

Assistance to civilian populations

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IV. Assistance to Civilian Populations

REFUGEES AND STATELESS PERSONS

In close connection with various national or international organisations the ICRC has continued its work of material, administrative and legal assistance in favour of refugees and stateless persons in numerous European and South American countries. In Spain, for instance, it was concerned with a certain number of persons who could not claim assistance from the International Refugee Organisation, and displaced persons whose status could not be settled before the winding up of this organisation, and who wished to be issued with certificates of residence or labour permits, or to be given medical attention. In Italy it continued to follow up cases of aged or sick refugees in essential need of relief: with the help of branches of the Legal Assistance for Refugees and the Italian Red Cross Social Service it was able to alleviate their distress to some extent. In conjunction with the Red Cross Social Service, Caracas, Venezuela, it took active steps to procure employment for refugees and to find a solution for the many problems facing them, particularly on account of the law limiting the number of alien workers to 25% in each concern.

The ICRC also intervened on several occasions to facilitate repatriation or emigration. Thus in Greece 170 Yugoslav refugees (whose names had been collected by the Delegate of the ICRC at the request of the Greek authorities) were able to return to their country. In Spain also the ICRC made numerous approaches with the object of facilitating the emigration of refugees (visas, Travel Documents, travelling grants, etc.). In China the situation of the Austrian refugees mentioned in

the previous Annual Report ¹ was examined by the representatives of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migrations and the World Council of Churches with the special object of settling the question of transport costs. The Delegate of the ICRC in Shanghai issued Personal Record Certificates and Travel Documents to refugees of various classes, including a fairly large number of Japanese being repatriated.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

The steps taken by States to provide refugees with documents in lieu of passports not yet being adequate in all cases, the ICRC has continued to issue a few Travel Documents.

As is generally known the ICRC Travel Documents "10,100 bis" are intended to facilitate the repatriation of displaced persons, or to allow them to emigrate to a country of their choice, or again to justify their presence in a country following events of war.

The issue of these documents by the ICRC is subject to the three following conditions :

- (a) that the applicant does not possess, and is quite unable to procure, a passport,
- (b) that the applicant has been granted an exit permit by the authorities of the country of residence;
- (c) that the applicant has been promised a visa by the diplomatic or consular authorities of the country to which he is emigrating.

These Travel Documents, which are distributed free of charge, reached a total of 376 during the year, 40 being issued at the request of the Allied Military Government, Trieste, 94 for refugees in Italy and the remainder at Innsbruck, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Cairo.

During the same period one hundred and ten ICRC Travel Documents were renewed.

¹ See *Report on the Work of the ICRC from January 1 to December 31, 1951*, Geneva, 1952, page 41.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

During 1952 the International Committee continued to intervene in the same spirit as in the past, in accordance with Resolution 31 of the XVIIth International Red Cross Conference ¹.

The report submitted to the XVIIIth International Red Cross Conference was approved, and the ICRC was invited to carry on its activities in conjunction with the League of Red Cross Societies. The full text of this Resolution is annexed ².

On the national level, in agreement with the governmental and non-governmental organisations and the League, the ICRC has remained in contact with the services concerned with legal assistance, particularly in the following countries :

Austria. — *Legal Assistance Section of the Austrian Red Cross.* Following approaches made by the Delegate of the ICRC the Bar Council has appointed one of its members in each juridical area to give free legal assistance to holders of a recommendation from the local branch of the Red Cross.

Brazil. — *Legal Assistance Section of the Brazilian Red Cross.* — The re-organisation of this section, hitherto a private concern, has been carried out under the guidance of the President of the Brazilian Red Cross ³. It will henceforth be directly attached to the Secretariat of the Brazilian Red Cross, but will maintain its financial independence.

Greece. — *Legal Assistance Bureau of the Greek Red Cross.* The statutes of the new Bureau formed the subject of an article in the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge* ⁴.

¹ See *Summary Report on the Work of the ICRC* (July 1947 to December 1951) page 26.

² See Annex IV, *Extract from the Toronto Resolutions*, Resolution 14, below, page 118.

³ See *Circular Letter* of June 3, 1952 to the Central Committees of Red Cross Societies.

⁴ See *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, March 1952, pages 257 to 260.

Italy. — Legal Assistance to Aliens Section (AGIUS). This has been an independent Section of the Italian Red Cross since 1945, and its work has had valuable results. It should be emphasised that AGIUS, which promoted this assistance, has served as a model for the results achieved in this field ¹.

In addition, a Member of the International Committee's Legal Section took part in the biennial Congress of the International Bar Association. The Congress recommended that Members of the Association should co-operate with the International Red Cross in providing legal assistance to refugees and stateless persons.

GERMAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES AND EAST GERMANS

The action for the reuniting of families, to which the ICRC has devoted its efforts for several years, was continued with similar perseverance throughout 1952.

As a result of increasing difficulties a marked decrease was to be deplored in the grouping of families between the East and the West ; the Committee's efforts in organising the reunion of families from the South East were, on the other hand crowned with success.

By the end of December 1952 the number of persons transferred to Germany from Poland and Czechoslovakia (and to a lesser degree from other countries of Eastern Europe) reached a total of 63,123. This figure does not include the 1,551 children from Jugoslavia, who, from the beginning of this action until the end of 1952, were able to rejoin their parents in Germany, Austria, France, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, etc., or the 4,000 adults who, from June 1952, were allowed to leave Jugoslavia in order to join their relatives in other European countries.

For Jugoslavia it was a question of gradually progressing from the reunion of children with their parents to the grouping

¹ With regard to the organisation of AGIUS and the first results obtained, see the International Committee's article on the subject, "Assistance juridique aux réfugiés", in the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, September 1950, pages 661 to 668.

of adult members of the same families¹. The negotiations entered into for this purpose were followed last June by the sending of a special mission to Belgrade. Concrete results were achieved by these negotiations thanks to the goodwill of the authorities and the co-operative spirit of the Yugoslav Red Cross. This work will be continued in so far as the countries which have given shelter to members of dispersed families will agree to receive those who are still in Yugoslavia.

For the first time a small number of children in Austria were able to join their parents in East Germany.

It is desirable that the reunion of families should be brought to a successful conclusion before the passage of time has caused irreparable damage within dispersed families and especially among the children separated from their parents. The International Committee sincerely hopes that the imminence of such danger will incite all the Governments and National Red Cross Societies concerned to pursue actively the task undertaken, particularly in countries where the work had been suspended.

REPATRIATION OF GREEK CHILDREN

During the year 152 children who were claimed by their relatives in Greece and had been identified by the Yugoslav Red Cross and the Swedish mission in Belgrade were repatriated from Yugoslavia, the Delegate of the ICRC and the League having been present.

In February all the countries sheltering Greek children were requested by the United Nations General Assembly to take steps to enable them to return to their homes, and the ICRC and the League were requested to continue their efforts in this connection². At the invitation of the Secretary General of the

¹ These German-speaking persons, often designated by the technical term of *Volksdeutsche*, whose establishment in countries of Central and Eastern Europe goes back for several generations, are not necessarily of German origin. They not only came from territories which were later linked up with Germany, but also from France, the Netherlands, Switzerland etc. It was only because they were German-speaking that they were regarded, often in error, as being German.

² See *Resolution* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, February 2, 1952 (Document A-L 85).

United Nations, representatives of the ICRC and the League attended a meeting of the *Standing Committee on Repatriation of Greek Children*; during this meeting the Czechoslovak Delegation made a suggestion for discussions to be held in Prague between the ICRC, the League and the Czechoslovak Red Cross.

The joint mission of the ICRC and the League remained in Prague from April 9 to 23, 1952. The discussion did not unfortunately lead to the results hoped for. The documents concerning these negotiations have been published in the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*¹.

In October 1952 the ICRC and the League submitted a fourth report to the General Secretary of the United Nations on the whole of their activity in favour of Greek children. In an accompanying letter they stated that after having exhausted all possible ways and means available to them in seeking a solution of the problem, they felt obliged to suspend their work, with the exception of repatriation which might still be carried out from Yugoslavia. The ICRC and the League nevertheless remain ready to resume their work when conditions dependent on Governments make practical action by the Red Cross possible. They also remain at the disposal of any of the Governments concerned who wish to apply for their assistance in preparing or carrying out repatriation.

These decisions met with the approval of the United Nations Assembly. The latter at the same time requested the ICRC and the League to continue their action for the repatriation of Greek children still remaining in Yugoslavia.

¹ See *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*, January 1953, pages 16 to 36.