all necessary precautions to prevent the deterioration of food-stuffs and perishable medicaments, and to provide against destruction by insects and rodents.

(d) *Warehousing in belligerent countries.* — The delegations of the ICRC, too, had to have stocks, which were more or less considerable. The delegations overseas, who looked after German and Italian PW and civilian internees, usually kept only sufficient stocks to meet emergencies, as the German and Italian Red Cross Societies generally supplied them with funds rather than goods. This allowed purchases to be made locally in order to meet the demands of PW or their camp leaders, as and when they were made.

Conditions were not the same in Europe, however. Here the setting up of large depots proved a matter of necessity in occupied territories, especially in France, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Greece.

The ICRC delegation in *Berlin* did not build up stocks during the first part of the War, except small quantities of medicaments brought by the medical officers visiting the camps, and a few parcels which had to be issued in Berlin itself. The delegates were, however, in almost daily contact with the ICRC in Geneva, to whom they communicated all the information they were instructed to gather concerning (1) camp strengths, (2) the transfers of PW, (3) the despatch of

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<sup>1</sup> The question of warehousing is explained in detail on pp. 227-250.

supplies to the camps, and (4) the stocks and requirements of each camp. The importance and usefulness of this liaison work increased in proportion to the scale of relief work in Germany, and as and when the German authorities allowed the delegation to expand the number of its staff, especially that of the visiting delegates. Towards the end of the War, other warehouses were set up in Germany, for instance at Lübeck, Ravensburg and Landeck <sup>1</sup>.

In principle, the delegation in *Rome* should have been able to work according to the same methods, but the conditions in Italy did not allow them to be strictly applied. The Italian administration was far less systematically organized than in Germany; a further difficulty was the widespread dispersal of PW, and especially of civilian internees, such as the *isolati* and the *confinati*.

#### **4. Arrival of relief supplies in camp : unloading, storing and distribution**

The numerical strength of a main camp included not only its actual occupants, but also the men in the annexes, the labour detachments, and the hospitals and sick-wards attached to the main camp. The allocation of supplies by Geneva was, as a rule, based on the total strength.

There were, however, many exceptions to this rule. In the first place, certain hospitals in Italy and Germany did not form part of a camp, administratively speaking. This was the case in particular with special centres, such as Mühlberg, for seriously disabled men, and Tangerhütte, for tubercular cases, where patients were assembled pending their repatriation by hospital train, or because their proper treatment was more easy to administer.

Particular difficulties arose in providing for PW enrolled by the Germans in *Bau- und Arbeitsbataillone* or BAB <sup>2</sup>. These

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 90-94.

<sup>2</sup> Building and Labour Battalions.

were flying squads of skilled workmen, usually roofers and glaziers, and mostly composed of French prisoners. Some of these BAB were constantly being shifted, and were thus attached to several camps in succession, a fact which had to be taken into account in allocating supplies. Other BAB were not attached to any camp, or could not be supplied from the main camp because of distance, or lack of transport : in such cases supplies had either to be sent direct, or by way of the nearest camp, even if the BAB concerned did not form part of its administration. As a rule, the ICRC was kept informed of these details by the camp leaders, but was sometimes at a loss, through lack of precise data on the nearest railway station, means of discharging and storing supplies, and so on.

As far as possible, supplies were sent to main camps and their annexes by full wagon-loads <sup>1</sup>. It was the duty of the camp leaders to receive and check the goods, to send receipts for them to Geneva and to distribute them. This last was no small task, since some camps had as many as 1,400 labour detachments. Moreover, the camp leaders had frequent difficulties in the matter of transport ; when appealed to for help, the ICRC made application to the camp commandants, either in writing or through their visiting delegates. The French Government also sent lorries to Germany for use by the principal camp leaders. The other Allied donors held the view that it fell to the Detaining Power alone to supply the vehicles required, and prompted the ICRC to intervene to this end.

Some camps in Italy, for instance those in the Apennines, lay in regions which had no regular transport service of any kind. Here the camp leaders were obliged to employ private lorries, carts and even mules. Transport by such chance means was not only uncertain, but, contrary to the usual practice, was not free.

As a rule, donors stipulated that the relief which they supplied should be distributed to PW of their own nationality <sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> On this subject, see pp. 170 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> For distribution by nationality, see pp. 251-257.

but their instructions were frequently overruled by the PW themselves, in favour of men from other countries with whom they were detained. French PW, in particular, formed a large majority in most camps in Germany and had the advantage of receiving regular, if not abundant supplies, at least until the spring of 1944, and these men usually shared with their comrades who had no parcels, either because the Detaining Power prevented their receiving any, or because there was no donor to attend to their needs.

This practice of sharing was made known from time to time in letters and reports from camp leaders to the ICRC. So long as it was done on a small scale, the donors were not over-concerned. For instance, at the time when the camps held only a few Americans amongst great numbers of British PW, these men were able to share in the consignments from the British Red Cross without any objection being raised by that Society.

The question only became acute when the proportion of such indirect recipients became very large, as it did in the case of Russian PW, and towards the end of the War, in the case of interned Italian military personnel, of whom there were thousands in nearly all the camps. Out of charity for these unfortunate men, several camp leaders decided, with the consent of their comrades, to share part of their own supplies with them. This practice applied as a rule only to food and cigarettes. Clothing was very rarely shared, either because it was barely sufficient for the recipients themselves, or because the donors' instructions were especially strict concerning this form of relief.

The sharing of medical supplies was nearly always allowed. Although frequent complaints were in fact made, the PW medical officers who were responsible for hospital treatment were generally able to impose the principle of unconditional medical aid, and to distribute to all their patients the medicaments and restoratives at their disposal.

## 5. Supervision of distribution

The ICRC, as early as 1939, made provision for obtaining proof of arrival of relief consignments. It held that such confirmation was due to the donors and moreover, that it encouraged them to pursue their efforts. At first, three receipt forms were sent with each consignment, one of which was kept by the camp commandant, one by the camp leader, whilst the third was returned to Geneva, bearing the signature of the camp leader (compulsory) and that of the camp commandant (optional).

Whilst adjusting the machinery for relief during the winter of 1941-42, the ICRC, after various trials, adopted the system of a receipt form in triplicate<sup>1</sup>. One part of this was kept by the camp leader and the others were sent back duly signed to Geneva. The ICRC was thus able to hand one receipt to the donors with the monthly statements. The receipts showed the number of articles or parcels, their total weight, and any shortages noted by the camp leader in the goods on arrival. Receipts also bore a number and various references to enable statistics to be made by the Hollerith machines system. As the numbers of the receipts appeared on the monthly statements of shipments, the donors had no difficulty in checking periodically the receipts received and those which were still outstanding.

Generally, it took from fifteen to sixty days for receipts to be returned to Geneva. If, at the end of two months' time, the ICRC had received neither the receipt, nor a letter or report from the camp leader in lieu thereof (should it have gone astray with the other documents accompanying the consignment: way-bill, customs permit etc.), a copy and a claim were sent to the camp leader. If this copy was not returned, consignments of slight value were considered as lost. For more valuable shipments, the ICRC asked the camp commandant for an explanation, sent a copy of its letter to the delegate and requested the railway authorities to open an enquiry. These steps usually made it possible to reconstruct events. For

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<sup>1</sup> See facsimile in the volume of Annexes.

instance, it was sometimes found that (1) a consignment had been diverted in transit from its original destination, owing to a transfer of prisoners, and could not be identified by the camp leader as the way-bills had been lost, or (2) that the consignment had been destroyed by bombing or other military operations, or finally, (3) that it had been totally or partly pilfered. It should be recorded, however, that losses due to theft were few, and only amounted to one or two per cent of the goods forwarded <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> On this question of great importance to the donors, see pp. 177 et seq.

### *Chapter 3*

#### **Campaigns in the Balkans**

Relief schemes in the Balkans were set on foot immediately after the campaigns of the summer of 1941. They were, for several reasons, exceptionally difficult.

In the first place, the main railway lines, and especially the most important, that of the Orient Express, had been cut in the Balkan countries owing to military operations. There were thus wide tracts of territory to which relief supplies could not be sent, since the only route possible from Switzerland was by the Arlberg, or Trieste.

Equally serious obstacles were offered by the confused situation created by the German occupation, or by the installation of satellite governments. Communications were frequently cut by the resistance movements. Thanks to the goodwill generally shown in these countries to the Red Cross, shipments which did not reach their destination were almost always sent back to the ICRC representative in one of the intermediate countries. For example, the delegation in Yugoslavia had to accept and distribute relief supplies which normally should have gone to PW in Greece; the delegation in Rumania did the same with goods bound for, or coming from the Near East, and which could not be sent in transit through Turkey, as had been planned.

The conditions of internment for PW and civilians in the Balkans were in many respects unlike those elsewhere. Thus, although the German authorities in Belgrade had stated that

there would only be transit camps in Greece, Albania and Yugoslavia, thousands of Allied PW were detained in these countries over a very long period. The status of the various categories of detainees could not have been less clearly defined or more subject to variation. They comprised Allied service men and civilians, partisans, people arrested for political reasons by the Germans, the Italians or by Governments acting under the orders of the occupying Power, and so on.

In order to adapt itself to these circumstances, the ICRC had to organize its work in the Balkans on far more flexible lines than in Central and Western Europe.

Before speaking of the Balkan countries proper, reference should be made to *Hungary*. When, in 1941, that country entered the war against Yugoslavia, and in consequence against Great Britain also, the British Embassy in Budapest had to abandon the relief schemes it had been carrying out during the preceding winter. On the other hand, the Embassy maintained by the Vichy Government until 1944 gave aid to French PW who had escaped from Germany and who arrived in Hungary by way of Austria or Czechoslovakia. It also looked after French citizens who were isolated or in small groups in the various Balkan countries. The Hungarian Red Cross gave help direct to Hungarians who had remained in Yugoslavia after the declaration of war, whilst Yugoslavs in Hungary received family parcels from their own country. Since there was sufficient food available in both these producing countries, it was unnecessary for the ICRC to take any action in behalf of this group of internees. Until 1944, that is, before Hungary put herself entirely under German domination, the ICRC was not called upon to look after Allied nationals in that country. Thenceforth, the Committee did its best to give those in Hungary the same help as it gave to those in other occupied territories.

In *Rumania* and *Bulgaria* there was little relief work to be done in behalf of Allied PW. At the end of the war there were only 803 American, 28 British and five Yugoslav PW in Rumania, and a small group of American airmen in Bulgaria. The ICRC delegations in Bucharest and Sofia, whose main task was to provide relief for the civil population and for political deportees

and detainees, were also able to assist these PW, in co-operation with the National Red Cross Societies, by means of stocks which were periodically replenished from Geneva.

From 1941 onwards, there were large numbers of Soviet PW in Rumania but they are not dealt with here; the question of relief to PW of this nationality will be reviewed as whole below <sup>1</sup>.

Matters were very different in Greece, Albania and Jugoslavia.

When *Greece* was entirely occupied, the German forces captured a large number of British troops whom they intended to evacuate without delay. The ICRC immediately provided their delegations in Athens, Salonika and Belgrade with stores to enable them to supply provisions for the journey, clothing and toilet articles for the thousands of men who were due for transfer to Germany, either by trainloads or in single wagons. A number of them, who were more or less seriously wounded, remained behind in Greek, or even in Yugoslav hospitals. Moreover, a great many of the British troops who had joined the Greek partisans were taken prisoner, either singly or in small groups, for months and even years to come. These men were also removed to the north, in so far as their condition allowed or means of transport were available. Greek PW were transferred either to Italy or Germany, according to whichever Power had captured them.

Germany entrusted Italy with the administration of the greater part of Greece and only resumed it herself after the armistice of 1943. Until that date, it was therefore at the instance of the Italian authorities, or of the Greek authorities under Italian orders, that Greek partisans and civilians considered as politically suspect were arrested and confined, either in concentration camps or in prisons.

This subject will be more fully dealt with in the chapter on political detainees and deportees <sup>2</sup>. It is, however, touched

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 53-60 and Vol. I, pp. 404-436.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 73 et seq.

on here, in reference to relief to PW, because the distinction between the various types of detainees, such as Allied PW, partisans and civilians, was less clearly defined in Greece than, for example, in Germany. Consequently, it was possible on the one hand to supply Greek concentration camps with food-stuffs more rapidly than elsewhere, and on the other, some of the Greeks confined in prisons benefited by relief to which they normally would not have been entitled, because they were together with Allied, in particular British PW.

While assistance to the Greek population formed by far their most important work, the ICRC delegations in Athens and Salonika also looked after British PW and small groups of French, Yugoslav, Polish and other civilian internees. The work of these delegations was chiefly hampered by shortage of transport.

When the German Authorities took the place of the Italians in 1943, they assembled in Southern Greece labour detachments of Yugoslav prisoners (probably sent from Germany) who, like their fellow-countrymen working in the extreme North of Norway, had preserved their status of PW. The ICRC encountered great difficulties in bringing up food supplies for these groups, who were hundreds of miles distant from their base camps.

In *Jugoslavia*, as in Greece, the partisans took up arms against the Axis troops and the forces which supported them. The ICRC delegation in Belgrade, like those in Athens and Salonika, were provided with 50 or 60 tons of relief stocks, and could thus deal with the situation during the frequent breakdown of railway transport. The delegation had to look after Greek and British PW transferred from Greece to Germany through Jugoslavia, and in particular to care for the sick and wounded sent to hospital in that country. Among these there were small groups of American airmen, towards the end of the war.

The delegations in Belgrade and Zagreb also provided relief for Yugoslav nationals. After the campaigns of 1941, the German authorities made known that they would keep only the Serbs in captivity, whilst Croats, Slovenes, Istrians

and others would be released. However, the ICRC soon established the fact that all camps contained an indiscriminate mixture of Serb (or alleged Serb), Croat, Slovene, Montenegrin, Dalmatian and other PW. These differences were not taken into account when appealing for relief supplies. Fortunately, the gifts received from London, Washington, Buenos Aires and Cairo were intended for Yugoslav PW in general. A large number of these men were "converted" into civilian workers and kept back in Germany, where they shared the same conditions as French, Polish and other foreign workers. The ICRC was thus unable to do anything for them with regard to relief supplies.

Some Yugoslav civilians arrested after the occupation were taken to the big concentration camps and treated like the other political detainees. Others, however, were able to receive individual relief parcels, in so far as they were in localities to which the delegations had access. Occasionally, the delegations were able to carry out the distribution of supplies on the spot. They also made every endeavour to promote the despatch of family parcels to Hungary, Italy and Germany. Lastly, the delegation in Belgrade was extremely active in behalf of Yugoslav PW repatriated from Germany in such a bad condition that they had to be taken to hospitals in Belgrade and the neighbourhood. As these unfortunate men were still in units and wearing uniform, it was possible to give them the clothing and medicaments they so urgently needed.

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## *Chapter 4*

### **Mass Capture of Prisoners of War on the Eastern Front in Europe**

The ICRC is able to alleviate the sufferings caused by war only insofar as the adversaries, in despite of events, retain some sense of common humanity. The Committee depends on the Governments for the success of its efforts, for without their goodwill it cannot despatch relief shipments wherever they are needed, nor can it, through the intermediary of its delegates authorized to visit the camps, check their arrival and distribution.

During the first phase of the war, relief work for PW was recognized, approved and assisted by all belligerents; thus this work rapidly developed far beyond the scope required by treaty stipulations, and even by the traditional principles of humanity. Unfortunately, that was not the case in Eastern Europe, after the USSR had been attacked by Germany on June 22, 1941. Despite all its efforts, the ICRC was unable to help any of the German, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian, Slovak and Rumanian PW in Russia, or any of the Soviet PW detained by Germany and her Allies, with the sole exception of those who had fallen into Finnish hands. A few minor and isolated distributions of relief supplies did take place, but on the whole, the hundreds of thousands of men captured on the Eastern Front received no collective relief shipments of any kind. Such aid would only have been possible on a reciprocal basis and this was precluded by the mutual mistrust of the adversaries<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For the problem as a whole and for relations between the ICRC and Soviet Russia, see Vol. I, pp. 404-436.

(a) *Russian Prisoners of War in Germany.*

On account of the swift advance of the German troops there were at first very many more Russian PW than German. In October they numbered already over 250,000, according to information furnished by the German military authorities, and as this number steadily increased, the problem of feeding such masses of men became acute. Reports received on the complete destitution of the Russian PW justified the fear that the coming winter would prove fatal to many of them.

On August 30 the German High Command informed the ICRC that not only would it allow, but in point of fact that it awaited the despatch of collective relief for Russian PW in German camps, and that such supplies would be entrusted to the camp commandants for distribution. The ICRC immediately made every endeavour to follow up this proposal. Encouraged by the favourable reception given by the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Moscow to its offer of relief for the wounded and sick in Russia <sup>1</sup>, the ICRC sent word to the Soviet authorities by telegram on October 1, that it was ready to forward to Soviet PW in Germany supplies of underwear, footwear and tobacco, to supplement the rations provided by the Detaining Power.

At the same time, the Committee sought to procure goods outside Europe, and in particular in Africa. The British blockade authorities, to whom application had to be made in this matter, replied that the Committee was free to transport relief for the above purpose on the vessels it had itself chartered, provided it accepted responsibility for the proper distribution of the supplies. When communicating the successful result of its negotiations to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, the ICRC added, in their telegram of February 16, 1942, that it had the necessary means of transport, and that funds to cover the costs could be transmitted to it by the Bank for International Settlements in Basle.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 61.

The Soviet Government did not, however, display any eagerness to have relief sent to its nationals in enemy hands ; at a time when its armies had, above all, to defend Moscow and Leningrad, it probably found it lacked the resources needed for such a purpose. The ICRC then approached the Allied countries and was able, by the end of February, to telegraph to Moscow that the Canadian Red Cross had offered 500,000 capsules of vitamins. The Committee made it clear, however, that the British authorities had strictly stipulated that the issue of these supplies should be supervised by delegates of the ICRC. It was further added that the German authorities would not allow this supervision to take place, unless the Soviet Government granted them reciprocity by accepting a delegate of the ICRC in Russia.

No reply to this telegram was received ; it was therefore impossible to go to the help of the Soviet PW, except in Finland where, as will be explained below, delegates of the ICRC had access to the camps. The obstacles created by the uncompromising attitude of both sides were all the more regrettable, since the material means were not wanting. In April 1942, the ICRC could have secured for Soviet PW in Germany 5,000 standard food parcels provided by the American Red Cross, whilst an enquiry had been received from Great Britain asking if the Committee was in a position to forward weekly parcels from the " Allied Packing Centre ". Had the first distribution met with success, further gifts would doubtless have flowed in.

In May 1942, the ICRC again approached the German military authorities, who seemed at first willing to accept collective relief, provided it was distributed by camp commanders, without any intervention whatsoever by the Committee's delegates. As this proviso could not be accepted by the blockade authorities and the donors, the gifts of the American Red Cross were sent on to Finland, as recorded later in this Report. The ICRC had expected, in point of fact, that the official reply, rather slow in coming, would be negative. Unfortunately, its fears were justified. On September 2, 1942, Germany, anxious concerning her men in Russian hands, about whom there was no information, stated that " she declined to make further concessions in behalf of an enemy who gave such clear proof of

his ill-will and that, consequently, all consignments of relief for Soviet PW would without exception be refused ”.

Circumstances were therefore to blame for the failure of the Committee's efforts. Matters remained as they were until the last weeks of the war in Europe, when the Committee introduced on its own responsibility a new method of distribution called the “pooling system”. At this time, the general chaos in Germany made it impossible to allocate food supplies to PW according to nationality or unit, in obedience to the donors' instructions. The urgent need of the moment was to save human lives by issuing relief on all hands, in general assembly camps, on the roads thronged with the thousands of men who were being withdrawn towards the West. Russian PW then benefited in good measure by the help that the ICRC brought up by rail and by road for all PW in Germany, without distinction.<sup>1</sup> Further, in May 1945, vaccine against exanthematic typhus was supplied to the Markt-Pongau Camp, where an epidemic had broken out among Soviet PW who had been released, but not yet repatriated.

At an earlier date, Russian PW in German hands had received, in two exceptional instances, small shipments which should be mentioned. The first consisted of medicinal herbs, an allocation from a collection of several hundred kilos made in Switzerland by the Swiss Women's Auxiliary Service and set aside for Soviet PW in proportion to their numbers. It went through in April 1944, the German military authorities having agreed that they would accept it, despite their standing rule, if the camp commandants were notified in advance and agreed to undertake the distribution.

During the summer of 1944, the Swiss Relief Committee for Russian Refugees handed the ICRC the following foodstuffs for Soviet PW :

200 boxes of ovaltine	(90 kilos)
1,400 soup cubes	(40 kilos)
109 bottles of tonic	(7.5 kilos)

Once again, the German Army High Command approved this consignment, on condition that it should not be repeated,

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 87.

and agreed to the proposal of the ICRC to allocate it to PW in the Freising Military Hospital, attached to Stalag VII A. This parcel actually reached the addressees, as proved by a receipt signed by their spokesman. Through their delegates' reports, the ICRC also learnt that in military hospitals Soviet PW mingled with PW of all nationalities, and thus frequently shared in their medical relief parcels.

This account would be incomplete without reference to the help given to Russian PW who had escaped from Germany and sought refuge in neutral countries, particularly in Switzerland, where the first Russians arrived in March 1943. As they were unable to return home, or join the Allied forces before the close of 1944, the Swiss authorities lodged them in camps. An ICRC delegate visited these camps regularly and was thus able to issue, up to December 31, 1944, some 6,000 kilos of clothing, underwear and boots, as well as 1,400 kilos of soap and toilet articles to Soviet escaped PW and refugees. These relief supplies were given by the American and British Red Cross Societies, and by various Swiss welfare organizations.

When Germany collapsed, released Soviet PW again poured into Switzerland. In May 1945, there were 7,000 accommodated in 89 camps. Thanks to the American Red Cross, the ICRC had a large supply of garments, invalid foods, and cigarettes for these men.<sup>1</sup>

(b) *Russian PW in Rumania and Finland.*

The only countries other than Germany which held Soviet PW were Rumania and Finland. Men taken by the Hungarian, Slovak and Italian forces were handed over to the German military authorities and taken to Germany.

In November 1941, there were some 60,000 Soviet PW in Rumania and on the left bank of the Dniester, and roughly 47,000 in Finland, in March 1942. The Rumanian and Finnish Red Cross Societies who transmitted this information to the ICRC, asked for its help; the blockade made it extremely difficult for these Societies to find sufficient relief locally for

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<sup>1</sup> For further details see pp. 355 et seq.

men suffering from great exhaustion and in extreme need of clothing.

In Rumania, as in Germany, and for the same reasons, the ICRC unfortunately was not in a position to take action. The Committee's delegate was however authorized, in June 1943, to visit the Mais Camp, where Soviet officers were interned. A small quantity of pharmaceutical products was sent there at the request of the camp doctor. Meanwhile, however, the camp had been disbanded, and the parcel was therefore handed to Calafat Camp, which held 2,680 Russian PW.

In Finland, on the contrary, relief work was possible on a fairly large scale. This was the only country at war with Russia which, even in the absence of reciprocity, allowed the Committee's delegates to visit the camps and to supervise the issue of parcels. Since the blockade authorities' requirements had been met on this point, supplies from overseas and elsewhere could reach Finland.

According to the Finnish Red Cross, members of the Russian forces taken prisoner during the winter of 1941-1942 were already suffering, at the time of capture, from undernourishment and vitamin deficiency, and many died of exhaustion or disease. Finland herself, at war a second time since 1939, was at that time in great difficulties over her own food supply. Marshal Mannerheim, the President of the Finnish Red Cross, informed the ICRC on March 1, 1942, that food and medical stores were urgently required. He added that the Soviet PW in Finland had been granted the benefits of the 1929 Convention, though neither Finland, nor indeed the Soviet Union, were signatories, and that a delegate of the ICRC would be gladly accepted by the Finnish authorities and granted all facilities for carrying out his duties.

The ICRC at once put the matter to the Red Cross Societies of the Allies and was fortunate enough to find donors. In the first place, the American Red Cross handed over relief supplies which had originally been intended for Russian PW in Germany, but which these had not been able to receive, as related above, because the requisite supervision by the ICRC delegates was not accepted by the Detaining Power. These supplies consisted

of 5,000 standard food parcels each weighing 5 kilos and containing tinned meat and fish, butter, biscuits and chocolate, having a total nutritive value of 12,200 calories, as well as cigarettes and tobacco.

The parcels left Switzerland in sealed wagons in May 1942, and went by way of Frankfort-on-Main, Berlin and Stockholm, reaching Helsinki in June, where the Finnish Red Cross took delivery. In co-operation with the Society, a delegate of the ICRC on a temporary mission to Finland issued these parcels in July to 10,000 prisoners, selected from amongst the most needy, the seriously wounded and the sick, in thirteen camps. The recipients, most of whom were of peasant origin, welcomed these products of America with joy and gratitude. In the words of their camp leader, this event was a "red letter day" for them, and the gifts "an unexpected message from God". Once the parcels were distributed, the delegate sent to Geneva the completed receipts and the letters of thanks to which, as is well known, donors attach great importance.

Again, thanks to the American Red Cross, a second shipment of 3,653 standard food parcels was sent in December. The ICRC added fifty parcels containing the 500,000 capsules of vitamins (vitamins A, B, Br, C and nicotinic acids) provided by the Canadian Red Cross, and which it was impossible to send to Russian PW in Germany. The ICRC took this opportunity of forwarding eighty parcels containing copies of the New Testament to Finland, a gift from the World Council of Churches (Commission for Spiritual Aid to PW) in Geneva. The delegate had informed Geneva that, on the occasion of the first distribution of gifts, the Soviet prisoners had asked for Orthodox prayer books and Bibles in Russian for religious services in camps. All this relief was distributed under the supervision of an ICRC delegate, who stayed in Finland from December 23, 1942 to January 27, 1943.

In July 1943, the Soviet PW received, for the third time, 2,770 standard food parcels from the American Red Cross, and a gift from the Swiss Red Cross comprising 306 boxes of pease-meal and eleven cases of medicaments weighing respectively thirty tons and 580 kilos. In agreement with the

Finnish Red Cross, the delegate distributed the supplies mainly to hospital patients, convalescent tubercular cases and the seriously wounded. The pease-meal was stocked in camps and military hospitals for use in winter in the form of soup, to supplement the usual rations. Medicaments (Becozym, Cibazol, Irgamid, Redoxon, etc.) were shared amongst four military hospitals.

In September a fourth consignment was sent, consisting of 10,703 standard food parcels from the American Red Cross, and ten tons of milk powder from the Swiss Red Cross. The Committee's delegate handed the major part of this milk to hospitals, where it was given, on the senior medical officer's directions, to PW who needed extra food, in particular to sufferers from tuberculosis and pleurisy.

A fifth distribution took place in April 1944. This was carried out by delegates of the ICRC and of the Finnish Red Cross, and consisted of the following goods, sent from Sweden to the Finnish port of Abö: 4,852 standard food parcels, the gift of the American Red Cross (to which the Tolstoy Foundation in New York had largely contributed); 2,000 kilos of meat, vegetables, sugar, and soap, which the Argentine Red Cross had sent on behalf of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Buenos Aires; and 317 tons of pickled cabbage (Sauerkraut) from the Swedish Red Cross. Like the previous relief supplies, these too touched the Russian PW deeply, as they brought moral consolation as well as material aid. "This gift has convinced us", wrote one of these men, "that we had not been wholly forgotten, that we were not altogether friendless and forsaken".

In October 1944, the Soviet PW received 2,332 standard food parcels from the American Red Cross. This was the sixth and last consignment.

The ICRC delegates who spent intermittent periods in Finland from 1942 to 1944 were thus able to distribute quantities of foodstuffs, as well as medicaments and religious works. This relief, which weighed in all some 500 tons, was provided by the American, Argentine, Canadian, Swedish and Swiss Red Cross Societies, and by the "Œuvre Suisse d'Entr'aide Ouvrière" (Swiss Worker's Mutual Welfare Scheme).

(c) *German, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian, Slovak and Rumanian PW in Russia.*

The Soviets captured a very large number of enemy combatants, particularly towards the end of the war, when the Russian armies had encircled whole divisions at Stalingrad, and the Germans were retreating from Leningrad, Moscow, the Caucasus and the Ukraine.

The great majority of these PW were German, but they also included members of the Rumanian, Hungarian, Slovak and Italian forces fighting on the Eastern Front. There were, too, nationals of countries annexed by Germany, in particular Alsatians and Luxemburgers, conscripted for the German army; further there were Spaniards and Frenchmen who had volunteered for the expeditionary forces, and Finns captured in the northern sector of the Eastern Front.

In the autumn of 1941 the ICRC made a first attempt to organize collective relief for these men, after having made a successful intervention in behalf of wounded and sick in Russia. In reply to the Committee's offer of August 12, the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies had stated, on September 20, its willingness to accept medicaments, surgical instruments, dressings and other hospital stores, and that donors should send these consignments by arrangement with the commercial representatives of the USSR in their own countries. The ICRC informed the Alliance by telegram on October 1, that it had communicated its request to the Red Cross Societies concerned<sup>1</sup>, and took the opportunity of expressing the hope that, in conformity with Art. 15 of the Fourth Hague Convention<sup>2</sup>, it would be able to transmit parcels

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<sup>1</sup> The ICRC learned later that several National Red Cross Societies had indeed sent large quantities of relief to Russia. The Australian Red Cross, in particular, sent two shipments, one of 1,166 comfort cases, to the value of £19,131 and one of a case of woollen clothing and of 30,000 sheep skins, to the value of £10,019. At the beginning of 1942 the American Red Cross gave medicaments, surgical instruments and clothing to the total value of 3,500,000 dollars. Russia received from the British Red Cross, in 15 different consignments, 1,410 tons of medical supplies, including one mobile X-ray apparatus.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I, p. 423.

through the Alliance, both to Russian PW in Germany and to German PW in Russia. The Committee also asked the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to approve two delegates who, in co-operation with the Alliance, would have settled all outstanding questions. In March 1942, the ICRC again approached the Commissariat and sought permission to send parcels to German PW, since it had a small quantity of relief supplies for them, consisting of two cases of sweets and tobacco which the German Red Cross had handed over to serve as a trial consignment.

Unfortunately, the Soviet authorities made no response to these proposals, and the ICRC never succeeded, despite repeated efforts, in accrediting a delegate to them, nor in sending anything whatsoever to Russia. Further, the complete absence of information on German and other servicemen captured by the Soviet army prevented these PW from receiving even the family parcels provided for in the 1907 Hague Convention, to which Russia as well as the States at war with her were signatory. Similarly, these States, with the exception of Finland, did not reveal the places of detention of Russian PW.

Besides these direct approaches, the ICRC made others, through its delegates, to the Soviet representatives in Turkey, Iran and Great Britain. As the German, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian and Rumanian Red Cross Societies had asked the ICRC on various occasions to forward relief supplies and had even, in 1943 and 1944, handed over funds for the purchase of food-stuffs and medicaments, the Committee's delegate, who had been sent on a special mission to Iran, was instructed to consult with the representative of the Alliance on how these requests might be carried out. The delegate in Teheran could have procured flour and rice on the spot. All these plans, however, came to nothing <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For the negotiations with Russia see Vol. I, pp. 404-436.

## *Chapter 5*

### **The War in North Africa**

After the conclusion of the armistice between the Vichy Government and the Axis Powers, the Allied Consulates in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia were still able, in spite of the increasingly uncertain political status of these three countries, to give direct assistance to their nationals who were in assigned places of residence, or were interned or lodged in camps and prisons. The total number of these persons in 1942 was estimated at roughly 10,000<sup>1</sup>. Relief supplies were distributed for the most part by the American Consulates in Casablanca, Algiers and Tunis, to U.S. nationals, as well as to many British, Poles and others. As these direct distributions by the Consulates encountered ever greater difficulties, they were supplemented, from 1942 onwards, by those of the ICRC, whose delegates had permission to visit the camps and several other places of detention.

A few months before the Allied landing in North Africa the situation deteriorated greatly, and the Allied consular staff was itself interned. Permission to visit these officials, who were now themselves civilian internees, was granted by an Italo-German Armistice Commission. During this period, the ICRC delegates in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia distributed in all 14,000 standard food and medical parcels and 46 tons of miscellaneous relief supplies to all the Allied nationals whose places of internment could be reached. Most of these internees were British seamen of the Merchant Service or sailors of the R.N.

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission, Geneva, 1948.

The Allied landing in November 1942 in no way hindered the delegates, who remained on the spot and continued their work. A fortnight after applying to the Italo-German Armistice Commission for permission to issue parcels to interned Allied consular personnel, the delegate in Morocco visited the members of the said Commission, now interned in their turn and grateful enough to receive a first gift of food and tobacco from the ICRC, with the consent of the American and British authorities.

The operations after the landing quickly gave rise to a great influx of German and Italian PW to the three North African countries. Those who fell into the hands of the Americans and British were placed in transit camps, pending their removal to permanent camps in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, Egypt and India. Those who were captured by the Free French forces remained in the hands of the National Liberation Committee at Algiers.

The PW held in the British and American transit camps were, on the whole, well supplied with food and essentials. They were, however, in great need of winter kit, since many of them were soon to be transferred to temperate or cold climates. Most were clad in the shirts and shorts usually worn by troops fighting in Africa. The ICRC approached the British and American authorities for warm clothing for these men and at once sent off the uniforms supplied by the German Red Cross, particularly for prisoners due to be transferred to Canada.

The Italian and German PW in French hands were less fortunate, as the French population in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia was itself short of necessary supplies. To make good this shortage, which was aggravated by the bad harvest in 1943, the ICRC set out to obtain relief supplies of food, medicaments and clothing for about 38,000 Italian and 40,000 German PW in the camps scattered over the three countries. Consignments from the German Red Cross unfortunately suffered loss and great delay due to transport difficulties in the Mediterranean and on African territory<sup>1</sup>. The Italian PW were in a

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 160-161.

still worse plight, as they could not expect any supplies from their own country, which had become a fighting zone. In addition, the total lack of paper prevented them from writing to their families for several months, until the ICRC succeeded in supplying the French authorities with several tons of paper purchased for this purpose in Sweden and elsewhere.

The Allied landing in North Africa also affected food supplies for French PW in Germany, as concerted measures in France and French overseas territory for the purchase and transport of supplies were now impossible.

The ICRC lent effective support to these various relief undertakings, although it was prevented by circumstances from giving them the impetus required. It was only with great difficulty that it secured a few gifts for these PW, who received little or nothing from their home countries. As normal communications between Europe and Africa had broken down, it sought to organize transport for this purpose only. However, despite prolonged negotiations with the Governments of Vichy and Algiers it did not succeed in getting a single ship allocated to it<sup>1</sup>. The German authorities, for their part, only used their own transport facilities when they were no longer able to send relief supplies by post. The ICRC were, however, able to arrange five trips to ports in North Africa in 1944, for vessels chartered by the British Red Cross, and one voyage to Casablanca by one of the "Foundation" ships. Relief supplies from or to North Africa were also carried by its vessels between Marseilles and Lisbon, or Gibraltar.

After the Allied landing in the South of France in 1944, the Allied authorities took over the transport of relief supplies from Africa. On the other hand, supplies from Germany intended for PW in Africa were dependent upon the Committee's fleet. As direct contact with Africa had by then ceased, the last shipments from the German Red Cross, which was shortly to come to a standstill, were loaded at Gothenburg and sent on to Philadelphia; from there, they were shipped to Africa by the American Army services, in the spring of 1945.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 160-161.

From November 1943 to May 1945, the Committee's ships carried from Europe to North Africa 4,300 tons of relief supplies for German PW in particular, and in the opposite direction 3,200 tons for PW taken in North Africa and held in the *Front-stalags* in occupied France. The attack on the *Embla* caused the loss of 221 tons of supplies for German PW.<sup>1</sup>

These operations called for unceasing negotiations with the belligerent Governments and National Red Cross Societies. In addition, ICRC delegates in various countries, for instance in Latin America, worked to collect donations and set up relief organizations, especially in behalf of Italian PW. The delegations in North Africa, to whom shipments were addressed, were responsible for the reception, forwarding and distribution of the goods.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 136-137 and 159.

## Chapter 6

### **Movements of Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees following the Italian Armistice of September 1943**

A profound change occurred as a result of the Italian armistice in the relief work done by the ICRC. It was brought about in the main by the following events :

(a)—Stoppage of normal rail traffic to Italy and within Italy, and dislocation of transport to Germany<sup>1</sup>.

(b)—Escape of many Allied PW and Italian anti-fascist military personnel and civilians to Switzerland<sup>2</sup>.

(c)—Transfer of Allied PW to Germany.

(d)—Transfer to Germany of Italian military internees and of deportees of all categories, calling for the immediate organization of new relief schemes.

(e)—Resumption of relief distributions to Allied nationals in Italy, after the division of the country into a State fighting with the Allies and a Neo-Fascist Republic.

The present chapter deals with points (c), (d) and (e).

#### *1. Transfer of Allied PW to Germany.*

The despatch of relief consignments to Allied PW and civilian internees in Italy became very difficult in the early summer of 1943, owing to the destruction of the railways and the disorganization of the Italian administration. In July, the ICRC informed the principal donors of the situation and told them that it was no longer able to give them the usual

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 355 et seq.

guarantees for such consignments. The unanimous opinion was, nevertheless, that the shipments should be continued, despite the risk of loss, in order particularly to build up reserve stocks in the camps.

A few weeks before the Italian armistice, the German authorities in Italy began the evacuation from the Peninsula of all prisoners of war taken by them in Africa, and of a number of civilian internees. In September, they did the same in respect of all Allied nationals whom they could arrest. Owing to the temporary closure of the Italo-Swiss frontier, the ICRC had at first no knowledge of the exact numbers transferred. They were, however, soon informed by the camp leaders and camp commandants in Germany of the arrival of thousands of men; these figures, together with the number of those who had escaped to Switzerland, gave approximation of the number of prisoners remaining in Italy. Many of these, estimated at about 30,000, went into the *maquis* and rejoined the Allied forces in their advance on Northern Italy.

To ensure sufficient relief for Allied prisoners transferred to Germany, the ICRC decided, with the consent of the donors, to make an increase of 10 per cent in the consignments asked for each month by the camp leaders of the large base camps, especially in Southern Germany and Austria. This was about the proportional increase in camp strengths resulting from fresh captures and the continual transfer of prisoners who had been held until then in Italy or the Balkans.

## 2. *Transfer of Italian anti-fascist nationals to Germany.*

Immediately after the armistice had been signed by Marshal Badoglio, the German military authorities and police, aided by the neo-fascist authorities, made mass arrests of Italian military personnel and civilians and sent them either to Germany, or to camps and prisons in Northern Italy. A few weeks later, the ICRC was in possession of information, which, although not authoritative, enabled it to distinguish three main categories.

(1)—The largest, that of the Italian military internees, comprised the anti-fascist members of the forces who had been

arrested as such and sent to Germany, where considerable groups of them were soon to be found in all camps and labour detachments. During the second half of 1943, their total strength rose to about 500,000.

(2)—There were, furthermore, many thousands of Italian anti-fascist prisoners, that is to say, members of the forces captured whilst fighting with the Allies. After repeated transfers between increasingly overcrowded camps in Germany, these men were as a rule merged, improperly, with the military internees and treated as such, although their status was not in principle the same.

Since they were not given PW status, these internees could not be visited by the Committee's delegates, and thus, under the regulations of the Allied blockade, they could not share in relief supplies from overseas. The President of the ICRC thereupon appealed to the humanity of the German Government. A few days later, the ICRC delegate in Berlin was called to the Chancellery, where he was informed that a special relief service had been organized for these internees by the Italian Embassy, in agreement with the Italian Red Cross set up in Vienna; if the Italian delegation agreed, the ICRC would be allowed to enter the camps. The German authorities, of course, were well aware that in default of this consent, the relief which they recognized as urgent could not be given. Approval therefore had to be obtained from the Italian delegation, who, for political reasons, might have wished to take the credit for this action. The efforts of the delegate in Berlin proved successful. The ICRC delegates were thus granted the right to supervise personally the distribution of relief from overseas, provided they made no mention of the origin of such supplies. The ICRC then informed the British Government and the representative of the American Red Cross at Geneva. Unfortunately, before the lengthy negotiations necessary to obtain the goods had been concluded, the Italian military internees were "converted" into civilian workers, which destroyed the Committee's last chance of giving the desired help.

In default of relief from overseas, the ICRC now made efforts to promote relief schemes on a smaller scale, from sources on

the continent. On the offer of a donation by the Papal Nuncio in Berne, the Committee lent its services for the purchase and transport of a wagon-load of foodstuffs, and its delegation in Berlin assisted the Nuncio in that town to distribute them. It also helped to obtain and despatch railway wagons required for the transport of family parcels from Italy, forwarded in particular by the Milan branch of the Italian Red Cross. The Committee were not, however, able to exercise any supervision over the allocation of these parcels, which the Neo-Fascist committees disposed of as they pleased.

(3)—Finally, a great many Italians in German hands belonged to the class of civilian deportees. Their treatment was the same as that of all nationals of occupied countries held in the concentration camps, or in prisons controlled by the German police. A summary is given below of the painful and almost insoluble problems which confronted the ICRC in trying to help these particular victims of the war<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. *Resumption of relief distribution to Allied nationals.*

After the division of Italy by political and military events, plans for the relief of Allied nationals had to be laid. For the sake of greater efficiency, sub-delegations were formed in the larger towns and supplied with stocks allowing them to take prompt action, whenever necessary. In view of Allied demands, they were, however, instructed to reserve goods from overseas for PW and civilian internees in the camps, and for British and American *isolati*. Allied *isolati* of other nationalities — Yugoslav and French civilians in particular — could only be given aid from the slender stocks arriving from France and the Balkans, supplemented by British and American parcels recovered from railway wagons that were destroyed or looted during bombardments or riots. It had been agreed with the Allied authorities and Red Cross Societies that the delegates were empowered to make whatever use they thought fit of any supplies they might elicit or seize in railway sidings, or

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 73 et seq.

even black-market depots. In this way, the delegate in Rome, with the aid of the local police, took possession of a wagon-load of standard parcels which had been stolen and shunted into a suburban station. These parcels were especially useful at a time when the breakdown in communications with Switzerland prevented the replenishment of stocks ; they were distributed in gradual stages to the British, American, French, Yugoslav, Polish, Greek and other nationals who were living secretly in the town and awaiting the arrival of the Allied forces.

Sub-delegations were set up in Florence, Genoa and Turin ; in the spring of 1944, the two last named towns were able once more to communicate direct with Switzerland. Another sub-delegation was established in Ponte San Pietro, near Bergamo, and became the centre for relief distributions throughout Northern Italy. Their work was of particular importance at that time, since the German military authorities had set up large transit camps in the plain of Lombardy for PW arriving from the Southern front, pending transfer to Germany. A great many sick and wounded remained in the camp hospitals for months, and the able-bodied themselves were evacuated very slowly, on account of transport difficulties. The delegation at Bergamo therefore made regular distributions of foodstuffs and medical supplies, with occasional issues of clothing, in these assembly centres, of which the most important were near Mantua and Modena. Since the train service had almost entirely ceased and road transport was unreliable on account of skirmishes between the partisans and Neo-Fascist troops, the delegates very often had to find lorries or caravans and take relief supplies themselves to the camps in turn. They so gained experience of a system which was afterwards adopted by the ICRC in Germany, towards the end of hostilities, when no other means of transport existed.

The delegates also issued relief to civilian internees in the camps and to British and American *isolati*, and when supplies of European origin were available, to other Allied *isolati*. The sub-delegation at Turin gave aid, although with some difficulty, to French civilians confined in prisons. The sub-delegation at Genoa carried out similar work within

the triangle Genoa-Florence-Milan, whilst that at Bergamo dealt with Milan and the towns of Lombardy which lay on the route to the Adriatic.

Jugoslav civilians deported to Italy were exposed to particular hardship. In 1942 and 1943, thousands of men, women and children were gathered in large concentration camps where their treatment was ill-defined, about half-way between that of political deportees and civilian internees. Regular visits were an essential prerequisite to relief. Although the Italian authorities made no objection in principle to such visits, definite requests were, however, always refused on one pretext or another. The guarantees necessary before supplies could be obtained from overseas were therefore lacking, and the armistice came before the ICRC was able to act in behalf of these camps. Fortunately, a great many such camps in Southern Italy were taken over by the Allies fairly soon and provisioned by them.

There were also a great many Jugoslavs in the Venice and Trieste areas. Although interned in camps they were, according to the Neo-Fascist authorities, ordinary civilians, and therefore entitled to relief on the same basis as the Jugoslav population.<sup>1</sup> Finally, several thousand of these civilians were dispersed among the prisons of Northern Italy and treated as Allied *isolati*. They were given relief supplies either bought in Europe, or taken from "recovered" parcels from overseas. Many of these parcels came from an illicit store discovered in Milan by the German authorities: it was thought likely, but never confirmed, that this store represented the load of a railway wagon that had been stolen or looted after damage in a raid.

Relief to Allied nationals was continued until their repatriation began after the end of hostilities, but the confused situation in Italy and difficulties of transport always prevented adequate action by the ICRC.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 487 et seq.

## Chapter 7

### Detained and Deported Civilians

Civilians in enemy hands<sup>1</sup>, as the account of measures taken for their protection has shown, fell into two main categories :

(1)—Civilian internees in the true sense of the term, that is, civilians living in belligerent territory at the outbreak of war and interned because of their enemy nationality ;

(2)—Civilian internees described as “ detainees ” or “ deported civilians ”, or “ civilians deported on administrative grounds ” (in German, *Schutzhäftlinge*<sup>2</sup>) who were arrested for political or racial motives, or because their presence was considered a danger to the State or the occupation forces. They included nationals of Axis satellites and of annexed or occupied countries, as well as a great many persecuted Germans, who were mainly Jewish.

The present chapter deals with the practical help given by the ICRC to civilians in the second category, who were confined in prisons, concentration camps or closed ghettos and for whom there was no explicit statutory safeguard. This form of relief work was not so wide in its scope as that for PW and for civilian internees with rights similar to those of PW under the 1929 Convention. It was however considerable, especially during the last two years of the War, and passed through several phases, corresponding to the series of concessions granted by the belligerents to detained and deported civilians in Germany, or in territories occupied by that country.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 567 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Persons in “ protective custody ”.

(a) — *First phase, 1939 to 1940. General representations.*

In its general negotiations in behalf of civilians, the ICRC at all times advocated the principle that the same protection should be granted to all civilians, without distinction of race, nationality, religious belief or political opinion. In practice, however, the Detaining Power insisted on drawing certain distinctions, with which the ICRC perforce had to comply, in the absence of any treaty stipulations on which they could take a stand. The Tokyo Draft had, in fact, prescribed not only legal protection but the right to receive relief supplies, for civilians of all categories in enemy hands. This Draft was, against the wishes of the Committee, not adopted as a whole by the belligerents: thus only civilians of the first category could benefit by the terms, where applicable, of the 1929 Prisoners of War Convention<sup>1</sup>. For detained and deported civilians therefore, special representations had to be made to each Government concerned.

(b) — *Second phase, 1941. Special representations.*

Upon the occupation by the Axis Powers of the greater part of Europe, millions of civilians fell into the hands of those Powers and were confined in prisons or concentration camps. As these camps were chiefly in Germany, or in countries occupied by the German forces, the ICRC made application in the first instance to the German Government, since obviously no relief of any kind could be undertaken without its consent.

The German authorities however placed detained and deported civilians on the same footing as persons arrested and imprisoned under common law for security reasons. The majority were in fact not nationals of enemy countries, nor as a rule even aliens, but possessed or had possessed, before becoming stateless, either German nationality, or that of an annexed country. The measures applied to these people were, therefore, from the German point of view and that of the satellite States, strictly a matter of internal policy, with which the ICRC might not interfere.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, page 569.

In view of the weakness of its legal position the Committee was obliged to act with prudence. The worse the situation of the detained and deported civilians became, however, the more energetically the ICRC made its demands; and the more the Axis Powers suffered strategic or political reverses, the greater were the Committee's chances of success. The special representations in regard to prisons and concentration camps in Germany, as in the annexed or occupied countries, were usually made through the ICRC delegation in Berlin and the German Red Cross. Towards the end of the war, the President of the ICRC made personal contact with some of the German leaders who at that time had gained control of internal affairs.

*Bohemia and Moravia.* — In the summer of 1942, the German Red Cross informed the ICRC that the occupying authorities in Prague had given permission for the despatch of medical supplies to Theresienstadt (Terezin), the largest camp for Jews in the country. A trial consignment of a few parcels was sent to the address given, *Lagerkommando Theresienstadt*, but no receipt was ever returned to Geneva. Theresienstadt, where there were about 40,000 Jews deported from various countries, was a relatively privileged ghetto, and the visit of a delegate of the ICRC in Berlin was permitted, in June 1944, as a special concession.

*Slovakia and Jugoslavia.* — The attempts made by the ICRC to intervene in behalf of detained and deported civilians met with constant opposition from the German authorities in occupation. The ICRC delegates, who were supported by the Slovak and Serbian Red Cross Societies, were always debarred from visiting the Slovak camp at Sered, which held Jews awaiting deportation to Germany; the same applied to the camp at Zemun, near Belgrade. The delegate at Bratislava was however on two occasions, during November 1944, allowed to visit the camp at Marianka, where a few American Jews were interned.

*Croatia.* — The delegate of the ICRC at Zagreb succeeded in obtaining an undertaking from the Croat Government in

January 1944, that the 1929 PW Convention would be observed, where applicable, in respect of detained civilians. He had, however, to make repeated representations in order to get this decision put into practice. After permission had at last been given, in June 1944, for the despatch of relief consignments twice a month, the detainees received foodstuffs, clothing and medical supplies over a certain period. In July 1944, two months before the authorities in occupation abruptly intervened, the delegate was even able to visit the concentration camps at Jasenovac, Stara Gradiska and Gredjani-Salas. He did not fail to call the attention of the camp commandants to the reckoning they might have to meet, if they allowed the civilians who were detained and deported to be brutally ill-used. As a result of this warning, conditions in the camps were somewhat improved.

*Hungary.* — The ICRC delegate in Budapest was able, in the autumn of 1944, to visit the concentration camps at Kistarcsa and Sarvar, where detained and deported Jews were confined. Here he distributed food and medical supplies received from Geneva, or purchased locally with funds made available to him.

*Rumania.* — Similar action was taken in this country, and the delegate visited the ghettos for Jews deported to the area lying between the Bug and the Dniester, in Transnistria<sup>1</sup>.

*Greece.* — The main difficulties had already been overcome by the end of 1942. The Italian Red Cross informed the ICRC, on December 11, that the Committee's delegates in Athens had authority to visit camps and prisons in the territory occupied by the Italian forces, and to hand out relief supplies. The ICRC was thus able to organize relief consignments, and at once approached the Governments and Red Cross Societies of Great Britain and the United States to this end, with the support of the Greek Government in exile in London. In February 1943, the Italian authorities even authorized the

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<sup>1</sup> For the mass deportation of Jews from Hungary and Rumania, see Vol. I, pp. 647 and 653.

issue of articles of uniform to Greek detainees, on condition that all military badges were removed.

Conditions in the concentration camps and prisons were appreciably better in Greece than in Germany. All detained civilians, except prisoners under common law, were allowed to receive parcels from home. In the spring of 1943, the Management Committee for Relief in Greece granted double daily rations to all civilian detainees held in seven concentration camps and 37 prisons in Athens and the provinces. During the summer of 1943, Swedish vessels brought 40,000 standard parcels from overseas, and the delegation of the ICRC, with the help of the Greek Red Cross, set up distribution centres in Athens and Salonika.

The delegates pressed the German and Italian authorities to improve conditions in the camps they had visited. They were never allowed to enter the camp at Haidari, near Athens, which had the worst reputation, and were only admitted to the camp at Goudhi shortly before the release of detained and deported civilians in October 1944. The sub-delegation at Salonika managed to make regular distributions of foodstuffs in the camps of Pavlo Mela and Vassiliades from 1944 onwards. In May 1944, a Greek medical officer wrote: "Your parcels are meeting a dire need and becoming a vital source of strength to the exhausted civilian detainees."

*Germany.* — As early as January 1941, the ICRC applied to the German Red Cross for permission to send food to detained and deported civilians in the camp at Oranienburg, but this was refused. Earlier a similar request made on May 20, 1940, concerning the camps at Drancy, Compiègne and in North Africa, had already been turned down by the German Foreign Office. In the summer of 1942, the ICRC was informed by this Ministry that parcels could not be sent to German citizens in concentration camps. A little later, however, in August, a fresh request was treated with more sympathy, and the delegate in Berlin was told that detained aliens, not only at Oranienburg but at Dachau also, could receive small food parcels from their relatives, on condition that the contents could be quickly

consumed. Family parcels were thus at last authorized for detained and deported civilians of enemy nationality, and were forwarded through the ICRC.

After further representations in October 1942, in behalf of detained civilians in Germany and Alsace, family parcels of foodstuffs and clothing were allowed for persons detained in Haguenau Prison ; an exception was made in the case of those who had been arrested on the grounds of political activities, or for imperilling the security of the State or of the authorities in occupation. From February 1943 onwards, this concession was extended to all other camps and prisons in Germany.

The ICRC declined, however, to limit its action merely to that of an intermediary between the detainees and their relatives. It claimed the right to send, itself, consignments of foodstuffs, clothing and medicaments, and to supervise their distribution in the camps. The Committee moreover insisted on ascertaining the situation within these camps and the number of occupants, by nationality. Its efforts were not entirely fruitless. In March 1943, the German Foreign Office informed the ICRC delegation in Berlin that the Committee and the National Red Cross Societies would henceforth be allowed to forward individual parcels to detained and deported aliens whose names and addresses were known to them. This privilege was, however, withheld from those accused of offences against the German State or the German forces. There was no limit to the number of parcels, but the amount of foodstuffs sent to any one detainee could not exceed his personal needs ; any surplus would be distributed amongst fellow-detainees who received no parcels. The ICRC delegates were not allowed access to the concentration camps, and the German Red Cross and camp commandants were forbidden to communicate lists of occupants, or even camp strengths.

The concession granted by the German authorities was therefore very slight, and indeed more apparent than real, since on the one hand, only individual parcels were permitted, whilst on the other, the authorities made it impossible for the senders to obtain the necessary data for consignments of this kind. Nevertheless, the ICRC was not deterred, but at once

set to work on their relief scheme, although they had at that time only some sixty names and addresses of civilian detainees in all the camps in Germany.

(c) — *Third phase, 1943 to 1944. Despatch of individual and collective parcels.*

The ICRC exercised its ingenuity to surmount the obstacles raised by the German authorities, and succeeded in obtaining from private and unofficial sources the names and addresses of a number of deported and detained civilians. This allowed the despatch of individual relief supplies to several concentration camps, from June 1943 onwards.

The result of this experiment far exceeded expectations. Only a few weeks later the first receipts arrived in Geneva bearing the signature of the consignees. By August 1943, the ICRC had in this way collected receipts signed by Belgian, Dutch, French, Norwegian and Polish detained and deported civilians. Subsequently, a growing number of parcels became available for the concentration camps, and these were forwarded, as soon as new names became known, to Belgian, Czech, Dutch, French, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish and Yugoslav detainees. The gratitude with which these parcels were received in the camps, where underfeeding was having disastrous effects, may well be imagined.

At Geneva, the card-index for detained and deported civilians slowly grew. News of the arrival of the first parcels had spread through the camps; the detainees who were allowed to write had told their relatives, and the ICRC then began to receive many requests, especially from Norway and Poland, that relief parcels should be sent, with all the data required. Lists also reached Geneva by secret channels.

Having overcome the first obstacle, the Committee was faced with that of the blockade, which was no less serious. The Allies only allowed parcels from overseas to be sent to camps where ICRC delegates had access and could supervise the distribution of relief supplies. This was possible only in camps for PW or for interned civilians on the same footing as

PW, who had equal rights under the 1929 Convention. The blockade authorities therefore refused, despite the Committee's repeated applications<sup>1</sup>, to allow goods to be imported into Europe which were intended for the concentration camps, where neither visits, nor supervision were permitted by the Germans. The said authorities also prohibited the transfer of funds which had been brought from occupied countries and deposited in Allied countries for the use of the refugee Governments in London.

The ICRC was therefore obliged to seek the necessary commodities within the blockaded zone. In spite of the general scarcity in almost the whole of Europe, the Committee managed to secure large quantities of tinned meat, biscuits, jam, sugar and other foodstuffs in the Balkan States, especially Rumania, Slovakia and Hungary, with the aid of the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross. These purchases were paid for with funds obtained by the Committee in Switzerland, through the representatives of Governments and Red Cross Societies, as well as various national and foreign relief organizations in that country. The goods were warehoused in bond at Geneva, where as many as 9,000 parcels were packed daily. From the autumn of 1943 until May 1945, about 1,112,000 parcels, with a total weight of 4,500 tons, were sent off to the concentration camps in Germany<sup>2</sup>.

The ICRC was, of course, unable to verify that the whole of these relief goods were handed over to the consignees; in any case, this risk did not deter the senders. When parcels were confiscated in certain camps, the Committee soon had knowledge of the fact, and at once suspended the despatch of further supplies; this happened in the case of Mauthausen. In general, the relief scheme worked well and was occasionally even aided in some degree by the camp commandants. Information from escaped detainees and letters from the concentration camps provided very useful evidence. For instance, a detainee at Oranienburg notified the ICRC regularly of the exact number of parcels distributed, or stolen. There is, at any rate, no

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 28 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see pp. 335 et seq.

doubt that the parcels saved thousands of lives. As one of the men wrote: "Your parcels were inestimable; in some cases the arrival of a single parcel gave new life to those on whom starvation had nearly finished its work".

In spite of the extensive card-index set up by the Committee, the effect of the individual parcel system was unfortunately to limit the number of persons benefited. In order to enlarge the circle and to reach even those deportees who were placed in the category "Nacht und Nebel", and whose names were never to be divulged, the Committee decided, during the summer of 1944, to send collective parcels to the concentration camps. This decision was in disregard of the conditions laid down by the Detaining Power, which however became rather less adamant after the Allied landing on the Continent and the liberation of the occupied countries. The scheme showed more chance of success than in the past, and it was incumbent on the ICRC to make the attempt, although the supervision of collective consignments appeared even more hazardous than that of individual parcels. The Committee was indeed urged by the Governments concerned to increase at all costs the volume of relief supplies sent to detained civilians.

As European resources were steadily diminishing, some relaxation of the blockade regulations had to be obtained. Fortunately, through the energetic intervention of the War Refugee Board in Washington, set up in January 1944 by President Roosevelt, the Allied authorities yielded to the insistent requests of the ICRC. The American supplies granted to the Joint Commission for transmission to the concentration camps<sup>1</sup>, which did not arrive in any considerable quantity until the end of 1944, provided relief for thousands of civilian detainees during the closing months of the war.

Some camp commandants prohibited the return of receipts, while others, such as the commandant at Dachau, allowed it. The receipts which reached Geneva bore several names (sometimes as many as fifteen), which were immediately filed in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission, Geneva, 1948, pp. 194 et seq.

card-index<sup>1</sup>. The ICRC thus used the information supplied by detained civilians to form an estimate of camp strengths. If, for instance, Geneva was informed that seven Poles in a certain camp had shared a parcel, the inference was drawn that the number of Poles in this camp was seven times greater than that of the parcels sent.

In addition to foodstuffs, the ICRC despatched a certain amount of clothing and pharmaceutical supplies. With regard to clothing, it had to be content with what could be found in the European market, since the textile shortage had become so acute that no country overseas would authorize the export of clothing. Underclothing of artificial wool was bought, and during the winter of 1944-1945, a good number of Belgian deportees were supplied with woollen garments given by the Belgian Government.

Pharmaceutical supplies (vitamins, restoratives and disinfectants) were sent as standard parcels and were accompanied by detailed instructions enabling the recipients to make use of the contents in the absence of medical supervision. Each of these parcels contained :

100 tablets	Decalcit
50 "	Redoxon
40 "	Protovit
20 "	Saridon
20 "	Coramin-caffeine
20 "	Entero-vioform
1 tube	Cibazol ointment—5 p.c. 20 gr.
1 tin	Neocide 50 gr.
1 roll gauze,	5 × 5 cm.
1 roll gauze,	10 × 5 cm.
6 squares	cellulose cottonwool

Finally, mention should be made of intellectual and spiritual assistance, such as books, cases of Communion wine for French chaplains, also Bibles and New Testaments, chiefly for the French and Norwegian deportees.

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<sup>1</sup> Facsimiles of these receipts are shown in the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, No. 320, August 1945, page 612.

Parcels were sent to Dachau, Buchenwald, Sangerhausen, Sachsenhausen, Oranienburg, Flossenburg, Landsberg-am-Lech, Flöha, Ravensbrück, Hamburg-Neuengamme, Mauthausen, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, to camps near Vienna and in Central and Southern Germany. The principal recipients were Belgians, Dutch, French, Greeks, Italians, Norwegians, Poles, and stateless Jews.

This relief work could not unfortunately be extended to all concentration camps, because a great many remained unknown to the ICRC until the end of the war. Moreover, the ICRC was long prevented by the blockade from procuring sufficient funds and goods. When it could do so at the very end of the war, transport had been seriously curtailed by the destruction of roads and railways.

(d) — *Fourth phase, January to June 1945. Admittance of the ICRC delegates to the Concentration Camps.*

In the chaotic condition of Germany after the invasion during the final months of the war, the camps received no food supplies at all and starvation claimed an increasing number of victims. Itself alarmed by this situation, the German Government at last informed the ICRC on February 1, 1945, in reply to a request of October 2, 1944, that individual and collective relief parcels could be despatched to French and Belgian detainees. In March 1945, discussions between the President of the ICRC and General of the SS Kaltenbrunner<sup>1</sup> gave even more decisive results. Relief could henceforth be distributed by the ICRC, and one delegate was authorized to stay in each camp, on condition that he undertook not to leave it before the end of the war. For the first time, therefore, the concentration camps were open to the Committee.

In order to take advantage of this last-minute concession, road transport had to be improvised, for there were now no trains in service throughout Germany. The efforts made by the ICRC in this respect are recorded elsewhere<sup>2</sup>. Suffice it

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, page 620.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 184 et seq.

to say that road convoys at once left for Germany, and that their loads of foodstuffs were issued either in the concentration camps, or to the many escaped or evacuated detainees wandering on the roads in a state of indescribable distress <sup>1</sup>. Between January 1 and April 15, 1945, 300,000 parcels weighing 1,200 tons in all were sent to concentration camps by road and rail.

On the return journey to Switzerland, the vehicles brought back women, children, the old and sick who were picked up on the roadside.

(e) — *Post-war activities, July to December, 1945. Collective consignments to released civilian detainees and deportees.*

For several months after the close of hostilities, the ICRC continued its relief work for detained and deported civilians who could not be repatriated at once, and who were lodged in the centres for Displaced Persons. Food, medical supplies and clothing were sent to Dachau, Munich, Mauthausen, Linz, Innsbruck, Lübeck, Bayreuth, Salzburg, Leipzig, Prague and Pilsen, for Polish, Czech, Baltic, Italian, Spanish, Yugoslav and other nationals.

From April 15 to June 30, 1945, over 300 trucks, in 34 columns, were sent to the areas occupied by the Allied forces, with 1,030 tons of supplies comprising :

- 272 tons for the French
- 110 tons for the Belgians
- 195 tons for the Poles
- 143 tons of War Refugee Board parcels for all nationals
- 228 tons for the Jews
- 82 tons for various nationals (Czechs, Italians, Dutch, Yugoslavs and others).

In the autumn of 1945, the ICRC ceased to send relief supplies to Displaced Persons, who henceforth were assisted by the Allied authorities, UNRRA and national relief organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> See delegates' reports and the map showing the principal concentration camps, published in the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, No. 327, March 1946, page 246.

## *Chapter 8*

### **The Final Phase of the War in Europe**

After October 1944, the International Committee's task became more onerous and difficult.

In the first place, after the Allied landings in Normandy and the South of France, the supply of parcels from overseas stopped altogether. The second of these landings and the fighting that followed moreover halted the despatch of relief from France direct to French PW in Germany. Fortunately, the ICRC was able to draw on the stocks it had providently built up in Switzerland. Once already, before the armistice between France and Germany in 1940, Geneva had acted as intermediary between the camps of French PW on the one hand, and France and her colonial empire on the other. Now a similar arrangement made it possible to keep up the supply of food for the French PW.

Meanwhile the situation in Germany was steadily deteriorating. Even the regulation rations, long since inadequate, were now no longer guaranteed to PW. As the German armies lost ground in the East and West, a hasty evacuation of the camps near the frontiers followed. Camps in Central Germany became overcrowded, while thousands of men, on the march without a break towards new places of detention, reached the limit of their endurance. These constant and sudden transfers so thoroughly intermingled the personnel of the camps that Geneva had no reliable information on camp strengths and relative numbers by nationality, not to mention nominal lists. Further, the destruction of railways and rolling stock paralysed transport.

Thus, relief work was at the same time urgently needed and seriously impeded. It was nevertheless carried on by new methods adapted to the circumstances.

After persistent applications to the Allied, German, and Swiss Authorities, the ICRC received some French, Belgian and Swiss wagons, in addition to the German railway cars still at its disposal. It was thus able to continue its consignments to the camps still in being and accessible by rail, and even to increase these shipments by 25 to 30 per cent, in order to provide for the increased camp strengths due to the concentration of PW. The ICRC also sent considerable quantities of relief to the big assembly centres for PW, internees and deportees, and set up depots which enabled the delegates to convey supplies in trucks to neighbouring camps and columns on the march. A first block-train<sup>1</sup>, composed of 50 cars of medicaments and medical equipment, left Switzerland on March 6, for Moosburg in Southern Germany, where a supply centre was set up. Other block-trains followed, each carrying between 500 and 600 tons of supplies.

Many camps, however, could not, or could no longer, be reached by rail. The ICRC then used the numerous motor trucks which, after repeated requests, they had succeeded in obtaining from the Allies. A first group of trucks set off for the Eger, Carlsbad and Marienbad districts, across which the columns of PW evacuated from Poland and Upper Silesia were passing. A second group was sent to the North and remained attached to the Lübeck supply centre, which furnished relief supplies to neighbouring camps and to columns of PW from East Prussia <sup>2</sup>.

By the time these railway wagons and lorries were ready for work, the invading Allied and Soviet Armies were already on the point of cutting Germany in two, and the ICRC could no longer communicate, either direct or through their Delegation in Berlin, with the German High Command, then established at Torgau. The ICRC therefore made contact at Constance with officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and of the SS

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<sup>1</sup> Or "set-train".

<sup>2</sup> For technical details concerning block-trains and lorries, see below, pp. 166 et seq., and 184 et seq.

who had retired to South Germany, and who were in fact directing the internal affairs of the country. It was they who authorized convoys to cross the German-Swiss frontier and to supply food to all camps in Germany.

Mention must be made of another feature of relief work during the last phase of hostilities. From February 1945, supplies could no longer be issued in the usual manner. Delegates with the convoys could have no idea of the nationality of PW they would meet on the way, and it is clear that when they came across men dying of hunger in a camp or on the road, they could have no justification for refusing to some what they gave to others. It was decided, therefore, to use the pooling system, so called because standard food parcels sent by the ICRC were, in each camp, pooled without regard to their origin (American, British, French, Belgian, etc.), and placed in the custody of camp leaders representing the various nationalities. These stocks were then issued equally to all Allied prisoners and civilian internees. The idea was, moreover, further developed. The ICRC sent telegrams on April 18, 1945, to the commandants of sixty-two camps, informing them that relief supplies should be shared out among all prisoners, without distinction. Thus Russian, Italian, Rumanian and other PW also received a share. Shortly afterwards, pooling was extended to include even civilian detainees and deportees.

As the normal system of distribution by nationality or specified camp had to be abandoned immediately, the ICRC decided to act without first obtaining consent from the donors. The majority of the contributors, however, and in particular the American and British Red Cross Societies and the French and Belgian Governments, informed the Committee that they consented. Other Red Cross Societies gave their tacit approval. Moreover, in a Note sent on August 17, 1944, to all belligerent Powers, dealing with the food supply of PW, internees and civilians in Europe on the cessation of hostilities, the ICRC had already alluded to the possibility of pooling in the future and said: "Should the internal organization of the Detaining State break down at a time when it is urgently necessary to forward relief consignments, it would be, for humane as well

as practical reasons, difficult and maybe impossible to issue supplies only to nationals of certain countries and certain categories of persons. Any such plan for assistance should, in our view, apply as far as possible without distinction to all PW, workers and deportees in the area being supplied ”.

#### FOOD SUPPLIES FOR THE DIFFERENT AREAS IN GERMANY

At this point a few technical and statistical details of relief work carried out in behalf of PW between October 1944 and the armistice of May 1945 may be useful.

According to information supplied by the American Supreme Command in Europe there were, in March 1945, some 2,200,000 Allied PW lodged in 70 camps. These included :

75,850 Americans	87,100 Italians
65,700 Belgians	122,100 Jugoslavs.
199,500 British	69,300 Poles
10,200 Dutch	784,300 Russians
754,600 French	

As already mentioned, the retreat of the German Army led to the evacuation of the camps that were in danger of falling into the hands of the invading armies. American and British PW were mainly transferred to the East, and Polish and Russian PW to the West, in order to prevent escaping prisoners from joining up with their own forces. Later, the continuing advance of both the Allied and Russian forces obliged the German military authorities to take other measures: they assembled all PW in three main areas in the centre of the country, one in the north at Lübeck, another in the centre at Altengrabow, and a third at Moosburg in the south.

These transfers were carried out in circumstances of extreme hardship. The PW had only a few hours notice to prepare for their departure. As the railways had been destroyed and there was a shortage of rolling stock, they had to cover the long distances to their new camps on foot; they were often obliged to march 40 to 50 kilometres a day, for eight to ten days. Rations,

too, were short so that the ICRC had to supply food not only to the camps, but also to columns of PW and detainees on the road across Germany.

(a) *Eastern Area.*

Evacuation of the Eastern area began in January 1945. Earlier, in October 1944, there had been the surrender in Warsaw of the Polish underground army commanded by General Bor-Komorowski. Under the terms of the capitulation, the German authorities had granted the benefit of the 1929 PW Convention to all Polish combatants captured since the beginning of the rising, including women. For the first time, therefore, the ICRC was called upon to help some thousands of women PW and, in addition, children who had gone with their mothers into captivity. The Polish Red Cross and various Polish organizations abroad, for instance in the United States, made generous donations to the ICRC for this work. The relief for the Polish insurgents was the last provided in conformity with the rule of distribution by nationality.

Prisoners evacuated from the Eastern area were of all nationalities. The Luckenwalde Camp, for instance, contained all the American PW of Oflag 64 and Stalag III B, British PW from Stalag Luft III at Sagan, Polish PW hitherto held in camps in Hungary, Norwegian PW transferred from Schildberg, and lastly Italian and French PW. Delegates of the ICRC were able to visit this camp and to issue 150,000 American parcels, brought up by rail in February, to all PW without distinction.

Prisoners from camps in Upper Silesia reached the west via Czechoslovakia. Detainees and civilian deportees from concentration camps in East Germany, bound either for the Hamburg-Neuengamme Camp or for Dachau in the south, were also on the roads. Confusion was at its worst when the endless columns of PW, civilian internees and deportees were joined by civilian refugees considered as being of German race (*Volksdeutsche*), and coming from Bessarabia, Poland, the Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe.

(b) *Northern Area. Lübeck.*

By February 1945, over a quarter of all Allied PW in Germany had been, or were being transferred, and the ICRC had quickly to assume the immense task of supplying the various assembly centres with food, despite the growing transport problem. For the Northern area, the Committee drew on parcels warehoused at Gothenburg and sent to Lübeck, where the delegation had built up a large stock of foodstuffs. From this depot, which also received goods from Switzerland by motor truck, distribution was made as far as possible by rail, but the arrival of shipments was extremely uncertain. Letters from camp leaders were often lost in transit. Some reached Geneva after considerable delay and showed that parcels had taken several weeks, or even months, to arrive at their destination.

On the request of the German authorities and with the aid of information supplied by them, the delegation of the ICRC in Berlin immediately organized relief work on the roads followed by the PW and civilian internees. As many of these were in the neighbourhood of Neubrandenburg, the delegation set up a supply centre in that town. It was able to procure two lorries and asked the German railways for the use of 18 railway cars. On February 12, both lorries were loaded with foodstuffs at the Committee's warehouse at Lübeck and left for Neubrandenburg. They first went to the Rostock-Anklam district and, on the way, left goods at Demmin for various groups of PW who had already arrived there. When the railway cars became available, it was possible to convey large quantities of foodstuffs to Neubrandenburg.

Immediately on arrival in this district, the delegate drew up, in agreement with the German authorities, a general plan for supplying food to the columns of PW on the march. In order to reach those on secondary roads, depots were set up at Anklam, Waren, Neustrelitz, Parchim, Demmin and Teterow. The delegate arranged for receipts to be given and for a regular check to avoid losses.

The PW on the march received one parcel each. Some

thousands of parcels were dumped in the above stores. Finally, supplies were sent to the following camps, at the rate of one parcel for each man :

Oflag 64 Neubrandenburg . . . .	680	parcels
Luftlager IV Gross-Tychow. . . .	6,500	"
Oflag II D Gross-Born . . . . .	5,000	"
Oflag 65 Berkenbrügge . . . . .	1,500	"
Oflag II B Arnswalde . . . . .	2,300	"
Group of American PW coming from Hammerstein. . . . .	485	"
Group of British PW coming from Stalag XX B . . . . .	1,000	"
Wehrmacht Prison at Graudenz. .	1,000	"
PW just arrived at Stalag II A Neubrandenburg . . . . .	1,500	"

To carry out this scheme of relief as speedily as possible, the work had to go on night and day. In Neubrandenburg itself, parcels were issued under the control of the French camp leader, with the full approval of his American, British, Polish and Yugoslav colleagues. In the course of their many journeys, the trucks picked up sick PW and took them to Neubrandenburg Military Hospital.

Whilst keeping in touch with the supply centre at Neubrandenburg, the delegates then went to the Lübeck-Hamburg area to meet PW coming from the Eastern territories, and supplied them with food, using trucks placed at the disposal of the ICRC by the American and Swedish Red Cross Societies.

A further six trucks left Geneva on March 7, 1945, carrying 20,000 litres of fuel, and reached Lübeck just as great streams of Allied PW were arriving in the neighbourhood. In order to feed them, the vessels from Gothenburg had to be unloaded without delay. As the delegation could not do this by itself, it enlisted the voluntary help of French PW from Oflag X B at Lübeck, a so-called "reprisal camp" for officers suspected of being supporters of General de Gaulle, others guilty of attempts to escape, and those of Jewish origin.

In North Germany, there was an issue of relief (standard food parcels and medical kits), which had arrived in Europe by way of Gothenburg. Clothing for French PW, provided by the American Red Cross, mufflers for American PW and some blankets for the British came through the same port.

(c) *Central Area. Altengradow.*

The approach of the Western Allies and the Soviet Armies made this Central area almost inaccessible by rail or road. There had been a plan to organize a relief depot at Altengradow, where Stalag XI A, now a large assembly camp, was situated. That scheme, however, had to be abandoned, because this town could be reached neither from Switzerland, nor from Lübeck. The PW therefore depended for food entirely on the parcels which Allied planes succeeded in dropping to them by parachute. They were, however, released earlier than those in the other areas.

Road convoys which were intended for Stalag IV B at Mühlberg, Oflag IV C at Colditz, Stalag IV G at Oschatz and Stalag IV A at Hohenstein, could not reach their destination and were unloaded at Moosburg in the Southern area.

(d) *Southern Area. Moosburg.*

The Southern Area, being adjacent to Switzerland, fared better than the others in the matter of food. It was also allocated the relief shipments that could not be forwarded to the Central area.

A representative of the ICRC met officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Army High Command and the SS at Uffing (Bavaria), and informed them that the ICRC wished to set up depots in this area. Although they acknowledged the necessity of such stocks, the Germans were at first very much against their being placed near PW camps. Finally, however, they agreed with the ICRC that it was not feasible to set them up anywhere but in Moosburg. This Bavarian village on the Isar, north of Munich, held Stalag VII A, which had become an assembly camp, and contained as many as 80,000, perhaps

100,000 PW of all nationalities. It was to this place that on March 6 and 28, and April 12, three block-trains of 50 wagons each were sent, carrying foodstuffs and medicaments, and escorted by delegates of the ICRC. One of these trains, the arrival of which was acclaimed with cheers by the PW, served to provision Stalag VII A itself ; the consignments carried by the two following trains were taken by road to neighbouring camps.

At Moosburg, all the warehouses were found to be occupied by civilians who had fled from Munich after the bombardments, and there was nowhere to store the relief supplies. However, with the help of the station master and the camp commandant, a barn and three other storehouses, as well as the station warehouse were finally made available. Under the delegate's directions, French and British PW unloaded the 93,312 parcels with all speed. The train left immediately and, on March 11, arrived at Buchs, on the Swiss frontier. The storehouses were guarded by six French, five British and five American NCOs, in their turn guarded by patrols of German soldiers.

On April 4, two other block-trains left for Stalag XIII A at Sulzbach and Stalag XIII B at Weiden. Unfortunately, military operations prevented their getting through, and they had to be diverted to Moosburg. Two special trains of twenty German cars each, not escorted by delegates of the Committee, also failed to reach their destination, Stalag V B at Villingen, and the supplies they carried were issued to PW in the Augsburg area.

As there was no further room at Moosburg, the German authorities asked the ICRC to establish a new depot at Ravensburg, a small town 20 kilometres from the Lake of Constance, where large premises could be reserved for the exclusive use of the Committee. This depot, placed under the supervision of delegates, could hold 7,000 tons of stores, and the vehicles of the ICRC could be parked, repaired and re-fuelled there.

In April, therefore, two block-trains, consisting in all of 110 cars, left for Ravensburg, from which point relief supplies were taken by lorry to PW and concentration camps within a radius of 300 kilometres. Ravensburg was soon afterwards

evacuated by the German forces and occupied by the French. Meanwhile, the convoys of the ICRC continued their journeys through the French lines. Food could thus be provided immediately for released PW. During the days preceding the French advance beyond Ravensburg, the Committee's delegate handed out some 24,000 food parcels to Allied PW in labour detachments, and to those on the roads.

The ICRC followed the same procedure during the second fortnight in April at Landeck, near the Arlberg Pass in the Tyrol. It was learned that mass removals of PW from Upper Austria towards the Tyrol, from Lower Austria towards the country round Passau and Braunau were in progress. One of the delegates found some thousands of PW in Landeck Camp, which was attached to Stalag XVIII C at Markt-Pongau, where many columns were also arriving. Two block-trains were therefore unloaded at Landeck, but distribution could not be carried out on a large scale until after the surrender, because the roads were too congested to permit any traffic.

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It may safely be said that the relief schemes carried out in the winter of 1944-45 and the spring of 1945 saved tens of thousands of lives.

Allied Red Cross Societies played an important part in the success of these efforts, not only by sending great quantities of supplies to Geneva, but also by obtaining transport facilities from various Governments.

Camp leaders also made a most valuable contribution ; it was they who kept the ICRC informed of the numbers and needs of PW, of the state of communications, and of the best method of conveying the supplies to each camp. Furthermore, the teams or committees formed by all the camp leaders in each camp often secured wide powers of discretion from the Detaining Authorities in the supervision and issue of relief.

The ICRC itself maintained unremitting pressure on the Allied and German authorities for the supply of means to carry out its welfare work. The Committee's experience, its

moral standing, and above all the confidence its impartiality inspired in all the belligerents, enabled it to aid the victims of war in pursuance of its traditional role of neutral intermediary, even during the period when the war, nearing its end, was also at its climax.

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## *Chapter 9*

### **The Period of Repatriation**

The American and British Red Cross Societies had given previous notice that when the fighting ceased, the Allied military authorities would themselves take care of the nationals of the United Nations who were found in the respective zones of occupation. Nevertheless, the task of the ICRC did not come to an end with the armistice in Europe. They were requested by the Inter-Allied Military High Command (SHAEF)<sup>1</sup>, to give their services in helping them to supply relief to Allied PW, for whom no means of immediate repatriation were available.

This relief work met with very great difficulties owing (1) to the shortage of transport ; (2) to the breakdown of direct telegraphic communication to various parts of Germany ; and above all (3) to the immense numbers suddenly released. These included not only hundreds of thousands of PW, but civilian workers, deportees and detainees, each group to be counted in millions. All these were classified on release either as ex-PW (RAMP)<sup>2</sup> or Displaced Persons<sup>3</sup>.

Without waiting for arrangements to be made with SHAEF, the ICRC began its relief work from May 8, 1945, as far as available transport allowed. The necessary information was supplied by its own delegates and the representatives of SHAEF. Large amounts of foodstuffs, medical supplies, tobacco, soap

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<sup>1</sup> SHAEF — Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces.

<sup>2</sup> RAMP — Released Allied Military Personnel.

<sup>3</sup> With regard to Displaced Persons, see pp. 118 et seq.

and clothing were sent into Germany by rail and road. The Ravensburg Distribution Centre was kept in operation under the direction of a permanent sub-delegation; the Landeck (Tyrol) sub-delegation also had some stocks at its disposal, and the delegation at Uffing (Bavaria) distributed the relief supplies stored at Moosburg.

Conversations between the representatives of SHAEF and the ICRC took place at Kreuzlingen, on the German-Swiss frontier, on May 22 and 25, 1945, and in Paris during June. As a result of these talks the scheme for supplying nationals of the United Nations countries was brought into line with the repatriation procedure, and the stocks held by the ICRC in Switzerland and abroad were liquidated in the most rational way. These stocks were used to augment the rations supplied by the Allied military authorities to ex-PW and ex-civilian internees in Germany, until their repatriation.

Under the new scheme, the ICRC drew on the General Pool of relief supplies built up in Switzerland with stocks of British and American origin, and despatched them at the formal request and on the instructions of SHAEF. The pooled stock warehoused in Switzerland represented about 30,000 tons of foodstuffs on June 1, 1945. Some relatively small relief stocks, which were the property of Allied Red Cross Societies and had not been placed in the General Pool, were distributed in accordance with the donors' wishes, in so far as the Committee had the means of transport. Other relief supplies which did not form part of the General Pool and were still lying in port at Lisbon and Toulon, were returned to the donors.

By the use of air transport, the repatriation of ex-PW and of civilian internees from United Nations countries, was speedily carried out. The data supplied by SHAEF show that about 1,500 transport planes and bombers took part during May in this operation and that they carried up to 36,000 persons a day, when weather conditions were good. For these people, therefore, only a small proportion of the available stocks was drawn on, and it was decided by SHAEF and the French Ministry for PW, Deportees and Refugees that the stocks remaining should be issued to Displaced Persons who were

nationals of United Nations countries, with the exception of four million American standard parcels. These were set aside for possible future requirements of ex-prisoners of war <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 118 et seq. for an account of the unexpected difficulties met in forwarding parcels, and especially stocks of pharmaceutical supplies, to the organizations now responsible. For supplies to PW who were nationals of the Axis countries, see the following chapter.

## *Chapter 10*

### **Relief to Axis Prisoners of War after the End of Hostilities**

#### **§ 1 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

At the end of hostilities in Europe, the relief work of the ICRC in behalf of prisoners of war necessarily resumed the character it had had at the beginning of the war. At that time (1940), virtually all PW were held by one belligerent, so that any intervention made by the ICRC was in fact almost entirely unilateral, although in principle based on reciprocity. After the autumn of 1945, the situation was reversed, and the only prisoners remaining were nationals of Axis countries, chiefly Austrian, German, Hungarian, Italian and Japanese.

At least one of the countries concerned, namely Germany, no longer existed as a political body, and the status of PW was not in fact immediately granted to German combatants who had laid down their arms under the terms of surrender<sup>1</sup>. The military authorities lost no time in distinguishing between war criminals, to whom the Geneva Conventions obviously did not apply, and all the other detainees from Axis countries, Germany in particular. Public opinion, however, and many minor officials were inclined to judge matters in a far more arbitrary way, especially in countries which had undergone great suffering during hostilities.

Although the Committee was not required to give a considered opinion on the question, it was nevertheless obliged to take it into account, and had to use circumspection when

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 539 et seq.

acting as neutral intermediary and when exercising its right of initiative. Since its only concern is to give the most effective help to those in need, the ICRC chooses in each particular case the most appropriate means to that end. That is why it did not, for instance, think it useful to make a public appeal for contributions in behalf of prisoners from Axis countries after the end of hostilities.

The ICRC was undoubtedly bound to act in the interest of the defeated, and its efforts from the end of 1945 were in fact centred on their welfare. In spite of appearances, no partisanship was involved in this policy, since the work of the Committee during any given conflict has to be considered as a whole. A rapid survey of the second World War and ensuing events will show that, from 1939 to 1943, considerable moral and material relief was given almost exclusively to nationals of the United Nations. In 1944 and part of 1945 the balance was still in their favour, and only in the post-war period was the position entirely reversed; then the intervention of the ICRC was only required for the combatants of defeated countries. The Western Powers, moreover, who had until then abundantly benefited by the Committee's assistance, readily authorized and in fact facilitated its activities, although circumstances made it impossible for these Powers to grant PW treatment strictly in accordance with the Red Cross Conventions and humanitarian principles.

The ICRC therefore met with few difficulties of a diplomatic or administrative nature. As regards material relief, however, the extremely limited means at its disposal hampered its efforts. From 1945 to 1947, the only resources available were : (1) for German PW, the balance remaining from sums subscribed by the German Red Cross and the German Government ; (2) for German and Austrian PW, the proceeds of collections taken in the United States amongst German PW who were still in relatively comfortable circumstances. For Italian PW, matters were slightly less difficult.

The ensuing account will deal mainly with relief to German PW, since they formed a typical example of the problems which affect material assistance to defeated combatants.

The collections mentioned above had been organized during 1944 by the German PW themselves in some of the camps in the United States ; the proceeds had been handed to the delegation of the ICRC in Washington, which kept them as funds for special grants, when required. Other camps followed suit, and funds amounting to \$ 1,220 at the end of 1944 had reached over \$ 12,000 by April 1945. Shortly afterwards, contributions from the German authorities and German Red Cross ceased altogether, and the ICRC requested their delegation to keep the above funds in reserve for general relief to German PW, and to encourage further collections. Gifts then arrived from all camps, raising the relief fund to \$ 200,000 in August 1945, to \$ 759,000 at the end of the year and to \$ 1,900,834 in June 1946, at which date the remaining German and Austrian PW left the United States.

The American authorities permitted these collections only on condition that the donors should not set any limitation to the use of the funds obtained, and that the ICRC should be entirely free to employ the money without distinction of nationality, race or religion. The camp leaders were, however, allowed to inform the ICRC delegation of the men's wishes ; many camps were more particularly interested in victims of the concentration camps, others in the German and Austrian civilian populations, prisoners in particular need, the European children, and so forth.

In compliance with their wishes, the ICRC spent about 60% of the total amount in favour of German and Austrian PW ; the remainder was allocated for relief to civilians and for the constitution of a reserve fund of \$ 500,000, to serve for the return of " Surplus Kit ", of which more will be said later. However, this reserve was not used as arranged, and \$ 250,000 were released in the autumn of 1946 for the purchase of relief supplies for German prisoners.

It must be stressed that these funds were absurdly small, as the following comparison will show.

The value of relief consignments to German prisoners of war from the summer of 1945 to that of 1947 only amounted to about 19 million Swiss francs, i.e. the approximate cost of

ten days' relief supplies to Allied PW, to whom relief supplies amounting in all to some *three thousand million* francs were assigned. Further, at the beginning of the post-war period, the number of Austrian, German, Hungarian, Japanese and other prisoners greatly exceeded the maximum Allied PW strengths, and, in 1947, the figure was still over a million men, not counting those in Russian hands. Thus, the ICRC often had to work out relief schemes at a time when the funds at their disposal did not even amount to *one franc* per head.

The methods employed naturally suffered by these restrictions. Instead of merely transmitting gifts for PW, as it had done during hostilities, the ICRC was obliged to take active steps to find donors — a task which, for the political and psychological reasons already quoted, proved thankless enough. Further, its inability to provide adequate relief from its own resources, reduced the Committee in the main to indirect assistance, such as appeals to the Detaining Powers for the treatment of PW in accordance with treaty stipulations and humanitarian principles. In the Western European countries in particular, where the release of PW was slower than overseas, war and occupation had left deep and painful wounds: ruin and destruction, impoverished economic conditions, and resentment against the invaders. The primary duty of the ICRC was to ensure that the prisoners should suffer as little as possible by these circumstances; the gradual improvement in their conditions was partly due to the Committee's efforts, and to the willing support which, it must be recorded, was increasingly afforded by the States concerned.

The Committee's resources, both in money and in kind, were too small to allow of equal distribution among the PW; priority was therefore given to those in severe climates, or in countries which were unable to give them minimum maintenance. Thus, German PW in Poland and Yugoslavia often received proportionately more than their comrades in France and North Africa, whilst intellectual matter only was provided for camps in the Near East, Australia, the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere. Merely limiting the number of recipients did not, however, entirely solve the question; the

Committee was ultimately compelled to satisfy only the most pressing needs. It thus restricted its purchases to medicaments, small quantities of diet foods, hospital linen, underclothing, tailors' and shoemakers' materials and, whenever possible, footwear. It was considered advisable to abandon any attempt at giving food supplies; even by abandoning all other forms of relief, attempts in this field would have been insignificant. The Committee also found that, with regard to food, the Detaining Powers were able to follow up its suggestions more freely than hitherto.

From the above comments, it will be seen that the Committee's resources were very limited, especially as it was obliged to hold back a minimum reserve fund (often less than 500,000 francs) for unforeseen emergencies, such as epidemics, the relief of distant camps the existence of which had remained unknown, and for repatriated prisoners.

The question of transport costs for relief supplies was also difficult to settle. As the "levy"<sup>1</sup> was only applicable to relief supplies for Allied PW, and the proceeds of the "levy" from the German side had ceased, these costs could only be covered by the balance of the German Government's payments for this purpose. This balance amounted to 613,097.52 francs on January 1, 1946, and fell to 443,088.22 francs by June 30, 1947. As the ICRC was anxious to keep this balance in hand against possible deficits, it was obliged to deduct from funds intended for the purchase of relief supplies a percentage sufficient to cover overhead costs, such as administrative expenses at Geneva and in the delegations (when accountable to relief activities), warehousing, checking of consignments, repacking, loading and transport charges, if free transport was refused. During 1946, a reserve account was instituted, whereby 20% of all funds subscribed for any given relief action were put aside to meet costs, and any remaining balance was afterwards transferred to the purchase fund.

The question remained whether these deductions were justifiable, since the funds had been subscribed exclusively

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<sup>1</sup> See page 270.

for prisoners' needs. Some donors, it is true, relieved the ICRC of any anxiety on this point. The Committee had, in view of the humanitarian character of its work, received from the Swiss pharmaceutical manufacturers during the war a rebate of 30% on the wholesale rates for its purchases. From July 1, 1946, half this rebate, which until then had been entirely used for prisoners' needs, was placed in the reserve account. Added to the balance of the German subscriptions already mentioned, these funds were, with the donors' permission, used to meet overhead deficits. These could no longer be paid by the levy made on the reserve account, i.e. 2% in 1946, and 5% in 1947. Whereas during the war an average levy of less than 5 per thousand had been sufficient when the goods handled amounted to about 2 million francs a day, overhead expenses inevitably exceeded this low rate when the figure reached only 2 million per quarter, in spite of reductions in staff and administrative machinery. As the donors would not have approved of a deduction of more than 5 per cent (which was the limit set by the ICRC in 1947), recourse had to be made to the two reserve accounts mentioned above.

Even then the ICRC was faced with financial difficulties, and at the beginning of 1947, it considered whether the purchase, packing and despatch of relief supplies could not be more economically undertaken by commercial agents, despite the remuneration such agents would require for their services. Self-management was however found less expensive, as the rebates which the suppliers, especially in Switzerland, granted the ICRC, would not have been available to third parties. No change in working methods was made during the first half of 1947; during the period July 1947-June 1948, a new but partial solution was found<sup>1</sup>.

During the war, the ICRC received a great many donations in kind, and purchases were relatively few. Furthermore, these were made on the Swiss market, where prices were state-controlled. After the war, however, the ICRC was obliged to

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<sup>1</sup> See Report on the Committee's activities from July 1, 1947 to December 31, 1948.

draw upon its main assets to purchase goods, in some cases job lots of uncertain value. The Committee was, moreover, not responsible to any donors for its transactions, the funds at its disposal having been contributed by German PW in the United States, or drawn from frozen funds in Switzerland belonging to the former German Government. It was then decided that the relief schemes should not be the sole concern of the Relief Department, or of the Pharmaceutical Section, and considered by the Central Management only, but that they should be further submitted for the approval of the President's office.

Further, as from the end of 1946, commercial experts outside the ICRC and its management were appointed to supervise the purchase prices of commodities.

However judiciously employed, the above resources proved insufficient. The ICRC therefore tried to fill the deficiency by facilitating the despatch of family parcels and organising collections among members of German communities overseas.

Family parcels, which were the original form of Red Cross relief, played an important part during the War<sup>1</sup>, especially in respect of French PW in Germany. The moral support they gave was not their least advantage. When hostilities ceased and the majority of the detaining States were quite unable to supply prisoners with the minimum rations laid down by the Conventions, the material and moral value of these parcels increased accordingly. It remained to be seen whether the next of kin could make the sacrifice involved, and whether they should be encouraged to do so by the ICRC, which was itself supplying relief to the German and Australian civilian populations, at first through the Joint Relief Commission and after the end of 1946, in conjunction with the League of Red Cross Societies, through the International Relief Centre for Civilian Populations, the International Union for Child Welfare, and other welfare associations. After careful study, the ICRC undertook this responsibility. The Committee was the prisoners' only support, while the civilian populations, however bad circumstances might be, were assisted by the occupying

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 10 et seq.

authorities and received gifts through various channels from abroad. Nevertheless, the occupation headquarters in various areas did occasionally limit the contents or number of parcels sent, but the goodwill of the authorities in yielding to the Committee's arguments led to an early compromise, covering the interests of the occupying authorities, the population, and the prisoners and their families.

As early as 1946, the ICRC launched an appeal to German communities abroad, as there remained no German Government or National Red Cross to whom it could apply. In particular, it made an application to the Swiss authorities to sanction the use in favour of German PW, of private German funds impounded in Switzerland, within the limits of the agreements concluded between the chief Allied Powers and Switzerland. The ICRC also asked that certain sums deposited by the German Government, before the surrender, with the Swiss Government or the German Legation in Berne, should be released, at least partially, for the benefit of German PW in Germany.

In spite of the funds raised in this manner in 1946 and early in 1947, the situation remained alarming. Although food rations were on an average slightly higher than in the preceding year, the prisoners were underfed, especially where their state of health required a stimulant diet. They lacked medical attention and clothing; when released and repatriated, they were exposed to hardships which were particularly severe for the sick and disabled.

The ICRC once again urged the Detaining Powers to improve prisoners' conditions and to hasten their repatriation. At the same time, the study of the reports on camp visits led the ICRC to conclude that to meet the most urgent needs would require at least the following amounts:

\$ 650,000	. . . . .	for artificial limbs
\$ 1,650,000	. . . . .	„ medical supplies
\$ 785,000	. . . . .	„ foodstuffs
\$ 36,600,000	. . . . .	„ clothing
\$ 5,950,000	. . . . .	„ sundry articles
\$ 250,000	. . . . .	„ intellectual relief (books, games, etc.).

The total requirements therefore amounted to \$ 45,885,000. This was by no means an excessive figure, as it hardly reached an average of \$ 45 per head, the number of prisoners being then at least a million, without including the repatriates and the disabled.

In February 1947, the ICRC issued an appeal to the Governments and Red Cross Societies of 34 countries, which was accompanied by a report on "The situation of German and Austrian Prisoners and War-disabled". The appeal requested Governments to allow the use of frozen German funds, and the collection and despatch of gifts in money and in kind. The National Red Cross Societies were requested to support and cooperate in these collections. The ICRC also sent representatives on special missions to the twenty countries of Latin America, to the United States, and to Spain and Portugal, to submit its appeal to the Authorities, the National Red Cross Societies and the German communities.

By June 30, 1947, twenty-six countries had responded to the appeal. All but two unfortunately declined to allow the use of frozen German funds, but all agreed to collections in their territory.

To guide persons willing to participate in this relief scheme, the ICRC issued at the end of June a leaflet entitled "Information for the use of Donors", giving a list of products and essential articles for PW and disabled, with instructions on the transfer of funds, packing and despatch of goods, and the refunding of costs.

By the end of June 1947 the ICRC had received, as a small beginning, gifts to a value of 20,000 Swiss francs <sup>1</sup>.

## § 2. SUPPLY OF FOOD AND CLOTHING <sup>2</sup>

After the surrender of the German forces in May 1945, the ICRC was, as in 1940, once more suddenly faced with

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<sup>1</sup> Further details on the subject will be found in the Report on the Activities of the ICRC from July 1, 1947, to December 31, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> For pharmaceutical relief and intellectual aid, see pp. 311-340 *passim*.

great numbers of prisoners in need of relief. Some were given the status of "Disarmed Personnel" but this had no bearing on the problem they set. At that time there were, including "Disarmed Personnel", well over three million German PW, of whom almost one million were held in France, about one million in Italy, 80,000 to 100,000 in Yugoslavia, 40,000 to 50,000 in Poland, about 20,000 in Czechoslovakia, a few hundred thousand in the British Commonwealth and the United States, and almost one million in Germany itself. The number held in Russia was not known.

The physical and moral condition of the prisoners was deplorable. A great number had been under arms for several years, and their health had been affected by the campaigns in Eastern Europe or in Africa; all were profoundly depressed by the total ruin of their country. A large proportion consisted of boys of 15 to 19, and men in the fifties or sixties.

Relief was therefore a matter of great urgency, and only the ICRC could supply it. The only resources available, however, were a sum of barely 700,000 Swiss francs, representing the balance of the funds contributed by the former German Government, and about 400 tons of supplies, comprising the last two deliveries of food supplies from the German Red Cross, intended for German prisoners in North Africa, which had not been forwarded for technical reasons. In addition, the shortage of transport prevented any immediate action; accordingly, nothing could be done before 1946 for the German PW in Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. It was in fact, some months before the ICRC, or even the Governments of the Detaining Powers could ascertain the exact number of PW, their postal addresses and the route by rail or road which served each camp. In Poland, for instance, transport was disorganized for so long, that in 1946 there were still prisoners in some provinces of whom the central authorities in Warsaw knew nothing.

The ICRC had from the beginning to relate its relief work to the limited resources at its disposal, and it decided on measures based on the three following principles:

(1) — No response would be made to requests for individual relief, except those from men who were isolated or in prison.

It was to be presumed that all prisoners in the same camp fared in much the same way, and that those who made application were not necessarily the worst off, but rather the more enterprising, who did not hesitate to write to the ICRC and at the same time to other relief organizations such as the YMCA, the Society of Friends and the American Red Cross. Moreover, the system of collective relief was more convenient and effective ; it would obviously have been both costly and difficult to despatch parcels to prisoners on farms or in labour detachments far from any railway. It was better to send full wagon-loads of provisions to base camps, for the men's communal kitchen, or for fair distribution by the camp leader.

(2) — The ICRC did not think that it should have to look after prisoners due for early release. This applied in particular to the men in the big assembly centres in Germany itself, where they only remained for two to six months after the armistice.

(3) — Relief, as mentioned above, was also not considered necessary for prisoners held by countries in relatively satisfactory economic circumstances, such as Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Great Britain, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and the United States.

The ICRC therefore, from the autumn of 1945, concentrated its efforts on relief for prisoners in French hands, numbering about a million. By this time, rail communications had been almost entirely restored, and the military authorities, having completed the organization of depots and labour detachments, were anxious for the ICRC to share with them the task of feeding and clothing the men who were being used as labour throughout France. It was also agreed that the ICRC might freely visit the camps, and that the distribution of relief supplies should be carried out by them, or under their supervision.

In spite of having limited its efforts to this one category of PW, the ICRC still found itself without sufficient resources to meet their full needs for any length of time. In agreement with its Delegation in Paris, it therefore decided to send relief in the first instance to camps where the food situation was

especially critical ; thereafter, to the sick in camp infirmaries or in hospitals ; thirdly, to men who were isolated in prisons ; and finally, to the camps in North Africa and Corsica, where the food supply was still very precarious.

During the summer of 1945, the ICRC learned from its delegates' reports—and the French Government acknowledged the fact — that about 200,000 men out of one million were in serious danger from underfeeding. This was particularly so in the devastated areas, or in non-agricultural regions such as the Atlantic seaboard, Auvergne and the Bordeaux district. The number of cases of hunger oedema and general debility were increasing, and many had, or were likely to have fatal results, the daily rations having fallen to less than one thousand calories. Furthermore, the camps had been overcrowded, owing to the cession by the United States of 200,000 prisoners to France.

On August 21, the ICRC issued a Memorandum to all Governments concerned on the prisoners' condition. They declared that, in their own view, prisoners handed over to another Power should be given treatment at least equal to that applying before their transfer. On September 14, they again approached the U.S. Government, with a request that they should take urgent steps to alleviate the grievous need of German prisoners in French hands. The head of the Delegation in Paris had several interviews with the United States military authorities in Paris and Frankfort, to whom he detailed the requirements in foodstuffs, medical supplies and clothing, and offering at the same time the services of the Committee.

These negotiations led to an important relief scheme, which was later termed " Operation A " (American). This began on October 6, and when it ended, about three weeks later, the men's physical condition and morale showed marked improvement. An undertaking given by the French Government to raise the daily ration to 2,000 calories indicated that they were now out of danger.

Motor-trucks and drivers had been placed at the disposal of the ICRC by the United States authorities, and these distributed supplies from the American food depots at Marseilles,

Rheims, Orleans, Le Havre and Le Mans. Convoying and distribution were carried out by five ICRC delegates in France and 25 escort agents. Thus, 3,669,374 kilos of foodstuffs were distributed to all the camps in fourteen out of 19 military districts, and 262,485 kilos of clothing and sleeping bags went to 32 camps, containing a total of 169,099 men <sup>1</sup>.

These relief supplies were given free by the Americans, but the ICRC delegation was reimbursed for its expenses by PW depots at the rate of one French franc per kilo of goods delivered. The amount of these invoices was deducted from collections amongst able-bodied PW who received pay, and from the fairly large sums which the camp commandants were compelled to accumulate from "mess profits", since they could not always find sufficient supplies on the market to absorb the credits allowed them for purchases of foodstuffs.

Concurrently, a similar plan, called "Operation F" (French) was devised to supplement "Operation A". At the time when it was decided that the situation described above had to be rectified at all costs, the French Government had repatriated the great majority of French PW from Germany, and was at any rate able to estimate the exact amount of supplies still necessary for the repatriation centres. A large stock of food parcels, made up after the liberation of France by the provincial branches of the French Red Cross, still remained in Switzerland, and could not be forwarded to Germany owing to the breakdown in rail transport. At the suggestion of the ICRC, part of these stocks were bought with the proceeds of collections among prisoners and "mess profits". The parcels were sorted and made up by the ICRC, which began to dispatch them in the autumn of 1945. The prisoners thus received about 200 tons more of foodstuffs.

In addition to these supplies, the remainder of the German Red Cross stocks warehoused in Switzerland was brought into use. During the autumn of 1945, the ICRC also distributed to German prisoners in France and North Africa various food

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<sup>1</sup> The details of this distribution were as follows :— 85,555 sleeping bags, 18,030 pairs of shoes, 19,080 tunics, 700 vests, 18,330 greatcoats, 17,745 pairs of trousers, and 11,774 caps.

supplies bought in Sweden with funds available at Geneva ; these purchases consisted of 100 tons of powdered milk, 100 tons of split peas and 15,000 tins of preserved fish.

German prisoners in France suffered from the lack of clothing no less than from under-nourishment. This need was partially met with the help of collections made in German PW camps in the United States. The Relief Division was thus able to buy, at a cost of \$ 175,000, 197,000 pairs of shoes from American " surplus stores ", that is to say, the reserve stocks which the U.S. Government had built up in France, and which were sold off after the war. Of this footwear, 157,000 pairs were distributed in France, 15,000 in North Africa, and at a later date, 25,000 in Poland and Jugoslavia. Furthermore, the Delegation of the ICRC in Washington purchased, at a cost of \$ 160,000, 72,000 U.S. Army sleeping bags, which were divided among the camps in France, Jugoslavia and Poland. The delegation in France also issued 25,432 articles of underclothing from American surplus stocks.

The ICRC took further measures to procure clothing for PW during the winter of 1945-1946. Assuming that in the comparatively less devastated regions of Germany there would be a considerable number of uniforms belonging to dead, captured or demobilized service men, the Committee requested the occupying Powers to allow them to collect old German army uniforms and other clothing for the prisoners' use. The proposal was accepted only by the French Government, for whom it presented obvious advantages. In November 1945, the collection was organized in the French Zone of occupation, with the help of local welfare organizations, and brought in about 875 tons of clothing, of which 800 were at once despatched to camps in France. The remaining 75 tons were cleaned and disinfected in the Committee's warehouses at Geneva, and then sent on to France and Poland. This was certainly a most satisfactory result.

The prisoners condition again became alarming in the summer of 1946, as the " carry-over " between the French harvests had not been sustained. The Swiss Relief Fund had at that time made a collection of potatoes among Swiss farmers for distribution in neighbouring countries, and having obtained

more than the quantity required, it handed over the surplus of 67 tons to the ICRC, which sent them to PW hospitals and to camps where food conditions were especially bad.

At the same time, the ICRC Delegation in Paris, encouraged by the success of "Operation F", established a "Paid Relief" service, with the approval of the French authorities, in order to provide prisoners with a more varied and substantial diet. It offered to purchase in France, at the request and the charge of camps and labour detachments, especially nutritious foodstuffs, such as date, fig and banana butter, jams, honey, flour made from runner beans, haricot beans, peas, barley and chestnuts, meal for soups, oatflakes, and so on, but no rationed products. Thus, from September 1946 to June 1947, it bought and sold 308 tons of goods at a cost of 20,400,000 French francs and sent off 500 consignments to 76 depots, 18 military hospitals and many labour detachments. The scheme was carried on over the whole period with a working capital of five million French francs, and without any loss of goods.

The Relief Division also undertook important transactions, firstly in 1946, and again during the first half of 1947, to a total value of 282,536 and 481,488 Swiss francs respectively. It was thus able to send foodstuffs to France, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (in particular 9,100 tins of sardines which it was able to buy cheaply), as well as underclothing, material for cobblers' and tailors' repairs, and toilet articles.

Gifts in kind were few. From May 1945 to June 1947, the ICRC received 118 tons of such goods, comprising 94 tons of foodstuffs, 14 tons of clothing and ten tons of cigarettes and sundry articles. Nearly all the donors lived in Switzerland: the few residing abroad sent their gifts direct to the ICRC delegations, except for the German Women's Committee in Buenos Ayres, which forwarded some of the gifts to Geneva.

Lastly, a few private collections were organized in Switzerland under the auspices of the ICRC; one of these was in behalf of German Red Cross sisters held in captivity. The results were in general satisfactory.

German prisoners in North Africa received relief through the ICRC Delegation in Cairo. The head of that delegation

visited South Africa and was fortunate enough to obtain from the South African Red Cross and other relief organizations the gift of several shipments of foodstuffs, as well as funds with which goods were purchased in Egypt. The delegation also received gifts from local sources, and from the German civilian internees in Palestine and Southern Rhodesia. These amounted in all to 258 tons of foodstuffs, including 88 tons abandoned by the German forces on the Island of Rhodes, which the British authorities, in the spring of 1946, handed over for German PW. These commodities (maize, barley, meal, dried peas, tinned meat and lard) were all sent to North Africa, excepting 18 cases containing 645 kilos of lard ; 15 cases were forwarded to Poland and three to Czechoslovakia.

All consignments were sent, not direct to the camps as during the war, but to the ICRC delegations, to ensure the judicious use of the supplies, which were too limited in quantity for general distribution. The delegates in France were helped in their work by PW placed at their service by the military authorities.

As already mentioned, individual relief was given only to men detained in French prisons for various reasons ; these were supplied with standard parcels, made up by the delegation in Paris and containing goods received from Geneva. In 1946, the parcels held 1 tin of jam, 2 tins of biscuits, 250 grammes of chocolate, 5 cakes of soap, 1 pair of socks and some underclothing. Prisoners who received pay gave 100 French francs for each parcel, whilst others received them free of charge.

The ICRC, for the reasons described above, had some difficulty in arranging for prisoners to receive parcels from Germany and Austria. Through the efforts of its delegates in the British, American and French zones in Germany, the relatives of PW in French hands were, in 1945, allowed to send Christmas parcels. These were officially authorized in 1946 and accepted by all German post-offices, except in the Russian zone. There were many losses at first, but a normal service was finally established.

It was a far more difficult matter to secure the same advantages for PW in the countries of Eastern Europe. It was not until the end of 1946 that the ICRC delegations in Germany,

Austria and Yugoslavia obtained the consent of all the authorities concerned to the despatch of family parcels by block-trains for PW in Yugoslavia. The first train, composed of nine wagons from the American zone in Germany and six wagons from Austria, left Salzburg on November 2, 1946 and crossed the Yugoslav frontier on the following day. The contents were distributed by the Yugoslav Red Cross; shortly afterwards the Committee was informed that the parcels had arrived in the camps. The same year, two other block-trains left Salzburg with loads not only from the American zone and from Austria, but also from the French zone. A few months before, the Austrian post-offices had been authorized to accept postal packages in transit for prisoners in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, the Committee's delegations in Germany obtained authority to organize, with the local Red Cross branches, the despatch of individual parcels to Poland and Yugoslavia by block-trains sent direct from Germany.

### § 3. FORWARDING OF SURPLUS KIT

The " Surplus Kit Operation ", set on foot by the Delegation in Washington, remains to be described. As far back as 1944, when the repatriation of Italian PW was under discussion, it had been assumed that prisoners held in the United States would not be able to take all their personal effects with them when they returned to Europe. At the suggestion of the Delegation, the Secretary for War gave it authority to collect all such excess luggage for despatch to Geneva at the end of hostilities, when it could be sent on to the prisoners' country of origin. There were three categories of articles :

(1) — Works of art, handicraft, and so on, executed by the prisoners, such as paintings, drawings, carvings, photographs, scientific collections, musical instruments, scores and manuscripts.

(2) — Books of all descriptions.

(3) — Clothing and articles bought by the prisoners out of their pay during captivity.

The Committee's Delegation in Canada obtained similar authority for prisoners in that country.

The surplus kit was forwarded from all the camps to the Committee's warehouse in New York, to await despatch to Europe. Such large quantities arrived that the Committee had to create separate departments to deal with it, both in New York and Geneva. Heavy expenses were incurred, and the Delegation in Washington, which had at first accepted the kit free, was eventually compelled to make a charge to senders. However, costs were lower than at first estimated, and in the end there remained a balance of 470,000 Swiss francs which, with the consent of the *Landesverbände* of the German Red Cross, was allocated to the purchase of relief supplies for German prisoners.

When the last prisoners left the United States in June 1946, the surplus kit in the care of the ICRC amounted to about 180,000 parcels. These parcels weighed in all 2,000 tons and their transport at the ordinary rates would have entailed sums that neither the Committee, nor the owners could have borne. The American authorities were good enough to allow free carriage. The first shipments arrived at Marseilles and Le Havre on board American troopships, and were forwarded by rail, also free of cost, to the Red Cross warehouses in Geneva. When the kit could no longer be shipped in this way, the Delegation in Washington was authorized to send all parcels not exceeding 20 lbs in weight by mailbag. The remaining 1,800 tons were sent to Bremerhaven by the U.S. War Department.

After prolonged discussion, the ICRC and the Bavarian Red Cross came to an agreement, approved by the occupying authorities, on the method of forwarding kit to the owners. It was arranged that the Bavarian Red Cross should be responsible for receiving and sorting the parcels, checking addresses, tracing addressees who had changed their residence, and forwarding parcels in Germany and to former inhabitants of territories that had returned to Czechoslovakia, or were under Polish administration. The Austrian and Italian Red Cross Societies undertook the same duties in Austria and Italy. All parcels

received at Geneva or Bremerhaven were thus forwarded, according to their ultimate destination, to one or other of these organizations, by means of block-trains escorted by agents of the ICRC or of the Red Cross Societies concerned.

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## *Chapter II*

### **Relief to Displaced Persons**

The Allies had declared beforehand that, at the end of hostilities, they would each in their respective zones of occupation, undertake the provisioning of the citizens of United Nations countries who might be in Germany. From May 1945 onwards, the ICRC therefore made every endeavour to co-operate with the Allied military authorities. The Committee had at that time over 100,000 tons of relief consignments available in its warehouses in Switzerland, in the ports of arrival and in several warehouses in Germany. Apart from some 400 tons intended for German PW in North Africa, these supplies had been given for PW in German hands and included a relatively small quantity for political detainees in the concentration camps.

These goods were intended mainly to supplement the rations issued by the occupation authorities to former PW and civilian internees in Germany pending their repatriation; this last process, however, was carried out at such speed that only a very limited proportion of goods was used in this way<sup>1</sup>. It was therefore proposed to use them for displaced persons, citizens of United Nations countries, whose situation was extremely critical. The consent of the donors was, however, necessary, and most of these preferred to have their goods returned to them. The American and British Red Cross Societies, on the other hand, pooled all the foodstuffs and clothing sent to the ICRC, and this joint stock could be drawn upon

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 96.

under their supervision and the instructions of the Interallied Supreme Command, and supplied to Displaced Persons of the United Nations in the American and British Zones. The French Government decided that in its own zone the same category of people should be assisted by the military authorities and by the French Red Cross, who would draw on the stocks from French sources that were in the custody of the ICRC.

In the first few months after the armistice, the Allies did not consider it necessary to appeal to the ICRC, although relief requirements were urgent and vast in scope. In the course of the early interviews in May 1945 at Kreuzlingen, near the German-Swiss frontier, attended by representatives of the Allied military authorities and of the ICRC, the Committee was informed that its co-operation was no longer considered necessary. Fully informed of the distress of the Displaced Persons, the Committee could not but persist. In July, they opened further negotiations in Augsburg and Frankfurt with the United States Army High Command and did not conceal their firm intention to pursue a task which, though temporary, was none the less urgent, and which their technical organization and their large stocks of goods would enable them to carry through with every prospect of success. The Committee pointed out, moreover, that the occupation authorities were so overburdened with work that relief transported by the ICRC to the centres specified, in particular to Augsburg and Mannheim, had not been issued. These arguments were, however, of no avail.

Immediately afterwards, the ICRC took similar steps in Paris and in London. Whilst their proposals met with sympathy, neither the French Ministry for Prisoners, Deportees and Refugees, nor the British War Office or the British Red Cross could give an undertaking to intervene in Frankfurt. The interviews which took place in Geneva with representatives of the American Red Cross only served to confirm the Committee's point of view in principle, without altering the paradoxical and most deplorable fact that large quantities of food and clothing remained idle in Switzerland, when they might have somewhat relieved the dire distress of the Displaced Persons.

In a Memorandum addressed, in August 1945, to the Governments and Red Cross Societies of the countries concerned, the ICRC consequently declined all responsibility for citizens of the United Nations in Germany, since the Committee was prevented from sending them the relief which it considered indispensable and which it could have supplied. The Committee further deplored the fact that it could do nothing in behalf of Displaced Persons who were nationals of countries that the Allies considered as ex-enemy States. The Occupation Authorities had informed the Committee that the maintenance of these people devolved on the German administrative departments in charge of food supplies for the civil population. These departments were, however, unable to distribute even the barest necessities to Baltic, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Hungarian, and Italian nationals or to stateless persons, owing to the shortage of foodstuffs, to requisitioning by the Allied Armies and to transport difficulties. In spite of this fact, the ICRC was not allowed to help this category of war victims by drawing on the pool. The French Government alone placed at its disposal 150,000 five-kilo food parcels for Baltic and Hungarian DPs, which were distributed between May 1945 and February 1946.

Despite all the negotiations mentioned above, the situation remained unchanged and, although appeals which increased in urgency and number reached Geneva, it was impossible to send consignments at shorter intervals. Moreover, the goods already sent to Germany and entrusted to Allied organizations which had been recommended to the ICRC, were neither guarded, nor even protected against the weather. After many incidents, a special ICRC mission again went to Frankfurt and made it plain to the Allied authorities that the longer the distribution of stocks was delayed, the greater would be the liability incurred by the Governments and Red Cross Societies who were owners of relief supplies, since this state of affairs obliged the ICRC to maintain a large administrative organisation. The Allies then decided to wind up the pool straight away, and from November 1945, sent rolling stock for this purpose to the Swiss frontier. By the end of February 1946, the last wagons had left the warehouses.

The ICRC also made every endeavour to bring relief direct to the Displaced Persons. A few donors had left it free to dispose of about a thousand tons of goods, and the Committee decided to use them for this purpose ; it was thus, during the winter of 1945-46, able to send 113 wagons of sundry goods to its delegations in Germany and Austria. During the same period, the residue of the 150,000 food parcels given by the French Government for Baltic and Hungarian DPs was dispatched, the first half of this lot having already been issued in the summer of 1945. At the request of the General Post Office in London, the Swiss Postal Administration also handed over to the ICRC about 165 tons of cigarette and tobacco parcels posted direct by relatives of British PW in Germany, and which were still in transit through Switzerland when the war came to an end. Lastly, the Committee had 250 tons of sundry relief supplies available, consisting of foodstuffs, clothing and toilet articles given by the British Red Cross. By the end of March 1946, these gifts had enabled it to send 66 wagons to DPs in Germany, and 40 wagons to those in Austria, and also seven wagons to refugees in France. Part of the tobacco and cigarette parcels mentioned above were handed over to the Belgian and French Red Cross Societies.

In behalf of Displaced Persons also, the ICRC was able to spend certain sums which, during the war, had been entrusted to them for the relief of Allied prisoners, but which had not been used by the time of the armistice. The largest of these sums was a remittance of 25,000 francs from the Afghan Red Crescent, and another of 10,000 francs from the Gambia War Charities Fund. In all, the Committee had at its disposal 120,000 Swiss francs, which it employed for the following purposes :

Food parcels for DPs of all nationalities in the French Zone of Germany.

Food parcels for Rumanian DPs in Austria.

Sundry relief supplies for Ukrainian DPs in Austria.

Oat-flakes, chocolate, condensed milk, etc., for the children of DPs of all nationalities in Austria and in the French Zone of Germany.

Candles and various Christmas presents for children of DPs in Austria.

A sum of 12,000 Swiss francs made over to the ICRC Delegation in Italy for local purchases of relief supplies.

Layettes and underwear to a value of 20,000 Swiss francs, sent to the Delegation in Paris for refugees of all nationalities in France.

Moreover, since the request of German prisoners in the United States had been that part of the collection should be devoted to DPs, some 20,000 francs were used to purchase layettes ; these were distributed in Austria and in the French Zone of Germany, where the DPs were in decidedly worse circumstances than in the British and American Zones.

Other funds were spent on DPs of specified nationalities. The Estonian Legation in New York and the Latvian Legation in Washington informed the Committee's delegate in Washington, of their desire to hand over to the ICRC, for the benefit of Estonian and Latvian refugees in Europe, part of their Governments' funds frozen in the United States. The Committee agreed to these mandates, once convinced that its action as a neutral intermediary was required. It had in fact learned that the United States Treasury would release these funds only on condition that they were entrusted to itself, and moreover, that the authorities of the United States Zone of Occupation were in favour of this plan. Two sums, one of 200,000 and one of 85,000 dollars were then transferred to the ICRC, the first for Estonian and the second for Latvian refugees ; these allowed the despatch of clothing materials, layettes, cobblers' and tailors' material, toilet articles, medicaments and so on, to Germany and Austria. Further, relief organizations in the United States and Canada made a gift of 11,000 dollars for the purchase of foodstuffs for Ukrainian refugees in Austria.

Finally, the ICRC had available, in 1946 and 1947, a few gifts in kind for its relief work in general and for certain categories of war victims. The first were allotted to Displaced Persons. Thus, following an appeal launched jointly by the ICRC, the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Union for Child Welfare, the Committee received some fifteen

tons of dried fruits from the Turkish Red Crescent, cases of clothing from the Chilian Red Cross, 20 tons of sundry relief supplies from the Brazilian Red Cross and two and a half tons of milk powder from the Uruguayan Red Cross. These gifts were despatched to Austria, except the milk powder which went to children of DPs in the French Zone of Germany. The ICRC also received the following relief supplies for Displaced Persons of specified categories: for Ukrainians, some 54 tons of medicaments, foodstuffs, worn clothing and school equipment, provided by the Ukrainian Canadian Relief Fund in Canada; for Jugoslavs in Austria, some five tons of warm clothing from the Serbian Relief Committee of America in the United States, together with small quantities of relief supplies sent by Jugoslav groups in Great Britain.

Among refugees of special concern to the Committee were the Spanish Republicans. The Committee allotted to them a large part of the relief goods sent to the delegation in Paris for refugees in France. Moreover, the war-disabled at Fouka Marine, in Algeria, received about a ton of underwear, toilet articles and medicaments.

Although of considerable extent during the winter of 1945-46, relief work in behalf of Displaced Persons diminished after that period, and was confined to carrying out specified commissions. In the autumn of 1946, the ICRC decided to wind up this work as of November 1—with the exception of such commissions as were still in progress—since it was not in a position to act on a sufficiently large scale; moreover, its financial means made it barely possible for it to carry out its main task of giving aid to PW. During 1947, the ICRC received no further appeals for the relief of Displaced Persons, so that this decision was not prejudicial to these victims of the war.

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## *PART II*

### WORK OF THE ICRC IN TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS <sup>1</sup>

#### GENERAL REMARKS

The measures taken by belligerents during the second World War to isolate the enemy, paralyse his communications and destroy his means of transport, seriously hampered the application of numerous provisions of the Geneva and Hague Conventions.

In June 1940, after the invasion of France and Italy's entry into the War, there remained only one serviceable line of communication between the British Commonwealth and the Continent — that through Portugal and Spain. Contact between Great Britain and Sweden was broken when Denmark and Norway were occupied; Switzerland, surrounded on all sides by Axis Powers, was also cut off from direct contact with the Commonwealth. Before the belligerents had reached agreement on the Committee's suggestions for the restoration of communications<sup>2</sup>, the situation was aggravated by the Spanish authorities' decision, early in December 1940, to prohibit the transit of goods through Spain. The events which followed — occupation of the Balkans, invasion of Russia, entry into the war of the United States, landings in North Africa, war in the Pacific, Allied landings in France — everywhere raised impassable barriers, and the destruction of merchant vessels and the

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<sup>1</sup> As several National Red Cross Societies have expressed a wish to receive full information regarding the ICRC organization of maritime transports and the difficulties with which they had to contend, a more detailed explanation has been given under this heading than for other subjects.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 130 et seq.

bombing of railroads brought sea and land transport almost to a standstill. From August 1944, all communication between territories in German hands and elsewhere had been cut, and only the ICRC ships, motor vehicles and "block-trains"<sup>1</sup>, together with the Swedish vessels chartered for relief to Greece, were still able to maintain between belligerent camps the contacts required for the conveyance of mail and relief supplies to the prisoners of war. When Japan became at war with the USSR in 1945, she was also cut off from other countries.

This state of affairs raised problems affecting most countries. Relief organizations and Governments all met the same difficulties in getting relief supplies to their nationals or to persons under their protection, and in forwarding correspondence. In the circumstances, special agreements between States could only be of partial assistance. On the other hand, the especial status of the ICRC enabled it to devise more general plans, and to take practical measures in favour of all war victims, irrespective of nationality.

The lack of communications was an obstacle to the repatriation, under the Conventions, of medical personnel and the seriously wounded and sick, and similarly to the forwarding of relief supplies, parcels and mail for prisoners of war. It also prevented the execution of special agreements on the exchange of civilian internees, the transmission of civilian messages and relief to civil populations. The ICRC was thus faced with new and unforeseen tasks.

Less than a year after the outbreak of war, the British Red Cross had been obliged to charter vessels to carry relief supplies and parcels. The ICRC, on its part, had to ensure the regular transmission of mail from the Central Agency, where all information concerning PW and civilian internees was assembled, and the forwarding of Red Cross Messages. The Committee made every effort to remain in contact with its delegations, especially by wireless. In August 1944, when postal services broke down completely, it arranged for the conveyance of PW correspondence, organized relief transports by sea, road

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<sup>1</sup> Or "set-trains".

and rail, and attempted to establish communications by air.

The Committee at once sought material assistance, as its limited funds did not allow it to assume such heavy liabilities. As soon as means of transport and funds were available, it put its plans into execution. These were not, however, exclusively a matter of organization. Diplomatic problems grew in number, and effective action in that field by the ICRC depended on the consent of the belligerents, since the contacts which had to be made required special privileges and immunities, and the grant of free passage.

These critical and delicate negotiations led the Committee to set up in 1942 a separate department, the Transport and Communications Division, with an expert and technical staff, experienced in postal, wireless and telegraphic communications, and in maritime, road and rail transport. This Division had to cope with the difficulties which the constantly changing war situation threw up ; it had to organize transport and obtain the necessary permits from Governments. As some of the vessels employed for sea transport were to become the property of the ICRC, the Committee in 1942 set up the " Foundation for the Organization of Red Cross Transports " as a separate body, with a distinct legal status, and thus entitled to own ships.

In some cases these transports were operated for the Committee by private concerns. These possessed technical facilities, the improvisation of which would have raised insuperable financial and practical difficulties and would in any case have served only a temporary need.

During the recent War, the Committee was therefore obliged to adapt its methods to an entirely novel situation. It did not shrink from heavy responsibilities, and so ensured the survival of certain humanitarian principles, despite the breakdown of normal communications and transport restrictions. The results obtained are set out in the statistics annexed hereto<sup>1</sup>. The difficulties of the undertaking and its significance in the field of international law may be estimated in the following chapters, which describe the diplomatic negotiations and the various measures taken to ensure Red Cross transports.

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<sup>1</sup> See volume " Annexes ".

## Chapter I

### Maritime Transports

#### § I. INTRODUCTION

##### I. *Earlier schemes.*

In 1940, when the ICRC first proposed to use vessels under special charter, to fill the gaps in normal communications, it could quote no precedents or treaty stipulations in support of its scheme. The International Red Cross Conferences and a Commission of Naval Experts<sup>1</sup> had already studied the conditions under which protection could be granted to Red Cross maritime transports not covered by the Tenth Hague Convention<sup>2</sup>. Nothing, however, was achieved, as none of the proposed systems was approved. These suggestions may, however, be compared with the methods adopted during the last conflict.

*The International Fleet.* — The proposal made in 1913 to create an International Red Cross fleet, contained in a report submitted by the ICRC to the XIVth International Red Cross Conference in 1930<sup>3</sup>, was also raised at the Commission of Naval Experts which sat in Geneva in 1937<sup>4</sup>. Although the scheme was strictly confined to aiding wounded, sick and shipwrecked persons, it satisfactorily covered the whole problem of sea transport for humanitarian purposes. Unfortunately, legal, practical

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<sup>1</sup> Commission held at Geneva in 1937 to study the revision of the Tenth Hague Convention of 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Hague Convention of October 18, 1907, for the Adaptation to Maritime Warfare of the principles of the Geneva Convention of July, 6, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> See Document No 14 submitted to that Conference by the ICRC.

<sup>4</sup> See ICRC Report to the XVIth International Red Cross Conference (1938), Document No 2.

and financial obstacles caused the scheme to be abandoned ; it could not, therefore, serve as the basis on which to build a case for granting immunity to vessels carrying Red Cross relief supplies. On the other hand, there was no question of devising special legislation, or of exempting the vessels and crews from territorial jurisdiction. In consequence, vessels bearing the Red Cross emblem and sailing under the Committee's control remained subject to the laws of the country under whose flag they voyaged, and to maritime law : any immunities enjoyed were those granted by the belligerents.

The following peculiar case was reported by the ICRC delegate in Ankara. A relief mission to the Dodecanese Islands, then occupied by German forces, had set out on February 12, 1945 ; the mission sailed on board Turkish caiques flying their national flag and the Red Cross emblem. On February 23, when Turkey declared war on Germany, the Turkish flag was hauled down and from that time the vessels only displayed the Red Cross flag. None the less they continued to sail in Greek waters with the belligerents' approval, and were universally considered by the military authorities as owned by the ICRC. The ships' charter papers held by the Turkish skippers had been drawn up in the name of the ICRC, and the delegate in charge of the mission was considered as the head of the Red Cross fleet. This incident was, as it were, the first practical realisation of the scheme for the international Red Cross fleet, although, of course, the legal problem involved had not yet been settled<sup>1</sup>.

*Transport of Medical Stores.* — The protection of medical stores transported by sea had been studied before the War, in particular by the Commission of Naval Experts (1937). No provisions to this effect were, however, included in the draft of the revised Maritime Convention, as the Commission preferred to recommend to the Governments the suggestions put forward "as suitable subjects of *ad hoc* agreements"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that the caiques were considered to be the property of the ICRC did not confer upon them *ipso facto* this body's nationality. See p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> See Document No 2 submitted by the ICRC to the XVth International Red Cross Conference (1938).

In September 1943, the British Red Cross informed the Committee that it proposed to charter a neutral vessel for the conveyance of medical stores from Great Britain to the British military bases in the Mediterranean, for the wounded and sick of all belligerents irrespective of nationality. The wish was expressed that this transport operation should be carried out under the emblem and the supervision of the ICRC.

Medical stores carried in vessels other than hospital ships enjoy no special protection. The Committee could not, on the other hand, use the vessels in its service to convey medical stores, because these ships had to be exclusively reserved for the tasks that the belligerents had agreed to cover by the grant of safe-conducts. The ICRC therefore submitted the proposal of the British Red Cross to the belligerent Governments concerned. The United States Government raised no objection of principle, but asked for detailed schedules for each voyage. No other replies were received.

During the recent War, the paradoxical situation therefore existed in which the facilities that were granted for relief consignments to PW, civilian internees, and even in some cases to civil populations, could not be obtained for the transport of medical stores for wounded and sick military personnel.

*Relief to Civil Populations.* — In the field of relief activities for civil populations, there had been recognition, before the War, of need for protection of vessels carrying supplies intended for charitable purposes. To that end, the Committee submitted the following question to the Commission of Naval Experts (1937).

“ Does the Commission believe it desirable and possible to stipulate that vessels protected by the Red Cross may be used to convey relief supplies to certain categories of the civil population, or does it consider that this protection can only be given under *ad hoc* agreements ? ”

The Commission, seconded by the National Red Cross Societies, were in favour of the latter alternative.

During the War, however, the ICRC succeeded in getting agreement that the status granted to its vessels should, in principle, be extended to cover the transport of relief supplies for certain civil populations <sup>1</sup>.

*2. First attempt to commission ICRC vessels.*

In June 1940, the ICRC made its first attempt to establish lines of communication by sea. At that time, military operations had led to an almost complete break-down of regular communications and, as already stated, Red Cross activities were seriously imperilled. The ICRC thereupon proposed to the British and German authorities that it should purchase or charter a neutral vessel to ply, under the Red Cross emblem, between Great Britain and occupied France, and that these Governments should each make good half the costs.

The German Government stated that it was prepared itself to supply a hospital ship or other vessel, and that it would find half the running costs.

The British Government gave preference to a vessel chartered by the ICRC and stipulated the conditions under which it should be put into service.

Four months after transmitting the British proposal, the Committee was informed, through the United States Government acting as Protecting Power, that the German Government declined to agree, on the grounds that navigation between British and French ports in the Channel was too insecure. The British authorities replied that they were preparing a new proposal.

Matters had thus reached a deadlock when, in February 1941, the Committee was advised by the Swedish Legation that the Swedish Red Cross was prepared to arrange for an exchange of seriously wounded across the North Sea, if the Swedish Government secured the agreement of both Germany and Great Britain. The Committee informed the Swedish Legation of its efforts during the previous eight months, and offered to support the Swedish proposal to the two countries concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. pp. 132-133.

During the second half of 1940, members of the ICRC visited London and Berlin to discuss the matter with the authorities concerned, and a delegate was sent to Lisbon to study the technical side of the question.

In the meantime, the belligerents had agreed to allow the transport in the Mediterranean of PW parcels which had been held up at Lisbon owing to the suspension of rail transit through Spain<sup>1</sup>. This maritime service was confined to the carriage of relief supplies for PW, whereas the scheme for a cross-Channel service had been planned on a wider basis. Its acceptance would have allowed the institution from the outset of the war of a service similar to that for conveying relief supplies to PW, and the exchange of repatriates could thus have been systematically organized under Red Cross auspices.

This failure was not due to objections to the principle of the scheme, and the question even of the route was of secondary importance, since the two parties had successively proposed communication between enemy ports (Great Britain — Occupied France), and between neutral ports (Ireland—Peninsula). It was however found impossible to reach agreement on the exchange of civilian internees, the repatriation of seriously wounded and medical personnel and the other charitable operations which the use of a Red Cross vessel was to have facilitated. Furthermore, the Governments made their decision depend on the settlement of other problems, some of which were handled by the Committee and others by the Protecting Power, and even, in some cases, by both agencies at the same time. This duplication was bound to be prejudicial to the work of the Committee, particularly when proposals submitted through the Protecting Power were accompanied by threats of reprisals. Lastly, the belligerents were usually inclined to regard these questions as being interdependent; for instance, the ICRC was confidentially informed that the German authorities would only accept the British offer, provided the mail service for German PW in Canada was improved.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 158 et seq.

Nevertheless, the ICRC did not relax its efforts to secure protection for vessels other than those exclusively employed for carrying PW relief supplies.

### 3. *Red Cross Maritime Transport during the War.*

*Use of the Distinctive Emblem.* — During the recent war, the Red Cross emblem began to be used to protect certain maritime transport operations which served the purposes of the Red Cross, but were not covered by international conventions

The use of a red cross on a white ground, provided for by the Geneva Convention, is strictly reserved at sea for the protection of military hospital ships. The Tenth Hague Convention of 1907 governs the employment of these vessels, which may not be put to other uses without the consent of the belligerent Powers concerned. This held good when Red Cross organizations or belligerent Governments wished to place particular transports under the Red Cross emblem. In principle, the formal agreement of all States signatory to these Conventions was necessary before the Geneva Cross could be placed on the vessels which, in circumstances not covered by the terms of the Tenth Hague Convention, actually did sail under the protection of that emblem. Since no such agreement could be secured in the midst of war, and as circumstances called for immediate action, recourse was had in each case to an arrangement between the belligerent Powers whose armed forces were liable to encounter the vessels requiring protection at a given time and on certain defined routes.

*Employment of protected vessels.* — The Red Cross emblem was used during the war to protect certain vessels, as follows :

(1) Cargo ships carrying, under Red Cross auspices, relief supplies intended for PW, civilian internees and some civil populations, and conveying PW mail and Red Cross message forms ;

(2) Swedish vessels carrying relief supplies to Greece ;

(3) Vessels used for the repatriation of seriously wounded and sick, and for the exchange of PW and civilian internees.

Although many vessels were put into service under the Red Cross emblem, this practice was limited to strictly defined cases, and could not be extended to all the maritime transports that were required in the execution of relief undertakings.

The belligerents were only requested to grant special protection when conveyance by ordinary vessels appeared impracticable owing to the suspension of services, or when such transports were exposed to great risks. The repatriation of seriously wounded and the exchange of civil internees were carried out partly by ordinary vessels, partly by hospital ships and by steamers sailing under special safe-conducts. In regard to the transport of goods, the parcels and relief supplies intended for Axis PW and civil internees were almost invariably sent by ordinary means. Large quantities of parcels and relief supplies for Allied PW and civil internees in Europe were also carried by neutral or belligerent vessels which did not bear the Red Cross emblem. In the course of the war, Swiss vessels, for instance, shipped about 124,000 tons of Red Cross relief supplies, whilst the Committee's vessels carried about 470,000 tons.

The particular status of these vessels did not, therefore, cover all the uses for which they were intended. Furthermore, they were limited to purposes and to routes which were clearly defined beforehand.

*Vessels of the Red Cross Fleet.* — Apart from hospital ships exceptionally employed for exchanging seriously wounded, PW and civil internees, most of the vessels sailing under Red Cross protection were commissioned under charter-parties between neutral shipowners and National Red Cross Societies. Three vessels, however, the *Caritas I*, *Caritas II* and *Henry Dunant* were acquired by a Red Cross body set up for this purpose by the ICRC, and styled the "Foundation for the Organization of Red Cross Transports".

## § 2. STATUS OF THE COMMITTEE'S VESSELS

The vessels were distinguished legally by the privilege of immunities granted to them by the belligerent Powers concerned. Apart from these immunities, they continued to be subject to the common law governing neutral merchant shipping.

The main conditions which the ICRC placed to the operation of vessels under its emblem and control were as follows :

(1) The safe-conducts required for each vessel to be obtained by the ICRC.

(2) Vessels to be employed exclusively for the transport of relief supplies authorized by agreements between the ICRC and the belligerent Powers concerned, and addressed to the ICRC or their delegates.

(3) Distinctive markings to be displayed in accordance with the regulations in force.

(4) Vessels to be accompanied by neutral observers appointed by the ICRC, to ensure that the undertakings given by the ICRC to the belligerent Powers were carried out.

(5) Adherence to the schedules announced by the ICRC to the belligerent Powers, and to the sailing routes approved by the latter.

The conditions for Red Cross maritime transports, agreed upon by the ICRC and the belligerents concerned, were set out in a memorandum communicated in April, 1942, to all Governments and National Red Cross Societies.

### 1. *Safe-conducts.*

*Applications for safe-conducts.* — The ICRC made it a principle only to apply for free passage provided they could control the use of the vessels concerned. On the other hand, they were not prepared to assume responsibility unless the belligerents undertook to respect the vessels under safe-conduct. These conditions were fulfilled for all vessels sailing under the distinctive markings of the ICRC.

The ICRC, however, occasionally applied for safe-conducts for vessels which did not carry its emblem, and for which it disclaimed any responsibility, either because the belligerents failed to give sufficient security guarantees, or because the ICRC itself was not in a position to exercise effective supervision. As an example of the first class, we may quote the relief transports from Sweden to Germany <sup>1</sup>, and of the second, the sailing vessels first used between Lisbon and Marseilles <sup>2</sup>, as well as the first Swedish cargo boats which carried relief to Greece, the *Radmenso* and the *Sicilia*, chartered by the British and the American Red Cross respectively.

The ICRC made requests for safe-conducts direct to the Governments of the Powers whose naval forces were likely to encounter the vessels. An exception was made in the case of safe-conducts required from the Soviet authorities, where the requests were sent through the intermediary of their Allies.

*Description of vessels.* — Application for a safe-conduct had to be made for a specific purpose, in respect of a vessel of given name and precise description. The ICRC was greatly hampered by this requirement, as it never knew how long an interval would elapse before the application was granted <sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, there was no fixed time limit for giving notice, such as that which applied to the notification of routes. Particulars of each vessel had also to be communicated to the belligerents to permit its identification by their naval forces.

*Nationality of the vessels.* — None of the belligerents imposed conditions as to the class of vessels to be employed, but the ICRC, as far as possible, had recourse only to neutral ships. The Committee also applied for safe-conducts in respect of vessels under belligerent flags (French, Greek, Italian, Rumanian and Yugoslav). Vessels sailing under the Red Cross emblem in fact

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> Detention of a ship while awaiting a safe-conduct led to considerable demurrage. If, on the contrary, the vessel was kept in service, there was the risk of its no longer being available when the safe-conduct was finally granted, which involved finding another vessel and filing a new application.

all flew a neutral flag, with the exception of the Greek steamer *Nereus*, which was none the less under charter to the Swiss Confederation. In one case only did ships in the service of the ICRC belong to a power which meanwhile became belligerent. These were the Turkish caiques employed on the transport of relief to the Aegean Islands. As already recorded, the vessels nevertheless continued to enjoy the immunity which had been previously granted <sup>1</sup>.

*Blockade.* — The blockade influenced the belligerents in their decisions, and reciprocity therefore was an important factor in the success of the Committee's applications. For instance, the German authorities only consented to the Foundation's using Swedish vessels in the Baltic, on condition of receiving equivalent tonnage from the enemy <sup>2</sup>.

*Immunities.* — In principle, vessels sailing under safe-conduct <sup>3</sup> were protected and respected. In practice, their security depended upon the manner in which they obeyed the navigation regulations to which they were subject <sup>4</sup>. In this respect, each of the belligerents concerned made certain exceptions and repeatedly recalled that no absolute guarantees could be granted; these vessels were, in fact, subject to the inevitable risks of war.

*Violations.* — Three vessels sailing under the emblem and control of the ICRC suffered attack by air. The *Stureborg* was torpedoed by two Italian planes and sank on June 9, 1942, when returning from the Piraeus to Alexandria. The *Embla* was twice

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> See Report of the Foundation for the Organization of Red Cross Transports, p. 7 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> This granting of free passage should not be confused with the special licenses which were required for vessels to pass the blockade, for instance, the British "shipwarrant" and "navy certificate" (or "navicert"), which covered both the ship and the cargo. The "navicert" was compulsory. The Committee's vessels were not, in principle, obliged to carry the "shipwarrant", but it was preferable for them to have this document, in order to avoid delays. The formalities relative to the "shipwarrant" were usually fulfilled by the consignors.

<sup>4</sup> See below p. 149.

attacked in the Gulf of Lions by a formation of British aircraft, on April 6 and 19, 1944, and sank during the second attack. The *Cristina* was similarly attacked in the roadstead of Sète, on May 6, 1944. She was later refloated.

The ICRC notified the Powers concerned of these violations and, in view of the repeated attacks suffered by their vessels in the spring of 1944, decided to suspend the service until satisfactory guarantees were given. It was established that in no case had there been neglect on the part of the ICRC, and that the attacks on their vessels by belligerents therefore constituted a violation of the agreements made for these transports.

After an enquiry, the Italian Government offered an official apology for the attack on the *Stureborg*: the British Government did likewise in respect of the *Embla* and the *Cristina*, and gave pledges for the future. With regard to compensation, action by the ICRC was not required; the matter was settled between the interested parties, either direct, or in the case of the *Stureborg* through the Protecting Power.

Despite these incidents, the safe-conducts granted by the belligerents enabled the ICRC to carry out its tasks effectively until the end of the war. We may add that in proportion to the number of sailings made, the losses were very small compared with those of other merchant fleets. In fact, only five per cent of the goods carried, and less than three per cent of the tonnage employed were lost <sup>1</sup>.

## 2. *Distinctive Markings.*

*Red Cross emblem and markings.* — In June 1940, during the preliminary discussions with regard to a cross-Channel service by a single vessel, the Committee had already suggested to the British and German Governments that the ship should be placed under the protection of the Red Cross emblem <sup>2</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> On January 26, 1944, the Swedish Minister at Berne wrote to the ICRC: "The Swedish Government has always been deeply impressed by the scrupulous care with which the Maritime Department of the ICRC organized and directed the movements of Red Cross vessels, thus ensuring a lower proportion of losses in this service than in any other during the war".

<sup>2</sup> See above p. 130.

German authorities offered to place a hospital ship at the disposal of the ICRC, while the British authorities suggested the use of a neutral vessel chartered by the ICRC ; they were, however, silent on the question of distinctive markings. Six months later, when applying for authority to put into service the Yugoslav steamer *Herzegovina* and the French ships *Penerf* and *Ile Rousse* for carrying parcels between Lisbon and Marseilles<sup>1</sup>, the ICRC advised the British, French, German and Italian Governments of their intention to place the inscription " C. INTERNATIONAL " on these vessels, in addition to a red cross on a white ground.

Before the result of these negotiations was known, transports had been started by means of motorized sailing vessels of the Spanish and Portuguese merchant services. At this time the German and Italian authorities made the safe-conduct, granted to these ships two months previously, conditional upon their being marked thenceforward with the Red Cross emblem. The Committee, however, wished this marking to be reserved for craft over which they could exercise effective control. On the other hand, the British Admiralty objected to the use of the emblem for vessels other than those covered by the Tenth Hague Convention of 1907, and considered that craft sailing under the Committee's auspices would be sufficiently distinguished if they bore an inscription such as " C. INTERNATIONAL C.R. ".

Shortly afterwards, the transports were organized so as to give the Committee the control it desired. Vessels were chartered direct by the British Red Cross, in agreement with the ICRC, and were accompanied by a convoying agent appointed by the Committee. In these circumstances, the ICRC endeavoured to ensure the protection of the Red Cross emblem. Since the Committee's independence and neutrality were pledged, it was in a position to accept responsibility for these transports towards the belligerents, in so far at least as the latter undertook to give them protection.

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<sup>1</sup> See below p. 158.

*Painting of hulls.* — After some discussion, the British authorities finally consented to the vessels bearing the inscription " C. INTERNATIONAL ", followed by a red cross on a white ground, but stipulated that the hulls should not be painted in light colours, which might lead to confusion with hospital ships. Some exceptions were however made later ; for instance, the Swedish vessels chartered by the Foundation sailed in their customary light grey colour.

At the request of the belligerents the inscriptions and Red Cross emblems had to be painted directly on the hulls ; the use of markings on temporary fixtures was not allowed.

*Lighting.* — The belligerents insisted that the distinctive markings should be illuminated at night. This ruling naturally applied only to ships at sea. In ports of call, they were subject to blackout regulations and were thus exposed to the risk of air raids. In spite of the frequent night bombardments in which they were involved, only one minor incident occurred. Whilst anchored in the port of Genoa, the *Padua* was hit on October 22, 1942, at 10 p.m. by an incendiary bomb and slightly damaged.

Sailing by night on the Port Vendres to Marseilles run was prohibited by the Germans from April 1944 onwards. Vessels which could not complete the passage during the day had to put in at Sète.

*Scope of rules.* — As the rules for marking the ships were not in line with the regulations of the neutral Powers, the ICRC had to apply to the respective Ministries for licences, but experienced no difficulties in this respect.

*Regulations.* — During the first two years in which Red Cross vessels were employed, the methods of displaying and lighting the distinctive markings led to much discussion with all the belligerents concerned, and transports were often delayed on this account. The Committee finally obtained the agreement of all belligerents on each point, and clearly defined regulations framed on experience were at last introduced in 1943. The rules for the marking of the Red Cross vessels until the end of the war were the following :

(a) *Principles.*

Every ship sailing under the Committee's control and with the consent of the belligerent Powers concerned, shall display the distinctive markings prescribed below. These markings shall be at once removed when the vessel is no longer employed by the ICRC.

(b) *Arrangement of markings.*

The distinctive markings shall be the inscription "C. INTERNATIONAL" and several Red Cross emblems, thus displayed :

on each side of the vessel and at least one metre above the water-line, the inscription "C. INTERNATIONAL",

on each side, at the end of the hull, fore and aft, the red cross emblem on a white ground,

on deck, fore and aft, preferably on the hatchways, and if required, on the roof of the deckhouses, the Red Cross emblem on a white ground,

in the axis of the ship and in an elevated position, a vertical panel showing the red cross on a white ground.

(c) *Dimensions of markings.*

The dimensions of the markings may vary according to the space available. The markings shall be painted directly on the hull or the deck, where they shall preferably be placed on the hatchways.

The inscription in capital letters "C. INTERNATIONAL" (C full stop INTERNATIONAL) shall be painted in black letters on a white ground, and shall cover the space between the top of the hull and a height one metre above the water-line. The length of the inscription shall be equal to fourteen times the height of the letters.

The dimensions of the Red Cross emblems shall be as great as possible and shall in any case be not less than three metres square. The Red Cross shall be placed in the centre of a white square ; the length of the limbs shall be equal to three quarters, and their thickness to one quarter of one side of the white square. The lower part of the Red Cross emblems appearing fore and aft shall be placed one metre at least above the water-line.

(d) *Illumination.*

The lighting of the distinctive markings by night shall be obligatory and sufficient to make them clearly visible to sea, land and air forces. The illumination of the vertical panel and of one of the horizontal emblems shall be particularly bright.

(e) *Validity of the present regulations.*

The present regulations, instituted with the agreement of the belligerent Powers concerned and ensuring the security of vessels placed at the disposal of the ICRC, shall supersede all other regulations which may be inconsistent with them. Municipal and international laws and customs relative to markings and inscriptions on ships shall apply to the vessels in the Committee's service, without prejudice to the present regulations.

*Misuse of markings.* — In April 1941, the British Government agreed to the use of the Red Cross emblem on the Committee's vessels, but reserved the right to withdraw their consent, should enemy Governments be shown guilty of misusing the emblem. Throughout the war, however, only once was an incident of this kind reported. According to a communication made by the German Government to the ICRC, German naval forces had observed an unusual number of vessels bearing the Committee's markings and moving along the Portuguese coast, during the night of November 6, 7 and 8, 1942, that is, just before the Allied landing in North Africa. This observation justified every kind of suspicion<sup>1</sup>. No confirmation was, however, found for these allegations, and it would therefore appear that on no occasion was there any misuse of Red Cross markings on vessels.

At the end of the War, distinctive markings served no further purpose, and in May 1945, the ICRC removed them from the thirteen vessels which were still being used for Red Cross purposes.

3. *Use of vessels.*

The use of vessels covered by special immunities was intended, in the first place, to make good the breakdown in regular communications which impeded the various welfare services (transport of repatriates, exchange of civil internees, and forwarding of mail and relief supplies). The majority of these schemes failed, however, and only transports of parcels for PW, organized in haste and without previous agreement, had

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<sup>1</sup> There were, in fact, six Red Cross vessels sailing in these waters at that particular time.

the approval of the belligerents. The latter made it clear, however, that vessels used for the above purpose should carry no other freight, or passengers, and the British authorities gave their approval only to shipments covered by a navicert. The vessels were moreover required to follow specified routes.

These restrictions remained in force until the end of the war; nevertheless, the facilities granted were later extended to other supplies besides postal parcels, and to new classes of recipients. In July, 1942, by agreement between the ICRC and belligerent Powers, the following ruling for the employment of ships was adopted:

The vessels shall be used exclusively for the transport of goods addressed to the ICRC or its delegates, and composed of relief supplies for prisoners of war and civil internees of all nationalities.

In addition, medicaments and hospital supplies intended for civil populations will be allowed. For all other cargoes addressed to the ICRC or the Joint Relief Commission and intended for other categories of war victims, the ICRC must obtain the previous agreement of the belligerent Powers.

The British authorities requested the ICRC to add the following prescription:

Mail bags, addressed to the Swiss postal authorities or to the ICRC, and containing PW parcels, may also be conveyed by Red Cross vessels.

The ICRC was later authorized, in principle, to forward relief supplies intended for the civil population of occupied countries, on condition that these shipments were provided with navicerts.

The transport of material necessary for carrying out relief schemes, such as motor vehicles, lubricants, tyres, and so forth, was also permitted.

These provisions also applied to mail for PW and civilian internees, but this concession in principle only held good for letters exempt from postal charges: the conveyance of Civilian Messages on Red Cross forms therefore required special authority<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This authority was refused for the transport of civilian messages by the *Vega* to and from the Channel Islands, as the German authorities were unable to organize a censorship in the Islands.

On the other hand, the ICRC was unable to get the use of a vessel to carry medicaments and supplies for the medical corps of expeditionary forces <sup>1</sup>.

From 1944 onwards, a few exceptions were made to the ban on the transport of passengers. At the request of the Swedish Government, the Committee agreed to allow their diplomatic messengers and other Swedish citizens to travel on Swedish vessels chartered by the Foundation, subject to the approval of the belligerents concerned. In all, 145 passengers thus crossed the Atlantic on Red Cross ships.

The use of the Committee's vessels for the evacuation of groups of civilian war victims gave rise to no objection in principle. The attempts made to put this scheme into practice were, however, usually frustrated, owing to the tacit opposition of one or other of the belligerents. The Committee could not, of course, undertake such operations without the formal consent of all Governments concerned.

In short, the Red Cross vessels were restricted to the transport, over certain routes, of PW mail and authorized relief supplies, addressed to the Committee and for the exclusive use of specified categories of war victims.

As a result of the supervision carried out by the Committee's delegates few incidents occurred, and none was serious. Some cases of ordinary merchandise were loaded by mistake at Lisbon on one occasion <sup>2</sup>. There were, however, a number of stowaways. These were usually put on shore before sailing; a few were discovered too late for them to be landed <sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> The ICRC informed the British authorities and offered to send the cases back to Lisbon, but it was finally agreed that the goods should be handed over to the consignee in Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> Some Portuguese who left Lisbon on Red Cross vessels bound for the United States were taken back to Lisbon at the request of the U.S. authorities. An Alsatian citizen found on board the *Embla*, which left Marseilles on December 26, 1942, was landed at Gibraltar by the British authorities. This incident might have had serious consequences for the ICRC transport system, as the British authorities refused to ship the man back to Marseilles, as was demanded by the German authorities there. A German PW was also found, on April 25, 1945, on board the *Caritas II* on arrival at Lisbon; this stowaway had escaped the notice of the Allied control officials, both at Toulon and Gibraltar.

The convoying agents were bound to inform the authorities concerned of any merchandise or stowaways found on board, and thus at the first opportunity curtail any misuse of the immunities granted by the belligerents. Any such irregularities were subject to common law, whatever the circumstances. Claims put in by a belligerent could only be referred to the belligerent Power concerned, together with a statement of the Committee's opinion.

Allocation of tonnage was subject to the sole condition that the vessels should be at the disposal of both adverse parties. When granting safe-conducts for ships carrying parcels for PW held in Europe, both Germany and Italy specified that the same vessels should, on their return voyage, carry relief supplies for their own nationals in Allied hands. As a matter of fact, the Axis Powers very seldom had recourse to the Committee's vessels <sup>1</sup>.

Since the ICRC itself had no funds with which to procure means of transport, these were supplied by the relief organizations or the Governments concerned. The latter were, however, inclined to claim the exclusive use of the vessels thus supplied, whereas the Committee's policy of strict impartiality forbade it to waive its rights in favour of any particular body. The ICRC therefore accepted means of transport only on condition of being free to use them for the benefit of all nationalities; the only concession made was a bare priority for the organization bearing the costs incurred.

The Committee's delegations in the sailing ports allocated the available cargo space equally amongst all concerned, according to the volume and priority of the goods to be shipped, and irrespective of the charterers and the ship's origin <sup>2</sup>. This system allowed the Committee at the same time to co-ordinate

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<sup>1</sup> About 1 ½ per cent of the total tonnage shipped.

<sup>2</sup> A similar arrangement was made with the Swiss Federal Maritime Transport Service, with reference to the cargo space which this Service placed at the disposal of the Red Cross in Swiss vessels sailing between South America and Europe. Applications for freightage were referred to the ICRC, which allocated the space available between the relief organizations concerned.

its transport, build up stocks, and space out the shipments according to their urgency.

#### 4. *Organization of supervision.*

The ICRC was obliged, in view of its responsibilities, to take steps for the protection of the rights of belligerents. It was unable, however, to give any absolute guarantees, especially before having acquired some experience in this field. The Italian Government, which was dissatisfied with these reservations, proposed that the ships should call at an Italian port, instead of Marseilles, in order to "ease the task of the ICRC and to simplify the machinery of supervision". But the gradual organization of transports allowed the Committee to exercise more effective control and to gain the belligerents' confidence to an increasing degree. These Powers confined themselves to sanctioning and making compulsory the presence of convoying agents, whom the ICRC had itself introduced on the vessels sailing under the Red Cross flag. In other respects the ships at sea and in port were subject to the same supervision as any other neutral merchant shipping.

*Special charter clauses.* — Since financial considerations prevented the ICRC from purchasing or chartering ships itself, it could only fulfil its obligation towards the belligerents by obtaining certain guarantees in turn from the owners and charterers. To this end, it required of all subscribers to the charter-party a formal undertaking to observe and to ensure the observation of the regulations laid down for Red Cross transports. The purpose of the charter had to be expressly named in the agreements: the contracting parties undertook to place the vessels at the sole disposal of the ICRC, and to follow the instructions given them by its representatives, in particular those relating to schedule and routes.

Chartering was also subject to the following clauses:

(1) *Distinctive marking of the Committee's vessels.* — The location and dimensions of these inscriptions and emblems must be approved by the Committee's agents. They must be in position before sailing

for the first voyage ; they must be kept in good order and removed before the vessels is returned to the owners. All costs incidental to the markings and to their illumination shall be placed to the ship's account.

(2) *Restrictions on the use of the vessels.* — The Committee's vessels are exclusively reserved for the transport of shipments that are intended for the categories of war victims entitled to such relief supplies, and that are addressed to the ICRC (or to its delegates, or the Joint Relief Commission), for distribution under its supervision. Only the goods entered on the ship's manifest, which must be handed for signature to the Committee's representatives at the loading port, may and shall be on board. Without special authority from the ICRC at Geneva, no persons except the regular crew and the convoying agent appointed by the Committee may sail on board any of these ships.

(3) *Convoying agents of the ICRC.* — Since the obligations towards the belligerents impose a responsibility upon the ICRC, the Committee shall place a convoying agent on board each vessel, to represent the ICRC in all questions involving its interests. The primary duty of the convoying agent shall be to ensure the observance of the pledges given by the Committee, covering the vessel. The ship will supply the convoying agent with appropriate accommodation and food.

(4) *Supervision of vessels of the ICRC.* — The interests of the vessel itself demand that the restrictions imposed by belligerents in accordance with Paragraph (2) should be strictly observed. The master must therefore take all steps he may find desirable to prevent any infringement of the restrictions. He shall give all necessary orders and explanations to the crew. The convoying agent shall assist in the supervision. Since both master and convoying agent have the same objects in view, their co-operation should present no difficulties. Their action should be based on mutual confidence and the desire to render service to the ICRC.

If, despite all precautions, stowaways or unauthorized cargo are discovered during the voyage, such persons or goods shall in principle be taken back to the sailing port and put ashore. The captain and the convoying agent shall do their utmost to follow this rule, and all vessels in the service of the ICRC shall lend each other assistance.

(5) *Neutrality of Red Cross vessels.* — The duties assigned to the Red Cross vessels entail the observance of strict neutrality by all personnel on board. Masters shall require their crews to abstain from giving to any third person any information that might be of interest to belligerents. Members of the crew must refuse to answer questions put to them by officials, except those relating to their duties on board, stating, if necessary, that they have strict orders from the ICRC to this effect.

(6) *Validity of the present regulations.* — Certain international, municipal or other laws and regulations may be contrary to the foregoing clauses. In such an event it shall be expressly understood that the above stipulations, the purpose of which is to ensure the fulfilment of the obligations incurred towards belligerents, supersede all other considerations. These shall be waived in face of the overriding interests of the ICRC, whose maritime transport service cannot be carried on without the fulfilment of the said obligations.

The above provisions were inserted in the charter-parties. The ICRC moreover reserved the right to name the consignees of both vessels and cargo.

*Delegations.* — The Committee's delegations organized and supervised the loading and unloading of the ships. They had sole responsibility for the allocation of tonnage for the various consignments ; they received and forwarded cargoes, determined the schedules for each voyage (which had to be notified to the belligerents concerned), and gave the necessary instructions to the owners or their agents, particularly in regard to distinctive markings, sailing dates and routes. The delegations themselves discussed all matters relating to the movements of vessels with the local authorities and the representatives of belligerent Powers in neutral countries. This method prevented the risk of contradictory instructions to the masters. When on duty, the convoying agents took their instructions direct from the delegations in the ports.

*Convoying agents.* — On receiving authority to organize maritime transport, the ICRC decided that supervision should be exercised by convoying agents exclusively of Swiss nationality. The belligerents soon demanded that all vessels sailing under safe-conduct should be accompanied by such agents. This was however not always possible ; on several occasions, disordered communications and the long delays in obtaining visas prevented the agent appointed from arriving in time <sup>1</sup>. To avoid holding up the transport, the vessel then sailed according to schedule,

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<sup>1</sup> Convoying agents travelled with ordinary passports and were signed on as part of the crew for the duration of their mission. They carried official commissions from the ICRC and wore armlets with the Red Cross badge.

whilst the belligerents were notified that no convoying agent was on board. Incidents of this kind became, in time, so common that the ICRC in December 1944 requested the belligerents to release it from this obligation. They agreed to dispense with the convoying, but reserved the right to ask for it in special cases. The Committee, for their part, continued to place convoying agents on board, whenever possible.

Although the belligerents had insisted on the presence of such representatives, they omitted to specify their duties. Before leaving, each convoying agent received instructions from the ICRC ; these were to ensure strict application of the regulations for the use of the vessel and the distinctive markings, to be present at all loadings and unloadings, to obtain a nominal roll of the crew, and copies of the bill of lading, the postal way-bills, and so forth.

The convoying agent had to remain on board from the time the customs water-guard went ashore, until the officers at the arrival port came on board. He was empowered to make a complete inspection of the vessel. During the voyage, no cargo could be loaded or discharged ; no strangers were admitted on board and no-one could leave the ship. In the event of any infringements of the obligations assumed towards the belligerents, the convoying agent had to take all appropriate steps. Responsibility for navigation, however, belonged exclusively to the master.

*Crews.* — The ICRC took no part in the enlistment of crews ; it did, however, stipulate that all members of ships' crews should be nationals of States recognized as neutral. When the signing on of seamen who were citizens of belligerent countries became unavoidable, the Committee submitted such cases for the approval of the Powers <sup>1</sup>. These raised no objection to the

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<sup>1</sup> This undertaking could only be kept with difficulty, for it was by no means easy to find neutral seamen. Moreover, this restriction, voluntarily established by the ICRC, proved unnecessary. The crews of the Swiss merchant fleet consisted, to a great extent, of nationals of belligerent countries, and most of these vessels had Russian or Belgian masters, without causing any disadvantage. All the incidents in connexion with the crews of ICRC vessels concerned neutral seamen, except in one case, where a British subject had been signed on.

signing on of seamen of non-neutral countries (the Baltic States, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Norway and Russia), whose services had to be enlisted in various occasions <sup>1</sup>.

The crews were recruited in neutral countries ; those intended for Red Cross vessels sailing from a belligerent port were usually conveyed there by other ICRC ships.

The Committee ordered the immediate discharge of any seaman who was clearly not approved by one or other of the belligerents. This measure had to be taken only on four occasions <sup>2</sup>.

The British Government insisted, in the case of the *Rosa Smith*, which sailed between Gothenburg and Aberdeen, that the crew list should be submitted to the British Consul at Gothenburg. The members of the crew were allowed to go ashore at Aberdeen, but could not leave the town.

The various measures of supervision adopted by the ICRC proved in practice to be adequate, since their vessels had the confidence of the belligerents until the end of the war.

#### 6. *Provisions relating to navigation.*

In addition to safe-conducts and the use of the Red Cross emblem, the security of the vessels called for other precautions. Ships had to follow the routes laid down by the Committee in agreement with the belligerents. However, such agreement was often very difficult to obtain, and this seriously delayed the sailings. Vessels could not put to sea when each of the parties wished a different route to be followed, and if discussions did not lead to at least some provisional arrangement, the service was suspended for an indefinite period.

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<sup>1</sup> When it was proposed to charter an ICRC vessel for service in the Far East, the Allies consented to the crew's being composed of Japanese seamen, provided this concession induced the Japanese authorities to approve Red Cross transports.

<sup>2</sup> The discharge of a Swedish officer of the *Vega* at Lisbon, which was demanded by the Armistice Commission at Marseilles, led to an incident in November 1942. The master, the owners and the British Red Cross refused to dismiss this officer, who had been brought by air at great expense from Sweden to Lisbon. They changed their views, however, and engaged a Finnish substitute, so that the ICRC was able to authorize the vessel to resume its service.

*Notification.* — When the belligerents concerned were informed that the first Red Cross transports would take place, they declined to give any guarantee of the vessel's safety unless the time-table to be followed was communicated to them ten days in advance. Thus, whereas the safe conduct was granted once and for all, notification of the time-table had to be made for each voyage. The Italian authorities even demanded that the Committee should await confirmation of their consent before giving sailing orders <sup>1</sup>.

The notification procedure was laid down by each belligerent and was frequently modified. Notice of the time-table, in particular, was at first required ten days in advance, afterwards six, and finally four days. Some belligerents even accepted 48 hours previous notice ; the period varied also according to the route followed.

The notification included a detailed schedule of the outward and return voyage, including ports of call and dates of clearing and arrival at the various ports. When a vessel sailed from a neutral port, the notification was made by the ICRC delegation to the naval attachés of the belligerent States ; sailings from belligerent ports were notified direct to the Governments concerned by the ICRC itself.

The object of notification was to allow belligerent Governments to inform their armed forces. Its chief disadvantage was that any vessel which for some reason could not keep to the schedule, had to be held in port during the period required for fresh notification. The ICRC was, moreover, at times completely cut off from all communication with its ships : it had, for instance, from 1944 onwards, no means of rapid communication with its delegations in Marseilles and Toulon, and was in consequence not in a position to report any delays incurred by vessels calling at these ports <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> When this consent arrived after the proposed sailing date, a fresh notification with ten days' notice was required.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the ICRC was unable to report to the British authorities before June 19, 1944, that the sailing from Sète of the *Cristina*, notified for June 13, 1944, had been delayed until June 25. The Foreign Office at once informed the Committee that they could accept no responsibility in respect of this vessel until the military authorities had received the fresh notification.

*Sea routes.* — Safe-conducts were granted for voyages not only between the ports of call, but also along courses precisely defined by geographical pin-points. The determination of the route was one cause of unfortunate delays, as it usually entailed drawn-out negotiations with the belligerents. One of the Governments concerned would sometimes accept beforehand the route to be fixed by its allies, or would even leave it in part to the discretion of the adversary. All parties were informed of the route finally chosen. However, changes were often demanded during the time the vessels were in service. Shoals or mine-fields made certain routes very dangerous for ships, which bad weather might divert slightly from their course. The *Vega* in this way ran aground on a sand bank, and the *Padua* sank after striking a mine in the Gulf of Lions.

*Pilots.* — Governments often insisted that the vessels should take pilots on board, especially in the territorial waters of belligerent States <sup>1</sup>.

In view of the dangers to navigation between Port Vendres and Marseilles, the ICRC itself requested the German authorities to provide pilots. The request was granted, on condition that the pilots should be regarded as neutral; this the United States Government accepted, but the British Government refused. Three months later, the British revoked their decision and gave an assurance that pilots shipped between Port Vendres and Marseilles would be treated as neutrals by the British authorities, and be exempt from capture. After this arrangement no further incidents occurred on this route.

Pilots whose services were used in other waters did not receive favoured treatment, since the Red Cross vessels had not been granted extra-territorial status.

*Reports of position by wireless.* — In May 1944, shortly after the attacks on the *Embla* and the *Cristina*, the British Government requested that, as an additional precaution, ICRC vessels should give their position by wireless, to permit their identifica-

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<sup>1</sup> This was the usual practice between Rhodes and the Piraeus, in the Faroe Islands channel, the Delaware estuary, German waters of the Baltic and the North Sea, the Channel Islands, and so on.

tion by the armed forces. The British authorities stated that the Allied air forces in the Mediterranean declined all responsibility for air attacks, unless certain information in respect of sailings were given in good time. The German authorities, on being consulted, agreed to the use of wireless on board. After frequent changes during the first three months<sup>1</sup>, the regulations for wireless signals were fixed as follows in August 1944.

(1) Signals by radio every four hours starting from midnight (C.E.T.) on 600 metres (500 kilocycles) in the following order.

“Position at... hours GMT ; latitude..., longitude..., course..., speed... knots...”.

(2) Position by wireless daily on 600 metres to radio stations at Algiers (or Gibraltar), and Coltano (Leghorn).

(3) In the event of an unexpected call at an intermediate port :

(a) The master shall give notice by wireless (600 metres, 500 kilocycles) of his intention of putting into port and shall inform the Lisbon delegation of his arrival and of the probable date and hour of sailing. The master shall also give notice, at least four days before sailing, to the owners or their agents, for transmission to the British authorities, of the probable date and time of sailing from the port of call.

(b) The master shall give at least 48 hours previous notice of sailing from the port of call by wireless.

(4) Should the ship's wireless be unable to reach the stations of Algiers, Gibraltar and Coltano, the aforesaid communications shall be sent through Spanish radio stations.

The consent of the Spanish Government was necessary for calling at Spanish ports. It was granted with the following reservations : wireless communications to be limited to the dates of arrival and sailing and to be made either in clear, or in international code. Transmissions to be made in the frequencies in international use for the service of the merchant marine.

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<sup>1</sup> Six vessels which had been held up at Marseilles whilst these formalities were being completed, were allowed to leave port without observing the new regulations, on condition that they sailed in convoy.

In December 1944, the British Government informed the ICRC that its vessels were no longer required to give their position by wireless in the Mediterranean. The measure was therefore only applied when this zone was a major theatre of war.

In the Atlantic, the ICRC vessels had to give their position once a day to their national station on a wavelength of 500 kilocycles. The *Rosa Smith*, sailing between Aberdeen and Gothenburg, had to give her position twice a day.

*Scope of regulations.* — All these regulations were intended to enhance the safety of the Committee's vessels. The latter might, however, on occasion be unable to comply with them, owing either to orders issued by the military authorities, or to some other imperative reason. The question arose, therefore, whether vessels might be without protection in especially dangerous situations. The British Government repeatedly made it clear that they would accept no responsibility for attacks on ships or crews that had failed strictly to observe regulations. The ICRC vessels were thus exposed to the perils inevitable in a state of war, whilst their safety depended solely on the exact observance of all regulations to which they were subject. Although no consequences ensued, the fact that these vessels bore the onus of obligations which could not in all circumstances be fulfilled, created an unusual situation. From a logical point of view, withdrawal of protection could only be grounded in breaches of the general conditions governing safe - conducts, use of the vessel, schedule of routes, and distinctive markings. This question was not specially discussed, but the Italian authorities seemed to have interpreted the principles of protection in this sense. When the ICRC made certain reservations early in 1941 regarding the use of the Red Cross emblem, they replied as follows :

"With regard to the display of the distinctive Red Cross markings, the Ministry believe that it is precisely, and *a fortiori* the fact that routes, port of call, sailing dates, etc., may not always be stated in advance, which makes it advisable for sailing-ships to bear the Red Cross emblem, particularly for their protection against air attack."

In conclusion, provisions governing navigation should be framed solely to ensure the better identification of the vessels ; the protection of those vessels should not be in any way conditional on such regulations. Belligerents should not therefore be entitled to decline all responsibility for attacks against vessels displaying the emblem, on the grounds that they were unable to identify them.

#### 7. *Transfer of flag.*

Owing to the losses suffered by their merchant fleets, the neutral countries were hardly able to offer tonnage to the ICRC. Moreover, the United States and the German authorities had on several occasions expressed a wish for all Red Cross transport to be placed under the control of the ICRC and under the Swiss flag. The Committee therefore asked the Governments concerned to grant exceptions to the provisions of international law governing the transfer of flag, and succeeded in having three belligerent vessels placed under the Swiss flag.

The Swiss Confederation approved these transfers, on condition that the vessels should be subject to Swiss law, in particular with regard to transfer of ownership of the vessels to Swiss nationals, and removal from the shipping register of the home country. The ICRC was, moreover, required to obtain the consent of the belligerents to the proposed transfers, and to take responsibility for the employment of the vessels, which could not be included in the allocation of tonnage assigned to Switzerland by the belligerents.

On the occasion of the purchase of the *Frederic*, a Belgian steamer held up at Casablanca, the German Government made the transfer of ownership conditional on its right to demand at any time the return of the vessel to her owners<sup>1</sup>. The British Government stipulated that no financial profit from the transfer should accrue, even indirectly, to the enemy Powers.

In order to reconcile these various conditions, the transfers were effected on a basis of sale with privilege of repurchase,

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<sup>1</sup> The Swiss Political Department agreed to the German reservation, with the approval of the Belgian Government in London.

and payment was deferred until the end of the war. The vessels were not subject to registration fee for their entry in the Swiss Register <sup>1</sup>.

Whereas the commissioning of neutral vessels as Red Cross transports was subject only to concurrence between certain belligerent Powers, transfers of nationality had to be notified to all Governments concerned by the Swiss diplomatic representatives.

The Committee sought the preliminary agreement of the Belgian, Brazilian, British, French, German, Italian, Swiss and United States Governments. Thereafter, it was found necessary to secure the adherence of Japan too, because this country, at the time of the initial transfer, had made reservations on the score that she might later regard this change of flag as a derogation to certain provisions of international law.

In short the ICRC, in order to transfer belligerent vessels to a neutral flag, had to bring about the following :

(1) Belligerents should waive their right, recognized by the London Declaration of 1909, to consider such transfers as null and void.

(2) The ownership of the vessel should be transferred to a Swiss corporate body.

(3) The purchase should not lead to any financial gain to the belligerents.

(4) These Powers should consent to release ships in spite of their own needs of tonnage.

(5) The Foundation should obtain adequate financial support to cover the risks of operating the vessels thus acquired.

Lastly, the status of vessels transferred to the Foundation was identical with that of the other ships sailing under the control of the ICRC.

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<sup>1</sup> For clauses relating to the sales and financial guarantees, see the Report of the Foundation.

### § 3. TECHNICAL ORGANIZATION

*Chartering.* — The first shipments under safe-conduct comprising parcels for PW were made possible by contracts entered into with a Portuguese firm, which over a period of three months was responsible for chartering the required tonnage.

The ICRC also contemplated the chartering of ships <sup>1</sup> either at the expense of the Governments concerned, or at the charge of National Red Cross Societies. The plans fell through and the Committee soon abandoned the idea, having in the meantime had recourse to a method by which its own interests and those of relief organizations and Governments were protected. Charter-parties were concluded between the British Red Cross and owners in neutral countries, but the ICRC had the exclusive use of the vessels and all facilities for carrying out the supervision required by the belligerents.

This system, concurrently with another adopted in 1942, lasted until the end of the war. After the United States' entry into the war, the American Red Cross asked the ICRC if the relief supplies given by them might not be carried by vessels flying the Swiss flag and sailing under the same conditions as the ships of the Committee already in service. On being consulted, the Swiss Government were willing to allow vessels to be transferred to their flag, provided the ICRC obtained the necessary authority. They offered meantime to set aside from 2,000 to 3,000 tons per month of cargo space in their own ships, for use in the transatlantic service of the Red Cross <sup>2</sup>.

As the relief consignments planned greatly exceeded this figure, the proposal of the American Red Cross, which was endorsed by the U. S. State Department, was accepted, and the ICRC, together with the Swiss authorities, studied means for giving it effect. The ICRC then decided to set up a Foundation

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<sup>1</sup> This condition was made by the British Government during the discussion of the cross-Channel scheme. See above p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> This proposal was discussed by the British and Swiss authorities and the conditions for releasing Swiss tonnage for Red Cross transports were laid down in the Agreement of April 9, 1942.

governed by Swiss law, for the purpose of acquiring the vessels to be transferred to the Swiss flag, and of taking responsibility for the relief shipments entrusted to the Committee. The vessels purchased by the said Foundation were to be managed either by this body, or by a shipping agent of Swiss nationality. According to Swiss law, the vessels could not be chartered by a foreign organization. The Foundation, however, was authorized to charter vessels sailing under foreign flags.

From 1942 onwards, therefore, the shipment of relief supplies was in the hands of a special Red Cross body, the activity of which was nevertheless subject to the ICRC <sup>1</sup>.

In point of fact, the Foundation purchased only three vessels. Most of the cargoes were carried by ships under charter, mainly because the purchase of ships and the change of flag created such difficulties on each occasion as to leave small chance of any settlement within a reasonable space of time.

In the end, only vessels chartered by the British Red Cross, or by the Foundation, or ships belonging to the latter body, were used as transports under the emblem of the ICRC.

The terms of the charters were adapted to the forms in common use, and were different in almost every case; some vessels were on time-charter, some for the voyage and others for the duration of the war.

*Financing.* — The recovery of freight and costs for vessels chartered by the British Red Cross was ensured by the ICRC delegation, which made up the invoices according to the tonnage allocated amongst the consignors, and reimbursed the British Red Cross. The Foundation settled in respect of its own vessels, as a rule direct with the consignors, and the ICRC was only required to act in the case of certain transfers of funds.

The freight rates varied according to the charter-parties. For the Foundation's vessels the rates were calculated at cost level, as this body asked no remuneration for its services and had also certain taxation privileges.

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<sup>1</sup> The formation and activities of the Foundation are shown in the Report of its administration issued together with the present Report.

Part of the relief supplies carried consisted of sacks of postal parcels which were conveyed free. The net cost of carriage was charged by the ICRC to the National Red Cross Societies of the recipients. The charterers did not ask for repayment of carriage of bags containing PW mail.

*Administration.* — Negotiations with belligerents were the sole concern of the ICRC. A separate department was set up for this purpose ; it was at first attached to the Relief Division, and later on to the Transport and Communications Division, which was formed in August 1942 and placed under a Commission of the ICRC.

The Transport and Communications Division had the task of approaching Governments on transport questions, and supervised the general work of the Maritime Transport Service, to which the convoying agents were directly responsible. Instructions to shipowners, charterers or masters were given through the delegations, or the Foundation.

#### § 4. WORK ACCOMPLISHED

##### 1. *Lisbon-Marseilles*

At the outbreak of the war, relief supplies for Allied PW were conveyed from Lisbon to Germany by rail. In the winter of 1940, the Spanish Government was obliged to prohibit the transit of goods from Portugal over its railway system. The ICRC then began to carry relief supplies by sea from Lisbon to Genoa or Marseilles. Our review of this service, as of the others dealt with below, will be confined to essentials ; space does not permit an account in detail of the technical problems connected with the various shipping routes, of the many negotiations they involved, or of the regulations — frequently modified — which were established by the belligerents <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures are given in the volume of Annexes showing the movements of the vessels which during the war carried relief supplies under the Committee's auspices for PW, civilian internees and civil populations. The Committee is able to supply full data on all technical questions relating to their Maritime Transport Service.

The first shipments in the Mediterranean began in December 1939 and January 1940, and were carried out by small Portuguese sailing ships chartered by the British Red Cross and sailing under a safe-conduct from the belligerents. Their supervision was not, however, sufficiently strict, and the German Government indicated that they were disinclined to place confidence in these vessels for an indefinite period. The ICRC then had recourse to steamers, each having one of their agents on board ; these would carry exclusively goods intended for PW and civilian internees. This course proved satisfactory as regards British PW ; it was not so, however, in the case of French PW, since the plan for employing vessels chartered by the French Red Cross met with insurmountable obstacles. The French authorities, who were faced with urgent needs, had to resort to " block-trains " from Portugal, although the costs were heavy.

After the United States came into the war, shipments for PW steadily increased, and the use of large cargo-vessels became essential. There were, moreover, drawbacks to the chartering of Portuguese steamers, since the ICRC had to deal with shipowners on a purely commercial basis ; furthermore, no voyage could be made without authority from the Portuguese Government. At this juncture the Foundation for Red Cross Transports, recently set up by the ICRC, purchased the Belgian vessels *Frederic*, which thenceforth sailed under the name of *Caritas I*. This ship was intended for the United States-Marseilles route, but its first voyage was from Lisbon to the Mediterranean.

In November 1942, the Allied landing in North Africa made navigation in the Mediterranean extremely hazardous ; one Red Cross vessel was caught in an air raid on Genoa. The dangers became such that the Portuguese Government forbade its merchant ships to call at Mediterranean ports. As rail communications had also broken down between Marseilles and Geneva, all consignments from Lisbon had to be suspended. When these routes were re-opened, Spanish, Portuguese and Swedish vessels chartered by the British Red Cross were employed.

The increasing pitch of war in the Mediterranean had its effect on Red Cross transports. Some vessels were exposed

to great risks in following the difficult routes laid down by the belligerents. Others were repeatedly attacked by aircraft, and one was sunk. The ICRC then suspended the Marseilles-Lisbon service and sent a protest to London. The British authorities expressed their regret; to avoid the recurrence of similar incidents, they requested that the Red Cross vessels should report their position and speed four times a day by wireless. Several cargo-boats were thus able to leave Marseilles, but shortly afterwards the Allied landing on the French coast (August, 1944) again held up all navigation. Since there was no more room in the warehouses at Lisbon for goods which continued to arrive from overseas, several ships unloaded at Barcelona. By the autumn of 1944, conditions for navigation had once more become almost normal, and it was possible to send relief supplies to Toulon, until the port of Marseilles was again made serviceable.

After the end of hostilities, the ICRC considered that ships bearing the Red Cross emblem and convoyed by its agents were no longer necessary, and informed the Red Cross Societies of the Allied countries of this view. However, at their express demand, the Committee's Maritime Service was continued for a time, until the stores of relief supplies in the various ports had been cleared.

## *2. North African Route*

After the events of 1942, German PW camps were set up in North Africa; on the other hand, France was no longer able to obtain goods direct from Algeria for French PW. The ICRC therefore endeavoured to establish a link between Marseilles and Algiers or Casablanca. No more neutral vessels being available, ships already in its service had to be used. Some of the vessels on shuttle service between Lisbon and Marseilles therefore touched at Casablanca, to unload supplies for German PW and to take on board others for French PW.

These irregular passages proved inadequate, and other expedients had to be found. Goods from North Africa were transported to Lisbon free of charge by the British Admiralty,

and thence to Marseilles on Red Cross ships. After the landings in France, the Allied services were able to send supplies direct to that country. Relief supplies from the German Red Cross had to be shipped by the Northern route. The first consignment reached Casablanca direct from Gothenburg, the others were shipped from Gothenburg to Philadelphia, and were thence forwarded to Casablanca by the American Red Cross.

### 3. *South American Route*

Throughout the war, relief supplies from South America were carried almost entirely in Swiss vessels. Agreements concluded by the British and United States Governments and by the ICRC with the Swiss Government supplied the Argentine Red Cross with cargo space of varying capacity in vessels detailed for carrying food to Switzerland. This space it was asked to allocate impartially between the various Allied nations. The system did not however allow of rapid disposal of available stocks. The British Red Cross therefore, at the beginning of 1943, chartered a Swedish vessel lying in Buenos Aires, which then made several voyages between that port and Marseilles, with the consent of the belligerents and under the emblem of the ICRC.

### 4. *North American Route*

In the early years of the war, the American Red Cross had sent relief supplies to Europe on board American ships, which unloaded at Lisbon. The United States, on entering the war, were anxious to supply their nationals held in Europe and Japan. Two maritime services, Atlantic and Pacific, were planned for this purpose, under the auspices of the ICRC ; they were the subject of negotiations at the beginning of 1942, and in the case of the Atlantic transports, were brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

American tonnage being no longer available, the American Red Cross set about finding neutral cargo-boats. The ICRC was asked if it would consent to ship American consignments on steamers flying the Swiss flag and displaying the ICRC

emblems. The difficulty lay in reconciling this procedure with Swiss law ; it was not overcome until the ICRC had set up the Foundation, which was then able to purchase neutral vessels and sail them under the Swiss flag.

The conveyance of relief supplies between the two continents formed the main activity of the Foundation. Eighty-seven per cent of the cargoes shipped by vessels bought or chartered by the Foundation was carried from Philadelphia to Marseilles and Gothenburg. The vessels on this route also accounted for most of the shipments made under the ICRC emblem. Further data on the structure and operation of this regular service will be found in the Report of the Foundation.

Negotiations which took place at that time between the Swiss and British Governments led to an agreement, countersigned by the ICRC, under which Switzerland set aside 4,000 tons a month for the ICRC, 3,000 tons being allotted to the British Red Cross and 1,000 tons to the American Red Cross. These cargoes were carried at preferential rates. In its concern for neutrality, the Swiss Federal Government decided that, on the return voyage from Europe, the cargo space it had made available to belligerents should be used for relief supplies sent to PW of the Axis countries in the United States and Canada.

Four vessels chartered by the British Red Cross occasionally formed part of these transports.

In the summer of 1944 the Allied landing in the South of France debarred the port of Marseilles from use by navigation. The ICRC had already considered the possibility of linking North America with a North German port, via the Faroe Isles and the Scandinavian coast. The dangers to shipping north of the German coast prevented Red Cross vessels in the Atlantic service from sailing direct to German ports. The ICRC was thus obliged to warehouse relief supplies at Gothenburg, which henceforth served as a relay station for goods bound for Germany from the North. A delegation was opened there, with the same duties for the Baltic as those of the delegation in Lisbon for the Mediterranean.

A few vessels, nevertheless, continued to operate on the southern route and discharged their cargoes at Barcelona,

to be warehoused pending the re-opening of the ports of Marseilles and Toulon.

#### 5. *Aberdeen-Gothenburg Route*

A direct line between Great Britain and Sweden was proposed by the British Red Cross as early as September 1941. Aberdeen had been selected in view of its good communications with the interior. It was not until the autumn of 1944, however, that the German authorities accepted this plan in principle, on condition that the ships, on their return passage, should carry mail and parcels for German PW. Their uncompromising attitude moreover prevented any agreement being reached before March 1945 on the choice, status and conditions of charter of such vessels. The first shipment of relief from Aberdeen did not therefore reach Gothenburg until after the armistice.

#### 6. *Gothenburg-Lübeck Route*

Events in the Mediterranean theatre of war at first led the ICRC to consider linking the United States direct with Germany by the north. The British Government and the owners of vessels chartered by the Foundation objected, however, to this idea, on account of the dangers referred to above. In default of other routes, it was decided to ship relief supplies to Gothenburg, whence it was hoped to convey them to Germany via Denmark by the Helsingborg-Elsinore ferry. This service was irregular, however, and the ICRC attempted to set up a coastal shuttle service between Sweden and Germany.

This service could not be opened until November 1944. The belligerents had chosen the port of Lübeck, despite the danger of destruction by bombing. Since the Allies had refused safe-conducts to these Swedish vessels, the ICRC did not provide them with the Red Cross emblem, or place their convoying agents on board, for no responsibility for this service could be assumed in these conditions. The ICRC delegates did, however, supervise the loading and discharging of goods and their forwarding to the camps in Germany. The Swedish Government asked that the cargo-boats should at least be painted white,

and that their sailings should be notified in advance by the ICRC to the British and Russian diplomatic representatives in Stockholm. In the absence of safe-conducts, the Swedish Government accepted declarations from the belligerents to the effect that the vessels would be respected as far as possible.

Despite these restricted guarantees, the Swedish boats, up to the Armistice, made twenty-seven trips without incident. At the end of April 1945, two of the ships took off at Lübeck about a thousand people released from concentration camps. Shortly after the end of hostilities, the Lübeck service was given up, but the ICRC delegation in Gothenburg remained in their post, at the request of the Red Cross Societies concerned, to cooperate with them in clearing stocks. These were forwarded to France, Belgium, Finland, Poland and Germany.

#### *7. Projected Near East Route*

The occupation of the Balkans by Axis forces made communications with the Near East both difficult and precarious. Great delays and losses attended the transport of parcels to Axis PW and civilian internees in countries overseas, and the conveyance of supplies from India, Egypt, Turkey and Syria. To rectify this situation and to promote the despatch of urgent relief supplies to the 3,000 British PW held in Greece, the ICRC attempted to put a line in operation between Turkey and the Adriatic, similar to that between Lisbon and Marseilles. After some hesitation, the belligerents, at the beginning of 1942, agreed to this plan in principle. Unfortunately, none of the vessels the ICRC wished to place in service were approved by all the Governments concerned, and since railway communications had meanwhile been re-opened, the scheme was abandoned.

#### *8. Projected Far East Route*

An account of the Committee's attempts to organize the sea transport of relief supplies to Allied PW in Japanese hands will be found in the chapter covering all the problems of the war in the Far East<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 437 et seq.

### 9. *Maritime Transport of Relief for Civilian Populations*

The results achieved by the ICRC in the sphere of maritime transport of relief supplies for civilian populations are set out below. Details are given, in particular, of transports from Turkey, Egypt and Palestine to Greece, from Lisbon to the Channel Islands and to the Netherlands, and finally from Turkey to the Dodecanese.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 401 et seq.

## *Chapter 2*

### **Railway Transport**

Up to the middle of 1940, the railways worked normally in Western and Central Europe, so that relief supplies could be sent to PW and internees of both parties by the ordinary mail service across the countries at war. This was so in particular of parcels sent by post from any part of the world to Polish PW, and to French and British PW and internees in Germany.

After the occupation in 1940 of Norway, Belgium, Holland and part of France, followed in 1941 by that of Yugoslavia and Greece, the number of PW increased considerably. The ICRC itself then had to solve the problems raised by the rail transport of the collective and individual relief consignments required for such large numbers of men.

The forwarding of individual and especially family parcels will be discussed later. Throughout the war such parcels were sent chiefly through the post office ; the ICRC was therefore not concerned with them. It did, however, take repeated steps to assure the despatch of individual parcels in mail bags or cases, of anonymous parcels having no particular addressee, and of goods in bulk.

Up to the beginning of 1944, the German and French railway systems were more or less intact, but requisitions by the German military authorities in Germany and in the occupied countries led to a shortage of rolling stock. Thus, from the time of the Franco-German armistice in 1940, the daily civilian train which should have connected Hendaye and Paris never ran ; in fact, the regular use of this line was confined to military transports. As a result, parcels sent through the Army post offices

to German PW held in the British Commonwealth were accepted, but the reverse did not hold good. Relief supplies for Allied PW shipped by the American, Argentine, British, Brazilian, Canadian and other Red Cross Societies had, therefore, to be sent by another itinerary, proposed as early as 1940 by the ICRC ; this was by the sea route from Lisbon to Marseilles or Genoa, and thence by rail to Switzerland. This route was increasingly used until the end of the war, except for a few months in 1944, after the Allied landing in the South of France.

Relief supplies to PW in Europe were carried largely by the French, Italian, Swiss, German, Hungarian and Balkan railway systems. Although conditions were often most difficult, the railway staff everywhere showed a devotion to duty which earned the gratitude of the ICRC and the donor agencies.

The many problems of railway transport will be discussed under the following four headings :—

- (a) Organization ;
- (b) Shortage of rolling stock ;
- (c) Application of provisions for free transport ;
- (d) Looting, accidents and petty theft.

(a) *Organization*

At first, the ICRC commissioned international transport firms to attend to the receipt and despatch of goods sent to PW through its agency. After a few months this system proved too costly. Without entirely dispensing with the services of international shipping agencies, the ICRC set up its own Transport Department. As this was not a commercial undertaking, expenses were much reduced (from 1942 to 1946 they were no higher than 4.5 centimes per kilogram) ; more important, the consignments sent to PW and internees of all categories shared the privileges enjoyed by the Committee itself.

Shortly after setting up this railway transport central office, the ICRC opened similar offices at the headquarters of certain delegations, one or several of whose staff were assigned to transport formalities. Those delegations that only occasionally had duties of this kind continued to employ the local transport agents.

### *(b) Shortage of wagons*

Box cars in good condition, with a load capacity of seven to twenty tons and utilizable over the whole European network, were required. As supplies arrived irregularly in Switzerland, applications for rolling stock could not be satisfactorily met within the required time limits. From the outset therefore, consignments were hampered by a persistent lack of freight cars.

In view of the neutrality of Switzerland, the Federal Railways soon prohibited the despatch abroad of single cars. On being refused a request for one or several lifts of wagons, the ICRC proposed that rolling stock should be supplied to the Foundation for Red Cross Transports. After consultation with the Swiss Government, the Federal Railways again refused, but promised that if negotiations with the French and Italian State Railways failed, they would consider the temporary loan of Swiss wagons then at Marseilles or Genoa.

At the same time, it was impossible to obtain sufficient French or Italian wagons when Red Cross ships reached Marseilles or Genoa, nor enough German wagons to take the goods from Switzerland to the PW camps in Germany. In the absence of a remedy, the ICRC had to make constant applications to the various railway managements; in spite of these efforts, its relief service was seriously menaced on more than one occasion. There were three periods of acute crisis :

(1). The first occurred during the winter of 1940-41 and lasted until spring ; it affected traffic from Marseilles to Geneva, and from Singen into Germany. The organization difficulties which had provoked the crisis having been overcome, the volume of transport became fairly stable as from the winter of 1942-43 and showed the following monthly averages : 1,000 to 1,800 wagons received, 1,000 to 1,200 sent to Germany, and 100 to 300 to Italy and the Balkans.

As most of the relief goods entrusted to the ICRC were destined for Germany, the despatch office at the frontier station of Singen was of primary importance. Technical details were finally settled under an agreement with the German Red Cross

in September and October 1943. The German Railways then announced that the goods would be directed over sixteen sectors of their network. Consequently, the ICRC had to set up a composition department. As consignments for single camps did not always make up a full wagon-load, the German Railways had agreed to accept single wagons of not less than five tons weight and addressed to several camps in the same neighbourhood. In such cases all the addressees had to be entered on the way-bill and the customs declaration, and the various lots so marked that they could without difficulty be unloaded separately.

All the parcels in one car were numbered according to a system which allowed the ICRC to keep a statistical record.

On the 12th and 25th of each month, despatch schedules for the following fortnight had to be sent to the German Railways. As goods arrived in Switzerland irregularly, however, the ICRC schedules made a distinction between those shipments which were "definite" and those which were "probable" or "doubtful". The cars were of course loaded in conformity with customs regulations. Each was placed under bond; the seals of the wagons were numbered, and the numbers were entered on the document.

The same procedure applied to the so-called "composite" cars containing separate consignments for more than two or three camps. Consignments of this kind were loaded in the same car for transport to the German station at Singen, where they were re-loaded for direct forwarding to the addressees. This system, although less reliable than previous arrangements, was the only way of sending relief supplies to isolated groups of PW who could not receive their parcels through a large camp.

Every "composite" car had to have a way-bill made out for Singen by the Committee's Despatch Department, and another for each constituent consignment. As many as 20 or 30 way-bills were thus needed, in addition to the customs declarations, manifests, etc., making in all eleven documents for each consignment. Special forms were used by arrangement with the Swiss and German Customs and Railways. An agreement was signed with the Swiss Railways for the loading of the

cars in the warehouses, since cars had often to be loaded successively in four or five warehouses (e.g. Geneva-Cornavin for medical stores, Geneva-La Renfile for clothing from France, Vallorbe for foodstuffs from overseas, Bienne for the toilet articles sorted there, etc.).

“ Composite ” despatches were maintained until the summer of 1944, that is, until normal traffic in Germany broke down. At that point, these consignments suffered such losses that the method had to be abandoned.

Combined loading on the same cars of supplies intended for PW of various nationalities was increasingly aided by the standardization of overseas parcels ; thus, repeated loading and the despatch of single cases to small detachments of PW were avoided.

The Committee's shipments followed the six principal methods shown below.

(a) *Full cars ; one or more loadings.* — These were intended for PW of the same nationality and the same camp (including subsidiary labour detachments, infirmaries and hospitals). This was the most reliable method and was applied as often as possible.

(b) *Combined cars ; one lading.* — These cars were sealed ; they contained supplies taken from one warehouse and were sent to PW of several nationalities in the same camp.

(c) *Combined cars ; several loadings.* — These were also sealed ; they carried goods taken from several warehouses and were sent to PW of different nationalities held in the same camp.

(d) *Combined cars routed indirectly ; one lading.* — These remained sealed until they reached their first destination ; they carried supplies from one warehouse and for PW of different nationalities in two or three camps in the same railway sector.

(e) *Combined cars routed indirectly ; several loadings.* — These also remained sealed until they reached their first destination ; they contained goods from several warehouses for PW of different nationalities held in two or three camps in the same railway sector.

(f) "*Composite*" cars. — These were sent to Singen and contained separate consignments. This system was only used in the last resort.

The above procedures also applied, with a few modifications, to shipments for Italy and other countries. They ensured the fullest possible use of the available rolling stock.

(2) In 1943, the Committee's railway transport passed through a second critical period, chiefly as regards transport to Germany. Up to that time, the ICRC had been able to secure numbers of German wagons, and a fair number of Italian, French and other cars, mainly owing to the volume of commercial traffic between Germany and Italy by way of the Brenner and the St. Gothard. The Swiss Federal Railways were then able to provide the ICRC with German empties returning from Italy through the St. Gothard. In the spring of 1943 difficulties arose, as the result of the air raids on the stations of Milan, Bologna, Verona and Rome. After the capitulation of Italy, the number of German wagons crossing Switzerland became steadily less, and there were no Italian cars available at all. This was at the same time a period of unprecedented need for rolling stock, as thousands of Allied prisoners were being transferred to Germany.

At a conference held in Berne, in November 1943, it was found that the shipment of Christmas parcels alone to all the Allied prisoners in Germany would require 1,300 wagons. The Federal Railways could, however, only provide a few dozen. In face of this serious situation, the ICRC urged the Allied Red Cross Societies to send rolling stock to assist in maintaining the supply of relief to Allied PW. It had already made similar appeals, first in 1940 to the British Red Cross, at the time when this Society was establishing its relief programme, and again in 1941, when the ICRC advised the representative of the American Red Cross to make plans for sending American freight-cars, in the event of relief supplies from the United States arriving in still greater quantities.

In 1943, warnings of a possible collapse of the railway transport system in Germany could not be given officially by the

Committee, since Geneva was not entitled to express its views regarding the issue of the war. The ICRC had therefore to confine itself to private talks with the American, British and Canadian Red Cross. A representative of the ICRC was sent to these three important contributing Societies, to propose that wagons and motor-trucks should be supplied against the day when the means of transport of the Detaining Power completely failed.

These negotiations were unsuccessful, and as before, the ICRC had to rely wholly on German rolling stock. The confusion which followed the armistice in Italy was, it is true, of short duration, and the situation improved slightly by the end of 1943. Nevertheless, from November 1943 to July 1944, the despatch schedule of supplies was delayed by about two months, on an average. This situation righted itself later, when from June to October shipments from overseas ceased entirely, as the result of the Allied landing in France<sup>1</sup>, while shipments from Switzerland to Germany between June and November averaged 900 wagons monthly.

(3) In November 1944, a third rail transport crisis occurred and this lasted until the close of hostilities. During this period, the steadily increasing air attacks on the German railway system, in particular on the lines leading to the marshalling yards at Cassel, Leipzig, Berlin and Munich, immobilized or destroyed tens of thousands of wagons; in addition, they caused the loss of loads standing in these yards. The consequences were soon felt in Geneva; owing to the lack of rolling stock, the number of consignments fell rapidly and in December 1944 there was an arrears of 1,700 wagons. In October, supplies from overseas arrived again in Switzerland through the ports of Toulon and Marseilles, which had both been hastily repaired. The line from Marseilles to Geneva, through Lyons, became a bottle-neck, as more than five ships had unloaded simultaneously at Marseilles. In Switzerland, the Committee's warehouses were full, and it was not easy to find other storage room for the mass

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 159.

of supplies arriving in American wagons which had to be returned to France within twenty-four hours of their arrival.

On the other hand, the situation of the PW and internees daily became worse, since in view of the concentric attack on the Reich itself, they were being transferred from the frontier districts to the interior of the country. The ICRC dispatched a representative to Berlin, to make a last effort to obtain as many German wagons as possible. In December 1944, the German Railways promised to put 1,000 wagons at the immediate disposal of the ICRC. Despite their undoubted goodwill, the competent authorities were unable to keep their word : instead of one thousand, they supplied only a few dozen.

The earlier negotiations with the American, British and Canadian Red Cross Societies now bore fruit, the more so as the Allied Governments felt the need for quick action, if their nationals in Germany were to be saved. These Governments and Red Cross Societies, after consultation with the Transport Division of the Allied High Command, agreed to put rolling stock at the disposal of the ICRC : the American, Canadian and Polish Red Cross Societies undertook to supply motor-trucks<sup>1</sup>, while the Belgian and French Governments promised railway wagons.

The ICRC thereupon drew up a scheme, based on the nationality and number of PW in Germany, the rate of issue desired by the donors, and the stocks available in Switzerland. The Committee asked for at least 2,460 wagons, as from the end of December 1944, or the beginning of January 1945. In February 1945, the French Railways furnished 247 wagons, and the Belgian Railways 71, instead of the promised initial deliveries of 300 and 100 respectively. The remainder was to be delivered by March, but in the meantime the course of events was hastened, and the ICRC would in any case have been unable to use the total number requested.

With regard to these contributions by the French and Belgian Governments mention should be made of the " block-trains ".

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 186.

In 1942 a considerable stock of French material was awaiting shipping space at Lisbon, and the ICRC, together with the French Government and Red Cross, conceived the idea of forwarding it by "block-trains".

The representative of the French Red Cross at Lisbon, acting in agreement with the Committee's delegation in that town, assembled complete lifts of 20 to 25 wagons for the use of the ICRC, and arranged for their dispatch from Port-Bou to Geneva. Timely use was thus made of supplies which otherwise would have been greatly delayed through lack of shipping space in the Mediterranean. Sixteen "block-trains" ran from Lisbon to Geneva; this very costly scheme was abandoned when navigation in the Mediterranean again became normal.

At the beginning of 1945 the camps in North, East, West and Central Germany, as well as those in Upper and Lower Austria, could no longer be reached by rail, owing to the close proximity of the combat areas. The ICRC had therefore to continue its use of railways for transport to Southern Germany (Baden, Wurtemberg and Bavaria), and Western Austria (Vorarlberg and the Tyrol). Here foodstuffs and medicaments were the more urgently required, as the Detaining Power had removed large numbers of PW to these areas and could no longer give them their regular basic rations. The ICRC thereupon decided to send "block-trains" of 20 or 25 wagons each to supply these camps and to build up stocks which could be sent by road to camps near the zone of operations.

The French and Belgian wagons were registered by the Swiss Federal Railways; they were marked "Private: International Committee of the Red Cross" and "Freight for Prisoners of War only". In view of the danger of air attack, the wagons were painted white all over, to distinguish them from the German rolling stock; in addition, they displayed the Red Cross emblem and, with the permission of the Swiss Government, the Swiss Federal Cross.

As the registration of French and Belgian rolling stock was delayed, the ICRC borrowed two lifts of 50 Swiss wagons from the Federal Railways in February 1945; these were used to form "block-trains" until wagons from abroad became available.

The 186 "block-trains" which the ICRC was able to organize were used chiefly to carry supplies to:

(a) the warehouse at Ratisbon. From here, lorries took supplies to camps in Wurtemberg and Baden, and also to the North, towards the convoys of PW on the march from Silesia and Saxony.

(b) Stalag VII A, at Moosburg, near Munich, where the German authorities had assembled nearly 100,000 Allied PW.

(c) Vorarlberg and the Tyrol, where PW and civilian internees from Italy and Upper and Lower Austria were converging<sup>1</sup>.

(c) *Arrangements for free carriage.*

As a general rule, the Committee's consignments to PW, and by analogy, to civilian war victims, were eligible for free carriage under Art. 38 of the Convention. This privilege was granted by the Swiss Federal Railways, and the German, Italian<sup>2</sup>, Yugoslav, Greek and Hungarian State railways.

The position was more complicated in countries where the railways belonged to private companies.

Negotiations with the French National Railways in this connexion were particularly important. Not only were nearly all shipments from North and South America to Central Europe directed across France, but the French *départements* all despatched large quantities of relief goods to Switzerland, for onward carriage to French PW in Germany. The movement of supplies in the reverse direction was no less heavy, as the ICRC forwarded considerable relief consignments from Switzerland to the camps for Allied PW, civilian internees and others in France; in addition, the shipments which the Committee sent on behalf of the German Red Cross to its delegations overseas had to cross French territory.

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<sup>1</sup> To this end, the ICRC set up a large depot of foodstuffs at Landeck, at the end of the Arlberg tunnel; road transport left from here for the East. This depot was also used for the feeding of PW in transit.

<sup>2</sup> As no official confirmation was given by the Director-General of the Italian Railways, the Committee was obliged, throughout the war, to negotiate with district managers and stationmasters in order to secure the application of Art. 38 in each particular case.

It was in the interest of the German authorities to facilitate the transport of relief goods, both for their nationals in enemy hands and for the PW whom they held. Accordingly, they placed no obstacle in the way of the negotiations between the ICRC and the Vichy Government. The authorities at Vichy, who were naturally anxious about the fate of French PW in Germany, were unwilling to incur carriage charges for the supplies they despatched in conjunction with the French Red Cross, or which they received from overseas for relief purposes. To avoid amending the statutes of the French Railways, they set up a government organization called the *Comité de la reconnaissance française*, whose duty it was to refund expenses of this kind to the French railway system. Meanwhile, the ICRC, acting as intermediary between the belligerents and their nationals held in PW camps, had already established the principle of equal treatment in this respect for PW of all nationalities. For that reason, the Vichy Government, when discussing free carriage, did not even refer to the possibility of discrimination between relief supplies for French PW and for Allied PW of other nationalities. The French authorities realized, moreover, that concessions on bulk shipments from the British Red Cross would facilitate the grant by the blockade authorities of the navicerts and landcerts required for the relief goods they wished to send from overseas, or from Portugal, to French PW.

No controversy arose in this connection until the close of hostilities. Large quantities of relief supplies, warehoused in Switzerland, were then returned to the donors, since they could not be sent to Germany. The cost of their transport by the French railways was claimed, not from the *Comité de la reconnaissance française*, but from the French Red Cross, which in turn requested reimbursement from the ICRC. Finally, the donors, after discussions with the Committee, agreed to meet these costs, as they concerned goods which were returned to them. On this occasion, the Ministry for War in Paris agreed to bear the carriage charges for the relief supplies sent by the ICRC to German PW in France.

The technical features of rail transport dealt with above relate only to European countries ; in others, where the transport

system continued to work normally, there was no need for the ICRC to intervene. The question of free carriage was, however, a different matter. The principle of reciprocity required that this facility, already accorded to relief supplies for Allied PW in the hands of the Axis Powers, should apply also for consignments to German and Italian PW even when conveyed by private railway companies.

The matter was of slight importance until 1943 ; before that date, the numbers of PW from the Axis countries were relatively low, and the small quantities addressed to them could be sent by post. In 1943, however, the German Red Cross made large consignments of uniforms, games, books, Christmas presents and other goods, while the Italian Red Cross sent considerable quantities of medicaments. The ICRC thereupon applied to the Governments and railway companies in Great Britain, Canada, India, South Africa and Turkey, and to the Government and Red Cross of the United States, for the carriage of these supplies under the terms of Article 38 also.

Great Britain granted the free transport requested. The United States, whose railways are under private ownership, did likewise, whilst stating that the cost of transport, including the unloading and transit through Canada, would be refunded by the American Red Cross. The Governments of the British Dominions and India also fell in with the wishes of the ICRC.

On the other hand, the many attempts made to obtain free transport on the Turkish Railways unfortunately remained unavailing. From the outset a variety of difficulties attended the transit of cases of medicaments and Christmas parcels for German and Italian PW in Egypt, Palestine, India and the Near East. These goods had in fact to pass through Turkey to Mersina, whence they were shipped to their destination, but were often held up at that port. When the German and Italian Red Cross learned of these delays, they ceased to send collective parcels in cases and returned to the system of parcel post.

#### (d) *Looting, Accidents and Petty Theft.*

Thefts and looting, although unimportant in relation to the volume of goods, were during the period of war itself so

common that it would be tedious, and indeed impossible, to enumerate them in detail. Their frequency varied with the progress of the war. During relatively quiet periods, the ICRC departments and the consignees were able to exercise a fairly efficient supervision. But when military operations disorganized an area which the supplies had to cross in transit, or in which they were to be distributed, losses were inevitable, despite all the precautions taken. It is not therefore surprising that after 1940 the number rose steadily.

Losses through theft, looting or accident were of different kinds.

(1). Thefts might be committed by the persons packing the parcels, cases or bales. They were negligible in the case of goods sent by national Red Cross Societies, whose workers were under strict discipline. When the supplies were dispatched by less well-organized agencies, or when they came from countries impoverished by the war, a comparison between the weights given by the donors and those of the goods received generally showed appreciable discrepancies.

(2). Thefts also occurred during transport by rail and in the ordinary post. These increased from 1941 to 1945, as certain commodities became scarcer in the countries of origin.

(3). Goods were pilfered or damaged in the shipping ports. These losses were relatively small, as the ports were usually under military supervision.

(4). Losses during sea transport itself were also small and were usually due to accident rather than to dishonesty.

(5). Risks were, however, greater during unloading in harbour, especially when the port had been damaged or partially destroyed by bombardment, which made supervision more difficult.

(6). Thefts during transit through neutral countries were negligible.

(7). Difficult problems were raised by the theft, looting and confiscation of goods in the detaining countries. Whenever a loss was reported by the camp leader or by a PW, endless

discussions ensued. It was indeed not easy to identify the culprits, since the thefts might have occurred in many circumstances :

(a) Most frequently during carriage by railway in the detaining countries ;

(b) At a time when the wagons were stationary and being opened at the rail depot attached to a main camp ;

(c) During the unloading and the storing of goods in premises of varying suitability, usually situated at some distance from the camp ;

(d) During transport to camp annexes, hospitals, etc ;

(e) During transport to labour detachments. Many camps had several hundreds of these detachments ; one even possessed 1,400 ;

(f) At the destination, where thefts might be committed by PW other than the consignees, or by the camp guard.

As a rule, enquiry into isolated thefts shed no light on the matter. Satisfactory results were only secured when the ICRC was able to prove that the loss had occurred during transport by rail, since the railways were then responsible and were obliged to make good the value of the loss.

Enquiries were effective only in cases of repeated theft. The contents of the wagons and the weight and number of parcels were verified at the time of despatch ; a check was also made by the camp leader, a stationmaster or the individual consignee. These checks sometimes made it possible to discover at least the place where the losses occurred, after which they were often reduced and even stopped by appropriate security measures.

The ICRC had only two means of discovering losses :

(a) by comparing the weight of the goods received with that shown on consignment notes ;

(b) by checking the receipts of the camp leaders or individual consignees.

From January 1, 1942 (the date from which statistics of this kind were kept) until February 1945 (on which date con-

signments according to nationality were replaced by so-called "pooled" shipments), the ICRC received receipts for 91.888% of the goods sent into belligerent countries. During this period the percentage of goods on which receipts were not returned rose to 8.115%, whereas it has been only 0.48% in 1941. This considerable increase may be attributed to the growing dislocation in Europe at the end of the war.

The proportion of 8.115% was the absolute maximum of unreturned receipts. It may be supposed, however, that a certain number of receipt forms (attached to way-bills and customs declarations) did not reach the consignees, and that the others, once signed, were lost in the post. The true losses could therefore not have amounted to more than 4-5%. In addition, the transfer of PW and of entire camps, and the recovery of consignments which had been only partly rifled, also prevented the ICRC from establishing any precise facts.

At all events, the following conclusions may be drawn from these facts.

(1). Losses were inevitable in view of the scarcity of goods caused by the war, and the risks to which transport was exposed in belligerent countries, mainly owing to military operations. These losses varied between one and ten per cent, according to the phase of the war and the circumstances in which the relief supplies were forwarded and distributed.

(2). Losses remained at a relatively low level for collective consignments sent in sealed full wagons, and for cases or standard parcels. It was far higher for individual parcels, the supervision of which was more difficult owing to the variety of packings and addresses.

(3). The ICRC regularly informed the donors of losses, and also drew their attention to the risks. Donors were moreover notified when the losses exceeded 10% during carriage through any given country and were asked whether, in spite of this, they wished to continue sending goods at their own risk. As a rule, the donors assented.

## DESPATCH OF GIFTS BY POST

Although problems relating to the despatch of postal packages often arose, and were solved in conjunction with those concerning mail in general, some special difficulties also occurred. These only will be considered here.

The forwarding of postal packages intended for PW and civilian internees was one of the most important matters before the ICRC throughout the war, firstly, because the parcel post afforded easy and rapid distribution of packages to individual addressees, and secondly, because the free carriage of postal packages was guaranteed by the World Postal Convention signed in Cairo in 1935. This Convention however, could obviously make no provision for the technical problems inherent in the bulk consignment of relief to PW under Art. 38 of the Geneva Convention. These were problems which the ICRC could solve only in close collaboration with the national postal authorities members of the World Postal Union. When any two countries go to war, their direct postal intercommunication is automatically cut. However, since relief supplies were guaranteed to PW, and as most categories of civilian internees eventually shared this benefit, the postal authorities of the countries at war attempted to maintain a regular service through the postal machinery of neutral countries. Thus the transport of postal packages on the continent of Europe depended to a large extent on Portugal, Switzerland and Turkey.

After the Franco-German armistice in 1940, the ICRC was faced with the task of re-establishing the postal connection between Portugal and Switzerland. It was urgently necessary to forward the postal packages which had accumulated in the British General Post Office, from Lisbon to Germany and Italy. In order to retain the advantage of postal transmission as far as possible, the following arrangements were followed.

The parcels held up in Lisbon were put in mail-bags and handed over to the delegation of the ICRC by the Post Office. They were thus temporarily withdrawn from the postal circuit and, in agreement with the British Red Cross, were sent to Marseilles; the delegation of the ICRC there forwarded the

parcels to Switzerland in the same way as non-postal consignments, but with post office forms instead of the usual consignment notes. Once in Switzerland, they re-entered the international postal circuit, for the Swiss Post Office forwarded them to Germany and Italy by the ordinary postal channels. This method of semi-postal transmission was maintained until December 1944, when the German railway system was put out of action by the Allied air-raids.

This channel of communication from Western to Central Europe was first used for the bulk shipments of the British General Post Office, and later for those of the Western Hemisphere (Canada, United States, Latin America and the West Coast of Africa), amounting in all to three or four thousand mail-bags a month. Postal packages sent from North Africa to Europe continued to go by the sea route between the French colonies and France itself, which was in fairly regular use until the Allied landing of November 1942 in North Africa<sup>1</sup>.

Postal packages sent to or from the South-East of Europe, the Near East and India had to pass through the Turkish postal system. This traffic consisted of parcels sent in one direction from Italy and Germany to PW and civilian internees in Egypt, Palestine, East Africa and India, and in the other from Allied organizations in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Turkey to PW and civilian internees held in Italy and Germany. The postal authorities sent considerable quantities of goods by this route, which was cut for a few months in 1941, owing to military operations in the Balkans: it was later in use again provisionally, and finally opened to regular traffic from October 1941 until the summer of 1944.

Through the receipts and reports sent to it by the camp leaders, the ICRC had a direct check on the collective consignments sent through its care. A check on the arrival of postal packages in the camps, hospitals and prisons, however, could only be made indirectly and was limited to a count of the individual receipts attached to these parcels. At the request of the

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<sup>1</sup> From the month of December 1944, the ICRC was able to despatch postal packages for German PW held in North Africa from Geneva to Toulon, by its own transport.

ICRC, the National Red Cross Societies sent in statistics at regular intervals, showing the quantity and sometimes the serial numbers of the consignments, as well as the percentage of receipts returned after a reasonable lapse of time. It was thus able to take action when delays and losses exceeded the proportion considered normal in time of war. Delays were due either to congestion in the ports such as Lisbon, Aleppo and Mersina <sup>1</sup>, or to the accumulation of goods at the censorship offices. In the first case, the ICRC was, as a rule, able to improve matters by applying to the shipowners and charterers, as well as to Governments who might put shipping space at its disposal. In the second case, however, it had to content itself with making recommendations to the Detaining Power. The problem of theft became still more complicated, as mentioned above <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In April 1943, the Istambul-Mersina line was opened in place of the Istambul-Aleppo line.

<sup>2</sup> The consignments of postal packages were all the more difficult to control because parcels forwarded carriage free are not entered separately on postal forms, or registered. In consequence, no separate enquiry was possible concerning them.

## Chapter 3

### Road Transport

#### (1). *General Survey*

The work of relief was dependent on transport facilities not only by sea and rail, but also by road. The latter even became a major problem after the Allied landing in France. In the reigning total disorder, a transport system capable of supplying food for the millions of detainees in Germany, facing starvation in the camps or on the roads, had to be established within a few weeks. The only way in which the ICRC could reach them was, besides a few "block-trains", by means of fleets of motor-trucks. Earlier, however, the Committee had already been active in this field, as the following brief details will show.

*Portugal-Switzerland.* — On the occupation of France and until its liberation, the ICRC several times studied the possibility of communication by road with Lisbon. This idea was abandoned, because the Committee's ships sailing between Lisbon and Marseilles were able to meet all requirements. Moreover, road transport from Portugal to Switzerland would have been very difficult and expensive ; it was thought preferable to keep it in reserve, in case other means failed.

*Italy.* — After the Italian armistice, the dispatch of relief to the North and Centre of Italy, which were still in the hands of the Axis, became a very hazardous matter. The Committee's representatives in Rome and Ponte San Pietro (near Milan) needed vehicles to convey relief to the camps. Instead of sending lorries from Switzerland or buying them in Italy, the ICRC first applied to the German military authorities responsible

for the maintenance of the PW. As this request was not granted, the ICRC, in April 1944, prepared to send truck-loads of foodstuffs to Rome, but this the German Command refused to allow. The ICRC was reduced to sending a trailer to its representative in Ponte San Pietro, who already had a car, and it was not until a year later that the delegates received the vehicles they required.

*Greece.* — In Greece, the representatives of the ICRC also needed motor-trucks for the distribution of relief supplies to Allied PW and to the war-disabled of the Greek Army, but these vehicles could not be taken from the park held by the Managing Commission for the feeding of the civilian population<sup>1</sup>. The ICRC then applied to the Greek War Relief in New-York, which sent four trucks of Canadian origin for the exclusive use of the ICRC. These trucks were returned to the Greek War Relief in Athens when they were no longer required.

*France and Germany.* — Later, it will be seen how the steps taken by the ICRC to transport overseas relief supplies by road from the Mediterranean to Switzerland enabled it to build up a large fleet of vehicles. These were used in 1945 for conveying food to the camps in Germany. A road service of this kind had already been contemplated in 1943, when the German railway system began to deteriorate. In May 1943, at the request of the British Red Cross, the ICRC asked the German Government to authorize the transport of relief supplies in lorries driven by Swiss personnel.

It was then planned to create a food-depot at Singen, on German territory, and a park of vehicles in Switzerland. The scheme was to carry supplies by rail to Singen; at the end of each trip into Germany the trucks would have been serviced in Switzerland before proceeding to Singen for a fresh load. This service would have partially ensured the food-supply of camps within a radius of 500 kilometres.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 450 et seq.

The ICRC requested the British Red Cross to supply the lorries and sent a representative to Great Britain and the United States to discuss the matter with the Red Cross Societies of these countries. In the meantime, it asked the Swiss Army Command for permission to use Swiss trucks, and sought the consent of the German Government. The ICRC counted on Germany's supplying the fuel, in return for the trucks which it would save in this way. But the German Command informed the ICRC that it had not sufficient oil or fuel for these vehicles ; other arrangements therefore had to be sought.

(2). *Supply of equipment to the ICRC.*

A. *Lorries.*

Foreseeing an interruption of rail traffic in the Rhone Valley, the ICRC in May 1944 proposed to the American Red Cross that motor-trucks be sent to Europe, and asked the United States Legation in Berne to support this motion. Shortly afterwards, the Ministry of Economic Warfare expressed a desire for a road service between Portugal and Switzerland. The ICRC then addressed a definite request for thirty trucks to the American Red Cross. This request was approved, but the ARC advised the Committee in the meantime to use Swiss or Spanish vehicles, for which the U.S.A would supply the tyres, fuel and oil. The ICRC then asked the Spanish Government for the temporary loan of about fifty vehicles, and some fuel. But neither Spain nor Switzerland could offer any lorries.

Meanwhile, the supplies for Switzerland and the ICRC were already awaiting transport from Marseilles to Geneva, and the ICRC made arrangements with the Swiss authorities to convey them to Geneva, in addition to the relief supplies waiting at Lyons. Unfortunately, the vehicles which could have been lent by the French Red Cross were useless owing to lack of fuel, and the Swiss Army Command could not spare some 50 gas-producer lorries requested for this purpose, in view of the military operations going on near the Swiss frontier.

*First delivery of trucks.* — Shortly afterwards, the Department of State in Washington announced that 50 trucks had

been sent. The first 26 were shipped on the *Caritas I*, and landed at Barcelona on September 20. These heavy trucks, with ten wheels and a capacity of eight tons, were not able to reach the Spanish frontier with their loads until three months later. A great many formalities and lengthy negotiations were required before the vehicles could be handed over to the ICRC and allowed to take the road. The visas required to enable the Swiss drivers to take over these vehicles were not granted until the end of November.

In the meantime, twenty-three more American vehicles had arrived at Marseilles on the *Caritas II* on October 20, and the fiftieth truck reached Toulon on November 9, on the *Henry Dunant*. To begin with, they were used for a shuttle service between the port of Toulon and the warehouses.

By an agreement signed on September 29, 1944, these trucks were handed over to the ICRC for the transport of PW parcels, after which they were to be returned to the American Red Cross. This Society also assumed all operation expenses and maintenance.

The Canadian Red Cross in its turn offered about 50 three-ton trucks, then in England. These vehicles were loaded by the British Red Cross on the *Silver Oak* and reached Toulon at the end of November.

At the beginning of February 1945, all the vehicles supplied by the USA and Canada were in the hands of the ICRC in Geneva, except 24 American trucks, which for a time were used by the Committee's warehouses at Toulon.

The ICRC had originally intended all these vehicles for the transport to Switzerland of the relief supplies unloaded in Portugal or on the Mediterranean. But when the lorries arrived at Geneva, the situation had completely changed. The Committee's ships were again calling at the southern French ports, and from there to Switzerland the railways were sufficiently repaired for a resumption of traffic. On the other hand, the disorganisation of transport in Germany was so great that it threatened to halt the flow of relief to the interior of the country. In January 1945, the German authorities made no further objection to the entry of Red Cross motor convoys to German

territory. The ICRC thus found itself suddenly faced by an unprecedented task, far surpassing its material resources : the "block-trains" it was able to organize on certain sectors, and the hundred or so trucks at its disposal, were quite inadequate.

*Northern Germany.* — At that time help was not sent from Switzerland alone. After the opening of the maritime route in the North, Lübeck had become the relief-centre for Northern Germany. The Committee's representative in that town was therefore also in urgent need of vehicles in order to transport food to the camps in Prussia. The ICRC could however only make about thirty trucks available to that sector, since the remainder were absolutely essential for its work in South Germany and Austria. The American Red Cross then sent direct to the Committee's representative in Lübeck the trucks which it was able to purchase in Sweden. About fifty of these vehicles were thus transported to Lübeck, in April, on Red Cross ships; moreover, about sixty trucks from America were unloaded there in May.

Meanwhile the Committee's representative in Lübeck had tried to organize a service of motor-barges. These would have navigated the Elbe, to points near the camps (for example, Brandenburg), and from there the trucks would have carried the supplies to their destination. But this plan fell through when the Elbe was cut by the Allied advance.

In February the Allied High Command placed one hundred American Army trucks at the disposal of the ICRC, together with fuel. The convoy reached Geneva from Paris on March 12.

Not only had prisoners to be fed, but deportees had to be helped and repatriated. As a large number of these were French, the French Government requisitioned about a hundred vehicles for the ICRC, of which the latter received 97. When it asked for more, the French Government was unable to comply, but promised to make good to the Swiss Government any tyres and fuel which the latter might advance to the ICRC for the transport of repatriated persons.

In response to the Committee's request for motor coaches, with which to transport repatriates, the Swiss Army Command

offered 28 coaches with an aggregate capacity of 600 to 700 persons. Later on, the Swiss Motor-Owners' Association offered some fifty vehicles, for which, however, the fuel was to be found by the Committee. The ICRC then asked the Allied Command for permission to use the fuel which had hitherto been reserved for the transport of PW, and took the further step on May 11 of requesting the Swiss Army Command to lend it some petrol. These steps were however unsuccessful, and the plan for using the Swiss coaches had to be abandoned.

In March 1945, the YMCA placed twelve trucks at the disposal of the ICRC. Ten three-ton trucks were also received from the Polish Red Cross. These reached Geneva from England on March 21.

In April, thirteen 2½ tons trucks were sent from the American depot at Vitrolles to the Committee's representative at Toulon, for the local service.

Again in April, the American Red Cross supplied fifty more trucks of a type similar to those which it had sent in the autumn of 1944, and five motor-cars.

The Italian Red Cross offered sixty Italian lorries, immobilized in Switzerland. It could however, not make use of them, because they were claimed by the Italian Army.

Altogether 474 vehicles and 137 trailers were directly operated by the ICRC. It also entrusted some transport work to private firms using their own vehicles.

## B. *Fuel.*

As we have just seen, the ICRC had considerable difficulty in obtaining trucks. It was equally difficult to obtain the fuel required for running them, as petrol was strictly rationed in Switzerland. The ICRC had to try to obtain it from abroad, and was successful only after protracted negotiation.

When the first contingent of trucks was landed at Barcelona, the delegation of the ICRC had at its disposal an initial reserve of 150,000 litres of fuel, and a weekly allocation of 50,000 litres. This fuel was advanced by Spain and charged to the American Red Cross.

The American Army supplied the petrol, particularly to the pipe-line at Lyons, for the shuttle service between Toulon and Geneva, in January 1945.

When preparing to use American and Canadian trucks in Germany, the ICRC had to ensure fuel supplies in advance. The Allied High Command in Paris, to which it applied, granted some petrol, which had to be sent from Marseilles and Lyons in tank-wagons. The French Government also promised to deliver 250 litres a day at the frontier close to Geneva. Finally, some of the fuel was sent from Switzerland, through the ICRC, to the supply-centres set up in Germany. Thus, two tank-wagons (i.e. about 36,000 litres of petrol) were sent to Moosburg in March; and tank-lorries also accompanied the convoys. For the Lübeck service the ICRC at the same time sent five lorries carrying petrol in containers. Later, the Lübeck delegation was supplied direct by the Allies.

At the end of April 1945, the Allied Fuel Office (Petroleum Section), which had supplied 85,000 gallons of petrol during the second half of March (i.e. 17 tank-wagons), informed the ICRC that it could thereafter count on 25,000 gallons weekly. This undertaking precluded any further risk of hold-up in the organization of road transport.

Between April and December, 1945, the American Army supplied nearly two million litres of petrol.

### (3). *Use of the Committee's trucks.*

The trucks were reserved at first exclusively for carrying food supplies to Allied prisoners and internees, but it was not long before they were also used for the benefit of deportees, particularly in the case of the trucks assigned to the ICRC by the French Government; the latter hoped in this way to send relief to the civilian workers, whose position was causing it great anxiety. When the war came to an end, the ICRC was authorized to use American trucks for the relief of civilians. The ICRC's trucks were also used to transport people from one camp to another and to repatriate them, and to carry Red Cross mail and correspondence for PW.

The list given in the Annex to this Report contains detailed information on the use made of the trucks. Briefly stated, they made 3,140 journeys, travelled 2,831,840 kilometres, conveyed 8,602,580 kilograms of goods and repatriated 23,481 persons. In the present volume only a summary account can be given of the 366 missions carried out by the ICRC motor convoys during 1945.

Before they were sent to Germany, the trucks were used for conveying to Switzerland the goods unloaded at Barcelona, Toulon and Marseilles by the Committee's ships. During this period the ICRC was negotiating for permission to send its trucks into Germany, where the situation was growing more alarming every day. The foodstocks in the camps were inadequate; moreover, the camps in Eastern Germany had been evacuated and the prisoners were being moved westward; during these long marches the meagre provisions with which they set out were soon exhausted. The ICRC delegation in Berlin procured two trucks at the beginning of February, for the emergency relief of these PW columns. The supplies were loaded at the ICRC depots at Lübeck; the lorries thence made their way across Pomerania, leaving depots en route at Demmin, Altburgund (Oflag 63) and especially at Neubrandenburg, which became a distribution centre for the secondary depots (Parchim, Tatarow, etc.), situated along the route traversed by the evacuated prisoners. Any PW picked up on the roads were carried to the hospital at Neubrandenburg.

At the beginning of March the ICRC was at last authorized to send its own lorries into Germany. The first convoy crossed the frontier at Constance on March 7. The following is an account of this first mission.

*First Mission.* — The motor column consisted of 25 trucks, driven by Swiss drivers and escorted by a delegate of the ICRC and by 14 members of the German Army. Nineteen of these trucks, loaded with 120 tons of food, were to go to Bohemia, the other six to the North of Germany.

The fleet of trucks destined for Bohemia passed through Ulm, Ingolstadt, Bayreuth and Eger and reached Karlsbad in time to relieve two columns of prisoners. One of these columns,

5,000 strong, had come from the camp at Lamsdorf and was marching towards Bayreuth; the other, 6,000 strong, came from Teschen and was making for Auschwitz. The marching columns were spread over a distance of hundreds of kilometres, and their commanders were ignorant of the exact position of each group. The delegate's car and a motor-cycle were used for frequent reconnaissances. When the convoy located a company, on information from the commanders, the contents of one truck were handed over, against a receipt, to the camp leader and were distributed by him. The operations were carried out at night, when the men were halted. The supplies were distributed between March 9 and 11; each of the prisoners received about 5 kilos of food.

Empty trucks were used for the transport of the wounded and sick. Medicines were delivered to the relay hospital at Tschentschnitz, and the trucks then returned through Moosburg. One of them made a détour in order to take supplies of medicaments to the relay camp for prisoners (No. 4088) at Eger, and Stalag XIII B at Weiden. Eight trucks remained at Moosburg which had become a supply-centre; the others returned to Geneva on March 13.

Of the six trucks which went to Northern Germany, five carried 20,000 litres of petrol for the use of the delegation at Lübeck, and the sixth took medicaments to the camp at Luckenwalde, near Berlin. On their way through Berlin, they left part of the petrol there. Three of these trucks remained for ICRC activities in Prussia, and the three others returned to Switzerland after having supplied a camp near Berlin with foodstuffs brought from the dépôts at Lübeck.

Thereafter the missions continued, and the motor columns were despatched in all directions; those from Switzerland supplied Southern Germany, while others were organized by the delegation at Lübeck and did the same service in the North. There were also supply centres in Germany itself, under the direct control of a Red Cross representative, with their own lorry park. For instance, at the end of March a supply centre with 47 vehicles was set up at Moosburg, and transferred shortly afterwards to Ravensburg.

Deportees from the camps at Ravensbrück, Buchenwald and Mauthausen were also supplied ; on their way back, in April, the trucks transported certain categories of deportees, such as women, children, and aged or sick persons, whose evacuation was permitted by the German authorities.

In April several of the convoys were overtaken by the Allied advance. Some of the vehicles were requisitioned by the American troops, for the supply of liberated camps and the repatriation of prisoners and deportees. Others were diverted to Austria. A large number of prisoners had poured into the Tyrol, where a supply centre was quickly established by the despatch of two block-trains. During this time, most of the convoys were therefore obliged to change their destination whilst still *en route*.

At the end of April, the Allied High Command requested the ICRC to take relief to the PW who could not yet be repatriated, and to the civilians of various nationalities who were still in Germany, described as " Displaced Persons ". However, immediately after the capitulation on May 8, the Allied High Command decided to make its own arrangements for feeding nationals of Allied countries. Nevertheless, the ICRC had to carry on its activities until the end of the year, and it turned its attention more particularly to the former deportees.

After the surrender, the convoys remained in operation to the end of 1945, observing the same frequency and principles as before : relief on the journey out, repatriation on the journey back. Some of them deserve special mention.

At the end of May 1945, a convoy set out to cross the demarcation line between the American and Soviet armies, in order to take relief to the Jewish population at Terezin (Theresienstadt). It reached Prague without difficulty, thanks to the assistance of the Soviet military authorities.

In June, the trucks of the ICRC repatriated nearly 4,000 Italian prisoners of war from Bavaria, and 3,000 Swiss from Berlin, who were collected from an assembly point near Hanover (Fallersleben Camp).

The ICRC also organized the transport of relief supplies

to Austria, Hungary and Rumania, which were occupied by the Soviet armies. During the summer twenty-two trucks in three convoys travelled to Vienna, Budapest and Bucarest. They carried 180 tons of goods, part of which were supplied by the Joint Relief Commission. After accomplishing this task, they brought back repatriated persons to Switzerland.

Although no general agreement had been made concerning these missions, they were all successfully carried out, thanks to the tacit consent of the Russian military commanders, which was obtained along the route by the convoy-leaders.

As the first mission to Eastern Europe had proved successful the ICRC sent a convoy of fifteen trucks in September to Warsaw. In November, further convoys were sent to Vienna and Budapest.

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As already mentioned, the ICRC trucks were also used to carry mail to and from PW and from the Central Prisoners of War Agency. When normal communications were interrupted in August 1944 by the Allied offensive, the ICRC took immediate steps to provide alternative arrangements, with the consent of the Allied authorities and the postal administrations of the countries affected. As it then had no vehicles for the transport of relief, the ICRC acquired a three-ton lorry and organized, at its own expense, a regular service between Geneva, Lyons and Marseilles, for the exclusive carriage of PW and Red Cross mail.

The following spring the Committee's trucks, originally destined for the transport of relief, were used for the carriage of mail-bags sent from and addressed to all the countries in the world, except Great Britain. The British Legation at Berne, in agreement with the ICRC and the Swiss postal administration, organized its own transport by truck between Geneva and an airport in France, whence the mail-bags were flown to England by British military planes.

After December 1944, an American plane also maintained a regular service between New York and Geneva, solely however

for the transport of PW mail between Germany and the United States. Civilian messages and PW mail of all other nationalities continued to travel, on the Committee's trucks, to Marseilles, where they were either handed over to the French postal authorities, or placed on the Committee's ships, or on American Army transport aeroplanes, and delivered to the ICRC delegations in the country of destination. Inward mail followed exactly the same route, and was delivered to the Swiss postal authorities on arrival in Geneva.

In the spring of 1945 the Swiss postal authorities were no longer able to forward the mail to Germany, and from then until April 1946 all correspondence with this country had to be carried by the ICRC trucks. These trucks maintained regular services between Switzerland and the different zones of occupation in Germany and Austria. They also transported the mailbags awaiting delivery to PW in Czechoslovakia and Poland which were held up in Switzerland.

#### (4) *Organization of Road Transport.*

*Protection.* — From the outset the ICRC was careful to ensure the security of its convoys. A request to the British Government to be put in touch with the French Forces of the Interior was refused. However, the French Committee of Liberation granted something in the nature of a safe-conduct: "The trucks for Switzerland should be marked in a special way, and instructions could be given to the combatants by wireless that these transports should not be attacked."

A request for safe-conduct was also sent to the German Command on August 11, for the trucks which were on their way to Geneva from Barcelona, Marseilles and Lyons and which were to carry relief from the German Red Cross on their return journey. This sector, however, was liberated by the Allies before a reply reached the ICRC.

In order to protect its trucks as much as possible against air attacks, the Committee had them painted white and placed on them both the cross of the Swiss Confederation and the emblem of the Red Cross, with the initials of the ICRC between

the four arms. The belligerents concerned were informed to this effect and raised no objection to the use of these signs, but made it clear that they were nevertheless unable to guarantee the security of the convoys.

Despite these precautions, many of the convoys were attacked. Moreover, with the rapid advance of the Allies they came into the path of the fighting troops. Every convoy leader knew the procedure in such an event : the trucks were halted and the personnel took cover ; the leader carrying a white flag, advanced upon the nearest officer, presented his papers and his instructions for the convoy, and enquired how he might continue his journey. At night the flag was replaced by a white light.

As the vehicles were operating in dangerous conditions and on extremely poor roads, accidents were not unusual <sup>1</sup>. However, none were serious except one which occurred on the Pilsen road and was caused by the bad surface ; four refugee passengers were killed and eight seriously injured. The Czechoslovak Government assumed full responsibility.

However carefully planned, the itinerary laid down in the convoy-leader's instructions had frequently to be modified *en route*. The orders of the military authorities and the destruction of roads might at any moment require the trucks to make long détours.

To avoid delays through breakdowns, each convoy had its own mobile repair shop. A damaged vehicle that could not be repaired on the spot was taken in tow, and its load was divided between the other lorries. The convoy was thus not held up and was able to remain intact. On the return journey the drivers themselves serviced the trucks. Some twenty mechanics were employed by the ICRC for repair work.

*Composition and equipment of the convoys.* — A convoy of trucks usually consisted of about ten vehicles, in addition to

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<sup>1</sup> Some lorries supplied by the French authorities had been sabotaged while under construction by workers belonging to the Resistance. An accident was caused by the steering post breaking on June 5, 1945, at Lodenice, in Czechoslovakia.

those carrying petrol and spare parts. PW were employed as drivers ; one instance of this was the employment of Canadian PW in the camp at Moosburg, who were released for this purpose by permission of the German Command. Five Swiss drivers thus sufficed for each convoy. But there was one drawback to this system : when their camp was liberated, the PW immediately left their work, and the convoy found itself in difficulties. After May, the Canadian drivers had all to be replaced by Swiss personnel.

Road transport activity, at its peak, required a staff of about 400, twenty-five of whom were convoy-leaders. The drivers were exempt from military service and were furnished with the necessary passports, permits, visas and safe-conducts, together with an armlet bearing the emblem of the ICRC. They carried everything they needed for their own use (sleeping-sacks, blankets, provisions and cooking utensils). Every convoy also had a receiving set, because no warnings were given of isolated air-attacks, which were announced only by wireless.

For help in the transport of the sick, the Swiss Red Cross supplied doctors and nurses to the ICRC, and equipment (blankets, mattresses, medicaments). Each convoy of about ten vehicles was accompanied by a doctor and four nurses, and the convoy-leader was provided with a medicine chest.

*Truck pool.* — In making over trucks to the ICRC the American Red Cross stipulated that preference was to be given to the transport of parcels for American and British PW. It was impossible, however, to fulfil this condition, because when on their journeys and in the camps the convoys encountered PW of all nationalities, besides deportees and civilian internees. As a result of hurried evacuation, these people were all herded together in the reception camps, and there would have been no justification in helping some, and not others.

In February 1945, the Committee placed the question before the British Government, which replied that the vehicles supplied by the Dominions were chiefly intended for the benefit of British and American PW, but that the ICRC,

in which the British Government had complete confidence, was free to decide what should be done in particular cases<sup>1</sup>.

*Internal organization.* — For the organization of the motor convoys, the ICRC, in November 1944, created a separate section attached to the Division for Transport and Communications. During the first few months, motor convoys between the Mediterranean and Switzerland were managed by a private firm; their importance became so great, however, that the ICRC began to operate them directly.

The staff was recruited from the Swiss Army. Most of the convoy-leaders were officers from Army motorised units, and the convoys were under military command while on the road.

The central organization in Geneva comprised :

(1) a technical department which engaged staff, inspected and maintained the vehicles, obtained driving licences, number-plates, tryptiques for international travel, kept fuel accounts and prepared the convoys;

(2) an accounting and administrative department which dealt with salaries, insurance contracts, passport formalities, drew up instructions for each convoy and organized the work of the convoy-leaders.

The ICRC also established a number of depots and distribution centres near the German frontier, at Kreuzlingen and St. Margrethen in particular. These centres had repair shops and lorry parks. The work in Germany itself was divided into two zones by a line running from Berlin to Cassel. The depots in Switzerland, and that at Ravensburg, were the centres for the Southern Zone, while the delegation at Lübeck was responsible for the Northern Zone. Three fleets of trucks, 35 vehicles in all, were attached to the permanent depot at Ravensburg, about 20 kilometres from the Lake of Constance. The parcels were sent by rail from the Committee's warehouses at Geneva and Vallorbe to Ravensburg, and thence were

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<sup>1</sup> See also p. 87.

distributed to the camps by truck every day. The isolated delegation at Lübeck, which had no contact with Switzerland, distributed relief supplies sent in the Committee's ships from America to Gothenburg. Most of the trucks at Lübeck had come direct from Sweden and America.

The four distribution centres at St. Margrethen, Kreuzlingen, Ravensburg and Lübeck were each in the charge of a leader responsible for their technical management. They were subordinate to the Committee's delegation in Germany, which alone was empowered to deal with the civilian and military authorities.

These depots on the Eastern frontier of Switzerland and in Germany made it possible to deliver supplies more quickly and to make the fullest use of the vehicles at the disposal of the ICRC.

After the end of September 1945, Basle became the starting point for all convoys, and relief supplies were stored after that date in the premises of the *Mustermesse* in Basle.

The road transport service was wound up at the end of 1945, and the 80 cars and 25 trucks remaining in the Committee's possession were then placed under the Administrative Service.

#### (5) *Return of Vehicles.*

The French trucks were returned to the French Red Cross in batches during June and July 1945; a few still remained for a time at the depots of St. Margrethen, Vernier and Lübeck.

As from the month of June, the American Red Cross announced its intention of offering to the American Army the vehicles it had lent to the ICRC. As a result, 164 trucks and 137 trailers were assembled at Geneva and made over on July 31, 1945, to the representative of the American Red Cross. The trucks were finally parked in Basle and the trailers in Geneva. In August, 75 trucks left Basle for Paris. Others were sent in different directions (Italy, Yugoslavia and Poland). Many of them were made over to the representatives of the American Red Cross in Europe: five in Denmark, four in Czechoslovakia and seven in Rumania.

On the other hand, the Canadian Red Cross declared itself ready to leave its 50 vehicles in the hands of the ICRC, as long

as they were needed. At the end of 1946 it handed them over to the Committee as a gift. The Committee then presented some to the National Red Cross Societies who had applied for them. Thus the Polish, Austrian, Hungarian, Rumanian and Yugoslav Red Cross each received four trucks. Fourteen vehicles were distributed among the delegations of the ICRC at Paris, Lyons, Berlin, Baden-Baden, Frankfurt, Vlotho, Prague, Vienna and Warsaw, and were still in use on June 30, 1947. The ICRC kept about ten for its own use in Geneva.

The closing of the Lübeck Centre, contemplated in July, was postponed until its stocks were exhausted. The Swedish lorries were sent to Norway, in accordance with the Allied authorities' desire to present them to the Norwegian Red Cross. The lorries which had been sent to the delegation in Lübeck by the ICRC were left there, so that its stocks might be cleared.

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### *PART III*

## EXECUTION OF RELIEF SCHEMES

### *Chapter I*

## **Collective Relief Supplies for Prisoners of War**

### § 1. ADVANTAGES OF COLLECTIVE SUPPLIES

The immense scale of relief work for prisoners during the recent war is not easy to assess.

Individual parcels <sup>1</sup> despatched by private persons, National Red Cross Societies or relief organizations took the form of postal packages, usually weighing five kilograms and addressed to prisoners by name. They were exempt from all postal charges <sup>2</sup>, and were despatched either direct or through the medium of the International Committee.

Parcels sent to the ports of Lisbon and Marseilles were checked by the delegates of the Committee and then sent on by post direct to the camps. Parcels arriving at Geneva in transit were immediately forwarded to their destination; their contents were not checked and the forwarding in no way involved the Committee's responsibility.

Other individual parcels were sent unaddressed to Geneva in cases or in bags, and a list of recipients drawn up by the donors came by separate mail. The Committee then attached

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 281 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> In conformity with Art. 38 of the 1929 PW Convention.

the list to the parcels, and forwarded these by rail to the camp leader, who distributed the parcels according to the instructions received.

The individual package system was adequate for a limited relief scheme, but was unfit to meet the needs of a host of PW and civilian internees of all nationalities.

From the autumn of 1940 onwards, the Committee, with the support of its delegates, the camp commandants, camp leaders and the PW themselves, recommended the donor organizations to send their relief supplies in the form of *collective consignments*.

These organizations complied with this advice and as a rule sent standard five-kilogram unaddressed parcels in cases — a new method which was evolved during the war.

They also sent bales of foodstuffs, clothing and underwear in bulk to the Committee. These goods were sent on from Geneva carriage-free by rail to a camp leader of specified nationality, who stocked and issued them according to need. These consignments could be sent only on behalf of a National Red Cross Society recognized by the other side.

Individual parcels were of course greatly appreciated by PW, to whom they brought most valuable encouragement. Through them contact was established with relatives or friends ; the receipt came back to the donor, bearing the signature and comment of the recipient. However, despite the psychological value of individual parcels, their distribution raised such practical difficulties that the ICRC preferred to handle collective consignments. Indeed, except for British or American addressees the German authorities allowed individual parcels to be handed over only when the identity of the men had been checked by the camp leader as well as by the camp commandant. A list showing the name, number and address of the recipients then had to be forwarded to the Committee, with the regulation labels. The lists and labels took some time to reach Geneva, and their transmission to the donor, sometimes in a distant country, involved a further delay. The postal itinerary and its hazards also had to be taken into account. Finally, all sorts of changes might take place during this process ; the consignees might have

moved to another camp, or have been sent to a labour detachment or to hospital,—not to speak of the men who might have died or been released, converted into civilian workers or repatriated.

Thus, in a great many cases, parcels did not reach their destinations. They were held in store for a few days and then distributed to PW of the same nationality who were sick or in need. They were only rarely reforwarded, for fear of loss. The receipt, when available, was sent back to the donor unsigned, or with one or more signatures of recipients other than the consignee. The donors, although glad to have helped one or more PW, were usually disappointed not to have assisted their own relative or friend.

The censorship of parcels in the camps was very thorough ; family parcels were often found to contain prohibited articles, or written and printed messages, which entailed total or partial confiscation. Not all consignments, indeed, were carefully checked on departure, as they were in Great Britain. Here the British Red Cross had organized two big packing centres for family parcels, the larger in London and the other in Glasgow. The Red Cross Societies of the Dominions, in particular those of South Africa and New Zealand, also had centres of this kind. Parcels made up by individuals were sent there and opened, their contents checked with the greatest care, then repacked according to a standard method, and put in sealed mail-bags.

Despatch through the post was both uncertain and difficult. The considerable increase in the number of PW in Germany brought about such an influx of letters, parcels, and receipts that the postal censors and distribution departments were often overwhelmed with work. Consignments were held up at some points in transit, and were liable to arrive at their destination several months later, or not at all. It transpired that from 60 to 70 per cent of personal parcels were lost in transit. The postal authorities declined all responsibility, since post-free carriage excluded parcels from registration. Searches by the Committee were therefore confined to enquiries in the camps. The temporary or final suspension of rail transport in different countries further complicated the situation.

Crated individual parcels accompanied by nominal lists and despatched by rail were more certain of arrival, but distribution difficulties such as deaths, transfers and releases remained.

*Collective Relief Supplies* therefore represented the most effective means of helping PW. Whilst avoiding the disadvantages of the individual relief system, these supplies provided the material additions necessary to the food and clothing allotted by the Detaining Authorities under Arts. 11 and 12 of the Convention. In all the occupied or belligerent countries of Europe, the food situation became worse from 1942 onwards, and this additional food was in many cases indispensable ; the needs of prisoners could indeed be met only by consignments of this type. The National Red Cross Societies sent the Committee collective gifts, usually from oversea sources, at regular intervals. The Committee allocated these gifts in accordance with the instructions received, on the basis of strengths supplied by the camps ; they were then equitably distributed within the camps to PW of the same nationality, according to the scale fixed by the donors. Strict supervision was exercised by camp leaders and camp authorities. The delegates of the ICRC, on their periodical visits, also confirmed the safe arrival of gifts.

This system of forwarding supplies also afforded a higher degree of safety, and the percentage of parcels found missing on unloading was usually very low. Camp leaders had stocks available to meet all contingencies, such as losses, thefts, or the unexpected arrival of new prisoners. In the last case the Committee adjusted its shipments to the new camp strength notified, and replaced the parcels drawn from the camp reserve stocks. The Committee could also send a consignment at short notice, from the stocks held in its warehouses in Switzerland. The undoubted advantages of collective consignments were emphasized by the Committee whenever a new relief scheme was being planned by a National Red Cross Society. When the problem arose of food supplies for Italian PW and military internees in Germany, the Committee again drew attention to the difficulties in the way of a distribution of individual

parcels : a real improvement for food and clothing of these internees could only derive from a fair allotment of collective parcels.

Most National Red Cross Societies adopted the collective relief system, and seemed convinced that standard parcels and bulk consignments were most suitable.

On November 7, 1940, in response to a request from the Committee, the British authorities gave their consent for the despatch of collective relief supplies from overseas. They hoped that this method would offer better safeguards and have better results in general than individual relief supplies. Six months later, they openly stated their preference for collective parcels. Personal parcels were, however, still only discouraged, rather than prohibited.

With regard to food supplies, the American Red Cross stated in July 1942 that all orders of standard parcels for individual PW would in future be refused. Private contributions were thenceforth accepted only for the purpose of distributing parcels to PW in general, or to those of a specified nationality. Relatives and friends wishing to send relief to PW were not prevented from doing so, but they had to make up the parcels themselves and hand them to the local post-office which then despatched them. The American Red Cross thus concentrated on collective aid to American or Allied PW and internees, sending the parcels in cases to the Committee, which forwarded them to the camps for distribution by camp leaders.

The British authorities decided about the same time that food parcels should be sent through the medium of the British Red Cross, without explicit addresses, for equal distribution among all British PW.

In taking these restrictive measures in respect of individual consignments and in thus promoting a rational and practical method of sending food supplies, the British and American Red Cross Societies acted in the interest of fairness and in the desire to simplify their own task and that of the Committee. To maintain the principle of equal treatment, they decided that PW still receiving food parcels from private sources should not, during the week in which such parcels arrived, share in the

general weekly issue of standard food parcels, or their equivalent in bulk consignments.

The German authorities on several occasions pointed out the difficulties of censorship and checking involved in the delivery of individual parcels to the camps. They decided to regulate these consignments by laying down that they must be packed in cases or mail-bags. Both cases and bags were addressed to the camp leader, who issued the parcels according to the nominal lists attached.

Some relief organizations, whilst recognizing the drawbacks of individual consignments, thought it their duty to conform to the wishes of a great many donors and continued to send supplies in this form until almost the end of the war. Large numbers of individual parcels therefore continued to arrive from the Belgian Congo, North Africa and French West Africa. They were intended for colonials, former colonials or other prisoners indicated by name. The French Government, the Brazilian and the Polish Red Cross Societies also sent this type of parcel. The Belgian Red Cross, in September 1944, adopted the advice of the Committee, as they considered that the system of individual parcels no longer conformed to the general conditions of the war. It scarcely seemed fair that a small number of PW should receive parcels individually, while so many others did not, and while the increasing transport difficulties prevented a normal collective supply.

The suspension of direct postal traffic with Germany in 1945 and the difficulties met with by the Swiss Postal Administration in finding rolling stock brought the despatch of individual parcels to an end.

The German and Italian Red Cross Societies sent both personal and standard parcels. Recognizing the force of the Committee's view, they agreed that perishable goods and articles without personal value for PW or civilian internees who had been repatriated or released, or who had died, should be handed over to camp leaders for distribution to sick or needy prisoners of the same nationality. An exception was made for strictly personal effects and for objects of value which had in all cases to be returned to the senders. The Committee gave

its formal approval to this rule, which was to be applied on a basis of reciprocity to parcels for prisoners and internees of all nationalities. The Committee's delegations in Canada, the Belgian Congo, Australia, British India and the United States were asked to take measures accordingly.

Although the collective parcel, a form of generalized relief which became part of the routine of the camps, never had the same personal value for the recipients as the individual parcel, it must be recognized that the standard five-kilogram collective parcel, the corner stone of relief work, played a vital part in the food supply of the PW and civilian internees. Collective relief was in fact one of the most important Red Cross achievements during the last war. The parcels, a gift from the community to the community, were distributed during the final phase of the war in the assembly centres and on the roads in Germany, and saved thousands of lives, without any distinction of nationality.

## § 2. DESPATCH AND RECEIPT OF GIFT RELIEF SUPPLIES

In 1940, relief schemes for PW and civilian internees took on regular proportions and entailed the movement of considerable amounts of foodstuffs, clothing, medical supplies and articles of all kinds. As the peacetime staff and resources of relief organizations were not equal to the extra work involved, the National Red Cross Societies were obliged to take on new personnel and to raise the funds required for war-time tasks. Some of them had the advice and aid of their Governments and received grants in cash and in kind from the Ministries responsible for food and supplies.

In some countries, the State, by its contribution to the work of the National Red Cross, was able to exercise a fairly considerable influence upon its activities. In others, the Societies had more independence, especially when they were able to collect large funds from the public and the prisoners' relatives.

In both instances, the work of the International Committee was usually the same, varying only in the way it was carried

out. When the Government was the principal source of relief, the Committee had to give an account of its use of funds both to the Government and to the National Red Cross.

The work of the Committee was easier when only one important donor was concerned, than when it had to negotiate with several and carry out differing instructions for the use and allocation of supplies. Nevertheless, the system of small contributions proved useful for filling in the gaps in standardized schemes which did not provide for war-victims who had no clearly defined status. The major donors, in fact, nearly always specified the recipients, both by their nationality and category ; on the other hand, private donors and small committees left the ICRC free to distribute the money or parcels as it thought proper. Standard consignments were, however, the most numerous and formed the greater part of contributions from overseas.

### *Packing and Marking*

Relief supplies from overseas, which were sometimes six months on the way, required strong, compact and airtight packing. From the beginning, the ICRC, acting on information from the camp leaders, advised senders to make up parcels of uniform weight, size and packing, able to withstand handling in transit and in warehouses. The best packing was done by the Canadian Red Cross, whose parcels were sheathed in stout cardboard and packed in lots of 8 or 16 in plywood packing-cases. With the donors' consent, the Committee forwarded the cartons only to Germany and used the packing-cases to recondition other consignments arriving damaged in Switzerland. Some parcels sent from overseas, in particular from the Near East, were sewn up in stout canvas, which proved quite satisfactory. Light wooden boxes were not strong enough. The packing of parcels from the European countries and North Africa was handicapped by the shortage of the requisite material, and the percentage of losses was higher than for those from overseas, although not so high as for family parcels ; these were often badly packed, in spite of appeals made to the public by National Red Cross Societies at the Committee's request.

In 1942, it became urgently necessary to recover the packing material used in consignments to Germany. The Committee obtained the German authorities' undertaking to return packing material from the French Red Cross within France and from the Belgian Red Cross, to the country of origin, and to send material from overseas back to Geneva. Orders to this effect from the German military authorities to camp commandants were only partly carried out, especially when there was a shortage of rolling stock. A few wagon-loads of packing material were, however, sent back at regular intervals from Germany, from 1942 to 1944. Moreover, the German Red Cross was authorized to use Canadian Red Cross packing material for parcels sent to German prisoners in Canada for occasional consignments; these parcels arrived satisfactorily.

The question of marking parcels was an important one from the outset. The quantity and varied nature of relief supplies coming from all parts, the diversity of the donor organizations, and the vast numbers of PW and civilian internees of all nationalities held in many countries made it imperative to avoid all possible confusion in marking; in spite of this, there was much criticism.

The system of *colour markings* proved itself in practice. Some cases were painted all over, others only at the corners; some simply had bands or stripes of paint, in varying numbers and patterns. Sometimes only the labels on parcels and bales were of different colours. Inscriptions and special symbols for each nationality were also used.

Markings in fact had to be of all descriptions; besides varying with the country of origin, they differed sometimes according to the donor organizations of these countries, the contents of parcels, the nationality of the consignees and their status as PW or civilian internees.

After repeated efforts during the years 1941 to 1943, the Committee secured the senders' agreement to use a clearly defined and simple system. This was a code corresponding to that used for the Watson Business Machine statistics, by which donors were given monthly returns for the distribution made. Prisoners of each nationality were indicated by not more than

two letters,—for instance, AM (American), BE (Belgian), FR (French), G (Greek), followed by a reference number of one to three figures.

### *Reference to Donors*

The donors wished their names to appear on parcels, labels and receipts, so that the recipients should be aware of their origin.

There were two types of sender whose names could at all times be shown : the private donor, and the National Red Cross Society established in its own country.

Organizations that were not recognized by one of the belligerent parties, such as Red Cross Societies in exile and relief organizations whose names showed their connection with a belligerent State, could not be mentioned. The German and Italian authorities, in particular, feared the propaganda effect of the influx of supplies from overseas. The German authorities invoked Art. 78 of the Convention in this respect, which lays down that prisoners may receive supplies from societies " regularly constituted under the laws of their country ". From this they argued that Red Cross Societies set up in exile abroad had no authority to appear as donors on the shipping documents. The Committee informed all Allied donors of these terms stipulated by the other side. There were three ways of overcoming the difficulty : (1) gifts of which the true origin could not be given were termed gifts of the Red Cross Society " of the donor's country of domicile " ; (2) gifts sent " through the medium " of that Society ; (3) gifts sent " through the medium of the ICRC ", if it was not expedient to mention any particular country.

The Committee was able to satisfy itself that these restrictive measures did not prevent the prisoners being informed, in one way or another, of the true origin of the gifts and the work in general of Governments and Red Cross Societies in exile.

### *Grading of supplies by Nationality*

#### *(a) American PW and Civilian Internees.*

As early as November 1941, before the United States came into the war, the American Red Cross had shown considerable activity in behalf of Allied nationals. The Society sold several lots of standard parcels to the ICRC ; up to the United States' entry into the war, these parcels were re-sold to Swiss donors.

After the 1940 campaign, which led to the setting up of Allied Governments and Red Cross Societies in exile and the formation of Allied relief committees in the United States, the American Red Cross provided standard parcels for Belgian, Dutch, French, Greek, Polish and Yugoslav nationals, in conformity with financial agreements concluded by the Governments, the Red Cross Societies and other organizations of these countries with the American Red Cross and the U.S. Government. Thus the vast " Lease and Lend " scheme covered bulk deliveries of relief in foodstuffs, clothing, medicaments and other articles for Allied prisoners in Europe.

Guided by its own experience and that gained by the British Red Cross with its standard parcels, introduced in 1940, the American Red Cross went about its plans in a methodical way. Large quantities were despatched, indicated by number and subdivided into numbered sections. Distribution was made according to code letters and in conformity with the general ruling that PW and civilian internees of American nationality should have priority. Thus, assuming the ICRC had 300,000 standard food parcels available in Switzerland, then according to the general instructions, it issued, in the first place, one parcel a week to each American PW or civilian internee ; thereafter, it referred to the code letters for allocation to French, Dutch and other PW. Excellent results were obtained by this system, which enabled regular supplies to be made to Allied PW ; interruptions were only temporary, during the major transport crises or shipping hold-ups, or when vessels were lost.

Food parcels were of four principal types : (1) the standard parcel, (2) the invalid parcel, (3) the medical emergency kit, and (4) the capture parcel.

(1) The standard food parcel weighed 4.5 kilograms net and contained food in tins or preservative packing ; it had a maximum food-value estimated at 10,000 to 12,000 calories.

(2) In the invalid parcels, the less easily digestible items were replaced by food suitable for tuberculosis cases, or for stomach or liver patients ; these were in particular condensed milk, water-biscuits and rice. Whereas standard parcels were issued regularly, irrespective of the recipients' state of health, invalid parcels were limited to about 5 per cent of the total strength of the camp.

(3) The distribution of first-aid kits was better assured than that of food parcels, which, as far as the Allies were concerned, depended on purchases made by the donors. At the outbreak of war, the American Red Cross accepted the scale adopted for British prisoners, that is, one first-aid kit per 1000 PW in a camp, or two kits per 100 PW in a military hospital. This proportion was found inadequate, and after April 1944, five kits per 1000 men were issued to camps. The medical officers in charge who used the kits supplied the medicaments first to American PW, but also to large numbers of Allied PW under treatment in the same camp or hospital.

(4) The "capture parcel", instituted by the American Red Cross in 1943, owed its origin to the plight of aircraft crews captured after baling out, or when their planes had been shot down. These men had no kit and their equipment (heavy boots, electrically heated overalls and flying helmets) were of no use for life in camp. Emergency relief parcels for these men were therefore indispensable. From June 1943 onwards, the American Red Cross forwarded "capture parcels" to the Committee ; these were small fibre or plastic boxes, containing a set of underclothing and articles of personal use, especially toilet articles. One parcel was issued to each man belonging to the U.S. land, sea or air forces on his arrival at his first camp.

The distribution of "capture parcels" was made easier by the fact that Allied prisoners usually passed through a "Dulag" or transit camp before being sent to a permanent camp. The capture parcels were therefore handed over to the

camp leaders of the Dulag, who issued them to all new-comers. The parcel was accompanied by an Army toilet kit.

From the autumn of 1944, the American Red Cross, in order to give some variety to standard food parcels, introduced two new types of parcel. The contents of "A" were somewhat more digestible than those of the ordinary parcels. The parcels labelled "A" included commodities of slightly better quality and were allotted in the first place to American PW.

In addition to the standard parcels, tobacco, cigarettes soap, towels, blankets, footwear, clothing and underwear were sent to prisoners. These consignments, in the form of cases or bales, usually contained one type of article, and were useful for bulk distribution in the camps. For this reason, the American Red Cross introduced a further standard parcel intended for men who were isolated, which contained the following articles :

1 cap	1 greatcoat
2 pairs underpants	2 shirts
1 pair gloves	1 pair boots
2 handkerchiefs	6 pairs socks
1 battle blouse	2 pairs trousers
1 pair shoe laces	2 undervests

(b) *British Prisoners of War.*

The British Government and Red Cross Society had decided to send relief of identical weight and quality to the citizens of Great Britain and all countries of the Commonwealth. The contents of the parcels, however, varied slightly according to the origin, religion and habits of recipients. The Red Cross Societies of the Dominions and other parts of the Commonwealth arranged with the British Red Cross to supply standard parcels of the same description.

The Committee was instructed to issue one standard food parcel a week to every British prisoner, whatever his home country ; the men also received parcels direct from home.

The British standard food parcels weighed 11 lbs English ; various types, two of which were intended for Indian prisoners, were packed in Great Britain. The five in most common use contained products that would keep for some time ; their food value made them suitable for supplementing the daily rations of the Detaining Power. The composition of these parcels was excellent and served as a model for other Red Cross Societies.

Parcels of the ordinary kind contained the following products : biscuits, chocolate, condensed milk, jam (or syrup), fish, sugar, tea, meat roll (or sausage), soap, dried eggs, dried fruit (or puddings, or creamed rice), oatmeal (or rolled oats, or pancake batter), hot meat (or corned beef), cheese, margarine or butter. Vegetables, bacon, cocoa, sweets and seasoning were only included in a few types of parcels.

Products included in parcels for Indian prisoners were as follows : atta (flour), dahl (lentils), rice, salt, fish, curry powder, margarine, condensed milk, tea, dried or tinned fruit, biscuits, chocolate, sugar, vegetables, bacon, etc.

Parcels packed in Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa were of identical weight and contents. Canada sent up to 70,000 parcels a week, whilst those from New Zealand reached the figure of 88,000.

In the interests of variety, standard parcels alternated with bulk supplies bought by the British community in the Argentine and forwarded through the Argentine Red Cross. At regular intervals, the British Red Cross, in agreement with the other Red Cross Societies of the Commonwealth, substituted one for the other. Four hundred tons of bulk supplies from the Argentine were equivalent to 20,000 standard food parcels. Supplies were likewise collected by the British Relief Committee in Brazil, and gifts or special parcels were sent by some Dominions. Thus amongst other products, the South African Red Cross sent the Committee 32 tons of sugar to the value of 1,500 South African pounds.

Unlike the American and French Red Cross, the British Red Cross did not add packets of cigarettes to the standard food parcels. Separate parcels containing a ration of 2 ounces

of tobacco and 50 cigarettes were sent each week to every British prisoner.

The British Red Cross despatched large quantities of uniforms, greatcoats, battle blouses, trousers and footwear, as well as shirts, pullovers, undervests, gloves, caps, linen, etc. The Australian Red Cross in Melbourne also supplied sheepskin coats, when the German High Command had given authority for these to be distributed in May 1944; each prisoner was to receive one. Clothing was sent at the request of camp leaders according to need. Whenever stocks of any particular article were exhausted, the Committee at once informed the British Red Cross. In addition, toilet articles and other articles in every day use were also provided.

From June 1943 onwards, the Canadian Red Cross made up capture parcels on the same model as those of the American Red Cross<sup>1</sup>.

When the war began, soap was included in food parcels, but camp leaders found that this spoilt the food and advised the Committee and the donors to pack the soap separately. From April 1, 1944 onwards, the British and Canadian Red Cross Societies made special consignments of soap, equivalent to three, and then two ounces a week for each man.

The Invalid Comforts Section of the British Red Cross reached a very high standard in preparing special parcels for the sick. There were two types of diet parcels and four kinds of medical parcels, which were sent to sick quarters attached to camp or to independent hospitals, on a scale of distribution based on camp strengths<sup>2</sup>.

The invalid parcel could replace or supplement the rations contained in the ordinary standard parcel, according to need. Some specially made-up diet parcels, as well as medical and surgical kits, were issued on the recommendation of camp and hospital medical officers.

Until September 1943, the majority of the parcels for senior medical officers were sent direct from London. They were

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<sup>1</sup> The contents are given in the Annexes.

<sup>2</sup> See Annexes.

opened by the ICRC in Geneva, who made additions to the contents as requested, from reserve stocks in Switzerland. These reserve stocks were especially useful for supplying camps newly established and for meeting cases of extreme urgency. After September 1943, however, the growing variety and size of camp populations, together with transport difficulties, led the Invalid Comforts Section to replace direct consignments by supplies sent from Switzerland.

In July 1943, the Invalid Comforts Section sent a weekly total of 17,000 special parcels. This figure was even exceeded during 1944 and 1945.

(c) *French Prisoners.*

As early as 1940, relief to French PW was characterized by the large proportion of consignments in bulk. At that juncture, about a million men had been taken prisoner, and relief had to be organized with all speed. France was short of foodstuffs and packing material, so that a scheme such as that of the British and American Red Cross could not be introduced. Collective relief, in any case, did not play so important a role for prisoners from France itself as for British PW, since as soon as postal communications were resumed between Germany and France, these men received individual parcels from their relatives. This fact compensated, to some extent, for the absence of collective consignments. The ICRC therefore sent relief supplies primarily to camps with a strength of more than 20,000 French PW. These provisions were intended for the sick, for men who were undernourished or who had no relatives, and for labour detachments where conditions were bad, owing to local circumstances, the kind of work carried out, or the attitude of the camp commandant. These bulk supplies, which at first only provided 800 grams a month for each man, gradually increased, thanks to the efforts of the whole French Empire and French donors living abroad. The ICRC gave constant information to the donors, and assisted in the necessary negotiations.

The Directorate-General for Prisoners of War, at Lyons, —the executive body for relief work—was under the direct control of the Ministry of War ; in co-operation with the French Red Cross, it was able to plan the distribution in the camps before the relief supplies were despatched. From 1941 to 1944, supplies were sent in transit through Switzerland ; the wagons were examined by the Swiss customs on arrival from Lyons. The contents and packing of the parcels were verified by the Committee's experts, who reported losses and damage to Lyons ; the wagons were thereupon sealed and sent on their way with fresh waybills to Germany. The French Red Cross and Government had some difficulty in obtaining the necessary foodstuffs for these bulk consignments <sup>1</sup>.

The relief organizations and Red Cross Societies in North Africa took their share of this relief scheme. The Directorate for PW was anxious to receive its quota of foodstuffs at regular intervals, in order to supply the " Frontstalags " in France, in which the German authorities had assembled nearly all the African PW. These shipments were however held up by transport difficulties in the Mediterranean <sup>2</sup>. On the Allied landing in North Africa in 1942 and the total occupation of France, supplies were suspended until the autumn of 1944.

The French Red Cross at home and French donors overseas wished to establish a system of regular collective supplies by standard parcels, but the scheme could not be instituted in France itself until the liberation of the country. In 1942, the Free French organizations made financial arrangements with the American and British Red Cross, under which home supplies from France were supplemented by large consignments of parcels. In 1943, the rate of consignments was one parcel a month for each man ; a plan for distributing two parcels a month was only partially effective, as the first deliveries coincided with the breakdown of railway transport in Germany <sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 26 et seq..

<sup>2</sup> See p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 172.

Bulk consignments, which included some dietetic foods, were supplemented by army type medical kits, adapted for use in the camps. These kits were sent to Lyons together with the food supplies. The Committee also bought various medicaments in Switzerland, on the charge of the French Government.

Besides standard food parcels, the United States, during the second half of the war, supplied parcels of medicaments and other special relief.

The great number of French prisoners made the problem of clothing a particularly difficult one. The uniforms of these men, captured after a brief campaign, were in most cases in good condition and lasted until the beginning of 1942. The position became more strained during the winter of 1942-43, and there was a great shortage of underclothing. The German authorities, who had seized a large quantity of French uniforms, distributed some of these to the prisoners. At the same time, the Directorate-General for PW was able to meet requirements in part from supplies drawn from reserve stocks, or from the manufacturers. These sources were exhausted in 1943 and deficiencies could only be made up from overseas. It was, however, difficult to clothe 750,000 men in this way, and deliveries in bulk did not begin until the end of 1944. Conditions in Germany no longer allowed of normal distribution, so that uniforms could only be supplied to camps easily accessible from Switzerland, or via Lübeck.

(d) *Belgian, Dutch, Greek and other Allied Prisoners.*

Supplies to Belgian prisoners differed from those for the French in only two respects: (1) relief consignments from the Belgian Congo, which corresponded to those from North Africa for the French, only began towards the middle of the war and were entirely for European Belgians, there being no native prisoners from the Congo; (2) the limited number of prisoners permitted the speedier provision of parcels by the Belgian Red Cross.

The other Allied prisoners, such as the Dutch, Greeks, Norwegians, Poles and Jugoslavs, only received a steadily diminishing supply of family parcels from their own countries.

After the events of 1941-42, the flow of parcels to Greek, Norwegian, Polish and Yugoslav prisoners ceased altogether and the supply then depended chiefly on the relief organisations set up abroad to assist these men, in co-operation with the Governments in exile established in London. The organizations in the Argentine, Brazil, the British Commonwealth or the United States sent their supplies through the Red Cross Societies of those countries, or through the Egyptian Red Crescent in the case of those in Cairo. These Allied organizations and Red Cross Societies in exile negotiated agreements for the supply of foodstuffs, and later of clothing.

All these PW received British or American standard parcels at the following rates: Dutch, two a month; Greeks, three; Norwegians, four. The Belgians, Poles and Yugoslavs received, like the French, one parcel a month until 1944, and thereafter two, as far as transport allowed.

The following is a brief summary of the relief supplies distributed by the ICRC to Dutch prisoners:

(a) *Regular consignments*: two standard parcels a month to each man, from the American or British Red Cross (gifts of the Dutch Red Cross in London, or the Dutch Embassy in Washington), and about 230 British or American cigarettes monthly for each man.

(b) *Periodical consignments*: in place of regular supplies:

(1) Foodstuffs in bulk sent by the Argentine Red Cross;

(2) Equipment sent by the British Red Cross;

(3) Clothing given and forwarded by the ICRC on behalf of the Dutch Legation in Berne, at the request of camp leaders and with the consent of the Detaining Power.

This method of supply was, with some variations, adopted for all Allied prisoners other than American or British.

(e) *Italian Prisoners.*

In Italy, where a marked preference was shown for individual family parcels, the Italian Red Cross promoted a system

of despatch which, although not very systematic, was appreciated by the recipients. The number and value of parcels sent direct by post cannot be determined.

However, at the request of many prisoners, the Italian Red Cross introduced a system of standard parcels in the winter of 1942-43. The first 5,000 parcels were sent in March 1943 to prisoners in various parts of the British Commonwealth, who were sick or who had no relatives. After the events of September 1943, this scheme came to an end.

The Italian Red Cross, whose means were limited, concentrated on sending medical supplies to Italian senior medical officers, since a large proportion of the men were detained in tropical areas; here the illnesses they had contracted during the campaigns in Africa were aggravated by the climate. The treatment prescribed by the Italian medical officers often differed from that proposed by their Allied counterparts, so that urgent requests for large consignments of Italian pharmaceutical specialities had to be met.

In view of the climate, the clothing question hardly arose; moreover, the Detaining Powers provided what was required.

At the end of the war, the Italian Red Cross was reorganized and assisted the Italian prisoners in North Africa.

#### (f) *German Prisoners.*

There were but few German prisoners until the North African campaign. Up to that time, they were supplied by the Detaining Powers with all their prime necessities. After 1940, the German Red Cross arranged the despatch of family parcels and, in the early years of the war, of Christmas parcels.

From 1943 onwards, the German Red Cross called upon the Army authorities to aid in the bulk shipment of uniforms. In accordance with Army regulations, the German Government only supplied equipment to NCOs and men. Officers were given special grants (*Selbsteinkleiderzuschüsse*) to procure their own clothing; the allowance was paid to their next of kin, who had to make up the clothing parcels themselves, either from personal stocks or by private purchase. These

individual parcels were made over to the German Red Cross, which verified and despatched them.

Family parcels containing foodstuffs sent in the same way, after checking by the German Red Cross, were of two kinds :  
(a) letter parcels weighing from 250 gr. to 2 kilograms and  
(b) postal parcels of 2 to 5 kilograms.

When increasingly severe food restrictions prevented most families from making up these parcels, the German Red Cross offered standard parcels of a specified weight, each containing two kinds of food (*Typenpakete*). Those most usually sent contained cigarettes, tobacco, biscuits and toilet articles.

In the spring of 1944, the German Red Cross planned to make monthly consignments of 200 tons of collective food parcels for the 40,000 prisoners in North Africa, so that each man might receive one standard parcel a month. This scheme was especially handicapped by the lack of transport.

#### *Christmas Parcels to German and Italian Prisoners*

The Italian Red Cross sent books on art in the place of food parcels at Christmas.

In 1941, the German Red Cross, in agreement with the German Government, deposited large sums in Swiss francs with the Committee, so that the latter's delegates might buy Christmas gifts for prisoners in various parts of the British Commonwealth. The British, Australian and Canadian Governments consented to these purchases. The Committee's delegate was thus able to give each of the 2,942 officers and men held in Canada a parcel containing 100 cigarettes, chocolate, toilet articles and linen. He also handed over collective gifts to camp leaders, such as musical instruments, table mats for dining halls, razors, sports gear and so on, and a sum of money for a Christmas dinner.

In 1942, the German Red Cross and Government made similar arrangements, but on a large scale, owing to the increase in the number of prisoners.

In 1943, the German donors wished to continue the practice, but had some difficulty in obtaining, through the ICRC, the

permission to purchase goods in Allied countries. Great Britain limited the purchases and asked that they should be replaced, at least in part, by consignments in kind from Germany.

In the same year, the Australian Government found a way out of the dilemma, by consenting to the German scheme on condition that a similar plan should be carried out by the Committee's delegation in Berlin in behalf of Australian prisoners in Germany.

### *Christmas Parcels for Allied Prisoners*

All the Red Cross Societies of the Allied countries were careful to replace the standard parcels at Christmastime by parcels containing a few delicacies. Extra issues of 50 or 100 cigarettes were given to each man.

In 1942, for instance, Belgian PW received supplementary parcels from New York containing one pound of gingerbread, half a pound of fig biscuits and half a pound of raisin biscuits. Norwegian PW, in 1942 and 1943, received parcels packed by the ICRC in Switzerland, which contained 125 gr. chocolate, 250 gr. biscuits, cigarettes and, some of them, a bottle of red wine. In 1941, the ICRC obtained the belligerents' authority for the inclusion of greeting cards in Christmas parcels.

### *Prohibited articles*

The following could not be sent to PW of any nationality :  
Alcoholic beverages.

Medical personnel armlets (except for those entitled to wear them).

Certain toilet articles (toothpaste in tubes, nail-files) <sup>1</sup>.

Arms, tools and objects liable to be used for escape or sabotage (metal saws, files, screw-drivers, drawing pens, scissors, compasses, identity cards, maps, cameras, field-glasses, pocket knives, scout knives, tin openers) <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Nail-files were not confiscated in Italy.

<sup>2</sup> Germany and Italy allowed small penknives and Italy scissors.

Money, correspondence, printed matter (in parcels).

Certain forms of office equipment (multigraph apparatus, carbon paper, duplicating paper, marking ink, stencils, note books, calendars, etc.).

Certain games and sports gear: skis, metal golf clubs, referee whistles (allowed in Germany during games and taken away after use), tennis nets<sup>1</sup>, ping-pong nets, tennis balls, gymnastic rings, ropes, Indian clubs, cricket bats, boxing-gloves, football boots, dumb-bells.

Cigarette papers, cigarette holders, packets of cigarette papers<sup>2</sup>.

### *Negotiations concerning prohibited articles*

Although the ICRC had agreed with the belligerents on rules for the authorization of articles intended for PW, some articles remained in dispute throughout the war<sup>3</sup>. The ICRC had to begin negotiations anew with the Detaining Powers whenever a new type of parcel contained articles that were liable to confiscation.

In Australia, for instance, quarantine regulations proscribed the import of meat that had not been completely sterilised; some tinned meat sent by the German Red Cross was impounded in consequence. After having informed the donors of this particular regulation, the ICRC negotiated with the Australian authorities for the replacement of these goods.

Consignments of coffee from the Allied Red Cross Societies to PW in Germany and Italy also caused difficulties. Since PW in labour detachments were in contact with the population, there was a danger of illicit trading in coffee (sale or barter, and black-market dealings in preparation for escape). The Germans prohibited the despatch of coffee, but the ICRC

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<sup>1</sup> These and the following articles were only prohibited by Italy.

<sup>2</sup> On October 27, 1944, the German authorities granted permission to distribute these articles to PW in Germany, on condition that the other side took similar steps. The authorities kept the prohibition in force until March 1945, from which time they agreed to these articles being distributed, if contained in German Red Cross parcels.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 12-13.

interceded in favour of the hospitals, pointing out that coffee was issued under medical supervision and that the patients had no contact with the civil population. The German authorities then granted this request.

In 1942, the Italian authorities prohibited the issue of coffee in the camps. The ICRC, which had received large gifts of raw coffee from Brazil and Venezuela, made arrangements with the donors for the coffee to be roasted and ground in Switzerland and then sent in small quantities to all the hospitals and to the sick, on the basis of 2% of the total strength in each camp.

The same difficulties occurred with regard to chocolate, but the ICRC obtained the belligerents' approval for small quantities.

As the Convention provides for the use of tobacco in the camps, the Detaining Powers placed tobacco and cigarettes on sale in the canteens at the beginning of the war; but as early as 1941, the Germans stated their inability to do this, in view of the great influx of Allied PW. The Allied donors had therefore to supply tobacco themselves; this led to some difficulty, since certain types of packing had printed inscriptions which the German authorities regarded as propaganda. Some confiscations occurred, and the ICRC had provisionally to remove the original packing of some brands warehoused in Switzerland and to send the contents in plain bulk. In course of time the donors overseas were able to make fresh consignments in packings acceptable to the adverse party.

All large consignments of clothing required strenuous negotiations<sup>1</sup>; three instances of this may be quoted.

Whilst the Italian authorities would only allow khaki pullovers, the German authorities refused them to begin with and even placed conditions on the admission of grey pullovers; at first they also objected to brown shirts.

The Italian authorities refused to allow shoes and insisted upon Army boots. In 1942, the Germans introduced the *Bekleidungs-Soll* regulation, by which prisoners were allowed

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 36.

to possess only two articles of clothing of the same kind ; they confiscated nearly all the footwear which the men could not prove to be their own property, stored it under their own supervision and gave out wooden clogs in exchange.

The British authorities prohibited the distribution in Egypt of *Afrika-Korps* uniforms, owing to their similarity with those of the British Forces in Africa (khaki shirt and shorts).

### § 3. PURCHASE OF RELIEF SUPPLIES BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

In 1942 and 1943, the ICRC made purchases for PW and civilian internees amounting approximately to fourteen million Swiss francs.

These purchases mainly comprised foodstuffs such as vegetables, flour, tinned meat and fish, from countries other than Switzerland, especially from Hungary, Rumania, Tunisia and Portugal. Condensed milk, toilet articles and everyday articles were bought in Switzerland.

During and after 1944, general trading conditions compelled the ICRC to purchase mainly in Switzerland. The most varied commodities were bought during that particular year, including Communion wine, Passover bread, jams, soup thickening, green coffee, white flour, apples, soup cubes, Ovaltine, tunny fish, condensed milk, cheese, cigarettes, shaving tackle, tooth-brushes, tooth-paste, barber's clippers and scissors, combs, tin openers, padlocks, pens, paper bags, typewriters, sewing machines, bicycles, children's cots, feeding bottles, etc.

Two members of the Relief Division were in charge of the Purchasing Section. Purchases were, as a rule, carried out as follows :

(1) Reports from delegates on the lack of certain articles in several camps.

(2) Requests by the PW or internees, communicated to the Geneva representatives of the Red Cross Societies concerned.

(3) If these representatives agreed, instructions were given to the Purchasing Section to draft a provisional buying scheme.

(4) Call for tenders and rendering of an estimate by the Section.

(5) Submission of the estimate to the donors' representatives.

(6) If the estimate was accepted, allocation to the Section of funds not exceeding the estimate.

(7) Request to the suppliers for details on conditions of purchase, customs classification, gross and net weights, and packing methods.

(8) Application for export permits to the Import and Export Section of the Federal Department for Commerce in Berne, with a statement of the method of financing the purchases (origin of gifts, etc.).

(9) In the case of rationed goods, simultaneous application to the Commodity Section and the Rationing Section of the Federal Wartime Office.

(10) On receipt of the export permits, placing of the order with the suppliers.

(11) On delivery of the goods, verification of quality and quantity.

These eleven points merely outline the procedure. The operation was, in point of fact, subject to many difficulties, the greatest of which was the increasing scarcity of goods. Few firms were in a position to deliver goods in the large quantities required.

In most cases, offers were not firm and contained reserve clauses on price increases. A great many suppliers, apprehensive of exhausting their stocks and of being unable to satisfy their usual customers, preferred not to quote for orders from the Committee. At the same time, the shortage of packing material grew; the strict rationing of paper and cardboard delayed, and sometimes even prevented, the delivery of articles already ordered, or available. Assembling and packing in the Committee's warehouses would have been both complicated and costly; firms able to carry out this work under expert supervision, according to instructions from Geneva, had therefore to be found.

Export regulations in Switzerland were another source of difficulty. Blank export permits, which did not state the quantity or quality of the goods for export, could only rarely be obtained, so that the ICRC usually had to await a special permit before placing an order, or to make purchases conditional on the permit being granted. As a rule, suppliers refused to accept conditional orders, for fear of loss should the permit be refused. Nevertheless, despite the awkward supply position for certain goods and raw materials in Switzerland, the ICRC always met with understanding and support from the authorities, who in difficult cases made allowance for the fact that the operation served a humanitarian purpose.

For technical reasons, no export quota could be allocated to the Relief Division for certain rationed goods. However, the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross, which had quotas for these goods, shared these with the Committee in urgent cases.

In 1946 and 1947, the commodity shortage in Switzerland became more severe, and prices rose sharply. The ICRC was obliged to make purchases outside Switzerland.

The attached Annexes include a general summary of the purchases made by the Committee from January 1, 1944, to June 30, 1947.

#### § 4. THE WAREHOUSES OF THE ICRC

##### (a) *Stocks in European transshipment ports.*

###### *Southern Route*<sup>1</sup>.

Relief supplies from Great Britain, the United States, South America and Africa, intended for Allied PW, had to be unloaded at Lisbon or, with the consent of the British authorities, in another neutral European port; navicerts were only granted on this condition.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 158.

Since rail traffic from Lisbon to Geneva was very congested, slow and costly, and road transport could not be considered, the ICRC obtained authority to forward the goods by sea from Lisbon to Marseilles on neutral vessels; the supplies were then sent on to Switzerland by rail, to be stored in ICRC warehouses and then forwarded to camps.

During the whole of the war, Lisbon was the great central transshipment port. From 1940 onwards, a delegate was stationed here and for five years worked in close contact with the representatives of the National Red Cross Societies. The work of the Red Cross in Lisbon during these five years was extensive. The handling of Red Cross supplies, the negotiations both with the Portuguese authorities and the Blockade Control, made Lisbon a very animated centre of relief activities.

The following account outlines the principal duties of the delegation in Lisbon.

(1) — On receipt of the consignment advice the head delegate recorded this in the register and gave each bill of lading a number.

(2) — Before fixing the date of despatch, he applied to the Portuguese customs authorities for exemption of dues and other privileges. About ten days elapsed before the reply reached the Committee's customs agent. For consignments in transit, the delegate applied for free re-export facilities, and for exemption from export tax on purchases made in Portugal.

(3) — All consignments from overseas were covered by a British navicert, for which application had to be made to the British Consul General in Lisbon. The document was available within twenty-four hours.

(4) — The delegate forwarded the navicert, together with the application for export or re-export permit (whichever was required), made out on official stamped paper, to the Portuguese Ministry of Economic Services.

(5) — From 1941 until the end of the war, the Lisbon port authorities allowed a 90% rebate on all port dues; application had however to be made in each case for this rebate.

(6) — Application to the dock labour agencies for the unloading, warehousing and loading of goods at cost price ; this was also granted for the duration of the war.

(7) — The application to the Portuguese Ministry of Economic Services, the navicert, the original bill of lading and the cargo list were handed to the Committee's transit agent. A further time lapse of ten days was necessary before the goods could be loaded on the vessels.

(8) — On completion of loading, the accompanying documents were submitted to the delegation office for stamping and signature before being handed to the British Consul General a few hours prior to departure. The navicerts attached to the manifest were handed over at Gibraltar during inspection. All other formalities were effected by the Committee's transit agent.

To avoid loading entire cargoes for consignees of the same nationality (British mail-bags, for instance), the Lisbon delegation tried to arrange combined cargoes on the basis of the arrival dates of supplies. Cargoes were not transhipped direct from incoming to outgoing vessels ; too many cargoes arrived simultaneously and some had suffered damage owing to insufficient packing. The parcels were stored in the port warehouses ; however, these were sometimes so full that consignments had to be stacked on the quays under tarpaulins. In view of the port area and its congestion, it will readily be understood that unloading was a matter of great difficulty, and that reloading for Marseilles, which had to be effected fairly soon, was also far from easy.

Until May 1942, there was hardly ever an examination on arrival except by the customs, and goods were inspected only by the Lloyds' agent in Lisbon. The vessels sometimes reached port before the delegation had received the relevant documents ; accordingly, the delegation itself organized a checking system ; it engaged a tallyman who was present on arrival of the goods, which he then checked, sorted and warehoused. Shortages and damage were recorded and the damaged parcels repacked. Usable goods which were too damaged to undergo further

transportation were sold or distributed locally ; goods unfit for use were made over to the public refuse service. After having passed through several hands in the countries of origin, parcels were subject to two, three or sometimes four further handlings when loading and reloading were effected by barges. The same occurred at Marseilles, Toulon and Genoa, in Switzerland and finally at the camps.

The delegation sent regular fortnightly lists to the ICRC of all relief supplies arriving at Lisbon for prisoners of war ; they also sent extracts from these lists to the donor organizations.

Goods traffic in Lisbon, already considerable, greatly augmented in 1943 after the decision of the American, British, French, Belgian and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies to increase their reserve stocks of food, clothing and other articles ; the American Red Cross, in particular, set up large stocks in Switzerland.

After the opening of the port of Lisbon to Red Cross traffic (at the end of 1940), mail-bags from Great Britain were also sent there ; these were deemed not to leave the postal circuit in passing via Portugal, whether by rail or sea. The Portuguese and British postal authorities (a representative of the General Post Office was permanently stationed at Lisbon) attended to the unloading, warehousing and reloading of the bags, without calling upon the services of the ICRC delegate. On a claim being lodged by the Committee with regard to contents missing from bags, at Marseilles or Genoa, the Portuguese postal authorities gave the following account of their security measures :

(a) — From discharge at Lisbon and until reloading, British mail-bags were in the care of the Portuguese postal staff.

(b) — On delivery to the shipping companies whose vessels had been chartered by the ICRC, the mail-bags were checked singly by the representatives (1) of the postal authorities, (2) of the shipping company, (3) of the stevedores ; in case of discrepancies, the bags were recounted.

(c) — The same checkers examined the bags singly ; sacks which were torn, opened or unsealed, were removed and replaced by bags in good condition. Those which had been too badly damaged were sent to the Post Office depot for repair.

In October 1942, the first consignment of mail-bags from the Dominions and other countries reached Lisbon. The first category arrived from Great Britain on British vessels, the second from the United States by neutral ships. The cargoes were placed in the same warehouses, and checked and reconditioned in the same manner as mail from England.

The mail-bags from other countries (Belgian Congo, etc.) were the sole concern of the Portuguese postal authorities, who warehoused them on their own premises ; this was only for a very brief period, as they were given priority for re-despatch through the ICRC.

On their return to Lisbon, the vessels brought goods (mail bags, cases or bales) from the German and Italian Red Cross Societies for PW in Great Britain, India, South Africa and Uruguay. The East-West traffic could not compare with the West-East, as the number of Axis PW and civilian internees was much smaller than those of the Allies.

Consignments for the East-West route were also subject to the following formalities during transit through Portugal :

(1) — *Permission of Blockade authorities.*

No consignments could be reforwarded overseas without authority from the local blockade authorities ; application was in each case made in writing to the British Consulate-General by the delegate in Lisbon (with the exception of consignments for North Africa, for which a landcert or navicert was required). The letter of application was returned, marked " Approved ". Applications were never refused, but on some occasions the British authorities asked to be shown the arrival documents.

(2) — *Portuguese re-export permits.*

For each consignment, a separate application had to be made to the Ministry of Economic Services, stating the names

of senders, addressees and beneficiaries, the number, weight, description, contents and value of the parcels, and the form of transport contemplated (rail, ship or aeroplane). On occasion, the navicert had to be attached. Although this information was only required for statistical purposes, the authorities insisted on their punctual submission in full.

(3) — *Exemption from import and other duties.*

Although exemption of this nature was required under the 1929 Convention, to which Portugal was a signatory, the Ministry of Finance demanded an application in each particular case. In February 1944, exemption of duties was only allowed in respect of prisoners of war, and was refused outright for civilian internees. Equal treatment for these two categories of war victims, though accepted by the belligerents, was not then admitted by Portugal.

*Warehousing at Barcelona.* — With the increasing danger to maritime traffic in the Mediterranean, shipments for Marseilles had to be interrupted in the middle of May, 1944. Shortly afterwards, all sailings for the Mediterranean were stopped and goods accumulated in the Lisbon warehouses to such an extent that the delegation was compelled to hire warehouses outside the port, at great expense.

Owing to the inconvenience of warehousing goods which were mainly perishable, the ICRC advised Red Cross Societies to curtail or suspend their consignments to Lisbon, until normal dispatch to Geneva could be resumed.

At the same time, the ICRC also studied the possibility of setting up other depots in Spain and Portugal, so as to prevent, if possible, a complete stoppage of relief traffic, and to permit forwarding to Switzerland overland. These depots would have had the advantage of being easily accessible to American, British and Allied vessels. A scheme for setting up a depot at Leixoes, near Oporto, had already been drafted in 1942 ; it was again considered, but was not given effect.

In Spain, the Committee chose the port of Barcelona and the British authorities gave their approval in principle to the

despatch of goods to this port. Barcelona could be entered in all weathers by vessels of large tonnage and had the necessary equipment for loading cargoes direct into railway wagons and motor vehicles. It was less convenient for warehousing, since its limited sheds were designed to accommodate Spanish imports only, rather than goods in international traffic ; storage charges were also very high. Other warehouses could be found at cheaper rates outside the dock precincts, but their use entailed heavy carriage costs. Unloading at Barcelona started in June 1944, and the ICRC then estimated it sufficient to warehouse 20,000 tons, requiring a floor space of 60,000 sq. metres.

The Committee then apprised the Spanish Legation in Berne of their scheme for rail transport from Barcelona to Port-Bou, a small port on the Franco-Spanish frontier, and thence by motor vehicles to Geneva. The authorities gave their consent for the transport of all goods across Spain in transit, and free rail carriage from Barcelona to Port-Bou.

These warehouses remained in use until June, 1946.

*Marseilles.* — Under an agreement between the belligerent Powers, supplies for PW unloaded at Marseilles were to be immediately reloaded on railway trucks and despatched to Switzerland ; no stocking in the port was allowed, and transit could only be effected through France. This clause, to which the ICRC adhered in general, laid a great burden on the local delegation and on the dock-workers. Cargoes were mixed *en route*, parcels were found broken into or emptied during loading at Lisbon. Some packings had not withstood the journey and the contents were heaped at the bottom of the holds. Reconditioning had to be done at first in awkward circumstances, as the ICRC premises were cramped and badly equipped. On application to the port authorities, the ICRC obtained better conditions which enabled cargoes to be discharged more rapidly.

After inspection, counting, sorting and division by lots, goods were loaded in wagons. During the early months of 1942, rolling stock became scarce in Marseilles ; to meet this

difficulty, the ICRC secured fifty Swiss wagons for use as a reserve at the port. In spite of the risk of theft, it was decided to warehouse goods temporarily in the town, where adequate premises were available. The Committee even recommended that goods should be sent there, as far as storage capacity allowed, in anticipation of sea transport difficulties.

After June 1943, the use of ICRC vessels was considered for the transport between Lisbon and Marseilles of consignments from North Africa intended for PW from those areas. Some of these men were interned in occupied France, and the French Red Cross wished to send them parcels direct from Marseilles. In view of steadily increasing transport and storage difficulties in Switzerland, the ICRC decided that the goods should be sent not direct to camps, but to the warehouse it then possessed in Paris. This met with the Blockade authorities' proviso that the distribution of supplies should be supervised by the Committee's delegates. Senders were requested to mark the cases "Frontstalag", in order to distinguish them from supplies intended for prisoners in Germany.

Marseilles received relief supplies from Syria, Martinique and Guadeloupe, carried by French vessels from Casablanca. Relief supplies for North Africa or destined for Lisbon were also sent from this port.

*Toulon.* — After a few months interval, the Lisbon traffic was resumed in the autumn of 1944, but the vessels, with the exception of the *Caritas II*, could not be unloaded at Marseilles, where the docks had greatly suffered through bombardment. Vessels were sent to the harbour of Toulon, which the Allied Supreme Command had assigned for the use of the ICRC for its Mediterranean traffic. Goods arriving in this port were to be despatched only in conformity with storage space in Switzerland. Since at that time such space hardly existed, these re-shipments came to a temporary standstill. Within a short time, the only goods sent on were the relief stores urgently asked for by the camps and which the warehouses in Switzerland could no longer supply. Warehouses therefore had to be established in France. At Toulon itself, the ICRC

set up an important centre in the *Arsenal de Mer*. Goods sheds and warehouses which had been seriously damaged in air raids were allocated to it on condition that they were repaired. Whilst the repairs were being done, the Committee was allowed to use a very large warehouse in the *Arsenal de Terre*, four kilometres from Toulon. Goods were carried from the harbour to the warehouse by road.

Thanks to the help of the naval, military and civil authorities, the ICRC base at Toulon became a model establishment for the docking of the ships, and the warehousing and onward despatch of the cargoes. It included an unloading jetty 180 metres long and 18 metres wide, with a railway track, which allowed goods to be unloaded direct on to railway wagons. The warehouses, now repaired, and the new building could accommodate 9,300 tons of relief stores.

The supervision of the storehouses was maintained in the day time by the ICRC staff and the harbour personnel. During the night, a guard was kept by a patrol of harbour police consisting of 12 to 15 Senegalese riflemen.

In March 1945, the Allied authorities permitted the rail transport from Geneva to Toulon of goods from the German Red Cross, provided the total despatches did not exceed 1,000 tons a month, that storage, handling, and loading on ships at Toulon was done at the Committee's responsibility, and that the shipping space was supplied by the ICRC.

*Genoa.* — Cargoes of varying types of parcels (bulk food, clothing, footwear, blankets, etc.) and British postal parcels were unloaded at Genoa after May, 1942. These parcels from various sources and addressed to Allied PW, only passed through in transit. The permit for free transit through Italian territory had to be renewed for each shipment.

#### *Northern Route (Gothenburg-Lübeck <sup>1</sup>).*

In view of the hold-up of relief parcels in Atlantic and Mediterranean ports, due to the breakdown of traffic caused

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 163.

in its turn by the events in France in 1944, measures were taken, at the end of the summer of that year, to send to Sweden ships carrying relief supplies destined for Germany. The Swedish ships *Mangalore* and *Travancore* arrived at Gothenburg on September 6, 1944, after having called, without unloading, at Barcelona. Two days later the *Gripsholm* arrived direct from Philadelphia with a cargo of Christmas parcels for American PW, medical stores, and standard food parcels. It was difficult to accommodate the cargoes in the free port, already overflowing with goods owing to the restrictions imposed shortly before between Germany and Sweden. The supplies remained there for nearly two months, stacked in wooden sheds. The harbour administration promised the ICRC permanent storage for 12,000 tons<sup>1</sup>.

In January 1945, 30,261,000 kilograms of various goods had been received at Gothenburg; a little more than half had reached their final destination. The American PW had, for the most part, received their Christmas parcels on Christmas Eve.

At this point the shuttle service had, in its turn, to be suspended, for supplies of coal, until then obtained only with difficulty, were completely stopped. For the same reason, and also because of the scarcity of wagons, another cessation of rail transport was to be expected. This was a disquieting situation for the ICRC delegate, whose warehouses were then full<sup>2</sup>. It was possible, as an extreme measure, to build temporary wooden huts, since there was no lack of that material in Sweden, or to use as floating warehouses the numerous vessels lying idle in the harbour.

Countless improvisations resorted to during the last weeks of the war ensured the safe transport of relief to Germany<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> The possibility of storing at Malmoe, or in another Swedish port was rejected after examination.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 89 et seq. and p. 164.

(b) *Storehouses in Switzerland.*

**(Setting up and organisation of storehouses.)**

The registration, storage and distribution of the goods received, required the establishment on Swiss territory of large warehouses under customs control.

*Geneva.* — From September 1939 to the end of 1940, the sole transit agent of the ICRC was a commercial firm, which forwarded food, clothing and pharmaceutical products in its own name. For this purpose, it used its own storage premises in Geneva, in particular in the bonded stores of Rive and Cornavin.

After January 1941, the British Red Cross began regular supplies to British PW, and relief in transit for them arrived in Switzerland at an increasing rate.

Depots well suited for handling goods had to be obtained ; the bonded warehouses of Geneva, situated as they were, fulfilled these conditions. In May 1941, the ICRC came to an agreement with the *Société d'exploitation des ports-francs et des entrepôts cantonaux de Genève*. This agreement was confirmed by a convention on the existing relations between the two parties. The convention principally laid down that the *Société d'exploitation* should take delivery of all goods consigned to the ICRC, unload the wagons, sort the consignments and store them. The ICRC itself paid a monthly rent based on the stocks recorded at the end of each month, no account being taken of the actual area occupied. A lump sum payment was agreed upon for the loading and unloading of wagons. Rates were high, but they included all handling, supervision and administration expenses, and all charges for storage.

The cost of wages for the reconditioning of parcels and the actual dues charged by the Federal Railways outside the storehouses were not included in this agreement and had to be reimbursed separately.

On September 30, 1941, 8,000 tons of goods (comprising postal parcels, foodstuffs in cases and in bulk, bales of under-

wear, blankets, uniforms, cases of footwear, tobacco, etc.) occupied four-fifths of the bonded storehouses. At the same time, consignments from overseas had been notified, and others were at Lisbon and Marseilles; the space reserved at Cornavin was no longer sufficient. Furthermore, access to the Geneva warehouses could be had only by a single-track railway, which made speedy unloading of the numerous wagons impossible: these were often immobilised and could not be despatched within the usual time limits. Lastly, the administration of the warehouses was under contract to store large consignments intended for the food supply of Switzerland, and it had to limit Red Cross traffic to ten wagons a day and to a maximum warehouse content of 6,000 tons.

*Vallorbe.* — New premises therefore had to be sought. Thanks to the kindness and understanding of the Federal Railways and the Swiss Customs, storehouses at Vallorbe were brought into use in November, 1941. As a rule, wagons containing collective postal packages were sent from Marseilles direct to Vallorbe; these comprised at the time 11 lb food parcels from Great Britain, and crated parcels from the United States and Canada. After January 1942, bulk consignments were sent to Vallorbe, where the cost of handling and demurrage were much less than in Geneva. The administrative costs were also much lower, although an ICRC representative had to be detailed to organize and supervise the work. Lastly, the size of the premises and their good organization made it possible to centralise stocks and thus facilitate control and supervision.

At the beginning, the ICRC used only one goods shed and one engine shed; later, the Swiss and French sheds and the passenger buildings and platforms, which were specially adapted for the purpose, were occupied up to the last square foot (about 6,000 sq. metres, in all).

In order to provide storage for the continually increasing quantities of goods coming into Switzerland, and for the reserve of an additional four to five thousand tons that the donors intended to set up there, the ICRC arranged to hire premises

in Zurich and Basle ; on the rejection of a plan for using premises offered at Payerne by the Nestlé Company, a shed was erected at Vallorbe with an area of 3,300 sq. metres. This was a preliminary to large construction work.

In July 1942, the need for a new storehouse became evident. The Committee's warehousing facilities in Switzerland did not allow of the storage of more than three to four thousand tons of goods, equalling on an average the load of six to eight wagons a day at Cornavin and 20 at Vallorbe. As the warehouse facilities were exhausted and the distributing staff overworked, delays in the despatch of goods were inevitable.

Furthermore, the British Red Cross had already, in March 1942, expressed its intention of gradually setting up in Geneva a reserve of standard parcels ; in July 1942, it planned to keep a permanent ten weeks reserve supply, amounting to 1,500,000 parcels, and a floating four weeks reserve covering the current monthly distribution of 600,000 parcels. In June 1942, the American Red Cross had reported the despatch of 10,000 food parcels, which reserve it increased two months later to 25,000 parcels. The storing of these large consignments was a difficult problem, in view of the limited space available in the depots at Geneva and Vallorbe ; therefore, in September, the ICRC entered into negotiations with the *Conseil d'Etat* of Geneva, for the construction at Vernier (Geneva) of a shed similar to those which had been erected at Vallorbe.

*La Renfile (Geneva).* — On November 2, the ICRC agreed in principle to the construction of sheds at La Renfile. This building was raised in two portions, the first covering 3,700 sq. metres, and the second 2,600 sq. metres, the whole being calculated to take the freight of 1,200 wagons. A double railway track was laid down to serve the new buildings. It was understood that the warehouse would be managed by the ICRC, with the collaboration—which was of course indispensable—of the Customs. On May 28, 1943, the local authorities ratified these agreements and gave the ICRC possession for five years of the first shed that had been built. In 1945, the ICRC put up, at its own expense, a new building covering an area of nearly

5,000 sq. metres. On April 30, 1946, it had storage accommodation at La Renfile of about 13,500 sq. metres, with a capacity of 15,000 tons.

*Bienne.* — At the beginning of 1943, the ICRC leased part of the premises (3,000 sq. metres) belonging to a commercial undertaking at Bienne. These stores, able to take from 8,000 to 10,000 tons of goods, were provided with private sidings and a customs office; they were reserved for clothing and other articles from the American Red Cross.

*Lausanne.* — As from September 1943, the ICRC also stored clothing at Lausanne. The goods stored were subject to the same customs regulations as at Vallorbe.

*Geneva.* — The *Palais des Expositions* (Exhibition Hall) being in the centre of the town, exactly met the requirements for the systematic storage of a large quantity of packages. The ICRC was granted the use of this building as from April 1944. At that time 45,000 tons of relief stores, consisting of foodstuffs, medical supplies, clothing, sports gear, games, etc., were accumulated in the thirteen warehouses scattered throughout Switzerland. Thirty thousand tons more were expected, for which no accommodation had been found. Furthermore, the American Red Cross had announced its programme for the year 1944, involving an increase in the dispatch of goods amounting alone to 85,000 tons, of which hardly one-fifth had arrived in Europe. On its side, the British Red Cross had notified 60,000 tons on the basis of shipments in 1943, whilst the Red Cross Societies predicted 15 to 20,000 tons. On the other hand, the ICRC, which was short of rolling stock, was no longer able to forward goods at the same rate as before.

To facilitate the arrival of supplies at the *Palais des Expositions* and their despatch in complete wagon-loads, the Geneva Tramway Company established a temporary branch enabling wagons to unload inside the building. A service of lorries increased to the utmost the capacity of this warehouse, traffic reaching its peak at the end of 1944 and during 1945.

*Basle.* — At the beginning of 1944, the ICRC, which was handling about two million standard food parcels a month, hired premises in the bonded depots of Zurich, Basle and Aarau.

The bonded warehouse of Basle, which is patronised by the Chamber of Commerce of that city and controlled by the Federal authorities, offered every desirable guarantee, and its modern equipment and storage presented many advantages. It was very suitable as a transit warehouse in the distribution of goods and parcels for prisoners of war. Since this depot was regarded, from the customs point of view, as foreign territory, goods only came into contact with the customs when they left it ; while stored there, they could be unpacked, sorted and allocated free of customs supervision.

*Buchs.* — Some private firms sub-let to the Red Cross the few hundred square metres which they were not using. This was the case at the frontier station of Buchs, whence supplies left for Germany.

*Chiasso.* — In Italian Switzerland the ICRC used the depot at Chiasso, managed jointly by the Swiss Federal Railways and the Italian State Railways, and supervised by the Swiss and Italian customs. About 2,000 sq. metres were also obtained inside the bonded warehouse in this town.

*France.* — In January 1945, all depots both in French and German Switzerland were full ; they contained about 110,000 tons of supplies to a value of several hundred million Swiss francs. Stores continued to pour in, but, owing to air attacks on the German railways, it became impossible to send consignments to Germany. The ICRC then decided to set up temporary depots in France close to the Swiss frontier, for relief goods arriving day and night by lorry from the French capital and from local branches of the French Red Cross.

When hostilities ceased in Europe on May 8, 1945, the ICRC had in all parts of Switzerland 21 depots with a total area of about 75,000 sq. metres and a capacity of about 105,000 tons.

The four warehouses at Vallorbe, Bienne, La Renfile and the *Palais des Expositions* in Geneva were managed solely by the ICRC, which mainly employed its own staff and workers there. The other depots were merely rented.

By March 31, 1946, all the depots in Switzerland had been liquidated. The *Palais des Expositions* had been officially closed on March 12, and the only depot still in use in February 1947 was that at La Renfile, which took all the parcels intended for displaced persons and German PW still interned in Europe.

#### **Checking, allocation and despatch of goods.**

As a general rule, the depots were advised by Geneva headquarters of the arrival of wagons. After customs examination and checking of waybills, the wagons were unsealed and unloaded, and their contents verified in the presence of an ICRC representative and a customs official. This operation, which might at first appear of a routine nature, was complicated by the great variety of goods carried.

After they had been checked, the consignments were sorted according to class of goods and lots in bays for each nationality.

During sorting they were inspected for damage. Losses and spoilt goods were noted and a report on them was made to the information and enquiry services. Damaged parcels were reconditioned by a team of workmen, who repacked the sound goods.

The warehouses reported a fair number of damaged parcels ; damage especially resulted from faulty packing, unable to withstand long sea journeys. Parcels from the Near East, South Africa and North Africa, some of which reached Geneva in a very bad condition, were particularly liable to damage in this way.

In its desire to carry out its duties conscientiously and with due regard for the donors the ICRC endeavoured to salvage the greatest possible proportion of goods damaged *en route* ; the staff engaged in this work spared neither time nor trouble. The proportion of supplies damaged during storage in Switzerland was so insignificant that the donor societies ceased to insure against this risk.

Damaged consignments were sorted, according to contents and type of parcel, by the ICRC under the supervision of the Customs, the Health Service and the Cantonal Veterinary Service, which decided on the further use of the goods. Damaged stock was classed as follows :

- (1) — For refuse.
- (2) — For cattle-fodder and use as industrial waste.
- (3) — For immediate consumption.
- (4) — For delivery to the PW camps.

If the goods had been spoilt by sea-water or damaged through perforation of tins during packing, or through the action of vermin, they were delivered to the town refuse service, or destroyed in the presence of a Customs official.

Reconditioned goods which were unfit for human consumption, were sold, when suitable, in Switzerland as fodder for cattle. The money earned by the sale of waste was credited to the consignor, the price being fixed according to the state of the goods. As in the case of fodder, receipts for the sale of waste was paid to the account of the donor organization. Sale prices varied between 15 and 70 francs per 100 kilos.

Some of the goods, after health inspection, were declared fit for immediate consumption, and were distributed under a general import permit from the Customs to Swiss aid societies, hospitals, or to the poor. The *Cartel Romand* for Child Relief, and the Henry Dunant Centre at Geneva, attached to the Swiss Red Cross, sometimes benefited.

The Customs districts of Lausanne and Geneva were authorised to admit, duty free, foodstuffs still fit for consumption which were stored in the Geneva and Vallorbe warehouses, as long as they were intended solely for charitable distribution. The recipients were required to give written undertakings to the Customs not to sell the goods, but to use them solely for their own purposes. They then gave a receipt to the Custom which authorised the clearance.

These provisions applied in respect of Geneva, Vallorbe, and subsequently Basle, Zurich and Chiasso.

Other goods were sold under agreements between the ICRC, the Customs and the Federal Wartime Food Office. Such was the case particularly with the contents of the French family parcels warehoused at Geneva (*Palais* and Cornavin), which had to be rehabilitated before delivery to the consumer. These goods were sold to private firms, who then made arrangements with the Swiss authorities regarding the conditions of sale. The ICRC credited the donor with the proceeds. Provisions sold in Switzerland for immediate consumption, exchanged for other goods intended for export, or kept as payment for services, were subject to customs duties and the usual taxes, in accordance with a decision taken by the Swiss Customs at Berne on May 7, 1945.

The foodstuffs in damaged parcels which would bear further transport were reconditioned and sent in bulk ; they were shipped in crates, each filled as far as possible with the same type of goods, and were forwarded to PW as supplementary rations. The ICRC instructed its staff at the warehouses to use separate packings, rather than put standard parcels retrieved intact from cartons into the same cases as reconditioned supplies in bulk. Individual parcels damaged in any way could not be forwarded in that state, and were also reconditioned. Supplies unfit for consumption were taken out, and provisions which could be saved were packed in cases by type of article, thus avoiding the excessive cost of making up fresh parcels.

Clothing was rarely damaged. If in irreparable condition, it was sent to the rag merchants ; if damaged but still wearable, it was repaired and given to welfare institutions.

#### **Allocation and shipment of goods.**

After inspection, the ICRC and the Customs were advised of the arrival of the goods by means of warehouse certificates <sup>1</sup>, indicating the place of origin, the nature, number and weight of the provisions, and other essential particulars. Damage

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<sup>1</sup> See specimen in the volume of Annexes.

and shortages were recorded and confirmed in writing. The goods thus made available to the relevant services of the ICRC were easier to divide and despatch <sup>1</sup>.

On receipt of the shipping orders <sup>2</sup>, transport and customs papers, the warehouse staff loaded the wagons, in the presence of a customs inspector and an ICRC tally-man, and in exact accordance with the allocation scheme. Shipments conformed strictly to the order of arrival of the goods, those which had been delivered first leaving first. Where absolutely necessary owing to lack of storage space, arrival of large quantities of goods, requests for important shipments, or shortage of stocks, the parcels were transferred direct from the wagon on which they arrived to that on which they left. The ICRC authorised this procedure only in extremely urgent cases.

Once loading was completed, an ICRC foreman and a railway official checked the closing of the doors and windows ; the customs inspector affixed the seals and noted the number of each wagon ; the railway official then checked the seals, and fastened insecure doors and shutters with official cord. The goods then left for Germany, Italy and France.

(c) — *Warehouses abroad.*

*North Africa.* — In the last months of 1942, the ICRC opened depots at Algiers and Casablanca as assembly points for all consignments for British, Polish, Norwegian, Dutch and Belgian civilian internees, and for German PW. At Algiers, a Swiss national was appointed assistant-delegate and placed in charge of the local depot ; another Swiss resident in Casablanca served as warehouse manager in this port.

A large depot was opened at Cairo, where the Committee's delegation had to meet requests for supplies from PW and civil internees who were either in permanent camps in Egypt, or awaiting transfer to British India or the Dominions. In these countries reserve stocks were built up with regular con-

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> See specimen in the volume of Annexes.

signments from the German Red Cross. (The same applied to the United States, although the needs were not urgent, as PW were given adequate food and clothing by the authorities.)

*France.* — During the early months of German occupation, the Paris delegate proposed setting up a bonded warehouse, emphasising in support of his request the difficult situation of the detainees in assembly centres, who received quite irregularly the parcels sent to them direct from Geneva. The scheme did not become effective until March 1943, when the first consignment of 10 tons of British and American food and clothing was delivered to the Paris warehouse. This depot was reserved for ICRC consignments to PW, civil internees, detainees in minor camps, in hospital or in forced residence, to whom complete wagons of supplies could not be sent. The premises were located in a former warehouse of the French Red Cross, who gave the ICRC the free use of about 80 cubic metres. That Society also assisted the delegate by transporting supplies from the station to the warehouse, handling and despatching the goods to camps or hospitals free of charge. The Committee's expenses consisted in gratuities for the staff.

As practically no packing material was available locally, the large civilian internment camps of the Northern zone sent the empty packings of consignments from Geneva back to the Paris warehouse. The ICRC forwarded standard British, American, Indian and Egyptian food parcels, and tobacco, cigarettes, footwear and clothing to Paris. Consignments from North Africa, intended for North African PW interned in France, were sent direct from Marseilles. The stocks available on the liberation of France were distributed in accordance with instructions from the donors and the Allied Supreme Command.

*Great Britain.* — Until the autumn of 1942, the British Red Cross made store-rooms available to the ICRC, where postal parcels from the German and Italian Red Cross were stacked pending distribution. A reserve food supply was constituted against winter emergencies, but the regular relief

consignments to camps went on. The store-room reserved for the ICRC thus served as a permanent depot. The delegation provided its own staff for packing and despatch. The British Post Office were instructed to send to the depot all parcels of any size which bore no camp number. The British Red Cross also undertook all warehousing formalities, thus lightening the delegation's task.

At the beginning of 1945, the quantity of German Red Cross supplies sent to London grew to such proportions that it became difficult to find storage room. The British authorities allowed the Committee's delegation in London to open store rooms at Camp No 7, in Devonshire, which was of easy access. It was decided that the receiving, sorting, warehousing and distribution of parcels should be done by PW volunteers. In compensation for their loss of pay, the camp commandant authorized the delegation to hand an equivalent lump sum to the camp welfare funds.

*Italy*<sup>1</sup>. — During the summer of 1942, the ICRC delegate had a reserve supply of parcels at Rome, but this was soon exhausted and was not renewed.

So long as PW camps in Italy were known to the ICRC only by their numbers, without indication as to locality, relief supplies had to be addressed to the *Commando della difesa territoriale* at Milan, a military administration which acted as intermediary between the ICRC and the Italian Red Cross and the military authorities. The *Commando* both supervised and distributed supplies amongst the camps; distribution was made according to directions from the Italian Red Cross.

In accordance with an agreement with the authorities, civilian internee camps were however supplied direct from Geneva. The ICRC informed the Italian Red Cross of all its consignments, in order to ascertain, as numbers increased or decreased, what quantities were required for each particular camp; reserve stocks were thus no longer necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> See also pp. 67 et seq.

At the beginning of 1944, in view of the increasing number of requests from Allied PW and internees, and on being informed by the Rome delegation that rail consignments could not go farther than Florence, the ICRC decided to set up stocks of food and clothing in Northern Italy at their sub-delegation of Ponte San Pietro (Bergamo). The German and Italian authorities both consented to the forwarding of wagons to the new depot, conveying relief supplies for American, British, French, Yugoslav and Greek PW and internees, or *isolati*. Supplies were stored under the direct supervision of the delegate, whom the ICRC left free to effect distributions in accordance with the general conditions reigning in the country; supplies to camps, in particular, were forwarded by motor lorries.

A few months later, the ICRC shut down the Ponte San Pietro depot, as the locality was too exposed to air attacks; food and clothing were thereafter sent to Chiasso, on the Italo-Swiss frontier, for distribution in the PW camps of North Italy, and in prisons.

*Greece.* — Supplies for Allied PW, war-disabled and Greek detainees were concentrated in the depots at Athens, the Piraeus and Salonika. In 1944, the delegation held very large stocks for disabled, seriously wounded and tubercular cases. To prevent an accumulation of perishable goods, it was proposed to issue part to security detainees in prisons and concentration camps, the distribution being made under the control of the Committee's delegates, who could pay regular visits to these persons. The ICRC suggested to donors and the blockade authorities that one-fifth of the monthly consignments should be set aside for this purpose; this was agreed.

During the civil war of 1944, 24,785 Canadian food parcels stored in the "Evrotas" Mills in the Piraeus were completely destroyed.

In 1945, with the consent of the donors, parcels were distributed to homeless persons whose villages had been burnt down, and to welfare institutions.

*Yugoslavia.* — At the end of January 1944, British and American airmen from Salonika were interned in Belgrade,

pending an opportunity to transfer them to PW camps in Germany. These men usually arrived exhausted and, as they came from the South, lightly clad. The ICRC delegation in Yugoslavia on their behalf called for a stock of clothing, underwear, shoes, blankets, toilet articles and medicaments. The ICRC set up a depot in Belgrade, in the charge of their delegate, who made issues of these articles to the camps and hospitals.

In November, the Committee's delegate informed the British and American military missions with the Yugoslav liberation forces that he had in Belgrade a large stock of food parcels and clothing from British and American sources. At the request of these two missions, the major part of the reserve stores was handed to the Yugoslav Red Cross, to assist distressed Yugoslav nationals. A small stock of each article was put aside by the ICRC for needy American and British nationals residing in Yugoslavia, and for Allied ex-prisoners of war and refugees.

*Germany.* — Early in 1944, the ICRC set up a reserve stock of about 10,000 parcels, of which four-fifths were standard food parcels and the remainder medical parcels, provided equally by the American and British Red Cross Societies. These parcels were stored at the Swiss Legation in Berlin and in premises provided by Swiss nationals. From time to time thereafter the delegate received supplies for urgent and special cases, for instance, British or American PW or internees detained individually in civil prisons.

*Torgau.* — In May 1944, the British camp leader at Stalag 344, Lamsdorf, the largest British PW camp, suggested that a central distribution centre should be set up in Germany. The German authorities approved the creation of a central depot for all nationalities, for the exclusive use of the ICRC. They proposed that the depot should be at Torgau, a fortified town on the banks of the Elbe ; its central position (south-west of Berlin) would allow supplies to be sent to all the camps of the river, i.e. to about 750,000 PW. However, conditions

in the Torgau sector became too uncertain and the ICRC finally had to abandon the idea.

*Lübeck.* — On the offer of the German authorities, this port was used by the vessels on the Baltic shuttle service between Sweden and Germany, and it now became an important supply centre for the Northern camps. The Committee sent a special delegate to supervise the unloading of cargoes, and to issue supplies to PW of each nationality, as directed by the Gothenburg delegation. The goods were carried by the motor lorries with which the ICRC equipped its delegations in Germany, or by rail, whenever possible. The Lübeck depot also supplied the camps in the military regions (*Wehrkreise*) II, III, IV, VI, IX, X and XI.

*Moosburg.* — After March 1945, consignments from Switzerland were sent to Stalag VII A, at Moosburg (Bavaria). This camp could still be reached by rail, or by road, and become the central relief depot to the camps in South Germany<sup>1</sup>.

*Ravensburg.* — This place, situated north-east of Lake Constance and about ten miles from the Swiss frontier, was also an important distributing centre at this time. A well-equipped warehouse accommodated stocks which arrived by two rail routes, one from Constance, the other from Bregenz. When rail transport was impracticable, supplies were sent by road. Within a radius of some 180 miles from Ravensburg, lorries delivered supplies to PW and concentration camps; to this effect, the ICRC delegate had created a stock pool. In spite of military events, the Ravensburg centre continued after May to be of the utmost importance in supplying PW in neighbouring territory not yet occupied by the Allies, as well as those who had been released, but whose repatriation was meeting with difficulties.

*Austria.* — Similar action was taken, during the second fortnight in April, at Landeck in the Tyrol, near the Arlberg

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 92.

Pass. Columns of PW, evacuated by the German authorities from Lower and Upper Austria were moving towards the Tyrol and the Passau and Braunau regions. The ICRC ascertained that some thousands of PW were in Landeck, a camp previously attached to Stalag XVIII C at Markt-Pongau. Two block-trainloads were stocked in the village. The ICRC would have wished to take large-scale action, but its motor vehicles could only move with difficulty in this mountainous region, where roads were few and in very bad condition. By June, stocks in Landeck had all been issued and the centre was closed, since further consignments by block-train or lorry were impossible.

## 5. DISTRIBUTION BY NATIONALITY

From the beginning, the donors entrusted their individual or collective gifts to the care of the ICRC on the one essential condition that distribution to PW should be according to nationality. In some cases this rule gave rise to highly intricate problems.

### (a) — *Polish Prisoners of War*

The Detaining Powers considered as Polish PW all officers and men captured by the German forces in 1939-40. Consequently, all those who had fought under Ridz-Smigly were looked upon as Polish, including the "Volksdeutsche" (or racial Germans), and the Ruthenians and Ukrainians who had been Polish since 1918. For this reason, the ICRC was unable to inform Ukrainian and Ruthenian donors where these ethnical groups were interned or what was their camp strength, and had to ask them to allow of distribution without discrimination to all PW whom the Axis Powers designated as Polish.

After the 1939 campaign, some 400,000 men of the Polish forces managed to reach France, via the then neutral territories of Rumania and Italy. A Polish army was reconstituted in France under General Sikorski and thenceforth fought on the

Franco-German front. On the other hand, part of the many thousand Polish workers employed in France before the war, particularly as miners, had been mobilised as French nationals, whilst others joined the Sikorski army. Thus, after the 1940 campaign in France, there were three classes of Polish prisoners in Germany: (1) those captured during the Polish campaign, (2) those from the French army and (3) those who had belonged to the forces under General Sikorski.

The German military authorities decided to consider as Polish prisoners all those captured on the Eastern Front (*Ostpolen*), and as French prisoners those taken on the Western Front (*Westpolen*), regardless of the forces (French Army or Sikorski units) to which they belonged. This apparently simple measure was the source of much confusion. When the camps for French prisoners of war included small numbers of Western Poles, the French camp leader supplied them with the same commodities as his compatriots. When in large numbers, the Polish prisoners elected Polish camp leaders, who could claim part of the relief supplies intended for the French. The French authorities approved this arrangement, but the Eastern Poles, who received no parcels in 1940 and 1941, did not consider it fair that their compatriots should be given relief supplies while they had none. From 1943 and until the end of 1944, however, the Eastern Poles alone received American Red Cross standard parcels, provided by Polish welfare organizations in the USA, and the Western Poles complained in their turn to the ICRC.

On several occasions the ICRC proposed to the German authorities that they should merge *Ostpolen* and *Westpolen* in a single national group, where all Poles would be subject to the same treatment and would receive the same collective relief. The German authorities refused to revise their first general settlement and throughout the war continued to ascribe to prisoners of war the nationality of the army in which they were serving at the time of capture.

(b) — *British Prisoners of War*

The British Red Cross made no discrimination between the various nationals of the Commonwealth. Regard was had to nationality only in some cases ; for instance, the Indian PW, for whom special parcels were made up. Further, British merchant seamen, whatever their nationality, were regarded as naval personnel. As the German and Italian military authorities, for purposes of relief, ascribed to these crews the nationality of the flag under which they sailed, this decision raised no difficulties. Thus, in one camp for marine personnel, which contained 54 different nationalities, the prisoners were considered as British subjects, and all shared in collective relief.

Early in 1943, the German and Italian camps began to receive groups of PW from the " Free Forces " (units formed in exile and composed of French, Czechoslovaks, Jugoslavs, Norwegians, Greeks, and so on), who were placed with the British and American prisoners, and in whose behalf the British Red Cross gave the Committee the following information.

" For relief purposes, the following prisoners of war should be considered as British :

(1) — Those who had taken the oath of allegiance to the King, and were thereby legally part of the British armed forces. They should include :

(a) — Those who had sworn allegiance to the King only (for instance, members of the French Navy who entered the Royal Navy in 1940, the Belgian Section of the Royal Navy, and persons of various nationalities incorporated in the Forces) ;

(b) — Members of Allied national air forces, sworn in by their own State and enrolled in the Belgian and Czechoslovak Air Forces, who were also members of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve ;

(2) — Members of Allied Forces, reconstituted with British aid and under British authority, in the period since the occu-

pation of their national territory, forming the land, sea and air forces of Allied Governments temporarily established in Great Britain.

Prisoners of this last category should have the same standing as British nationals for the purpose of food and clothing supplies only in so far as they are separated by the Detaining Power from their compatriots who were taken prisoner while defending their national territory."

(c) — *French Prisoners of War*

The French authorities and Red Cross adopted the same standpoint as the British Red Cross : any man taken prisoner while fighting under the French flag was to receive the same supplies as those given to French prisoners. The only distinction was that made for Colonial troops, the majority of whom were, after approaches had been made by the ICRC, collected by the German authorities during 1942 and 1943 in "Front-stalags" in France, where the climate was more suitable. The Central Directorate for Prisoners of War at Lyons, which distributed supplies, was aware of these camps and gave them priority for material sent by the Red Cross in Algiers, the French Red Cross in Morocco and the *Fraternité de guerre* at Rabat, by donors in French West Africa, Egypt and Syria.

Besides the usual commodities, these consignments included couscous, dates, dried figs, etc., and they were usually distributed in original packing. Extra collective supplies had to be provided for French PW of colonial origin, to replace the family parcels which were regularly received by French metropolitan prisoners. The majority of families in Senegal and Morocco were unable to make up and despatch such parcels. In these cases also, the collective gifts from Africa were very useful.

The most important point in regard to distinction between French PW was that of the treatment of men belonging to the Allied Forces reconstituted by General de Gaulle, afterwards called the Army of the National Liberation Committee. The first large parties of prisoners in this category were notified

to the ICRC in 1943. The Italian authorities considered that these men formed a special category of French PW, the "Gaul-listi", whereas the German authorities informed the ICRC that they considered these prisoners as British or American. No difficulties with regard to relief supplies ensued from these conflicting views, the British authorities having agreed to send relief through the ICRC, on the same basis as to nationals of the Commonwealth, to men of the reconstituted French Forces, whether in British or Gaullist units.

(d) — *Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, Greek, Dutch and Norwegian PW*

Czechoslovak prisoners of war were of various origins :

(1) — *Volunteers in the British Forces.* Many Czechoslovak nationals were in the Royal Air Force.

(2) — *Volunteers in the American Forces.* Their exact numbers were never known, particularly as the US Forces included a great many men of Czechoslovak origin who had become American citizens.

(3) — *Volunteers in the French Army.* The Foreign Legion contained a large proportion of the foreign volunteers in the French Army.

(4) — "*Volksdeutsche*" from *Czechoslovakia.* After the annexation in 1939, these men were considered as German nationals and were mobilised in the German Forces, in particular the *Waffen-SS*. In captivity, they were given the same relief supplies as German PW.

The situation of Slovak nationals was indefinite ; some fought with and others against the Allied Forces ; their case therefore belongs to the general problem of partisans.

Czechoslovaks serving in the French, British and American forces were given relief in the same way as all other foreigners in those armies. Those belonging to reconstituted Allied troops were treated in accordance with the above-mentioned principles adopted by the British Government.

The same treatment was given to the Yugoslav, Greek, Norwegian and Dutch nationals in the French, British and American Forces.

(e) — *Other nationalities*

All armed forces in conflict comprised individuals or small groups of various nationalities ; Spanish, Portuguese, Turks, Swiss, Armenians, Egyptians, Swedes and stateless persons, who fought with the French, British, American, Italian and German forces. They were usually given the same relief as their comrades with whom they were taken prisoner. Their applications to the ICRC were particularly for individual and family parcels ; they asked to be placed in contact with donors and appealed to legations, consulates and various welfare associations.

The situation of civilian internees from South American States was also very confused, especially as a great many citizens of Colombia, Guatemala, Peru and Haiti, for instance, were of European origin and in most cases Jews from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Rumania or Poland, who had acquired the other nationalities. Here again, the main difficulty was that of individual relief.

(f) — *Hungarian, Rumanian and Bulgarian  
Prisoners of War*

In the early years of the war, the nationals of these three countries fought with the German and Italian forces (if they followed the official policy of their Governments) and remained as separate groups among Axis PW, receiving relief from their consulates or legations. On several occasions, the ICRC urged the German Red Cross to supply these prisoners, when they were isolated or in small groups.

Before the change of policy in these countries, however, some of their nationals had decided to fight on the Allied side. In these cases, the problem of their relief was similar to that of partisans of all nationalities.

It is extremely difficult to give precise details of the efforts made by the Committee to assist partisans. Aid for partisans in captivity was contingent upon their treatment by the Detaining Power. Those enlisted in the Allied Forces were considered as members of these forces. When they formed military or paramilitary associations in their own countries, they were considered, when captured by the Germans, as political prisoners. Their position in regard to relief was then the same as that of detainees in concentration camps, or in prisons under police control. They were generally unknown to the ICRC and therefore beyond assistance until the closing months of the war <sup>1</sup>.

Among internees of indefinite status there was a very large group of Italian military internees designated as "Badoglisti"; these were not, as a general rule, sent to concentration camps, but were attached to PW camps. However, they were not allowed relief in the same manner as regular combatants <sup>2</sup>.

#### § 6. ARRIVAL OF RELIEF SUPPLIES IN PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

*Germany.* — The majority of prisoners of war in Germany were held in camps dispersed over 17 sectors (*Wehrkreise*). In April 1944 there were, apart from Russian PW, 1,850,000 prisoners in all, housed in 60 camps for NCOs and men, and 25 camps for officers, with a few orderlies. In general, each camp had an administrative centre where about 10% of the prisoners and the spokesmen of each nationality were occupied. The remainder were in the numerous labour detachments of the main camp, sometimes several hundred kilometres away. The camps usually included an infirmary and one or several hospitals. Some of the largest camps, with several thousand prisoners, were composed of a base camp and satellite camps, called *Zweiglager*.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 73 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 68.

The German authorities tried to group prisoners by nationality, with only partial success. Some camps were set aside for members of the sea and air forces ; one of these was Stalag Luft III, near Sagan-on-Bober, in Lower Silesia, where American and British airmen, including Dominion personnel, were accommodated after the opening of the camp in 1942. In June 1944, the camp contained 12,989 airmen.

The camp leader's task of distributing relief supplies to thousands of prisoners was often overwhelming and one not always in relation to his rank and experience. Thus, a student of 26, a corporal in the French forces, acted as camp leader for 26,000 men, to whom he issued supplies during the entire war. In the largest British camp, Stalag 344, the camp leader was a warrant officer of the Regular Army, and was responsible for the supplies to 50,000 men.

At the base camps, the spokesmen had to organise the distribution of supplies to hundreds of labour detachments and to men in hospitals. Auxiliary stores of food and tobacco had to be set up to facilitate issues. Supplies to French PW were distributed by lorries furnished by the French Red Cross.

The number of men in hospital was regularly communicated to Geneva and the supplies for their use were sent to the spokesmen with directions as to the hospitals to which they should be delivered. As the strength (and even the existence) of some infirmaries and hospitals were unknown to the ICRC, bulk supplies were sent to the spokesman, who apportioned them according to the number of patients and their requirements. TB cases were, as far as possible, placed in separate hospitals. Diet being most important in the treatment of these cases, it was fortunately possible to supplement the German basic rations by issues of sugar, honey, powdered milk, fats and rice, in addition to the ordinary food parcels. Cod-liver oil from South Africa and highly vitaminised yeast preparations were also given. The British Red Cross moreover supplied each man with 6 oz. of dried bananas and rice weekly.

Particular care was taken in sending relief to PW undergoing disciplinary detention in the prisons at Torgau, Graudenz and GERMERSHEIM. They received the same treatment as German

military personnel undergoing similar punishment and were consequently permitted only to receive clothing. As their food was inadequate, the ICRC requested the German Government to allow these men to share in relief supplies ; a settlement was made in July 1944, and each detainee was thenceforth allowed to have one parcel monthly.

The spokesmen were in close contact with the ICRC delegates and could obtain advice on all questions concerning distribution, proprietary rights in supplies, etc. Their letters described their problems and, while giving useful and varied information, also made suggestions for meeting their difficulties.

Whereas the food supply problem was solved by 1942, that of clothing was more difficult. The following are a few extracts taken at random from delegates' reports on camp visits in 1942 :

" It was noticed during camp visits that the state of PW clothing was a serious matter... Mending material was everywhere short.... Garments taken as war booty or from collective consignments are withdrawn from PW who receive clothing from their next of kin... Shoes are no longer issued, even to British PW... In labour detachments the employer is supposed to provide working boots when footwear is worn out. A great many employers cannot obtain any... The French PW are still wearing the same trousers... The most acute question is that of footwear... Ninety per cent of the men in labour detachments have only one pair of socks... The spokesman states that the men have been given no blankets by the Germans. Twenty per cent have no blankets at all. Thirty-three per cent have only one blanket. Forty-seven per cent have two... For eighteen months the camp spokesman has been vainly trying to obtain new blankets in place of the old..."

The spokesmen also kept the Committee informed of their anxiety about black-market activities and the replacement of stocks destroyed by bombing. For instance, the Belgian spokesman at Stalag XI B wrote on October 11, 1943 :

" In all farm detachments the Canadian parcels for the September issue have been withdrawn ; this is an exceptional measure, and applies to all the detachments of the Stalag. It was required for the following reasons :

(1) — It is common knowledge that the food position in farm detachments is better than in many industrial detachments. The thousand Canadian food parcels recovered in September are to provide for some particularly bad industrial detachments, and to give extra rations to those who are really in need. Our thorough knowledge of the food conditions in each detachment tells us the true requirements of some of the men.

(2) — During their visit to Stalag XI B in August last, the ICRC delegates remarked that it might be well to make a distinction between farm and industrial labour detachments, as the prisoners in the former were using the contents of Canadian and American parcels for black-market purposes to an undesirable degree—a fact which has been obvious to us for some time. We followed the delegates' advice, and the disappointment shown by Detachment 1443 at the removal of the September Canadian parcels is precisely due to the fact that a large black-market is practised there".

It will be seen by this report that the camp leaders, acting sometimes on the delegates' advice, stepped in to prevent abuses. Their action resulted in the maintenance of proper discipline and prevented the detaining authorities from taking sudden and injurious decisions.

*Air bombardment.* — From 1943 onwards, conditions in the majority of camps in Germany were disrupted, or at least severely impaired, by air attacks which destroyed quantities of relief stores. The camp leaders in bombed camps applied to the ICRC for new consignments and for the replacement of indispensable stocks.

*Prohibition of camp reserves.* — This extremely important question has already been dealt with in the chapter on the general problems relating to Allied PW of all nationalities in Germany. It is impossible to quote here all the appeals from base camps and labour detachments. The prisoners were quite aware that the measure endangered their health or even, towards the end of the war when communications steadily deteriorated, their lives.

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As an illustration of life in the camps, we conclude this account with extracts from correspondence exchanged between the camp leader of Stalag X A (Schleswig) and Geneva. This camp contained over 20,000 French PW and a large number of other Allied PW. Compared to camps in Germany as a whole, it may be considered as of average standard. Relief distributions were on the whole satisfactory, although the usual difficulties were present.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (October 5, 1941).*

Owing to reorganization and a marked reduction in the number of French PW in the camp, the great majority of labour detachments still remaining are on farm work. Biscuit, formerly one of the chief necessities, is no longer in urgent demand. All surplus stocks of biscuit were formerly sent to industrial detachments, but these are now in minority. We should therefore be glad if you would reduce consignments of biscuit and all other shipments in general.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (November 13, 1941).*

All Red Cross consignments are distributed to the camp, the detachments and the hospitals. Further, in corresponding with detachments, I learn which are in greatest need and am able to give them priority.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (March 18, 1942).*

The living quarters of one detachment have been entirely destroyed by fire, and 21 French PW were unable to save any of their clothing. They now have no underclothing, and as the German replacements will not cover their losses, I have taken up their case. I should be grateful if you would bring the matter to the notice of the French authorities, so that the required articles, namely, shirts, pants, socks, pullovers and slippers may be sent.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (May 5, 1942).*

Clothing is inadequate in the camp and in most of the labour detachments. In Detachment No 605, some of the men are employed in the tanneries of a leather works. In this job, it is impossible to avoid getting one's feet wet. The works managements supplied rubber boots to twenty men, but cannot furnish more as rubber is so scarce. We should be most grateful if the ICRC could supply Detachment No 605 with about thirty pairs of rubber boots.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (July 3, 1942).*

Most wagonloads of family parcels from Lyons arrive in very poor condition ; the parcels are crushed, broken open and otherwise damaged. The cause seems to lie in rough handling during loading and *en route*. We should be glad if you would make sure that the necessary preventive steps are taken in France.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (November. 6, 1942).*

Sick prisoners in camp, and some industrial detachments badly need some milk. The French Red Cross, to whom we have already turned, has sent a quantity which is quite inadequate to meet requirements. The men fully realise the difficulties now existing in France, and for this reason I take the liberty of applying to you.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (May 18, 1943).*

Since December 1942, the Polish Legionaries have shared equally with the French in collective gifts from the Red Cross.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (June 22, 1943).*

According to instructions from you dated January 15, 1943, I have today despatched to Cornavin Station, Geneva, a wagon containing all empty packing cases recovered to date. I shall take all necessary steps to prepare a second wagon in the near future.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (August 26, 1943).*

*Bau- und Arbeitsbataillon* No 10 has sustained damage during the bombing of the Hamburg area. All their effects, including food and clothing, have been destroyed. Please send to this camp as soon as possible an extra wagonload of food and the usual clothing supplies for this emergency.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (March 15, 1944).*

We have received 200 bags of lentils sent by the French Red Cross at Beirut, for which the men are most grateful. The general receipt has already been returned to you.

*ICRC to Camp Leader (April 5, 1944).*

The first lots of parcels from Morocco are being despatched. Unlike the Algerian parcels, these parcels are from anonymous donors and are for issue by you to all French PW from North Africa under your charge.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (November 14, 1944).*

In my letter dated October 30, 1944, I informed you of the loss through bombing of 43 tons of goods intended for French PW in Hamburg.

To help their comrades, who were all in industrial detachments, the men at once emptied their stores and sent off two wagons; one of these, containing 2,116 American parcels, was despatched on November 4, and arrived the following week. Nothing is known of the second wagon. As we now have no reserves whatever, we are quite unable to provide relief supplies, either for the men at Hamburg or for the full camp strength at Stalag X A.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (November 28, 1944).*

Collective consignments: — The French in industrial detachments received one American parcel per man for October, and half a Canadian parcel per man for September. The French Red Cross sent sardines, tinned meat and fruit paste for industrial detachments. The German High Command's prohibition of food reserves is strictly applied in this camp but we have, however, managed to keep a fairly large stock of tinned foods for the sick.

*Camp Leader to ICRC (November 28, 1944).*

The last issue of American parcels took place in October. In view of the losses notified and should the present rate of arrivals continue, I cannot expect to make another issue before the end of January, 1945. Each man receives a parcel every two months; the situation at present is extremely difficult, owing to the fact that out of the 21,000 French in Stalag X A, 8,500 are employed in industry. Only rapid replacement of lost stocks will provide the men with relief supplies which, you will understand, are urgently required. Just over nine wagonloads every two months are required to ensure a supply of one parcel per man.

*ICRC to Camp Leader (January 12, 1945).*

With regard to supplies for French PW camps, large consignments have arrived which are being distributed. We have sent off from Lübeck nine wagons, each of 637 cartons of four American parcels apiece; and one wagon containing 644 cartons of four parcels each, to cover the months of September and October 1944.

We are now once again receiving food supplies from France, not in bulk as before, but in standard five-kilo parcels.

*ICRC to PW complaining about unfair distribution by his Camp Leader (March 27, 1945).*

The supply of food to PW in Germany has generally become very serious of late ; this of course has led to hitches in monthly issues. It is therefore quite possible that some detachments may not receive the supplies they expect, owing to the fact that these have not arrived at the base camps, or only after delays which may run into weeks or months.

This situation is caused by the almost total suspension of rail traffic, and we are trying to meet it by sending supplies by road. We are making every effort in the present very uncertain and changeable conditions to continue the supply of relief to PW of all nationalities.

Similar extracts could be given of correspondence exchanged with Stalag 344, the largest camp for British PW in Germany ; as early as 1943, it contained over 21,000 men. Correspondence with this camp was heavy, as the British Red Cross was able to provide a weekly parcel for each man, as well as large amounts of clothing.

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*Italy.* — Arrangements for the delivery of supplies to camps in Italy were, except for details, the same as those in Germany. The Committee's difficulties in distribution arose from military events <sup>1</sup>.

*Rumania.* — This was also true of relief supplies in Balkan countries under Axis control, where the same principles of distribution applied as in Central Europe, but where difficulties directly caused by military operations were encountered.

One instance of this was the case of the American airmen interned in Rumania in 1943. Although the numbers involved were only 810, the ICRC found the difficulties of supply about equal to those for thousands of men assembled in one camp in Germany. On Aug. 24, 1943, the Committee's delegation in Bucharest sent a telegram notifying the arrival of 110 American

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 67 et seq.

prisoners, 69 of whom were wounded ; all of them lacked the kind of clothing they would need for captivity, in face of the oncoming winter : greatcoats, shoes, warm underclothing, pullovers, gloves, socks, scarves, toilet requisites and cigarettes had to be provided. The first supplies were despatched on September 7. On September 18 the Bucharest Delegation stated that the men had been transferred to Timis, and that food supplies should be sent, since their pay was not sufficient for them to buy the extra food they needed.

On September 20 the Geneva representative of the American Red Cross granted authority to send them invalid parcels in addition to food parcels. On November 10 the ICRC informed its Bucharest delegation that a wagonload of food had been sent off to the Rumanian Red Cross. On November 19 the Committee added that the clothing was ready, but had not yet been despatched through lack of wagons. On November 22 a telegram from Bucharest reported the American prisoners' great disappointment over the absence of clothing on the wagon which arrived at Bucharest on November 9. In view of this delay, the Rumanian Red Cross lent the American prisoners 120 greatcoats, trousers, and pairs of shoes, and 240 shirts and towels, pending the arrival of supplies from Geneva. On the same day the Committee sent word that a wagonload of clothing and food had been despatched.

On December 7, the Bucharest delegate reported on his visits to the camp at Timisul de Jos and Sinaia Hospital. On behalf of the PW he asked for sports gear, games, 120 tooth-brushes and a second blanket for each man. He added that the prisoners at Timis and Brosos included five Jugoslavs and four British, who were also entitled to regular supplies, and requested the ICRC to prepare further consignments.

In May 1944, the Bucharest delegate reported a regular increase in the number of American airmen captured ; fourteen of the new arrivals were in hospital and required special relief. In April 1944, the total had increased by 145 airmen. The Committee thereupon despatched several wagonloads of relief, but rail communications with Rumania were temporarily cut during the month of August.

On September 20, 1944, American and British PW were released and repatriated. As the stocks in Bucharest could not be removed to another country the ICRC referred to the American Red Cross, who authorised the delegate to distribute the supplies jointly with the American Mission in Rumania and the Rumanian Red Cross. On March 30, 1945, one-fourth of the stocks were handed to the Russian Red Cross for distribution to Soviet wounded in Rumania, and three-quarters to the Rumanian Red Cross for sharing between the hospitals and civil population of Moldavia and Northern Transylvania.

*Occupied France.* — Relief activities for the "Frontstalags" for Colonial French, Poles and a few British airmen in occupied France and in Belgium and occupied Holland were similar to those undertaken in Germany.

*Greece.* — Activities in Greece have been described in the chapter concerning relief in the Balkans.

*Norway.* — In 1943 the ICRC were obliged to extend their activities to Norway, on being informed that detachments of Polish and Yugoslav prisoners in the hands of the German SS and until then considered as political detainees, had been "ceded" to the *Wehrmacht*, and were therefore entitled to PW status and relief supplies. There were about 1,750 Poles and 1,700 Yugoslavs in labour detachments dispersed between Egersund, in the South-East, and Narvik, in the North. The Yugoslavs had been captured while fighting with partisan units. On visiting the detachments in the summer of 1943, the delegate observed that they were short of warm underclothing, boots, uniforms and greatcoats and urgently needed food supplies. The Committee arranged with overseas donors to draw from the Yugoslav and Polish stocks received through the American Red Cross, and distributed one American food parcel a month to each man.

These men, whose state of health was particularly bad, also received rice, beans and lentils from welfare organizations in Cairo. Clothing, too, was sent, particularly to the sick and wounded in hospital. A small reserve was set up on the pre-

mises of the Norwegian Red Cross in Oslo, from which supplies could be drawn as required. A monthly ration of 210 cigarettes per man (equivalent to that of PW in Germany) was also issued to all camps, even in the extreme North.

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### *German and Italian Prisoners of War*

*Overseas.* — In general, relief supplies for German and Italian PW overseas arrived without incident or noticeable loss, but with great delay. A good many requests for relief took three to four months to reach Geneva, and some convoys travelled from four to eight months before reaching their destination. This caused considerable inconvenience, especially where perishable goods or urgently needed medicaments were expected. Accordingly, delegations were often asked to provide relief, if possible with local purchases.

As a general rule, the Allied Detaining Powers supplied sufficient quantities of food and clothing. Most Italian and German camp leaders stated that the men were not in need of foodstuffs; only vegetables and fresh fruit were occasionally lacking. Their main requirements were books, sports gear and educational matter.

*Great Britain.* — After October 1939, the ICRC had a small number of German PW in Great Britain under its care. The authorities gave their sanction and support to the establishment of a Prisoners' Welfare Committee representing the British Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., the Churches and Jewish religious organizations. This Committee supplied prisoners with daily necessities, such as tooth-brushes, tooth-paste and soap, when these could not be provided by camp canteens. It also set up dental centres and supplied medical kits and some surgical instruments. The Committee kept the ICRC informed of its work and transmitted requests to which it could not give effect.

German and Italian PW in Great Britain received the same military rations as British troops and were given used uniforms, dyed brown or green, with distinctive markings. Spare underclothing arrived fairly regularly in family parcels and German Red Cross gifts, sent through the post. A small fund held by the Committee's delegation in London and maintained by the German Red Cross was used to meet the urgent needs of the wounded or sick.

After the military operations in North Africa and Italy, several transit camps were set up in Great Britain for German PW awaiting transfer to the United States or Canada. They arrived just as they had been captured, in light uniforms, and suffered greatly from the cold. As their transit stay was not long enough for any relief scheme to be undertaken in their favour, the ICRC appealed to the Detaining Powers to improve their living conditions, and to the German Red Cross to send winter uniforms with all speed to the countries holding German military personnel.

*Canada.* — The largest PW camp in Canada was Camp 133. The following are extracts from correspondence :

*Letter from the ICRC delegation, Montreal (August 4, 1942).*

Up to June, most of the men in this camp had received no standard parcels. Parcel deliveries are very irregular, the delay in transit being from six to nine months. The contents are well chosen and of good quality. In many cases, especially during the last few months, all the tooth-paste was missing. Tooth-powder should be sent in future ; tubes are no longer allowed.

*Letter from German Camp Leader, Camp 133 (August 10, 1942).*

About 4,500 men of the Army, 500 of the Navy, and 500 of the Luftwaffe, captured in North Africa, only have tropical clothing. In view of the climate in Canada, warm clothing is urgently required.

*Letter from ICRC Delegate, Montreal to Camp Leader, Camp 133 (September 9, 1942).*

A parcel of catskins is being forwarded, for cases of rheumatism. I am unable to send elastic belts or any rubber articles (hernia belts

or surgical articles), as these are prohibited. Bolts of flannel are being sent, however, with which the camp leader can make body belts. Rubber or metal hot-water bottles are not obtainable. It takes some time to provide supplies for such a large number of men (11,000). I shall do my utmost to obtain tobacco and cigarettes. So far only three men have received parcels from home.

*Letter from the ICRC to the German Red Cross (December 14, 1942).*

A third of the parcels arrived in bad condition, some without acknowledgement slips; others had been sent first to Egypt, then to South Africa and finally to Canada. Hundreds of parcels will have to be repacked in Canada; as the contents have become mixed in the mail-bags.

A further consignment of 605 uniforms is on the way, mostly to Camp 133.

*Letter from Camp Leader, Camp 133 (March, 10, 1943).*

The Christmas gifts from the German Government and Red Cross have now all arrived; 9,900 German Red Cross parcels were distributed on January 30 to the men in the camp. All the groups working outside the camp shared in the distribution. In the name of all the men I am sending our heartfelt thanks to the German Red Cross; once again we have received a proof of our country's solicitude in our behalf.

The camp strength was, on February 12, 1945, 9 officers and 13,313 men.

Relief activities in behalf of Russian prisoners in Finland and of PW in Japanese hands are described in the chapters entitled "Conflicts in Eastern Europe" and "The Far Eastern Conflict". (Vol. I, pp. 404-514).

## § 7. ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES

During the early years of the war, the administrative expenses of relief work were advanced by the ICRC; recovery of the outlay was confined to a commission of 2% on purchases made for the donors.

By the beginning of 1942, the work became so extensive and overhead costs increased in such proportion that the ICRC was manifestly unable to meet its commitments through its regular resources. It thus became necessary to draw up a plan to cover these expenses, and an agreement to this effect was concluded between the ICRC and the national Red Cross Societies.

### *Fixing of a Levy.*

It was decided that the cost of handling the supplies (for the most part from overseas) should be borne by the National Societies, and that the ICRC should collect a levy proportionate to the tonnage handled. This levy was made either on the arrival in Switzerland of transit consignments, or at Marseilles, Toulon, Barcelona or Gothenburg, if the goods were shipped direct to those ports without passing through Switzerland.

A simple and equitable method of calculation was adopted : total overhead expenses were divided by the total weight of supplies handled, thus giving the rate per kilogram. Under the agreement, statements were to be made out annually, but for practical reasons shorter periods were preferred. The National Societies were then debited according to the rate fixed and in proportion to the supplies earmarked for PW and internees of each particular country. The same rule applied to welfare associations and private donors.

Since the British and American Red Cross Societies made it a practice to send to the ICRC large quantities of relief supplies for non-British and non-American prisoners and internees, these Societies agreed to simplify the work of accounting by paying the amounts due on the whole of their shipments, irrespective of the nationality of the recipients ; it was further agreed that the debt thus incurred in respect of these detainees would be repaid later by the Red Cross Societies concerned.

The rate of the levy, namely four centimes, charged as from January 1, 1942, was reduced to 1½ centimes during that year, through saving made in the costs and increase in the quantity handled. In 1943, the rate was two centimes.

In 1944, it was, in view of increasing costs, raised to five centimes, which exceeded the actual costs by about 2 centimes per kilogram. The levy made at this rate enabled the ICRC Treasury to build up a reserve fund. Deliveries fell in 1945, whilst costs rose, mainly owing to road shipments being substituted for railway transport and a rate of 6.35 centimes had to be charged between January 1, 1945, and June 30, 1946.

The average rate between 1942 and 1946 was 4½ centimes per kilo and was levied on a total of 380,783,385 kilograms. The yield from these charges enabled administrative costs of over 17 million Swiss francs to be met.

Difficulties in the transfer of funds owed to the ICRC created an unsatisfactory situation. On June 30, 1947, a number of National Societies still owed large sums to the ICRC for their share of the levy.

The following figures illustrate these operations :

(A). — *Supplies conveyed and administrative Costs*

Supplies conveyed (in kilograms) <sup>1</sup>

1942 . . . . .	46,152,492
1943 . . . . .	104,037,810
1944 . . . . .	132,765,282
1945 . . . . .	97,827,801
	<hr/>
	380,783,385

Administrative costs (in Swiss francs)

1942 . . . . .	520,670.50
1943 . . . . .	2,006,103.48
1944 . . . . .	3,690,974.30
1945 . . . . .	8,665,548.21
1946 . . . . .	2,309,027.13
	<hr/>
	17,192,323.62

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<sup>1</sup> 1 kilogram = 2.205 lb.

(B). — *Details of Costs (in Swiss francs)*

		Percentage of gross total
Salaries of office staff . . . .	4,754,596.64	27.07
Wages of manual workers . .	2,680,302.32	15.60
Road transport costs . . . .	2,505,073.02	14.57
Overheads in the 24 Swiss warehouses . . . . .	1,945,009.76	11.32
Erection of temporary ware- houses, purchase of furni- ture, machines, stores and cost of installation . . . .	1,691,358.15	9.84
Rent of sundry warehouses and amortisation . . . . .	1,124,494.95	6.38
Local road transport . . . .	688,154.92	4.01
Pharmaceutical Division . . .	690,864.57	4.02
Sundries (delegations, con- voying agents, etc.) . . . .	563,838.61	3.28
Sundry administrative office expenses in Switzerland and abroad (office costs, supplies, cost of missions, telephone, telegraph, lighting, heating, social insurance, etc.) . . .	1,666,444.52	9.74
Reserve fund for liquidation expenses <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	699,647.85	4.07
Gross Total . . . . .	19,009,785.31	110.10
Less : Sundry receipts <sup>2</sup> . . .	1,817,461.69	10.10
Net Expenses . . . . .	17,192,323.62	100.00

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<sup>1</sup> This Reserve Fund is intended to cover all expenses foreseen and undertaken before June 30, 1946, those incurred in the process of winding up relief activities after that date, and unforeseen expenses (disputes, litigation, delayed claims).

A statement on the use made of these funds will be supplied by the ICRC to all National Red Cross Societies as soon as the former relief activities have been wound up,

<sup>2</sup> These are the produce of the sale of temporary buildings or miscellaneous equipment, etc.

To the above expenses must be added the cost of reconditioning damaged parcels in Switzerland and repacking goods on instructions from donors. The cost of the labour and supplies required for this work could not be charged to the levy. They were therefore debited to the National Societies and other welfare agencies directly concerned.

Lastly, unloading costs at Genoa, Lisbon, Marseilles and Toulon were charged direct to the Red Cross Societies, according to the nationality of the recipients.

## § 8. INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

On the outbreak of war, the ICRC employed only two staff members to deal with relief supplies: these had hitherto been engaged in purchasing goods for the victims of the Spanish Civil War<sup>1</sup>.

This "Purchasing Section" became the "Relief Section" after a few weeks. Its work was to procure donations for PW and civilian internees, and to forward relief—which was usually done via one or more neutral countries. As international communications were still fairly satisfactory during the early months of the war, the ICRC entrusted the handling and carriage of goods to expert business firms, in particular to shipping agents. Various purchases were also made in Switzerland by the Relief Section at the request of the donors.

After the campaigns in Western Europe, applications for relief reached Geneva in steadily increasing numbers. Restrictions of all kinds, particularly in the occupied countries, required action by the ICRC on many occasions; finally, the Committee itself undertook a number of duties it had hitherto deputed to shipping agents.

The extension of these activities is illustrated by the corresponding increase in the staff of the Relief Section: whilst there were six members in 1939, they numbered fifty-two at the end of 1940. At that date, the work was allotted as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the ICRC on their work in connection with the Spanish Civil War.

The Section comprised three services : the *Collective Relief Service*, the *Individual Relief Service* and the *Pharmaceutical Service*. Two branches were added to the Collective Relief Service, the first known as the Commercial Service, which dealt with all questions pertaining to purchases, warehousing and other technical problems concerning the supplies themselves, and a service known as the Shipping Section, which specialized in distribution and despatch. These two departments took over the tasks previously performed by the shipping agents.

Whereas collective relief consignments grew continuously, the level of individual relief consignments, which were so important during the early months, soon became stationary ; in fact, with the increasing insecurity of communications in Europe, the level presently declined. Consequently, the staff of the Individual Relief Section showed no tendency to increase ; it comprised a secretariat, with a Swiss correspondence office, a foreign correspondence office, an administrative bureau and a shipping office, which maintained close contact with the Post Office.

The Pharmaceutical Service worked in close cooperation with the Joint Relief Commission, which had a qualified staff for the purchase and packing of medicaments. A separate organization for pharmaceutical supplies was justified by the need for expert staff (pharmacists and chemists).

Goods were shipped through the Relief Division. On October 1, 1942, the " Pharmaceutical Medical Control " office was reorganized as the Pharmaceutical Liaison Section. This Section also dealt with relief for British and American PW. At this time therefore two parallel bodies were in existence, the Pharmaceutical Liaison Section of the ICRC and the Pharmaceutical Section attached to the Joint Relief Commission.

At the close of 1940, three separate departments under a single management handled questions concerning relief to PW, civilian internees and populations<sup>1</sup>. At the beginning

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<sup>1</sup> This last activity was taken over by the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross upon its official inception in July 1941. (See pp. 359 et seq. and the said Commission's Report).

of 1942 the extension of relief activities to new theatres of war (Balkans, North Africa, Eastern front) raised a great many questions of principle, and the ICRC set up a managing body able to take full responsibility and to act as a board of directors. This body was the Relief Commission<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time, the Relief Section for collective shipments to PW and civilian internees of equivalent standing was made a Division, the director of which was responsible to the Relief Commission for collective relief programmes.

At the beginning of 1942 therefore, the Relief Commission had under its authority the Collective Relief Division and the Individual Relief Section. On the other hand, the Service under the Relief Division which, until June 1942, had handled technical problems of transport and communications, was transformed into an independent Division for Transport and Communications, and placed under a Transport Commission. The latter was the counterpart of the Relief Commission and worked closely with it.

The Relief Commission met according to requirements. The large number of problems in the general field of relief required a close liaison between all the Committee's departments dealing with relief<sup>2</sup> and a branch of the General Secretariat of the ICRC, attached to the Chairman of the Relief Commission, ensured that liaison.

The main relief work of the ICRC consisted in the transmission of foodstuffs, tobacco, clothing and medicaments in standard parcels or in bulk. It was decided to assign this work to the Relief Division, whereas individual relief work would remain the concern of an independent section under the Relief Commission. Likewise, intellectual aid and educational supplies were handled by an independent Section. Matters of principle

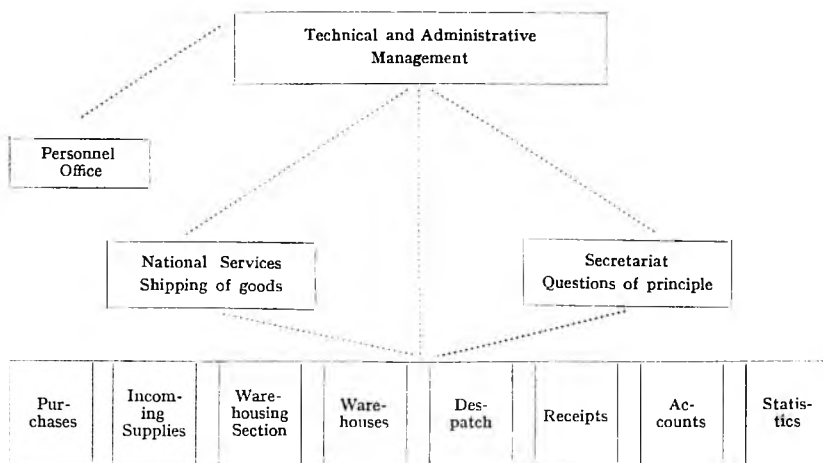
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<sup>1</sup> This Relief Commission had been active since the autumn of 1940 as an unofficial advisory body and was presided over by a member of the ICRC. Its function was then mainly to coordinate relief work for PW and civilian populations.

<sup>2</sup> Relief Division, Individual Relief Section, Pharmaceutical Section, Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross, Special Aid Division and, on the technical side, the Transport and Communications Division.

regarding pharmaceutical supplies remained the concern of the Pharmaceutical Section of the Joint Relief Commission <sup>1</sup>. At the beginning of 1944, pharmaceutical relief work grew on such a scale that it became necessary to create a Pharmaceutical Division <sup>2</sup>.

Thus, after various phases of adaptation, the final structure of the Relief Division was as follows :



### *Relief Division.*

The Relief Division, which was mainly concerned with the receipt, handling, warehousing, forwarding, inspection and administration of supplies, was, although non-profit-making, necessarily organized as an ordinary business undertaking. In the course of the war it was to become the largest private shipping concern in Europe. To perform its task efficiently, it had to engage expert business personnel. The latter were largely independent ; the Relief Division was responsible only for the technical aspect of relief work for PW and civilian

<sup>1</sup> Standardized shipments of medicaments (medical kits, etc.) were however dealt with by the Relief Division, which forwarded these parcels to PW camps according to instructions received from the donors.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 278.

internees ; all questions of principle had to be submitted to the Relief Commission.

The Division was under the charge of a *Director* and an *Assistant Director*<sup>1</sup>. They managed, coordinated, supervised and organized the work of all the sections of the Division, in all technical and administrative details.

The *Personnel Office* dealt with all matters relating to the staff, both clerical and manual, i.e. engagements, dismissals, salaries and social insurance. When relief work was at its peak, the staff comprised about 300 clerks and 400 workmen.

The *Secretariat* had to deal with all questions of principle relating to relief work ; this involved correspondence and negotiations with the civil and military authorities in Switzerland and abroad, the National Red Cross Societies and their representatives in Switzerland, and so forth.

There were six *National Sections* : American, British, French, German, Italian and Allied, the last comprising the following nationalities : Belgian, Czechoslovak, Greek, Yugoslav, Norwegian, Polish, Russian and others.

The common task of the Sections was to forward supplies, to keep an account of stocks and to make out the shipping orders. They handled in a similar fashion the supplies delivered to the Relief Division by the Purchasing Section<sup>2</sup>.

The *Incoming Supplies Service* notified the National Sections and the Warehousing Service of anticipated arrivals of supplies, announced by airborne advance copies of the bills of lading, and other documents. The National Sections could thus arrange for distribution to the PW, whilst the Warehousing Service prepared the necessary storage space. The Incoming Supplies Service made out a report of the missing goods.

The *Warehousing Service* supervised the erection and equipment of the warehouses under the management of the Relief Division, dealt with the management of the bonded warehouses, allotted incoming goods to the warehouses, and negotiated with the Swiss Customs.

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<sup>1</sup> The latter resigned as on March 1, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 225-227.

The *Shipping Office* drew up the accompanying documents for the consignments sent by the Relief Division (such as the Swiss and international way-bills), marked the railway wagons, and made out despatch notices for the spokesmen and the receipt forms which they were to sign. In addition, it maintained relations with the Swiss and foreign railways through its station representatives at Geneva, Basle, Schaffhausen, St. Margarethen, Buchs and Chiasso.

The *Receipts Office* sorted the receipts which came back from the camps, checked them and sent a copy to the donors. It had also to search for missing receipts and make out duplicates.

The *Accounts Service* calculated the costs of the Relief Division chargeable to the levy <sup>1</sup>. In view of the scale of these costs and their highly distinct character, the Service was not subordinate to the General Treasury of the ICRC; the latter acted merely as the Relief Division's banker.

The *Statistical Service* kept statistics by means of Watson Business Machine cards, on incoming and outgoing supplies <sup>2</sup>, on all aspects of the Relief Division's work and on the movement of supplies which passed through its hands <sup>3</sup>.

The organization described above was maintained until June 30, 1946. On that date the work of the various Services of the Collective Relief Division had to be separated. One of the Services dealt with the liquidation of the Division's war activities <sup>4</sup>, and another handled subsequent relief work according to an independent financing method <sup>5</sup>.

#### *Pharmaceutical Division.*

Early in 1944, the medical and pharmaceutical requirements of PW of all nationalities increased to such a degree that the Pharmaceutical Section had to be reorganized. On the basis of a scheme drawn up by the Manager of the Joint

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. II, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> See examples in the Annexes.

<sup>4</sup> See Report on the Liquidation of the Levy, submitted by the ICRC to the donors.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 10, p. 99 and Chapter 11, p. 118.

Relief Commission, the ICRC decided on March 14, 1944, to set up a Pharmaceutical Division which would be independent of the Relief Division. This new department was subsequently attached to the Medical Division, itself founded in January, 1946.

In 1942 there had been plans for a body which would frame purchasing programmes in Switzerland and solicit donations. The efforts of this body caused a large influx of supplies to the Pharmaceutical Section, composed mainly of relief in kind, in the shape of drugs which could be stocked. Consequently, the Section required a large measure of independence and freedom to take emergency action.

The nucleus of the Pharmaceutical Division was a staff of eleven members, which increased rapidly on account of the swift expansion of the work.

In August 1944, there were 24 staff members and seven packers; in January 1945, 39 staff members and ten packers; in April 1945, the staff reached its maximum with 58 employees, sixteen of whom were packers.

Through its specialized sections, the ICRC purchased medicaments and general hospital stores amounting to about 2,700,000 Swiss francs. It made up, despatched or re-forwarded, in all, medical stores weighing some 1,900,000 kilograms.

### *Intellectual Aid Service.*

The nature of these relief supplies, the fact that they could not be standardized, and the relations required with welfare agencies not affiliated to any National Red Cross Society, gave this Service an entirely distinct character.

Its constituent departments were briefly as follows:

(1) — A *Secretariat*, the managing body of the Service, which handled questions of principle, kept in touch with the other ICRC departments, in particular the Delegations, corresponded with the National Red Cross Societies and authorities, and supervised and allocated the work to be done. It also represented the ICRC on the Advisory Committee<sup>e</sup> for the supply of reading matter to PW and internees;

(2) — The *National Sections*, which received and answered requests from PW. They corresponded with the latter, as far as possible, in their own language.

These Sections were in close contact with the *Library*, the *Card-Indexes*, the *Purchasing Section* and the *Dispatch Section*. In these departments, too, work was organised according to the recipients' nationality.

The Intellectual Aid Service also comprised the following technical departments: *Storekeepers* and *Packers*, and *Postal and Railway Shipping*; the latter was in practice a subdivision of the general Shipping Service, which handled all relief transports.

Early in 1946, the National Sections for Allied nationals were entirely dissolved. The organization of the Service remained similar to its wartime structure, but the staff was soon reduced to five members only.

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## *Chapter 2*

### **Individual Relief**

Throughout the war, a separate department, the Individual Relief Service, was responsible for the despatch, transmission and receipt of the parcels addressed to individual PW. Matters which concerned both collective and individual relief consignments, such as the blockade, the purchase of supplies, land and sea transport, and distribution by camp leaders were of course dealt with simultaneously.

The present chapter describes only the problems connected with individual relief.

#### (1). — *Labels*

In order to restrict the despatch of individual parcels, especially those sent to Polish PW from occupied Poland, the German authorities introduced a system of labels. These were issued by the camp commandants to the PW, with instructions to send them to their relatives and friends for use when despatching parcels. Only parcels bearing these official labels were accepted.

After the Franco-German armistice, the French Government agreed to a similar system for next of kin parcels addressed to French PW in Germany. The number of such parcels was a rule limited to two a man each month; three were exceptionally allowed. The German authorities who, at the request of the ICRC, had ceased applying the label system to parcels

sent to Polish PW from countries other than Poland, then made the system compulsory for parcels from all countries, and later applied it in respect of all Allied prisoners except the British and American.

The next of kin of a great many PW, who lived overseas, received their official labels only after great delay. This was true for French next of kin in North Africa, Belgians in the Congo, Poles, Jugoslavs and Greeks in various continents, as well as the families of men whose home towns were in Australia, New Zealand, Latin America and South Africa. The label system, introduced to regulate the parcel traffic between neighbouring countries, became a serious obstacle when applied to oversea countries.

Having unsuccessfully opposed this system, the ICRC tried to limit its ill-effects in particular cases and instructed senders and recipients who were not clear as to the procedure. At the suggestion of the British Red Cross, the Committee requested the German authorities to allow relatives in Great Britain to send parcels to PW without special labels. This request was not met, but the German authorities agreed that parcels should be distributed, without labels, to French and Belgian PW whose families resided overseas.

In September 1942, it was rumoured that special labels were no longer required for parcels to Dutch prisoners. A decision to this effect had been made by the German military authorities in Holland, who wished to place the despatch of parcels to Dutch PW in the hands of the Netherland Red Cross, which was under their control. This decision was however repudiated by the German military authorities in Berlin in July 1943; some confusion resulted, since in certain camps the commandants had ceased issuing the labels, whilst prisoners could not receive parcels without them, and certain families had been misinformed.

A similar misapprehension occurred with regard to Polish PW, who continued to send their labels regularly to the Polish Red Cross Committee in Warsaw, although this body had been suspended by the German military authorities early in 1942.

On September 27, 1943, individual parcels to Allied PW were placed under further restrictions by the German authorities prohibiting postal communication between Polish PW and their relatives in Great Britain. This measure covered the despatch of labels and was later extended to Yugoslav prisoners. It did not however apply to Polish PW who had fought with the French forces (*Westpolen*); these, like the French PW, were still allowed to send correspondence and labels to Great Britain. The ICRC was no longer able, in these circumstances, to send on the labels received from certain categories of prisoners. They were used on the parcels which the ICRC was able to supply, although these were few in proportion to the number of requests received.

About the same time, the ICRC was informed of an illicit trade in labels in the camps. In order to distribute the few parcels then available as fairly as possible, the Committee sent a circular to camp leaders asking them to collect labels and send them to Geneva, after signing them. They also requested that the number of labels sent should not exceed 10% of the camp strength, and that priority should be given to the sick or disabled. Finally, the ICRC obtained authority to send the labels for Yugoslav PW to the British Red Cross in London, which to some extent counteracted the effects of the stoppage in direct postal communications.

Difficulties of a similar nature arose after the liberation of France, when a great many German servicemen were held in that country. The French authorities, doubtless fearing a great influx of family parcels, decided to adopt the same system of labels for individual parcels to PW in their hands. The Committee, which had never condoned the German military authorities' decision to restrict the number of parcels sent to PW, requested the French authorities to withdraw the system, and the latter agreed. When the parcel post was resumed between Germany and France, at least from the Western occupation zones, the German authorities limited exports by placing parcel consignments under the supervision of local welfare organizations in Germany; this procedure satisfied all concerned.

## (2). — *Despatch*

Individual parcels were sent by post and were of three types.

### (a) — *Parcels sent from neutral to belligerent countries.*

These were sent as soon as regulations on maximum weight, prohibited articles and packing were available<sup>1</sup>. They involved a great deal of work, as an export permit was required in each case.

By the end of 1940, exports had already been considerably reduced. Early in 1941, the ICRC for the last time obtained an extension of the export licence for individual parcels sent by relatives or friends in Switzerland; shortly afterwards, the export of foodstuffs and most articles of clothing was prohibited. Before this regulation came into force, the Committee was able to make purchases abroad and to place a reserve stock of individual parcels in its warehouses. In July, Geneva received 5,000 clothing and 5,000 food parcels from the American Red Cross. These stocks were drawn upon by donors in Switzerland who were relatives or friends of Allied prisoners, and were rapidly exhausted. Further orders for 9,000 parcels in all were placed with the American Red Cross in 1941 and 1942. In November 1942, the American Red Cross stipulated that the parcels should be sent only to Allied prisoners, excluding those from Axis States. In agreement with Allied donors, the ICRC abandoned this work at the end of 1942, when the volume of collective supplies was sufficient to ensure regular issues to nearly all Allied prisoners.

As Geneva continued to receive requests from relatives and friends in Switzerland of PW belonging to both belligerent parties, it sought, in addition to its collective relief activities, to set up reserve stocks of parcels for that purpose. Here the ICRC did work similar to that of several private organizations in Switzerland, such as the French PW Relief Committee at Berne, the French Welfare Centre at Geneva, and the Relief Committee for PW and Civilian Internees at Lausanne.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 9 et seq.

In the summer of 1943, the ICRC ordered 2,000 standard food parcels from Hungary ; on their arrival, 1,500 were handed to the department that had meanwhile begun to send relief to the concentration camps<sup>1</sup>. The remaining five hundred were at once despatched. In May 1944, 3,000 more parcels were obtained, but a subsequent order for 3,000 was never delivered, owing to military events.

Individual parcels could be exported from Egypt, and the ICRC arranged through its Cairo delegation for residents in Switzerland to order parcels for Italian, German and Japanese PW and civilian internees in Africa, Palestine and British India. Monthly lists were sent to Cairo, when the money orders had been received and checked in Geneva. The parcels despatched in 1944 and 1945 were mostly intended for Italian and German PW in North Africa ; they ceased in June 1945, when the Egyptian authorities placed a ban on such exports. Certain articles, such as watches, could only be sent individually. The ICRC got in touch with Swiss watchmakers and tried to meet requests from doctors, orderlies, chaplains, camp leaders and camp teachers. From 1942 to 1945, 250 watches were thus forwarded ; quantities of spare parts and watchmaking tools were also supplied. In addition, Braille watches were sent to the blind. The first step in this regard was taken by the British Red Cross, which ordered 126 Braille watches from Swiss makers, directing that 106 should be despatched, and that twenty should be held at Geneva for issue, when required, to Allied PW in Germany. In 1942, the ICRC also supplied 24 Braille watches to the Australian Red Cross. In October 1942, a Geneva firm presented the Committee with 72 Braille watches, for equal distribution among German, American and British PW ; 48 could not be delivered, as the Germans and Americans for whom they were intended had been repatriated. The ICRC suggested that the 24 watches destined for American PW should be handed to repatriated French PW. These watches were then distributed by the French Red Cross in Paris ; the remaining 23 watches were handed to the German Red Cross in Berlin.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 73 et seq.

(b) — *Parcels despatched between belligerent countries in transit through Switzerland.*

At the beginning of the war, the ICRC set up a transit postal service<sup>1</sup>. During the hostilities, this service handled 70,887 individual postal parcels, of which about 75% were repacked and usually reconditioned. Many of them bore inadequate, incorrect or out-dated labels; many had no labels at all. All this involved much labour.

(3). — *Sorting of individual parcels sent by post through Switzerland*

On the Italian armistice, a great many individual parcels for Allied PW in Italy were on the way. All Allied PW still in the hands of the German forces in Italy or of the Neo-Facist Republic were transferred to Germany. The Swiss postal authorities undertook to sort and assemble parcels held up in Switzerland, and to correct the addresses as soon as Geneva was notified of the transfers made. This concerned especially the parcels despatched by the General Post Office in London. The sorting and change of addresses were done at the Basle Post Office, with the assistance of a number of experts sent by the Committee. In the period until the end of 1943, only 12,414 new addresses were discovered; in February 1944, 19,636 parcels were sent, and by the end of April 73,000 had been despatched. In July, 50,000 parcels remained; as they could not be stored indefinitely, the ICRC suggested to the British Red Cross that they should be forwarded as collective consignments. The General Post Office regulations however still required that all undelivered parcels should be returned to the senders, and the British Red Cross asked the ICRC to send them back, with the exception of the small tobacco parcels. By the end of 1944, despatch figures were as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 11.

Parcels sent to PW and civilians in Germany, both as collective and individual consignments. . . . .	143,767
Parcels issued to British military internees in Swit- zerland . . . . .	9,337
Parcels returned to senders . . . . .	396
Total . . .	153,500

Throughout the war, the ICRC had to forward individual parcels coming from overseas. This form of consignment was given up by the larger donor organizations, but was continued, in particular, by foreign private organizations in Egypt, and by various committees in the East and in Africa. These donors required the assistance of the ICRC, especially in obtaining labels. Individual parcels were sent to Geneva by the Polish and Yugoslav Relief Committees in Cairo, the French Relief Fund and the French Club in Cairo, the French Red Cross in Port Said, Beyrout, Tunisia and Algeria, the Moroccan War Fellowship, the Colonial Women's Unions at Jadotville, Elisabethville and Albertville, the Kilo-Moto Gold Mine Company, and various other organizations. To forward the parcels, the ICRC had to ascertain addresses, check with the help of the Agency's card-index (on account of frequent transfers) and, above all, to act with speed. The despatch of parcels when ready was often delayed for various reasons; thus, individual parcels assembled in the Congo between December 1943 and March 1944, were held up at Lobito until January 1945, only reaching Switzerland the following month, when the forwarding of individual parcels to Germany had ceased. They were, with the donors' consent, sent to the Belgian Government, then reinstalled in Brussels, which handed the parcels to the National Ex-Servicemen's Relief Bureau.

### *Chapter 3*

#### **Intellectual Aid <sup>1</sup>**

The relief afforded by the ICRC to prisoners and internees extended also to the spiritual, educational and moral spheres. The Committee thus maintained close relations with the welfare associations concerned in this kind of work. This relief included devotional articles for all faiths (Bibles, New Testaments, prayer-books, Korans), furthermore books and periodicals of all kinds, text-books for art students, musical instruments and scores, games and sports gear, and so forth. The Committee also induced the responsible authorities to grant official recognition to the studies pursued in camps, and sought to relieve the tedium of camp life by organizing libraries and study groups. In this connection, the Committee was always careful to fall in with the initiatives taken by the Detaining Powers themselves <sup>2</sup>.

The necessary reading matter was contributed by various bodies, in particular by the National Red Cross Societies, which in turn collected books and funds for purchases in their respective countries. The donors included public and private libraries, and many private individuals made substantial contributions in money. By 1940, six important welfare organizations with headquarters in Switzerland set up in Geneva, under the chairmanship of the ICRC, an Advisory Committee for the supply of reading material to prisoners of war and internees. These organizations were :

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<sup>1</sup> Called " Intellectual Relief " during the war.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 273-280.

- (1)—The World Alliance of YMCA ;
- (2)—The International Education Bureau ;
- (3)—The European Students' Relief Fund ;
- (4)—The International Federation of Librarians' Associations ;
- (5)—The World Commission for Spiritual Aid to Prisoners of War ;
- (6)—The Swiss Catholic Mission for Prisoners of War.

In 1943, the Advisory Committee carried through a large-scale collection in Switzerland, the yield being divided between the above organizations and the International Committee's Intellectual Aid Section. A vast library adequate for the varied needs of camps and individual PW was built up at Geneva. It contained scientific and medical books, text-books for students, light reading matter and books for the blind. Geneva also sent individual book parcels made up by National Red Cross Societies and private persons living in Switzerland or abroad.

Consignments of books were selected from the stocks of the library, examined for matter unacceptable to the censorship in the detaining countries, and then dispatched post-free all over the world, either in cases or by parcels not exceeding 5 kilos. Contributions from National Red Cross Societies enabled the ICRC to buy stationery in Switzerland, which allowed the export of such articles. Artists' materials and musical instruments were supplied by the YMCA. Each consignment, whether collective or individual, included a detailed list and a receipt in duplicate, one copy of which was to be signed and returned to Geneva, where each recipient was registered on an index-card. Many tens of thousands of books, games and music scores were sent in this way, and the stationery shipments included well over a million items.

Equitable allocation of these stores was ensured by the camp leaders. Co-operation by correspondence was of course facilitated by the visits of the Committee's delegates. The PW were also allowed to apply personally to the ICRC. By the wide variety of their requests the PW gave proof of a great

need of occupation, which only reading and intellectual pursuits of every kind could satisfy. The men who experienced captivity are even better qualified than those who tried to make it bearable, to affirm that intellectual aid is an indispensable adjunct to all other forms of relief.

The ICRC and the other relief organizations aimed especially at creating libraries in every camp, and these very quickly became a valuable stimulus and a source of recreation. Those men who were unable to make personal application to the librarians received the books which were sent in travelling sets to labour detachments in the most out of the way places.

Chaplains of all faiths were able to minister freely to these communities. The ICRC passed on requests for "spiritual aid" to the religious organizations who were members of the Advisory Committee. The PW of Eastern religions were by no means forgotten; they received prayer books in such languages as Urdu, Hindustani, Bengali and Mahratti.

Arts and crafts flourished in the camps, and the ICRC supplied quantities of material to sculptors, draughtsmen, artists and decorators. In one civilian internment camp—to quote but a single example—a Fine Arts school was attended by 89 pupils, including 48 children. In a PW camp, a well-known artist arranged a course of sketching and cartoon-drawing for his fellow-prisoners.

Reference should also be made to the camp newspapers which were a link between PW of the same nationality, and sometimes also with those of other nationalities. The camp leader or his assistants contributed information of general interest for publication. For this reason the Committee included in its consignments of material for intellectual aid everything which directly or indirectly furthered the publication of such newspapers.

Dramatics and music were the favourite entertainment of prisoners and internees, and the Committee sent hundreds of scripts of comedies, one-act plays, sketches, monologues, music scores and so on<sup>1</sup>. Material for scenery, masks and

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<sup>1</sup> Musical instruments were sent mainly by the YMCA.

costumes were occasionally sent. Excellent theatrical companies were thus formed, assisted by decorators, stage-managers, carpenters, wardrobe-keepers and many other professional or extempore artisans.

Sports and indoor games were an especially valuable form of recreation, as they helped to keep the men in good health, despite conditions of captivity. The Committee sent indoor games as a rule, whilst the YMCA devoted itself more particularly to sports gear.

The blind were not forgotten ; many games, such as dominoes, chess, draughts and cards, which develop the sense of touch that is their paramount resource, were sent to them.

One can easily imagine the field thus opened to the relief organizations. The obligations of the Detaining Powers, clearly defined in the 1929 Convention, were as a rule observed. But as the war progressed and extended, these obligations grew increasingly onerous. The role of the International Committee became more definite, and as far as intellectual aid was concerned, it was clearly required to collect material, facilitate international shipments, extend Red Cross protection to the auxiliary welfare organizations duly recognized by the belligerents, and to safeguard PW property used in intellectual pursuits. In a word, the ICRC had to protect, directly and by all means approved by the belligerents, the intellectual and moral health of PW and civilian internees.

In the interests of neutrality in all intellectual, cultural and religious matters, the ICRC endeavoured to provide the reading material, cultural resources and devotional articles required by all the nationalities, languages and faiths of the captives. The common desire of the ICRC and the auxiliary welfare organizations was to ensure to each man the intellectual aid corresponding to his needs, aptitudes and convictions. A remarkable co-operative effort was thus made in the religious sphere, each organization concerned knowing the comfort and moral strength that can be found in the normal practice of religion.

## *Aid to German Prisoners.*

The German Red Cross sent books, prints, reproductions of works of art, musical instruments, gramophone records and plays to the camps in Africa, Australia, Canada, Egypt, India, the Argentine and Great Britain. The German authorities paid great attention to the education of their nationals in captivity, especially of the women and children in the civilian internment camps. The prisoners benefited very greatly by this assistance, perfecting themselves in their trades and improving their knowledge.

By the spring of 1941, questionnaires were sent to German PW camps. The leaders supplied precise details of the various professions and trades represented in the camps. These questionnaires were also issued to women internees. An examination of these documents made it possible to classify the captives according to their trade, profession and aptitudes, and to organize a proper distribution of the material for intellectual aid coming from Germany.

Prisoners and internees were sent courses of instruction in series known as *Soldatenbriefe* (Soldiers' correspondence courses). By this means, curricula were standardized, and the German Government was able to recognize these studies and the final examinations, provided, however, that the Examining Boards who sat in the camps were approved by the German Ministry of Education. Only the final university examinations could not be taken in the camps.

After the German surrender, the ICRC was confronted by all the problems of pursuing the work of assisting PW who had no Government or National Red Cross to represent their interests.

After 1940, the ICRC directed its efforts mainly to collecting relief material. It began to count more and more on the auxiliary organizations which, since the armistice, had rapidly regained their freedom of action. These organizations, particularly the YMCA, contributed in a very large measure towards the creation of study centres in the new camps.

The ICRC decided to allocate a part of the relief funds to intellectual aid. To make the donations of books as effectual

as possible it adopted the system of "General Interest". A PW teacher was sent text-books for use by the whole group of students; subscriptions for scientific, literary, artistic, technical and other reviews were paid, thus enabling all the groups to keep abreast of current events in their own subjects; documentation was collected for PW doctors.

About 1,500 standard works, weighing in all 1,330 kilos, were thus distributed by the delegations in France, North Africa, Poland, Italy, Belgium, Germany and Egypt; 435 subscriptions were paid for Swiss medical journals, which contained valuable information on medicine, pharmacy and dentistry. Subscriptions were as a rule taken out in the name of the camps or hospitals and the copies circulated. In 1947, 8,350 of these periodicals were sent out to the different countries. It was even possible to supplement the Swiss medical journals with some reviews published in Germany, which were given to the Committee's delegations at Munich and Vlotho, and in turn forwarded to Geneva. The doctors, who in many cases had been deprived of all scientific information for several years, thus learned of medical and therapeutical developments. In this way, they not only refreshed and increased their knowledge, but, above all, were able to prepare themselves for an immediate resumption of their professional duties on their return to civil life.

### *Relief for Italian Prisoners.*

In 1941, the Italian Red Cross established a stock of books in Geneva to enable the ICRC to meet the requests it received direct. As Italian PW were often interned in countries far distant from home, the ICRC suggested that its delegations be commissioned to purchase books on the spot. The Italian Red Cross, however, did not agree to this suggestion and was thereafter confronted by the blockade. Only the camps in the Middle East and South Africa seem to have had sufficient material for the purpose of study and recreation.

The Italian PW in England were provided with text-books through the YMCA. About 1,500 volumes thus passed through the ICRC delegation in London.

The Holy See and the National Catholic Welfare Conference in the United States sent the ICRC a very large number of prayer-books and religious works. Books in Italian were also collected in Switzerland and were made over to the Italian military internees in that country.

The Committee's intellectual aid to Italian prisoners and internees was on the whole limited, on account of the work done by the Italian Red Cross itself.

#### *Aid to French Prisoners.*

During the German occupation, it was decided that occupied France should organize intellectual aid for the camps in France itself, whilst the French PW camps in Germany would be helped by non-occupied France.

In the free zone, the *Centre de ramassage du livre* worked in conjunction with the official censor's office and sent its collections of books to Geneva in accordance with instructions from the French Red Cross. The Advisory Committee notified that Society of the prisoners' requirements. Consignments were also sent direct from France to Germany.

In 1941, 90% of the Advisory Committee's activities were devoted to the French prisoners. The YMCA played the most prominent part in this Committee, whilst the ICRC dealt mainly with the administrative formalities involved. The camp leaders and the French PW were in direct communication with the ICRC and kept it informed of the intellectual activities in their respective camps. This was done not merely for information purposes, but to provide supporting material for possible representations to the Detaining Power. The ICRC drew generously on its stock of French books for the French PW. These consignments increased especially in the last two years of the war. They were the more keenly appreciated as relief from France dwindled.

#### *Aid to British PW.*

The British Red Cross kept in close touch with the PW camps, and the task of the ICRC was much rather to ensure

the transmission of material sent via Geneva, than to provide intellectual aid itself.

The Indian Red Cross and the Egyptian Red Crescent contributed the religious literature required by the Hindu and Moslem prisoners.

#### *Aid to American PW.*

The Committee provided little intellectual aid to American prisoners, since, under a special arrangement, the World Alliance of the YMCA itself arranged and directed this work.

Nevertheless in organizing the prisoners' studies, religious devotions and recreations, the Committee's delegates gave the same attention to American PW as to the others.

#### *Aid to PW of other nationalities.*

The Polish, Yugoslav, Dutch, Greek and Russian PW received supplies of standard literature and text-books from the stocks built up by collections in Switzerland or donations from National Red Cross Societies. Particular help was given by the Polish Red Cross. The ICRC had some difficulty in collecting books in Russian, Serb, Greek, Dutch and Norwegian, but met a large number of requests through appeals to the auxiliary organizations and to foreign residents in Switzerland. The British Red Cross was also most generous towards PW who were not British, but were attached in any way to the British forces. They authorized the ICRC to distribute books from their stocks, in particular to men who were anxious to pursue their university studies.

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## *Chapter 4*

### **Medical Aid**

#### **§ I. MEDICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL AID**

Under Article 14 of the 1929 Convention, every camp must have an infirmary capable of supplying any form of medical attention required by the prisoners.

As far as circumstances permitted, this provision was generally observed by the belligerents. The camp infirmaries could not, however, always have adequate supplies of all medicaments or hospital equipment they needed. The ICRC then undertook to meet these shortages by suitable consignments, the allocation of which was, as usual, carried out in conformity with Red Cross principles.

#### *(A) — Allied Prisoners of War*

##### **I. Requirements**

During the first two years of the war, information reaching Geneva on the state of health of Allied PW showed that the medicaments and medical stores issued by the Detaining Power were adequate. Towards the close of 1941, however, the situation changed. The diminution of food rations, the decline in living and working conditions, and the lowering morale amongst PW all helped to sap their powers of resistance, and requests for medical stores began to multiply. Furthermore, the amount of medicaments and medical stores made available to PW diminished. Certain National Societies had,

up to the close of 1941, been able to send their PW appreciable quantities of medical stores, but now met with increasing difficulties in sending them direct ; a neutral intermediary thus became indispensable, and the ICRC was asked to assist.

Judging by the applications received from camp doctors the needs were apparently very similar in all camps for Allied prisoners. The principal shortages appeared to be in vitamin tablets, tonics, especially for cases of anaemia and heart trouble, sulphamides and, during cold weather, all forms of expectorants and resolvents. The camps also required dressings in bulk, disinfectants and insecticides and, for sick quarters, minor surgical instruments, syringes and hospital stores.

As the living conditions in German camps grew worse, applications became more urgent and numerous, and covered every branch of medicine and pharmaceuticals. Predominant among these were requests for specialities not included in standard kits, most of which came from the United States or Great Britain and were available in almost all camps. Thus, large quantities of sera and vaccines were needed for the treatment of infectious disease and sometimes for the prevention of possible epidemics, such as dysentery, typhoid, exanthematic typhus, and so on.

Although the needs were strikingly similar, some categories of PW nevertheless were particularly prone to certain diseases ; thus, tuberculosis was rife among the Jugoslavs, despite the fact that they were given the same food parcels as certain other nationalities. This was apparently due to the fact that these men were more sensitive to changes of climate. The ICRC made special efforts to supply them with the medicaments and tonics they lacked. The American PW appeared to suffer chiefly from digestive trouble (gastritis, ulcers, etc.). The requests sent to Geneva by the American doctors bore mainly on sulphamides and medicaments for the digestive system.

## **2. Collective Aid in Money**

Considerable sums were entrusted to the ICRC for the purchase of medical stores for PW of certain nationalities. They were contributed by National Red Cross Societies (in

particular the American, British, Dutch, Yugoslav and Polish Red Cross), by Governments (Belgium, France, Greece and Yugoslavia), or by various relief organizations such as the *Aide aux prisonniers et internés belges*.

Furthermore, a certain number of Red Cross Societies (in particular the American and Canadian Societies), private institutions and individuals gave the ICRC money for medical aid to PW and political deportees, regardless of their nationality.

### 3. Collective Aid in Kind

#### (a) — *Reserve stocks*.

“ Reserve stocks ” meant the accumulation of quantities of medical and pharmaceutical products for repacking, in compliance with individual requests. These reserves gave the ICRC full freedom to despatch relatively large and urgent consignments at any time.

*American PW.* — The American Red Cross was the first to build up stocks in Geneva, which were originally intended for PW. These reserves derived from consignments arriving in Geneva from March to November 1944 and amounted to 31 tons of medicaments ; of these, twelve tons only were issued to American PW. The A. R. C. fairly soon decided to give PW of other nationalities the benefit of these stores, and from May to December 1944 numerous issues were made in camps for Belgian, Dutch, French, Yugoslav, Polish and other prisoners of war.

The initial stocks were replenished in 1945 by shipments comprising one ton of various medicaments and 100 special assortments, totalling 33 tons, called “ Men’s Medical Kits ”. Each of these included 15 parcels. These assortments could be despatched direct to camps, without re-packing.

*British PW.* — Transport of medical relief to British PW, from Great Britain to Germany, became increasingly difficult, and the ICRC recognised the fact that the transit system no

longer came up to expectations. Too much time now elapsed between the transmission of a request and the arrival of stocks in camp. The ICRC then suggested that the British Red Cross should build up stocks in Geneva for British PW only. London agreed and from October 1944 to November 1945, sent over 77 tons of medical stores to Geneva, including 14 tons of cod-liver oil<sup>1</sup> and three tons of insecticide. Some 15 tons of various products were issued to British PW, in camps or repatriation centres, or on the march. The rapid sequence of events in Germany alone prevented the full use of these stocks; they served however to carry through extensive relief operations.

*Other Allied PW.* — A certain waste of labour was inherent in working by nationalities. A plan for creating a pharmaceutical pool in Geneva for PW of all Allied States consequently soon took shape. In February 1944, the ICRC submitted practical proposals to interested National Societies, together with a schedule of the products likely to be required. The Committee stressed the need promptly to make up deficiencies in pharmaceutical products and medical stores, but added that the Detaining Power should not thereby be relieved of its obligations; recognition should merely be given to that Power's inability, due to limited means, to care for all the wounded and sick in its charge.

The National Societies, and the American Red Cross in particular, were greatly interested by this plan and agreed to its immediate inception. This meant the creation at Geneva, under the Committee's supervision, of a large stock of medicaments, surgical instruments, hospital stores and dressings,

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<sup>1</sup> The British Red Cross gave exact instructions for the proper issue of malted cod-liver oil, as follows:

*Monthly dose per man:*

For TB sanatoria: 4,550 grams;

General Hospitals

and Infirmaries: 1,850

The other British nationals interned in Germany (PW and civilians), who were assessed at some 160,000, received an average monthly ration of 10 grams per head.

The armistice prevented the completion of this scheme, which was to cover a six months period.

upon which it could draw for all Allied PW. Pharmaceutical products and surgical instruments were to be sent according to requirements to the head physicians of infirmaries and to PW camp hospitals in Germany and in countries occupied by the German and Italian forces. The above supplies were to be employed for all PW without distinction of nationality.

The countries which agreed to a scheme for financing the pool were : Belgium, France, Greece, Holland, Jugoslavia, Norway, Poland and the United States. The British Red Cross, which had just built up its own stock at Geneva, elected not to participate. The American Red Cross further presented to the Committee a sum of 100,000 dollars ; converted into Swiss francs, these funds allowed certain consignments to be completed.

The pool was formed by two series of shipments. The first took place between October 1944 and March 1945, and the second between January and August 1945. The total weight of these shipments exceeded 1,400 tons.

In the spring of 1945, 70% of these goods were ready for immediate dispatch and issue to PW camps ; 30% was to remain in Geneva for routine indents. The trend of events in Germany however completely upset this plan ; from March onwards, increasing use had to be made of block-trains and road convoys, so that the largest stocks possible might be sent to the camps that were still accessible. In all, some 100 tons of medicines were dispatched during March, April and May 1945, to permanent and assembly camps in Southern Germany and Austria. These stores included mainly specific remedies against dysentery, diphtheria, tuberculosis, affections of the digestive tract and dermatosis.

Shortly after the Armistice the American Red Cross requested the ICRC to make no further call on the pool without fresh instructions <sup>1</sup>.

(b) — *Relief in transit.*

A clear distinction must first be drawn between relief in " direct " transit and relief in " indirect " transit.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 304 for final disposal of pooled stocks.

*Direct transit* was the passage through the Committee's hands of parcels bearing an exact address. *Indirect transit* was the movement of standard parcels placed at the Committee's free disposal, which arrived at Geneva already packed and ready for dispatch. These parcels did not arise from specific requests; they were an addition to standard foodstuff and clothing consignments, made in proportion to the camp strength. Thus the various types of parcels in "indirect" transit, i. e. the medical, surgical and invalid comfort parcels of the British Red Cross and the medical kits of the American Red Cross were handled in the same way as the standard parcels of all other types<sup>1</sup>.

From 1942 onwards, the ICRC forwarded small consignments of parcels in transit for Germany which donors were unable to send direct: they included gifts from the British Red Cross for British nationals, and from the American Red Cross for Belgian PW. After 1944, the volume of parcels entrusted to the ICRC in transit, particularly for British, Belgian and French PW<sup>2</sup>, increased considerably.

Though the direct transit system was, as a general rule, a practical means of sending PW the exact relief they asked for, it clearly had many drawbacks. Owing to the progressive destruction of means of transport, the period of time for a parcel to reach its destination steadily increased. The disbandment or the evacuation of a large number of camps still further complicated matters; parcels frequently arrived only after several weeks, or even months; many could not be delivered and were returned to Geneva.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 207 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> British transit parcels which arrived in Geneva totalled 29 tons, French transit parcels 14 tons and Belgian transit parcels 39 tons. Military events prevented the dispatch of all these consignments. Such shipments as the ICRC found possible were carried out between November 1944 and May 1945, and went to PW of the above nationalities; after the close of hostilities, some consignments also reached repatriation centres.

The use to which the balance of these transit supplies were put is explained below, p. 304.

(c) — *Gifts in kind.*

Besides the goods supplied by Governments or National Red Cross Societies for their own nationals or those of their Allies, the ICRC received many donations from Red Cross Societies, private welfare organizations and private individuals. Donors either specified the recipients, or asked the ICRC to use the gifts in its general medical relief schemes for PW and political deportees.

The chief donors were the South African Red Cross (which sent large quantities of fish-liver oil—principally for consumptive PW—numerous sera and vaccines), the Canadian Red Cross (vitaminised products, insulin, sera, vaccines and sundry medicaments), the American, Argentine, Brazilian, British, Rumanian and Uruguayan Red Cross Societies, and the French residents and the “Pro Hollanda” Committee in Buenos Ayres. Many Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturers also contributed gifts in kind for all categories of PW.

(d) — *Purchases.*

The funds given to the ICRC for medical relief work were used for purchases in Switzerland and abroad.

*Purchases in Switzerland.* — These far exceeded those made abroad. The products bought by the Committee from the Swiss manufacturers were mainly intended to supplement consignments from abroad. The purchase of any kind of medicament in whatever quantity was, however, beset by numerous difficulties. The output of many products fell during the war, and owing to the fear of a shortage, the export of medicaments was forbidden. Nevertheless, the Swiss Federal authorities granted the ICRC all possible facilities and showed respect for the Committee's peculiar situation. After the armistice the restrictions on exports were gradually lifted and it became possible to export all the products made in Switzerland, though delays were sometimes protracted.

When making such purchases the ICRC generally gave preference to branded goods ; though more expensive, these could be relied on for purity and careful manufacture. Many Swiss chemical firms granted substantial rebates.

*Purchases abroad.* — During the war, the ICRC almost entirely gave up buying abroad, as deliveries took far too long and administrative and transport difficulties were excessive. As soon as hostilities were over, however, the ICRC used every opportunity to buy the largest possible quantity of medicaments in the foreign market, provided rates were satisfactory. These purchases, particularly those made in the United States, had the advantage of not requiring exchange operations. When buying from American Army surplus stocks the ICRC was given priority and enjoyed other concessions.

*Narcotics.* — The export of narcotics being subject to international regulations, after various negotiations the ICRC was allowed, under Federal regulations, to buy, forward and export the narcotics required. Similarly, the foreign countries concerned granted the necessary permits for the import of such drugs. Thus, the many applications and formalities involved in the purchase and issue of narcotics were reduced to a minimum.

To avoid the loss of time due to belated delivery, the ICRC established in Geneva a stock of its purchases in Switzerland, including essential medicaments and dentists' supplies ; this so-called "Specialities Stock", enabled the ICRC to make large consignments, sometimes two or three days only after receiving the indent.

*Epidemics.* — The ICRC also built up a large stock for use in the event of epidemics. This reserve of disinfectants, sera, vaccines, cardiacs, etc., valued at some 500,000 Swiss francs, allowed of rapid action to prevent epidemics of exanthematic disease in Rumania and Hungary, and of other epidemics in Germany and Holland. Fortunately, it was not found necessary to draw upon the whole of this reserve, since those epidemics that occurred in Europe were, as a rule, less

severe than might have been feared. At the close of the war, the balance of this reserve was taken over by the *Don Suisse* (Swiss Relief Fund).

(e) — *Individual Relief.*

Applications for medical and pharmaceutical relief made by individual PW should, under the general rule, have been dealt with by the Individual Relief Section; they were however referred to the Pharmaceutical Section, which was better equipped to select and purchase the specialities forming the bulk of the requirements.

The number of parcels sent in response to individual applications was comparatively large. A great deal of work was involved in their purchase, packing and checking, and in attendant formalities, but the parcels were often invaluable to PW suffering from serious or little-known diseases, whom the camp doctors were unable to treat with the camp medical resources.

(f) — *Warehouses.*

The handling of the medicaments and the manual work generally was done in several warehouses, the chief of which were the bonded warehouses at Cornavin and Plainpalais, both in Geneva. These stores housed large stocks, as mentioned above, for which the Pharmaceutical Section was responsible to the Allied donors. A few months before the armistice, the supplies for Axis PW were lodged in the same warehouses. Products bought in Switzerland were kept apart in other premises.

(g) — *Liquidation of stocks and of supplies in transit.*

The fact—at first sight surprising—that Geneva still had considerable quantities of medicaments at the close of the war was due to late deliveries and arrivals in transit.

The stocks of the British Red Cross, for instance, were still very large. In October, responding to the Committee's request, that Society made the whole amount available to the ICRC, with the proviso that priority should be given to the needs of

the Polish Red Cross in Poland (which received 30 tons of supplies), and of British nationals in Budapest, Prague, Warsaw and Vienna. From October 1945 until June 30, 1947, the ICRC was further able to send some 32 tons of British supplies to Displaced Persons.

The stocks of the American Red Cross, in September 1946, still included 100 standard assortments of fifteen parcels each ("Men's Medical Kits"), i. e. some 33 tons of supplies. These were made over by the American Red Cross to the League. The latter requested the ICRC to allocate these stocks between certain National Red Cross Societies, including those of Austria, Hungary, Poland and Rumania.

The relief shipments in transit which could not be forwarded to PW camps were allocated as follows: 38 tons belonging to the Belgian Government were, on its request, returned to Belgium, less fifteen tons which were issued to Belgian nationals. The balance of French supplies in transit was sent to the sanatoria in the Black Forest where French former PW and deportees were undergoing treatment.

The ICRC warehouses also contained, at the close of the war, a large part of the stocks forming the "pool", mentioned above. Some consignments did not reach Geneva till after the armistice. It was not until February, 1946, that the ICRC received final instructions as to the disposal of these stocks. They were divided as follows:

Poland received 366 tons . . . . .	=	28 %
UNRRA purchased close on 657 tons (for		
Austria and Italy) . . . . .	=	50,5%
The American Joint Distribution Committee		
bought 51 tons (handed to the Joint Relief		
Commission for distribution) . . . . .	=	4 %
Belgium received about 55 tons . . . . .	=	4,3%
Netherlands received about 13 tons . . . . .	=	1 %

The dressings (146 tons) included in the stocks belonged to the American Red Cross and were given by that Society to the Swiss Red Cross, which issued them to various Swiss hospitals.

(h) — *Allotment of costs.*

During the war all the medical and pharmaceutical relief given to Allied PW was financed by the "Allied Levy"<sup>1</sup>.

After the armistice, a new system of financing was introduced. Five per cent of all funds placed at the disposal of the Pharmaceutical Section was set aside for overhead costs, and a further 15% was held in reserve. Transit, insurance, and other expenses were met out of this reserve, and any credit balance was paid into the Committee's general relief funds.

(B). — *German and Austrian Prisoners of War*

Up to the end of 1944, applications for medical and pharmaceutical aid received by the ICRC from German PW or civilian internees in North and South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, India and Great Britain were forwarded direct to the German Red Cross. That Society then sent the required supplies and the ICRC despatched them to the applicants. At that time, health conditions among the German PW were still satisfactory and comparatively little assistance was needed.

After the end of 1944, however, the position underwent a sudden change: very large numbers of Germans were taken prisoner and certain Detaining Powers were abruptly faced with extremely difficult problems. The situation of the German PW soon deteriorated, both as regards food and their state of health. In France particularly, the requirements reported by the Committee's delegates and by the German camp doctors soon became very extensive.

The ICRC at once approached the German Red Cross and, in January 1945, laid the following proposals before that Society:

(1) — The German Red Cross should at once prepare standard kits containing medicaments, dressings and medical necessities as the basis of emergency supplies, for all German PW camps in France and North Africa. In the light of information

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 270.

received and of its former experience, the ICRC submitted a model for a standard parcel suited to this particular purpose.

(2) — A stock of medicaments supplied by the German Red Cross should be stored in bond in Geneva, thus enabling the ICRC to give immediate effect to the applications that were reaching it from all quarters.

The ICRC also proposed a substantial increase of the relief supplies sent in transit, and stressed that transport difficulties seemed likely to increase still further and that very long delays would no doubt elapse between the applications for relief and the delivery of the supplies.

Despite several letters of reminder, mainly asking the German Red Cross to remit funds for the purchase in Switzerland by the ICRC of the most urgently required medicaments, no affirmative reply reached Geneva by the armistice. The German Red Cross could no more than despatch five railway wagons, notified in April 1945, and containing medical relief stores among other articles. These wagons, however, never reached Geneva.

At the same time, the ICRC itself endeavoured to relieve the German PW and at once set about collecting funds. At the close of 1944 a first contribution of 10,000 Swiss francs was paid to the Pharmaceutical Section, which was able to issue medicaments to the German PW who were detained in French territory near Geneva. In all, and up to April 30, 1945, the Pharmaceutical Section received 41,000 Swiss francs; it was thus able, on the strength of lists of patients received, to buy the necessary medicaments in Switzerland and despatch them to camps and hospitals in France, Corsica and North Africa. Furthermore, in April 1945, standard assortments of essential medicines, dressings and disinfectants, were sent to the ICRC delegations in Paris and in Lyons, for issue to camps and hospitals.

*France.* — After the armistice the situation of German PW in France generally became critical. This was apparently

due to transport and food difficulties, which were accentuated by the mass transfers of prisoners to the French by the American military command.

Some of the camps lacked even the barest necessities ; to meet this emergency the Committee sent medical kits containing minor surgical instruments, dressings, anaesthetics and disinfectants. Later on, a quantity of assorted medicines were handed to the Paris delegation for distribution.

This initial scheme was, however, inadequate, and the prisoners' state of health became steadily worse. Loss of weight, starvation oedema, bone diseases, hypovitaminosis, intestinal affections and various complaints due to malnutrition were reported. Proper medical treatment was urgently required. The shortage of soap and disinfectants gave rise to all kinds of skin diseases and facilitated the spread of vermin.

The ICRC thereupon made an urgent appeal to the American military authorities, who agreed to supply the ICRC with a large quantity of medical stores. It was decided that each German PW camp holding 3,500 men or more, should have a standard assortment (described as " CAD Basic Medical Unit ") comprising four tons of pharmaceutical products, dressings and instruments. These assortments were similar to those provided for the relief of the civilian population of the liberated countries in Europe.

The following figures give some idea of the quantities of medical and pharmaceutical stores handed over to the ICRC by the American military authorities :

Pharmaceutical products, dressings, and disinfectants . . . . .	296 tons
(issued to 69 German PW centres in France, and four centres in the French occupation zone)	
Soap . . . . .	363 "
DDT powder . . . . .	89 "

The scheme was abandoned before each camp had received its allotted share ; the ICRC was then obliged to divide the

total amount and share out a certain number of assortments to each camp and centre. Thus, all the large PW centres received substantial quantities, between October and December 1945.

The happy effects of this extensive scheme were soon observed ; after the end of 1945 and during the early months of 1946, the fortnightly reports furnished to the ICRC by the spokesmen showed that the health situation was at first stabilised, and then rapidly improved. In one centre, for instance, cases of wasting and debility fell by 75% between October 1945 and December 1946, and deficiency diseases disappeared.

The American assortments contained an excess of certain medicines, whilst others were inadequate or entirely absent. The Committee had to make the best use of excess products and make up for deficiencies.

In the small labour detachments the health of the men remained poor ; dressings and the most essential medicines were still short. Between November 1945 and June 1947, the ICRC supplied them with 2,000 small medical kits with appropriate contents.

The ICRC further decided to build up stocks at their various Delegations in France, particularly in Paris and Lyons, to allow shortages in regular consignments from Geneva to be rapidly made up. This was an expert matter, and a qualified dispensing chemist was appointed at the Paris delegation, to co-ordinate all medical and pharmaceutical relief schemes in France. His department kept in touch with the camp doctors and dispensers and could thus inform the ICRC of current requirements.

During 1946, the ICRC also provided German PW doctors with some 650 surgical sets, enabling them to perform minor operations themselves and thus avoid sending the patients to a central infirmary or district hospital. Hospitals and permanent infirmaries for German PW also received equipment, such as blood-pressure gauges, sedimentation apparatus, surgical instruments, and so on.

*North Africa. Corsica.* — The ICRC also supplied medical stores to PW camps in these areas. The consignments included

standard assortments of anaesthetics, disinfectants and dressings and, later, collections of medicines. In addition, medical parcels were sent direct in reply to specific requests.

*Jugoslavia.* — During the summer of 1945, the health of German PW in this country was affected by two circumstances : first, the danger of an exanthematic epidemic, and secondly, the appearance of a new disease, found only among these men, and then called "German nephritis". The chief symptoms were diarrhoea and oedema, together with albuminuria and blood pressure. On occasion it took the proportions of an epidemic, though its infectious nature was never established. It was apparently due partly to vitamin B deficiency, in conjunction with a lack of mineral salts. The PW also suffered from bacillary dysentery, which was very widespread owing to recent events in this country.

The first consignments sent to Yugoslavia from Geneva in the autumn of 1945 were complete assortments which furnished hospitals and the chief PW camps with first-aid equipment and essential medical requirements. More detailed information on conditions in Yugoslavia thereafter reached Geneva, and the Committee's delegation in Belgrade, in agreement with the Yugoslav Red Cross and the authorities, made issues of insecticides, typhus vaccines, anti-diarrhoeics, cardiacs and vitamin products. In July 1946 further standard assortments were sent to PW hospitals and camps.

Altogether, the ICRC supplied German PW in Yugoslavia with 334 parcels weighing 16,865 kilograms and valued at 161,488 Swiss francs.

*Austria.* — The medical and pharmaceutical stores sent by the ICRC to the small number of German PW detained in Austria consisted at first of distributions made from December 1945 onwards in the Vorarlberg and in the Tyrol ; similar issues were later on made in the camps of the American and British Zones. On learning that repatriated PW were due to arrive from Russia and Yugoslavia, the ICRC despatched large quantities of supplies to the main reception centres at Innsbruck and Linz

in particular. Hospital trains sent to Yugoslavia to fetch sick PW were also provided with medical stores.

The consignments sent to Austria throughout 1946 and during the early months of 1947 amounted in all to 238 parcels, weighing 8,350 kilos and valued at 71,095 Swiss francs.

*Occupation Zones in Germany.* — A certain number of German ex-servicemen were detained in the occupation zones of Germany, in camps and labour detachments, or in the "prohibited areas". From November 1945 to March 1946, the ICRC provided the camps with standard assortments, medicines, insecticides and dressings.

The ICRC also gave medical aid to PW repatriated from France, Yugoslavia and Russia, largely with the 16 tons of medical stores supplied by the Americans for the relief of the PW in French hands, as mentioned above. On the request of the French authorities, the Committee also sent similar stores to the Stromberg sanatorium for the treatment of repatriated German PW.

In June 1947, the Committee sent their Berlin Delegation over six tons of pharmaceutical and medical stores for German PW repatriated to the Soviet Zone, particularly for the repatriation centre at Frankfort-on-the-Oder.

The consignments sent to Germany totalled some 30 tons, of which 11,650 kilograms were for PW detained in camps and 11,850 kilograms for repatriates to the Soviet zone.

*Belgium.* — The German PW in Belgium, most of whom worked in the mines, suffered for a time from the shortage of dressings and disinfectants. The Belgian authorities endeavoured, from the outset, to improve their situation. The ICRC was thus only called upon to contribute a few consignments, particularly by first-aid kits and products which were in short supply. Towards the middle of 1946 this relief discontinued, as Belgium was able to meet all the requirements of such PW as has not been repatriated.

*Poland.* — Here, the Committee began, in September 1946, by sending supplies to the camp at Jaworzno, which held a great number of sick and disabled Germans. Later reports stated that this consignment had greatly improved the men's state of health. Assortments of medicines, dressings and surgical instruments were issued to the PW working in the Silesian coalmines, as soon as the ICRC received permission to visit their camps. Two hundred small standard medicine chests were also given to labour detachments.

Later, the Warsaw Delegation built up a stock which was regularly replenished for use in emergencies.

In all, 575 packages weighing 18 tons and valued at 107,767 Swiss francs were sent to German PW in Poland.

*Other countries.* — Medical and pharmaceutical supplies to the value of some 10,000 Swiss francs were also sent to German PW in other countries, particularly Italy, the Middle East and the Netherlands, as also to German civilians interned in South America, Arabia and Australia.

(C). — *Italian Prisoners of War and Military Internees*

The camps in which Italian PW and military internees were detained during the war, were scattered throughout several countries, and even different continents. The attempts made by the Committee to give these men medical and pharmaceutical relief therefore could not, as in other cases mentioned above, be carried out along uniform and regular lines.

*India.* — In 1942, the Committee distributed in PW camps about one ton of medicaments received from the Italian Red Cross.

*North Africa.* — From 1942 to 1945, several consignments were distributed, including large quantities of insecticide and a number of surgical instruments in Algeria. From September 1945 onwards, a fairly large number of mixed medical consignments were issued in that area.

*France and Corsica* — Many individual applications reached Geneva and were given attention. From June 1944 to July 1945, similar requests from Italian military internees in Switzerland were met.

These activities were financed by the Italian Red Cross and by gifts from Italian military internees in Switzerland; Italians detained in Germany and Jugoslavia were the chief beneficiaries.

*Germany.* — Italian military internees in Germany were not considered as PW<sup>1</sup>, and the ICRC was consequently denied access to their camps. Supplies could not therefore be sent to them direct, but were forwarded through the Apostolic Nuncio in Berlin, who had authority to distribute the medical stores sent from Geneva. In this manner, 40 standard assortments, chiefly for the treatment of malaria, to which the Italian forces in Greece, the Balkans and Africa were prone, were bought and distributed in August 1944 with contributions made by the Relief Committee for Italian Internees, in Lausanne. Another remittance from the same body, added to a sum of 15,000 Swiss francs drawn from the ICRC's own funds, enabled dispatches to be made to these Italians until the armistice.

*Jugoslavia.* — From the autumn of 1945, the Committee's efforts were directed chiefly to the provision of medical relief for Italian PW detained in Jugoslavia. In October 1945, standard parcels, dressings and other articles were issued in nine hospitals. A month later, a further seven mixed consignments were despatched to Jugoslavia; their contents had been prescribed by the Committee's delegate in Belgrade and the Italian Red Cross delegate in Geneva, and comprised chiefly medicines for cases of exanthematic typhus, specialities for nephritis and calcium tonics for consumptives.

In the autumn of 1945 further assortments were sent to the Italian Red Cross delegates in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Austria (medicines, dressings, typhus vaccine and insecticides) for the Italians still detained in those countries.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, p. 535.

### *Distribution Schedule*

	Purchase value (in Swiss francs)
Italian Military Internees in Switzerland. . .	1,373
Italian PW in North Africa . . . . .	11,210
"    "    France and Corsica . . . . .	1,075
"    "    Germany . . . . .	36,332
"    "    Jugoslavia. . . . .	17,726
"    "    Austria . . . . .	4,453
"    "    Czechoslovakia. . . . .	1,050
"    "    Poland . . . . .	8,753
"    "    other Countries . . . . .	1,137
"    "    repatriated to Italy. . . . .	12,491
Total . . .	95,600
Gifts in kind (Swiss medicaments) . . . . .	17,350
Total value (all medicaments purchased in Switzerland) . . . . .	<u>112,950</u>

#### (D). — *Civilian Internees*

The ICRC seized every possible opportunity to provide civilian internees with medical and pharmaceutical relief. Parcels of medical supplies were issued in large quantities to camps for British, Norwegian, Russian and Yugoslav internees in Germany and Italy. Later on, especially after the autumn of 1945, similar supplies were sent to German civilians interned in France.

As a general rule, these consignments were subject to the same difficulties as the supplies for PW, and were handled as described in previous chapters.

#### (E). — *Displaced Persons*

##### 1. Needs

Health conditions amongst the "Displaced Persons" were an immediate source of concern to the ICRC, and information on the subject was sought immediately after the armistice, particularly in Germany and Austria.

From the close of June, requests for medical relief supplies reached the ICRC direct from camp doctors and UNRRA teams. In every case an almost complete lack of medicaments was reported. Some doctors even travelled to Geneva to ask for indispensable supplies. The Committee's delegates were, for their part, gathering all available information. The ICRC then decided to send a mission to Germany and another to Austria. The object of the first mission, which went to Bavaria, was to obtain first-hand information and to make immediate issues of the medical supplies that had already arrived there.

In August and September 1945, further medical missions, organised jointly by the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross, went to Germany, to deal with the health in general of displaced persons, and to establish local co-ordination between the ICRC, the Swiss Relief Fund and the Swiss Red Cross. On the strength of information supplied by these missions, further issues were made by the ICRC during the autumn of 1945, particularly in the Bayreuth area of the American Zone.

Several pharmaceutical missions were also sent to Austria, after October 1945, and distributed quantities of stores in the camps for displaced persons.

Health conditions amongst displaced persons in Germany were gradually brought under control ; this was due in particular to the large relief supplies distributed by UNRRA, especially in the American Zone. Consequently, the ICRC reserved the greater part of its medical supplies for displaced persons in Austria and Italy.

## **2. Gifts in kind**

From June 1945 onwards, Allied PW and deportees were repatriated with great rapidity ; the ICRC consequently decided to divert to displaced persons stores which had been originally built up for PW. On being consulted, the British Red Cross agreed that the medical supplies stocked in Geneva for British PW should, as from October 1945, be employed partly for the Polish civilian population, but chiefly for displaced persons of Allied nationality. These stocks included over 32 tons of pharmaceutical products, dressings, and so forth.

Other medical stores held by the ICRC abroad, particularly in Southern Germany and Upper Austria, were quickly disposed of during the summer of 1945, as first aid to displaced persons. The first distributions took place in the American Zones of Germany and Austria, and were later extended to the British and French Zones in these countries.

### **3. Cash donations**

The ICRC also devoted to the relief of displaced persons of various nationalities a sum of about 105,000 Swiss francs, originally intended for the purchase of relief supplies for Allied PW. These funds consisted of a gift of 47,000 Swiss francs from the Santista Mills, at Sao Paulo, part of which had been previously utilised for Allied PW, and a sum of about 22,000 Swiss francs deriving from a collection made by German PW in the United States, who had requested that part of the proceeds should be used for displaced persons. With this money the ICRC purchased medicaments in Switzerland, which were a useful addition to the medical stores drawn from stocks abroad.

The ICRC was also called upon to assist particular categories of displaced persons, and for this purpose received 85,000 Swiss francs from the Estonian Delegation in the United States, to provide medical relief for Estonian displaced persons in Germany and Austria. A further 34,000 Swiss francs was presented by the Latvian Delegation for relief to displaced persons of that nationality. Lastly 11,000 Swiss francs, handed to the ICRC by the United Ukrainian Relief Committee in the United States, helped to give medical relief (dental supplies in particular) to displaced Ukrainians. Seven tons of medical and pharmaceutical stores were also given by the Ukrainian Canadian Relief Fund.

### **4. Relief operations**

In all areas where the ICRC issued medical supplies, close cooperation was maintained with UNRRA, the military occupation authorities and the National Red Cross Societies, especially with the British Red Cross.

*Germany.* — In the American Zone, the issue of medical supplies from the stocks set up locally by the ICRC was quickly put through in the early summer of 1945; the supplies were collected by UNRRA lorries from the ICRC stock. In the British Zone, distributions started at the beginning of September 1945, through the Committee's delegations at Lübeck and Vlotho, and were continued through the British Red Cross H.Q. and UNRRA. In the French Zone, the ICRC sent consignments direct to the camps, and established a stock at the Rastatt Central Depot, which was under the *Direction centrale des personnes déplacées* of the Health Department of the French Military Government. An agreement was subsequently reached with the French occupation authorities, providing that requests for medicines received from DP camps which could be met neither by purchases on the local market, nor by the Rastatt Depot, should be referred to the ICRC. The latter was thus able to supply medicaments and pharmaceutical products that were not otherwise available.

*Austria.* — Distributions in Austria were carried out by the Committee's delegations, in close cooperation with the military authorities of the three zones, the British Red Cross and the PDR (Prisoners, Deportees, Refugees) Section of the French Military Government.

*Italy.* — Some consignments were issued by the Committee's delegations in North and South Italy to camps for displaced persons of various nationalities.

### 5. Example of Relief Work

The delegation at Linz (Upper Austria) was stationed in an area which contained a particularly large number of DPs<sup>1</sup>. Its work can be taken as typical.

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<sup>1</sup> In June 1945, their number represented one-fifth of the entire population of Upper Austria.

Fifteen tons of medicaments, restoratives, dressings, disinfectants, etc., were issued in the period up to the autumn of 1945. Thereafter, the Committee replenished the delegation's stocks at regular intervals, supplying 24 tons in all. The delegation was thus able to assist the displaced person in camps, infirmaries and hospitals, and to issue medical stores to the convoys of DPs travelling through Linz towards the West. Several qualified chemists were sent to Linz, to share out the stocks. In August 1946, a first-aid post was set up at Enns, on the frontier between the American and Russian zones, to assist the train-loads of repatriates passing through that town.

The health of many children was improved by regular doses of cod-liver oil; concentrated vitamin-D tablets for infants in arms did much to prevent cases of rickets.

From May 1945 until March 1947, when the delegation was withdrawn, 589 issues of medical stores were made to DPs, as follows :

Issues to camps . . . . .	438
„ „ hospitals and camp infirmaries . . . . .	42
„ „ national and regional Committees . . . . .	60
„ „ sundry National Red Cross Branches . . . . .	25
„ „ repatriation convoys. . . . .	<u>24</u>
Total. . .	589

In addition to collective aid, the delegation also made up individual prescription for over 4,000 DPs.

## § 2. ARTIFICIAL LIMBS, SURGICAL APPLIANCES, ETC.

The medical aid provided by the ICRC for PW and internees was not confined to consignments of medical stores, but also included artificial limbs, surgical appliances, dentures, spectacles, and so on. Article 14 of the 1929 PW Convention stipulates that "temporary remedial apparatus" shall be supplied to PW by the Detaining Power. This general provision

was interpreted in various ways, and PW were often given appliances in no way suitable for several months or years of captivity.

In these circumstances, the ICRC first attempted to induce the Detaining Powers to apply Article 14 in a more generous spirit, and in particular to replace inadequate temporary apparatus by provisional prostheses that might be regarded as semi-permanent. Where such steps were unavailing, the ICRC had to satisfy the most urgent needs by relief supplies.

Although this class of supplies was of minor importance in comparison to other consignments, the subject deserves close consideration, for this branch of the Committee's undertakings was especially complex and called for special organization.

The surgical appliances required may be divided into four classes :

- (1) — Dentures.
- (2) — Artificial limbs.
- (3) — Artificial eyes.
- (4) — Hernia trusses and other surgical apparatus.

(a) — *Allied Prisoners of War.*

Article 14 of the Convention states that PW camps shall have infirmaries where they may receive attention of any kind, at the expense of the Detaining Power. This attention therefore includes dental treatment and artificial limbs. Article 14 thus implies the presence of a staff of dentists, in addition to surgeries and workshops adequate in proportion to the number of PW and dentists, together with ample and regular issues of dental material and supplies of all kinds.

The provision regarding " temporary apparatus " is certainly unsatisfactory. Temporary dentures are obviously of no value to men whose detention is prolonged ; prostheses of this kind can be of service for a few days, or a few weeks at the outside, while the gums are being treated and permanent dentures made. Such want of precision cannot however explain the non-obs-

vance of Article 14 by Germany, and by Italy in particular. The following seem to have been the chief reasons for lack of dental care :

- (1) — Scarcity of dentists and dental mechanics.
- (2) — Inadequate installations.
- (3) — Shortage of essential stores.
- (4) — Mass arrival of PW in camps.

The ICRC soon discovered that in the two countries mentioned the steadily increasing number of patients compelled the dentists to confine treatment to the relief of actual pain and the sometimes quite unnecessary extraction of decayed teeth.

The number of men without teeth quickly rose and led to a corresponding increase of gastric affections. The workshops were soon overwhelmed, and to relieve the pressure of work the dentists apparently kept as strictly as possible to the letter of Article 14.

One of the Committee's first tasks was to determine the lowest degree of masticatory capacity below which the Detaining Powers should be obliged to supply dentures to PW. The Committee's representations led to no appreciable results, the belligerents objecting that they could not give PW in their hands the dental treatment and dentures which were denied to their own armed forces. Thus, PW taken by armed forces in which dental treatment was confined to the most urgent cases were at a disadvantage ; this was the case in particular for Allied prisoners in Germany.

The Committee received a great many appeals from PW who were not given conservative treatment and whose teeth were promptly extracted, although the Detaining Power declined to bear the costs of even temporary dentures.

These appeals were partly met, in so far as the ICRC was able to send individual and collective relief parcels to the PW camps.

#### *Individual relief in cash.*

In individual cases, civilian dentists employed by the camp were reimbursed the cost of dentures made for Allied PW.

Means had to be found of checking such supplies of dentures, and this involved more office work. Early in 1942, the interested Red Cross Societies agreed to the Committee's opening separate accounts for this purpose, and gave credits over which the Committee had autonomous control.

Each case had to be carefully examined in order to apportion costs between the Detaining Power and the National Red Cross ; to this effect, the Committee engaged a qualified dentist to assess each case in the light of the reports which the camp doctor, or the dentist in attendance was asked to supply.

This work involved extensive correspondence. On receiving an application, the ICRC invited the camp doctor to submit an estimate of costs, which was then examined and passed. Instructions for treatment were then issued to the doctor in charge, with a request for an invoice. After the treatment had been given, the invoice was countersigned by the patient and forwarded to Geneva ; if the bill was passed, the claim was paid to the camp doctor. Matters were still more complicated when the treatment was given by a civilian dentist not resident in the camp.

This method was hampered by the dilatory procedure required and the insufficient funds placed at the Committee's disposal by the Red Cross Societies. From 1942 to 1945, Geneva never had enough money to assist even the most severe cases, not to mention those whose condition was daily becoming worse. Funds allocated for the purpose were at once discovered to be insufficient to cover even some proportion of the cases awaiting treatment.

The ICRC tried to meet the situation, which caused them great concern, by increasing the supplies of relief in kind.

### *Individual relief in kind.*

Such relief, in the shape of raw material for the manufacture of dentures or false teeth, was only provided in a very few cases, the risk of loss being too great in time of war.

### *Collective relief.*

Collective supplies were always sent in the shape of stores and material, but in no case in cash.

At the exact moment when the ICRC was engaged in organizing a collective relief scheme, appeals from help suddenly began to arrive from all quarters, in particular from Germany. Geneva was submerged by a flood of applications, and the position was rendered more acute by the general shortage of dental supplies, both in Switzerland and abroad.

Requests came direct from PW dentists and camp leaders, still more frequently from the Committee's own delegates or those of the YMCA, and from Red Cross Societies.

The ICRC had three sources of dental supplies: (1) gifts in kind from Allied Red Cross Societies, (2) collections in Switzerland and (3) purchases of raw material in Switzerland with funds subscribed by various donors.

In 1943, the British Red Cross sent to Geneva a number of parcels of various types, called "Dental Units". They were packed in such a manner that direct transmission was impossible; the ICRC thereupon suggested, and the British Red Cross agreed, that a stock of material from Great Britain should be held in bond at Geneva. The Dental Units were unpacked and served to make up appropriate parcels for the camp dentists.

Further, the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission made a collection of dental material in Switzerland and shared the proceeds.

The ICRC also opened a workshop in their Dental Section, where disused dentures were broken up and cleaned, and artificial teeth assembled in sets. Gold or platinum clips and rivets were removed from unserviceable teeth. In all, the workshop recovered 180,000 artificial teeth, and gold and platinum to the value of 2,000 Swiss francs.

Purchases were made under the direction of a qualified dentist, and were closely checked for quality and price, both generally very unstable in this branch of trade.

The stocks comprised three categories: (1) purchases in Switzerland, (2) the proceeds of collections, (3) supplies from

abroad and in bond. The Committee frequently drew upon all three stocks to make up complete sets to meet the needs of the camps. Customs and export operations hampered the work, although the ICRC was given every facility by the authorities.

From 1943 to 1944, the parcels were sent by post, but the insurance companies eventually refused to cover any further war risks, and the ICRC despatched collective consignments by rail. This method, though slow, ensured safe arrival.

(b) — *German Prisoners of War.*

The ICRC was soon informed that German PW in France and elsewhere stood in urgent need of dental treatment, and that the health of a great many was seriously threatened, owing to insufficient mastication and consequent malnutrition.

An initial scheme aimed at opening dental surgeries, to deal with the most urgent first or second degree patients. Standard kits were made up and 56 were sent to France, two to Poland and one to Belgium.

The German PW dentists in charge of the surgeries thus established in France, North Africa and Corsica were given permission to make regular visits to the camps and larger labour detachments in their areas. Prisoners were also allowed to travel to the centres where dental surgeries had been opened.

The Committee did not confine itself to the opening of such centres ; it ensured a regular supply of stores of every kind : instruments, amalgam, dental cement, medicaments and so on. A shortage of certain supplies only could bring all dental treatment in a centre to a standstill. Anxious to respond promptly to requests from camp dentists, the Committee decided to centralize all demands at their Paris Delegation ; here large stocks were built up, from which the required stores could be at once taken and despatched.

With the help thus provided by the ICRC, the German dentists in France were, during 1947, able to treat some 50,000 patients monthly. In one centre, for instance, a single dentist, assisted by a dental mechanic, treated 14,280 German PW in the space of fifteen months.

Additional deliveries were made to German PW camps in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy and Poland, to complete or replenish the equipment of existing centres.

Another scheme in this connexion was the opening of repair workshops in each of the ten military regions in France. German PW in need of dentures were sent for treatment to the hospitals where these workshops were installed. The latter were regularly supplied in raw material and instruments by Geneva, or direct by the Paris delegation. Six hundred new dentures were thus made each month, apart from numerous repairs.

The total supplies sent to German PW in France included 635 parcels of dental and surgical material, weighing about 12 tons and valued at about 350,000 Swiss francs.

## **2. Artificial Limbs**

From 1940 onwards, the Committee paid close attention to the situation of amputee or seriously wounded PW. As the war lengthened, endeavours were made to keep a record of their numbers and names, and to ascertain the care they received, particularly as regards the supply of artificial limbs. It was apparent from the outset that, unless repatriation could be effected as soon as the healing of the patients' stumps made this possible, strict application of Article 14 became an obstacle to any modern methods of rehabilitating the war-disabled. The wearing of temporary appliances such as the Detaining Power is bound to supply, can in most cases only be prejudicial to the functional re-education which is required, if the patient is to use an articulated artificial limb. Since the obligation of the Detaining Power stopped at the supply of peg-legs or semi-articulated limbs, amputees not eligible for repatriation could not have the individualized medical gymnastics which are practised in special institutions.

The Committee made its chief efforts therefore to secure the early release of amputees and to induce the belligerents to conclude agreements to that effect.

In May 1941, negotiations for the exchange of seriously wounded between Germany and Great Britain failed, and the

ICRC was called upon to carry out special relief schemes. As a preliminary measure, the belligerents were asked for exact information regarding the number of PW amputees, the care they were given and the degree of cooperation which the ICRC might expect.

During hostilities, artificial limbs were almost exclusively supplied to Allied PW. Requests from Axis PW were few in number and could always be suitably satisfied, either by the Detaining Powers themselves or by the Committee's delegations, which used funds provided by the German Red Cross for this purpose.

Artificial limbs were especially required for British, American and Polish amputated PW in Germany ; the seriously wounded of other nationalities, and the Allied amputees detained in Italy were sent home before assistance of this nature was initiated.

Two courses were adopted: (1) the raw materials required for the manufacture of prostheses were furnished to the Detaining Power, or (2) experts were instructed to make plaster casts and take measurements, while the limbs were made in neutral countries.

Comparatively few consignments of material were made, as the manufacture of limbs in camps was difficult owing to the lack of trained labour and workshops. The cost of the consignments was borne by the Red Cross Societies concerned <sup>1</sup>.

More extensive assistance was given by a Swiss orthopaedic mission for British and Polish PW in Germany. Having secured the belligerents' consent to this undertaking, the ICRC first established a list of British and Polish amputees in German hands, with particulars of their condition and present location ; an estimate was made of the materials required and the itinerary and duration of the mission fixed. The British authorities were then given the approximate costs of the mission itself and of the appliances required.

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<sup>1</sup> The first method of aid was particularly useful after the armistice for the Relief of German PW amputees held in the American Zone of Germany.

Through the Committee, it was agreed between the British and Swiss Governments that Switzerland should supply the necessary material while Great Britain would replace the leather, brass, lacquer, cotton and wool, but not the aluminium used. The German Government agreed to have the amputees assembled in six hospitals and granted the necessary visas and special permits to the Swiss experts.

The British Government having furnished the required funds for general expenses, the scheme was carried out as follows :

(1) — *First mission.* The Swiss experts visited the six assembly centres, took measurements and made the casts for the manufacture of the appliances in Switzerland.

(2) — *Manufacture of appliances.* This was done in five Swiss workshops and was a matter of some difficulty, as the work had to be done without trial fittings, which are usually frequent.

(3) — *Second mission.* The Swiss experts made a second journey to the assembly centres to fit and adjust the limbs which were almost completed. At the same time they took new measurements and made fresh casts for other amputees.

(4) — *Despatch of appliances.* The first three stages were somewhat protracted and the German authorities meanwhile arranged for the repatriation of the amputees, who received their artificial limbs just before leaving Germany.

### 3. "Ophthalmic Relief"

The supply of glass eyes and spectacles to PW was known as "Ophthalmic Relief".

As a rule, the provision of glass eyes by the Detaining Power encountered little or no difficulties, especially in the case of accidents occurring during captivity. Spectacles were often refused ; the belligerents did not, for instance, consider themselves bound to replace spectacles worn by PW prior to captivity.

Collective relief in this sphere was confined to providing sun glasses for PW in an African camp.

Individual cases were dealt with in agreement with the Joint Relief Commission. The latter had a large stock of lenses and frames, the result of a collection in Switzerland for PW and civilian victims of the war. The lenses were sorted by experts and sent free of charge to applicants. From January 1, 1942, to December 31, 1945, 25,100 pairs of spectacles were sent to Allied PW. From early December 1944 until June 30, 1947, Axis PW received 3,375 pairs. Each pair was sent in response to an individual request, usually accompanied by an oculist's prescription.

The ICRC had sometimes to satisfy special demands, particularly for cylindrical lenses which the Joint Relief Commission did not stock. Such prescriptions were handed to a Swiss optician, who submitted a preliminary estimate. The costs were met from the fund for surgical appliances contributed by National Societies.

#### **4. Hernia Trusses and other Surgical Appliances**

A great many PW, especially in Germany, complained that they could not obtain surgical belts, or elastic knee and other bandages which they required. This applied particularly to PW who had undergone abdominal operations before or after captivity.

Requests were also received for invalid carriages—these could unfortunately not be satisfied—and for special surgical appliances for permanent wear, which could not be classed as temporary apparatus.

For all these requests the ICRC wrote to the camp doctor and the applicant, asking for exact measurements, prescriptions, or other details. The articles were then ordered from Swiss manufacturers and despatched.

## Chapter 5

### Relief for Civilian Internees

Civilian internees having been placed in all respects, including relief supplies, on the same footing as prisoners of war, there is no need to repeat here what has been already said on the subject. We shall merely draw attention to the peculiar features of civilian relief.

#### (1). — *Absence of Military Discipline*

On enlistment in the forces, with the attendant military discipline, men rapidly lose the sense of social distinctions. This applies particularly to prisoners of war. The idea of wealth and poverty could only play a small part in their lives. At the most, certain PW received frequent parcels from home, whilst others, who were in poorer circumstances or who had no relatives, could expect nothing.

In civilian camps, on the contrary, social distinctions were very marked and created much ill-feeling. The consequent strained relations often made the choice of a camp leader a matter of no slight difficulty. In such cases the internees appointed a committee of three to five persons, selected from the various elements in the camp, to represent them with the camp administration or the welfare organizations. Such difficulties most often occurred in the early periods of captivity or during an emergency caused by aerial bombardments, transfers or similar incidents, whilst they subsided at calmer junctures, or when the internees had grown accustomed to their new way of life.

No particular complaints were voiced by the internees as regards the quantity or quality of their food, since all donors stipulated that this should be the same as that for PW. Free collective consignments of foodstuffs, clothing and footwear were greeted quite differently, however, by civilian internees than by prisoners. Members of the forces, whether PW or not, were accustomed to receiving their rations and equipment and, in a general way, whatever necessities might improve their living conditions. Civilians, on the contrary, who had always lived on their own resources, felt they were now a charge on welfare societies. Time and habit usually helped them to overcome this feeling.

Regular work, which was introduced in most camps, had an excellent effect. Where work was not possible, e.g. in tropical countries, the books, games and educational supplies given as a form of relief were genuinely beneficial.

#### (2). — *Lack of Pay and Wages*

Whereas pay or wages granted by the Detaining Powers enabled prisoners of war to buy essentials in the canteens open to them, the lack of pocket money created much discomfort among civilian internees, from 1939 onwards. The Red Cross Societies and home governments realised that it was indispensable to make internees monthly allowances in lieu of pay. The issue of these allowances was the concern of the Protecting Powers, and the ICRC was called upon only if these Powers were unable to carry out this task. This was so, generally, where small parties detained in outlying camps were involved. Donors reported such camps' requirements and requested that the nearest delegate should make the payments, in place of the Protecting Power. Instances of this were the German internees in French Equatorial Africa, the Belgian Congo, South Africa, the Portuguese colony of Goa (India), Jamaica and Tahiti, the Italian internees in the Belgian Congo, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Italian and German families residing in Iran and Iraq in conditions not unlike internment, and lastly certain Allied nationals interned in the Far East.

The belligerents agreed to the transfer of this pocket money and no difficulty arose in this respect. Complications were caused, however, by the demand of the German Red Cross that German Government funds should be issued only to German internees who had signed a declaration of loyalty to the Reich (*Reichstreue*) and to its head. Many internees who had lived for years overseas had to some extent lost touch with their home country and were not, like others, organized on a political basis; the above condition was therefore a frequent cause of misapprehension and ill-feeling in the camps, creating differences between the internees and their spokesmen, and making the task both of the ICRC and of the Protecting Power more difficult. Despite the extreme delicacy of the question, the ICRC finally induced the German Red Cross to allow spokesmen to give the loyalty clause the widest possible interpretation.

Occasionally, the forwarding of money was delayed by the same lack of communications that had prevented the Protecting Power itself from carrying out payments. For example, funds for Kingston Camp, Jamaica, had to be handled both by the ICRC and the Protecting Power: Geneva sent the funds to the London delegation, which forwarded them to the Swiss Vice-Consul in Jamaica. The money for the 29 German internees in Tahiti had to be sent direct to the spokesman, as neither the ICRC nor the Protecting Power had representatives on the island. Small parties of internees detained in transit in Ceylon, the Fijis and other Pacific islands, Aden, Cyprus and the Bermudas were in a similar position.

Allowances were paid monthly in particular camps, according to a schedule drawn up by the donors. Special relief had to provide for the internees not covered by this schedule, such as those in transit and new arrivals, who often lacked the barest necessities.

Thus, in 1942, the ICRC was called upon to send individual relief to some 8,000 inhabitants of the Channel Islands whom the occupying authorities had deported to Germany. This was not a case of mere internment, comparable with that of the British women held in the Vittel and Liebenau camps, but a

wholesale transfer of population. Similar situation arose when nationals of the Axis countries were first assembled and then interned in various parts of the Commonwealth. Relief for Allied civilians interned in Germany consisted in the dispatch of foodstuffs, clothing and medicaments, whereas assistance to nationals of Axis countries usually took the shape of funds sent to a local delegate, who made the most urgent purchases on the spot.

An example of such relief work was the help given to the crews of three German merchantmen interned in Mormugao, in Portuguese territory. The geographical isolation of this non-belligerent colony required the services of an ICRC delegate sent from Simla. Having noted the men's needs and handed funds to their spokesman, the delegate, acting in agreement with the British authorities, provided the men with articles of daily use purchased locally.

### (3). — *Camps for Women and Children — Family Camps*

As the donating agencies and the ICRC discovered, interned women and children required more varied food supplies than prisoners of war. This was particularly so in family camps, containing as they did persons of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions. Relief supplies could only be sent on specific demand. Uncertainty as to the internees' real needs still further complicated matters. Goods from overseas were four to six months under way. Thus it was difficult to foresee so far ahead the number of layettes that would be required for babies born in the camps, or the number of garments necessary for children of different ages. Not until the close of 1942 was it possible to set up a department for the issue of clothing and other articles, drawn from the stocks constituted in Switzerland, on the grounds of the information furnished by camp representatives and camp authorities.

Difficulties also arose regarding food. The principal donors made up separate parcels for children. Throughout the war, it was, however, no easy matter to satisfy requests for special

foods, such as diets in particular. In the same way, the supply of cigarette and tobacco was not always simple. Some women internees thought they were entitled to extra food-rations instead of tobacco, and certain camp commandants tried to win over the ICRC and, indirectly, the donors to this view. Other women internees, on the contrary, insisted on their share of tobacco so as to be able to barter it for eggs or fresh vegetables. Most family camps also needed equipment for a kindergarten and teaching material for adult and children's classes. Workshops also had to be set up. One of the most successful camps in this particular connexion was that of Salisbury, in Southern Rhodesia.

After several years experience, the British Red Cross decided to provide weekly food parcels for men and women, and fortnightly parcels for children under ten. Other Societies, which were unable to issue more than one or two parcels a month, introduced standard rations for children. In 1941, the British Red Cross attempted to make issues of clothing, subject to promises of reimbursement—a condition which proved inapplicable, and which was rescinded in October 1943, after which date all relief was given free. When the United States entered the war, the American Red Cross at once adopted the same principle in its relief work for American civil internees.

The German and Italian Red Cross Societies sent almost no civilian clothing to their internees.

Civilians were not always subjected to the same forms of internment. Some merely had assigned residence ("Parole Centres" in India). Small parties of American or other diplomats were assigned residence in requisitioned hotels at Baden-Baden, Bad-Godesberg and elsewhere. At Bad-Godesberg, no less than seventeen different nationalities were represented.

A large proportion of civil internees in Italy were "confinati" or "isolati", a peculiar system of internment which placed severe difficulties on the supply of food, both because the delegates were barely able to exercise effective supervision of ration issues, and because the blockade authorities imposed precautionary restrictions.

Some 135 tons of foodstuffs were dispatched to small parties of civilian internees in Albania, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Holland and Hungary.

(4). — *Relief Schemes for Japanese Civilian Internees*

Early in January 1945 the Japanese Red Cross requested the ICRC to issue financial relief to Japanese civilian internees in Australia, Canada and India. No measures of this kind were contemplated for prisoners of war<sup>1</sup>. The ICRC felt obliged to ask that Japanese PW should share in the relief funds supplied by the Japanese Red Cross and submitted an estimate of the amount likely to be required for this additional relief up to the close of 1945. In its reply the Japanese Red Cross, while agreeing that PW should benefit by these funds, would make no explicit request to this effect.

The funds were used as follows :

*Australia.* — In obedience to Japanese wishes, a small proportion of the monies allotted for relief work in Australia was divided between Japanese children in the camps. The balance was to be used thus : one-fifth to contribute towards an educational fund, and four-fifths to be shared between the 2,800 internees detained in Australia. The children having been given their share and the educational fund set up, the internees thought the balance could most usefully be entrusted to the Committee's delegate for the purchase of goods wholesale. The donors agreed, and the said part of the gift became the General Fund ; the ICRC delegate was commissioned by the internees themselves to buy various relief supplies. From July 1945 onwards, the Japanese PW also profited by both these funds, which were drawn upon until the repatriation of the majority of Japanese during the first half of 1946. In the autumn of that year the delegate further drew upon the funds to dispatch large quantities of relief to the Japanese who had

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 437 et seq.

surrendered or been taken prisoner, and whom he had recently visited at Rabaul. As all Japanese had left Australia by the end of 1946, the funds still available were returned to Geneva for the purchase of relief supplies for Japanese PW in Burma.

*Canada and India.* — In conformity with the instructions of the Japanese Red Cross, the funds were shared out between the internees ; thus the Committee's delegates merely had to transmit funds and collect receipts. Only a small balance was left in Canada.

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## Chapter 6

### Relief to Civilian Detainees and Deportees

#### (1). — *Extent of Supplies*

A statement of the various stages of the work undertaken by the Committee for detained and deported civilians, unprotected through their lack of any definite status<sup>1</sup>, will give a just idea of the constant attempts made to send relief supplies to the prisons, concentration camps, and ghettos converted into closed camps. The results obtained, meagre enough in relation to the numbers to be sustained, were by no means proportionate to the efforts made, which were beset with great and sometimes insuperable difficulties. These were such that relief action could only effectively begin in the summer of 1943. Although in 1942 *family parcels* were allowed in a few concentration camps, *individual parcels* from the ICRC and Red Cross Societies were only accepted in 1943. From the summer of 1944 onwards, the ICRC was at last able to despatch *collective relief consignments* to concentration camps.

During the second World War, the Committee sent to detained and deported civilians in German concentration camps 6,836 tons of supplies in all, representing 1,631,000 relief parcels issued to the French, Belgian, Norwegian, Polish, Dutch, Yugoslav, Czech and Greek detainees<sup>2</sup>. From Nov. 1943 to May 1945, 1,112,000 parcels were despatched, chiefly containing

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<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 73 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> For distribution according to nationalities, see Annexes.

foodstuffs, and also underclothing and pharmaceutical products. Foodstuffs were sent in the shape of standard parcels, weighing from 2 to 4.5 kilograms, according to the supplies available and the regulations laid down by the Detaining Authorities. The parcels were nearly all made up in Geneva. Twelve thousand parcels of underclothing, weighing about 2 kilograms each were packed in Switzerland. They contained one undervest and one pair of pants for men, and one undervest and one pair of knickers for women. Standard pharmaceutical parcels, each weighing 650 grams and containing disinfectants, sulphamides vitamin preparations and dressings, were also made up in Switzerland; these totalled 19,250<sup>1</sup>. From the autumn of 1944 onwards, the War Refugee Board in Washington handed the ICRC a total of 260,000 parcels for its relief action in German concentration camps. A first consignment of 15,000 food parcels (50,000 kilograms) was sent to Gothenburg in Sweden, and forwarded direct to concentration camps in North Germany. A second shipment of 224,328 food parcels (747,760 kilograms) reached Gothenburg at the end of 1944; of these, 39,325 were presented to the World Jewish Congress in Stockholm, and the balance of 185,005 parcels was sent to the Committee's delegate at Lübeck, who distributed them after the German surrender to detained and deported civilians of all nationalities in North German camps. A third consignment of 60,626 food parcels was made over to the Committee, early in 1945, in the port of Toulon; these were sent by rail or road through Switzerland to Germany, Austria and Hungary. The Jewish detainees in Vienna and Terezin (Theresienstadt) were given several thousands of these parcels.

In addition to these supplies, the American, British and Canadian Red Cross Societies handed to the ICRC in September 1944, for issue to deportees of all categories, the standard parcels for prisoners of war salvaged from the S. S. *Christina*, which had been sunk in the Mediterranean. The cargo was sorted and checked under expert advice before being dispatched to the concentration camps. In this manner, the Committee was

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 82-83.

able to forward to these camps a further 25,600 food parcels (54,756 kilograms), which were distributed as follows.

French . . . . .	8,586 parcels
Belgians . . . . .	4,304 "
Poles . . . . .	4,220 "
Norwegians . . . . .	3,615 "
Dutch . . . . .	2,866 "
Czechs . . . . .	800 "
Greeks . . . . .	409 "
Jugoslavs . . . . .	400 "
Spaniards . . . . .	300 "
Italians . . . . .	100 "

The ICRC also forwarded large quantities of supplies sent in bulk from France and Belgium, which were placed in bond in Geneva and made up into standard parcels for despatch to Germany. Further gifts were handed to the Committee by Jewish organizations for the relief of Jewish detainees and deportees in concentration camps and ghettos. The ICRC despatched from Switzerland 72,200 food parcels and 4,440 parcels of pharmaceutical products on behalf of the three most important Jewish welfare organizations, in particular the American Joint Distribution Committee in New York<sup>1</sup>. From December 1944 to May 1945, this organization's representative in Switzerland paid in 333,000 Swiss francs, allowing 33,326 food parcels to be sent to some twenty camps, mainly to Landsberg-am-Lech, Bergen-Belsen and Terezin (Theresienstadt).

From the armistice and until the autumn of 1945, the ICRC also sent by road convoy about 1,800 tons of supplies to Dachau, Munich, Mauthausen, Linz, Innsbruck, Lübeck, Bayreuth, Salzburg, Leipzig, Prague, Pilsen and other camps where former detainees and deportees were still to be found.

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<sup>1</sup> See below p. 516.

(2). — *Internal Organization — Special Relief Division*

From 1942 onwards, the Individual Relief Service at Geneva forwarded parcels intended for civilian detainees and deportees by next of kin resident in countries at war with Germany. After protracted and laborious negotiations the Committee secured the German authorities' consent to yet larger shipments of individual and collective parcels. Relief work for German concentration camps and prisons grew to such proportions and became so intricate that a separate department had to be opened.

This department became, early in 1944, the *Special Relief Division*, which dealt with relief to civilian detainees and deportees in prisons, concentration camps, labour detachments and ghettos converted into closed camps, in Germany and in the occupied territories. Later, this Division absorbed the Concentration Camp Parcels Service (formerly part of the Relief Division) and the Civilian Workers Service set up in the autumn of 1944. The Special Relief Division dealt both with the detained and deported civilians (including refugees, internees and civilian workers who had no legal protection), and with Jews who were under arrest or the subject of persecution. The Division's main purpose was to give the most effective material relief possible to certain categories of war victims, while observing as far as possible the wishes of the donors. The Special Relief Division was the counterpart of the Relief Division<sup>1</sup> which dealt exclusively with relief to PW and civilian internees who were classed with prisoners of war, and who alone had a definite legal status recognised under treaty law.

The practical details of these relief shipments were usually handled by the Joint Relief Commission<sup>2</sup>; this body purchased and despatched supplies according to instructions from the Special Division, which met the costs. The ICRC negotiated with the Allied blockade authorities, the donor organizations, and the Detaining Powers. By this co-ordination of inter-

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> See below p. 363.

national relief activities, the Joint Relief Commission became the Committee's executive agent for the despatch of supplies to many categories of detainees in enemy states ; these activities thus fell within the scope of the Committee's humanitarian tasks. Acting on the Committee's behalf, the Joint Relief Commission dealt with the transit, despatch, warehousing and sorting of the extensive bulk supplies sent to Geneva.

The organization of the relief shipments was the sole responsibility of the first section of the Special Relief Division, i.e. the Concentration Camp Parcels Section (called the " CCC " = *Colis pour camps de concentration*). This Service was started in 1943 and grew to considerable proportions. Its books were kept separate, an account being opened for each donor who wished to send parcels to civilian detainees or deportees. The work became steadily more intricate, as donors sent their parcels at irregular intervals and consignment cost varied, according to the contents of each parcel. Separate estimates had to be made and submitted to the chief donors—i.e. the Governments, Red Cross Societies and private relief organizations. Over a thousand accounts for individual gifts and collective donations were opened. Balance sheets were issued monthly ; regular statistics were kept, to allow an estimate of daily shipments and fair distribution by nationalities and camps. The Accountant's Section was in daily contact with the Joint Relief Commission with regard to all questions concerning the orders for parcels placed by the CCC Section.

The latter also comprised a secretariat for the correspondence with donors, who frequently asked for changes in the standard parcels made up by the Joint Relief Commission. All parcels, both individual and collective, despatched by the CCC Section contained acknowledgement forms for signature by the recipients. As in all departments of the Central Prisoners of War Agency, the Section had a card-index, where the names of detainees and deportees were recorded when the signed receipts reached Geneva. The receipts were numbered and dated, and handed to the Business Machines Section, which made out perforated cards showing the cost of the parcels, the number despatched, the number of receipts and other details.

The acknowledgments provided invaluable evidence. When a detainee was released or transferred to another camp, his parcel was sent on by the German post office. The receipts therefore showed new addresses, and by this means other concentration camps were often discovered.

The second section of the Special Relief Division known as the " Civilian Workers Section " was set up when the despatch of relief supplies to workers <sup>1</sup> was facilitated through concessions made by the German authorities. These concessions permitted the supervision by the ICRC of supplies issued to alien workers deported into Germany during the last period of the war.

Furthermore, a large number of next of kin parcels for civilian workers had been forwarded from France to Geneva, and were checked by the CCC Section. Difficulties in rail transport towards the end of hostilities unfortunately precluded any such large-scale relief scheme, and by agreement with the French Government 43 wagonloads of foodstuffs and pharmaceutical products sent to Geneva were returned to France during the summer of 1945.

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<sup>1</sup> Despatches of this nature were debarred from 1940 to 1943 owing to the rules imposed by the Blockade Authorities.

## *Chapter 7*

### **Special Cases**

#### § I. RELIEF TO WAR-DISABLED AFTER THE ARMISTICE <sup>1</sup>

##### *General Remarks*

For some time past, individual and collective appeals received in Geneva, reports from the Committee's delegates and other information had made it clear that the war-disabled would, in some countries, constitute a difficult problem after the war. The Committee's work in Greece in 1941, for instance, has exemplified the valuable assistance that could be given by a neutral organization to the war-disabled of an occupied country <sup>2</sup>.

Although relief to war-disabled was the concern of the national authorities, it became evident that outside help would be required in the countries which had particularly suffered during the war. In some countries the pensions granted to the disabled did not cover their most essential needs; furthermore, as civilian war-victims were not by rights entitled to compensation, neither displaced persons nor refugees were eligible. However, national and international associations could not assume the responsibility of the competent government authorities for adequate compensation; only gifts in kind could be considered.

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<sup>1</sup> By reason of the circumstances that attend total warfare, the notion of war-disablement has been extended to other disabled besides members of the forces.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 451 et seq.

## *Relief Action*

The Committee's activities were based on two criteria : the category of the beneficiaries, and the nature of the relief. These, however, were not as simple as they may appear. In practice, each action had to be examined separately.

The *category of the beneficiaries* depended not only on their nationality, but also on their status and the nature of their disablement.

The disabled, either singly or in groups, were of varying status ; they included prisoners of war, repatriates, ex-prisoners of war (either at home, or in a convalescence or rehabilitation centres), demobilised army personnel, civilians, displaced or stateless persons, evacuees (for instance Sudeten Germans), *émigrés* (such as Spanish Republicans), and political dissidents who received relief neither from their country of origin, nor in their place of residence.

Disabilities fell into the following classes :

- (1) — Amputees and paralytics.
- (2) — Blind and deaf.
- (3) — Facial disfigurement ; nervous and mental cases ; loss of memory.
- (4) — Tubercular cases (bone and pulmonary).
- (5) — Heart cases ; chronic diseases.

The most important distinction was that of nationality. The Committee have no funds for the use of the disabled in general and must draw whatever sums are required from funds restricted to definite categories of persons. Most of the funds used by the ICRC for the disabled are in fact earmarked, consisting of balances remaining after the armistice from sums reserved for prisoners of certain nationalities, from the collections made amongst German and Austrian PW, or from certain donations.

The *nature of the relief* depends upon the kind of disability and the needs of the area where the disabled reside. Relief supplies include the following :

- (a) — Artificial limbs, or raw material for their manufacture.
- (b) — Special appliances (crutches, Braille watches, aids for the deaf, orthopaedic or surgical apparatus).
- (c) — Furniture and bedding for convalescent or rehabilitation centres.
- (d) — Foodstuffs and clothing.
- (e) — Medicaments and restoratives.

### *Prisoners of war*

It has been seen <sup>1</sup> that the ICRC provided artificial limbs, surgical apparatus, special appliances for amputated and blind PW during the war. After the armistice, the Committee continued its work for German disabled PW, particularly in France. Individual cases were reported by its delegates after camp visits.

A collective scheme was organized for German PW amputees, at the Rimini-Miramare Camp in Italy. Artificial legs drawn from the stocks in Geneva were fitted in the camp; these had not been made to measure and were suitable as provisional appliances. Funds at the disposal of the Committee's Washington delegation were used to supply this camp with artificial arms made in America.

Crutches were also issued to amputees in a demobilisation centre in Southern Germany. Repatriates who lacked even these appliances, had to drag themselves along on their stumps, or be carried by their comrades to the departure station. The Committee obtained crutches through an appeal to the Australian Red Cross and to Swiss makers.

### *Demobilised army personnel and civilians*

As soon as hostilities ceased, the ICRC turned to the question of relief for the disabled in countries which had suffered

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 265-266, and above pp. 318 et seq.

most during the war, and for displaced persons of all nationalities in Germany, Austria, Italy and East European countries. Conditions were such that many months elapsed before details sufficient for a study of the problem and for the organization of relief action could be gathered. To supplement the information given by its delegations and by national relief committees, the ICRC several times sent a medical specialist to Germany to ascertain the most urgent needs. A concerted programme, requiring long preparation in view of the manifold difficulties, was drawn up for German and Austrian disabled. This work was financed with part of the proceeds from the collections amongst German and Austrian PW in the United States. A sum of 200,000 Swiss francs was allocated for the above purpose.

In the French Zone of Germany the production of artificial limbs was seriously hampered by the requisitioning of raw materials, such as wood, leather and metal, and by the lack of components, e.g. screws, bolts, belting, straps, hooks and so on. The ICRC was able to help the amputees by inducing the occupation authorities to release the required material, and by supplying essential parts to the workshops through the regional relief committees, under the supervision of the delegation in Baden-Baden.

Aid for the disabled in the British Zone consisted chiefly in the opening of a vocational training centre. Five workshops were set up in Bad-Pyrmont; in each of these ten men were trained as watchmakers, tailors, cobblers, carpenters and draughtsmen. This scheme was carried out in collaboration with the British Red Cross, which undertook to find the necessary instructors in Great Britain.

In Austria, joint assistance was given to the amputees and the blind by the ICRC, the Swiss Relief Fund (*Don Suisse*) and the Swiss Red Cross. The blind were furnished with Braille watches and equipment for vocational training (e.g. typewriters, material for the making of baskets, brushes and netting). Some raw material for the manufacture of artificial limbs was also provided.

Smaller schemes were intended for the disabled in Finland (medicaments sent direct from the U.S.A.), Italy (similar

consignments sent direct to the National Office for War-Disabled), France (clothing and carpenters' tools sent to a TB sanatorium in Upper Savoy), Java (two artificial legs made in Geneva), Rumania (surgical appliances for paralytics), and so on.

### *Displaced Persons*

Relief work for disabled Displaced Persons is an extremely delicate matter and requires careful planning. Thus, it took the ICRC eighteen months constant efforts to secure appliances for 35 amputees in Italy. In February 1946, the Naples delegation had found the money for supplying these men with artificial limbs, which were ready for despatch in April 1947. Meanwhile, the amputees had been moved from Italy to the British Zone in Germany, and had been dispersed. The Committee's delegate in that zone first had to discover their whereabouts, and ensure their transfer to the same hospital. Thereafter, he had to secure competent medical advice and expert workmen, before the limbs could be fitted.

In another instance, a party of Polish amputees in the French Zone of Germany were given artificial limbs made in Geneva and fitted under the supervision of the delegate, the costs being met by a Polish committee. Two parties of disabled Spanish Republicans, one in North Africa, the other in the South of France, were twice given relief in the shape of clothing, foodstuffs, restoratives and medicines. Supplies were also sent to assist Latvian disabled in various parts of Belgium and Germany; the costs were met with funds subscribed for that purpose.

The ICRC sometimes received gifts in kind for distribution as it though fit. Thus, a gift of several thousand pairs of crutches from the Australian Red Cross was shared out by the Joint Relief Commission and the ICRC among civilian and military disabled in the countries that had suffered most severely during the war. In some instances, the Committee worked in conjunction with both the Swiss Red Cross and the Swiss Relief Fund, or with one of these organizations, without abandoning its own autonomy.

The experience of the ICRC has testified to the distress in which the disabled in a defeated country find themselves. In this connection, a useful comparison can be made between Greece in 1941 and Germany in 1945. From May 1945 onwards, the German disabled, whether military or civilian, found themselves resourceless. There were too few hospitals; compensation was quite uncertain; material for the manufacture of artificial limbs, surgical appliances, food, clothing, medicines and restoratives were all lacking. Having regard to the men's needs and the regulations issued by the occupation authorities, the ICRC felt obliged to take independent action and to start relief schemes along customary lines, despite the absence of any explicit mandate to that effect.

## § 2. RELIEF TO WAR-DISABLED AND CONSUMPTIVES IN GREECE

The situation of the many disabled ex-servicemen in various parts of Greece raised a difficult problem from the very outset of the German and Italian occupation. This category of sick and wounded were in particular need of help, but communications having broken down throughout the country, it was no easy matter to secure information about them.

According to data available in Geneva in the late summer of 1941, about 5,000 seriously wounded Greek soldiers were either in hospital at Athens, or had been discharged shortly before. Although all war-disabled were entitled to compensation, very many of them were in acute poverty, or were even homeless. The Athens district alone counted 1,800 war-disabled and 1,000 consumptive ex-servicemen who were not in hospital. Early in March 1943, the Greek Red Cross informed the Committee that their registers showed, for the whole of the country, 20,000 war-disabled, including 4,500 consumptives.

### (1). — *Negotiations and despatch of relief supplies*

The ICRC planned, in agreement with the Greek Red Cross and the occupation authorities, to send food, medicines

and clothing to their delegation at Athens for distribution to the Greek military disabled. It was then discovered that only a fraction of the necessary supplies were available in Europe. Geneva thereupon advised the donors of the position and asked the Allies, in August 1941, to grant these disabled the same facilities as for PW, with special reference to navicerts. At the end of August 1941, the ICRC received broad permission to give Greek disabled in hospital a share in the collective overseas consignments and the same advantages as Allied PW. The Committee was held responsible for distribution and had to provide donors with monthly statements on the number of men treated in hospital, and the issues made. This authority was confirmed in December 1941, and navicerts in respect of parcels intended for Greek disabled in hospital were granted from March 1942 onwards.

Geneva was thus in a position to give useful assistance to the Greek disabled, even when hostilities had ceased, in the period up to the end of September 1945. Before the overseas supplies reached Athens, the delegation was able to give the recipients part of the supplies purchased by the Turkish Red Crescent for the account of Greek donors and shipped from Turkey to the Piraeus, between October 1941 and August 1942, by the steamers *Kurtulus* and *Dumlupinar*<sup>1</sup>.

Application for relief supplies was also made also to the British, Canadian and American Red Cross Societies, who authorised the ICRC to hand out to Greek disabled in hospital, during the summer of 1942, a first issue of 10,500 standard food parcels, partly given by the Greek War Relief in Washington, and drawn from shipments unloaded at Lisbon. At the end of August 1942, the Athens delegation received the first two wagonloads of food parcels; others followed in November and December, but transport overland from Geneva soon encountered great difficulties. The ICRC then obtained authority for overseas supplies for the disabled to be conveyed by the Swedish vessels which, from September 1942 onwards, were on

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<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 452.

shuttle service between Canada and the Piraeus, to carry wheat to the Greek civil population <sup>1</sup>.

The Committee sought permission from the Allied authorities to extend their aid to the disabled who had not been admitted to hospital for want of accommodation. Early in 1942, the Committee was able to help a limited number of men belonging to this category, and after further applications, was in April 1943, temporarily allowed to make distributions as it wished. The number of parcels intended for disabled not in hospital was later reduced on several occasions, and this led the ICRC to take the matter up in London, in June 1943.

In February 1943, the Italian authorities consented to the Committee's issuing Allied uniforms to Greek disabled, on condition that all military badges were removed ; the German authorities would not however agree, and the scheme had to be abandoned.

A further scheme for the hospitalization in Switzerland of a number of consumptive Greek disabled was approved by the German authorities, but had to be given up, owing to insuperable transport difficulties.

After the spring of 1943, supplies from Europe ceased, and the Athens delegation could only count on direct shipments for Greek disabled from the United States and Canada. A monthly average of 20,000 parcels was thus conveyed by Swedish vessels. In all, the delegation received some 300,000 standard five kilo parcels, despatched by the American and Canadian Red Cross, on behalf of the Greek War Relief and the Greek Red Cross in London. Further consignments were received from the Argentine Red Cross.

The donors continued to specify, however, that these parcels should go only to the disabled in hospital. Furthermore, the American authorities held that disabled not in hospital should be regarded as civilians, and thus be entitled solely to the overseas relief distributed to the population by the Managing Commission. The separate service for the disabled set up by that Commission could however not meet all their needs. This

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<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 472 et seq.

ruling, based on a theoretical view of the case, was most unfair in practice, since the disabled in hospital, who were a minority, alone received special relief, of which they really stood less in need than the others. The disabled who were left without assistance, supported by the Greek Red Cross, objected to the ruling ; on the other hand, the delegates discovered that hospitalization did not facilitate the task of checking issues and that it was by no means easy to prevent misuse by the recipients themselves. Early in December 1943, the ICRC submitted a detailed report on the subject to the donors, showing that the safeguards at its delegation's disposal were the same, whether the disabled concerned were in hospital or not. At the end of January 1944, the Allied authorities, while maintaining the limit of 20,000 parcels, gave the ICRC general authority to extend the distribution on its own responsibility, to disabled who were not in hospital.

In early March 1944, the Committee's delegation endeavoured to set up a medical service for disabled who were not in hospital. The Greek Red Cross, acting in agreement with Geneva, asked that no new medical examinations should be made and that decisions should be based on the medical certificates issued by the military authorities. They also urged that the parcels which were accumulating in warehouses and were liable to spoil, should be distributed to all disabled, including those of previous conflicts.

After further negotiations, the delegation was definitely authorised, at the end of June 1944, to distribute relief to the following categories :

- (1) — Disabled in hospital.
- (2) — Disabled not in hospital through lack of room, but attended regularly in their homes by special medical officers.
- (3) — Disabled certified as consumptive, not in hospital, and not visited in their homes by a medical officer.
- (4) — Disabled not in hospital and not consumptive, but with more than 50% incapacity.

The Allied blockade authorities consented to the Committee's scheme, on condition that the supplies were issued according to the instructions and on the responsibility of the Athens delegation.

(2). — *Medical premises and equipment*

In view of the distressing circumstances of the disabled not in hospital, and in particular of T.B. cases, the ICRC made strenuous attempts, in the winter of 1941, to ensure their proper medical treatment and admission to hospital, or at least, to temporary quarters. These efforts met with such constant and in most cases insuperable difficulties that very poor results were obtained.

The seven hospitals and the ten wards in civilian sanatoria reserved for disabled at that time were wholly inadequate, and the ICRC at first planned to send prefabricated hutments from Switzerland for the accommodation of the T.B. cases. The Italian Government had given formal assurances that these premises would not be requisitioned, on condition that they were under the sole responsibility of the Committee's delegation and erected with local labour under the supervision of the military occupation authorities. The ICRC applied for funds to various Allied and neutral Red Cross Societies. Before the difficult problem of transport was solved, the Greek Red Cross announced that it had found premises, namely, the sanatorium owned by the Dionysos Society at Papanicolos, and the Jeramoni and Petras sanatoria. The Red Cross therefore advised Geneva to send, instead of hutments, the equipment required for these buildings. With the 100,000 Swiss francs subscribed for the purchase of huts, the ICRC bought hospital equipment and medicaments. A further appeal was made in February 1943 to the American, Canadian and British Red Cross, to the Turkish Red Crescent and to Greek residents in Egypt. As a result, large quantities of supplies, including mattresses, sheets, blankets, and surgical instruments were furnished by welfare organizations in London, the American Red Cross, Greek relief committees in the United States, and Greek residents in Egypt,

and were delivered in Athens. It then transpired that no further premises for the disabled could be secured.

A scheme sponsored by the Greek Red Cross in London for the accommodation of 400 men in a large hospital in Tripoli, had to be abandoned, as also other suggestions for the housing in military hospitals of 100 war-invalids, who had been released after four months imprisonment, and for using a wing of the former Military Hospital No. 3 for cases of T.B. A part of the stores was used to furnish the quarters set aside for the disabled ; the remainder was warehoused in the Piraeus by the delegation, in conformity with fresh instructions from the donors, who did not wish their gifts to be handed over to local organisations until the question of premises had been settled.

Most of these stores were unfortunately destroyed by air bombardment a few months later. The stores salvaged, among them 87 beds and 66 mattresses, were handed at the donors' request to the Greek Red Cross, after the liberation of the country in May 1945. The ICRC also presented this Society with two relief consignments : (1) in June 1945, 7,500 Allied military garments, the issue of which had been forbidden by the German ; (2) in September, 234 cases and bales of hospital stores and a few cases of clothing received from the British Red Cross, acting on behalf of the Greek Red Cross in London.

### § 3. RELIEF TO NURSES IN CAMPS

After the armistice the ICRC turned to the problem of the German nurses detained in PW camps in order to care for the wounded and sick.

During the summer of 1945, the Committee sent layettes and clothing on several occasions to German Red Cross nurses in German PW camps in France who were expecting babies.

In the autumn, clothing was collected among the Protestant and Catholic nurses' associations in Switzerland, on behalf of the eighty German Red Cross nurses who were attending seriously wounded German PW in the Hedwigenkoog Hospital, on the North Sea. Two hundred kilos were thus distributed by the delegation in the British Zone. This gift was followed, in

1946, by parcels of underclothing and knitting wool for the nurses of the Munsterlager, in the same zone.

New and worn underclothing, material and sewing requisites for making nurses' overalls were sent in 1947 to the German nurses with the SEP<sup>1</sup> Hospitals in Austria.

These gifts of wool and material enabled the ICRC to make the best use of the limited funds available, and gave the nurses occupation for their leisure time.

#### § 4. RELIEF TO INTERNEES IN NEUTRAL COUNTRIES

The military personnel, PW and civilian refugees interned in neutral countries usually received relief from their legations or consulates. The ICRC took action only in particular circumstances. Thus, 125 cases containing about four tons of cigarettes from the American and British Red Cross were sent to Sweden for the Polish internees and the American airmen brought down in Swedish territory. These supplies, addressed to the Swedish Red Cross, and a consignment of 305 kilos of clothing for Latvian children, were exempt from carriage and customs charges.

Three German vessels, with a total crew of 98, took refuge at the outbreak of hostilities in Mormugao, the port of the Portuguese colony of Goa. As communications between this country and Germany were ordinarily very bad, and one-half of the supplies sent direct through the post by the German Red Cross were spoilt in transit, the Committee instructed the delegations in India to send these men gifts in cash and in kind.

For similar reasons, relief supplies of the German seamen interned in Saudi Arabia were despatched by the Committee's delegation in Egypt. However, this procedure was less convenient in the case of seven German seamen interned in the Yemen, after shipwreck. This country had no diplomatic relations with certain States; the ICRC was unable to obtain the necessary

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<sup>1</sup> = Surrendered Enemy Personnel.

permits, and could only send a few parcels of medicaments through a resident in the Yemen.

A number of Polish military refugees who had fled to Hungary after the Polish Campaign in 1939 were helped by the Hungarian Red Cross with funds received from the Polish Government in London. After the occupation of Hungary by the Germans, these men were in danger of being deported to Germany. In agreement with the Hungarian authorities, the Committee's delegate supplied them with relief in money and in kind, and continued to do so until of the Battle of Budapest, when all communications between the internees and the delegate were cut.

### *Spain : Miranda de Ebro Camp*

More extensive efforts were made in Spain where, on the outbreak of war, a large number of civilians and military personnel were interned in the Spanish camp of Miranda de Ebro. They comprised, besides stateless persons, nationals of 27 different countries : Austrians, Belgians, British, Dutch, Germans, Poles, Spaniards, and also some Jews. The majority were military personnel from France arrested by the military police. The ICRC delegate was authorised to visit the camp and was given sufficient supervisory powers to allow of the distribution of supplies from overseas. The demoralising conditions of this camp, which was already overcrowded before the extensive evacuations of 1943, can easily be imagined. In spite of the Spanish authorities' efforts to improve living conditions, the internees were short of clothing, particularly undergarments, and the food rations were inadequate.

The first direct appeals reached Geneva early in 1941, from stateless persons and Argentines who, together with Germans and Austrians, were dependent on their own resources. Recognizing the urgency of their case, the ICRC informed several welfare organizations of the difficult circumstances in which these internees were placed. In the autumn of 1941 the first consignment of medicaments was made by the Polish Red Cross, which requested the Committee to draw 200 food parcels from its stock of standard American parcels in Geneva. Early

in the following year, the British and American Red Cross decided to send relief to Allied internees in Miranda, and it was agreed that supplies should be drawn from the cargoes of vessels calling at Lisbon, and forwarded by the Committee's delegate; the Spanish Red Cross, the American Ambassador and the ICRC delegation would then jointly distribute the gifts in the camps. As the result of customs and transport difficulties, the following rules were found necessary.

(1) — At the suggestion of the Spanish Red Cross, it was decided that the supplies should be sent customs free to the Miranda Branch of that Society, which would attend to the forwarding and distribution in the camp.

(2) — Besides exemption from customs, freight charges on the Spanish Railways (in private ownership) would be reduced by one-half.

(3) — The Spanish authorities agreed to the Committee's delegate in Madrid visiting Miranda Camp, in order to verify the safe arrival and proper distribution of supplies.

This agreement enabled all consignments obtained by the Committee efforts to be distributed without difficulty.

The following is a schedule of the consignments made :

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 1940 — | 1 case surgical instruments (60 kilos).  |
|        | 3 cases containing radiographic apparatus (106 kilos).   |
|        | 3 cases of pharmaceutical products (the balance of a gift from the German Government, sent to Geneva for the Spanish Red Cross). |
|        | 1 parcel of surgical appliances (5 probangs).  |
| 1941 — | Gifts for the Polish internees in Miranda :  |
|        | 3 bales of clothing, from the British Red Cross.   |
|        | 4 consignments of pharmaceutical products, from the Polish Legation, Berne.  |
| 200    | A.R.C. standard parcels, drawn from the Polish stocks in Geneva.   |
| 1942 — | 200 ditto.   |
|        | 1 case of secondhand French books, for Polish officers.  |
|        | 27 individual food parcels, from the Polish Relief Committee, Indian Orchard (Mass.).  |
|        | 21 A.R.C. standard food parcels, drawn from stocks in Geneva.  |
|        | 400 Canadian Red Cross food parcels.   |

- 500 A.R.C. standard food parcels, drawn from Allied stocks in Geneva.
- 1,500 A.R.C. standard food parcels, from the Polish-American Council, Chicago.
- 400 Canadian Red Cross food parcels.
- 500 A.R.C. food parcels, drawn from Allied stocks in Geneva.
- 1943 — 500 A.R.C. standard food parcels, from the Polish Council, Chicago.
- 2 boxes of Sandoz vials and surgical instruments (request of the Spanish Red Cross to Geneva).
- 900 pounds sterling—private gift (The Spanish Red Cross requested the ICRC to remit these funds for the German internees).
- 1944 — 2,500 A.R.C. standard food parcels, drawn from Polish stocks.
- 1,000 A.R.C. standard food parcels for American military internees.

### *Switzerland*

The problem of assistance, through the ICRC, to escaped PW or refugees interned in Switzerland, did not arise until after the Italian armistice in 1943. A very large number of British PW and internees succeeded in escaping from Italian camps and taking refuge in Switzerland. Italian soldiers and civilians followed suit. The majority of these refugees arrived completely destitute, after a hazardous and exhausting journey. Applications for help poured in to Geneva. The Swiss authorities and Red Cross, who up to then had provided for all refugees, could not meet all the requirements of over 70,000 internees. The greatest need was for clothing, blankets and footwear, all of which were severely rationed in Switzerland and could not be imported, owing to the quota system imposed by the economic blockade.

For the most urgent cases the ICRC suggested drawing on reserves in Switzerland intended for Allied PW in Germany. The donors were first consulted, and when both their approval and that of the blockade authorities has been obtained, the ICRC equipped the British and American escaped PW and 2,000 former PW and civilian internees of Allied countries, such as Greeks, Russians, and Jugoslavs, with a complete set

of clothing drawn from these stocks and comprising : 1 battle blouse, 1 pair of trousers, 1 greatcoat, 1 pullover, 2 shirts, 2 sets of underwear, 3 pairs of socks and 3 handkerchiefs. This issue proved inadequate, and the Committee again appealed to the American Red Cross, which then gave authority for the distribution of a further 5,400 sets. The A.R.C. acted as a shipping agent, and the goods were paid for by various donors, such as the Greek War Relief Association, the Committee for Aid to Russians, in New York, and the Yugoslav Relief Fund Association, in Chicago. The *Œuvre de secours aux ouvriers*, in Geneva, similarly supplied clothing and various necessities for Russian ex-PW. The British Red Cross provided the Polish internees with sets of clothing. The French were given uniforms and clothing drawn from the stocks made over to the ICRC by the French Red Cross. The Committee informed the authorities and the internees themselves that the uniforms had been intended for PW detained in Axis countries and had therefore been transported under a safe-conduct from both belligerents ; in no circumstances, therefore, could they be worn by ex-PW on their returning to their units or to a territory occupied by their forces. It was agreed that the uniforms should be surrendered by ex-PW on their leaving Switzerland and returned to the ICRC warehouses.

The Swiss authorities were of opinion that Red Cross food parcels were not required, as the internees' rations were equivalent to those of the Swiss forces, and often higher than those of the civilian population. The ICRC endorsed this view, and the parcels were found extremely useful as additional rations for PW in belligerent countries. An exception was made for Indian ex-PW, who were accustomed to have their own diet, and the British Red Cross provided them with the appropriate parcels. Food parcels were also sent to sick internees under treatment in Swiss sanatoria.

The responsible Swiss authorities issued the relief supplies, and the ICRC delegates, who could visit all internment camps in Swiss territory, had full supervisory powers.

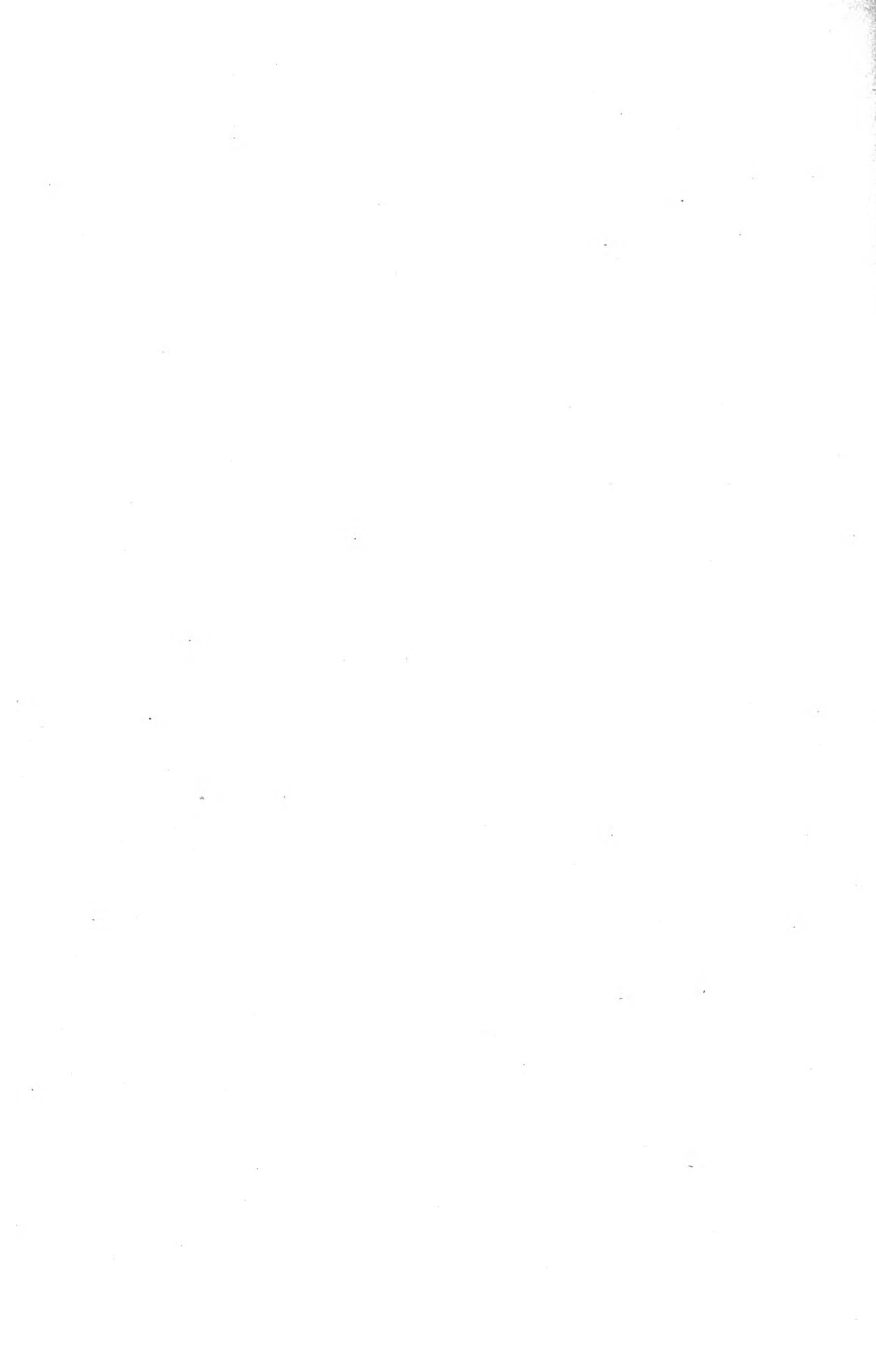
The endeavours made by Geneva since 1943 to find supplies for a large number of Italian internees and refugees bore fruit

only after the armistice in Europe, when funds from the Argentine allowed of various purchases. Further, A.R.C. parcels were made available for Italian internees.

The ICRC was throughout able to meet the numerous individual requests for medicines made by this class of internees.

Finally, the Committee undertook, in conjunction with the Swiss Federal military authorities and the Swiss Red Cross, to provide dental treatment for all internees in Switzerland. The Swiss authorities, while particularly concerned about dental care, were not in a position to give better treatment to foreign military personnel than that prescribed for the Swiss Army. The ICRC then assumed responsibility for all fees not payable by the Swiss military authorities, and to this effect set aside a Denture Fund, with the co-operation of the National Red Cross Societies concerned. Steps had to be taken to ensure speedy and well-organized relief, as demands were becoming increasingly numerous. One such expedient was to transform a railway restaurant car into a dental surgery and workshop. Expenses were allocated, according to an exact schedule, to the Red Cross Societies, to some of the internees, to the Swiss Red Cross, the Swiss Army Medical Service and the ICRC.

This mobile dental surgery, which was in operation from December 18, 1944, to July 18, 1946, was attended by 3,034 internees in the space of seven months. Allowing for holidays and travelling time, an average of 25 to 30 patients a day was maintained. This experiment was most successful, since it proved the utility of travelling dental surgeries. Camps are thus saved the expense of permanent installations. Checking is simple and thorough, so that a very inexpensive system may be used. The dental car, which was taken over by the Swiss Relief Fund on behalf of the International Dental Relief scheme, was later slightly modified and sent to Poland, where it was used, in particular, for the treatment of the Warsaw child population.



## *PART IV*

### RELIEF TO CIVILIAN POPULATIONS

#### *Chapter I*

#### **Extension of Relief Work to Refugees, and to the Women, Children, Aged and Sick of the Civilian Population**

##### § I. CREATION OF A SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS EXECUTIVE

Whereas the experiences of the First World War led to the revision and extension of the Conventions for the protection of wounded combatants and prisoners of war, there were still no international agreements, on the outbreak of the Second World War, for the protection of the civilian populations, if no account is taken of the few inadequate and obsolete clauses of the Regulations annexed to the IVth Hague Convention of 1907. A Draft Convention for the protection of civilians in enemy or enemy-occupied territory, which had been prepared by the ICRC, was approved by the XVth International Red Cross Conference at Tokyo in 1934, and placed on the agenda of a Diplomatic Conference to be held in 1940, but which could not be called on account of the war <sup>1</sup>.

The ICRC therefore had no treaty basis upon which to build up relief work for civilian populations. Nevertheless, it was resolved to make every effort to alleviate their distress, in accordance with the spirit of its own statutes.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, p. 573.

This task has in any case been defined by several International Red Cross Conferences held between the two Wars. In 1921, the Xth Conference (Geneva) voted a recommendation that Governments should agree to provide for the partial relaxation of the economic blockade, in the interests of the sick and aged, and the children.

At the Conferences which followed (1925-1928), the ICRC was invited to study what concessions might be made for certain categories of the civilian population, should Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant (Sanctions) be implemented. An important resolution to this effect was adopted by the Brussels Conference (1930) ; it runs as follows :

“ The Conference,

Having approved the report laid before it by the First Commission on the subject of “ Article XVI of the Covenant and Alleviation of the Blockade ”.

#### I.

1. — Warmly thanks the International Committee of the Red Cross for the valuable report which it has presented on the questions dealt with in the Tenth Resolution of the XVIIth Conference and the Ninth Resolution of the XIIth Conference, the said report having greatly facilitated their work.

2. — Notes that it would be desirable to create a suitable agency, the function of which would be, as far as is possible, to spare from certain categories of persons, such as children and the aged and sick, the inevitable distress resulting from the application of Article XVI of the League of Nations Covenant, or of a war blockade to their State, in the resistance of which to such action they take no part.

#### II

3. — Notes that under the terms of the resolutions of the Second Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations, relations shall be maintained for humanitarian purposes, should the economic weapon of the League of Nations be applied in conformity with Article VI of the Covenant of the League.

4. — Considers that the humanitarian relations in question should include assistance to certain categories of the population, by supplying them with medicaments, hospital stores, food and clothing.

5. — Invites the International Committee of the Red Cross to consult, where necessary, with the appropriate departments of the League of Nations on arrangements for possible alleviations in each particular case.

6. — Invites the International Committee to study the form which such alleviations might take, on the basis of the Danish-Swedish and the Bulgarian proposals referred to under the Ninth Resolution of the XIIIth Conference, reproduced in the annex.

### III

7. — Feels that the principle of maintaining humanitarian relations should be extended to the case of blockades during "declared warfare", and that the principle of the proposal made in Resolution VI should therefore be adopted.

8. — Invites the National Red Cross Societies to draw their Governments' attention to the preceding Resolution, with a view to securing, if possible, their full or conditional adherence to the principle mentioned in the said Resolution and to the proposals mentioned in Resolution VI.

9. — Invites the International Committee, if need be, to place itself at the disposal of the parties concerned, including among others the belligerents and Protecting Power, with a view to implementing the said proposals."

Upon the outbreak of war in 1939, the ICRC, acting on the above Resolution and on its right and duty to take the lead, initiated various relief activities which will be described in Chapter 2.

At the same time, the League of Red Cross Societies moved its headquarters from Paris to Geneva. According to its statutes, revised in 1938, the League was also called upon (Art. 3, par. 3), to undertake relief work in co-operation with the National Societies. Although, in principle, intended for peace time, this co-operation was continued throughout the war — the more easily since the Secretariat of the League, which now had its offices in a neutral country, was able to remain in constant and direct touch with the National Societies.

Both being responsible for civilian relief, the ICRC and the League worked independently during the first weeks of the war, and then jointly as soon as the League settled in Geneva.

The Statutes adopted by the XIIIth International Red Cross Conference (The Hague, 1928) stipulated under Article 9 that :

“The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies shall cooperate in fields which are common to both organizations, in particular as regards the activities of relief associations in case of national or international disaster.”

In peace-time, this Article came into force whenever major disasters occurred, such as earthquakes, floods and epidemics. But it could also apply in the case of armed conflicts. The ICRC and the League in any case drew authority from it to prepare immediate co-operation between the two organizations ; they were encouraged to do so, moreover, by a cable from the Chairman of the American Red Cross.

At the end of May 1940, the first opportunity for joint action occurred. In their flight before the lightning advance of the German forces, millions of French, Belgian, Dutch and Luxemburg refugees were crowding the highways of France. The French Red Cross did what it could, but the task was overwhelming. It turned for help to the ICRC and the League, who decided to launch an appeal to all the National Red Cross Societies of the non-belligerent and neutral States. On May 29, 1940, these Societies were informed of the situation and of the most urgent needs ; they were asked at the same time to send gifts direct to the French Red Cross.

Some declined, stating that they already had to deal with refugees in their own country. Others made considerable gifts in money and in kind. Thus, the Yugoslav Red Cross sent 300,000 dinars to the French Red Cross, of which 50,000 were in money and the remainder in non-perishable foodstuffs ; the Greek Red Cross gave 50,000 francs, the proceeds of a collection ; the Turkish Red Crescent offered 500 tons of wheat, carriage free ; lastly, donations of 600 and 500 Egyptian pounds were handed to the Ministers of France and Belgium in Egypt, as gifts from the Egyptian Red Crescent. The Red Cross Societies in Latin America planned to help the women and children, through the ICRC.

In addition to the problem of civilian refugees, another still more urgent matter arose, which was more in conformity with the traditional work of the ICRC. A large number of French combatants had been surrounded in the Belfort area and taken prisoner by the German forces. Food supplies could reach them only from Switzerland. The ICRC was informed of this situation by the German authorities, who despatched a delegate to Geneva to discuss the situation, and the Committee at once took steps to help these prisoners.

During the summer of 1940, the ICRC was again urged to help the refugees in France, particularly the women and children; it sent several trainloads of condensed and powdered milk to Paris.

The ICRC and the League soon realized, however, that such intermittent and limited endeavours were in no way commensurate with needs, and that constant appeals would soon exhaust the goodwill of donors. As the representative of the ICRC stated at the joint meeting held on October 28, 1940, the only practical solution was to set up a special relief agency for civilian victims of the war. It was at this meeting that the name "Joint Relief Commission" was mentioned for the first time.

In November 1940, this Commission issued an appeal, on behalf to the ICRC and the League, to all Governments and Red Cross Societies capable of giving aid. The appeal asked for donations in kind and in money, and for export and warehousing facilities. In particular, it asked the Latin American countries to make available either funds or medicaments, the latter being allowed to pass through the British blockade without difficulty. The donors were free to name the country or category of persons who were to benefit; they were, however, advised to assist preferably in building up large stocks, which were essential if immediate action was to be taken in urgent cases.

Owing partly to the general political and economic situation, the success of this appeal was unfortunately less than that issued in May 1940 for the refugees in France and Belgium. Most of the replies were evasive, and the total contributions of the American, Danish, Ecuador and Japanese Red Cross Societies, and of the Danish and Mexican Governments, together

amounted only to 120,000 francs. The Turkish Red Crescent made a gift in kind, and some Governments stated their readiness to facilitate the export of certain products. Despite these somewhat disappointing results, the appeal of November 1940 enabled the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross to step forward as a legally constituted agency — a fact which was to be of great consequence.

The newly-created Commission derived from the ICRC and the League certain noteworthy facilities. In addition to its expert secretariat, whose task had been greatly reduced by the war, the League was particularly well placed to procure relief supplies, through its close connection with many National Red Cross Societies. Moreover, the Chairman of the League was likewise Chairman of the American Red Cross; in this latter capacity he had displayed great interest, before the United States entered the war, in relief work for the occupied countries of Europe. At his suggestion a sum of 70 million dollars (50 million granted by the United States Government and 20 million collected by the American Red Cross) had been set aside for this purpose.

On the other hand, owing to the nature of its membership, the League alone was unable to undertake relief work for civilian populations in countries at war, since several of its leading members belonged to countries that were at war with the Axis. By the summer of 1940, it was clear that the German Government would not sanction any action by the League in the territories occupied by the Axis.

On the other hand, the ICRC was almost universally recognized; it could act in most of the countries at war, with the full approval of the authorities. This was its main asset. The belligerents had absolute confidence in its impartiality, and this confidence was largely due to the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland, the country where its headquarters are situated and its members recruited. In addition, it was obvious that, in accordance with the traditional principles that guide the Committee's work, the relief programmes undertaken under its auspices would serve no political ends, but would retain a strictly humanitarian character.

The ICRC, moreover, enjoyed numerous practical advantages. In many countries, it was represented with Governments and Red Cross Societies by duly accredited delegates who were able to appeal for donations, secure export permits, find means of transport, and receive and issue relief supplies. Through the reports made out by these delegates, the donors were exactly and impartially informed as to the result of the undertakings to which they had contributed.

Subsequently, it has often been maintained that the ICRC should have made itself solely responsible for giving relief to war victims. It was only after careful consideration that the ICRC abandoned this idea, since its limited resources would not have borne the costs of such a scheme. As the League was in a similar position, the two organizations were naturally led to join forces in an undertaking which they would have been unable to accomplish separately.

It was expected that the Joint Relief Commission, as such, would have to carry out large-scale financial operations in which neither the ICRC, nor the League would be committed. It had therefore to be endowed with an independent legal status, and was set up in conformity with Articles 60 seq. of the Swiss Civil Code, as a non-profit-making association, of which the ICRC and the League were members. This association was entered in the Commercial Register ; its statutes were adopted on July 23, 1941.

The General Assembly, the legislative body of the association, included one representative of the ICRC and one of the League. It set up a Council to direct the work of the Joint Commission, appointing two representatives of the ICRC, two of the League, and one member chosen outside these two institutions. The membership of the Council was increased to seven in October, 1943.

In the minds of its founders, the Joint Relief Commission was intended merely to further the joint action of the ICRC and the League, without in any way setting up a new and permanent International Red Cross body, since decisions of this kind are the prerogative of the International Red Cross Conference. This temporary agency did not, moreover, have a monopoly of the

relief work undertaken by the ICRC and the League for civilian populations. The ICRC, it will be recalled, first carried out its work in Greece unaided, later with the assistance of the Swedish Government <sup>1</sup>.

To meet the initial overhead costs of the Joint Relief Commission, the ICRC and the League each advanced 1,000 dollars. Later, the Commission was able to cover its own expenses for premises, staff, checking and issue of supplies, convoy agents, etc., by means of a levy of 2% on the value of the goods forwarded. The cost of transport, warehousing and insurance were generally borne by the donors, and sometimes by the beneficiaries. Such was the method finally adopted, in preference to subsidies from Governments and National Red Cross Societies, as was originally suggested.

## § 2. GENERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE BELLIGERENTS

The relief schemes carried out by the Joint Relief Commission between 1941 and the end of 1946, when it was wound up, are too many for enumeration here. The Final Report of that Commission (comprising the joint report by the League and the ICRC to the International Red Cross Conference) gives many particulars on the subject. The present statement will therefore be confined to the Committee's assistance to the work of the Joint Relief Commission in the belligerent countries.

Before giving legal status to the Joint Commission, it was essential to know how the belligerents would greet its work for civilian populations in the occupied countries. M. C.J. Burckhardt, member of the ICRC and promoter of the joint activities, conducted the principal diplomatic negotiations and took upon himself the work of liaison between the Joint Relief Commission and the belligerents.

Germany was first consulted, as the relief operations had to begin in territories that were occupied by her forces. In the summer of 1940, during a mission to Berlin, the future Chairman

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<sup>1</sup> See below pp. 450-479.

of the Joint Relief Commission succeeded in convincing the German civil and military authorities that the proposed work was indispensable and offered every pledge of goodwill. The German Red Cross also promised their full support.

After the appeal of November 1940, the ICRC and the League officially asked the German Government to authorize the shipment of food supplies, clothing and medicaments for women and children in the occupied countries. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Reich replied on January 11, 1941, by a letter of primary importance, which laid down the following rules :

(1) — The German Government agreed to the principle of relief shipments in kind and in funds to the war-stricken populations in the territories occupied by the German forces.

(2) — The shipments were to be by collective consignments, and not by isolated gifts for specific persons.

(3) — The German Red Cross would have to organize and control the issue of gifts.

(4) — Relief consignments would be duty and carriage-free, provided they were addressed to the German Red Cross.

(5) — Distribution would be carried out by the local welfare agencies and in accordance with the wishes of the donors.

(6) — No requisitions would be made at any time for the benefit of the German forces or officials.

(7) — On application in each instance, representatives of the donors would be allowed to enter the occupied territories to satisfy themselves that the relief supplies had been carefully and equitably distributed.

Of these clauses, the sixth was of especial importance, as it was an essential condition of any relief work for civilian populations in territories occupied by the German Army.

### *Economic Warfare.*

The second World War at once assumed the character of total warfare, since the States engaged did not count only on

the force of arms to defeat the enemy. In particular, they had planned beforehand the means to strike at his economic power, and contrary to what happened in 1914-1918, the plans were put into operation forthwith. As soon as war broke out, trading with enemy, or enemy-occupied countries was prohibited; it was strictly regulated with neutral countries; many commodities were classed as war contraband and were liable to confiscation by the belligerents.

According to the Governments concerned, this policy, even if it did temporarily harm private interests, was justified by the necessity for the earliest conclusion of the war and of the suffering it inflicted on the entire world. There was, however, no doubt that it affected neutrals as well as the enemy, and the civilian population as well as the combatants; it was thus difficult to reconcile with the humanitarian principles to which civilized nations should conform in waging war. In particular, the belligerents were averse to the dispatch of relief supplies, because they wished at all costs to deprive the adversary of any element which could give him the slightest assistance in his war effort<sup>1</sup>. The ICRC, which is by principle and tradition bound to assist all war victims, was therefore confronted by very serious and sometimes insurmountable difficulties.

#### (A). *The Blockade*

Relief work was seriously hampered by the strict blockade which the Allies imposed upon the European continent as soon as war was declared, with the intention of economically isolating the Axis countries. The ICRC had thus no access to the great overseas markets, and even in the neutral countries of Europe, for reasons which will be given later, it could not freely purchase the necessary supplies.

To cover their requirements, the neutral States signed agreements with the Allies known as " War Trade Agreements " or " Blockade Agreements ", which cut their exports both to other neutral countries and to belligerent States. The agreement

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 28.

of April 25, 1940, for instance, subjected the foreign trade of Switzerland to very severe regulations.

To ensure the application of these agreements and of those of a similar kind which she had been compelled to sign with the Axis Powers owing to the counter-blockade<sup>1</sup>, Switzerland herself controlled all her imports and exports. Upon their arrival in Swiss territory, all goods which the Allies had permitted her to import for her own requirements were taken over by a Swiss commercial control body, whose duty it was to prevent their being diverted from their ostensible purpose.

By virtue of the Blockade Agreement, Switzerland also agreed to the creation of a "Standing Joint Commission"<sup>2</sup>, comprising delegates of the Swiss and Allied Governments. This Commission, with headquarters in Berne, dealt with all the problems raised by the application of the Agreement. It regularly received from the Swiss Government the necessary statistical information and documents, and all particulars which it deemed appropriate. Difficulties it could not solve itself were submitted, through its delegates, to the Governments concerned. The Allied delegates received their instructions direct from the blockade authorities; these were the Ministry of Economic Warfare in London, the *Ministère du blocus* in Paris, and, after the United States entered the war, the Board of Economic Warfare in Washington. An Interallied Blockade Commission, accredited to the Ministry of Economic Warfare in London, coordinated the work of these Ministries and the economic warfare of the Allies. The Commission also authorized the passage of neutral goods through the blockade. After the occupation of France and the entry into the war of the United States, it became the Joint American-British Blockade Committee.

While fairly moderate at the outbreak of the war, the rules imposed by the blockade on neutral countries became steadily more stringent, as a result of reprisals against enemy trade. The blockade authorities made exception, however, for certain relief schemes. This was the case with a project undertaken by

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Not to be confused with the Joint Relief Commission itself.

an American organization in occupied Poland. Likewise, through the efforts of the ICRC in London, several large food consignments from Latin America, addressed to Poland and even Germany, were allowed through the blockade, for distribution by the German Red Cross to the wounded and sick.

The Allied regulations tightened, however, after the occupation of the greater part of Europe and the western seaboard by the Axis forces. On July 31, 1940, Great Britain instituted a new control procedure for ships and cargoes, known as the "navicert" system. Inspection was carried out in the ports of loading—consequently before the shipment of the goods—and no longer in the Allied control ports in Europe. Through the British or Allied diplomatic representatives in neutral countries, the blockade authorities in London received applications for transit; when these were granted, they issued the papers known as "navicerts". Goods and ships not covered by navicerts ran the risk of seizure by the sea patrols and other Allied control bodies. In addition, ships wishing to take advantage of certain facilities in Allied ports of call, such as repairs, refuelling, provisions and so on, had to secure a ship's warrant, in exchange for an undertaking not to convey goods other than those covered by a navicert, nor to render any service whatever to the enemy.

The strictness of these stipulations took no account of humanitarian considerations. Henceforth, any supplies sent to enemy territory were exposed to seizure, even if intended for the wounded and sick. Aware of the grave harm thus caused to war-victims, the ICRC at once began negotiations with the blockade authorities and sent one of its members to London to plead its cause with the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

Discussions first turned on relief for prisoners of war. The Ministry agreed to individual parcels, which were expressly provided for under Articles 37 and 38 of the Geneva Convention. The matter of bulk consignments, without which the prisoners in German hands would not have had the extra food rations that were indispensable, was the subject of protracted discussions; such consignments were authorised only after the ICRC has supplied proof that it was able to check the issue of these

supplies to Allied war prisoners and civilian internees. It was still more difficult to obtain approval for bulk consignments of overseas supplies for French prisoners ; the Allies gave their consent finally in 1942, and then only for a limited tonnage <sup>1</sup>.

The Committee's mission to London thereupon broached the very complex problem of assistance to civilian populations in countries occupied by the Axis forces. They recalled the experience of the war of 1914-1918, during which the Belgian population had been supplied, despite the blockade, through an American committee which had organized the supervision of relief distribution on the spot. They also invoked several Resolutions adopted at International Red Cross Conferences between 1920 and 1938. According to these Resolutions, the ICRC was to consider the part to be played by the Red Cross in the event of economic blockade, and to consider how blockade regulations might be relaxed in the interests of specific categories of the population in the countries concerned, and of the release of certain supplies, such as medicaments and hospital equipment. This enquiry was to form the basis of a possible international convention on the subject <sup>2</sup>.

*First Period (August 1940—End of 1943).*

The ICRC was unfortunately unable to secure permission to send relief from overseas to certain categories of war-victims in the blockade countries. In a letter dated September 14, 1940, the Ministry of Economic Warfare stated that, while fully appreciating the value of the Committee's humanitarian work, the British Government were compelled to refuse to modify in any way the blockade policy defined by the Prime Minister in his speech of August 22, 1940. In their opinion, the shipment of relief to occupied countries indirectly assisted the enemy, who could devote part of the local production to the requirements of the German population, and even to the manufacture of war material (for instance, the manufacture of

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 30 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> See Resolution X, Geneva Conference, 1925 ; Resolution IX, Hague Conference, 1928.

explosives with fats, alcohol with potatoes, plastic material for aircraft with by-products of milk). It would, moreover, be impossible to ensure that the enemy did not seize these supplies for their own use. There was no reason to make an exception even for certain categories of persons (e.g. children and mothers), because the supply of food to the civilian population of an occupied country as a whole must be the responsibility of the occupying Power.

The British Government would countenance only the shipment of medicaments earmarked exclusively for wounded and sick in the occupied countries. These medicaments, again, were confined to pharmaceutical products, in the true sense, and dressings; they did not include foodstuffs not of a strictly medical nature, such as vitamins or cod-liver oil, nor blankets and hospital equipment, as the British Government considered that enough of these were on the European continent and should be furnished by the occupying Power.

In practice, medical stores were only given navicerts with difficulty, particularly those addressed to the civilian populations of Belgium and Jugoslavia; and the list of authorized products was frequently altered.

The economic blockade was accompanied by a financial blockade, the object of which was to deprive the enemy of the benefits of foreign currency. This became increasingly strict, especially after the United States entered the war, and also greatly hampered relief work.

Anxious, despite all these obstacles, to help women and children, the ICRC turned to the European markets for the food and clothing which the Allied blockade prevented them from procuring overseas. Unfortunately, the resources of the neutral states and of the Balkan countries, which were satellites of the Axis, were quickly exhausted, and it became more and more difficult to meet the applications that constantly came in. To remain inactive in face of the increasing distress in the devastated areas would have been a dereliction of duty. The ICRC once more tried to convince the blockade authorities that military necessities, however imperative, never completely freed a belligerent from its moral obligations, and that conse-

quently the Allies could not remain indifferent to the fate of millions of human beings who were suffering from starvation and epidemic disease. Similar steps were often undertaken at the express request of National Red Cross Societies and other relief organizations, whose representatives in London supported the endeavours of the ICRC to the fullest extent.

Undeterred by repeated refusals, the ICRC took up the matter once more, whenever a particularly critical situation arose. Its perseverance was at last rewarded ; at the request of one of its members, then in London, the blockade was relaxed to enable food supplies to be taken into Greece, where famine was making terrible inroads on the population <sup>1</sup>. But neither Belgium, nor Belgrade, nor any civilian population elsewhere was able to benefit by similar measures ; only when the European Continent was invaded by the Allies in 1944 were the regulations lifted for Holland and the Channel Islands.

*Second Period (End of 1943—May 1945).*

For the above reasons, purchases by the Joint Relief Commission had to be made in neutral countries, particularly in Switzerland.

As the war lengthened, supplies became increasingly scarce. Despite the generosity of the Government towards the Committee's relief schemes, Switzerland had to bear in mind her own precarious situation. The agreements by which she was bound to both parties, and which were constantly changing with the military, political and economic situation, greatly restricted her export possibilities. As a result of the victories gained in 1943 and 1944, the Allies increased their pressure on neutral countries, to bring them to sever their commercial relations with the Axis Powers, and Switzerland was placed between the blockade and the counter-blockade. A Swiss delegation was sent to London to negotiate with the Anglo-American delegation representing the blockade authorities. Under the provisional agreements of December 19, 1943, and of August 14, 1944, Switzerland

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 452 and 461.

procured navicerts for the indispensable overseas goods, but in exchange her Government had to agree to cut down her exports still further.

In London, the Swiss delegation advocated, first and foremost, the vital interests of their country ; but as the ICRC had its headquarters in Geneva, they agreed, at the Committee's request, likewise to plead the cause of the Red Cross. The ICRC was bound to carry out its work within the scope of the arrangements to which the Swiss authorities were committed by the Allies, and the quotas granted to the former were henceforth too small to deduct a part of them to serve as relief exports.

The Standing Joint Commission, mentioned earlier, could, it is true, grant additional quotas. All the relief schemes of the International Red Cross were therefore submitted to them. But they allowed only the shipment of supplies paid for with Swiss funds. The ICRC could not agree to a distinction between the origin of the funds used ; it was precisely through the use of foreign assets deposited in Switzerland that certain purchases could be made, against the account of welfare organizations in the occupied countries. In addition, when the Standing Joint Commission were unable to decide controversial cases themselves, they had to refer to the blockade authorities in London and Washington. Relief work was thus subjected to very regrettable delays, and its chances of success were correspondingly reduced.

The ICRC then entered into direct negotiations, in Geneva and Berne, with the Allied delegates of the Commission. It maintained that work of international and purely humanitarian character, such as it pursued, should not be subjected to the same restrictions as trade exchanges, and that the ICRC was entitled to special treatment. Its claims were supported by examples such as the following : the delegate of the ICRC in Belgrade had wired to Geneva that, unless the 20 tons of potatoes and 30 tons of millet intended for the school canteens recently opened in Belgrade, and for which an export permit had been in abeyance for a long time, did not leave at once, the entire relief scheme would have to be abandoned.

The Allied representatives were impressed by these arguments and promised to give a wider interpretation to the

blockade regulations. They allowed the Joint Relief Commission temporarily to continue its work for civilian populations in distress, whilst awaiting the response to the Memorandum sent by the ICRC to the Governments in London and Washington, on July 3, 1944, and dealing with the problem as a whole.

In this document, the ICRC had stressed the neutrality, impartiality and exclusively humanitarian purpose of its work ; it added its conviction that it would be able, by the effective control of distribution, to avoid any misappropriation of relief supplies which were intended for civilian populations. It concluded by asking that in the negotiations with the Swiss delegation then in progress in London the blockade authorities should consider granting the two following privileges to exports made from Switzerland by the Joint Relief Commission, for war-victims who took no part in the war effort of the Axis, i.e. women, children and the sick :

(1) — Such exports to be under a special régime and no longer considered as exports of the Swiss Government.

(2) — Such exports to receive permits by an emergency procedure, so that shipments should not be delayed.

Having examined the Memorandum during the summer of 1944, the blockade authorities recognized that the wishes of the ICRC were justified, and in large measure fell in with them.

Meanwhile, France had been the theatre of important military operations and events pointed to Germany being in a similar position in the near future. The ICRC therefore, as a neutral, impartial and world-wide agency, had to be ready to act not only in the occupied countries, but in the belligerent countries themselves. This increase in the scope of relief work led to further negotiations with the Allied representatives in Switzerland, who adopted a most conciliatory attitude.

On April 5, 1945, a final agreement was concluded in Switzerland between the ICRC and a delegation representing the American, British and French Governments. It dealt specifically with the following points :

(a) — Supplies imported by the International Red Cross to Switzerland under the Allied control system might be re-exported with the consent of the Allied representatives in Berne, to a destination other than that indicated on the navicerts;

(b) — Export of Swiss products by the International Red Cross was subject to approval by the Allied representatives in Berne, who would consider applications "in a spirit of complete understanding for the humanitarian objectives of the Red Cross", and would deal with them "in the least restrictive and most expeditious manner possible";

(c) — The British and United States Legations in Berne were granted extremely wide powers to authorize relief exports;

(d) — International Red Cross exports were not to be considered as part of the export quota of the Swiss Government. However, they were to be reduced, whenever the blockade authorities deemed it necessary;

(e) — Monthly statistics of exports by the International Red Cross were to be sent in by the Swiss Government to the British and United States authorities.

Relief shipments for Germany were the subject of a special arrangement. The export of supplies which had entered under a navicert was prohibited. Export of supplies of Swiss origin was permitted in behalf of the disabled, mothers and newly-born infants, expectant mothers, children and persons who were too old to contribute to the war effort of Germany, likewise victims of catastrophes such as epidemics, on condition that full reports of each distribution were made to the Allied Governments. The collapse of the German forces which took place soon after, and the occupation of the Reich by the four Allied Powers, made such shipments impossible.

The general agreement of April 5 enabled the Joint Relief Commission greatly to extend its activities, which had still further increased since it centralized applications for export permits and the shipments of all relief agencies in Switzerland. When in October 1944, it was decided not to subject Swiss exports to liberated France and Belgium to the control of the

Allied representatives in Berne, the blockade authorities greatly simplified the task of the ICRC. The Committee's delegates in these countries were now able to obtain direct from the local military authorities the import permits for relief supplies they considered necessary. In January 1945, this concession was extended to the liberated areas of the Netherlands and Alsace-Lorraine.

### *Third Period (Post-war period).*

After the end of hostilities in Europe, the machinery of the blockade was maintained to enable the Allies to ensure a fair distribution of goods. The British Government, for instance, asked to be notified of all International Red Cross shipments and their destination ; they could thus deduct them from the total quota which was allocated to each country.

Through its almost exclusive monopoly in this sphere, the Ministry of Food in London was also able on very advantageous terms to procure from the Argentine the goods needed to supply Europe. The Ministry therefore proposed that International Red Cross purchases in that country should go through its hands, to preclude any rise in prices. A delegate of the ICRC, representing the Joint Relief Commission in London, was instructed to consider these questions, in agreement with the Allied authorities.

### *(B). The Counter-Blockade*

The blockade was met by a counter-blockade, which also limited relief shipments to occupied countries. The Axis Powers, who attached as much importance as the Allies to economic warfare, by 1940 controlled the foreign trade both of the occupied and of the neutral countries of Europe. All exports from these countries had, consequently, to be accompanied by a *Geleitschein* or accompanying certificate. The same rule applied to the supplies which the ICRC wished to send to the civilian populations. The requisite *Geleitschein* was invariably obtained, but at the cost of delays which often held up the shipments.

Only relief for prisoners of war and civilian internees was free from all restrictions.

In addition, the agreements concluded between the Reich and Switzerland stipulated that Swiss exports should not exceed a certain volume. The ICRC asked that the supplies which it sent to occupied France for humanitarian purposes should not be included in the Swiss quota. In the summer of 1941, the German authorities gave a satisfactory answer as regards pharmaceutical products, but no exception was ever made in the case of foodstuffs and clothing.

### *Transfers of Funds.*

The Trading with the Enemy Act of September 1939, under which Great Britain prohibited commerce with enemy countries, included monetary provisions. All transfers of funds from Great Britain to neutral countries required the authorization (license) of the Board of Trade, and this license was granted only for the payment of goods produced by the neutral countries in excess of their own requirements and which, in addition, did not contain more than 20% of raw material coming from Axis countries.

These provisions, and similar measures taken by the United States even before their coming into the war, were a serious handicap to the work of the Joint Relief Commission. As will be seen from the latter's Report, the Commission sometimes had more difficulty in finding funds than supplies. On many occasions they were prevented from transferring to Geneva the sums which donors abroad wished to contribute for the purchase of relief.

Foreseeing these difficulties, the ICRC and the League, upon beginning their joint activity in November 1940, at once approached the Bank of International Settlements. A joint account was opened, to which the donations that came in response to the appeal of November 1940 could be paid in all countries.

This Bank, like all others, had to comply with the financial controls established by the Allies. It was unable to make many

transfers for the account of the International Red Cross, as the neutral countries produced only few commodities in excess.

The Joint Relief Commission, to which the markets in the Axis satellite countries were still largely open, then turned its attention chiefly to collecting funds within the blockade area. But it was sometimes difficult to define the origin of such funds. For instance, were amounts lent by Swiss banks to relief agencies in occupied countries to be considered as subject to the regulations of the Trading with the Enemy Act? Or could funds deposited in Swiss banks in the name of nationals of occupied countries and released for use by the Joint Relief Commission serve to make purchases in countries that were subservient to the Axis? Persistent representations by the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission enabled these funds to be utilized, at least partially, in Eastern Europe <sup>1</sup>.

The freezing of Swiss assets in the United States caused no less difficulties. Assets which were the property of the ICRC in that country were treated in exactly the same way as those belonging to Swiss citizens; consequently, they could be transferred solely through the Swiss National Bank, the only agency which had a general license for dollar transfers.

During the early years of the war, the expenses of the ICRC were met for the most part by donations from the Swiss Government and people. But the extension of the war increased expenditure to such a degree that the ICRC had to make greater claims on the help of the Governments and Red Cross Societies of the belligerent countries. The funds which were paid to the ICRC in the Allied countries remained frozen in accounts opened in Great Britain and the United States. The only way in which these funds could be made available was to resort to the good offices of the Swiss National Bank, which accepted frozen gold and credited the Committee with its equivalent in Swiss francs. Operations of this kind sometimes exceeded the financial capacity of Switzerland, for whom an accumulation of frozen gold in Allied countries presented certain risks.

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<sup>1</sup> For further particulars on this question, see the Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

When requesting the British and United States Governments for authority to export supplies from Switzerland for humanitarian purposes, the ICRC also raised the question of transfers of currency. Arguing the impartial and disinterested nature of its activities, the Committee claimed the right to dispose freely of its assets in the Allied countries and to transfer them to Europe according to requirements. It emphasized that the amounts thus transferred would serve not to purchase supplies, but only to meet the overhead expenses of relief schemes and other humanitarian work.

The Allied authorities received this application favourably, and after negotiations, early in 1945, between their representatives and the ICRC, they facilitated the financial operations of the Committee, in so far as the legislation of the Allied countries and Switzerland permitted.

#### *UNRRA and International Red Cross relief work.*

During the war, civilian populations were not aided solely by the ICRC, the League and the Joint Relief Commission. Supplies reached them also from various official or private sources, such as Governments in exile, nationals residing overseas and religious associations. The following Chapter, which deals with humanitarian activities in the various countries, shows that these agencies very often asked for the cooperation of the ICRC and their delegates.

When the Axis forces were gradually compelled to abandon the territories they had occupied, relief to civilian populations grew to exceptional proportions and its greatest agent was UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). This body was set up by forty-four Allied Governments on November 9, 1943, in order to provide initial relief for the liberated Allied countries and to help to their recovery. The present Report cannot give any account of the remarkable achievements of UNRRA during its three years of intense activity. But a few words should be said of its connection with the International Red Cross which, through the Joint

Relief Commission, was engaged in similar work from 1941, although with far smaller resources.

In the summer of 1944, the ICRC sent a delegate to the United States to consult with the Directors of UNRRA on cooperation between the two agencies. These talks showed that, despite common features, the two organizations differed on several essential points.

UNRRA was concerned, as a rule, solely with Allied countries; it was only from 1945 that it extended its help to certain ex-enemy countries. Moreover, it handed over its gifts for the Governments to use as they saw fit; in particular, they could sell the supplies to the public for the benefit of the national exchequer.

By reason of its universality and strictly non-political character, the Red Cross was on the other hand bound to give assistance wherever the need arose. It was to be presumed that after having chiefly helped Allied nationals during the war, it would later have to act in the same way in behalf of Axis nationals. Further, the nature of Red Cross supplies is such that they are issued direct and free of charge to the recipients. Such were the main reasons why the ICRC could not give up its own work for civilian populations, nor merge into the new organization its own *ad hoc* agency for similar work. The Committee could not, at least officially and in its own name, make its delegates in the liberated countries available to UNRRA, although this would have been desirable in view of the services that these experts in matters of relief might thus have been able to render.

However, an observer of the ICRC attended the meetings of the UNRRA Council, and the latter organization had a representative in Switzerland. Thus, although each worked according to its own rules, the two organizations kept up relations which enabled them to exchange informations on the requirements of the war-stricken countries, and even on many occasions, to cooperate in a practical manner. Thus, when the UNRRA missions arrived in Greece and the Dodecanese to convey supplies to the civilian population, they were assisted by the Committee's delegations, who had preceded them

in this field. Likewise, distribution of parcels to Allied prisoners of war who were liberated *en masse* after the retreat of the German forces, was carried out jointly in Germany by UNRRA teams and the Committee's delegations.

Except for these special cases, the Joint Relief Commission remained independent. It held itself, in particular, at the disposal of neutral countries which were not members of UNRRA and of all donors who were anxious to relieve distress caused by the war, according to Red Cross principles, in disregard of any political considerations. In consequence, the activities of the Commission increased greatly during the immediate post-war period.

### *Distribution of Relief.*

As a rule — and this was so mainly after the war in Poland, Belgium, Norway and Yugoslavia — the Red Cross Societies distributed relief direct in each country. If they were not approved by the occupying Power, the work was done by humanitarian organizations that were recognized by the occupying authorities. In certain cases where the national Red Cross as such was not given permission to carry on its work, means were nevertheless found, for instance in occupied Poland, to enlist the services of its local branches.

The delegate of the ICRC — or its agents in places where no regular delegate was at work — confined his duties as a rule to transmitting instructions from the donors and from the Joint Relief Commission to the distributing agencies. It was expressly stipulated : (1) that all necessary precautions should be taken to prevent the recipients from selling relief supplies on the black market ; (2) that all civilians in the service of the occupying Power, who ought therefore to be supplied solely by the latter, should be excluded from distributions. To ensure the application of these rules, the delegate carried out tests in the warehouses, supervised distribution and checked the reports made out by the receiving committees. The reports were then studied in Geneva by the Joint Relief Commission, and forwarded to the donors.

Consignments of foodstuffs sent to the occupied countries were, as a rule, provided firstly for children, and then for expectant and nursing mothers. The children usually received their rations in the day nurseries or school canteens; meals taken on the spot ruled out all possibility of illicit traffic.

When a whole population had to be fed (i. e. men, women and children, with the exception of persons working for the occupying Power), relief was distributed to the food shops and issued by these to the public against ration coupons. This method was adopted in Greece, the Dodecanese, the Channel Islands, and the Netherlands during the famine of 1945, and in the German pockets of resistance on the Atlantic Coast. But even in such cases the delegate of the ICRC took care that the supplies handed over to orphanages, day nurseries and hospitals were allocated in full to children and the sick.

Clothing supplies were particularly difficult to check. The delegate supervised distribution, it is true, but to make sure that the recipients did not sell them afterwards in order to buy extra food, periodical tests would have been required. When the British authorities proposed to lay this down as a condition to shipping clothes to the internee camps in the south of France, the ICRC decided that such tests were practically impossible. Civilians who are able to move about freely will clearly find it even easier to sell illicitly the articles which they receive as gifts for their personal use.

To keep medicaments out of the black market, these were almost always handed to hospitals, which had to keep a detailed record of their use. To this system the blockade authorities raised no objection, since it had been agreed that the whole population of the occupied territories, and not only women and children, could share in relief of this kind. Medical stores allocated to chemists were, as a rule, supplied direct to the patients on a doctor's prescription, mostly free of charge; if paid for, the proceeds went to relief organizations.

The above remarks give only a general picture. In practice, the Joint Relief Commission and the delegates of the ICRC had to conform to stipulations which varied from one country to another, and they were not always able to carry out their

work in entirely satisfactory conditions. Delegates sometimes had difficulty in gaining access to allocation schemes and, especially, detailed reports, either because the responsible associations were not yet properly organized, or because they considered any request for information as evidence of distrust. The donors, on the other hand, were most anxious to have exact information about the results of the relief programmes to which they had contributed, and showed signs of failing interest when this very legitimate wish was not met. The delegate of the ICRC often had the difficult task of smoothing over differences of this kind <sup>1</sup>.

### § 3. THE POST-WAR PERIOD

At the close of hostilities in Europe, the ICRC itself decided to liquidate the Joint Relief Commission, since this body had been set up by the ICRC and the League only for the duration of the war. The latter organisation agreed on this point with the ICRC. It was however settled that the Joint Relief Commission should be allowed to finish its current undertakings. It was also planned to set up a small Office, on the model of that which existed at the beginning of the war, which would maintain liaison between the ICRC and the League and coordinate the further relief activities of the National Red Cross Societies in behalf of civil populations. Other humanitarian institutions still in need of a neutral intermediary might have the service, the Committee thought, of a foundation similar to the Foundation for the organization of Red Cross Transports, established in 1942.

It proved, however, impossible to carry out this plan, for two reasons. In the first place, the liquidation of the Joint Relief Commission and the continuation of its work by two new organizations met with difficulties of a legal nature. Secondly, the liquidation would not have been opportune at the time, since it would have discouraged donors who were

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<sup>1</sup> For fuller particulars about the allocation of relief, see the Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

anxious to continue their help to war-victims, and for whom the name of the Joint Relief Commission, known throughout the world, was a guarantee that the scheme would be carried out surely, comparatively quickly and at small expense. The Joint Relief Commission therefore continued to exist.

With a view to better co-operation between the ICRC and the League, the Council of the Commission was replaced by an Executive Committee of three members, two of whom represented the ICRC and the League respectively, whilst the third was chosen by the two organizations. The decision of the ICRC and the League to continue their joint activities in this form was sanctioned by an agreement signed by their respective Chairmen at Paris, in November 1945, as the result of a discussion in the Executive Committee of the League. It was provided that the Joint Relief Commission should continue to function as long as it received relief supplies in quantities sufficient to cover its overhead charges.

For its part, the Advisory Conference of National Red Cross Societies, which was convened at Geneva by the League from October 15 to November 3, 1945, had recommended that "the question of collaboration between the League and the ICRC should be placed on the agenda of the next Session of the Board of Governors and that, in the interval, nothing should be done which might hinder current relief activities".

This recommendation of the National Red Cross Societies and of the executive of their Federation, confirmed the ICRC in its belief that, in the autumn of 1945, it would have been premature to interrupt material relief work for civilian populations. None the less, the question arose whether it should itself continue this work. This question had to be considered, not only as regards the possible liquidation of the Joint Relief Commission, but also in a general way, as soon as hostilities came to a close. Article VII of the Statutes of the International Red Cross instructs the ICRC to continue work in time of peace "for the relief of the evils regarded as consequences of the war". On the other hand, in order not to dissipate its energies, and also to encourage the re-establishment of normal relations, both between the National Red Cross Societies and between the

peoples themselves, it is the policy of the ICRC to relinquish its various activities as soon as the victims of the war are no longer in need of a neutral intermediary, and as soon as other national or international organizations are in a position to take useful action <sup>1</sup>.

As regards assistance to civil populations, the conditions prescribed in Article VII were undoubtedly to a large extent fulfilled. In 1945, however, the necessity for a neutral intermediary was just as obvious. It is true that there was nothing to prevent the victorious States in Europe from entering into direct relations with the more prosperous Allied countries, or with neutral States, and to appeal to the generosity of each. But such was the disorganization of the public services, of transport facilities, and sometimes also of the Red Cross Societies themselves, that it was impossible at the outset to dispense with the technical services either of the Joint Relief Commission or of the ICRC. The latter had already obtained, or was about to obtain, free transport, priority and other advantages for the movement of relief deliveries on the territories of the United Nations in Western Europe and in the neutral countries. The populations of the defeated countries, on the other hand, would have been deprived of the barest necessities, without the comparatively small gifts which the ICRC and its delegates could alone supply to them, despite many obstacles, at least during the initial period of the occupation.

In the autumn of 1945, the ICRC realised that the Red Cross had a peculiarly important mission to fulfil and that, in particular, the condition of the civil populations, no less than of the prisoners of war <sup>2</sup>, raised the problem of assistance to the defeated. The Red Cross Societies of the victorious nations were, at that time, wholly absorbed by their heavy duties in their own countries, or in the countries of their Allies ; the work of UNRRA was confined, at any rate at the outset, to relieving members of the United Nations. Private charity, with sadly restricted means, was therefore alone in a position to help war

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 43 and 46.

<sup>2</sup> See above pp. 99 et seq.

victims without distinction. The ICRC did not hesitate to offer itself to private welfare agencies, as an instrument for benefiting the civil populations of countries occupied by the United Nations, just as during hostilities it had, at the request of donors in Allied or neutral countries, set on foot large-scale relief for the civil populations of countries occupied by the Axis forces. In the view of the ICRC, its activities constitute of necessity a whole, from the outset of the conflict until the final conclusion of peace, i.e. until international relations are completely re-established. It was therefore important that, despite the feelings of resentment and rancour induced in millions of people by the savage nature of the conflict, the spirit of absolute impartiality, which is that of the Red Cross, should once more be given full play. The ICRC had some difficulty, however, in upholding the motto *Inter arma caritas*, and in thus properly fulfilling its duties as a neutral intermediary. In this connection, Germany, where the difficulties were greater than anywhere else, is a typical case; that is why the following pages will be mainly concerned with that country<sup>1</sup>.

During May 1945, until the occupying forces took over State control, indescribable chaos reigned in Germany. Disorder was rife; the appalling destructions the absence of millions of able-bodied men still prisoners of war, the large-scale evacuations, together with the exhaustion and privations which the people had suffered during the last months of the war and the crushing effect of defeat, reduced the civil population to a state where they were unable to attend to their own needs. Still less could they attend to the many *Volksdeutsche* who were pouring in from the Polish provinces, and from the territories where they had formed compact groups, in Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. To make matters worse, vast numbers of aliens still remained in Germany: Allied prisoners of war, who had to be fed by means of the ICRC vehicles until their own national Commissariats could care for them; civilian workers, forcibly recruited in the occupied

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<sup>1</sup> Further details on Germany, and the consideration of the same problem as it arose in other countries will be found on p. 401 et seq.

countries and who, like the prisoners, could not be immediately repatriated; and finally, the displaced persons. Of these last, some hundreds of thousands hesitated about returning to their country of origin; demoralised and embittered by long years of suffering, they rendered the food situation even more precarious, and sometimes even endangered the safety of the native population. True, UNRRA came to their assistance after a few weeks, but the statutes of this organization compelled it to leave a large proportion of them without assistance.

Among the countries bordering on Germany, two had not suffered directly from the war: Sweden and Switzerland, and it was from them that the first relief came. The ICRC did all in its power to facilitate the despatch of these supplies, in particular those which came direct from Switzerland, or passed through Swiss territory. As has already been stated, the ICRC on several occasions, in particular in a Memorandum of August, 1945, requested permission to send into Germany, at least for Allied former prisoners of war and for civilian workers and displaced persons from the Allied countries, the large quantities of goods which had accumulated in Geneva by the end of 1944<sup>1</sup>.

The supplies available for the German civil population at first comprised a part of the stocks held by welfare organizations in Sweden and Switzerland, and by the Joint Relief Commission; the last were very slender; for the Red Cross very rarely, as we know, received donations not specifically earmarked and, up to the time of the armistice, very little had been allocated for the Axis Powers. Moreover, some time passed before the thousands of truckloads of supplies furnished by the Swiss Relief Fund and the Irish Donation arrived.

Thus, while large and regular consignments were already *en route* for the Western countries, and later for the South-West of Europe, the revictualling of Germany at first lacked all system and was confined to isolated, unofficial sources; no special agreements on the subject had been made with the Allied General Staffs, and the ICRC vehicles entered Germany duty free merely by permission of local military commanders.

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 118.

A few weeks later, however, when the occupying Powers had set up an administration, the ICRC asked for official authority for the entry of goods intended either for the German people or for aliens detained in Germany. However, the occupying authorities were not yet at that date ready to grant such permission, at any rate as regards the German population. It was maintained, in particular, that by the terms of the Potsdam Agreement the standard of living of Germans could not be superior to that of the peoples who had suffered occupation by Hitler's armies. Nevertheless, the ICRC, which had been informed by the reports of its delegates from South-Eastern Europe and also by appeals for help, of the migrations of *Volksdeutsche* and their tragic consequences, was certain that the occupying authorities could not long remain indifferent to the situation of these millions of people, including many women and children, who had no fixed abode, no shelter, and no means of existence. On September 7, 1945, the ICRC drew the attention of the American, British, French and Russian Governments to the wretched plight of these refugees, and offered to report on their most urgent needs and to hand out to them the supplies it had received from Governments and private donors for this purpose.

As, however, the *Volksdeutsche* were now spreading throughout the whole German territory, any scheme of relief would have to include the entire population, without distinction. The special delegate sent by the ICRC to the four General Staffs of the occupying armies had thus to seek their consent to the supply of relief, not only to the refugees but also to the stable German population. These attempts achieved an early success ; from the autumn of 1945 onwards, relief supplies were allowed to enter, and the Committee's delegations were able to start work in the French and British zones, as well as in Berlin. The American and Russian authorities did not grant permission until the early months of 1946 <sup>1</sup>.

Thus, in the spring of 1946, the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission were in a position, one through diplomatic means, the other in the practical field, to transmit relief supplies to

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<sup>1</sup> For further details see pp. 424 et seq.

civilians, whether they belonged to the United Nations or the defeated countries. As regards the United Nations in Western Europe and Italy, such action now became rare, for these countries had restored their external relations, both political and material, to a point where they could do without the services of a neutral intermediary and no longer needed the assistance of the International Red Cross. In fact, they themselves now gave assistance to that body—this was especially so in the case of France, Belgium and Italy—by granting free transit facilities, or at any rate considerable reductions in tariffs, for the consignments of the Joint Relief Commission passing through their territories.

A year after the end of the war in Europe, the question again arose whether the Joint Relief Commission was still in a position to do all that the ICRC and the League expected of it. For reasons which will be found in the Report of the League to the Stockholm Conference, the Board of Governors of the League, at its XIXth Session held at Oxford, in July 1946, discussed the problem, which had already been considered in Paris by the League Executive Committee in the autumn of 1945, and passed a Resolution, the substance of which ran as follows: Relief supplies given by a Red Cross should, as far as possible, be transmitted direct to another Red Cross Society. The Joint Relief Commission should cease its activities altogether, that is to say, it should refuse all new commissions, even from Red Cross Societies.

This Resolution was officially communicated to the ICRC on July 29, 1946, at the time when the Preliminary Conference of Red Cross Societies was sitting in Geneva. The Committee was thus able to discuss the matter at once with the Chairman of the League. By a joint circular dated September 4, the ICRC and the League issued the following statement to all National Red Cross Societies, the chief donors outside the Red Cross, and to Governments and the public: The Board of Governors of the League, judging that the supply of relief to civil populations could, in most cases, be made direct by donors to recipients without the assistance of the Joint Relief Commission, had asked for the winding-up of the Commission within six months. In order, however, to give donors an opportunity of

meeting the new situation, the Joint Relief Commission was ready to accept, up to October 31, all commissions which could be put through before the end of the current year. The ICRC agreed to this liquidation, but it was understood that, after November 1, both the ICRC and the League would continue to facilitate, in accordance with their statutes and in the spirit of the Red Cross, all consignments of relief to civil populations who were victims of the war.

In fact, after an initial post-war diminution, gifts sent to the Joint Relief Commission had increased again in the early summer of 1946, and it was estimated that the countries who benefited thereby would still be in need either of a neutral intermediary, or, in the case of United Nations populations, at least of organizations having the technical experience and the privileges which the ICRC, the Joint Relief Commission and the League had acquired during the war.

In this belief, the League expanded its secretariat in Geneva and offered its services to all Red Cross Societies anxious to aid civil populations. The ICRC gladly lent its support to this undertaking, thus giving fresh proof of that desire for co-operation which, in 1940, had led to the foundation of the Joint Relief Commission. The ICRC now supplied the League with information concerning the requirements of civil populations; this information appeared, with other data, in the Information Bulletin for the co-ordination of relief, published in Geneva by the League from July 1946 onwards. The Committee lent its support to the League's application—which was speedily granted—to the Swiss Authorities, for the same privileges (free transit, free warehousing and facilities for rapid export) which had been accorded formerly to the ICRC, the League, and to their organ, the Joint Relief Commission.

As, contrary to expectation, it was necessary to continue warehousing and assembling part of the deliveries in Geneva, the ICRC offered the League space in its own warehouses for 180 tons of relief goods, and made itself responsible for sending on supplies. These were small at first, but reached 36 tons in June, 1947<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In August and Sept., 1947, the amount reached the figure of 135 tons.

In those countries where the League had not as yet all the required facilities, or where the assistance of a neutral intermediary was needed, the delegations of the ICRC (e.g. in Germany, Belgium, Northern Italy, at Cairo, etc.) dealt with the receipt, forwarding and distribution of relief goods for which the League was responsible.

After overcoming the difficulties inherent in the winding up of an organization in full activity, the League was soon able to act as a useful intermediary for the National Red Cross Societies in transmitting their gifts to civil populations.

There remained, however, a delicate problem to be solved, that of the "non-Red Cross" gifts, i.e. the funds or goods received from a donor country, which had not passed through the channel of the Red Cross of that particular country<sup>1</sup>. Apart from the supplies given by UNRRA and other international government organizations, the transmission of which the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission were not called upon to ensure, this category comprised consignments from various Governments (Swiss Relief Fund, Irish Donation, etc.), international religious organizations, municipalities, national associations, groups formed under the sponsorship of towns, etc., and finally, private contributors. These "non-Red Cross" gifts had constituted the major part of the relief transmitted by the Joint Commission during and after the war; but there was a risk of these sources drying up if the services, both practical and economic, of a neutral intermediary failed just at the moment when the generosity of the public was beginning to show signs of flagging.

The question now arose whether the privileges accorded to the Red Cross should be exercised for the transmission of gifts which had not passed through the Red Cross of the donor country, and in particular for the gifts not destined for an entire population.

At the time of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, and later during the World War of 1914-1918, the ICRC had already been asked to forward gifts from families, institutions other than the

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<sup>1</sup> This matter is touched on in Vol. I, p. 38. It is also dealt with in the Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

Red Cross, and Governments. During the recent War, the importance both absolute and relative, of gifts of this kind increased largely. In proof, we need only consider the remarkable development of the aid afforded by religious associations to prisoners of war, by Jewish organizations to civilians in Europe and the Far East who were victims of racial persecution, by various Allied Governments to their nationals who were prisoners, and finally, the increasing help given by Governments compelled to seek refuge abroad, to the civil populations resident in their home countries under enemy occupation. The greater part of these donations, valued at several hundred million Swiss francs, had, as was well known to the Governments concerned, enjoyed priority and freedom of transport, transit concessions and customs exemption, these advantages having been granted to the ICRC for all relief goods sent to prisoners of war and, very often, for those sent to civil populations.

The ICRC had been granted this extension of Red Cross privileges solely because it ensured that even gifts not originally sponsored by the Red Cross should be distributed in accordance with the rule of impartial charity which is the feature of the Red Cross. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that, in the matter of relief parcels, the Prisoners of War Convention had its origins in the individual parcel system, that is to say, in the system by which relief is sent direct from the donor to the recipient.

But was it feasible to adhere strictly to the principle of impartiality in the distribution of "non-Red Cross" gifts to civil populations? The ICRC regards this principle as essential; during the last phase of the War, it could not, however, always be sure of having been faithful to this policy. From the Red Cross point of view, relief ought to be allocated solely in accordance with the existing needs and their degree of urgency, without any regard for either side in a war, or for political, social or religious parties. The effect of this principle is, clearly, that when needs are not equally urgent everywhere, assistance given in various quarters will not be in mathematically equal amounts. During the first war years, relief work for the Allies was very much greater in proportion to that afforded to their adversaries, while after the armistice, the ICRC, apart from its

activities in aid of displaced persons and the civil populations of Central and Eastern Europe, dealt almost exclusively with nationals of the Axis Powers, especially of Germany.

Furthermore, the ICRC had not been at liberty to issue supplies as it thought best to prisoners of war of certain Allied countries, for example, nor to any civil population. In its capacity of trustee and forwarding agent, on the contrary, it had to comply with the wishes of the donors, who also—including the National Red Cross Societies—received considerable funds from the public for quite definite purposes. Had the ICRC, therefore, only accepted donations for distribution to all war victims, solely according to their needs, it would have been compelled, even during the war, to cease practically all its efforts to help not only civil populations, but also prisoners of war<sup>1</sup>. It is true that the ICRC endeavoured, sometimes not entirely in vain, to get the National Red Cross Societies and other donors to agree that a certain amount of relief goods should be held in common for all prisoners, no matter of what nationality. But it is not less true that the restrictions placed on its activities caused very great disparities in the distribution of goods, even as regards any single group of belligerents.

This was, however, of small importance, as long as the ICRC was the only possible intermediary between donors and recipients, as was the case during the War, and in 1946-1947 also as regards certain territories. In these circumstances, the Red Cross could not, on the plea that a different destination would be more suitable, refuse any offer of relief, for it was essential that aid should be given at all costs to war victims of every kind. On the other hand, when means of sending aid apart from the Red Cross became available, the ICRC preferred to accept only those commissions which could be executed in a spirit of complete impartiality, while favouring, even in the post-war period, generous offers of a non-political nature.

The ICRC applied the same policy to the transmission of "non-Red Cross" relief to civil populations. After the liquidation of the Joint Relief Commission, the ICRC at first thought

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<sup>1</sup> For further details, see Vol. 1, p. 16 et seq.

of temporarily undertaking this work, but abandoned the idea for three reasons :

(1) — In the first place, the ICRC was anxious to husband its resources. True, it was entitled to cover expenses by imposing a levy calculated at the end of each year, either by the system applied to PW relief, or on a fixed percentage basis, as had been the practice of the Joint Relief Commission. Either method would have enabled it, as in the past, to debit its general budget only with the small amounts which were not repayable. The creation of a special department to deal with civil populations would have meant diverting to this new task a section of its staff, which was already hardly numerous enough to deal with current business, even if experienced assistants had been transferred from the Joint Relief Commission.

(2) — A special department, functioning only for a few months, would have caused exactly the sort of confusion that had been avoided, in 1940, by the constitution of a joint organ of the ICRC and the League. The League from that time had in fact an organization of its own to deal with the transmission of gifts from National Red Cross Societies.

(3) — Finally, on its being decided that the Joint Relief Commission should be dissolved, it appeared essential that a " non-Red Cross " successor should be found, so as to limit direct intervention by the ICRC to the fairly brief period—as it was then hoped it would prove to be—during which relief would be needed by civil populations.

With the approval therefore of the General Secretariat of the League, the ICRC looked for a successor in this work, and on November 1, 1946 (from which date the Joint Relief Commission entered into liquidation, or in other words, refused any further commissions) the ICRC and the League made the following announcement by a general Circular addressed to the National Red Cross Societies, to the chief " non-Red Cross " donors and to Governments :

(1) — Donations from National Red Cross Societies would in the future be forwarded by the League.

(2) — The ICRC would continue, in accordance with its statutes and its humanitarian traditions, to facilitate the despatch of relief to civil populations, particularly in cases where a neutral intermediary was indispensable.

(3) — An "International Centre for Relief for Civil Populations" which had just been established in Geneva, would accept, from November 1 onwards, any commissions from donor organizations for the receipt, purchase, transport and distribution of relief supplies destined for civil populations in distress as a result of the war. In accordance with the agreements concluded between the ICRC and the League, this Centre, which was taking over the personnel, offices and, as far as possible, the working methods of the Joint Relief Commission, would carry out, in the name of the Commission and on its account, any mandate not executed when the Commission ceased work.

Relief for civil populations was therefore assured for as long as might prove necessary, in accordance with the desire of the ICRC and the League that no obstacle should be placed in the way of non-political relief work.

We will not dwell here on the many practical difficulties which were necessarily incurred by the disappearance of the Joint Relief Commission and the substitution of new organizations<sup>1</sup>. A few words may however be added on the subject of the Committee's activities up to the end of June, 1947.

In conformity with the circular of November 1, the ICRC offered its services to the League<sup>2</sup>, to the Centre and to any other institution requiring support.

In order to encourage donations for civil populations, the ICRC formed a service for passing on appeals for relief to the League, the major international welfare organizations, the Swiss Relief Fund, various other relief organizations, and the public. These appeals were a measure of the acute distress suffered by countries which had been ravaged by the war. The ICRC also discovered that relief work was becoming day by

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<sup>1</sup> Further details on this subject will be found in the General Report of the Joint Relief Commission and in the report to be made by the League to the International Red Cross Conference.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 391.

day more difficult. Donors were slackening in enthusiasm, those countries which had not been affected by the war wished to cease sending relief in order to concentrate on improving social conditions in their own territories, and the Governments themselves decided to bring UNRRA's activities to an end.

The League and the international or national institutions to which the ICRC forwarded its appeals, were frequently obliged to reply that they themselves were receiving requests of the same kind, and that they were unable to make any substantial response. The ICRC, acting in agreement with organizations whose headquarters were in Switzerland and with the Swiss groups, persevered, however, in supplying and exchanging information concerning needs for relief, in particular by way of the unofficial monthly meetings that took place in turn at the headquarters of each of these institutions, and at which the following organizations were represented: Caritas Catholica Internationalis (Lucerne), the World Council of Churches, the Union O.S.E., the International Union for Child Welfare, the World Alliance of Y.W.C.A., the World Alliance of Y.M.C.A., the International Centre for Relief of Civil Populations, the American Friends Service Committee and the European Student Relief.

The members of these meetings, joined soon after by representatives of various other relief or social organizations, published, under the auspices of the ICRC, appeals to world public opinion, at the beginning of each winter. They hoped thus to encourage the generosity of countries and of peoples who had not suffered from the war, or who had been less affected than others by its consequences. The first appeal was launched in October 1945 by the ICRC, the International Union for Child Welfare, the Caritas Catholica Internationalis, the World Jewish Congress and the World Council of Churches. These stated their readiness to unite in order to rescue the children of Europe from their tragic fate, without distinction of nationality, race or religion. Though the League was unable, for comprehensible reasons of a statutory nature, to associate itself formally with this appeal, it was none the less conscious of the serious nature of the problem. This is clear from the message

which, jointly with the ICRC, it addressed in November 1945 to the National Red Cross Societies, and which reflected the emotion with which forty-three of these Societies, meeting in an Advisory Conference called by the League, had heard the reports on this distressing subject made by many delegates. The National Red Cross Societies were asked to give further evidence of their generosity and fellowship, by helping to put an end to one of the worst calamities that had ever menaced the children, not only of Europe but of the entire world.

During the winter of 1946-1947, the ICRC and the international institutions with headquarters in Switzerland repeated their appeal to the whole world, calling on every individual to make, as far as his means permitted, a donation to the national or international organizations which based their activities on the principle of impartial aid to all human beings in distress. Hopes had been entertained of a considerable improvement in the circumstances of war-victims during 1947. But throughout the Northern hemisphere, and especially in Europe, the harvests were so poor that in December a third appeal was launched, under the auspices of the ICRC, by the nine institutions already mentioned, urging once more, in the name of human fellowship, the need for supplying immediate aid to all in distress.

In the matter of publications, the ICRC tried to avoid duplication by supplying one or other of the above-mentioned organizations with abundant data ; practically all of these bodies themselves also published bulletins and surveys. As the ICRC appeared, for the moment, to be the only organization capable of dealing direct with such questions, it instructed its Medical Division to study the ill effects of undernourishment and poor housing conditions on the health of civil populations ; if the public were enlightened on this matter, they would better realise the urgent need for assistance. In June 1946, a first report appeared, in which a vivid picture was drawn of the decline in health observed, chiefly among people who had been suffering for long years from restrictions of every kind. This report formed the basis of the appeal sent out in the autumn of 1946 by all the major relief organizations.

After the liquidation of the Joint Relief Commission, the Civil Populations Service of the Medical Division was enlarged, so as to provide all those interested with the general or special documents they required. The greater part of these data were based on information obtained by the Committee's delegations from the competent authorities on the spot ; the rest came from National Red Cross Societies, or from officials who visited Geneva. In its publications, of which two more appeared in November 1946 and August 1947, the ICRC had tried to give details of the conditions in the largest possible number of countries, partly to achieve impartiality, and partly because general reports were much less frequent than those on special aspects of the subject. These summaries were widely quoted in the Press, among the national and international relief organizations, National Red Cross Societies, and in official and scientific circles. Fresh printings had to be made, both in French and English, to satisfy the heavy demand from official departments, welfare associations and the many people interested in the social consequences of the war.

On December 26, 1946, the ICRC signed an agreement for cooperation with the International Centre for Relief for Civil Populations, the work of which was similar to that of the Relief Department of the League Secretariat. The ICRC undertook to support any steps taken by the Centre to obtain facilities for export and for the conversion of money in the donor countries, as well as the same privileges as the Joint Relief Commission, e.g. as regards the transit of supplies.

In return, the Centre could, on payment of their expenses, claim the services of the delegations which the ICRC still maintained in the countries to which assistance was being given, as long as their activities were of a non-political nature, or in conformity with the Red Cross principle of strict impartiality, i.e. as long as they dealt with all the necessitous people in a given country or territory. The ICRC knew, however, by experience that donors often wished to restrict their gifts to a certain category of recipients ; by refusing its services in such cases, there was a danger that it would obstruct a considerable part of such welfare work. A compromise was necessary. It was recom-

mended to the Centre that it should endeavour to coordinate these donations of restricted scope with one another, or with the more general donations, so that ultimately the relief sent to a country, or a group of countries devastated by the war, would be sufficiently comprehensive. Naturally, all activities had to be sanctioned by the authorities of the countries concerned and, in so far as the ICRC was an intermediary, to conform with the general arrangements made with the authorities.

The scruples which the ICRC felt as regards the principle of strict impartiality were heightened during 1947. The donors, moreover, while still inspired by a true spirit of charity, became more and more strongly inclined to send individual parcels, or relief in a form which would emphasise the activities of the political or religious institutions in which they had a major interest. The ICRC was unable to follow this policy, especially at a time when its intervention was no longer indispensable, other paths now being open to public charity. As a result, the ICRC gradually ceased its practice of sending on individual parcels, whenever the post office could take them over; it practically succeeded, in the course of the first half of 1947, in checking the flood of packages which were sent from all directions to Geneva, usually without previous notice. As regards collective donations for relief for a stipulated purpose, the ICRC requested the donors, or their agents, to ask the authorities concerned for leave to send them direct to their destination. The countries which could only be dealt with through a neutral intermediary were now luckily becoming fewer. For this reason the ICRC which, as we have seen, is compelled by its statutes to limit its activities as soon as circumstances permit<sup>1</sup>, was led to restrict still further its work in forwarding relief to the civil populations affected by the second World War <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 385.

<sup>2</sup> In the Supplementary Report for the period July 1947 to Dec. 1948, an account will be found of the ICRC's collaboration with the Centre for Relief for Civil Populations, the League and various other relief organizations, in the case of several countries where a neutral intermediary could still be of service.

## *Chapter 2*

### **Relief to Individual Countries**

#### **§ I. ALBANIA**

The limited relief that the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission were able to give to the Albanian population was considerably delayed by adverse circumstances.

Albania did not, like Greece, have the advantage of aid from colonies of its nationals living abroad, sufficiently numerous and well-off to supply her with relief funds. Moreover, Albania was, during the second World War, one of the most difficult European countries to supply from abroad.

As early as 1944, the condition of the Albanian population became very grave. Appeals were made to the ICRC both by the Government and by the Resistance<sup>1</sup>. Medicaments, food-stuffs and clothing were urgently needed for nearly 50,000 children.

A member of the Committee's delegation in Greece reached Albania in May 1944. After discussions with representatives of the Albanian Red Cross, the Government and the Resistance, he drew up a plan for forwarding and distributing supplies. The ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission took steps to find donors willing to assist a homeless population numbering, by the figures of the Albanian Red Cross, more than 170,000 people.

The gifts actually received amounted only to 51,500 francs. It was not until the summer of 1945 that the Joint Relief

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<sup>1</sup> The Anti-Fascist Committee for Albanian National Liberation.

Commission was able to forward via Bari 1,241 kilos of clothing, 6,872 kilos of foodstuffs, and 550 kilos of pharmaceutical supplies. Since communications across the Adriatic were re-established only several months after the end of hostilities, the goods warehoused at Bari did not arrive in Albania until the autumn of 1945. They were distributed with the assistance of two delegates of the ICRC, who, in travelling about the country, were able to decide where needs were most urgent.

In spite of the considerable activities of UNRRA, the situation in Albania improved only very slowly. The State was supporting 35,000 children, of whom 10,000 were orphans; 70,000 women and old people were living in deplorable conditions, and 23,000 refugees from Greece were completely destitute<sup>1</sup>. Renewed assistance was essential. With the aid of the Swiss Relief Fund and the Irish Donation, the Joint Relief Commission was able to increase its work in Albania and to assist most of these stricken people.

Other gifts unfortunately could not be used until more than a year had elapsed. In August 1944, in fact, the ICRC delegation in Cairo was in possession of £E 7,000, collected by the Albanian Minister in Cairo; £E 5,000 was a gift from the Egyptian Government, and £E 2,000 came from a charity sale organized by Albanian ladies.

Despite the personal intervention of the Egyptian Finance Minister, these funds could not be transferred to Geneva. It was only at the end of 1945 that the Cairo Delegation managed to place the £E 7,000 at the disposal of the London Delegation, which used this sum for purchasing relief stores for the Albanian population in the sterling areas<sup>1</sup>.

## § 2. AUSTRIA

At the end of the war in the spring of 1945, the situation of Austria was particularly tragic. A large part of her territory had been devastated, while a vast influx of refugees

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

had served to heighten her already considerable economic difficulties.

Upper Austria, with a normal population of about one million, was accommodating some 600,000 immigrants. These included Hungarian refugees, members of German minorities from the Sudetenland, Hungary and Yugoslavia, many South Tyrolese and displaced persons. Food rations were below the living minimum and medical supplies were virtually exhausted.

The partition of Austria into four zones of occupation made relief schemes extremely difficult. The first shipments were hastily improvised and despatched mainly from Switzerland. The Committee's delegation established in Vienna in the spring of 1945, which had organised soup kitchens even before the surrender, exerted themselves in behalf of expectant and nursing mothers, children's homes, TB patients reported by the municipal health service, and a large number of repatriates. Medical and pharmaceutical supplies were sent chiefly to maternity and children's hospitals.

Until rail communications were restored, the relief supplies were transported by road from Switzerland, with the unofficial consent of the local authorities. To distribute the supplies according to the wishes of the donors, delegations were set up in Vienna, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Salzburg and Linz; these co-operated with the local agencies. The relief thus contributed was quite disproportionate to the needs. Nevertheless, as the Viennese authorities recognised, the ICRC and the Swiss Relief Fund played a leading part in feeding the country during that period.

When the railways began to function in 1946, the Joint Relief Commission was able to send its shipments by block-trains. Concurrently, the UNRRA services were expanded. It soon became clear that these various relief actions would have to be co-ordinated. At the beginning of 1946 the Inter-Allied Commission in Vienna requested the organizations to submit all distribution plans for their approval. The Austrian Government, on its side, appointed the Ministry of Social Insurance to co-ordinate relief activities; the scheme was to be as far as possible in accordance with the wishes of the donors.

This step greatly facilitated the import of relief, duty and carriage free ; and the Committee's delegates no longer had to make daily arrangements for the forwarding and storage of goods. They continued, however, to notify Geneva of the requests for help, mainly for the refugees <sup>1</sup>.

### § 3. BELGIUM

From the outbreak of the war in the West, the ICRC kept in close contact with the Belgian Red Cross and with those of its units which had withdrawn to France to care for the Belgian refugees. The Committee was thus able to follow the food situation, which soon became very difficult. Information from this source was supplemented by reports from the Committee's delegates on their visits to PW camps in the occupied zones, and by prominent Belgians who came to Geneva to plead the cause of the undernourished women and children.

Collections were made amongst the Belgian organizations in Switzerland. In addition, a joint appeal issued by the ICRC and the League on November 22, 1940, elicited substantial contributions for the relief of women and children in Belgium. Finally, to meet a steadily increasing food shortage, the ICRC devoted a large proportion of its freely disposable funds for the purchase of relief for Belgium.

Even before it had full status, the Joint Relief Commission was made responsible, by the ICRC and the League, for the co-ordination of relief for the Belgian civilians ; in particular, the Commission received for distribution almost the whole of two large gifts from the Government of the Belgian Congo <sup>2</sup>.

The Committee's Relief Department sent the following goods between November 1940 and April 1942 (in kilograms) :

Condensed milk . . . . .	2,700 cases	67,160
Cheese . . . . .	62 „	940
Chestnut purée . . . . .	167 „	3,760
(gift of the Belgian Congo Government)		

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<sup>1</sup> For particulars regarding the foodstuffs, clothing and medical supplies sent to Austria by the Joint Relief Commission, on behalf of numerous donors, see the Commission's Report.

<sup>2</sup> For particulars see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

Jemalt . . . . .	40 cases	1,823
Cenovis yeast . . . . .	40 „	1,280
Milk products . . . . .	20 „	760
Nestrovit . . . . .	1 „	60
Sundry foods . . . . .	169 parcels	3,823
Pure vitamin C . . . . .	2 cases	70
Salt fish . . . . .	22 barrels	1,700
Ovaltine . . . . .	40 cases	1,580
Condensed milk . . . . .	50 „	1,175
Clothing (Various shipments to the Belgian Red Cross from the Lausanne Committee for the Relief of Belgian PW and Internees) . . . . .	20 „	863
Clothing (gift of the Belgian Embassy in Washington) . . . . .	4 „	160

All these shipments were addressed to the representative of the German Red Cross in Brussels, and consequently were exempt from freight charges and customs dues. The representative handed them over to the Belgian Red Cross, which acknowledged receipt to the ICRC and distributed the relief to maternity homes and welfare institutions.

In order to increase this aid, which was still far from adequate, the Winter Relief, an organization set up to assist the civilian population and collaborate with the National Red Cross Society, sent a delegation to Geneva to consult with the ICRC on suitable measures. Close and fruitful co-operation then developed between the Winter Relief, the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission, which had just begun operations for the women and children. As the Winter Relief had succeeded in mobilising the credits and funds of the leading Belgian banks in Switzerland, Hungary and Rumania, considerable purchases could be made in those countries through the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission <sup>1</sup>.

The Joint Relief Commission's consignments, however, were only a relatively small proportion of the total supplies sent to the Belgian civilian population. At the end of 1940, the Belgian Government in London set up an organization in

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<sup>1</sup> For particular, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

Portugal for the relief of the population in occupied Belgium. In the spring of 1941 a "Co-ordination Committee for the Provisioning of Belgium by Europe" was set up in Lisbon to centralise these vast shipments of foodstuffs from Portugal. A "Joint Committee for the Distribution of Relief in Belgium", in Brussels, comprising the principal welfare organizations of the country, under the chairmanship of M. Paul Heymans (who was also chairman of the Winter Relief), shared out the material among the various organizations, including the Belgian Red Cross, the Winter Relief and the National Child Welfare Office, which carried out the distribution. Because of their activity for the women and children of Belgium, the ICRC—and from 1941 the Joint Relief Commission also—maintained close relations with these Belgian organizations.

\* In November 1942, the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission were requested by the German authorities to send a delegation to Berlin in order to examine the whole question of Belgian relief. In the course of these meetings, which were also attended by the heads of the relief distributing agencies in Belgium, the German authorities stated that no more direct shipments of foodstuffs by the Co-ordination Committee in Portugal would be permitted; that is to say, the Germans were opposed to the people of Belgium being fed by an agency controlled by the Belgian Government abroad. On the other hand, they had no objection to the relief being distributed under the auspices and through the intermediary of a strictly neutral and non-political body such as the ICRC.

To avoid any interruption in the flow of relief, the ICRC stated its readiness, in principle, to take over these new responsibilities, subject to having a representative in Belgium. The Committee felt that if it was to handle the shipment of relief from Lisbon and give satisfaction to the donors, it should also supervise the goods on their arrival and in their distribution. This arrangement was approved by the Belgian Government; the Joint Relief Commission undertook the technical organization of these shipments.

The ICRC thereupon set up a delegation in Brussels, enlarged the one already in Lisbon, and sent a representative to Spain

whose mission was to forward the foodstuffs, reaching Spain by sea, to the representative of the German Red Cross at the Franco-Spanish border, who sent them on to the German Red Cross representative in Brussels. The goods were delivered in Brussels in the presence of the ICRC delegates and the representatives of the Belgian relief agencies.

Despite these substantial consignments from Portugal, the food situation remained precarious, and in the spring of 1943, when reserve stocks of wheat were practically exhausted, even became alarming. The ICRC endeavoured to close the gaps until the new harvest. In response to an appeal, the Swiss Government offered 14,700 tons of wheat which it held in Philadelphia: payment was to be made by the Belgian Government in London, and the wheat was to be carried in Swiss vessels in May 1943. This scheme, however, required the sanction of the blockade authorities, to whom the ICRC once more appealed for a waiver of the regulations in force. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Economic Warfare replied on July 1 that, after careful study of the question and despite its desire to accede to the wishes of the ICRC, it regretted its inability to grant the required navicerts. A further proposal by the ICRC for the grant of an extra ration of bread for Belgian children in the winter of 1943/44 was also refused in November 1943, in spite of the intervention of the Belgian Government in London.

The shipments from Portugal continued to reach Brussels regularly, but a new difficulty soon arose: the German authorities suspected that a part of these relief shipments were finding their way into the black market, and proposed that they themselves should supervise the reception and distribution of the goods. Such a measure, or even the supervision of distribution by the German Red Cross—which had also been contemplated—would have had a most disastrous effect on the relief programme and would have alienated the donors.

The ICRC delegation in Brussels immediately took steps and the German authorities, the Winter Relief and the Belgian Red Cross finally agreed that the ICRC delegation in Brussels should be responsible for reception and distribution. In order to carry out this new assignment, which entailed painstaking

vigilance from the time the relief goods arrived to their handing over to the consumer, the ICRC was obliged to increase its delegation.

When the Allies landed in France, communications between Portugal and Belgium were cut off and the Coordination Committee decided on June 16, 1944, to suspend its activity until the resumption of railway transport.

The Belgian population was still supplied, however, from Switzerland, particularly with foodstuffs which could still be sent by rail across Germany from Eastern Europe. An ICRC mission and the Joint Relief Commission had further conversations in Brussels with the occupation authorities, and sought to obtain some relaxation of the restrictions they had imposed in view of the military situation.

Despite the effective cooperation of the German railways, a large part of the cereals bought in Hungary by the Joint Relief Commission did not reach Belgium before its liberation by the Allied forces in September 1944, after which date the Belgian Government took over the task of provisioning the country. As will be seen later, the relief goods which were stocked in Germany were used for relief work in occupied Holland <sup>1</sup>.

In the period which followed the liberation of Belgium, the Joint Relief Commission continued to dispatch numerous relief trains to that country, as the ICRC delegation in Paris, after difficult negotiations with the French authorities and the Allied Military Command, managed to obtain the necessary permits. The stocks which remained in Portugal were also sent on to Belgium <sup>2</sup>.

#### § 4. CZECHOSLOVAKIA

On the German occupation of the whole of Czechoslovakia in May, 1939, Slovakia was declared an independent State, while Bohemia and Moravia were made a Protectorate.

Because of its peculiar status, Czechoslovakia was not included in the programme drawn up by the ICRC and the

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<sup>1</sup> See below p. 497.

<sup>2</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

League, and accepted by the Germans for assistance to occupied countries through the intermediary of the Joint Relief Commission. Moreover, all through the war, the food situation in these regions was never as unfavourable as in other occupied countries. Even in 1944, the ICRC representative in Slovakia was still able to buy food, principally sugar, which he sent to his colleague in Vienna for the Jewish population.

Only towards the end of the war, shortly before the liberation, were the ICRC representatives in Prague and Bratislava able to furnish irregular aid to the civilian population.

The representative at Prague, although with slight resources, assisted the persons wounded during the relieving battles, thus replacing the Red Cross installed by the Germans, now in flight. Soon after, the Czechoslovak Red Cross was sufficiently reorganized, and able to take over this work.

In the weeks following the liberation, the ICRC maintained daily wireless contact with its representative in Prague. To meet an urgent demand for medicaments, partly for the internees at Terezin, partly for the civilian population, the Committee obtained authority from the Allied Supreme Command to despatch a fleet of trucks, organized by the Joint Relief Commission and the Special Aid Division of the ICRC. Since these supplies were urgently needed, the ICRC had first of all tried to send them to Prague by air, but authorization for the flight was only granted as far as Pilsen. It would then have been necessary to find rolling stock in this town and reload the goods; the ICRC, therefore, preferred to use road transport for the entire route from Switzerland to Prague.

At Bratislava, under the German occupation, the ICRC representative helped the Jewish population<sup>1</sup>. Under an agreement with the Jewish donor, he was able to use part of the funds for aid to the civilian population at large.

The reconstruction work accomplished in Czechoslovakia was such that, even shortly after the war, relief was less urgently needed in Czechoslovakia than in other countries. Action by the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission did not appear to

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<sup>1</sup> See below p. 523.

be indispensable either, as the donors were soon in direct communication with Czechoslovakia. However, the representative of the ICRC in Prague applied for carriage and duty free transport of relief goods for the civilian population. This was granted on March 29, 1946.

With the consent of the Government and the donors, the ICRC handled ten per cent of the goods sent to Czechoslovakia by the Swiss Relief Fund, and distributed them to the minorities interned in camps and awaiting their deportation to Germany. These camps were also supplied with two carloads of potatoes from the Bavarian Red Cross. Thereafter, it was felt wiser to wait until these minorities arrived in Germany before giving them the relief intended for them <sup>1</sup>.

## § 5. THE DODECANESE

During the month of December 1944, the ICRC received urgent appeals from the civil and religious authorities of the Dodecanese Islands, at that time occupied by the Germans, for aid to the inhabitants, who were in a desperate plight. Negotiations undertaken by various delegations of the ICRC with the belligerents led to an agreement in January 1945, whereby the British and German military commands authorised delegates of the ICRC, of Swiss nationality, to distribute relief in the Islands of Rhodos, Leros, Cos, Calymnos, Calchi and Pserimo, where the population was most severely affected. Izmir was chosen as the base, and the Turkish Government authorised the ICRC to charter the necessary caiques, or Levantine sailing vessels. These craft were required to wear the Turkish flag and be marked with the Red Cross emblem. The bulk of the food consignments were supplied free by British Middle East Command. At the request of the ICRC delegation in Cairo, the Greek Red Cross in London and Egypt, and the Greek Colony in Egypt bore the entire costs of this mission, particularly the freight charges. The Greek donations allowed the purchase of medical supplies and certain foodstuffs. Valuable

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<sup>1</sup> See above pp. 387-389.

help was also given by the Red Cross Societies of Switzerland, South Africa and Australia, and by the Greek War Fund.

Once the thorny question of the sea-route had been settled, the ICRC delegate and five assistants, selected from the Swiss nationals resident in Turkey to supervise the distribution of the relief, left Izmir for the first trip on February 11, 1945, in charge of four caiques. Minefields and violent storms made this crossing a perilous undertaking, but the vessels reached their destination, and their cargoes were greeted by the population as heaven-sent gifts.

Unloading took a long time, as the inhabitants of the islands were so weakened by undernourishment that, even when fed, they were unable to work more than one hour a day. The death-rate had risen steeply everywhere; at the beginning of February 1945, it was somewhere between six and ten times over normal.

The occupation authorities, who were also in food difficulties, cooperated with the ICRC and offered them transport and storage space for the goods. They also facilitated the supervision and distribution of the relief.

While the delegates were in Rhodes, the Turkish Government declared war on Germany. This event almost ended the ICRC relief programme, since the boats were manned by Turkish crews and flew the Turkish colours. Nevertheless, the German commandant of the Dodecanese allowed the ICRC to continue its work, provided that the vessels were plainly marked with the Red Cross emblem. It was however very difficult, once the boats had returned to Turkey, to secure the permission of the authorities for another trip to the Dodecanese. They finally consented, after representations by the British military authorities and after they had noted the delegate's report on the food situation in the Islands.

On March 10, 1945, a second convoy, larger than the first, left Izmir for the Dodecanese; a third followed in April, and a fourth and last in May. By that time hostilities had ceased, but the British military authorities in charge of the Archipelago asked the Committee's delegate to continue the distribution of relief as before. In addition, at their suggestion also, the

ICRC sent a permanent delegate to Rhodes who continued to supervise the numerous shipments, sent either direct or through the Joint Relief Commission, until February 1946. This delegate was also able to place his experience at the service of the inhabitants of the Dodecanese.

From February to May 1945, 2,738 tons of food were distributed in the Islands, representing about 37 kilos per head. The following table gives the quantities, in kilos, distributed in each Island at each delivery :

Islands	Population	1st convoy (February)	2nd convoy (March)	3rd convoy (April)	4th convoy (May)	Total
Rhodes and Calchi . . .	49,200	236,669	533,226	582,127	554,218	1,906,240
Cos . . . . .	16,400	—	185,476	134,992	159,643	480,111
Leros . . . . .	4,200	30,660	41,559	39,953	45,953	158,125
Kalymnos & Pserimo	5,100	37,090	55,344	51,411	49,735	193,580
Total . . . . .	74,900	304,419	815,605	808,483	809,549	2,728,056

As circumstances differed on each island, the delegates did not deliver the same amount of food everywhere. Distress was specially acute in the town of Rhodes, whereas Cos, the most agricultural island, was able to do without food relief until March.

A part of the gifts was set aside for soup kitchens and milk centres for children, which the delegates organized as soon as they arrived in the Dodecanese. More than 250,000 individual issues were made in Rhodes from February to May, 1945.

The relief supplies also included :

- 10 tons of medical supplies
- 1 case of iodine
- 100,000 quinine tablets
- 1,000 woollen blankets
- 12½ tons of soap
- 1 ton of cod-liver oil.

Part of these supplies were purchased in the Middle East with the funds from the Greek Red Cross and the Greek colony in Egypt; the remainder came from the Greek and South African Red Cross Societies and from the Greek colony in Egypt. In every island they were handed over to a medical commission for issue to hospitals and the sick.

After the liberation the remaining stocks of medical supplies were given to the British Army Medical Service, which shared them out, jointly with the delegate of the ICRC and a local relief committee, among the hospitals and the poor.

The Greek War Relief Fund transferred 440 tons of foodstuffs and 463 bales of clothing and shoes left in Cyprus, to the ICRC delegation in Cairo. These goods did not reach Rhodes until June 3; they were carried on one of the three vessels which made up the fourth convoy. As the food supply of the Islands was now maintained by the British Army, these goods were stored in the ICRC warehouses in Rhodes and distributed by the delegate to hospitals, charitable and educational institutions and to the needy.

The ICRC delegation in Cairo received the following gifts for the Dodecanese in 1945:

	<i>From</i>	£E
Jan. 12	Messrs S. Casulli, Alexandria . . . . .	500.—
Jan. 13	The Greek Red Cross, Cairo . . . . .	2,000.—
Jan. 17	The Léricots Fraternity, Alexandria . . .	1,000.—
March 1	The Greek Red Cross, London, through M. Mouratiadis . . . . .	9,750.—
March 29	The Greek Patriarch, Alexandria . . . .	3,500.—
May 5	Messrs S. Casulli, Alexandria . . . . .	1,000.—
May 14	The Dodecanese Fraternity, Alexandria ..	1,499.985
	£E	19,249.985

These funds were used to cover:

- (a) — The expenses of the mission in the Dodecanese;
- (b) — The purchase of goods;
- (c) — Freight charges;
- (d) — Travelling expenses of delegates in the Middle East;
- (e) — Direct costs borne by the ICRC (telegrams, insurance, etc.).

## § 6. FINLAND

Immediately war broke out between Finland and the Soviet Union, the ICRC made its usual offer to launch a general appeal on behalf of the Red Cross Societies of the two countries concerned. The Finnish Red Cross accepted, and within a very short time the ICRC was able to transmit ambulances, medical supplies and medicaments presented by the sister Societies. The ICRC made the customary notification when these ambulances were put into service.

On learning of the distress of the Finnish civilians who had fled from the fighting zones towards the interior of the country, the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies considered making a joint appeal in their behalf. As, however, only one of the belligerents was involved, the ICRC decided that they could not proceed unless explicitly asked to do so by the Finnish Red Cross. The latter organization, consulted by telegram on December 28, 1940, replied that they had already received adequate foreign relief in cash and in kind, but that they would not fail to apply to the ICRC at some future date, if the situation required it.

This refusal will be better understood if it is borne in mind that the Finnish Red Cross directed its efforts mainly to the sick and wounded combatants, while the care of civilian refugees was entrusted by the Finnish Government to a central committee, the "Suomen Huolto", on which the Finnish Red Cross and other welfare organizations were represented. This Committee indirectly informed the ICRC that relief shipments would be gratefully accepted : although the aid sent by America and Sweden was considerable, it was not sufficient to meet all the needs.

In these circumstances and for the reason already mentioned the proposed appeal was impracticable. But the ICRC did all it could to encourage spontaneous gifts, and was thus able to send the following supplies to the Finnish Red Cross, in addition to medical stores :

March : 621 kilos of chocolate for Finnish children ;

- April : 1,886 kilos of medicaments, calcium and chocolate, purchased with the proceeds of a collection made among Swiss doctors ;
- June : 1,550 kilos of underwear supplied by the Junior Swiss Relief Fund for Finland.

In compliance with the wishes of the Finnish Red Cross, which feared that transport difficulties might prevent the timely arrival of supplies, many Red Cross Societies and other organizations for aid to Finland also sent money remittances to the Finnish Red Cross through the ICRC.

When fighting between Finland and Soviet Russia ceased, relief continued without interruption ; from then on, goods were shipped by the Joint Relief Commission<sup>1</sup>, while the ICRC arranged money transfers.

During the second Finnish-Soviet conflict, the Finnish Minister in Stockholm forwarded an appeal for relief by the Finnish Red Cross for the areas occupied by the Finnish army in Eastern Carelia, where about 85,000 Russian civilians were in very distressed circumstances. However, the ICRC obtained no reply either from the Soviet Government, whom they consulted through their delegate in Teheran, or from the British and American Governments, whose collaboration was requested for the dispatch of goods and money. As, moreover, the Swiss and Swedish Red Cross Societies were unable to contribute financially, the scheme had to be abandoned.

## § 7. FRANCE

The invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium and France by the Wehrmacht led to the exodus of millions of the inhabitants of those countries, who fled before the crushing advance of the enemy and sought refuge in the south of France. This mass influx of refugees, who frequently had no more than the barest necessities with them, confronted the authorities and the French Red Cross with a colossal task, for which their own immediate resources were inadequate.

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

The ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, in agreement with the French authorities, therefore sent the following telegram on May 29, 1940 to the national Red Cross Societies of the neutral and non-belligerent countries :

" Some three million French, two million Belgian, seventy thousand Luxemburg and fifty thousand Dutch refugees or evacuees are in a serious state of destitution in France. The French Red Cross appeals to sister Societies for relief of people in distress. Needs are new clothes, shoes, layettes, bedding, kitchen utensils, minor surgical instruments, dressings, non-perishable foods, collapsible huts, textiles for workshops. Please send gifts in cash or kind to Central Committee French Red Cross Paris and through Véron transport agent for all ports ".

Several replies were made to Geneva. The Argentine Red Cross Committee notified a gift from the French Relief Committee in Buenos Aires of 50 tons of clothing. The Turkish Red Crescent promised 500 tons of wheat <sup>1</sup>. The Greek Red Cross sent 125,000 French francs for the French Red Cross. Other National Societies sent their gifts direct to the French Red Cross, at the same time notifying the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies. Those gifts included : 150,000 levas from the Bulgarian Red Cross ; 100,800 French francs given by the Egyptian Red Crescent to the French Minister in Cairo ; and 50,000 dinars, together with a quantity of non-perishable foodstuffs to a value of 250,000 dinars, from the Yugoslav Red Cross.

It was proposed to launch a relief drive in all the Latin American States, with the support of the Foreign Minister of each country. There was also a generous response to the joint appeal in the United States ; the U.S. Government allocated 50 million dollars, and the American Red Cross 20 million dollars. These sums were to be used for the relief of refugees and war victims in Europe, under the supervision of the American Red Cross representatives. Unfortunately, the hopes

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<sup>1</sup> The ICRC was involved in long negotiations in order to obtain free carriage and exemption from customs duties for this shipment. When, finally, in the beginning of 1941, the agreement of all the interested parties had been secured, the economic situation of the country had changed and the Turkish Government was obliged to refuse the Red Crescent an export licence.

which the ICRC and the League had placed in the help from North and South America were dashed, as the Allied blockade<sup>1</sup> prohibited any food or clothing being sent to the civilian population in the countries occupied by, or subjected to the Axis.

Without waiting for the result of the appeal of May 29, the ICRC consulted the German occupation authorities on the details of the proposed relief action. The German Government sent a representative of one of its leading welfare organizations to Geneva, who asked for Red Cross help for the refugees in France.

As a result of these conversations, two wagons, containing twenty tons of condensed milk supplied by the ICRC, and five wagons containing 33 tons of good and clothing from the Swiss Red Cross, were sent to the areas in question. The urgency of the situation was such that an exception was made to the usual procedure and the shipments were distributed by the relief organizations that happened to be on the spot ; arrangements were later made for an ICRC delegate to be present, on delivery of the relief consignments. In July 1940, two members of the ICRC went on mission to Berlin and exchanged views with the German authorities, who finally agreed that the official representative of the ICRC in Paris should have a certain discretion in the distribution of relief sent to France <sup>2</sup>.

During the summer and autumn of 1940 the ICRC sent numerous consignments to the French Red Cross, the refugee camps and the children's reception centres; the persons in charge supervised the distribution and sent receipts to Geneva. The consignments were addressed to the representative of the German Red Cross, who passed them on to the French Red Cross, and they consequently travelled carriage and duty free.

The ICRC in this way sent the following supplies to France :

August, 1940: 70 tons of food and clothing (various donors  
in Switzerland);  
45 tons of food (Yugoslav Red Cross);

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 368 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> It was not until September 1943 that the German authorities recognised this agent as an officially accredited delegate of the ICRC.

*Sept. 1940 :* 283 tons of condensed and dried milk (Swiss Red Cross) ;

*Oct. to Dec. 1940 :* 676 tons of foodstuffs } various sources  
34 tons of clothing }

*Early 1941 :* 55 tons of food for the Swiss Aid Mission to the Children of Toulouse.

All subsequent shipments were made through the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross, which was then beginning to function <sup>1</sup>.

Although the efforts of the authorities and the French Red Cross led to the early repatriation of many refugees, the food situation in France required the continued shipment of goods. The French National Relief Committee was set up by decree on October 4, 1940, to deal centrally with all applications for relief. It was also the sole body authorised to make appeals to public generosity.

From 1941 onwards, the supply of relief to France was settled by direct negotiation between this National Committee and the Joint Relief Commission. Nevertheless, the ICRC's mediation remained indispensable for solving the numerous problems which arose in connection with the relief sent to camps in Southern France <sup>2</sup>.

During the summer of 1943, another problem demanded the intervention of the ICRC. The provisioning of Corsica depended to a large extent on imports. When the Allies landed in Italy the food situation of the island was seriously affected, for several food ships which the French Government had despatched were sunk as the result of enemy action. A delegate of the French Red Cross suggested that the ICRC should organize the supply of Corsica with French ships, ceded by the Government to the Foundation for Red Cross Transports. It was proposed to send 3,000 tons of food per month, half of it in the form of flour. As these goods were to be sent from metropolitan French territory, there would be no infringement of the blockade

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

<sup>2</sup> See below pp. 525 et seq.

regulations. However, when this scheme was submitted to the belligerents, the ICRC was told that "for military reasons" no safe-conducts could be granted. The plan to help Corsica had therefore to be abandoned.

After the Allied landing in France and during the subsequent fighting, the ICRC delegates were cut off from Geneva and were obliged to make decisions on the spot.

Thus, the ICRC delegate in Paris, realising that the reserves of flour to feed the capital were stored 50 kilometres outside Paris and that the city might thus be without bread, possibly for weeks, secured the consent of the Germans, who were still in command of the capital, to the immediate use of 80 lorries and buses, which had already been dismantled to make them useless for the German troops. The vehicles left Paris on August 23, 1944, but on reaching Melun after a roundabout journey, the silos were found to be in flames. The convoy then proceeded to Verneuil-l'Etang, whence 200 tons of flour were conveyed to Paris. Another attempt was made the following day, but the convoy was halted after a few miles, because the licenses issued by the Germans were no longer recognised. The Committee's delegate was even arrested, but managed to escape and conduct all the lorries safely back to Paris. The next day the capital was liberated, and no further trips were needed.

Thanks to the Committee's relations with an unofficial agent of the French Provisional Government, relief schemes for the towns and areas freed by the advancing Allied forces were greatly facilitated. On September 1, 1944, it was decided to send a first emergency relief consignment to the town of Lyons; a train was put at the disposal of the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission by the Swiss Government, and despatched loaded with milk products. The German Consul-General in Geneva had sanctioned the routing of this train across areas which the Germans did not yet regard as liberated, and the journey to Lyons and back was effected without incident. As the liberation proceeded, requests for help poured into Geneva, as the mass destruction of houses, roads and railways, coupled with the absence of transport, had impaired the provisioning of entire Departments.

Although the ICRC had long since made plans for post-war relief, the elements of the problem changed as the war drew to an end. The welfare organizations, both official and voluntary, were again able to act independently of a neutral intermediary, the work of which was based primarily on the principle of reciprocity.

Nevertheless, France was not yet completely freed, since certain points on the Atlantic coast remained under German occupation until the armistice.

*"Pockets" on the Atlantic Coast.*

When France was liberated in the summer of 1944, the German garrisons in the ports of Dunkerque, La Rochelle, Royan, Lorient and Saint Nazaire were surrounded by the Allied forces; these areas were consequently separated from the remainder of the country by unbroken fronts. In the autumn, local truces enabled part of the population to be transferred to liberated France. A great many of the inhabitants refused, however, to leave their native soil, and as the war continued, their position became increasingly serious.

In January 1945, the Chargé d'Affaires of the French Embassy in Berne asked the ICRC, at the request of the Commissioner of the Republic in Angers, to examine the possibility of sending a delegate to Saint Nazaire, to distribute the relief supplies which the French authorities proposed to forward to some 120,000 people living in and around the city. In addition, the German authorities asked the ICRC to send a representative into the Atlantic "pockets", especially to La Rochelle, to organize the provisioning of the town and of the Islands of Ré and Oléron.

The Committee agreed to do so. As soon as the consent of the belligerents was secured, a delegation left Geneva on January 19 to study the situation on the spot. On the grounds of their investigations and the promise given by the German occupying authorities not to requisition the supplies, the French and United States military authorities allowed a train to leave for Saint Nazaire, conveying 600 tons of foodstuffs and medica-

ments. The train arrived at its destination on February 17, after a truce had been concluded and the rails which had been torn up by the belligerents across the "no man's land" had been replaced. The French local authorities distributed the relief supplies under the supervision of the Committee's delegates.

Consequent to the favourable reports received from these delegates on the outcome of their mission, three other relief trains conveyed the following supplies to Saint Nazaire :

*On March 15 :*

- 60 tons of sugar
- 10 " " butter
- 3½ " " coffee
- 345 " " flour
- 1 wagonload of relief supplies. Given by the National Relief Fund (*Secours national*)
- 1 wagon of relief supplies. Given by the *Gendarmerie maritime* and the Harbour Fire Service
- 1,000 litres of petrol and oil, for civilian physicians in the area.

*On April 10 :*

- 350 tons of flour
- 60 " " sugar
- 30 " " tinned meat
- 20 " " dried vegetables
- 10 " " butter
- 100 " " potatoes
- 1 ton of Phoscao
- 1 ton of malted milk
- 5 tons of miscellaneous stores, given by the French Red Cross
- 15 " " given by the *Entr'aide française*
- 935 kilos of seed ;

*On April 21 :*

- 350 tons of flour
- 15 " " soap
- 10 " " potatoes
- 5 " " butter
- 10 " " noodles, macaroni, etc.
- 2 " " tinned meat
- 1,000 litres of petrol, for civilian physicians ;

60 tons of seed potatoes

1 lot of miscellaneous relief supplies, given by the *Entr'aide française*.

These further consignments were distributed in the same ways as the first. The delegates of the ICRC often had to cross the firing lines to arrange for these deliveries. While doing so they visited the Allied PW, some of whom were exchanged at the instance of the ICRC. The delegates also reported that medicaments and hospital equipment were required for the German wounded and sick in Saint Nazaire. Permission was obtained from the French authorities to forward a consignment to the enemy field hospitals through France, and the ICRC informed the German authorities that it would purchase medicaments and hospital material on receipt of funds from Germany. As communications between Berlin and the German Consulate in Geneva had been cut, the German authorities' answer did not arrive before the capitulation of the Reich. The proposed scheme was therefore abandoned.

The ICRC also contemplated chartering a neutral vessel which would carry supplies under the Red Cross emblem to La Rochelle and the Islands of Ré and Oléron. This proposal was approved by the belligerents. However, a local truce during the negotiations themselves enabled relief to be sent overland. These supplies were distributed with the help of the representatives of the Swedish Red Cross, who also co-operated in supplying food to Royan.

As Dunkerque had been almost entirely evacuated, the Allied military authorities declined to authorise relief supplies for the few inhabitants who had refused to leave the town. The delegate of the ICRC therefore confined himself to visiting the Allied PW camps and issuing relief there. He also visited the French civilians who had remained and were quartered in a part of the town that was still standing. This mission was a particularly dangerous one, for to reach the German outposts the delegate had to cross a mined stretch of "no man's land". The three tons of relief supplies for Allied PW followed the same route, and were carried through the mine-field by 200 German soldiers.

About 9,000 inhabitants had remained in Lorient. Reports stated that their food situation was alarming, as the German garrison had been cut off in the month of August 1944, since when no bread, potatoes or sugar had been issued. Having succeeded in crossing the firing lines, an ICRC delegate noted the requirements of the population and the means of access which were still open. Upon the strength of his report, the Allies agreed that the town should be supplied with food by a vessel furnished by the German authorities at Lorient. This vessel carried the Committee's markings and was manned by a French crew. The commander of the German garrison announced that any German soldier guilty of looting the supplies would be shot ; he also gave an undertaking that the distribution of the food and medicaments should be carried out under the supervision of the Committee's delegate. As all the civilian doctors had been evacuated from the Lorient area, the ICRC sent a Swiss doctor into the town to organise a relief distribution scheme, and to give medical attention to the inhabitants.

The *Carentan* left Vannes under safe-conduct, on April 14, 1945, and arrived on the following day at Port Louis, in the southern area of the Lorient pocket, where half of the supplies were unloaded. On April 16 she sailed to the northern area, to unload the remainder of her cargo. After negotiations by the delegates, the Allied artillery fire, which had exposed the ship to some danger in the southern area, was stopped until her return to Vannes.

This first consignment included :

47 ½	tons of flour
9	tons of sugar
70	tons of potatoes
3,000	cases of matches
2,920	pairs of shoes and slippers
8	cases of medicaments, given by the French Red Cross.

The *Carentan* made a second trip on May 8, the day on which the German garrison surrendered. At the request of the French and United States military authorities, the delegate once more distributed the relief stores, which comprised :

25	tons of flour
5	tons of salt
50	tons of potatoes
4 1/2	tons of tinned meat
750	kilos of soap
26	bales of clothing, given by the French Red Cross
1	consignment of medicaments and surgical instruments, given by the French Red Cross
1	consignment of miscellaneous relief (condensed milk, malted milk, etc.) given by the <i>Entr'aide française</i> .

The United States military authorities warmly congratulated the Committee on the manner in which their delegates had carried out their mission. The Prefect of the Loire Inférieure also expressed his gratitude to the Committee, on behalf of the population of Saint Nazaire.

## § 8. GERMANY

The difficulties that arose in connexion with the relief of the population of the defeated countries were especially marked in the case of Germany. This was due to her dominant position in the Axis and the particularly grave consequences of her defeat <sup>1</sup>.

For this reason, a detailed account will be given of the Committee's negotiations with the four occupying Powers for authority to send relief from private sources to civilians in that country. During the period of confusion which followed the collapse of the *Wehrmacht*, the ICRC carried out its relief work for released Allied PW and the Allied detainees who had escaped from concentration camps <sup>2</sup>. Similarly, the Joint Relief Commission, the Committee's road transport organization and various Swiss and Swedish associations were instrumental in giving intermittent assistance to the population, but this was not expressly authorized by the occupying Authorities and was only approved by the local military commanders.

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> See above pp. 96 et seq.

As soon as the armistice was signed, appeals from private individuals and organizations called the attention of the ICRC to the tragic fate of the population of Germany. Numerous demands for relief also came through the delegations, or in messages brought out of Germany by underground channels and posted in Switzerland. The hospitals lacked medical supplies of daily use, and those local branches of the Red Cross which had not been wound up were powerless for want of material resources. The official rations often did not exceed 1,000 calories a day, and even these could not always be obtained, because of the lack of reserve stocks on the market. Areas that had already been overpopulated by the influx of refugees from the air bombardment of the West, or by the exodus from the East during the winter of 1944, were burdened anew by the tens of thousands expelled from Czechoslovakia, Silesia, Pomerania and Hungary. The ruined railway stations served as camps for the refugees who, especially in the Soviet zone, wandered from station to station, as they found trains, often only to land once more at the point from which they had set out, or in the Berlin area. The central German Government had been swept away, taking with it the main services of the German Red Cross and of all the welfare organizations which, voluntarily or not, had supported the regime. Only a few Church institutions and local branches of the Red Cross remained. Abroad, those Germans who might have been able to help their country were themselves called upon, at least in law, to bear the consequences of defeat. There was, in fact, little or no opportunity of their setting up any relief organization, except in neutral countries such as Switzerland, where several committees were formed in the months following the armistice.

A number of charitable organizations asked the ICRC to obtain authority to despatch material and thus to enable them to meet the essential needs of a great many German cities, hospitals, homes, and welfare societies. In the early weeks, this voluntary activity met with few obstacles, but as soon as the occupation was placed on an organized basis, the Allied authorities desired to be informed in advance of any relief work that was contemplated.

At the end of the summer of 1945, a special delegate of the ICRC contacted the four Allied Staff Headquarters<sup>1</sup>. Whilst awaiting the result of the negotiations which ensued, various donors urged that there should be no cessation of voluntary aid. Consequently, in December 1945, although the official consent of the central authorities of the American zone had not been received, the Swiss Relief Fund started what was known as the "Ten Towns" relief, which distributed additional calories to one thousand children for one hundred days in each of the German areas selected.

Some of these towns were in the American Zone, and it was planned to send huts to Munich, for use as dispensaries and canteens. The municipal authorities of Munich had, with the consent of the Town Commandant, barely erected these huts, when the U.S. authorities in the Zone decided that the aid of the Swiss Relief Fund should not at once be accepted. In answer to an appeal by the ICRC, an exception was made for Munich and the order was rescinded in January 1946 in respect of this town. Nevertheless, on the advice of the ICRC, the relief operations were postponed in order not to jeopardize the negotiations. These did, in fact, result in a general agreement on March 1 for the Zone as a whole; the text of this document is given below.

As soon as the requisite agreements with the municipal authorities of Berlin and with each of the four Zones had been formally concluded, the ICRC was able to play its full part as an intermediary. The permanent delegations in each Zone, acting under the general supervision of the Special Delegation in Berlin, were called upon for daily duties which were often very heavy, as the agreement in principle could only be applied after repeated negotiations. The delegations had, for instance, to obtain transport facilities, to secure priority for a set-train sent by the Joint Relief Commission to travel over lines still closed to civilian traffic, to find warehouses and watchmen, to accommodate the escort agents and secure permission for them to stay in a country where foreigners were not yet willingly

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 389.

admitted, to gain the confidence of the military authorities in charge of welfare services, and to make sure that the German distributing agencies were able to carry on the work. Finally, it was necessary to reassure and encourage the donors, to supervise distributions, and to obtain reports on the subject—often no easy matter.

The delegations of the ICRC also collaborated with foreign institutions, in particular with the teams of the Swedish Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross and the Swiss Relief Fund. In its capacity as neutral intermediary, the ICRC was often able to distribute work in such a way as to avoid interruptions and overlapping.

### *Agreement with the Occupation Authorities*

The negotiations undertaken in 1945 by the Special Delegate were concluded almost simultaneously in the British Zone, in Berlin and in the French Zone. Agreement with the American and Soviet Zones took longer.

#### *British Zone.*

In the British Zone a plan for co-operation was drawn up on October 30, 1945, between the ICRC and the head of the British Red Cross, Civilian Relief Units.

This agreement reads :

(1) — Relief action in favour of the German population which the ICRC or other humanitarian organizations working together with the ICRC undertake within the British Occupation Zone of Germany will be planned and executed in collaboration with the B.R.C. Civilian Relief Unit working in this zone.

(2) — The relief actions might include :

(a) — Help to the settled German population (medical supplies, medical missions, child welfare, including the supply of clothes and food).

(b) — Help to the refugee population entering the British Zone (medical supplies, medical missions and supply of food and textiles to transit or permanent refugee camps).

(3) — The transport of supplies from Switzerland into the British Zone will be executed by lorries. Petrol and oil should be supplied by the military authorities of the Zone which the convoys cross or enter. In a later stage, the possibility of railway transports might be discussed.

(4) — For distribution, the German relief organizations recognized by the British authorities will be used by the ICRC or the organizations with which it works. For this purpose, the transport of the B.R.C. sections can be made available.

(5) — These distributions take place under the supervision of a delegate of the ICRC, or of an organization working with it, or by delegates of both.

The competent authorities of the Military Government of the British Occupation Zone agree with the outlines of this proposal between the ICRC and the B.R.C., Civilian Relief Units, in the British Occupation Zone.

For the ICRC: (Sgd.): Dr. A. H. LINDT.

For the B.R.C., Civilian Relief Units: (Sgd.): Colonel AGNEW.

Vlotho, October 30, 1945.

This text was approved by the Deputy Military Governor of the British Zone on November 6, 1945. Moreover, the Military Government granted the following additional terms:

- (a) — The Military Authorities supplied the ICRC with petrol and oil for the lorries carrying civilian relief to the British Zone. Military garages were available and repairs could be carried out at the expense of the British forces.
- (b) — The British Military Government undertook to provide the drivers and other persons in charge of consignments with permits to enter Germany.

#### *City of Berlin.*

In November 1945, the delegate of the ICRC proposed that relief work should be organized for the City of Berlin. As the Joint Relief Commission had received supplies from the Swiss Relief Fund and the Irish Donation, he was able to submit to the Allied authorities a detailed programme providing for a daily addition to the food rations of 1,000 children for three months, and for the distribution of medica-

ments, blankets, bed-sheets and sugar to various institutions. Recognizing the value of this offer, the Interallied Command instructed the Health Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of a Russian officer, to examine it in conjunction with the delegate. The plan was accepted and the ICRC was authorized to establish a delegation in Berlin. The Sub-Committee's decision was taken on November 26. The four Allied heads of the Berlin sectors met on December 3, and after some amendments, the minutes of their meeting were transmitted to the delegate as follows :

The Inter-Allied Command :

I. Has approved the document below with the following amendments :

- (a) — Substitute "see to" for "supervise".
- (b) — Add the following at the end of par. 3 :  
"The Public Health Committee will supply a monthly report to the Commandants or their deputies on the distribution of relief given by the Red Cross."

II. Has directed that the suggestion contained in par. 4 be submitted to the Co-ordination Committee of the Allied Control Council.

*Decision taken by the Public Health Committee on November 26, 1945.*

(1) — To accept the supplies offered by the International Red Cross for the relief of the sick and the children of Berlin.

(2) — To transmit all supplies to the Public Health Section of the Berlin Administration for distribution to the hospitals and children's institutions *in all sectors* of the city.

(3) — To allow the representative of the Red Cross to be present at the distributions. Supervision will, in future, be carried out by the Red Cross on the basis of enquiries made by the Public Health Section.

(4) — To submit to the Commandants proposals regarding the transport of supplies from Switzerland to Berlin. Transport should be carried out preferably by rail, which would enable the whole delivery to be made in one operation.

(5) — To permit M. Lindt to consult the Public Health Section on the subject of the medical supplies most needed in Berlin.

(Signatures of the representatives of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain and France.)

*Allied Kommandatura Berlin*

December 5, 1945.

*Subject:* Red Cross Issue for Berlin.

*To:* Dr. Lindt, International Red Cross.

(1) — The Allied Kommandatura Berlin agreed on December 3 to accept the generous offer of the International Red Cross of an issue of food and medicine for the sick and children of Berlin. Further, representatives of the Red Cross may attend the distribution of the supplies.

(2) — Attached hereto is a copy of letter forwarded to the Travel Security Board concerning Travel Permits for two of your representatives.

ALLIED KOMMANDATURA BERLIN.

On December 6, 1945, the Co-ordination Committee of the Allied Control Council approved the decision of the Berlin Command. And — of particular importance for the continued work of the ICRC in Germany — it also stated that the admission of representatives of relief organizations would be decided by the Command Authorities in Berlin and by the Military Governor in each Zone.

*French Zone.*

Negotiations in respect of the French Zone resulted in an agreement with the Military Governor on December 7, 1945, in the following terms :

(1) — The relief work of the ICRC and of humanitarian organizations collaborating with it, for sick persons and children in the French Zone of occupation in Germany, shall be planned and carried out in co-operation with the French Military Authorities.

(2) — Relief work may include :

(a) — Aid to the German population permanently domiciled in the zone, such as medical supplies, medical missions, food and clothing for children.

(b) — Aid to German refugees entering the French Zone of occupation (medical supplies, medical missions, food and clothing for children).

The aid shall be distributed either in the reception centres or in the permanent refugee camps.

(3) — It is intended that transport shall be by rail, if possible at the expense of the French Military Authorities. Goods may be taken by lorry to the nearest station to the Swiss frontier.

(4) — For the distribution of relief, the ICRC, or the humanitarian organizations collaborating with it shall make use of the German relief organizations recognized by the French Military Authorities.

(5) — Relief schemes shall be supervised by a delegate of the ICRC or of a humanitarian organization collaborating with it, or by delegates of both.

(6) — The ICRC shall give special consideration to the Saar District.  
Baden-Baden, December 7, 1945.

(Sgd.) General KOENIG.

As in the British Zone, relief could be given to the refugees and to the population permanently domiciled there. Authority was given for the establishment of a delegation of the ICRC.

#### *American Zone.*

In the American Zone, negotiations were less rapid. The occupation authorities had to settle highly complex demographic problems, which doubtless had a political aspect.

The delegate of the ICRC made a definite offer to give aid to the German refugees, whose situation was far more precarious than that of the population permanently domiciled in that zone; this would include medical attention, food supplies and clothing. However, the U.S. military authorities informed the ICRC that public opinion in the United States would not yet allow private organizations to give relief to the German population, at a time when the U.S. Government was itself sending large quantities of cereals to its zone of occupation. It was only at the beginning of January, 1946, that the U.S. Government allowed their military authorities in Germany to open the zone to voluntary relief. It was laid down that the donors should form two groups, one for relief from the United States and the other for relief coming from or through Switzerland. The ICRC, whose delegation represented the Joint Relief Commission in occupied Germany, was prepared, at

least for a certain time, to co-ordinate the consignments of the second group. An agreement in principle was concluded in Berlin on February 4, 1946, between U.S. General Staff Headquarters and the Special Delegate of the Committee. After approval by the ICRC, it came into force in the form of instructions issued by the Welfare Section of the Military Government in Germany. The Memorandum on this agreement reads as follows :

#### MEMORANDUM

Subject : *Relief Operations by the ICRC acting for Non-American Voluntary Agencies.*

It is understood that several non-American voluntary relief agencies wish to send into Germany relief supplies for the benefit of German nationals. These agencies wish to designate the ICRC as their agents for the import of these supplies.

The OMGUS<sup>1</sup> is prepared to receive in Germany the following kinds of essential goods :

Condensed, evaporated, powdered milk ; fats ; sugar or dextrose ; soap ; cod-liver oil ; clothing, especially shoes ; medicines ; recreational supplies ; school supplies, etc.

The following memorandum will serve as a basis for procedure in accordance with the above understanding.

#### *Transport.*

Relief goods will be called for by the Military Government. Transport of relief goods called for will be provided by the Military Government from points of entry designated by it to the cities of distributions.

#### *Allocation and Distribution.*

The allocation of all these supplies to areas and, in the case of undesignated goods, to agencies, shall be done by German public welfare officials under the orders of the Military Government (Welfare Section OMGUS).

The Central German Committee and German public welfare officials shall recommend to the American Military Government (Welfare Section OMGUS) the supplies which are to be called for by the American Military Government from the voluntary agencies represented by the ICRC.

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<sup>1</sup> = Office of the Military Government of the United States.

### *Liaison Personnel.*

The ICRC Special Delegate for Relief Actions in Germany will serve as a liaison agent to the American Military Government to facilitate arrangements for the import and distribution of supplies. In this capacity the Special Delegate will be directly responsible to the Chief of the Welfare Section OMGUS and will furnish reports to the ICRC and to the Military Government.

Authority to engage in activities relative to the distribution of these supplies in the U.S. Zone may be given to personnel of the ICRC or the voluntary agencies furnishing relief supplies only by the ICRC Special Delegate for Relief Actions in Germany, who may delegate this responsibility to the Chief Delegate of the ICRC in Frankfurt.

In his letter of March 4, 1946, the Chief of the Welfare Section clearly stated that his Section should be informed in advance of any plans for importing relief supplies into the American zone, since the approval of U.S. Staff Headquarters was necessary for all consignments. The local branches of the German Red Cross, the Catholic "Caritas", the Protestant "Evangelisches Hilfswerk" (Evangelical Aid) and the workers' organization "Arbeiter-Wohlfahrt" (Workers' Welfare) were authorized to carry out the distribution in collaboration. The Central German Committee was composed of representatives of these four societies and had its headquarters at Stuttgart, to which town, after November, 1946, all consignments had to be sent, or at least notified.

In April, 1946, the Military Government, which was no longer able to place its own transport at the disposal of the Joint Relief Commission, requested the ICRC and the American committee CRALOG<sup>1</sup> to arrange for convoys themselves at the expense of the German Authorities<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time it was felt that one of the four organizations chosen by the donors could in the future be made responsible for the delivery of supplies, as the German Central Committee alone was competent to designate the region most urgently in need of relief.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Relief Agencies Licensed for Operations in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> For the organization of convoys and reimbursement of transport charges, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

### *Soviet Zone.*

During this period negotiations with the Russian Military Command were also proceeding satisfactorily. On February 8, 1946, the Special Delegate of the ICRC was informed that the said Government intended to authorize the Committee to extend its activities to the Soviet Zone, and to Brandenburg in particular. The Russian officers, in a very practical spirit, asked the ICRC to prove to them, by making definite proposals, that relief passing through their hands would contribute materially to relieve the distress of refugee children in the Soviet Zone. They stated that at the beginning of the year there were 1,200,000 German refugee children in that zone, and that 60,000 of these were sick or undernourished. If the ICRC was in a position to give aid to at least a considerable proportion of these children, access to the Zone would be granted.

The Committee had already demonstrated what it could achieve, after the Inter-Allied Command's decision of December 3, 1945, by sending two complete block-trains of relief to Berlin within the space of two months. The prompt despatch of these consignments, delivered to the Joint Relief Commission, and their source testified to the value and complete impartiality of such aid. The ICRC adopted the same procedure for the Soviet Zone, and asked for support from the Swiss Relief Fund and the Irish Donation, the World Council of Churches, the International Union for Child Welfare, "Caritas", the American Friends Service Committee, and others. In March, the Special Delegate was able to submit proposals to the Russian Military Command. The latter at first planned to limit the aid of the ICRC to the Russian suburbs of Berlin, although providing for all children in need, whether refugee or not. However, the United Front of the Communist, Socialist, Christian-Socialist and Democratic-Liberal parties, on a proposal by the Communist and Socialist parties, suggested that the Russian Command should appeal for aid from abroad for the distressed population, not only of Berlin, but also of Brandenburg. The Special Delegate then submitted a plan to the military authorities, and on April 13, 1946, the Chief of Staff of the Soviet Military Admi-

nistration in Germany granted the authority applied for. His message reads as follows :

U.S.S.R.

General Staff of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany—  
Section for Transfer of Populations.

Berlin, April 13, 1946, No. 118.

To : Dr. Lindt, Representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The Soviet Military Administration in Germany expresses its gratitude to the ICRC for the relief it has given to the sick and destitute children in the Soviet Sector of Berlin.

With regard to your proposal for the extension of this relief to the sick and destitute children in the territory of the whole Soviet Zone of occupation, we consider that the following arrangement should be adopted :

(1) — All goods from the ICRC will be consigned to the German Administration for the Transfer of German Populations in the Soviet Zone, in Berlin.

(2) — Goods will be allocated by a Commission set up for this purpose and working under the German Administration for the Transfer of German Populations ; this Commission shall consist of representatives of the four anti-Fascist Parties, assisted by representatives of the Women's Committee and of the Free German Trade Union (FDGB). Later, representatives of other German democratic organizations will, if necessary, be admitted to the Commission.

The Commission shall be accountable for the receipt, the storage, and the proper allocation of all consignments from the ICRC for the Soviet Zone ; it will be responsible to the representatives of the ICRC for the use made of the goods received.

(3) — The ICRC, should there be any complaint of improper use of goods of foodstuffs received, will be entitled to refer to the representatives of the Soviet Military Administration ; this body will direct and supervise the work of this Commission set up for the proper distribution to sick persons and children of the Red Cross relief supplies.

I should be glad if you would inform me personally of your opinion in this matter.

(Sgd.) Lieutenant-General DRATVINE.  
Chief of Staff of the Soviet  
Military Administration in Germany.

Consignments made by the ICRC could be delivered not only in Brandenburg, but in the whole of the Soviet Zone. As the Russian message implied, the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) and the Evangelical Welfare Society were admitted to the Distribution Committee, set up on May 18. The delegates of the ICRC were in direct contact with the German Committee. The Military Government decided to take all necessary steps to ensure that the relief actually reached the sick, the children and those in distress. The letter of April 13 did not specifically authorize the delegates of the ICRC to attend distributions, but they could, in fact, visit the Russian zone for the purpose, as required. Moreover, reports kept the Committee in Geneva fully informed regarding the progress of distribution.

This joint undertaking sometimes gave rise to difficulties in the Soviet Zone, as it did in the other zones in Germany, and in other countries where the ICRC carried on relief work. In this post-war period there was a constant divergence between the specified wishes of the donors and the desire of the ICRC and the public authorities to allow, as far as possible, only relief that was truly for all in need, without discrimination.

Where the donors specify that their gifts shall be sent to some particular category of the population chosen, not solely on account of their needs, but in part from religious or political consideration, it is difficult to decide how far such wishes can be complied with. Gifts to a particular group are admissible if it is persecuted because of its religious or political character; they are not, however, allowable when the inhabitants of a district are all subject to the same jurisdiction. Nevertheless, if the wishes of donors are not taken into account, then their gifts may cease, and neither the ICRC nor the authorities of the receiving countries wished to take this responsibility. The Committee therefore had no other recourse but compromise, and endeavour to make up for relief of limited applications with a large number of special issues, or large-scale general supplies <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 394 and p. 399.

During 1946, the Military Government of the Soviet zone came to the conclusion that the Commission named in the above letter was paying too much attention to the donors' wishes and was not insisting strictly enough on the principle of allocation according to need. Negotiations took place between the military authorities, the Commission, the German Refugee Administration and the delegation of the ICRC. As it was held that the Allocation Commission was responsible both to the donors and the public authorities, it was decided to send the gifts to the homes, hospitals and other institutions specified by the donors, unless these organizations were receiving relief in excess. Moreover, establishments aided by private relief would only have a limited share of the general allocations. However, the ICRC and the Military Authorities both desired that all consignments should be directed to the Allocation Commission. On several occasions, difficulties had been caused by the despatch of semi-collective consignments addressed by name to religious, racial or political groups. Sometimes the consignors would not agree to their gifts being used for a common purpose; the Berlin delegation was then called upon to mediate. Relief consignments which gave rise to controversy represented, however, only five per cent of the total.

#### *System of Import Licences for Germany.*

At the beginning of 1946, customs regulations for goods entering Germany became necessary. Since the French Zone comprised all the territory along the German-Swiss frontier, the ICRC had to deal mainly with the French authorities, whether the goods were consigned to the French Zone, or sent in transit to the other zones.

In January 1946, the offices responsible for trade and finance in the French occupation zone announced that in future imports of any kind would require permits in accordance with the usual customs procedure. It was estimated that the time required for the examination of each application would be about six weeks. However, on January 12, 1946, the Director-

general for Trade and Finance authorized the ICRC to sign way-bills in respect of relief consignments for which it was responsible ; these took the place of the import licence. The Committee could exercise this right not only in respect of its own consignments, but also of relief from organizations working with it. It thus had a general contract for the duty-free import of all consignments for which it was responsible.

Although the ICRC was appreciative of the trust placed in it by the French occupation authorities, this arrangement had a disadvantage in that it gave the ICRC an import monopoly contrary to its policy of the open door. Other shippers, true, could import goods into Germany, but only under the normal commercial import procedure. They had moreover no exemption from customs duties and transport charges, such as that enjoyed by all consignments registered as part of the ICRC import quota. In June 1946, the Committee therefore supported an application from various international associations with headquarters in Switzerland, who desired to receive privileges similar to those which the ICRC enjoyed. However, the French authorities were unable to meet this request to the extent desired by these associations. It was not until the second half of 1947 that an organization having no connection with the ICRC received the right to send into the French Zone relief supplies coming from or through Switzerland, without having recourse to the Committee as intermediary.

In signing the customs declarations enabling relief supplies to enter immediately and free of duty, the ICRC became responsible for the way in which the goods were distributed. It therefore gave such a declaration only in respect of consignments over which it could exercise supervision, which obliged it to ask donors to use the services of the Joint Relief Commission. After that Commission had been wound up, the ICRC continued to give its signature and its stamp for consignments which were sent under the auspices of the two organizations that succeeded it : the Relief Bureau of the League of Red Cross Societies, and the International Relief Centre for Civil Populations.

## § 9. GREAT BRITAIN (CHANNEL ISLANDS)

In June 1940, the German forces occupied the British Channel Islands (Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney and Sark). Before the war, living conditions in these islands off the west coast of Normandy were similar to those in rural areas in the United Kingdom. In 1942, the number of inhabitants had dropped from 96,000 to about 65,000, many having been taken to the civilian internment camps in Germany. The Island of Alderney was completely emptied.

At the request of the Home Office, the ICRC began in August 1940 to enquire into the food situation in the Islands. Various reports stated that the rations were the same as in occupied France.

With the permission of the German Government, the ICRC used a gift of 25,000 Swiss francs from the Swiss Red Cross to send 261 cases of food and pharmaceutical products to the Islands. On March 29, 1941, the Bailiff of Jersey acknowledged the receipt of the consignment, stating that the recipients would be the injured, sick children and infants, and that a suitable quantity had been handed over to the Controlling Committee of Guernsey, which sent a receipt on March 31, 1941.

In a note dated April 10, 1941, the British Red Cross informed the ICRC of the pharmaceutical supplies required by the population. The Committee then repeatedly conferred with the Swiss authorities on the possibility of exporting the medical supplies listed by the B.R.C. Such export was possible only if the British Government compensated by importing British goods into Switzerland, and the ICRC instructed its delegation in London accordingly. The principle of compensation was accepted by the Ministry of Economic Warfare on July 17, and the details were settled by a member of the ICRC who travelled to London early in 1942. In view of the difficulties of the initial scheme, the British Red Cross decided to furnish the ICRC with a quantity of medical stores and funds for the purchase of other products in Switzerland.

The balance of the gift made by the Swiss Red Cross in 1940 allowed of the purchase of 82 kilos of vitamins; these were

sent off on October 6, 1941, with the agreement of the German and Swiss authorities.

It was not till April 22, 1942, that the ICRC was able to despatch a first consignment of supplies given by the British Red Cross ; this comprised six bales and a case of dressings.

A second consignment addressed to the *Feldkommandantur* of Granville, left on September 9. It included 33 cases of medical supplies and 15 bottles containing each 800 international units of insulin ; these stores reached the Islands on November 13, 1942.

Insulin being very much in demand, the British Red Cross sent 12,000 international units to the ICRC in April 1942. The Committee succeeded, after much difficulty, in shipping these to the Health Officer of Jersey, who sent an acknowledgment on November 13.

On November 19, 1942, the same Officer sent to the ICRC, through the German Red Cross, two lists showing the medical requirements of Jersey and Guernsey. These lists were forwarded to the British Red Cross on December 8, 1942. Subsequently, the Health Officer made several other requests, especially for insulin and cotton wool. Although the German Red Cross itself stressed the justice of these appeals, the British Red Cross refused to comply with them until they had received the acknowledgment of the 33 cases sent out from Geneva early in September.

The arrival of these cases was at last announced by the German Red Cross on March 5, 1943, and on May 10, they forwarded the acknowledgments to Geneva. The consignment included :

Miscellaneous sera . . .	3 cases
Drugs . . . . .	4 „
Ether . . . . .	20 „
Sulfamides . . . . .	1 case
Sterilized catgut . . .	1 „
Sedormid . . . . .	1 „
Powdered grape sugar .	2 cases
300 international units of insulin . . . . .	1 case
Total . .	33 cases valuing 20,255.30 Swiss frs.

On the arrival of the two receipts, the British Red Cross arranged for a further consignment, which left London for Geneva on August 7, 1943, whence it was forwarded in three lots, on November 5, 10 and 12, to the *Feldkommandantur* of Granville. The latter sent them on to the Channel Islands, where they arrived before Christmas, 1943. In March 1944, the ICRC received acknowledgments from the local authorities for:

15 cases of surgical instruments	}	for the sick in the Island of Jersey
10 „ „ disinfectants		
8 „ „ medicaments		
1 case of medical supplies		
8 cases of surgical instruments	}	for the sick in the Island of Guernsey
3 „ „ disinfectants		
10 „ „ medicaments		
1 case of medical supplies		

The British Red Cross sent regular clothing parcels to the Channel Islanders who were interned in Germany. On learning of the precarious situation in the Islands, the detainees in Germany made up a few packages out of their own parcels and sent them to their relatives. Unfortunately, this practice was a breach of the blockade regulations. The British Red Cross therefore asked the ICRC not to send any more clothing to the internees until an assurance had been given that such practices would not recur. On being informed of this British decision, the internees asked for the removal of their relatives to Great Britain, or at all events for permission to send them small Christmas packages containing cigarettes, chocolate, soap, dried fruit, etc., which they would take from their own weekly parcels. The ICRC communicated this request to the British Red Cross, who gave their consent on November 19, 1943. Clothing or footwear were however forbidden, and the British Red Cross demanded a receipt from an Island official, and a "final report" from the camp leaders. The parcels reached the Islands shortly after Christmas; on March 7, 1944, the British Red Cross received the official acknowledgments.

Meanwhile, an extensive slaughter of cattle had given rise to a milk shortage. In September 1943, the Controlling Com-

mittee of Guernsey appealed to the ICRC, who referred to the Swiss Red Cross. On December 2, 1943, this Society agreed to sponsor a relief scheme solely for children. It handed the ICRC a sum of 53,000 Swiss francs and proposed that the following should be sent :

30 tons of potatoes  
2,750 tins of vitaminized products  
10,000 kilos of powdered milk.

This list was, however, altered, when it was stated by the German military authorities that requirements in potatoes were covered by native production <sup>1</sup>.

On November 14, 1944, the Joint Relief Commission notified the British Red Cross that they still held in Geneva the residue of the pharmaceutical and medical stores sent from London during 1944 for shipment to the Channel Islands. These stores could not however be forwarded, as the Allied landings in Normandy on June 6 had cut off communications with the Islands, which the Germans continued to occupy.

In the autumn of 1944, a poor harvest seriously aggravated the food situation. The Islanders interned in Germany once more asked the ICRC to urge the British authorities to organise a large-scale relief programme through Geneva before winter set in.

On October 18, 1944, the German Consul-General in Geneva called on the Committee, to explain that as a result of the Allied landings the Channel Islands had been cut off from all outside sources of food for several months. Rations had been drastically reduced ; there were practically no medical stores or soap. The Consul also stated that the situation had led the German military authorities of the Islands to suggest, by direct communication, to the British military authorities that the inhabitants, particularly the women, children, aged and sick, should be removed to England, but that the British authorities had refused. The Consul therefore asked the Committee to come to the aid of the population. He gave assurances

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<sup>1</sup> For particulars, see Report by the Joint Relief Commission.

that the Committee could forthwith send a delegate to verify the critical situation in the Islands and distribute any relief that might be forthcoming.

Evidence of the keen interest of the Germans in the execution of this scheme was the fact that they laid down its acceptance, by the Allies as an essential condition to their consent to any relief action by the ICRC in behalf of occupied Holland<sup>1</sup>.

The Committee at once communicated the German proposal to the British authorities, urging them to consider once more the possibility of waiving the blockade regulations—this time in behalf of their own countrymen—and to authorize a large shipment of relief supplies for the British inhabitants of the Islands, adding that the stock of bread would run out by mid-December 1944, and that reserves of soap, coal and many medicaments were entirely exhausted.

On November 8, 1944, the Committee's delegation informed the Channel Islands Committee in London of the proposed relief scheme, and suggested that a relief cargo should be made available to the ICRC.

On November 9, the British Consulate in Geneva notified the ICRC that the British Government would authorize the shipment of relief to the Channel Islands only under the following conditions :

(1) that the German Government should explicitly recognize their responsibility for the continued supply of basic food rations to the population of the Islands ;

(2) that all the necessary facilities should be granted delegates of the ICRC to supervise the distribution.

The British authorities particularly stressed that such relief foodstuffs should be regarded as supplementary, and that they should be shipped in the form of PW parcels. They also agreed to send medical stores, in order to build up stocks in Jersey, Guernsey and possibly Sark. But they considered that this large-scale programme would require the presence of at least two or three of the Committee's delegates in the Islands.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 449.

The German authorities were at once informed of these conditions. Meanwhile, it was planned to use the *Vega*, which had hitherto been carrying PW parcels under the Committee's markings between Lisbon and Marseilles.

On November 21, the German authorities agreed in principle to the conditions laid down by the British Government. They did not, however, confirm the statement made by the German Consul in regard to the presence of delegates of the ICRC in the Islands <sup>1</sup>.

Several practical details still had to be settled concerning the safe-conduct, the route to be followed and the port of arrival, but the belligerents quickly agreed on these points. The port of arrival was to be St. Peter Port (Guernsey), and navigation in the Channel would be under the direction of a German pilot. During these negotiations, a cargo of 150,000 food parcels, 10,000 medical parcels and four tons of soap were taken from British Red Cross stocks, and prepared for shipment.

The first difficulty arose over the appointment of the two delegates who were to supervise the distribution of these supplies. To gain time, the delegates had left Geneva for Lisbon before the Governments had given their consent to the scheme. The Germans raised objections to one of the delegates, who was replaced at the last moment by the head of the Committee's delegation in Lisbon.

The *Vega* finally left Lisbon on December 22, 1944. The British Red Cross requested that the delegates should find out the exact number of inhabitants, their living conditions, and their requirements in food, clothing and pharmaceutical and medical stores. Particular attention was to be given to the sick, whom the British authorities agreed to receive in hospitals in Great Britain, should the Germans be unable to give them proper care.

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, the ICRC noted that the German authorities in the Islands made no objection to the landing, both in Guernsey and Jersey, of the Committee's delegates, who were given perfect freedom to discuss the situation with the civil authorities.

On December 27, the *Vega* arrived at St. Peter Port, with the following cargo, given by the B.R.C. :

Tobacco and cigarettes . . . . .	24 cases =	1,328 kilos
Food parcels . . . . .	119,792 =	669,697 „
Soap . . . . .	120 cases =	4,137 „
Medical stores . . . . .	82 cases =	2,159 „
Diet parcels . . . . .	4,200 =	21,000 „
Salt . . . . .	65 bags =	5,265 „
Children's clothing (given by Lady Campbell) . . . . .	6 cases =	300 „

The ship also carried a mail-bag containing 1,133 letters and cards from PW and civilian internees in Germany.

The cargo was unloaded in two stages, and in proportion to the size of the populations, given officially as :

Guernsey and Sark . . . . .	22,800 inhabitants
Jersey . . . . .	39,500 „

The first unloading took place at St. Peter Port on Dec. 30, 1944, and the second at St. Helier (Jersey) on Jan. 3, 1945. The ICRC delegates supervised the distribution and warehousing of the supplies, in cooperation with representatives of the German forces, the civilian authorities of the Islands and the local branch of the British Red Cross. An immediate issue was made of one food parcel a head ; the remainder of the 119,792 parcels—for 62,300 inhabitants—was placed in stock.

The *Vega* left St. Peter Port on Jan. 4, 1945, and reached Lisbon on Jan. 9. That same day the representative of the British Red Cross in Lisbon was handed the lists of supplies distributed to the population of the two islands, countersigned by the Bailiffs.

Before leaving the Islands, the delegates had wired to Geneva to notify a second shipment to the Islands, this time of flour and yeast for bread-making, soap, clothing, underwear and shoe-leather : the acute shortage of these commodities required instant measures.

Investigations by the delegates also established the need for subsequent shipments to the Islands of coal and Diesel oil, to keep the electricity plants and gas-works running.

As the need for fuel was growing urgent, the British authorities suggested that the Foundation for the Organization of Red Cross Transports should charter a neutral vessel, able to carry 1,500 tons of coal at each voyage. The ICRC preferred such a vessel to be chartered, like the *Vega*, by the British Red Cross ; the British Government agreed and proposed the *Sirius*, a Swedish vessel then in the Baltic. The German authorities agreed to the use of a collier for the Islands, but refused to allow the *Sirius* to leave the Baltic. To secure their acceptance of the scheme, the British authorities stated that the *Sirius* might carry mail for German PW from Gothenburg to Lisbon. Thenceforward, negotiations were conducted through the Protecting Power. The Germans agreed to the use of the *Sirius*, and to the conveyance of coal direct from England, instead of from Lisbon. They insisted, however, on the *Sirius* being chartered by the Foundation, and not by the British Red Cross. Thus, after two months of discussions, the first proposal made by London was finally adopted.

On April 25, 1945, the ICRC submitted the route of the *Sirius* for the approval of the German Government. Dartmouth, on the south coast of England, was chosen as the port for loading. But the war was drawing to a close ; the use of this ship under the emblem of the ICRC became unnecessary, and the scheme was therefore abandoned.

In a telegram dated Jan. 13, 1945, the head of the Committee's delegation in Lisbon referred to a matter raised by the British authorities at the time of the first voyage of the *Vega*, namely, the removal of the seriously sick to Great Britain. The representative of the ICRC stated that this scheme had the consent of the local authorities and of the German military authorities ; the latter however demanded the right to select the evacuees. The difficulties encountered in settling matters of principle and in choosing the ship prevented the speedy execution of the plan, and the armistice put an end to the negotiations.

On their first visit to the Islands, the Committee's delegates had learned that 141 Allied PW were detained there. On the return voyage of the *Vega* to Guernsey, these PW were given relief parcels taken from the cargo.

To hasten transport, the British Red Cross proposed that the next voyage should start direct from Great Britain, but the Germans categorically opposed the scheme. Supplies therefore continued to be shipped from Lisbon, and the *Vega* made four more journeys from Portugal to St. Helier and St. Peter Port, accompanied each time by a representative of the ICRC. All distributions were carried out in accordance with the scheme established for the first shipment. Receipts from the Bailiffs were regularly handed to the representatives of the British Red Cross in Lisbon, together with further applications for relief made to the ICRC delegates. It was only on the third voyage that a consignment of flour could be added to the cargo conveyed by the *Vega*.

The following are the particulars of these four voyages :

*Second Voyage :*

Cargo given by the British and Canadian Red Cross.		<i>kilos</i>
Food parcels . . . . .	134,656	749,691
Tobacco . . . . .	102 cases	5,645
Medicaments . . . . .	1,099 cases	44,905
Boot-soles . . . . .	6 cases	220
Salt . . . . .	150 bags	12,100
Diesel oil for electric power station in Jersey . . . . .	10 drums	

Besides this consignment there were :

- 126 food parcels for 21 American PW (given by the American Red Cross) ;
- 360 food parcels for 120 French PW (given by the American Red Cross) ;
- 12 clothing parcels for 120 French PW (given by the Argentine Red Cross).

*Schedule :*

- Departure from Lisbon, Feb. 1
- Arrival at St. Peter Port, Feb. 6
- Departure from St. Helier, Feb. 16
- Arrival at Lisbon, Feb. 21.

### *Third Voyage :*

Cargo given by the British and Canadian Red Cross.		kilos
Food parcels . . . . .	72,704	408,333
Medicaments and surgical instruments	328 cases	9,973
Salt . . . . .	150 bags	12,150
Flour . . . . .	8,000 sacks	511,652
Yeast . . . . .	37 cases	1,371
Soap . . . . .	200 cases	5,306
Diesel oil (given by the Shell Company)	21 barrels	6,349
Petrol . . . . .	7 barrels	1,179
Coal (for the locomotive used to convey the supplies) . . . . .	8 tons	

#### Schedule :

Departure from Lisbon, Feb. 28  
 Arrival at St. Peter Port, March 5  
 Departure from St. Helier, March 11  
 Arrival at Lisbon, March 15.

### *Fourth Voyage :*

Cargo. <i>Given by the British Government.</i>		kilos
Flour and yeast . . . . .	8,038 sacks	518,156
Sugar . . . . .	360 sacks	18,981
Kerosene . . . . .	13 casks	2,225

#### *Given by the British Red Cross*

Pharmaceutical products . . . . .	2,031 cases	47,362
Salt . . . . .	150 sacks	12,150
Seed . . . . .	157 sacks	8,119
Candles, matches, spare parts, etc. . .	167 cases	9,694
Communion wine . . . . .	1 cask	150

#### *Given by the Canadian Red Cross*

Food parcels . . . . .	45,880	259,957
Soap . . . . .	380 cases	11,022

#### *Given by the American Red Cross*

Clothing and footwear . . . . .	963 bales	42,993
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#### In addition :

Foodstuffs for French PW. (Gift of the A.R.C.) . . . . .	280 cases
Ditto for American PW. (Gift of the A.R.C.) . . . . .	480 cases
Ditto for British PW. (Gift of the C.R.C.) . . . . .	12 cases

Schedule :

Departure from Lisbon, March 31  
 Arrival at St. Peter Port, April 5  
 Departure from St. Helier, April, 15  
 Arrival at Lisbon, April 19

It will be noticed that the relaxation of the blockade regulations (agreed to by the Allied authorities on Nov. 9, 1944) was still further allowed in this first relief programme, since a considerable quantity of clothing was added to the food shipments.

*Fifth Voyage :*

Cargo.	Given by the British Government.	kilos
Sugar. . . . .	360 sacks	18,981
Flour and yeast . . . . .	9,308 sacks	502,056
Kerosene . . . . .	14 casks	2,336

*Given by the British Red Cross*

Clothing and footwear . . . . .	1,269 cases	49,707
Salt . . . . .	150 sacks	12,150
Medicaments . . . . .	8 cases	292
Soap . . . . .	100 cases	3,175

*Given by the Canadian Red Cross*

		kilos
Food parcels . . . . .	62,000	350,571
Cigarettes (for British PW). . . . .	1 case	

Schedule :

Departure from Lisbon, April 28  
 Arrival at St. Peter Port, May 3  
 Departure from St. Hélier, May 11  
 Arrival at Lisbon, May 15.

This cargo was also unloaded in two stages, the first at St. Peter Port and the second at St. Helier on May 8, the day on which the German garrison surrendered. The German commander himself notified the Committee's delegates of the armistice. He went on board the *Vega* together with the Bailiff of Jersey, and surrendered his authority, as regards unloading, to the representative of the local branch of the British Red Cross. A large crowd then swarmed on board the vessel. For hours the delegates of the Committee had to shake hands, give their autographs, and even consent to be carried shoulder

high. They also learnt that many babies born within the last months had been christened Vega <sup>1</sup>.

## § 9. GREECE

On the outbreak of hostilities against Greece, the ICRC began its customary work under the 1929 Convention for PW and, by analogy, for civil internees. During the occupation, the Committee gave help to the Greek military disabled, sick and TB patients, and, in so far as it was possible in the absence of any Convention, ensured the welfare of the Greeks interned in concentration camps, and of the 55,000 Jews of Salonika who were removed from Greece in May 1943.

The Committee's chief efforts were, however, made in another field of especial importance: this was the relief of the civil population.

In normal times Greece imported more than one third of the foodstuffs required for national consumption; it was now completely cut off from the outside world. In addition, home production dropped considerably as a result of the war. When the country was entirely occupied at the end of April 1941, the food situation rapidly became critical, the more so as the areas which had been annexed by the Bulgarians (Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia) supplied over one quarter of the country's total agricultural production. Immediate action was needed if a calamity was to be averted. All available foodstuffs had to be sent at once, and at the same time a large-scale scheme for the continuous, extensive relief to a whole population had to be planned. Thus the ICRC, in pursuance of its humanitarian duty, was led, for the first time, to the large-scale relief of a civil population.

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<sup>1</sup> Once more, the *Vega* sailed from Lisbon, on May 31, 1945 for the Channel Islands, this time under the entire responsibility of the British Government. She had on board the representative of the British Red Cross in Lisbon, and carried the remainder of the supplies warehoused in Lisbon for the Islands.

On May 30, 1941, the Committee's delegate in Athens sent an urgent appeal to Geneva, asking especially for an emergency consignment of milk for women and children. At the same time, a pressing call for help was made by the Greek Red Cross. By June 13, the ICRC had replied that it had begun negotiations and was preparing shipments.

The first opportunity to send help, although restricted in scope, came in the following circumstances. The Committee's delegation in Italy's African colonies informed Geneva that the women, children and sick civilians in Eritrea were in urgent need of condensed milk and other foodstuffs, and that the Italian Red Cross had placed a large sum of money at the disposal of the ICRC for the assistance of these people. After making unsuccessful attempts to purchase supplies in Egypt and Australia, the Committee learnt that a consignment of 100 tons of milk from the American Red Cross for the Greek population was lying idle in Egypt, owing to insurmountable transport difficulties. The ICRC proposed that the shipment should be presented to the Italians in Eritrea, whilst the Italian Red Cross handed over an equivalent amount to the Greek population. Negotiations were made in Rome by a mission from Geneva, and the Italian and German authorities agreed to the suggestion. The Greek population by this means shortly afterwards received 63 tons of powdered milk and a quantity of foodstuffs, the first wagonloads reaching Athens at the end of July 1941.

Meanwhile the ICRC applied in London and Washington for navicerts, in particular, for consignments of milk.

The Joint Relief Commission, on the proposal of its chairman, M. Carl J. Burckhardt, had also applied repeatedly to the National Red Cross Societies, for funds with which to purchase food supplies. A first consignment of the Joint Commission left Switzerland in November 1941<sup>1</sup>.

A relief scheme was also organized in Turkey. The Turkish Red Crescent was able to buy large quantities of food for the

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<sup>1</sup> Particulars will be found at the end of this report on the assistance given to the Greek population by the Joint Relief Commission. For further details see that Commission's Final Report.

account of the Greek War Relief Association. Upon arriving in Ankara in July 1941, the delegate of the ICRC took an active part in preparing these shipments. The ICRC, which had from the outset been engaged on the problem of transport by sea, agreed to distribute the supplies. Following these efforts by the ICRC and the Turkish Government, the Axis authorities agreed that a Turkish vessel, the *Kurtulus*, should convey the supplies from Istanbul to the Piraeus. In point of fact, the cargo of this ship had at first been intended for British prisoners of war in Greece, but as these were few in number, the ICRC secured permission from the Axis authorities for the *Kurtulus* to carry supplies also for the Greek civilian population. One month later, the blockade authorities allowed 50,000 tons of foodstuffs to enter the area under blockade. It should be added that the occupying authorities made it a strict condition that distribution of relief to Greece should be supervised by the ICRC.

The *Kurtulus*, during her sixth trip, sank with her cargo in the Sea of Marmora in January 1942; she was replaced by another Turkish vessel, the *Dumlupinar*, which was in operation until the month of August. These two vessels, sailing under the emblem of the Turkish Red Crescent, carried in all about 19,000 of the 50,000 tons of sundry foodstuffs contemplated. These cargoes included neither wheat nor flour.

An extensive relief scheme and regular food distributions had thus become possible.

In October 1941, when the first shipments from Turkey were due, the ICRC turned to the difficult problem of the reception and issue of relief supplies. Having secured the necessary permits from the Axis authorities, the Committee's delegation in Athens set up a supervisory body, subsequently known as the *Commission de Haute Direction*, or General Managing Board, which was to regulate and direct the relief work. This body was presided over by one of the ICRC delegates, and included the President of the Greek Red Cross and the representatives of the German and Italian Red Cross Societies. For the practical details of receiving and distributing the food supplies, the ICRC delegation set up an executive body, the

*Comité de gestion des envois de vivres du CICR*, or Managing Committee for ICRC food supplies, under the control of the delegation. The Chairman was a member of the ICRC delegation and the Committee included seven leading Greek citizens. The task of the General Managing Commission was to maintain liaison with the German and Greek authorities, and to take measures enabling the Executive Managing Body to carry out its work with the greatest possible efficacy <sup>1</sup>.

It was this organization which, with the limited means available, had the task of fighting the famine that was taking toll of the Greek population. It began its work on October 3, 1941, and continued until August 31, 1942, when it was replaced, as will be seen further on, by a new commission under the name of the "Managing Commission of the Delegation of the ICRC in Greece".

As shipments of wheat began to arrive only in March 1942, the consignments from Turkey served as the basis of the relief programme during the terrible winter of 1941-1942. The amount of food per month per person which before the war had been 155 kilos, dropped to 79 kilos in October, then to 50 kilos only in the spring of 1942. During this critical period, the population suffered grievously. The relief supplies distributed to the people, although of incalculable help and instrumental in saving tens of thousands of lives, were tragically inadequate. The loss of the *Kurtulus* at the end of January 1942 was severely felt in Athens; rations had to be cut to extremely small quantities. The shiploads of wheat and flour which arrived in March and April, and the return of the mild weather, fortunately averted the worst consequences.

The Managing Commission had at once set to work to organize the warehousing and distribution of relief supplies. They issued relief first to those suffering most severely from

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<sup>1</sup> The first Executive Managing Body is fully dealt with in the Final Report of the Managing Commission of the Food Shipments of the ICRC, (Athens, March 1945), which was drawn up by its liquidator, Mr. Evangelos Papastrados, who succeeded Mr. Zannas as administrator-delegate of this body. The reader will find a summary of this statement in the Final Report of the Managing Commission for Greek Relief under the auspices of the ICRC, which is to appear shortly.

undernourishment, and used most of the food to help the inhabitants of the capital and its suburbs, where distress was acute. The order of priority was : hospitals and welfare institutions, war-disabled and war-victims, and the destitute ; at all times, it did all in its power for the children.

The Commission supplied food to forty-three hospitals, two infirmaries and three clinics for oedema established jointly by the Institute of Social Insurance and the Greek Red Cross, and to four State and three private sanatoria. These institutions, which from October 1941 to August 1942 depended on the Commission for their main supplies, had to feed about 190,000 persons. A few private clinics, including 6,500 patients and staff, also received limited quantities of food during the worst period.

Food was also supplied to twenty-one homes opened by various associations for the disabled and other victims of the war, refugees in particular, where a soup ration was issued each day to about 17,000 people.

Canteens were opened for the destitute. From the outset, the Commission supplied the Central Canteens Commission (K.E.S.), which in October 1941 controlled 39 homes and 180 distribution centres, with enough food to issue daily meals to about 75,000 people. In March 1942, the number of distribution centres had increased to 335, and the Central Commission had in addition opened 147 canteens for schoolchildren, administered by the School Insurance Committee (E.M.A.). The quantities of food handed over to the public canteens grew in proportion : the average number of daily rations supplied by the Management Commission rose, between December 1941 and August 1942, from 200,000 to 275,000 for the public canteens, and from 32,000 to 60,000 for the school canteens, that is to say, from 232,000 to 335,000 in all.

The Managing Commission also supplied foodstuffs to canteens opened by trade and professional organizations and by business firms. These numbered 292 and catered for 101,000 people in the early spring of 1942. The canteens for civil servants and employees, eventually totalling 121, and catering for 55,000 people, also received supplies.

Finally, the Commission gave relief supplies to industrial undertakings for their staff and workers' canteens, on condition that the firms bore certain costs. There were 246 industrial canteens in November 1941, and 1,015 in July 1942: at this point they were closed down, as the Commission had meanwhile organized the general issue of supplies through the grocery-shops. The industrial canteens served up to 88,000 people.

Throughout, the Managing Commission allocated supplies to public and private child welfare agencies; at the same time it sought to co-ordinate their work. In February 1942, it was agreed that infant welfare should be in the hands of the Greek Red Cross and the Patriotic Foundation, that relief to children under school age should be given by the E.O.H.A. (National Organization of Christian Unity), whilst relief to schoolchildren should be given by the E.M.A. (School Insurance Committee). The private organizations at the same time continued their activities. In addition to the school children, numbering from 25,000 to 30,000, who received food through the E.M.A., a large number of children in the winter of 1941-1942 were given one meal a day (containing one third of the daily calories necessary) in the special canteens that were opened in all quarters of Athens. Between April and August, 1942, the number of infants fed by the canteens (including those of the E.M.A.) rose from 10,000 to 25,000. The corresponding figures for pre-school children were 119,000 and 165,000; for school children 67,000 and 86,000, making a rise from 196,000 to 276,000 in all. In July, the total was 285,000. As Athens numbered at that time some 330,000 children and young persons under 18, the great majority of these therefore received relief from the school canteens. Those who did not were either of wealthy parents, or were registered in the public canteens.

Lastly, the Managing Commission did what it could to alleviate distress amongst the inmates of the thirteen prisons and concentration camps: their average number during this period was 36,500 and their sufferings were particularly severe. Greek Red Cross nurses issued the supplies.

Owing to the technical and administrative difficulties entailed by the ever-increasing number of canteens, which,

apart from the children's canteens, eventually exceeded 1,800 and served almost 500,000 persons, the Managing Commission decided to abandon the system of cooked meals and to distribute supplies in kind through the grocery-shops. An experiment made in November 1941 by the Ministry of Supply proved unsatisfactory, and the Commission itself therefore set up an agency for this purpose. From July 29 to September 15, 1942, this agency made three distributions, the last of which took place after the new Managing Commission had begun to operate. Each issue affected about 1,220,000 people and comprised close on 3,164 tons of miscellaneous foodstuffs, including flour, noodles, macaroni, etc., shelled hazel-nuts and dried raisins. The canteens, however, still continued their work.

The first cargo of grain was brought by the Swedish ship *Radmanso* after the ICRC had made urgent representations to the blockade authorities<sup>1</sup>. This freighter, which was lying at Port Said, had been chartered by the British Red Cross to carry 7,000 tons of Egyptian grain to Greece. The ICRC procured the necessary safe-conduct from the Axis authorities, and the *Radmanso*, sailing under the Swedish flag, left Alexandria on March 13, 1942, arriving at the Piraeus on the 17th. Many difficulties, both in Egypt and in Greece, had of course to be overcome before sailing, since the ship was the first to ply directly between a port in the hands of the Allies and one occupied by the other side. She was followed by the *Sicilia*, chartered by the Greek War Relief Association of New York. This freighter left New York with a cargo of 3,000 tons of grain, under the Swedish flag, and berthed at the Piraeus on April 16. The ICRC had been asked on March 17 to obtain a safe-conduct from the Axis authorities, and was able to forward a favourable reply on the very next day. The *Hallaren*, chartered by the Swedish Red Cross and flying the Swedish flag, arrived at the Piraeus on the same day as the *Sicilia*, with a cargo of 4,000 tons of grain, a gift from the Swedish Red Cross, which she had loaded at Lisbon. The ship had left Gothenburg on February 20, on being authorized by the Germans to leave

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<sup>1</sup> For details of these negotiations see below p. 460.

Sweden on this errand, and she had taken two months to arrive at her destination. This vessel was then scheduled to carry foodstuffs from Istanbul to the Piraeus, at the same time as the *Dumlupınar*. Finally, she was used to carry two loads each of 4,500 tons of flour from Haifa to the Piraeus, the first in June and the second in August 1942. On her second trip, she discharged 1,000 tons at Izmir for the people of the Greek Archipelago <sup>1</sup>.

Another Swedish cargo steamer, the *Stureborg*, which had been held up in the Near East, carried 2,000 tons of grain from Haifa to the Piraeus during May. The Axis Governments, when granting the necessary safe-conduct, had stipulated that this vessel should show both the Swedish colours and the ICRC markings, and should have an ICRC escort agent on board. During her return voyage to Haifa, the *Stureborg* was sunk by Italian planes in the waters south of Cyprus. The captain and crew, with the exception of one seaman, and the ICRC convoy agent all lost their lives. The Italian Government expressed its regrets to the ICRC and made official apologies.

From March to August, 1942, these ships in all delivered 23,361.5 tons of grain and flour, and 386.5 tons of miscellaneous foodstuffs to the Managing Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> The ICRC then made negotiations for the *Hallaren* to continue carrying supplies to the Greek population, and instead of grain, to convey dried vegetables from Syria. In September, when the Argentine set aside a quantity of grain for Greece, the ICRC tried to arrange for its shipment, and to induce the German authorities to agree that the *Hallaren* be used for this purpose. But Germany who, as will be seen further on, had just consented to eight Swedish vessels leaving the Baltic to carry grain from Canada to Greece, refused consent, on the grounds that it was the turn of the Allies to supply tonnage by freeing, for example, three Swedish cargo boats which they were holding in Canada. Later, the Germans, who were considering the import into Greece of certain quantities of food to offset the requisition and export of Greek products, asked that this ship be placed at the service of the Greek firm "Ella Turk", to bring part of these supplies from Trieste and Venice. This question was the subject of lengthy discussions between the Swedish Government and the belligerents. The Allies finally gave their consent, after certain conditions had been accepted by the occupying Powers. From May 1943 to June 1944, the *Hallaren* made eight trips to Trieste and Venice, bringing to Greece almost 30,000 tons of food, including 16,000 tons of dried vegetables and 11,000 tons of sugar.

When the first cargo of grain was unloaded at the Piraeus, the daily bread ration for the capital had dropped to 30 dramia, or 96 grammes, and was moreover very irregularly issued. These deliveries made possible an appreciable improvement in what had become an extremely critical situation. Under an agreement between the head of the Committee's delegation and the Ministry of Supply, responsibility for maintaining the bread supply in the Athens area was divided equally between the Managing Commission and the Ministry. The bread ration was raised to 60 dramia (192 grammes) on March 25, 1942, and on May 3, to 67 dramia (215 grammes). The ration was kept at this level until August 3, when it had to be reduced again to 50 dramia (160 grammes), pending the arrival of the *Hallaren* on August 20.

The needs of the capital and the lack of transport allowed only of a small supply to the provinces : this, during the period when the first Managing Commission was at work, amounted to 2,993 tons of miscellaneous foodstuffs and 4,467 tons of grain and grain products.

The Managing Commission set up a separate service for the provinces, which appointed local " Red Cross Distribution Committees ". These committees were divided later, if the area was sufficiently large, into central and local committees : they received their instructions from, and were responsible to the Managing Commission.

The K.E.S. (Central Canteens Commission) also appointed Committees in a large number of prefectures to organize soup kitchens. Instead of distributing the food supplies in kind, these local committees sometimes handed the supplies over to the canteen committees, which made the distribution in the form of cooked meals.

The provinces and islands near Athens, where the food situation was as critical as in the capital, were necessarily the first to receive relief.

The Managing Commission itself had to procure information on the situation in the various provinces. It also collected data on the birth and death rates in a large number of communes. This preparatory work later proved most useful when the

Second Managing Commission, with far greater quantities of foodstuffs available, could give help on a larger scale to the distressed provincial population.

The ICRC delegates in Salonika worked tirelessly to ensure food supplies, in the face of a situation often complicated by the breakdown of communications between that city and Athens. When the new Managing Commission began its work, these delegates had already initiated an extensive distribution scheme and had organized medical and child welfare services <sup>1</sup>.

The Managing Commission for ICRC food shipments received in all 45,435 tons of goods, 25,516 tons of which were grain and grain products, and 19,919 tons miscellaneous foodstuffs.

The greater part of these supplies had been bought by funds given by relief organizations, in particular by the Greek War Relief Association and the Vanderbilt Committee, and by the Greek Government in London. The remainder, with the exception of a consignment of Italian maize flour provided by the Ministry of Food in Athens, came mostly from gifts by the Swiss Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross. The grain and grain products were purchased in the United States, Portugal, Egypt and Palestine, and the other foodstuffs for the most part in Turkey.

### *Relief Shipments to the Aegean Islands*

As supplies could not be sent from the Piraeus, the ICRC assigned its delegation in Ankara the task of victualling the Aegean Islands until the new Managing Commission took over. Despite many difficulties, the first shipments arrived in June 1942. The approval of the Turkish Government, the representatives of Greece in Ankara, and the Allied and the Axis States had been given. Although a Turkish steamer was used,

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<sup>1</sup> With the help of a Swedish delegate on this Commission, the three representatives of the ICRC (also members), then undertook the Commission's many duties involved in feeding the civil population, whilst continuing the traditional work of the ICRC. The organization set up Salonika to relieve the civil population employed at this time a staff of 350, as well as several hundred workmen.

the greater part of the cargo was carried by Turkish and Greek sailing vessels and fleets of caiques bearing the markings of the ICRC, based at Izmir. With the exception of the 1,000 tons of flour which, as mentioned earlier, were unloaded at Izmir from the *Hallaren* in August 1942, the relief supplies were bought in Turkey with funds largely from the Greek War Relief Association. The delegates of the ICRC in Ankara sailed with the boats, sometimes a hazardous and fatiguing undertaking. They themselves, with the eager help they found on the spot, distributed the supplies, and these were received with indescribable joy and gratitude by the population, then in dire need of help. The delegates were able, in particular, to issue 660 tons of miscellaneous foodstuffs in June and July 1942, and 1,000 tons in September of the same year to the islands of Chios, Mytilene (Lesbos) and Samos, and from these points the islands of Icaria, Furni and several others with smaller populations were supplied by means of small boats <sup>1</sup>.

The ICRC, aware of Greece's urgent and vital need for much greater and regular relief supplies, and acting in close co-operation with the Greek Government in London, had begun in the early summer of 1941 to negotiate with Governments for a relief scheme on a scale commensurate with the gravity of the situation. The occupying Powers were approached on the subject, and the German authorities in Greece on November 11, 1941 communicated the following to the ICRC delegation: (1) The German Government agreed to the ICRC providing relief for the Greek civil population; (2) formal assurances were given that the relief shipments would go

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<sup>1</sup> Distribution by the new Managing Commission began only in May 1943, as a result of the ban on the use of caiques for the transhipment of supplies from the Piraeus. By January 1943 it had been arranged that a Swedish freighter should carry to Izmir foodstuffs for the Islands from Canada; from Izmir, they were to be conveyed by sailing vessels. The first cargo was unloaded at that port towards the end of February, but the formalities for chartering caiques and installing the delegates in the Islands, delayed the forwarding of the food supplies until April. The ICRC delegation in Izmir saw to the unloading of the Swedish ships, and the warehousing, transhipment and transport by caiques of these supplies. Swedish delegates of the new Commission looked after distribution.

exclusively to the said population ; (3) every facility would be granted to the ships conveying these relief supplies.

On November 15, the Italian authorities gave similar assurances.

Without awaiting confirmation of these statements, the Committee applied to the blockade authorities for their consent to the shipment of quantities sufficiently large for Greece's requirements. M. Carl J. Burckhardt, a member of the ICRC and Chairman of the Joint Relief Commission, went to London in December 1941, to plead the cause of Greece. As a result, the blockade authorities allowed continuance of the shipments from Turkey, which thereafter rose to 11,500 tons, and stated that they would consider other relaxations of the blockade in favour of Greece. At the close of January 1942, they authorized the shipment of 1,000 tons of grain from Egypt. They also permitted the shipment of other relief in limited quantities, and the chartering of Swedish freighters which, as we have seen, carried over 23,000 tons of grain and flour to Greece at a particularly critical period.

The restriction imposed by Turkey made it impossible to procure any further stocks in that country and the other available resources were far from sufficient. Regular provisioning from overseas was essential if adequate and regular supplies were to be kept up. There remained, however, the problem of finding the necessary cargo space.

Upon M. Burckhardt's return, the ICRC approached the Swedish Red Cross on the subject. Sweden was then the only country which had the required ships. A number of Swedish freighters had been laid up in Baltic ports, since maritime communications with Great Britain and oversea countries had been cut after the German occupation of Denmark and Norway, and these ships could be used only with the consent of the German Government.

The Committee at the same time pursued its negotiations with the blockade authorities, while the Greek Government in London, the Greek War Relief Association, and the many friends of Greece did all in their power to hasten the success of the scheme.

In addition to the foodstuffs that could be supplied by the relief societies, by the Greek War Relief Association, in particular, the Canadian Government stated that they were prepared to furnish 15,000 tons of grain monthly.

The Allied Governments, while recognizing the urgency of these requests, could not agree to the shipment of far greater quantities of cereals and other foods, until they had definite guarantees as to the intended use of these supplies. They required assurances that relief would be distributed in its entirety to the Greek population, and that the food production of the country itself would still be reserved in the first place for the inhabitants.

The Allies were prepared to give preliminary permission for monthly shipments of 15,000 tons of grain, subject to the Axis authorities' acceptance of certain conditions. Early in March they asked the Swedish Government whether the necessary ships could be assigned for this purpose, and at once received an affirmative reply.

The next step was to induce the Axis Governments to agree to the conditions laid down by the Allies. The Swedish Government<sup>1</sup> and the ICRC took up the matter simultaneously and with equal vigour.

The Committee was able to inform the British Legation in Berne as early as February 3, 1942, that the Italian Government would do its best to facilitate this difficult enterprise. Shortly after, the German Government gave similar assurances. The Axis Governments asked however that no change should be made in the methods of distribution then in use, for which the *Comité de Haute Direction* was responsible<sup>2</sup>. They also insisted that the shipments should be consigned to the ICRC delegation. On March 6, the Governments of the Axis countries reiterated their assurances, and the fact was at once communicated by Geneva to the British authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> See Final Report of the Managing Commission for Relief in Greece.

<sup>2</sup> The *Comité* included, as stated above, representatives of the German, Italian and Greek Red Cross Societies, with the ICRC delegate in the chair.

Shortly afterwards, the Italian Government informed the ICRC that, though Italy had been able to deliver enough grain to Greece to ensure bread supplies until March, she was now no longer able to continue these shipments, and that it was urgently necessary to find enough grain to tide the population over until the next harvest in Greece.

At the same time the ICRC received distressing reports from its Athens delegation to the effect that the number of deaths in the city had risen to 5,000 in December (i.e. five times more than in December 1940), and that failing immediate supplies, Greece would suffer the most dreadful famine during the three months to come. Allowing for the cargoes to be taken by the *Radmanso* and the *Hallaren*, 20,000 tons of grain would have to be found in order to ensure a bare minimum of bread until the end of June.

On March 12, the Joint Relief Commission telegraphed this urgent appeal to the blockade authorities in London. At the same time the Committee notified the Greek Government in London and the American Red Cross. On March 20, it applied once more to the blockade authorities for permission to send the most urgent supplies, and stressed the imperative need for a large scale relief scheme. On April 18, at the request of the blockade authorities, the Committee once more gave details of the desperate food situation in Greece. Early in April, the Italian Government informed the ICRC that it thought inadvisable to increase the number of distribution agencies. On the other hand the Allied Governments expressed the wish that the grain supplied by Canada should be distributed under the responsibility of an organization which, like the existing one, would have the benefit of the Committee's experience and authority.

The Swedish Government meanwhile had approached Berlin and Rome, whose response, given in April, was encouraging; it was not until June, however, that the Swedes could give the Allies an assurance that the conditions they had laid down would be fulfilled. Certain difficulties still remained. In particular, the Axis Governments approved the distribution scheme set up by the ICRC, and did not wish it replaced

by another ; the British and United States Governments, on the other hand, while appreciating the aid of the ICRC, objected to any German, Greek or Italian Red Cross representation on the *Comité de Haute Direction* ; they wished the supplies imported through the blockade to be distributed by a strictly neutral commission, and suggested that the Swedish Government and Red Cross should both form part of such a commission. The Swedes readily agreed to this proposal, and it remained to discover a means of reconciling the demands of the belligerents. The Swedish Minister in Berne discussed the whole problem with the ICRC in Geneva on April 20, when the formation of a joint commission of ICRC delegates and Swedish citizens was mooted. In view of the magnitude of the enterprise, the ICRC was happy to enlist Sweden's help, the more so since that country had recently made an invaluable contribution to the work for Greece by her negotiations with the belligerents, and by the ships she had supplied, without which the Canadian grain would scarcely have reached its destination. To meet the Allied Governments' desires, the ICRC agreed to the proposal for a new Managing Commission without the leading Greek citizens who had hitherto given the ICRC invaluable assistance ; despite its readiness to co-operate with the Swedes, the Committee considered it hazardous to introduce any far-reaching change into the existing arrangement.

The matter was further discussed on May 6, 1942, in Geneva with the Swedish Minister in Berne, and the following plan was submitted by the ICRC to the Italian Government.

The ICRC would maintain the existing supervision of distributions, namely :

(1) — A *Comité de Haute Direction*, under the chairmanship of the principal ICRC delegate in Greece, and including, as before, representatives of the Italian and German Red Cross, and the Chairman of the Greek Red Cross.

(2) — A Managing Commission, presided over by an ICRC delegate and including a certain number of leading Greek citizens.

(3) — Where required by the increasing relief shipments, the addition of representatives of the Swedish and Swiss Red Cross to the Commission, with the same status as the ICRC delegates.

It was also proposed to set up a strictly neutral Red Cross Commission for the reception of all shipments from overseas and from neutral countries. The Managing Commission would remain in constant touch with the *Comité de Haute Direction*, which would maintain the necessary relations with the occupying and governmental authorities. The Commission would have power to set up Sub-commissions in Greek towns other than Athens and the Piraeus, where necessary.

On May 18 the Italian Government replied to this verbal note as follows :

(1) — The Government wished the work of distributing relief in Greece to remain in the hands of the ICRC, since this body was recognized by all belligerents, and had already done considerable relief work in Greece.

(2) — The Government approved an increase in the number of the Committee's assistants, whether of Swedish or Swiss nationality.

(3) — The Government thought it inadvisable to set up a neutral Red Cross commission, but proposed that the Managing Commission should be wholly composed of neutrals.

(4) — The Government agreed to the suggestion that this neutral Commission should, if necessary, set up Sub-commissions in towns other than Athens.

The ICRC transmitted this reply to the Swedish Government, which at once asked the British and American Governments for their consent. Before giving this, these Governments asked for further assurances :

(1) — That the duties of the *Comité de Haute Direction* would be strictly confined to maintaining liaison between the Managing Commission and the occupying authorities.

(2) — That the Managing Commission, composed solely of neutral delegates, would have certain powers and responsibilities only.

(3) — That the Swedish Government would be able to supervise the working of the plan, and to ensure that the conditions laid down by the Allies were observed by the occupying Powers.

In face of these reservations the Swedish Government and the ICRC again studied the question. It should be noticed

that collaboration between the ICRC and a Government had never been contemplated prior to this occasion. By its statutes and traditional principles, the ICRC is bound to carry out its relief operations on a strictly independent basis ; it cannot agree, even in exceptional circumstances and in any single country, to follow the instructions and act under the responsibility of any Government, even of a neutral country. The ICRC could not expose itself to the charge of serving Government interests. Betrayal of this fundamental principle would have jeopardized its entire work.

Furthermore, the activities of the occupying Powers had to be kept under strict surveillance, since the total supplies were to be handed over to the recipients, and at the same time the occupying Powers was not entitled to requisition an equivalent amount of domestic produce. Even had the ICRC been able to exercise such supervision throughout the country, it could not, as a matter of principle, have agreed to do so. It was therefore understandable that the Allies should invite another Government to undertake this responsibility and to be answerable to the Allies. Lastly, in view of the situation in Greece and the practical difficulties to be overcome, the distributing agency could have the necessary authority and powers only if the ICRC brought to its work the benefit of its credit with the Governments, the occupying Power, the local authorities and the Greek people themselves.

In view of these facts and the conditions laid down by the belligerents, the Swedish Government and Red Cross and the ICRC discussed the matter further in Stockholm and agreed to the following principles :

(1) — The relief scheme to remain under the sponsorship of the ICRC.

(2) — Distributions of oversea shipments to be handled by a strictly neutral commission ; as soon as the shipments were dispatched, Swedish delegates to sit on this Commission as delegates of the ICRC.

(3) — The *Comité de Haute Direction* to be maintained and its membership to include representatives of the Swedish and Swiss Red Cross Societies ; its chief duty to be to ensure liaison with the occupying authorities and to make suggestions for the distribution of relief.

It was furthermore agreed in Stockholm that the neutral Managing Commission should (1) act as an ICRC agency ; (2) include about fifteen members, of Swedish or Swiss nationality, six of them, at most, to be delegates of the ICRC and the remainder to be assistants to the ICRC delegation, under the control of the head delegate ; (3) the latter to be Chairman of the *Comité de Haute Direction*, whilst the chair of the neutral Managing Commission would be filled by a Swedish national ; (4) the Swedish *Chargé d'Affaires* to be allowed to attend the meetings of the *Comité de Haute Direction* in an advisory capacity ; (5) the Swedish Red Cross to furnish the ICRC with a list of the Swedish nationals selected for the new Commission, whilst the ICRC would secure their approval by the belligerent Governments concerned.

The plan thus adopted in Stockholm was submitted by the ICRC to the Italian Government, who in a note dated June 5, expressed their approval, adding that the German Government agreed likewise.

On June 29, 1942, the ICRC issued a Memorandum to all the belligerents concerned, setting out the result of the various negotiations conducted by itself and especially by the Swedish Government.

The Swedish Government and the ICRC at once set to work on this plan which was of such vital importance for the Greek population. On July 21, when the first three Swedish ships sailed for Montreal, the ICRC submitted to the Italian and German Governments a list of the new Swedish and Swiss members of its delegation in Greece. At the end of August these new members had reached Athens, and the new machinery was at once set in motion, as the first shipments of Canadian grain had by then also arrived.

The new Commission, composed of eight Swedes and seven Swiss, and entitled the "Managing Commission of the ICRC Delegation in Greece", began its work on September 1, and the original Managing Commission was dissolved. In view of the size and great complexity of its task, the Commission was much aided by the fact that it could draw on the large-scale

organization set up by its predecessor, the work and experience of which were also of great assistance.

When the new agency had been at work for some time, it became apparent to the ICRC that the collaboration between its delegates and the Swedish nationals did not rest on a very satisfactory legal foundation. Whilst the Committee's own delegates were invariably engaged on a contract basis, the Swedish members of the Managing Commission were not so bound—a fact which the ICRC had failed to foresee. Consequently, the Committee could not give them instructions, as they were under the orders of their own Government. The fact that the relief organization became more and more governmental in character inevitably placed the ICRC in an awkward position; circumstances finally became so difficult that the ICRC thought it would be best to withdraw, whilst continuing, however, to lend all possible assistance, in particular by enabling Swiss delegates to take part in its work. In any case, a closer definition of the respective positions of the ICRC and of the Swedish Government, subscribed to by the Governments concerned, became urgent.

The ICRC and the Swedish Government exchanged views, first at Stockholm and later in Geneva and Rome; the discussions concluded on March 9, 1943, with the "Rome Agreements", the chief clauses of which were as follows:

(1) — Relief for the Greek civil population to be given under the auspices of the ICRC. The work to be pursued by two agencies, a *Comité de Haute Direction*<sup>1</sup> and a Managing Commission.

(2) — The *Comité de Haute Direction* to continue with the same membership as in the past under the chairmanship of the principal ICRC delegate, and its meetings to be open to the representative of the Swedish Government, or the Chairman of the Managing Commission. The

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<sup>1</sup> The *Comité de Haute Direction* disappeared after the Italian surrender. In the subsequent period, the ICRC always maintained that the head of its delegation had, in a sense, become the successor of this body, that its specific powers passed to him, and that he had the right not only to be kept informed of the chief decisions made by the Managing Commission, but also to submit proposals or raise objections on humanitarian grounds, or for reasons of neutrality. In practice, however, and in the opinion of the ICRC, insufficient regard was paid to this point of view.

*Comité* to remain in contact with the responsible authorities in Greece regarding the work of relief, and to co-ordinate the activities of the relief agencies. The *Comité* to be kept informed of the work of the Managing Commission and of all its plans, and to have authority to submit proposals.

(3) — The Managing Commission to have equal numbers of Swedish nationals and ICRC delegates<sup>1</sup>. The Chairman to be appointed by the Swedish Government, and the Vice-Chairman by the International Committee. The Commission to allocate and distribute the supplies consigned to it, and to supervise consignments from overseas and domestic foodstuffs as required by the Allied Governments. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman alone to have powers to make decisions. The final decision in the allocation and distribution of all goods carried by Swedish ships under the authority of the Swedish Government, to lie with the Chairman, responsible to the Swedish Government. The Chairman also to undertake the supervision required by the Allied Governments. The Vice-Chairman alone to have final authority in matters concerning relief supplied by the ICRC. In all other cases, decisions to be made jointly by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. In all instances, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to consult each other on the course to be followed.

(4) — The ICRC delegates in the provinces could, with the consent of the principal delegate, be asked to distribute supplies received from the Managing Commission, so long as instructions received from the Chairman of the said Commission did not run counter to the traditional principles of the ICRC. The ICRC delegates undertaking such duties for the Managing Commission to be responsible only to the ICRC, and to continue under its authority, whether they were members of the Managing Commission, or not.

(5) — Questions relating to the goods brought from overseas in Swedish vessels to be handled through the Swedish Government; any new problems in regard to these goods to be settled in each particular case by agreements sought through the same channels between the belligerent Governments.

The Commission took the name of "Managing Commission for Greek Relief under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross".

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<sup>1</sup> The Italian authorities asked that the Managing Commission should not have more than thirty members. Owing to the difficulty of finding, in Sweden and Switzerland, qualified candidates free to serve for a sufficient period, the complement of thirty was reached only for a short time.

These provisions took effect late in March 1943, on the arrival in Athens of the new Chairman appointed by the Swedish Government, M. Emil Sandström, Counsellor to the Supreme Court of Sweden and Member of the Governing Body of the Swedish Red Cross, to whom the ICRC wishes here to pay a particular tribute. It should be recalled that important questions were usually discussed at the Commission's weekly sessions, before decisions were made by the Chairman, and that during temporary absences of the Chairman, his supervisory duties were discharged by a Swedish delegate, acting in the capacity of a representative of the Swedish Government.

In practice, the Rome Agreements did not lead to all the improvements which the ICRC would have considered desirable.

The ruling that relief was given to the Greek civil population "under the auspices of the ICRC" made that body responsible for the work as a whole. The ruling found its principal application in that the liaison between the Managing Commission and the occupying authorities was maintained by the chief ICRC delegate on the *Comité de Haute Direction*. Although it soon became apparent that it was neither practical nor possible to constitute the *Comité* as defined in the Rome Agreements, the ICRC held it to be the duty of its chief delegate to conduct negotiations with the competent authorities in Greece for the effective provisioning of the country. In practice, the ICRC noted that, even in cases where the particular responsibilities of Sweden towards the blockade authorities were not involved, negotiations were usually conducted by the Chairman of the Commission. Sometimes neither the ICRC, nor its delegates were informed of these steps. This was so, for instance, when highly important discussions took place between the diplomatic representative in Greece of the Swedish Government and the Chairman of the Managing Commission, which led, late in November 1943, to an agreement signed with the occupying authorities concerning the olive harvest. On the whole, it was not easy to maintain a satisfactory balance between the two parties co-operating in the Commission.

During the years 1943 and 1944, this situation was several times discussed by the ICRC and the Swedish Government,

but these conversations did not lead to appreciable results until much later. In addition, the ICRC was for a long time left in ignorance of the reasons why it had not been possible over long periods, to send food to certain areas, such as Epirus<sup>1</sup> where the situation was viewed with grave concern by the ICRC.

The Greek population—which generally drew no distinction between the Managing Commission, the “International Red Cross” and the International Committee—was on the whole ill-formed as to the ICRC’s powers in matters where the Committee had no authority to make final decisions, in particular as regards the allocation of relief. This state of affairs caused the Committee some anxiety. But the desire of each party to give all possible assistance to Greece, the recognition by each of the invaluable and indispensable contribution of the other in the pursuit of a common aim, and the bonds created by joint activities, often undertaken in trying circumstances, always overcame any difficulties. We should not forget that obstacles of this kind were virtually inherent in the nature of the parties whom circumstances had led to co-operate in a common task that could not have been accomplished without their concerted efforts. Both were inspired by the same will to serve, but both differed profoundly: the ICRC was a private Red Cross organization, a neutral body, relying solely on its experience: the other party—although the work of supplying Swedish delegates and of chartering cargo vessels fell to the Swedish Red Cross itself—was a Government with extensive resources that alone made it possible for certain tasks to be carried out.

By authorizing the use of its name and emblem for a relief work, the policy of which it could only influence to a limited degree, the ICRC made an important departure from its traditional principles. The step was, in its view, justified by the urgency and magnitude of the needs of the Greek population, the extreme danger in which they were and the peculiar circumstances of the work to be done. It was, too, vindicated by the devoted service given by the representatives of the Government with which the Committee was associated.

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<sup>1</sup> See Final Report of the Managing Commission, Chap. VI.

From September 1942 to April 1944 the Managing Commission received a monthly average of 15,000 tons of wheat and 3,000 tons of dried vegetables, and after December 1942 an additional 300 tons (later increased to 600 tons) a month of condensed milk for children. These shipments were not merely supplementary rations; they formed the basic food supply of the large towns and also of a considerable part of the population in small towns and villages. The situation in the absence of this substantial help, which arrived on the whole at sufficiently regular intervals, can be easily imagined.

In spite of the supplies given by the Commission, the position however remained critical. During 1943 it deteriorated greatly. In December the ICRC received highly alarming reports from national organizations and from the leaders of all Greek political parties; these reports were confirmed by the ICRC delegation. The famine had become acute, particularly in consequence of guerilla activities and the very poor harvest, and the approach of winter heightened the anxiety. As a crowning misfortune, the consignment due to leave Turkey and the 30,000 tons of Canadian wheat awaiting shipment, were both held up through lack of transport. Prolonged shortage was undermining the health of the entire population. Furthermore, 250,000 people at least were homeless. It was therefore essential that greatly increased help should be given without delay. The ICRC representative thought that to meet the situation the consignments should be doubled; he drew particular attention to the absence of fats and albuminous foods.

During December, while the Swedish Government was taking independent action, the ICRC brought the above facts to the notice of the British, Canadian and United States Governments; the Red Cross Societies of these countries were also informed. The ICRC added that if money donations were made, it could purchase clothing in Switzerland.

At the end of January 1944, the United States Government informed the ICRC that its appeal had been considered, and that they had decided to dispatch 1,600 tons of albuminous foodstuffs each month. Additional quantities of milk and ten tons of Ovaltine would be sent from Canada, and the United

States would also contribute some fifty tons of concentrated food for children ; 2,500 tons of rice had also been allocated, part of which were already on the way, the remainder to follow in January and February. The request for a largely increased monthly quota of wheat and dried vegetables had been granted, and extra quantities would be dispatched as soon as possible. Authority had been given for a gift of 300,000 garments and shoes for children and young people, and it was hoped to dispatch half of these within a month.

Shortly afterwards the Allies advised the Swedish Government that the monthly quotas of wheat and dried vegetables could be increased to 24,000 and 6,000 tons respectively, and that they were sending 2,000 tons of tinned fish.

Additional Swedish ships were made available through the Swedish Red Cross, for the transport of these large quantities. Since early September, the ICRC had been trying to find Swiss vessels. Despite their goodwill the Swiss authorities could not meet this request, as Switzerland had only a very limited tonnage available. In regard to this fundamental problem of tonnage, we should mention the efforts made by the ICRC in June 1944, at a time when the Managing Commission—which had no reserve stocks—feared that the slightest hitch in the deliveries by the Swedish steamers would compel it to abandon its distributions<sup>1</sup>.

Although larger consignments of dried vegetables and quantities of rice and fish reached Greece during the early

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<sup>1</sup> The Allies were landing in France at that time, and it seemed probable that oversea shipments for Switzerland would be held up in Spain and Portugal, thus greatly reducing the sailings of the Swiss merchant fleet. The ICRC thereupon asked the Swiss Government for the use of some smaller vessels, and for part of the supplies blocked at Lisbon, in order to feed the Greek population. The Swiss Government agreed that one or two vessels and 3,000 tons of wheat should be handed over, so that late in August the ICRC was able to ask the belligerents for their approval. The Swiss Transport Office then offered the *Zurich* to the Foundation for Red Cross Transports, for a limited period. The Greek Government in London, which was to provide the funds for chartering this vessel, wished the ship to be available for a longer period, however, and so the offer was not accepted. The British Government informed the ICRC that in view of the military situation they could not give their approval. As the problem of tonnage had in the meantime been solved, the project was then abandoned.

months of 1944, the Commission did not receive the fresh quotas until the second quarter, and deliveries did not tally with the quantities named in the new programme until after the country was liberated, when the Allied imports arrived. Between April 1 and November 1, 1944, deliveries nevertheless reached a monthly average of 29,000 tons.

After the liberation, the Managing Commission was unable to unload forthwith the Swedish boats lying in the Piraeus, as the port had been destroyed by the Germans before they left. Athens was temporarily cut off from all domestic supplies, and food became short. The Commission did what it could to meet the situation. Telegrams were exchanged with the Swedish captains, Stockholm and Geneva, and it was found possible to make a general issue of part of the stock of parcels intended for Greek war-disabled.

When Greece was freed in October 1944, the Allied authorities stated that they would grant every facility to the Managing Commission in the execution of its task. The Commission, however, regarded its work as completed, and was planning to hand over its responsibilities to the Greek authorities on December 15. However, at the urgent and repeated request of the Greek Government, which was not yet in a position to feed the population, Sweden and the ICRC agreed to continue their joint work until the end of April, 1945. The resources of the Commission were then increased by the imports of the Military Liaison, a relief service for civilian populations attached to the Allied Military Command. The Swedish ships continued the transatlantic service, in accordance with the relief programme, until the end of March, after which they were used for a further four of five months to carry UNRRA supplies.

During this period, the Swedish Government were no longer bound by their obligations towards the blockade authorities, and the co-operation between the ICRC and the Swedish representatives on the Commission changed, in the sense that all decisions were made by mutual agreement <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Final Report of the Managing Commission, Chapter XXVII.

Reference must also be made to the ICRC representatives' work for the protection of the civil population during the period immediately before the liberation, when local skirmishes, sabotage, punitive expeditions and reprisals were common. The delegation made contact—often with great difficulty—with the headquarters of EDES and EAM-ELAS, in order to obtain the concessions necessary for relief work. When the German troops left Greece, repeated protests of the ICRC delegates to the German command were successful in preventing the destruction of public utility installations, such as reservoirs, pumping stations, electric power stations, mills, stocks of goods, etc. At Salonika, the ICRC delegation acted as intermediary between the German forces and the partisans, and saved the town from large-scale destruction. In September and October 1944, the ICRC representatives succeeded in doing much rescue work on both sides of the firing line, after the retreat of the German armies.

The ICRC representatives were also able to give valuable service later on, during the civil war. This lasted from December 3, 1944 to January 17, 1945, when the Varkyssa agreements were signed; it caused much bloodshed in Athens, and added to the ravages of invasion and occupation those of domestic strife. With the approval of the British Command, the ICRC delegation succeeded in concluding an agreement with EAM-ELAS headquarters for the free passage across the fighting area of convoys of food and medical supplies. During this unhappy period, the representatives of the ICRC and of the Swiss Red Cross were particularly active. They largely took over the provisioning of hospitals and of the civil population, which would otherwise have been in a desperate position. Despite rifle-fire, mines, barricades, air attack and artillery fire, the Red Cross convoys daily crossed the fighting areas, since headquarters, the car park, fuel dumps and part of the stores were on one side of the lines, while the majority of the stores, the flour mills and the water tanks were on the other. Though many vehicles were put out of action, the ICRC representatives were spared the fate of a devoted Greek Red

Cross Nurse, Mlle Lecou, who was killed after volunteering to accompany a car-load of medical supplies.

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The Managing Commission<sup>1</sup> received from overseas a total of some 610,000 tons of foodstuffs, including nearly 470,000 tons of wheat and wheat products. In addition, 3,600 tons were received from Sweden, 2,100 tons from Turkey<sup>2</sup>, 31,000 tons from Axis countries by way of compensation, and 4,400 tons from Greece itself. Thus, between the opening and the close of its work, the Managing Commission handled about 651,000 tons of various foodstuffs. If we add the 55,000 tons given to the Committee by the Military Liaison for distribution, and the 6,000 tons left by the Germans, the total supplies amounted to roughly 712,000 tons.

In addition, the Managing Commission received from overseas 426 tons (gross weight) and 1,059 cases of medical supplies, 893,813 litres of cod-liver oil for children, and a quantity of hospital equipment, including 1,210 dozen spools of films and seven tons of X-ray equipment<sup>3</sup>.

Lastly, the Managing Commission was entrusted with large quantities of clothing<sup>4</sup>. Between February and August, 1944, it received some 900 tons of clothing for distribution to 300,000 children. After September 1944, the blockade authorities allowed the despatch monthly of 100 tons of clothing and footwear. After the liberation, the welfare organizations made a number of consignments. Altogether the Com-

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<sup>1</sup> The Commissions mentioned here are the *second* and *third* Managing Commissions ("Managing Commission of the ICRC representatives in Greece" and "Managing Commission for aid to Greece under the auspices of the ICRC", September 1942—April 1945), which were marked by the collaboration between the ICRC, the Swedish Government and the Swedish Red Cross. The figures relating to the *first* Managing Commission ("Managing Commission of the ICRC for sending Food Supplies", October 1941—August 1942) were given above.

<sup>2</sup> The supplies from Turkey were sent to the ICRC representatives who instructed the Managing Commission as to their distribution.

<sup>3</sup> See Final Report of the Managing Commission, Chapter XXII.

<sup>4</sup> *loc. cit.*, Chapter XXIII.

mission received some 2,500 tons of clothing for children and adults<sup>1</sup>.

In its complex duties, the Commission was seconded by the Swiss Red Cross Mission, whose first task, in July, 1943, had been to issue the milk and medical supplies which the Swiss Red Cross (Child Welfare Branch) sent to the ICRC representatives in Greece through the Joint Relief Commission. From the outset, the ICRC delegates made it a rule to hand over the whole of the milk, drugs and medicaments received to the Swiss Red Cross Mission. As this body had already set up part of the necessary machinery and was qualified to distribute this relief, and since its head was one of the ICRC representatives and therefore a member of the Managing Commission, the latter body decided that he should properly distribute the large quantities of milk, restoratives and medical supplies received from overseas, as long as the distribution was carried out in accordance with accepted principles. At Athens, the Piraeus, Salonika, Volo and in Crete, these relief supplies were distributed by the members of the Swiss Red Cross Mission ; in the provinces they were issued by the delegates of the Commission. The head of the Swiss Mission was responsible for co-ordinating these activities. In his capacity as member of the Managing Commission he was also responsible for supplying food to hospitals, sanatoria, welfare institutions, orphanages and canteens for children and students, etc. All the relief work for children and sick persons was therefore placed under his authority.

In addition, the Swiss Red Cross Mission organized independent medical aid for children, thus assisting the work of the Managing Commission. The Red Cross Mission thus rendered invaluable services to the Commission, particularly in the

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<sup>1</sup> When the new Managing Commission started work, the central administration left by its predecessor was employing a staff of 500 people. When the new Commission finished its work, the staff numbered about 2,000. In addition, there were nearly 900 chauffeurs, convoy agents and caretakers, and over 2,000 workmen. These figures do not include the staff of the Swiss Red Cross mission, the nurses and voluntary aids who were doing relief work, nor the personnel of the canteens. Besides these, a large staff was employed in the provinces.

period when the latter had only a small number of representatives and had to solve complicated problems of organisation at very short notice <sup>1</sup>.

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As regards the new Commission, composed of ICRC and Swedish representatives, the present account merely indicates the way in which this co-operation was carried on, the work and negotiations of the ICRC, the broad lines of the Commission's work, and the total amount of relief distributed. The Final Report of the Managing Commission supplies detailed information on all aspects of that body's work, particularly the organization, distribution and expansion of relief, relations with the German, Italian and Greek authorities, and help given by the Greek Red Cross and by Greek nationals.

Between 1941 and 1946 the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross, mentioned above, sent to Greece 2,471 tons of sundry relief supplies (including 101 tons of clothing) valuing 7,062,500 Swiss francs, and 113,642 kilograms of pharmaceutical products and medical stores, to the value of 1,825,000 francs. The authorities of the countries concerned greatly assisted its efforts by sanctioning the transfer of funds, granting the necessary export permits and facilitating the transport of goods. Although the Commission's funds were relatively small, the supplies which it dispatched from the interior of Europe were of considerable assistance, especially to children, owing to the great nutritive value of most of the foodstuffs; moreover, the medical equipment and stores were often a useful complement to the supplies received by the Commission.

The necessary arrangements with the belligerents were made by the ICRC, and all relief supplies were sent to its

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<sup>1</sup> The Swiss Red Cross Mission's work is described in Chapters XXII and XXIII of the Commission's Final Report. The Annex to that Report gives a short general account of the work done. For further details, see the Report on the Work of the Swiss Red Cross Mission in Greece.

representatives at Athens, who supervised their issue, according to the directions of the donors. After September 1942, the ICRC representatives made over to the Swiss Red Cross Mission all consignments of milk, restoratives and medical stores:

Thus, despite all the obstacles encountered, the economic blockade in particular, and with the co-operation of the Joint Relief Commission, the ICRC from the outset achieved results which, although small in proportion to needs, were vitally useful.

These relief supplies were, in fact, the first to arrive during a critical period, when nothing had been organized and when the prompt arrival of foodstuffs was a matter of life and death for hundreds of thousands of people. After September 1942, the relief programme assumed unprecedented proportions, thanks to the co-operation of the Swedish Government and Red Cross. The scheme undoubtedly saved a whole people from irreparable disaster; it was made possible by the goodwill of the belligerents and the authorities concerned, and by the continued efforts of a number of Red Cross Societies and agencies, the Greek Government in London and several neutral countries, added to those of various organizations—particularly the Greek War Relief Association and the Vanderbilt Committee—and of a number of private donors.

## § II. HUNGARY

When military operations spread to Hungarian soil, the ICRC delegate in Budapest made the utmost exertions to prevent the extermination of the Hungarian Jews <sup>1</sup>.

When the fighting approached Budapest, during the winter of 1944, he devised a scheme for assisting homeless children, regardless of their race or religion. Many people had been killed in air raids, and the evacuation of the population, by order of the Hungarian Fascist Government, before the Russian

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 647 et seq.; further p. 522 below.

advance had brought many orphans into the capital. In response to a public appeal, a large number of private apartments were put at the delegate's disposal, who used them as children's homes and placed them under the protection of the ICRC. Over 2,000 children of Jewish convert parents, who were receiving no help whatever, were housed, fed and cared for by the ICRC delegation while the battle was raging in the heart of Budapest.

After the German retreat, the ICRC representatives were unable at once to resume their ordinary duties. Nevertheless, they made themselves responsible for a thousand orphans in Budapest, and procured supplies and funds for the institutions in which the children were housed. This work was later on taken over by the Swiss Red Cross.

After relations has been established with the new authorities, emergency aid was conveyed from Switzerland to Budapest by the Committee's lorries, and later on by block-trains organized by the Joint Relief Commission. From 1946 onwards, when relations with abroad had become regular, the donors were free to deal with the receiving organizations direct; meanwhile the Hungarian Red Cross, too, was reorganized. The ICRC then withdrew its representatives in Hungary, and responsibility for the transport and distribution of the consignments from the Joint Relief Commission was assumed by the ICRC representative in Vienna.

However, before ceasing its work in Hungary, the ICRC helped to organize the distribution of relief. A committee was formed by the Government, with a representative of UNRRA in the chair. The ICRC representative, on the understanding that the committee would merely have advisory powers, agreed to sit on it, and suggested the appointment of an expert distributing agency. This body was presided over by a member of the Hungarian Red Cross and included representatives of the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Social Welfare and Food, and the Municipal Social Assistance Board. The ICRC representative was also an *ex officio* member. The duty of this body, known as the "Committee of Five", was to establish a plan for free food issues under the Red Cross emblem. The Hungarian

Red Cross was responsible for the receipt, storage and distribution of the supplies.

## § 12. ITALY AND THE ITALIAN POPULATION IN AFRICA

The ICRC was called in to help the Italian population only after the occupation of the Italian territories in Africa by the Allies.

### *Eritrea.*

After the Allied victory in Eritrea, the ICRC endeavoured to send milk to the Italian children in that country. Owing to its close connection with the supply of milk to Greece, this scheme has been described in § 9 above (p. 451).

### *Italian East Africa.*

After the close of hostilities in Abyssinia, in January 1942, the British and Ethiopian Governments concluded an agreement for the evacuation of the entire Italian population, with the exception of a few hundred technicians. The Swiss Government, in its capacity of Protecting Power, succeeded in having these Italians repatriated on board Italian vessels. They were due to embark at Berbera, in Italian Somaliland.

On May 6, 1942, a few days before the Italian ships called at Berbera, the ICRC was advised that they were carrying a large cargo of supplies for those Italians in East Africa who were not to be sent home. The Committee was requested to send a representative to Berbera to attend the unloading of the supplies, and to ensure their distribution in Eritrea, Italian and British Somaliland, and Abyssinia.

Thanks to the courtesy of the British authorities in the Middle East, a member of the Cairo delegation travelled to Berbera by special plane, where he arrived in time for the unloading, due to be ended on May 15. He drew up the following plan of distribution for 3,840 cases and bales of foodstuffs,

medical supplies and clothing, according to the type of product and the number of Italians in the various parts of East Africa :

2,777 cases and bales for Eritrea (80,000 civilians and 2,000 PW)  
464 cases for Italian Somaliland (11,000 civilians)  
599 cases for British Somaliland and Abyssinia (11,000 civilians and 5,000 PW)

Thirty-five cases were set aside for the members of the Italian Armistice Commission at Jibuti. Permission to send these was so long delayed that it was decided to add them to the consignment for PW held in the Berbera region. The British authorities thereupon received a further appeal in behalf of the Commission and finally gave their consent ; they undertook to transport the remaining twenty cases to Jibuti and replace the missing fifteen which had been sent to the above-mentioned camps, namely :

1 case of olive oil  
5 cases „ tobacco  
5 „ „ condensed milk  
1 case „ orange juice  
1 „ „ meat extract  
2 cases „ Marsala wine

The distribution in Ethiopia and British Somaliland was carried out under the direction of the ICRC representatives, and was completed in June 1942.

The goods for British Somaliland were reforwarded by sea. A joint committee of British and Italian officials, with two members of the Italian Red Cross at Mogadishu, superintended the distribution.

The supplies for Eritrea, hastily unloaded during the night at Massawa, were unfortunately reduced by about 3 per cent through pilfering. On reaching this port a few days later the ICRC delegate verified the losses and lodged a complaint with the occupants ; the culprits were thereupon severely punished and the warehouse guards reinforced by Italian *carabinieri*. The goods were repacked with the help of the Italian Red Cross

and transported in 22 railway wagons to Asmara, the capital, where they were used as follows :

(1) — The food, medicaments and restoratives were issued to medical units (hospitals) and to the Italian Red Cross. The latter administered the restoratives, under medical supervision, to the sick and to children in the towns ; part of the medicaments were sent to Mogadishu, in Italian Somaliland.

(2) — The clothing, underclothing and textiles were given to the poor.

(3) — The cigarettes and tobacco were issued to the PW and civilian internees in Eritrea, and to all Italian men over 18 years of age.

The branches of the Italian Red Cross in Eritrea also received parcels of clothing, underclothing, textiles, cigarettes and tobacco.

### *North Africa.*

When the North African campaign came to an end in May 1943, the Italian Government submitted a note to the ICRC and to the Swiss Government, as the Protecting Power, drawing their attention to the difficult position of the Italian residents and refugees in this area, particularly in Tunisia.

The ICRC passed this information to the American Red Cross representative at Geneva, who replied that President Roosevelt had issued instructions to the U. S. forces to assist the civilian population in North Africa, including the Italian residents, and that the occupying authorities were particularly concerned about Tunis.

The ICRC subsequently received an appeal through its delegate in Tunis, stating that the Italians in that town were no longer receiving financial help from the Protecting Power ; in October 1944, precise information at last reached Geneva as to the number of distressed persons and their requirements. The ICRC representative in Rome was put in possession of a quantity of medicaments by the Italian Red Cross, and was able to send them by air to Tunis early in 1945.

### *City of Rome.*

Under the German occupation, many refugees lived in Rome in precarious conditions. The ICRC representatives set

about collecting funds locally, pending the arrival of relief from abroad. In April and May 1944 they were able to distribute to Greek refugees 83,000 lire, a thousand undergarments and 5,550 kilos of rice flour; they also assisted Yugoslav refugees, who were given more than 25 million lire during the second quarter of 1944. Seconded by the Swiss Red Cross, the ICRC attempted to procure milk in Switzerland, but negotiations with the blockade authorities for import permits continued until the Allied occupation of Rome, and the scheme thus fell to the ground.

The Allies at once organized the provisioning of the city and set up an Italian relief organization, which facilitated the transit of gifts collected by the Joint Relief Commission. This body, the *Ente nazionale per la distribuzione di soccorsi in Italia* (ENDSI), included representatives of the Cabinet, the Vatican, the Italian Red Cross, and later, the National Confederation of Labour. Its purpose was to collect and issue free to the population relief supplies from North and South America and other countries, including Italy itself, and gifts from private sources. The Italian Government granted this agency exemption from postal charges, customs dues, and taxes.

The ICRC representatives in Rome co-operated with ENSDI from the outset. The Joint Relief Commission also sent it all the shipments it made in its capacity as intermediary between donors and recipients, and thus enjoyed all the advantages granted to the national organization.

### *Southern Italy.*

On September 9, 1943, the day of the first Allied landing near Naples, the Chairman of the Italian Red Cross happened to be in Geneva to discuss with the ICRC the question of feeding Southern Italy and Sicily. Wheat was becoming scarce in these provinces, which were cut off by the front from their usual sources of supply. In December 1943, the ICRC placed before the authorities a suggestion made by the Geneva representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross. Before the armistice was concluded, the Italian Government had ordered 150,000 tons of wheat from Hungary, and that country was now prepared to deliver

50,000 tons to Southern Italy, subject to the necessary permits being obtained.

In March 1944, the Ministry of Economic Warfare in London asked the ICRC for information concerning methods of payment and proposed routes. Military developments in Eastern Europe and the Balkans however brought the scheme to nothing, although it could not in any case have been carried out under the Red Cross emblem, owing to its commercial nature.

During the summer of 1944 several organizations in North and South America turned to the ICRC for assistance in the transport and issue of the supplies which they were anxious to forward to the Italian population in the areas occupied by the Allies. The most important of these associations, the American Relief for Italy, in New York, wished to send about 3,500 tons of clothing to Southern Italy. The ICRC could not, however, provide means of transport for these various bodies, since all the vessels in its service already had their full cargo of supplies for Allied PW in Europe.

The American donors were therefore advised to make arrangements direct with the Italian authorities in the liberated areas, or with the American Red Cross and UNRRA, who were already working in Italy. The ICRC however offered to all organizations anxious to use them for strictly humanitarian purposes, the services of the Red Cross delegates in the work of receiving and forwarding relief supplies and supervising their distribution.

Thus, in October 1944, the International Union for Child Welfare reported that their representatives in Buenos Aires had sent the ICRC representatives in Rome 5,000 tons of food-stuffs, for issue to the homes for children and adolescents whose needs the ICRC considered greatest, subject to full reports being made. In the meantime, the American Relief for Italy had set up an office in Rome and had been entrusted with the distribution of all relief received from the U. S. Supplies given by the International Union for Child Welfare were then issued jointly by the American Relief and the Red Cross representatives.

### *Regions bordering upon Switzerland.*

The inhabitants of these districts naturally turned to Switzerland, which had not been affected by the war. An immediate response followed. Besides the Swiss Red Cross and the Swiss Relief Fund, which furnished all the assistance in their power, many communes, associations and private individuals gave aid unsolicited<sup>1</sup>. Many organizations asked the ICRC for information on needs to be met, and steps already taken, or contemplated ; overlapping was thus avoided.

### *Northern Italy.*

After its occupation by the Allies, Northern Italy remained cut off from the Central and Southern provinces until a permanent civilian administration was installed. Local government in the region was therefore different from that in the rest of the country. The transport system was almost completely at a standstill, owing to the dearth of fuel, the effect of air bombardment and the lack of vehicles due to requisitioning by the Axis.

In May 1945, at their first meeting with an ICRC representative, the Allied military authorities stated that they would endeavour to feed the population by large-scale imports from North and South America. Assistance from the ICRC would be welcome, but the Allies would themselves, in future, indicate the areas in greatest need, thus co-ordinating the offers of help, which were very numerous in Italy.

Moreover, as the Italian Red Cross was being reorganised, the ICRC was no longer called upon to provide material aid for the civilians in Italy. Its representatives in Tunis, Milan, Genoa and Trieste continued, however, to render service in matters of transport, storage and exemption from dues and charges.

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<sup>1</sup> In this connection, particularly for the relief given to the Valley of Domodossola, see the Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

### § 13. JUGOSLAVIA

After the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the creation of local Red Cross bodies by the Axis, the ICRC found it impossible to extend its relief work to the country as a whole, and was obliged to act separately in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro. The main task was to assist the women and children in worst need. In addition, certain categories of refugees and minorities were the object of limited relief activities.

#### *Serbia.*

Early in 1941, the American Red Cross was informed by the United States Minister in Belgrade that a serious epidemic of malaria was spreading in Yugoslavia. The A. R. C. cabled to the League of Red Cross Societies its readiness to make a grant for help to the Yugoslav population. The League proposed the purchase in Switzerland of medicaments, for consignment to the Yugoslav Red Cross through the German Red Cross, and distribution under the supervision of the American Red Cross representative at Belgrade.

The scheme was approved by the American Red Cross, and orders were placed to the value of 30,000 Swiss francs. The whole matter lapsed, however, in August 1941, when the American delegation was obliged to leave Yugoslavia. The League then applied to the Joint Relief Commission, which proposed that distribution be supervised by the liaison officer at Belgrade. This course was agreed to by the American Red Cross.

During the first half of 1941, the ICRC approached the German Authorities with a view to appointing a delegate in Belgrade, but this representative was finally granted no more than the status of liaison officer with the German Red Cross at Belgrade. This partial failure was due to the German Red Cross itself, which was in principle opposed to the appointment of ICRC delegates in territories occupied by the Wehrmacht. The Committee accepted this arrangement, despite its unsatisfactory character, in order to be able to operate in Yugoslavia, even if only in a limited manner. It was understood that the issue

of relief supplies would take place with the approval and under the supervision of the liaison officer.

In the case which has been mentioned, the German Red Cross, learning of the A. R. C.'s scheme for medical aid, informed the Joint Relief Commission on September 3 that no supervision by the liaison officer was required, and that the medicaments could be forwarded to the Serb Red Cross. The Joint Relief Commission, which was responsible to the donors for ensuring that issues were supervised by a neutral representative, was unable to accept the German proposition, and withheld the consignment which was ready for despatch.

Despite this set-back the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission, who were informed by their Belgrade representatives of conditions in the country, sought funds with which to buy the material that Yugoslavia required. The campaign of 1941 and the occupant's struggle against the resistance movement, took a severe toll of the inhabitants, thousands of whom were forced to leave their burnt-out villages.

The appeals made by the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission were answered mainly the American, British, and Swiss Red Cross Societies, American and Canadian organizations, and Yugoslav associations abroad. Purchases were also made possible by an allocation from the Shoken Fund to the Serb Red Cross.

Aided by the ICRC liaison officer, the Joint Relief Commission was to set up several relief schemes<sup>1</sup>. Apart from the right to supervise distributions, the ICRC agent had succeeded in obtaining several privileges. He was authorized to inspect the warehouses in and around Belgrade where the shipments of the Joint Relief Commission were stored, and he forwarded the receipts of the Serb Red Cross to the ICRC.

The relief supplies which the Joint Relief Commission sent to Serbia were addressed to the representative of the German Red Cross at Belgrade, who forwarded them to the local committees of the Serb Red Cross. Under this system the Joint Relief Commission was exempt from transport charges and customs dues.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

The ICRC liaison officer also assisted the Swiss Red Cross in sending 450 Yugoslav children to the Ticino (Switzerland) for a stay during the summer of 1942.

The ICRC, having learned from the Yugoslav Legation in Berne that Yugoslavs abroad were planning to buy foodstuffs in Turkey for the Serb population, negotiated for the purchase and transport of these supplies. These were to be issued through the Serb Red Cross with the collaboration of the ICRC liaison officer. The latter, who was in Belgrade on sufferance, had but small influence ; to reinforce his position, the ICRC asked permission to appoint an assistant, to which the Germans agreed. It was thus possible for the first shipments to leave Istanbul in June, 1943<sup>1</sup>. The total supplies sent from Turkey to the Serb Red Cross amounted to 3,000 tons of miscellaneous commodities (figs, raisins, olives, shelled hazel nuts, dried fish, salt meat, milk powder and soap).

Early in 1943, before the successful conclusion of the above talks, the ICRC received alarming reports on the food situation in Serbia. A great number of roads and railway lines were cut ; the 1942 harvest had been inadequate, and there were over 300,000 refugees, including 80,000 seriously underfed children.

The ICRC then approached the blockade authorities in London. Before that, one of its members had drafted a scheme in Lisbon for the import of foodstuffs from overseas ; the British Ambassador had assisted in this work and promised to submit the plan to his Government. The Ministry of Economic Welfare, however, refused its consent ; the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission had, therefore, to be content with making purchases in countries within the blockaded zone.

The Swiss Red Cross also opened a relief programme for the Belgrade children, and its contributions, valued at half a million Swiss francs, were received and distributed by the ICRC representative. On this occasion, the latter had a far greater freedom of operation and supervision than when dealing with shipments sent by the Joint Relief Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

In October 1944, after the liberation of the country, the Yugoslav Red Cross published an appeal for the victims of the war, particularly the thousands of orphans, mostly destitute, who were living in the devastated areas. The Red Cross applied for the help of doctors and relief in the shape of medicaments, food and clothing ; the ICRC seconded this appeal.

After the armistice, the ICRC delegation stayed on in Belgrade with the consent of Marshal Tito's government. It assisted in the distribution of the supplies sent by the Joint Relief Commission ; helped by the Yugoslav Red Cross, it supplied three communal kitchens with powdered milk, part of a large consignment from the Swiss Red Cross ; it continued to handle relief sent from Turkey for Yugoslav children, and also issued the first shipments sent by the Swiss Relief Fund (food, clothing, bandages, medicaments, medical stores and vitamins), valued at 600,000 francs.

Through the various delegations, the ICRC was able to facilitate the movements and activities of the Swiss medical missions sent to Yugoslavia to prevent a feared epidemic, due to the lack of medicaments and sera <sup>1</sup>. In July, 1945, the Committee secured the rapid shipment to Yugoslavia of 200 kilos of vaccine and the same quantity of medicaments, given by the Swedish Committee for International Relief. The parcels had reached Paris by air, at which point they had been held up. The ICRC delegation in Paris applied to U. S. Headquarters and were granted priority for immediate conveyance by air ; the consignment thus reached Yugoslavia safely.

The ICRC, through its delegations, also secured contributions from various organizations overseas, in the shape of funds and commodities, for the distressed Serb people. The South African and Canadian Red Cross, the Irish Donation and the Swiss Relief Fund, were among the principal contributors <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, p. 721.

<sup>2</sup> A list of these contributions will be found in the Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

## *Croatia.*

The Zagreb Government having agreed, in February 1943, to apply the two Geneva Conventions, the ICRC appointed a representative in that town. Croatia was short of food, clothing and medical stores. The ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission, having no funds available for this work, set about finding contributors.

As the result of negotiations with the Geneva representative of the Yugoslav Red Cross in London, and with the Croat Government through its representative at Zagreb, the ICRC obtained from the Yugoslav Red Cross in London a gift of 50,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of sera, and from the Croat Government a grant of 500,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of medicaments. The Swiss Red Cross also agreed to contribute funds for medicaments and sera, and expressed the wish to send to Croatia a medical team, to combat possible outbreaks of exanthematic typhus in particularly devastated areas.

The Joint Relief Commission, which had already despatched several small consignments to Polish refugee Jews in Croatia, arranged to send medicaments for distribution by the ICRC representative, assisted by the Croat Red Cross. The Croat Government, however, refused permission for a Swiss medical team to accompany the shipment, and the Swiss Red Cross therefore abandoned its original plan for exclusively medical aid. Instead, it made a grant of 200,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of food and medicaments. These supplies were distributed by the Joint Relief Commission and the ICRC delegate <sup>1</sup>. The children of Zagreb and the surrounding districts thus received considerable quantities of milk. These shipments made up somewhat for the shortage of essential supplies.

Through the ICRC representative at Zagreb, the Swiss Red Cross then offered, through the Croat Red Cross, to receive some 500 Croat children in Switzerland for a three months stay. The Croat Red Cross was, however, obliged to decline this offer.

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

Early in 1944, the fighting in Croatia grew still more fierce between the German forces, assisted by German-Croat police squads, and the Resistance movement. Both sides exercised reprisals, from which the civil population was the first to suffer. Railway communications were largely destroyed and sea traffic was suspended. The number of homeless people grew steadily, as the Allied air raids became more frequent.

The Joint Relief Commission and the ICRC, which received regular reports from its representative, endeavoured to expand their relief work, despite the lack of funds and the growing shortage of commodities in Europe. Contact with Marshal Tito's representatives enabled the ICRC delegations at Zagreb, Algiers, Cairo and Bucharest to organize relief for the populations of the areas freed by the partisans. The Zagreb delegation was thus able to despatch medicaments to these areas<sup>1</sup>, and the ICRC had the opportunity to send relief supplies to Yugoslavia when a medical team of the *Centrale sanitaire suisse*, whose journey it had facilitated, left for that country<sup>2</sup>.

After the armistice, Yugoslavia was again united, and the ICRC maintained only its delegation in Belgrade, closing down its offices at Zagreb early in 1946.

### *Dalmatian Islands.*

During a visit to Geneva in March 1943, the ICRC representative at Zagreb reported that there was famine in the Dalmatian Islands, particularly in those of Brac and Lesina, as a result of the suspension of maritime traffic.

On April 16, the ICRC informed the Italian authorities that it proposed to provide relief in the Dalmatian Archipelago, and asked for help in the form of regular communications or means of transport. Such means were promised on May 7, by the Italian Government, who added that they themselves would make every effort to supply the islands. The representative of the Yugoslav Red Cross in Geneva proposed the purchase of some 2,500 tons of flour, enough to feed nearly 40,000 people.

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I, p. 721, and Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

As wheat could not pass through the blockade, the ICRC instructed its delegations in Hungary, Rumania and Croatia to submit this scheme to the Governments of these countries. Hungary replied that she was unable to export flour, as she had not enough for her own needs. Rumania gave a similar reply, but indicated that she could furnish 1,000 tons of barley.

In June, 1943, the Croat Government and Red Cross announced that, thanks to the help of the Italian Government, they could undertake the provisioning of the Dalmatian Islands, and that the proposed relief scheme was therefore unnecessary. The ICRC nevertheless consulted the Swiss Red Cross, and the latter, in July, contributed 50,000 francs for the children in the islands of Brac and Lesina. Naval operations in the Adriatic however precluded any direct transport at this time, and the above donation was included in the general relief for the Croat population. Finally, when, in October, the Croat Government showed interest in the Committee's offer, the situation in Italy had suffered such a radical change that the initial scheme was no longer feasible <sup>1</sup>.

### *Montenegro.*

Montenegro, one of the areas of Jugoslavia that had suffered most severely, applied to the ICRC for relief in the shape of foodstuffs and clothing for the inhabitants and for the refugees who had arrived from all parts.

In the absence of funds for this purpose, the ICRC asked the Joint Relief Commission to consult individuals and organizations able to contribute funds, and to study the technical problem of transport and distribution. After applying to the representatives of the American and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies at Geneva, and to the ICRC delegations in London and Washington, the Joint Relief Commission was able to meet this request <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For the few shipments despatched to Slovenia, which was annexed by Italy, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

### *Muslim Community in Yugoslavia.*

A large proportion of the Western Balkan population is Muslim. After its occupation by the Axis forces, the area was shared between Albania, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Croatia. The majority of the Muslims lived in Croat territory. Threatened by persecution, they flocked to the North, seeking refuge in Sarajevo and the Save Valley. Their number was put at 198,000, mostly widows and orphans; 108,000 were children under 14. Immediate help was required, to prevent starvation and disease.

In May 1944, the ICRC informed the President of the Arab Academy at Damascus, who was then in Geneva, of the desperate plight of these refugees, and asked him to name Muslims who could procure the necessary funds.

The Committee also applied to the Turkish Red Crescent and sent the Egyptian Red Crescent, at its request, the information supplied by the Zagreb delegation.

Having noted a report from the Joint Relief Commission to the ICRC delegation in London, the Yugoslav Red Cross and the Yugoslav Relief Society, in August 1944, announced grants for the purchase of pharmaceutical supplies in Great Britain. At the close of the year the Egyptian Government gave £E 25,000, and the Egyptian Red Crescent £E 5,000. Despite twelve months of negotiations, these funds could not be transferred, but were spent on the purchase of raw cotton for manufacture into cotton goods in Yugoslavia.

Pursuing the study of its plan with the ICRC delegation in Cairo, the Joint Relief Commission encountered new obstacles: the Yugoslav authorities thought it unfair to favour Muslims at the expense of the numerous other war victims, in a country where everyone needed assistance. Later, diplomatic relations having been re-established between Egypt and Yugoslavia, donors and recipients were able to settle the matter directly and the distribution of relief was assigned to the Yugoslav Red Cross.

## *Fiume.*

Early in 1944, the ICRC representative in Rome was informed by the Chairman of the Poor Relief Committee that the civil population of the town and district of Fiume was faced by a serious food shortage. A large influx of repatriates and refugees without means of support had greatly increased the indigenous population of 25,000. The children were in urgent need of milk. The ICRC representative in Northern Italy thereupon travelled to Fiume, despite great difficulties caused by the operations of the Resistance, taking with him two cases of condensed milk, 192 kilos of milk powder, 12 large boxes of Eledon, 3,200 soup cubes and 50 parcels of coffee substitutes, given by various donors in Milan. In addition, he had a sum of 15,000 lire for distribution to needy Yugoslavs in Fiume.

Talks with the military and civil authorities on Feb. 12, 1944, showed that the food situation was the same as in other towns and communes in the neighbourhood. Health conditions were fairly satisfactory, but the children were short of milk, particularly in Susak Camp, where 600 families, all refugee Yugoslavs awaiting repatriation, received only two scanty meals daily.

The representative handed the provisions he had brought with him to the camp store ; eighty litres of milk were at once issued to 106 children under ten. As this camp was closed in February 1944, the supplies did not need to be replenished.

On June 22, 1945, the ICRC delegation in Rome re-opened the question of relief for the population of Fiume, and stated that supplies would be put at the immediate disposal of the ICRC, on condition that the boat was accompanied by an ICRC representative, who would also supervise distribution. The Vatican and the Italian Red Cross hoped to be able, by the end of August, to collect 60 tons of food and medicaments for shipment from Ancona to Fiume on an Allied vessel, at the donors' expense.

Late in August, the ICRC delegate in Trieste succeeded in reaching Fiume and met the civil authorities. The Bishop of Fiume was prepared to organize the distribution, but his offer

had to be approved by the occupation authorities. As the port was completely destroyed, it was decided to transport the goods by road from Trieste.

However, the ICRC representative in Trieste was unable to secure the occupants' permission to convey the supplies to Fiume and to issue them there. On October 3, 1945, therefore, the ICRC wired to its delegation in Belgrade asking it to secure permission for one of its members. The Yugoslav authorities, however, delayed their consent. Supplies were also slow in reaching Trieste, as so many obstacles had damped the goodwill of the donors. On November 27, the ICRC representative in Trieste was at last able to report that 28 tons were awaiting shipment at Ancona. On December 3, the motor vessel *Esperia Redenta* unloaded fifteen tons, instead of the 28 tons that had been expected.

Although application for permits for further shipments were made well in advance, these still failed to materialize. However, the ICRC delegate at Trieste again succeeded in going alone to Fiume, for further negotiations. The distribution of the supplies was scheduled for Christmas Day, and was to have been supervised, not by the Bishop of Fiume, but by the newly-founded local Red Cross, which was in contact with the Yugoslav Red Cross, as well as with the Italian Red Cross.

The recipients were those of the communal Register. Priority was given to the unemployed and to the relatives of prisoners of war and deportees. This distribution, as well as later ones, was carried out with the help of various local and neutral organizations.

#### § 14. NETHERLANDS

The position in the Netherlands deteriorated in the autumn of 1944. In order to check the Allied advance, the occupying forces, whose numbers increased steadily, flooded large areas, thus destroying a great part of the harvest. Owing to the strike of the Dutch railwaymen, the products of the agricultural provinces in the North could not be sent to the Western provinces. Finally, the serious damage inflicted on the German

railways hampered the provisioning of the country. Famine was threatening, particularly in the three Western provinces (South Holland, North Holland and Utrecht), where the population had already suffered great privations during some four years of occupation.

Public opinion all over the world was deeply concerned by the peril which menaced an entire people, for which it held the occupying Power responsible, and called for immediate action. This did not facilitate the task of the ICRC, which had to observe extreme caution in approaching the German authorities.

On the occasion of preliminary talks with the German Consul in Geneva concerning the supply of food for Holland under the Red Cross emblem, the ICRC was told that such a scheme would only be permitted if it operated discreetly; public appeals through the press would almost certainly lead to an official refusal. Furthermore, the Government's decision would depend on the Allies' consent to the dispatch of relief to the Channel Islands—an undertaking to which the German Government attached the greatest importance<sup>1</sup>.

Meanwhile the ICRC, in its attempts to find support for its scheme, enlisted the active cooperation of the Netherland Government in London. The Dutch authorities promised their financial assistance, and backed up the endeavours of the Red Cross representatives in London to persuade the blockade authorities to make an exception in favour of Holland. Several national Red Cross Societies were also urgently requested to give their help.

In Switzerland various organizations, including a Committee in Basle, had quickly purchased foodstuffs and clothing with funds subscribed, notably by the Dutch Red Cross and the Swiss Relief Fund. Large quantities of wheat released by the Swiss Government were lying at Lisbon, ready for despatch. Acting on behalf of the Dutch Red Cross and the Swiss Relief Fund, the Joint Relief Commission purchased 2,600 tons of grain warehoused at Ratisbon and originally intended for

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 443.

Belgium : the recent liberation of that country had led the Germans to prohibit their export to Belgium.

The transport of these supplies raised a particularly difficult problem. On November 7, the ICRC suggested to the belligerents three routes which appeared practicable :

- (1) — By barge down the Rhine from Basle to Rotterdam ;
- (2) — By ICRC vessel from Lisbon to a Dutch port, named by the Germans ;
- (3) — By rail through Germany.

The Germans raised no objection to the first of these routes. The American authorities agreed to it in principle, on the recommendation of General Eisenhower's headquarters. The American Commander-in-Chief was strongly in favour of the Committee's attempts to relieve the Dutch population. The British Government, however, delayed their reply, and finally refused their safe-conduct for military reasons and on the plea that the Rhine was mined, and that in one place at least its course was blocked by fallen bridges. The barge, painted white and bearing the Red Cross emblem, which was ready to leave, had therefore to be unloaded. The Joint Relief Commission, however, succeeded in despatching the cargo across Belgium in a block-train, which reached the liberated part of the Netherlands on January 10, 1945<sup>1</sup>.

Great difficulties also hampered the transport of the 2,600 tons of grain stored at Ratisbon. These cereals had been purchased by the Joint Relief Commission with Belgian funds released in Hungary ; the consent of the blockade authorities was therefore not required. Owing to the disorganisation of the German railway system, it was impossible, however, to convey the grain by rail from Ratisbon to the Dutch frontier. The Germans thereupon made over to the Joint Relief Commission an equivalent amount of rye which was lying at Essen (Oldenburg), a small town near the Dutch frontier. The Dutch Government in London, the donor of these foodstuffs, valued at 800,000 francs, accepted this offer. After testing the quality

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

of the rye, the ICRC delegate had it conveyed by special trains to Rotterdam. This consignment made it possible to increase the ration for 3,200,000 inhabitants of the Western provinces by 400 grams a week for a period of three weeks.

The supplies stored at Lisbon included 3,575 tons of grain released to the Swiss Relief Fund by the Swiss Government, 600 tons of pulse foods, 500 tons of rice and 175 tons of oat-flakes given by the Swiss Relief Fund, in addition to a large quantity of medicaments offered by the Dutch Red Cross and 30,000 standard food-parcels, the gift of the Canadian Red Cross.

The *Henry Dunant*, flying the Swiss flag and bearing the markings of the ICRC, was put at the Committee's disposal by her owners, the Foundation for the Organisation of Red Cross Transports. This was done in agreement with the American Red Cross, which had priority for the transport by this vessel of parcels for American PW in Germany.

Early in November 1944, the ICRC applied to the belligerents for safe-conducts for the ship, and for the free passage of its cargo through the blockade. The United States granted a safe-conduct at the end of the month; Germany agreed in principle, but insisted that the Allied blockade should be lifted also from the Channel Islands. Moreover, she refused to allow an ICRC delegate to enter the fighting area, and proposed that the issue of supplies should be supervised by a commission of ICRC representatives residing in Holland and of Dutch Red Cross delegates. For Great Britain, on the other hand, the presence of an ICRC delegate was an indispensable condition of the operation. The ICRC then sought to induce the Germans to yield on this point, particularly as it was informed by the Dutch Red Cross in London that the Red Cross Committee in Holland had recently been reorganised and no longer commanded the confidence of the population.

The position in the Netherlands, meanwhile, became increasingly critical and it was essential that the *Henry Dunant* should sail at once. Urgent representations by the ICRC induced the German authorities to allow a delegate to accompany the ship to the Dutch port of Delfzijl and to ensure that the

cargo was properly accepted and forwarded. Furthermore, a member of the ICRC delegation in Berlin was to be in this port a few days beforehand and assist in the unloading. Both delegates, however, were strictly bound by their instructions, and the distribution centres in the interior would be supervised not by them, but by four Swiss residents in Holland, appointed for this purpose by the ICRC and free to communicate with the ICRC delegates at Delfzijl. These conditions were finally accepted by the British, who were notified that the route they had suggested—along the West coast of England and Scotland and then along the coasts of Sweden and Denmark—would be followed.

When the cargo for the *Henry Dunant* was ready, the ICRC advised the British Government of the ship's sailing, adding that after Gothenburg she would be accompanied by a German escort and would pass through the Kattegat, the Kiel Canal and along the German coast. On January 3, 1945, London however made a new reservation: before allowing the ship to sail, the Foreign Office wished to study the reports by Swedish residents in Holland on the distribution of the relief sent by the Swedish Red Cross. Two possibilities were feared:

(1) — Confiscation of the supplies by the Germans, in an endeavour to break the resistance of the Dutch people by underfeeding;

(2) — Fresh conditions imposed by the Germans, which might yield them further military advantages.

Thus an exceedingly urgent relief undertaking was held up still further. Moreover, there was a danger, if the vessel could not be used at once according to plan, of its being claimed by the American Red Cross, and the ship's lying idle in the port of Lisbon involved heavy demurrage. The attention of the British Government was drawn to these objections; they then authorised the sailing of the *Henry Dunant* for Gothenburg, but reserved their decision concerning the remainder of the voyage. Should the decision be favourable, a fortnight would be gained, i.e. the time taken to sail round the British Isles; if it were negative, the cargo would be unloaded at

Gothenburg and forwarded to its destination at the earliest opportunity.

Shortly after this, the ship left Lisbon for the Faroe Islands. The master had orders to sail through the Skepenfjord ; owing to a misunderstanding he had not been given the detailed charts asked for, and finding no pilot at the appointed place, he set another course. Unable to find the Skepenfjord in these circumstances, he decided to sail round the Islands on the north-east, and then met an escort which took him to Thors-havn.

After a fortnight's voyage, the *Henry Dunant* finally reached Gothenburg on February 11. On the 15th, the ship was allowed to leave for Delfzijl, at the same time as the *Hallaren*, a Swedish boat also carrying supplies for the Netherlands. Owing to the shallow waters of the Sound—the route fixed by the Admiralty—the vessel had to leave at Gothenburg 1,700 tons out of its cargo of 6,000 tons. These 1,700 tons included the standard food-parcels of the Canadian Red Cross, and these finally reached Holland on board the *Hallaren* a few days after the liberation. These supplies were issued in the Western provinces, chiefly to persons over sixty years of age.

On March 8, the *Henry Dunant* entered the port of Delfzijl, where she was anxiously expected. Her cargo was transferred on to canal barges, which took the supplies to the distribution centres. This work was done by the Netherlands Department of Agriculture and Fisheries—of which the Food Bureau was a branch—and was supervised by the ICRC delegates. The barges were sealed at Delfzijl, and the seals were verified on arrival by an official of the Food Bureau in the presence of the ICRC delegates. The said Office provided the Maas mills and its own bakeries for converting the grain into bread.

Large posters informed the public of the arrival of the supplies and their origin, manner of issue, and the places where they would be handed out free, against receipts. The distribution was effected in the following way :

(1) — 2,150 tons of flour were issued in the shape of bread to the whole population over four years of age ; 3,200,000 persons thus received two weekly rations of 400 grams each ;

(2) — 500 tons of rice were set aside for children and nursing mothers with babies up to six months, which represented two weekly rations of 250 grams for about 860,000 children ;

(3) — 175 tons of oat-flakes provided 293,190 children under 13 with two weekly rations of 150 grams ;

(4) — 460 tons of lentils were issued to communal kitchens, especially in the cities, allowing an issue of 0,75 litre of soup per head for four to nine days ;

(5) — The surplus flour, rice and oat-flakes were sent to children's canteens and to hospitals.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries met all the costs incurred in distributing the supplies (dock charges, pilots, transports, storage, milling, etc.).

The occupied provinces were not alone in receiving relief through Geneva. From December 1944 to March 1945, the Joint Relief Commission was successful in sending across France and Belgium four block-trains for the Netherland Red Cross at Tilburg<sup>1</sup>. A large part of these supplies was not employed in this area, but was placed in reserve for issue in the Western provinces on their liberation, as those provinces had suffered even more severely.

In their reports, the ICRC delegates stressed the fact that the situation in the Netherlands remained serious, in spite of these consignments. The ICRC, acting in close cooperation with the Joint Relief Commission, then sought fresh help. In response to its request, the American Red Cross abandoned its rights to the services of the *Caritas*, due to convey food-parcels for American PW, and allowed her use by the Swiss Relief Fund for a second relief shipment in April 1945. However, the armistice meanwhile concluded made it possible to use block-trains, which were quicker and cheaper. The goods thus conveyed<sup>2</sup> were distributed by the Netherlands Red Cross, with the cooperation of the ICRC delegate who had taken up his duties at The Hague after the liberation. As these supplies were insufficient to give the whole population

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

appreciable help, they were set apart for those districts and categories of persons which were in the greatest need.

In May 1945, General Eisenhower negotiated with the Germans in occupied Holland for the relief of the civil population. An agreement for the despatch of relief teams was signed by both parties; it included a clause authorising an ICRC representative to enter occupied territory in order to supervise distribution. The armistice, however, overtook this scheme.

Lastly, attention should be drawn to the assistance given by the ICRC to the relief work undertaken by Zurich University in aid of the professors at the University of Leyden. The ICRC facilitated the journey of a party of professors from Zurich to Leyden, to greet their Dutch colleagues. Later, Zurich University invited several Leyden professors and their families for a month's stay in Switzerland, and the ICRC helped in procuring their visas, and organised the journey, in cooperation with the Swiss Red Cross. Two groups, one of 48, and the other of 46 professors, arrived in Switzerland, the first on July 27 and the other on August 23, 1945.

## § 15. NORWAY

The Committee's work in favour of Norway appears slight, when compared with its efforts for other occupied countries. This is due to the role played at this time by Norway's neighbour, Sweden, a country which had escaped the war and whose population and Red Cross could thus give invaluable help to the victims of distress in Norway.

The Committee's work was therefore confined to those situations where the difficulties caused by the occupying forces could be overcome only by a non-political, as well as neutral intermediary. This was the case at the beginning of the Norwegian campaign. The Norwegian forces which were still resisting in the north had no ambulances, medicaments or dressings, as the stores set up in the south had fallen into enemy hands. The ICRC attempted to have part of these stores sent to the north, but the Germans refused.

As the result of an appeal in November 1940 by the League of Red Cross Societies and the ICRC, the latter had received gifts intended by the donors for Norwegian women and children, in general. With the agreement of the League, part of the funds were used to purchase 15 tons of sugar in Czechoslovakia and 15 tons of millet in Hungary. Together with three tons of dried raisins offered by the Turkish Red Crescent to the Norwegian Red Cross, the goods were sent to Oslo through the German Red Cross. There they were handed to the Norwegian Society for distribution among children in Norway.

Beginning as soon as it was created, the Joint Relief Commission despatched several consignments to Norway. Their distribution was supervised by the ICRC delegate in Stockholm, whenever the Germans granted him permission to visit Norway. The delegate was thus able to make valuable contact with the Norwegian Red Cross and to inform the donors about the conditions of life and the needs of the Norwegian population.

In 1944, it again appeared that action by the ICRC alone would overcome the obstacles to relief work in Norway. Northern Norway had just been liberated by the Russians, and Sweden had had reports of the tragic situation of the population, which had been forcibly removed by the retreating Germans.

The ICRC consulted the Norwegian Government in London and the Norwegian Red Cross delegate in Geneva, on the possibility of sending relief to these areas in a neutral ship sailing under the Red Cross flag, which could also on its return voyage bring back the sick.

The Swedish Red Cross was, however, also dealing with the question, and the Swedish Government had already taken urgent steps in Berlin. The German Government agreed to the dispatch of relief to these districts, on condition that similar supplies were sent to the areas already occupied by the Russians. This demand nullified the proposed scheme. Fortunately, however, owing to the exceptionally mild weather, the evacuation of the population involved less hardship than had been anticipated.

## § 16. POLAND

Immediately after the end of the Polish campaign, the ICRC considered the question of relief for the civil population and for the Polish refugees in neutral countries. A delegate was sent on a special mission to Berlin, in September 1939, to consult the authorities and the German Red Cross, and to learn their views on a relief scheme for which the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies would take responsibility.

In principle, the German authorities concerned were not opposed to such an appeal being addressed to all the national Red Cross Societies. Arguing, however, that the supplies contributed by the International Red Cross would be small in comparison with the efforts already made by German organizations for the provisioning of Poland, they asked that the proposed appeal should not be worded in terms that might serve the adversary for propaganda purposes.

At a further meeting in Berlin, the German Red Cross, which was strongly in favour of the scheme, informed the ICRC delegate of the shortage of medicaments in Warsaw. The delegate was able to verify the fact during a trip to Poland, when the Polish Red Cross and other welfare organizations gave him lists of urgently needed medicaments and medical stores.

On the other hand, the German authorities in Poland assured the delegate that the relief given by the Red Cross would be issued free to those who were in greatest need. In addition, they pledged themselves that the parcels for the Jews would be handed to them intact.

The only provinces which could benefit were those of Warsaw, Radom, Cracow, Lublin, and half that of Lodz. No relief could be sent to the provinces of the former Polish Republic which had been annexed by Germany, and the inhabitants of which were regarded as German citizens; the same applied, in spite of repeated attempts, to the provinces occupied by Soviet Russia.

The cooperation of the German Red Cross greatly facilitated the scheme. The Red Cross was instrumental in obtaining the

consent of the German Ministry of Transport for the free carriage and customs free consignment of all goods sent to its representatives in the General Government, who would reforward them through local Polish organizations. The occupying authorities did not, however, allow the Central Committee of the Polish Red Cross to continue working. It was agreed that receipts signed by the Polish organizations benefited would be sent in duplicate to the ICRC. In January, 1940, the latter circulated these details to the National Red Cross Societies and the other welfare organizations that were in a position to assist the Polish population.

It would be impossible here to enumerate all the gifts in money and in kind which the ICRC received to this effect, or to describe all the negotiations required, both for the transfer of funds and for export permits from the countries, chiefly Switzerland, that gave assistance. The following schedule is a summary of the consignments made, from February 1940 to July 1941, by the ICRC to the German Red Cross delegates in Poland; most of the items were contributed by Red Cross Societies overseas:

1940		Kilos	
<i>Feb.</i>	Sugar . . . . .	500 sacks	30,000
<i>March</i>	Chocolate . . . . .	5 cases	273
	Food and clothing . . . . .	3 "	116
	Pharmaceutical products . . . . .	22 "	485
<i>June</i>	Food and medicaments . . . . .	33 "	1,082
	Surgical instruments . . . . .	4 "	221
	Food . . . . .	144 "	5,091
	Pharmaceutical products . . . . .	14 "	659
	" " . . . . .	1 case	20
<i>May</i>	Clothing . . . . .	83 cases	6,797
<i>Aug.</i>	Food . . . . .	14 "	524
	Pharmaceutical products . . . . .	9 "	165
	Bandages . . . . .	14 "	859
	Food . . . . .	41 "	1,462
	" . . . . .	242 "	8,611
	Soap . . . . .	77 "	2,473
	" . . . . .	77 "	2,461
			<hr/>
			66,299

		<i>Forward</i>	Kilos
1940			66,299
<i>Sept.</i>	Condensed milk . . . . .	200 cases	5,000
<i>Oct.</i>	" " . . . . .	180 "	4,500
	Food and clothing . . . . .	3 "	80
<i>Dec.</i>	Bandages and medicaments . . .	2 "	83
1941			
<i>April</i>	Medicaments and restoratives . .	8 "	219
<i>July</i>	Pharmaceutical products . . . . .	4 "	189
		Total	<u>71,370</u>

In addition, the American Red Cross gave valuable help to the Polish population through a Committee, under Mr. Hoover's chairmanship, which included representatives of the various welfare organizations in the United States. This Committee had considerable funds, but its work came to an end when the United States entered the war.

Although the ICRC stressed the advantage of collective shipments, it was very often requested to send individual parcels to occupied Poland. As regular postal services had not yet been restored, the ICRC requested the German Red Cross to assist in forwarding such parcels. Early in March, 1940, the German Red Cross stated that its delegates in the General Government would transmit individual parcels addressed to residents in the principal districts of Poland, on condition that they were forwarded in the form of collective shipments, accompanied by lists of addressees. The parcels were not to exceed five kilos in weight ; spirits, tobacco, matches and saccharine were prohibited.

From its creation in the autumn of 1940, the Joint Relief Commission undertook responsibility in principle for relief to Poland. In 1941, however, the ICRC itself ensured the safe arrival of a shipment of clothing (16,350 kilos) in the following circumstances. On March 10, 1941, the *Cold Harbour* unloaded at Marseilles a quantity of clothing which the American Red Cross delegate in that town forwarded direct to the Swiss military authorities, for issue to Polish military personnel interned in Switzerland. The ICRC was subsequently informed

by the Swiss that, according to the attached instructions from the donors, the Commission for Polish Relief in New York, part of these goods were intended for Polish PW in Germany and the inhabitants of Polish occupied territory. The Geneva delegate of the Polish Red Cross in London thereupon requested the ICRC to forward these goods to the German Red Cross at Cracow, for transmission to the Polish Central Committee in that city, which was able to operate freely in Poland.

Certain preliminary steps were, however, required. Firstly, this clothing was not a commodity in transit, like the relief supplies from overseas, in respect of which the ICRC acted as shipping agent. The present consignment, having been imported into Switzerland with the remainder of the above shipment, could not be exported without a licence. Furthermore, it was contrary to the general blockade regulations to send relief goods from overseas to civilian populations of occupied territories. The blockade authorities, however, gave their consent, through the British Consulate in Geneva, and the export licence being granted, the clothing was loaded on three railway wagons and left for Cracow on September 24, 1941. The clothes were chiefly distributed in Galicia, an area that had hitherto received no help of this kind. The receipts, signed by the Polish Central Committee, were returned to the Commission for Polish Relief in New York on October 21, 1942.

In addition to this shipment of clothing, the ICRC on October 29, 1941, sent the Polish civilian population 101 cases of soap (12 tons) bought in Portugal, and 120 cases of woollen goods (three tons).

The ICRC also dispatched minor surgical instruments, purchased in Germany at the cost of 30,000 Swiss francs, and originally intended for Polish PW in that country. As these instruments were extremely scarce in Poland, they were handed to the Polish Central Committee, at the donor's request.

The role of the ICRC as neutral intermediary in a particularly difficult relief task also deserves brief mention. In August 1944, the Warsaw population, encouraged by the Russian advance to the eastern bank of the Vistula, rose against the occupant. The battle which raged in Warsaw led to the exodus

of hundreds of thousands of civilians, including a large proportion of women, children and old people. These refugees were assembled at Pruszkow, about twelve miles from Warsaw, in a transit camp with a capacity of some 50,000 persons. Thence they were transported towards the western part of the General Government, to the Wartheland, a part of Poland annexed by the Reich.

On August 25, following an appeal by the Polish radio in Warsaw, the Geneva representative of the Polish Red Cross in London informed the ICRC of this tragic situation, and placed large funds at the disposal of the Joint Relief Commission.

The ICRC at once issued an urgent appeal to the Governments and Red Cross Societies of Germany, Great Britain, Russia and the United States, with whom responsibility for any relief scheme primarily rested. The ICRC was especially anxious to send a member of its delegation in Berlin to Pruszkow, to supervise the distribution of relief. The only means of giving rapid relief would have been to send aircraft which could parachute two to five tons of supplies on each trip; the ICRC made arrangements to this effect with "Swissair" and tried to find the necessary fuel. Unfortunately, the belligerents concerned refused all safe-conducts, and the scheme had to be abandoned.

A proposal to deduct for Pruszkow part of the supplies given to the ICRC for PW and civilian internees was rejected. The Joint Relief Commission succeeded, however, in sending to the camp a large quantity of goods paid for by the Polish Red Cross in London. Twelve railway wagons despatched by the Commission happened to have left Switzerland three weeks earlier and had arrived at Cracow, not without difficulty, chiefly through the efforts of the German Red Cross. The Joint Relief Commission at once took steps to divert part of these supplies to Pruszkow camp. At the same time, it made further shipments<sup>1</sup>.

Further, the ICRC delegation in Berlin was advised on September 15 that one of its members would be allowed to visit

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

Pruszkow. He arrived there on the 17th, and spent two days visiting the entire camp and some of the dependent infirmaries, and supervising the distribution of supplies received from Geneva. Whereas the total number of persons passing daily through the camp at the time of the revolt was 30,000 and more, it had fallen by now to about 4,000. The delegate then proceeded to Warsaw, the evacuation of which was being pursued under appalling conditions, and reported to the ICRC on the most urgent needs. He then visited the Wartheland, to check the issue of relief in that area.

In early October, the ICRC received a new appeal from the Polish Central Relief Committee at Cracow. Echoed by the German authorities, the German Red Cross and all the Polish organizations, this Committee stated that the health and lives of about 30,000 people were threatened, since they were facing the winter without bedding, clothing, linen, footwear and medicaments, none of which the German authorities were able to supply in sufficient quantities. The ICRC at once relayed this appeal to all the Red Cross Societies and welfare organizations able to relieve these terrible sufferings.

From the outset, the Swedish Red Cross had despatched large quantities of relief goods to Pruszkow ; this Society now renewed its efforts, with the most effective cooperation of the American, British and Canadian Red Cross Societies.

Early in 1945, talks between the ICRC and the Paris representative of the Polish Government of Lublin determined the manner in which aid might be given to the liberated areas of Poland. Shortly afterwards, the Relief Organization set up by the ICRC delegation in Rumania sent working teams to the spot, who concerned themselves primarily with the Jewish communities. These teams were the main source of information on the extreme destitution of the Polish population.

Early in the autumn of 1945, a fleet of ICRC lorries successfully conveyed the first relief supplies for liberated Poland from the Joint Relief Commission ; the latter used block-trains for this purpose, as soon as railway communications were re-opened. The ICRC delegate who had been at Warsaw since April, 1946, cooperated with the Polish Red Cross, to which

these goods were delivered, and took an active part in their reception and unloading <sup>1</sup>.

### *Relief Work for Polish Refugees in Neutral Countries*

In their flight before the German and the Russian invaders, many Polish civilians took refuge in Rumania, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia. The Red Cross Societies of these countries came to the help of the fugitives, most of whom arrived exhausted and in pitiable condition.

The ICRC and the League issued a joint appeal on September 26, 1939, asking for help for these people, and a number of Red Cross Societies in non-belligerent countries sent the following contributions to Geneva :

American Red Cross . . . .	90,000 dollars
Belgian Red Cross . . . .	5,000 Belgian francs
Brazilian Red Cross . . . .	2,500 dollars
Estonian Red Cross . . . .	4,000 French francs
Dutch Red Cross . . . .	2,000 florins
Jugoslav Red Cross . . . .	60,000 dinars
Swedish Red Cross. . . .	20,000 Swedish crowns

These figures represent only part of the contributions made by National Societies for Polish refugees. To these should be added the very large gifts, in money and in kind, made by the Red Cross Societies in the four receiving countries. Other welfare organizations also gave their help through the ICRC.

The Hungarian, Rumanian, Lithuanian and Latvian Red Cross Societies received relief from the ICRC and the League in the shape either of funds for purchases locally, or of supplies bought in neutral countries, chiefly medical stores, clothing, footwear, bedding and soap. The joint delegates of the ICRC and the League on repeated occasions obtained information from these Societies as to the number and needs of the refugees, so as to ensure the fair distribution of the relief supplies.

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

## § 17. RUMANIA

Relief work in this country was principally for the Jews <sup>1</sup>. However, the ICRC was empowered to deduct certain sums from the funds destined for Jewish communities, with which the Bucharest delegation assisted the civil population, and in particular opened communal kitchens in 1944.

As was the case in other countries, the delegation negotiated the delivery and distribution of relief supplies sent to the Rumanian Red Cross by the Joint Relief Commission <sup>2</sup> and the International Relief Centre.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 520.

<sup>2</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

## *Chapter 3*

### **Special Cases**

#### § I. JEWISH CIVILIAN POPULATION

In its relief work for civilian populations, the ICRC paid special attention to the Jews. In Germany and the countries occupied by her, or under her domination, especially Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Jugoslavia<sup>1</sup>, no other section of the population endured such humiliation, privation and suffering. Deprived of all treaty protection, persecuted in accordance with the National-Socialist doctrine and threatened with extermination, the Jews were, in the last resort, generally deported in the most inhuman manner, shut up in concentration camps, subjected to forced labour or put to death.

The ICRC did everything in its power for these hapless people. The right to humanitarian action, was, however, its only authority for trespassing in a field which States considered to be exclusively their domestic concern, in which no international treaty provisions could run. Some measure of prudence was therefore essential, and the Committee refrained from steps that held no hope of success; these would merely have resulted in compromising, to no-one's advantage, those of the Committee's activities that rested on tradition or on the Conventions. The wisest course was to profit by the very limi-

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<sup>1</sup> For aid to the Jews in Shanghai, see Vol. I, p. 480.

ted facilities granted, to endeavour to secure others, to be watchful of changes in the political situation and to seize every opportunity for interceding in behalf of the victims of the racial discrimination practised by the Reich.

The question of relief for the Jews amongst the civilian prisoners or deportees held in prisons, concentration camps and closed ghettos has already been dealt with<sup>1</sup>. We must now speak of the aid given to the Jewish section of the free population. In Germany and her satellite countries, the lot of the civilians belonging to this group was by far the worst. Subjected as they were to a discriminatory regime, which aimed more or less openly at their extermination, they were unable to procure the necessities of life, even in the reduced quantities to which "Aryans" were entitled. Moreover, the Jewish communities had been seriously impoverished by the discrimination, confiscation and robbery practised on them for many years.

Relief work for the Jews opened up a new field of activity for the ICRC, where it was able to profit by experience already acquired, but where it continually encountered the almost insurmountable obstacles put in its way by the Axis Governments and the Allied blockade authorities. Part of this work was the concern of the Joint Relief Commission, a body which had, indeed, been set up to assist civilian war victims; consequently, the task of aiding ghettos and Jewish communities also fell to it. The Commission thus procured food, clothing and medical supplies, which were distributed by the National Red Cross Societies and other welfare organizations, so far as possible in the presence of an ICRC delegate.

Whilst the Joint Relief Commission carried out the technical part of the mandates entrusted to it by Jewish organizations and sent relief supplies to the countries where this was permitted, the ICRC increased its diplomatic pressure on the Governments concerned and the occupying Power, in the hope of securing some relaxation of the harsh treatment inflicted on the Jewish population. In response to numerous urgent appeals, the Committee thus worked for the protection of Jews, for their emigra-

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<sup>1</sup> See above pp. 73 et seq.

tion to Palestine and for the repatriation of civilian deportees <sup>1</sup>. The despatch of material relief nevertheless constituted its principal activity in this field.

As shown above <sup>2</sup>, the ICRC set up within its general services a "Special Aid Division", to deal with all questions relating to persecuted Jews. This department's task was, in the first place, to handle matters of principle and to negotiate with Governments and National Red Cross Societies, as well as with the donor organizations. It was mainly engaged in supplying, with the assistance of the ICRC delegations abroad, the most effective material relief possible to this class of distressed persons, in accordance with the wishes of the donors. The Special Aid Division refrained from action, however, whenever the Jewish organizations, particularly the American Joint Distribution Committee, were able to carry out their work unaided. Such was not the case during the most critical period of the war, in 1944 and 1945, when the National-Socialist persecutions reached their climax. At this time, the Jewish organizations were powerless, and the International Red Cross was the only hope of many thousands. The work of the Special Aid Division then developed greatly, despite the fact that it had no juridical terms of reference and was not strictly part of the Committee's traditional work. The Division pursued its task even during the post-war period, until the Jewish organizations were again able to assist the members of their community direct and without any outside help.

The Joint Relief Commission received large sums from Jews in countries either neutral, or at war with Germany, particularly America and Switzerland ; it even succeeded in collecting money in some of the States subservient to Germany. Considerable sums were handed direct by wealthy Jews in Rumania to the Committee's delegation in Bucharest, for local purchases. The ICRC also forwarded to that delegation money gifts for the same purpose which had reached Geneva from Jews abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 641-657.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 338-340.

The principal donors were :

(1) — The *American Joint Distribution Committee* (called for short the “ Joint ”), with headquarters in New York, and a representative in Switzerland ;

(2) — The *Jewish World Congress*, with headquarters in New York, and a representative in Switzerland ;

(3) — The *Schweizerische Hilfsverein für jüdische Flüchtlinge im Ausland* (for short : “ Hijefs ”), with headquarters in Montreux ;

(4) — The *Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States of America and Canada*, which had a branch at Montreux ;

(5) — The *Union O.S.E.* (Union of Child Welfare Societies), whose Swiss headquarters are at Geneva.

In addition, the ICRC was in constant touch with the major refugee organizations, particularly with the *Inter-Governmental Committee for Refugees* and the *War Refugee Board*.

(1) — The Inter-Governmental Committee for Refugees, in London, which had replaced the former Nansen Office, was dependent on the League of Nations. It often applied to the ICRC for information and was regularly advised of the work done by the Joint Relief Commission.

(2) — The War Refugee Board, in Washington, set up at the beginning of 1944 by President Roosevelt, gave valuable support to the Committee's relief work, particularly during the later months of the war in Europe<sup>1</sup>. It enjoyed certain facilities for the despatch of relief supplies through the blockade and for the transfer of money, (e. g. conversion of dollars into Swiss francs, for purchases in Switzerland on the account of the “ Joint ”, which was the largest Jewish donor).

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The position of the Jews in the Axis countries other than Germany was uncertain, and the right to give them assistance

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<sup>1</sup> See above pp. 81 and 336.

that existed at one time, could be cancelled at any moment. Moreover, the Jews were not everywhere treated alike: the greater the pressure exerted by Germany on her satellites, the harsher their anti-Semitic policy.

By adapting itself to these circumstances, the ICRC quickly put two distinct methods into operation:

- (1) — Dispatch of relief in kind through the Joint Relief Commission;
- (2) — Transmission of funds for local purchases by the ICRC.

These methods were adopted according to the degree of tolerance shown by the Powers concerned, and to the political and economic circumstances of the countries where the scheme was to be carried out. Both were sometimes applied simultaneously.

Relief in kind was sent to countries where the impoverished state of the market precluded local purchasing. To help the distressed population in these areas, the Joint Relief Commission forwarded goods bought in other countries, particularly in neutral European countries, such as Switzerland, Portugal and Turkey. These purchases were made with the funds which Jewish donors of various nationalities put at the disposal of the ICRC.

The despatch of goods was hampered by difficulties of many kinds:

- (1) — Lack of funds for purchasing in the overseas markets still available, and in neutral or occupied countries in Europe;
- (2) — Scarcity of commodities in neutral countries and export difficulties due to the restrictions imposed by these countries, to safeguard their own provisioning;
- (3) — Difficulties caused by the absence of land and sea transport, and by the damage to the railway systems in the countries at war;
- (4) — Difficulty in releasing frozen funds and supplies, and in conveying money and supplies to Switzerland through

the blockade. Thus, the Joint Relief Commission was not allowed to forward parcels containing goods that had been the subject of a navicert, except those received from the War Refugee Board. The transfer of funds by Governments in exile in London was also prohibited <sup>1</sup>.

Despite all these obstacles, the Joint Relief Commission succeeded in carrying on relief work in Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Italy, Yugoslavia, Latvia, the Netherlands and Poland, and later in the Balkan countries after their liberation <sup>2</sup>.

Whilst the Joint Relief Commission provided commodities, the ICRC arranged the transfer of funds for the purchase of goods in countries where stocks of food, clothing and medicaments were still sufficient, but were available only to Christians or "Aryans". This was the case in Rumania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where anti-Semitic regulations had reduced the Jewish population to a state of utter destitution.

Transfers of funds offered the following advantages :

- (1) — The local purchase of much-needed goods circumvented the blockade ;
- (2) — Transport problems, if any, were confined to the country where the work was being carried on ;
- (3) — Free exchanges enabled the ICRC to increase largely the purchasing power of available funds, and to take advantage of local markets ;
- (4) — At certain times, the supplies bought by the ICRC delegates in Balkan countries could be sent to groups of deported Jews in Austria, and even in Germany.

As a rule, the relief funds were utilised by the local Jewish organizations. During the critical period, these bodies worked

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> For relief to concentration camps and ghettos organized as closed camps, see pp. 73 and 335 et seq. For relief to free Jewish populations, see the Joint Relief Commission's Report.

under the auspices and the protection of the Committee's delegations. In the spring of 1944, the donors began to place Swiss francs and U. S. dollars at the disposal of the ICRC.

This method of work obliged the ICRC and its delegates abroad to carry out large-scale banking and exchange operations. In the Balkan countries, particularly Rumania, Hungary and Slovakia, relief for the Jewish population was the most pressing task before the Committee's delegates. Some skill was needed to get authority from the National Banks to negotiate foreign currency on the open market. It was only through the influence of the ICRC and its delegation that this method, allowing the best utilisation of the credits made available by relief societies, was specially permitted by the Swiss Authorities and by those of the Balkan countries.

The operation usually ran along the following lines: the donor deposited a certain amount to the account of the ICRC at Geneva; the latter telegraphed the figure to its delegations and these, after obtaining the consent of the national authorities, sold the credits to private individuals and requested the ICRC by telegram to deposit the amounts thus sold to the buyer's account.

When, in the latter part of 1944, postal traffic and telegraphic communication between Geneva and both Hungary and Rumania were suspended, the delegations were compelled to resort to other means of financing relief to the Jews. Recourse was had to the issue of certificates. In Bucharest, these certificates were nominal and not transferable, and could not be endorsed. The holders could use them solely to cash, at the ICRC Treasury in Geneva, the amount named. The Budapest delegation, for reasons beyond its control, was compelled to issue bearer certificates, at the risk of their being used for speculative purposes.

In this way, the ICRC issued 426 certificates for Bucharest, representing a total of 6,665,880 Swiss francs, and 687 certificates for Budapest, to the total value of 3,731,550 Swiss francs.

The greater the difficulties which the Joint Relief Commission experienced in sending goods from Geneva, the more freely did the ICRC have recourse to the transfer of funds for the local purchase of foodstuffs. These funds also allowed

the delegations to take immediate action, in emergencies. At the most critical period of anti-Semitic persecution, the ICRC delegates set up in certain towns, e. g. Budapest, children's homes where they placed Jewish children under their protection. They also opened a certain number of communal kitchens, each distributing about a hundred hot meals daily. Finally, reception centres and shelters were organized for the Jews who had escaped from concentration camps after the liberation.

### *Financing of Relief in Various Countries*

#### (a) — *Rumania.*

In 1943, the ICRC, to which Jewish circles increasingly appealed in behalf of the Jews in Rumania, considered the possibility of relief work, especially in Transnistria. Its difficulty was enhanced by the fact that the ICRC had only one delegate at Bucharest, who was moreover charged with other pressing duties.

To avoid delay, the delegate made arrangements with the Rumanian Red Cross, who consented to carry out this work, in agreement with Jewish circles, whilst the ICRC delegate's task was limited to general supervision and to any local checks he might think desirable.

This method was later extended and improved. The Jewish organizations themselves made purchases in Rumania, and handed over the goods (clothing, food and medical stores) to the Rumanian Red Cross, which distributed them in Transnistria and elsewhere. The ICRC delegate visited this province and was able to assure himself that the allocation was equitable.

The number of people assisted was roughly 220,000. The following were the classes chiefly in need of relief :

- (a) — People evacuated and deported to Transnistria in 1941 from Bukovina, Bessarabia and Northern Moldavia ;
- (b) — Jews due for emigration to Palestine ;

- (c) — Jews who had been ruined by the seizure of their property and their exclusion from certain professions;
- (d) — People rendered homeless by air raids on Bucharest and Ploesti.

This relief scheme had the support of the Rumanian authorities. It was started in November, 1943, with a first donation from the " Joint " of 100,000 Swiss francs, which was transferred to Rumania at the low rate of 45 lei for 1 Swiss franc. The Rumanian Red Cross made a grant from its own funds, bringing the total to 10 million lei in all. Most of this money served for the purchase in Rumania of clothing and footwear, which was distributed in the ghettos of Transnistria.

A further donation from the " Joint " of 100,000 dollars was transferred to the ICRC with the aid of the War Refugee Board. Of the 420,000 Swiss francs obtained by conversion, 100,000 francs were allocated to relief work for the Jewish population in Rumania. This time, the amount was not transferred through official channels, but made available to the ICRC delegation in Bucharest, which managed to obtain 33 million lei, at the rate therefore of 330 lei for 1 Swiss franc. This sum was allocated as follows :

- 8,000,000 lei for the purchase of underwear and clothing, all of which was distributed by the Jewish Centre at Bucharest ;
- 15,000,000 lei for the purchase of food, primarily for emigrants to Palestine on board the *Taris*. As the ship was unable to sail, the supplies were given to the destitute Jewish population ;
- 10,000,000 lei for relief in cash, clothing, food and lodging for war victims, especially for repatriates from Transnistria, refugees from Bessarabia and victims of air raids.

In May, 1944, four wagonloads of food were sent from Istanbul to Rumania. The supplies they carried (nuts, dried raisins, etc.) were of small use to the distressed persons, and were

therefore sold for general relief work. The ICRC delegate paid out to Polish refugee Jews the allowances he had received from Jewish organizations in Bucharest. In addition, 250 million lei were used for the relief of 12,000 to 14,000 persons repatriated from Transnistria.

The local Jewish organizations were very active. At the request of the "Joint", the ICRC delegate asked the well-to-do Jewish circles in Bucharest to subscribe to aid for their co-religionists in need; during the first nine months of 1944, a total of 847 million lei was thus collected.

From the summer of 1944, the transactions of the "Joint" reached the following levels:

- 4 million Swiss francs, during the second half of 1944;
- 8 million Swiss francs, during the first quarter of 1945;
- 10 million Swiss francs, during the second quarter of 1945.

Some of this money was utilised in neighbouring countries. At the beginning of 1945, Bucharest became the centre of relief work for the Jews in Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Sub-Carpathian Russia. This work could be organized only in Rumania.

(b)—*Hungary.*

Although relief for the Jews was permitted by the Rumanian authorities, this was not the case in Hungary. The ICRC delegate at Budapest nevertheless succeeded in setting on foot relief work similar to that carried out by his colleague in Bucharest.

The condition of the Jewish population in Hungary became particularly tragic after the German occupation in March 1944. The ICRC, which was unable to obtain any remission of the new measures affecting the Jews, endeavoured to give them practical assistance.

The Jewish Senate in Budapest had appealed for help, particularly in the shape of money, as food and medicaments were available on the spot. In agreement with the representative of the "Joint" in Switzerland, the ICRC at once deposited

six million pengös with its Budapest delegate, to which further sums were added later. The delegate was thus able to purchase both food and medical stores in Hungary and the adjacent countries, for distribution to the Jews confined in the *Judenhäuser*, the work camps and the ghettos. The delegate in Bratislava contributed to this work by purchasing foodstuffs, particularly sugar in Slovakia, which he sent to Hungary. These supplies were deposited in warehouses and put at the disposal of the *Judenbüro*.

When, early in November, 1944, the Hungarian Fascists began the deportation of 35,000 to 45,000 Jews, the ICRC delegate travelled along the route from Budapest to Vienna and issued food and medical relief to these unfortunate people, who were being driven to their destination in columns and on foot. The rest of the Jewish population (the aged and unfit, children, old men and sick people) who had been assembled in the ghetto at Budapest, were fed as well as circumstances permitted.

As soon as Budapest was liberated by the Soviet forces, the ICRC delegate was able to purchase about 350 tons of foodstuff in Rumania, for further distributions. Thanks to the credits from the "Joint", and to the combined efforts of the ICRC delegations and local Jewish organizations, stocks of food and medicaments were built up in Budapest.

(c)—*Slovakia*.

It was not until the uprising at the end of August, 1944, that the Slovak authorities started the mass arrest, imprisonment in concentration camps and transfer to Germany of the Jewish population in Slovakia. To escape from these measures the Jews were compelled to remain in hiding.

As there was no Jewish centre in this country, the ICRC delegate at Bratislava had great difficulty in issuing the money grants which were placed to his credit from the "Joint". Relief for Jews was then strictly prohibited. The delegate endeavoured, however, to assist the Jews in hiding by making payments to intermediaries, often trusted persons whom the

" Joint " had indicated by name. These subsidies enabled the Jews in hiding, who were unable to procure food in the usual manner, to obtain their supplies in the black market.

(d)—*Other Countries.*

When the Axis forces occupied Greece, the ICRC delegation did its best to assist the 55,000 Jews in Salonika. In July 1942, a census was taken, and most of the men between 18 and 45 were sent to labour battalions. The delegation gave them medical supplies. Towards the end of the autumn of 1942, the Jewish workers were discharged; towards the middle of May, 1943, they were transferred to Germany. When their departure had been arranged by the German authorities, the ICRC delegate at Salonika made pressing appeals for the right to supply them with bread and milk. The only effect was that the Germans asked the ICRC to recall their delegate.

In Austria, the Jewish population was assisted by the ICRC delegation in Vienna. In this city there were, amongst others, 15,000 Jews deported from Hungary in 1944 and employed on forced labour. The ICRC delegate at Bratislava gave them food and clothing purchased in Slovakia.

Similar work was carried out by the ICRC delegate in Croatia. From May, 1943, until the armistice, all relief for destitute Jews was given through his intervention. The credit put at his disposal for this purpose amounted, in 1945, to 20,000 Swiss francs monthly.

The ICRC in Geneva received direct from Jewish organizations sums amounting to 22,817,000 Swiss francs for its relief to the Jewish population in the Balkan countries. The greater part of this money was transferred to Rumania and Hungary and utilised on the spot, mainly for the purchase of food, clothing and medical supplies.

In this connection, it should be pointed out that the ICRC, in agreement with the " Joint ", deducted between 5 and 7 per cent from the funds sent by the latter, and set it aside for aid to war victims, irrespective of race, nationality or

religion. Thanks to these donations of Jewish origin, the ICRC was able to meet the cost of various relief schemes, in particular homes for children and heated hutments.

## § 2. CAMPS IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

During the years which preceded the second World War, many thousands of persons had to leave their native country because of political or racial persecution. Large numbers found an asylum in France.

In September, 1939, the French Government, for security reasons, assembled these refugees in camps in the South of France, where there were already many Spanish Republicans who had escaped from Spain at the end of the Civil War.

In the spring of 1940, during the Battle of France, great numbers of refugees moved towards the South and were for the most part accommodated in these camps. The armistice of June, 1940, far from leading to their release, increased the population of the camps by the inclusion of nationals of countries at war with the Axis, political suspects and "undesirable" aliens. This unexpected influx, added to the breakdown of transport, made the provisioning of the camps far more difficult.

The ICRC, on learning of this disquieting situation, managed to obtain information on the location and number of the camps, which the French Ministry of the Interior had hitherto refused to reveal. The Committee at once turned to all welfare organizations able to assist the internees, and called for financial help.

An immediate response came from the Swiss Red Cross and other Swiss relief organizations, and the Swiss Government authorized the ICRC to export the foodstuffs and medical stores it had purchased with the funds collected. Relief consignments were addressed to the camp commandants and to the representatives of the welfare organizations which had permission to work in the assembly centres. The first consignment left Geneva

on July 20, 1940, and others soon followed. Thus, in July and August the camps received about :

- 3,000 cases of condensed milk ;
- 12,000 kilos of powdered milk ;
- 5,000 food and clothing parcels.

The ICRC obtained receipts for these goods and handed them to the donor organizations.

This work was pursued with all possible speed. On its inception, the Joint Relief Commission seconded the Committee's requests for funds, and for free transport and exemption from customs dues <sup>1</sup>.

Since they were intended for refugees, the earliest shipments by the Committee were in the nature of relief for civilians. As the refugees were, however, under detention, the ICRC took steps to ensure that they should have the same treatment, whenever possible, as that accorded to prisoners of war under the 1929 Convention. The principal object of this equality of treatment was to allow relief supplies collected in countries overseas to pass through the blockade. Since the detainees were for the most part nationals of countries no longer at war with the Vichy Government (most of them were German and Austrian Jews, and citizens of countries allied with the Axis), they could not be regarded as civilian internees. The majority were therefore subject to the Ministry of the Interior, which detained them for security reasons, whilst civilian internees proper and the Spanish Republicans were under the authority of the Ministry of War.

In the summer of 1940, the ICRC applied to the blockade authorities for the free passage of relief supplies from overseas for women and child victims of the war in Europe ; on this occasion, it also described the critical situation of the camps in the South of France, and its desire to improve conditions in any way possible. Despite the interest shown by public opinion in Great Britain, no relaxation of the blockade could be secured. Undeterred, the ICRC pursued its negotiations.

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

Before making any response to the numerous appeals received, the Committee had to know exactly what were the requirements of each camp, and therefore obtained authority from the French Government to make visits. In November, 1940, a member of the Committee was able to inspect the camps at Gurs, Le Vernetin (Ariège) and Argelès-sur-Mer, containing respectively 12,047, 3,113, and 12,046 persons. He distributed 300 kilos of dressings, medical stores and surgical instruments, and a sum of 265,000 French francs, contributed by nationals of various countries for their detained relatives or friends.

The visit supplied evidence of grave needs, particularly for clothing, footwear, foodstuffs, medical stores and even hutments. The ICRC notified these requirements to the French authorities and the American Red Cross. On January 17, 1941, it telegraphed to the Ministry of Economic Warfare in London, once again appealing for an exception in favour of these refugees.

The presence of British subjects in these camps may possibly have influenced the attitude of the Allied authorities. At all events, the blockade authorities informed the ICRC on April 24, 1941, that they agreed to the despatch of relief from overseas to the camps in the South of France, on the following conditions :

- (1) — Free transport and exemption from customs dues in French territory ;
- (2) — Collective shipments only to be sent ;
- (3) — Supervision of issue by the International Red Cross, or the Friends Service Committee, acting in cooperation with camp committees elected by the detainees ;
- (4) — Periodical reports on the arrival and issue of relief stores, for the information of the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

These conditions were submitted to the French Government and the French Red Cross at Vichy, who informed the ICRC of their entire agreement in respect of points (1), (2) and (4). As regards point (3), they proposed that the issues should be entrusted to committees comprising members of the local French Red Cross and of the *Service social d'aide aux émigrants*.

The point was discussed at the end of 1941 during a second visit of a member of the ICRC to Vichy France ; finally, on January 30, 1942, the French authorities accepted the suggested procedure for the issue of relief from overseas to the camps in Southern France, and its supervision by a neutral organization.

After the United States entered the war, it naturally became more difficult to find North and South American donors inclined to send relief to internees in non-occupied France ; the Joint Relief Commission had to confine itself to sending medicaments.

On the other hand, the French Government and the blockade authorities agreed that a large consignment of clothing from the American Friends Service Committee should be unloaded at Lisbon at the end of 1941, and forwarded in early 1942 to the camps in Southern France. The operation was not easy, but the belligerents agreed that this clothing should, as an exception, be conveyed by a vessel assigned to the transport of PW parcels between Lisbon and Marseilles, under the Red Cross flag. The issue of this clothing in the camps was supervised by the ICRC delegate at Marseilles <sup>1</sup>.

During their visits, the Committee's representatives noted that the detaining authorities had not always succeeded, despite their earnest endeavours, in sufficiently improving the sanitary installations of the camps, or the feeding and clothing of the internees.

After the total occupation of France in November 1942, a large number of " hébergés " were arrested and deported and the task of feeding the remainder became increasingly difficult. By perseverance and the use of every opportunity, the ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission contrived to supply the camps, but this help was irregular and inadequate. Unlike the English-speaking civilians who, from 1943 onwards, were regarded in France as civilian internees and consequently eligible for relief, the " hébergés " did not come under the 1929 Convention. Furthermore, the welfare organizations that had hitherto assisted them, had, as the result of other calls, ceased

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

to take the same active interest in these people. The ICRC and the Joint Relief Commission, with no funds of their own, were in consequence seriously handicapped.

To complete the account of the ICRC's work in the camps of Southern France, we should allude to the forwarding of individual parcels and currency transfers. Relatives and friends who did not know the addresses of internees applied to the Committee, instead of sending parcels direct. The ICRC, in turn, was able to send them on, thanks to the "postal transit service" which it had set up for the purpose at the outbreak of war <sup>1</sup>.

Unfortunately, the French post office collected the cost of transport and customs dues from the consignees, most of whom were unable to pay ; thus, a large number of parcels were held up in the camps, involving the loss of all perishable contents. Thanks to negotiations by the ICRC, individual parcels were finally exempted from the above charges, but not from the consumer tax. Furthermore, the exemption held only if the parcels were assembled at Geneva and addressed to the *Comité de la Reconnaissance française*, who would forward them to the consignees through the local committees of the French Red Cross. People who were anxious to send gift parcels to the internees could not do so as freely as they would have liked.

The ICRC also did everything it could to promote the transfer of currency. On February 26, 1941, the Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees under the League of Nations, in London, asked the Committee to distribute a sum of 100,000 French francs (which was subsequently doubled), to German and Austrian members of the International Brigade detained in the camps at Gurs, Le Vernet and Argelès. The Joint Relief Commission was instructed by the ICRC to carry out this transfer and finally succeeded, after negotiations which lasted over a year <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Report of the Joint Relief Commission.

### § 3. JAPANESE NATIONALS IN LATIN AMERICA

In March, 1944, the Japanese Red Cross in Tokyo made a gift of 150,000 yen to the ICRC, through the Japanese Legation in Berne, for medical care to indigent Japanese in certain Latin American States. This contribution was to be allocated as follows :

Bolivia	4 per cent	Bol.	58,560.70
Brazil	13 " "	CR.	89,772.30
Chile	4 " "	Ch. dols.	42,918.20
Colombia	2 " "	Pes.	1,179.62
Cuba	7 " "	US. dols.	2,442.—
Mexico	24 " "	Pes.	40,604.—
Paraguay	4 " "	US. dols.	1,395.—
Peru	42 " "	Sol.	94,909.69

The Japanese Legation in Berne asked that the money should be entrusted to the ICRC delegates. Since there were no such delegates in Chile, Peru or Paraguay, recourse was had in these countries to the services of the National Red Cross Societies. The general control of the scheme was entrusted to the ICRC delegate in Buenos Aires, who was instructed to take all necessary action, to disburse the funds, and to collect and forward the accounts and receipts to Geneva. These papers were forwarded regularly from Geneva to the Japanese Red Cross. According to the wishes of the donors :

(1) — The funds were intended solely for the medical care of non-interned indigent Japanese.

(2) — Wherever practicable, the cooperation of the Japanese colonies or their committees was to be enlisted, particularly in the selection of beneficiaries.

(3) — The ICRC was responsible to the Japanese Red Cross for the use of these funds.

(4) — Detailed accounts and, if possible, receipts were to be sent at regular intervals to Geneva, as a rule monthly.

Wherever possible, the Protecting Power should also be consulted on the use of the funds and the selection of beneficiaries.

These instructions were communicated to the agencies concerned, namely the ICRC delegates, the Red Cross Societies and the Protecting Powers.

The execution of this particular relief scheme was by no means easy, and much telegraphic correspondence was required for the arrangements with the local Japanese organizations, and to obtain authority for currency transfers. By the end of May, 1944, however, most of the above amounts had reached the recipients. In Peru, Paraguay, Chile and particularly Cuba, instructions were strictly carried out, but this proved impossible in the other countries.

#### *Mexico.*

The ICRC delegate in Mexico made an agreement with the Japanese Mutual Aid Committee as to the use of the funds. This Committee had forty-eight delegates throughout the country, and was thus informed of all Japanese nationals who were in need of medical attention. The ICRC delegate made periodical allocations to the committee, and sent monthly reports to Geneva.

#### *Chile, Peru, Paraguay.*

In the absence of any ICRC delegation in these three countries, responsibility fell to the delegation in the Argentine, which enlisted the help of the National Red Cross Societies and the Protecting Powers, and issued precise instructions as to the categories eligible for relief. All accounts and receipts had to be forwarded to Geneva through the delegation at Buenos Aires.

In Chile, the National Red Cross agreed to administer the funds, with the help of two Japanese representatives. In point of fact, the money was entrusted to the Swedish Legation at Santiago, which looked after Japanese interests, answered applications and drew up the accounts. The statements were sent to the delegation at Buenos Aires through the Chilean Red Cross.

In Peru, this work was the charge of the National Red Cross, acting in collaboration with four Japanese representatives. Regular accounts and receipts were sent to the delegation at Buenos Aires.

In Paraguay, arrangements were made with the National Red Cross and the Spanish Legation, which looked after Japanese interests. But as no applications were received, the donors agreed that the available money should be held back for possible use in other South American countries. It was finally used for Japanese nationals in Cuba.

### *Cuba.*

During a first visit to Cuba, in September, 1944, the ICRC delegate to the West Indies made arrangements with the Cuban Red Cross and left a certain sum of money in its hands. These funds, and further sums which were paid in later, were administered jointly by the Cuban Red Cross and Japanese representatives. The main difficulty was the fact the ICRC delegate resided in Washington and could only visit Cuba at rare intervals.

Following a second trip, the delegate informed the Committee, in September 1945, on the difficult position of Japanese internees who were due for early release. He stated that all were short of clothing and food, whilst they received medical aid from the Government and the Cuban Red Cross. Later, the delegate stated that some of the released internees were in need of restoratives and vitamins, and asked for authority to purchase these with the balance of the funds assigned for Japanese nationals in Cuba. With the consent of the donors, 1,395 dollars originally provided for Paraguay, which could not be used there, were made over by the Committee. Thus, the funds assigned to Cuba were devoted almost entirely to medical care, whilst the quota first intended for Paraguay went to the purchase of clothing, foodstuffs, restoratives and vitamins for released Japanese internees. The ICRC delegate was able to buy this clothing cheaply in Haiti and to send it free of charge to Cuba.

### *Bolivia.*

Arrangements were made by the ICRC delegate at La Paz, but no Japanese nationals applied for medical care.

### *Colombia.*

No medical aid was needed. Certain Japanese families, whose breadwinners had been interned, were however in very straitened circumstances, and the ICRC delegate decided to use for their relief part of the funds at his disposal.

### *Brazil.*

The ICRC delegate at Rio de Janeiro proposed to enlist the support of the Papal Nuncio, who was looking after Japanese interests in Brazil, and was thus able to make contact with all the Japanese colonies scattered throughout this vast area. The donors accepted the suggestion. When approached, the Nuncio replied that he could only undertake this duty if he was not asked to confine himself to medical aid, since he was anxious to combine this new task with the work he was already doing, on behalf of the Vatican, for the Japanese. The donors having agreed, the funds were handed over to the Nuncio, who applied them both to medical aid and the purchase of foodstuffs, clothing, etc. The receipts were sent to Geneva.

The grant made by the Japanese Red Cross has not yet been completely disbursed, and the balance is drawn upon, as occasion arises.

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## ERRATA

Page 14, line 1.

This line should be indented and start a new paragraph.

Page 112, line 5.

For "under-nourishment" read "undernourishment".

Page 165, line 3.

For "below" read "below<sup>1</sup>".

Page 168, line 6 from bottom.

For "sentto" read "sent to".

Page 221, sub-title.

For "Parcels to" read "Parcels for".

Page 237, sub-title "Setting up...".

Delete both brackets.

Page 252, line 3.

For "mobilise das" read "mobilised as".

Page 348, line 11 from below.

For "five kilo" read "five-kilo".

Page 469, line 10 from below.

For "co tinue" read "continue".

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