

# Relief to prisoners of war, civilian internees and former prisoners of war transformed to civilian workers

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#### IV. RELIEF TO PRISONERS OF WAR, CIVILIAN INTERNEES AND FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR TRANSFORMED TO CIVILIAN WORKERS

##### LIBERATION AND REPATRIATION

The ICRC has continued to be in contact with Madrid and Berlin, with a view to the repatriation of former German prisoners of war still held at Nanclares de la Oca Camp. During the year most of these ex-prisoners were able to leave Spain and return to Germany or to emigrate overseas. These journeys were facilitated by the intervention of the ICRC Delegation in Madrid.<sup>1</sup>

In order to help military and civilian repatriates to Italy, the ICRC decided to draw from relief funds at its disposal a sum of 500,000 Swiss francs, for distribution through the intermediary of the Italian Red Cross. It is understood that these funds may also be used to assist the victims, direct or indirect, of the war or of its consequences.

##### FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR TRANSFORMED TO CIVILIAN WORKERS

In the spring of 1951, the ICRC brought to a close the work it had carried on in France, with the approval of the French authorities, on behalf of former German prisoners of war who had become civilian workers. Since then the German Consul General in Paris has undertaken the regular protection of his compatriots.

A summary of this temporary action of the ICRC, as a substitute for the Protecting Power, was given in previous annual reports.

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<sup>1</sup> The importance of the funds allocated for relief in Germany is shown on page 59.

The summary does not however include the 30,000 individual cases, with which the ICRC was engaged from 1947 to the end of 1950. In all these cases, the ICRC endeavoured to act as a mediator, at the same time intervening on a strictly unofficial basis in favour of German nationals who were not ex-prisoners of war (technicians or workers recruited by the National Immigration Office, clandestine immigrants, etc.).

Since the opening of the German Consulate in Paris this work has also been brought to an end.

#### PRISONERS UNDER LEGAL PROSECUTION

About the same date (spring 1951) the German Consulate in Paris relieved the ICRC of the work of assisting German ex-prisoners against whom legal action had been taken in *France*. The previous yearly reports describe the work accomplished in this field by the ICRC Delegation in Paris.

In *Germany*, the head of the ICRC Delegation again visited in January and February Landsberg and Werl Prisons where German ex-servicemen, sentenced by Allied tribunals, are detained. After these visits he had interviews with the British and American authorities, notably with Mr. J.J. McCloy, High Commissioner for the United States in Germany.

#### COMPENSATION FOR FORMER ALLIED PRISONERS OF WAR IN JAPAN

The Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom informed Geneva on July 10, 1951, that in accordance with Article 16 of the Draft Peace Treaty with Japan the ICRC would be requested to take the necessary steps for the Japanese assets held abroad to be used for assisting ex-prisoners of war in Japanese hands, and the families of those who had died in captivity or were suffering from the consequences of such captivity.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is competent under its statutes to take action, within the bounds of its possibilities and the means at its disposal, on behalf of the victims of

present hostilities or past conflicts. The ICRC therefore agreed in principle to undertake relief action extending to a whole category of war victims, provided that complete agreement existed between the Power liberating the funds in question and the Powers on whose territory the funds are now being held.

In giving its support on a strictly humanitarian basis, to action in behalf of ex-prisoners of war and their families, the Committee will clearly be acting in accordance with its traditional fundamental principles as a neutral intermediary and an entirely independent institution, without having to express an opinion as to treaty stipulations which are the concern of the Governments.

As already mentioned, the President of the International Committee visited San Francisco on the occasion of the signature of the Peace Treaty, in early September last year. The ICRC remains at the disposal of the Powers concerned, to determine the methods of application of the clauses in point, once the Treaty has been duly ratified by them.

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