

Isabelle VONÈCHE CARDIA

HUNGARIAN OCTOBER

BETWEEN RED CROSS
AND RED FLAG

The 1956 action of the International
Committee of the Red Cross

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OF THE RED CROSS

Translated by Martha Grenzeback

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PREFACE

At the end of October 1956, the world discovered the hidden face of the Soviet empire when an entire people in the Communist bloc rose up against the single-party system and their country's occupation by the Red Army. That country was Hungary. The Budapest revolution that broke out on 23 October revealed the impotence of the ruling Hungarian Communist party, which had to turn to Moscow for help. During the night, the Soviet divisions stationed in Hungary made their way to the capital to put down an insurrection of several thousand civilian combatants. Those combatants, however, enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the population, and most of the army and even the municipal police refused to fight them, if they did not actually join them. As a result, the "battle of Budapest" lasted nearly a week, followed by a temporary lull under the leadership of a new prime minister, Imre Nagy. This patriotic, enlightened Communist tried to reach a political understanding with the leaders of the Kremlin, but ultimately failed. On 4 November a second invasion by the Soviet army crushed the uprising.

The revolution was over. The Soviet intervention left thousands of dead and wounded, buildings in ruins, and prisons that, over the weeks, filled up with insurgents and intellectuals accused of having taken part in the revolt. Around 10,000 of them received heavy prison sentences, and more than 300 were executed, including Prime Minister Imre Nagy and several of his colleagues, all of them Communists.

Isabelle Vonèche Cardia's remarkable work focuses on one particular aspect of these events, namely the operation carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) during and after the insurrection. This operation was documented only in official ICRC activity reports, which provided precise accounts of the work carried out by the Geneva centre and its delegates and the distribution of aid to the victims, but refrained from any analysis or political conclusions. Ms. Vonèche Cardia's research fills that gap, revealing for the first time the political impact of the ICRC action. That action was critical for the Hungarians saved and protected by the Genevan humanitarian organization, but it was also of major importance for the ICRC itself, being the biggest operation the organization had undertaken since World

War II – and the most perilous, since the Soviet Union had been hostile towards the ICRC since the end of the war. The ICRC was consequently forced to embark on its action in Hungary without any assurance of cooperation from the authorities of Moscow and Budapest – and, needless to say, with no knowledge of the way the Communist bloc functioned, or of the nature of the power that held sway after the appointment of Imre Nagy.

Isabelle Vonèche Cardia presents a very perspicacious analysis of the difficulties arising from this unprecedented situation. The ICRC could, of course, invoke the Geneva Conventions, which had been ratified by the Soviet Union and Hungary; but it was confronted by an intractable armed conflict compounded by an equally intractable, three-sided political conflict – on one side, the Hungarian insurgents, on the other, the Soviet power, and between them Imre Nagy's government which, in its efforts to find a solution to the crisis, was moving closer and closer to the national revolutionary cause. Who was who, out in the field? Who represented which population and which authority? Was it an internal conflict or an international one? Like the elusive combatants themselves, the Genevan delegates had to feel their way, but they never gave up. The present study is the first that has ever described the real complexity of this situation and the ICRC's unflagging determination to save victims and protect the population in the face of all obstacles. At the same time, the author has impartially pointed out the weaknesses that marred the operational strategy adopted by the organization's base in Geneva.

At the outset, everything happened very quickly. Less than a week of fighting was succeeded by a week of relative stability as the Nagy government sought a compromise acceptable to both the revolutionary forces and Moscow. All this took only 13 days – and then came, as mentioned, the massive invasion and repression. During the initial stage, neither the ICRC headquarters in Geneva nor the delegates in the field had the time or the means to see clearly what was going on, much less enlist the aid of the authorities. A delegate from Geneva, for example, could hardly rely on the promises of a Hungarian diplomat who had served the Communist government before the revolution but rallied to the Nagy government – only to turn his coat again the next day. And how could relief supplies be forwarded and prisoners protected without the consent of this Soviet commander or that local revolutionary leader? Imre Nagy's position also seems to have been a major problem for the heads of the ICRC. His name appeared very rarely in updated documents, and there is no evidence that the organization approached his government. The ICRC may have considered him insignificant, or thought of his government as a sort of interlude between the main acts, a

temporary stopgap that would soon collapse. All we can ascertain now is that the Geneva organization approached the Soviet authorities – in particular Dimitri Chepilov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs – and, naturally, the Hungarian Red Cross, but did not try to obtain assistance from the revolutionary government of Budapest.

The incidents described in this book plunge the reader into the heart of a labyrinth that the author has managed to map out with the help of ICRC archival material. She has gone still further, however, in her efforts to shed light on the decision-making process. The Geneva Committee faced two major dilemmas, one of them being to determine the very nature of the conflict. As noted in several sources cited in this book, including a shrewd note by René-Jean Wilhelm, the Hungarian affair bore some of the hallmarks of an international conflict, but “the hostilities in Hungary called rather for the application of Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, an article that is valid for non-international conflicts”. In fact, writes Ms. Vonèche Cardia, the ICRC considered that the implementation of this article would serve to guarantee that a certain minimum of humanitarian principles was respected, making an exact legal definition of the conflict unnecessary for the time being but keeping such an option open for the future.

This policy – or rather this absence of any decision as to the nature of the conflict – was probably wise, under the circumstances. There would have been no advantage in poisoning the ICRC’s relations with the Soviets, who could not very well admit to a state of war with socialist Hungary, their friend and ally. On the contrary, the ICRC’s attitude “reflected its desire to maintain friendly contacts with the USSR”, writes Ms. Vonèche Cardia. “The Hungarian action was conducted with extreme caution to avoid compromising future operations in the Communist camp”.

The ICRC showed the same caution in facing its second major dilemma when, after the brief revolution had been crushed, János Kádár’s government began to carry out mass arrests, political trials, and executions. During those years of repression, the ICRC remained true to its mission, making every effort to carry out various operations. In particular, it sought authorization to visit prisoners, but never obtained it except in the case of one or two essentially uncontroversial visits. Notably, there is no sign that any attempt was made to ascertain the fates of the most prominent political prisoners, namely Imre Nagy and his codefendants, who were initially deported to Romania, and later imprisoned, tried, convicted, and executed in Budapest. This book shows very clearly that János Kádár’s government was happy to accept the food

and other material assistance sent in from the West, but kept the doors of the prisons locked.

After a year of unavailing efforts that foundered on the duplicity of the Hungarian authorities, the ICRC had to admit failure at last, and on 3 October 1957 it decided to cease its endeavours. Nonetheless, the present study cites accusations that the ICRC was not firm enough, a criticism that has been made notably by the ICRC's own collaborators. Isabelle Vonèche Cardia attributes the ICRC's timid approach primarily to its fear of a world conflict that would be more dangerous than the Hungarian insurrection. Judicious though this reasoning undoubtedly was, at the time the jails were filled to bursting with young insurgents, including minors, awaiting trial, sentencing, and execution – not to mention the Prime Minister, two other members of the lawful government of 1956, and two journalists, who would mount the scaffold on 16 June 1958.

Nonetheless, the ICRC seems to have been justified in ceasing its efforts in the sphere of deportations, since it lacked exact information. Concern about the fate of 100 or 200 students forced across the Hungarian border onto Soviet territory was set at rest by their return, and to date there has been no report of any insurgent prevented from returning home.

The publication of this meticulous, scrupulous work on the merits and flaws of the ICRC action must be saluted. With respect to the flaws, an episode recounted in the book shows that the errors committed were attributable to the ICRC's inexperience – even ignorance – rather than to any failure in its principles and duties. Applying to Moscow for the facilities it needed for its action in Hungary, the ICRC received the brusque reply: ask Budapest. Even in 1956, there were things that Geneva headquarters might have known. Or that someone could have made a telephone call or two to find out...

Miklós MOLNÁR

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FOREWORD

The aim of this book is not only to chronicle the action conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the course of the 1956 Hungarian revolution, but also to explain why this organization was authorized to work in the Eastern bloc. To answer this question, the book focuses first on the relations between the ICRC and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) before the events of 1956, and then on the relations between the USSR and Hungary. It then goes on to describe the ICRC's action in Hungary in chronological order, distinguishing between three different phases of the operation: the ICRC's operations during the insurrection, the establishment of delegations in Vienna and Budapest, and the period of the temporary missions that were organized after the permanent delegations were closed.

This study covers an entire decade (1952-1962) in order to situate the ICRC's action in its context. The year 1952 revealed a good deal about the state of relations between the ICRC and the USSR. That was the year of the 18th International Conference of the Red Cross, at which the Soviet Union displayed real hostility towards the ICRC. I have pursued my analysis up to 1962 so as to cover most of the ICRC operation in Hungary—which continued into the 1960s and even longer—as well as the Cuban crisis, in which the ICRC mediated between the USSR and the United States.

The book is based on an analysis of documents in the ICRC archives. The main dossiers to which I had access were those pertaining to the missions, which contained the reports submitted by the delegates in Budapest and Vienna, documents relating to the ICRC action in the field, and minutes of meetings between the various people involved. These dossiers provide a sound basis for reconstruction of the ICRC action. However, since the ICRC was working under pressure, the documents in the archives do not always give a precise account of the decisions made and the challenges confronted by the organization; and, moreover, certain documents are not accessible to researchers. Consequently, the study of the ICRC's action in Hungary from 1952 to 1962 has yet to be completed.

INTRODUCTION

On 23 October 1956, several thousand students assembled in Petöfi Square in Budapest, where a crowd quickly joined them. The demonstrators all gathered around the parliament building and demanded to talk to Imre Nagy, the former Council President who had been removed from power in 1955. That evening Imre Nagy finally spoke, but his speech did not satisfy the demonstrators' expectations; he merely enjoined caution. Then the First Secretary of the Party, Ernő Gerő, addressed the Hungarian people over the radio. In his speech, he could not praise the USSR enough, and condemned those who wanted "to set proletarian internationalism and Hungarian patriotism against each other".¹ The transmission of these words unleashed an uproar; demonstrators tried to storm the radio broadcasting building, and the first shots were fired there. Stalin's statue was joyfully pulled down as gun battles raged around the city. This armed riot was completely spontaneous, improvised by young people who met up and formed groups in the heat of the action. During the night, the Hungarian leaders finally decided to install Imre Nagy as the head of the government, but it was too late; the insurrection was under way. To re-establish order, they called in Soviet tanks, which sought to control the streets of the capital by force.

For one turbulent week, Imre Nagy tried to do the impossible: reconcile the demands of the rebelling people with Soviet pressure. In the end he decided to go with the Hungarians, and proclaimed Hungary's neutrality and its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. On 4 November 1956, Moscow answered this unacceptable move with force: Soviet tanks invaded the country and broke the armed resistance in one week. Order had been re-established.

In his last speech, Imre Nagy pronounced these words: "At daybreak, Soviet forces started an attack against our capital, obviously with the intention to overthrow the legal Hungarian democratic government. Our troops are fighting. The government is in its place. I notify the people of

¹ André Fontaine, *History of the Cold War*, Vol. 2, *From the Korean War to the Present*, trans. Renaud Bruce (London: Secker & Warburg, 1970), p. 215.

our country and the entire world of this fact”.² Up to the last minute Imre Nagy and his supporters beseeched the outside world to come to their aid, but their pleas went unheeded except for a few symbolic gestures intended to salve the consciences of Western governments and international organizations aware of their own impotence. Eisenhower wrote to Bulganin, the Soviet premier, asking him to withdraw his troops. The United Nations Security Council, to which Imre Nagy had already appealed during the uprising, held an emergency meeting on 4 November and voted nine to one for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Since the single vote against it was that of the USSR – which amounted to a veto – the Security Council could do no more than issue a moral condemnation of the Soviet intervention.

Although the Hungarians’ appeals fell on deaf ears in the political world, humanitarian bodies were more responsive. On 27 October 1956, only four days after the uprising had begun, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was already in Hungary. Answering an appeal from the Hungarian Red Cross, it had embarked on its biggest relief action of the decade.³

The ICRC was the relief organization of choice for a number of reasons. First, it was the only such body authorized to enter Hungary. All the UN’s attempts to intervene met with failure. The UN special commission established to investigate events in Hungary was denied entry to the country, and, despite his requests, so was the UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld. Consequently, the United Nations relied on the ICRC to assist the Hungarian people. Dag Hammarskjöld declared in July 1957, while visiting the ICRC headquarters: “No public tribute on my part [...] could adequately express the debt of gratitude which innumerable persons, in particular the victims of the events in Hungary and the Middle East, owe to the Red Cross for the services it has rendered during the past months with such competence and devotion to duty”.⁴

Second, the ICRC was the sole organization authorized to intervene in Hungary because it had always acted in the international sphere and addressed only problems engendered by armed conflicts, its main tasks being to protect and assist the military and civilian victims of those

² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

³ The ICRC was created in 1863 at the initiative of Henry Dunant. Its history and modes of operating are reviewed in Annex I.

⁴ “Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld at the ICRC Headquarters”, ICRC Press Release No. 615b, 10 July 1957.

conflicts.⁵ The ICRC's protective activities were intended to preserve those victims from the dangers, sufferings, and abuses of power to which they might be exposed in the hands of an adverse authority or enemy group or when, as refugees, they were completely dependent on the will of a host country not party to the conflict. Assistance consisted in conveying and distributing all material aid intended for conflict victims. These activities were fundamentally tied to the role of neutral intermediary conferred on the ICRC by the Geneva Conventions, the Statutes of the International Red Cross, and the resolutions of International Red Cross Conferences.⁶ Although the ICRC was the neutral intermediary between belligerents, it did not act alone. As part of the International Red Cross, it was obliged not only to respect all the decisions made by the authority superior to it (the International Conference), but also to cooperate with the other components of the movement, namely the League of Red Cross Societies (today's Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) and the National Societies themselves.⁷

Finally, the ICRC was able to intervene in Hungary by virtue of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, ratified by the USSR on 10 May 1954 and by Hungary on 3 August of the same year. Its action was restricted, however, by the fact that the Conventions are generally applicable only to international armed conflicts, whereas at the time in question the events of 1956 were classified as internal affairs of the Eastern bloc.⁸

⁵ Paragraphs 4 to 6 of Article VI of the Statutes of the International Red Cross provided a precise description of the role of the ICRC:

- "4. It undertakes the tasks incumbent on it under the Geneva Conventions, works for the faithful application of these Conventions and takes cognizance of complaints regarding alleged breaches of the humanitarian Conventions.
5. As a neutral institution whose humanitarian work is carried out particularly in time of war, civil war, or internal strife, it endeavours at all times to ensure the protection of and assistance to military and civilian victims of such conflicts and of their direct results. It contributes to the preparation and development of medical personnel and medical equipment, in co-operation with the Red Cross organizations, the medical services of the armed forces, and other competent authorities.
6. It takes any humanitarian initiative which comes within its role as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary and considers any question requiring examination by such an institution". ICRC/League of Red Cross Societies, *Handbook of the International Red Cross*, 11th ed. (Geneva, 1971), p. 276.

⁶ Jacques Moreillon, "Red Cross Assistance and Protection", *International Review of the Red Cross* 224 (Sept.-Oct. 1981): 264-268.

⁷ On the relations between the different components of the International Red Cross, see Annex II. On the National Red Cross Societies and the League of Red Cross Societies, see Annexes IV and V.

⁸ The problem of the applicability of the Geneva Conventions to the Hungarian conflict is discussed in Annex III.

Even where the ICRC is entitled to intervene, the country involved can always refuse to accept its assistance. In this case, however, the Hungarian Red Cross in fact applied to the ICRC, with the tacit consent of the Soviet invader. The interesting question here is why Moscow authorized the ICRC to enter its sphere of influence, when it had shown considerable hostility towards the organization since 1945. To answer this, we will have to review the relations between the ICRC and the USSR since 1917, examine the relations between Hungary and Moscow, and, finally, analyse the impact of the ICRC action in 1956.

CHAPTER I

**RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ICRC
AND THE USSR
1918-1956**

1. THE ICRC AND THE USSR, 1918-1945

Relations between the ICRC and the USSR were established soon after the October Revolution. In May 1918, the ICRC appointed Edouard Frick as its delegate in Russia. A few weeks later, on the basis of a proposal drafted by this delegate,⁹ a decree of the Council of People's Commissars was adopted and signed by Lenin. In this decree, dated 30 May 1918,¹⁰ the Soviet government "informs the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva and all the governments which have acceded to the Geneva Convention that this Convention, in all its initial and later versions, as well as all the other international conventions and agreements relating to the Red Cross and recognized by Russia before October 1917, are recognized and will be respected by the Russian Soviet Government which retains all the rights and prerogatives ensuing from these conventions and agreements".¹¹

On 7 August 1918, the Council of People's Commissars also announced "the uninterrupted continuation of the activity of the Russian Red Cross Society".¹²

⁹ For more information about relations between the ICRC and the USSR during this period, see François Bugnion, *Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et la protection des victimes de la guerre* (Geneva: ICRC, 1994), pp. 286-295. English translation in preparation.

¹⁰ Sources differ as to the date of this decree. The date of 2 June 1918 is cited in André Durand, *History of the International Committee of the Red Cross: From Sarajevo to Hiroshima* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1984), p. 100. However, we find 30 May 1918 in I. P. Blishchenko and V. A. Grin, *International Humanitarian Law and the Red Cross* (Moscow: Executive Committee of the Order of Lenin Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, 1983), p. 25.

¹¹ Blishchenko and Grin, p. 25.

¹² Durand, p. 102.

For its part, in 1921 the ICRC recognized the existence and operation of the Soviet Red Cross, but insisted that genuinely active ties be established. In October of that year, the ICRC established a delegation in Moscow and sent Voldemar Wehrlin there as a delegate. He remained in the Soviet Union until 1938. During those years, relations between the ICRC and the USSR were fairly good. Voldemar Wehrlin seemed satisfied with the work his delegation was doing: "Thanks to the prestige of the International Committee, such a mission has been able to work for 17 years in the USSR without deviating in the slightest from the guiding principles of the Committee's existence, namely, the total independence and impartiality of humanitarian activities".¹³

The Soviets, however, did not share Wehrlin's optimism. Although they tolerated the presence and activities of an ICRC delegate on their territory, they remained mistrustful of him. As one official remarked, "Here we consider Europe's humanitarian organizations as institutions of a single class – the bourgeoisie – that want to worm their way in everywhere to find out what is not going well for the Communists".¹⁴ This having been the case from the beginning, the Soviet attitude towards humanitarian organizations does not appear to have been the reason for the ICRC's departure in 1938. Although during his last year in the Soviet Union Voldemar Wehrlin received only temporary residence permits good for 10 to 15 days from the Soviet authorities, it was neither that sort of annoyance nor the Soviets' perception of the ICRC that compelled the organization to leave. The ICRC recalled its delegate on its own initiative,¹⁵ to the great regret of Wehrlin himself: "The USSR is a huge world in itself, and never in history has a country been so cut off. This situation, I feel, makes it highly desirable for a Red Cross delegation to be there, so that the outside world is represented within the Soviet Union, not only by the diplomatic missions pursuing national aims, but also by those of international humanitarian work so ably represented by your Committee".¹⁶

According to André Durand, the ICRC closed its delegation in 1938 because it had found itself called upon to perform, as a major part of its activities in the USSR, duties normally assumed by a consular office, while

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁴ Jacques Moreillon, *Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et la protection des détenus politiques* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute and Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1973), p. 71.

¹⁵ On this point, opinions differ: "It is with regret that the International Committee terminates this mission, the Soviet authorities having refused to renew its delegate's visa". Bugnion, p. 1158.

¹⁶ Durand, p. 236.

at the same time it was forbidden to carry out its own traditional tasks.¹⁷ Moreover, at the time the ICRC did not think of maintaining any permanent delegations except in conflict zones or areas suffering from particularly severe circumstances, so the fact that the ICRC had maintained a delegation for so long in the USSR was already unusual. Nonetheless, in November 1938, as war threatened, the ICRC again requested a visa for its delegate; but war broke out before it received a response.¹⁸

The main problem the ICRC faced in its relations with the USSR during World War II was the issue of prisoners of war. Since the USSR had not ratified the 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War,¹⁹ the ICRC could not legally intervene on behalf of either Soviet prisoners in enemy hands or prisoners detained by the Soviets. Thus, in terms of legal obligations, the ICRC had a perfect right to wash its hands of this category of persons. Instead, however, it decided to offer its services to all the belligerents regardless of whether or not they had ratified the Conventions. In order to perform its functions satisfactorily, in 1941 the ICRC requested permission to set up a mission in Moscow, but the Soviet government took no action. Instead, it informed the ICRC, through the intermediary of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, that "The Soviet Government is ready to accept the proposal of the ICRC concerning the despatch of particulars about prisoners of war, if such indications are forwarded by the countries at war with the USSR".²⁰ Even if the lack of a delegation in the USSR prevented it from making direct arrangements for assisting prisoners of war, the ICRC continued to hope that the belligerents might be brought to some sort of agreement. Yet despite numerous applications to the powers concerned, the ICRC did not manage to find any common ground. From 1944 on, hope was well and truly lost, since the Soviet government no longer allowed the representatives of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR to maintain official relations with the ICRC. Only informal contacts were possible.²¹

¹⁷ Certain consular duties fell to the lot of the ICRC mission in Moscow because Switzerland had not maintained political and commercial ties with the USSR since 1923. For more information on the reasons for that diplomatic rupture, see *ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁹ The USSR had, in fact, ratified only the 1929 Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field.

²⁰ Telegram from Moscow, 27 June 1941, in *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Its Activities during the Second World War (September 1, 1939-June 30, 1947)*, 4 vol. (Geneva: ICRC, May, 1948), Vol. I: *General Activities*, p. 409.

²¹ For a detailed account of the ICRC's actions in the conflicts of Eastern Europe, see *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Its Activities during the Second World War*, Vol. I, pp. 404-436.

In addition, the USSR and the ICRC were at odds more than once during the war. In 1942, the ICRC called on the belligerents not to prosecute prisoners of war for things they had done before being captured. The Soviets sharply criticized this request, since it was contrary to the policy they intended to follow. When the Katyn mass grave was found in April 1943,²² the USSR completely disapproved of the ICRC's willingness in principle, as long as all the interested parties requested it, to lend its good offices to appoint a commission of enquiry that would be present during the disinterment of the bodies.²³ The ICRC's attitude was openly criticized in the Soviet press. Finally, when Soviet troops arrived in Berlin, they arrested and deported the ICRC delegates stationed there. A few months later Moscow released them without explanation.

These incidents show that during the world conflict relations between the ICRC and the USSR were acrimonious and occasionally explosive, foretoking a difficult future.

2. THE CONFERENCES OF 1948 AND 1949

It was not until 1948, at the 17th International Conference of the Red Cross in Stockholm, that the different organs of the Red Cross world assembled again. This would also have been the first opportunity since the war for the ICRC and the USSR to meet, except that the USSR and its satellites declined the invitation. The reasons given by the Soviet government and the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR were aimed directly at the ICRC.²⁴

²² On 13 April 1943, the German authorities announced that they had discovered, in the Forest of Katyn (near Smolensk, on territory then occupied by the Germans), a mass grave containing the remains of some 10,000 Polish officers murdered by the Soviets in 1940. Moscow immediately retorted that the bodies were of prisoners executed by the Germans during their attack on the USSR. Both the German and Polish governments asked the ICRC to participate in the exhumation operations.

²³ *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Its Activities during the Second World War*, Vol. I, pp. 428-429.

²⁴ Letter from Dr. Chodlokov, Chairman of the Working Committee of the Soviet Union Red Cross and Red Crescent, Moscow, to Count Folke Bernadotte, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the International Red Cross Conference, 15 Aug. 1948 (FO[Foreign Office] 369/3969. K. 9831). See also letter from S. Basarov, Acting Chargé d'Affaires of USSR in Sweden, to Count Folke Bernadotte, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Swedish Red Cross, 17 Aug. 1948 (FO 369/3969. K. 9831), cited in Dominique-D. Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952: The Influence of Institutional Concerns on a Humanitarian Operation* (London: Kegan Paul, 1996), p. 249.

One of the Alliance's complaints about the ICRC was that it "did not protest against the fascist crimes and against the gravest violations of the International Conventions concerning the sick, wounded and prisoners of war committed by Hitler Germany".²⁵ Such a protest, however, would not have accorded with the rules the ICRC had laid down for itself, namely its "refusal to make any pronouncements on alleged violations of the Geneva Conventions, and [its] equally categorical refusal to undertake itself enquiries concerning deeds contravening these conventions or the law of war".²⁶ The Alliance also resented the ICRC on the grounds that it had done nothing since the end of World War II for the people still detained in former Fascist camps and that it had not protested against the "banditry of the Fascist Greek Monarchy" or against the "bloodbaths in Indonesia and Vietnam".²⁷ The Soviet government, for its part, blamed the ICRC for failing to denounce Fascist crimes publicly and for adopting a hostile attitude to the USSR; and since the ICRC was one of the organizers of the International Conference, the Soviets preferred not to attend.

The President of the ICRC, Paul Ruegger, seized the opportunity of the first session of the Conference to respond to these accusations. He asserted that the ICRC was not at all hostile to the Soviets, as evidenced by the efforts it had made since 1946 to establish a dialogue with the Alliance. As for the allegations concerning the ICRC's conduct during World War II, President Ruegger invited those interested to refer to the *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Its Activities during the Second World War*.²⁸

The accusations made against the ICRC, together with the Soviet refusal to attend the International Conference, showed clearly that relations between the ICRC and the USSR were very tense, and the Soviet Union was accordingly expected to stay away from the Diplomatic Conference of 1949 as well. Yet it did attend that conference, and signed the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Although initially this may seem surprising, two factors help account for Soviet participation in the 1949 conference. For one thing, signing the Geneva Conventions was a logical corollary of upholding the humanitarian law from which the USSR

²⁵ Seventeenth International Red Cross Conference, Stockholm, August 1948, *Report* (Stockholm: Swedish Red Cross, 1948), p. 31.

²⁶ Leopold Boissier, "Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et ses interventions dans les conflits politiques", *Annuaire suisse de science politique* 5 (1965): 12.

²⁷ Junod, p. 248.

²⁸ Ruegger's speech, first plenary meeting, 20 Aug. 1948, in Seventeenth International Red Cross Conference, Stockholm, August 1948, *Report*, pp. 25-27.

wanted to benefit. The Soviet Union had in fact signed all the conventions and other agreements of international law previous to 1949, except for the 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.²⁹ Moreover, at the time the Soviets were certain that the "world revolution" was on the right track, and that under the circumstances civil war must inevitably break out in the capitalist world in the form of a proletarian revolution that might bring other States into the USSR's sphere of influence.³⁰ During the conference discussions about Article 3 common to the four Conventions, the only article applicable to internal conflicts, the Soviets insisted very strongly on giving it the broadest interpretation possible.³¹ Thus, signing the 1949 Conventions was in the USSR's national interest, and had nothing to do with the ICRC.

Nonetheless, during the Diplomatic Conference the Soviet Union made certain reservations to the Geneva Conventions. The first one concerned Article 10/10/10/11, common to all four Conventions, which provided for the designation of an impartial humanitarian body to assume, in the absence of a Protecting Power, the functions normally performed by the latter. In its reservation, the Soviet government declared that it would not "recognize the validity of requests by the Detaining Power to a neutral State or to a humanitarian organization, to undertake the functions performed by a Protecting Power, unless the consent of the Government of the country of which the prisoners of war are nationals has been obtained".³²

The second reservation was in respect of Article 85 of the Third Convention (which reads: "Prisoners of war prosecuted under the laws of the Detaining Power for acts committed prior to capture shall retain, even if convicted, the benefits of the present Convention"³³). The USSR declared that it reserved the right to withhold unilaterally the protection of the Geneva Convention from prisoners of war whom it classified as war criminals.³⁴ Through these two reservations, the Soviet Union restricted

²⁹ The USSR also failed to sign the 1927 International Relief Union Convention (the principal aim of which was to provide material assistance to disaster-stricken populations in the signatory countries). See ICRC/LRCS, *Handbook of the International Red Cross*, 10th ed. (Geneva: ICRC/LRCS, 1953), p. 302.

³⁰ Jiri Toman, "La conception soviétique du conflit armé non international", in *Völkerrecht im Dienste des Menschen* (Verlag Paul Haupt, 1986), p. 315.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-335.

³² Claude Pilloud, "Reservations to the Geneva Conventions of 1949", *International Review of the Red Cross* 180 (March 1976): 117.

³³ *The Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949* (Geneva: ICRC, n.d.), p. 111.

³⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the Soviet reservation concerning Article 85, see Bugnion, pp. 716-724.

the ICRC's freedom of action, particularly with regard to the protection of prisoners of war or civilian internees.

Finally, the Soviet government pointed out that according to the 1949 Geneva Conventions "the ICRC may undertake measures relative to the assistance to the wounded and sick and the protection of members of the medical personnel in armed conflict. This activity is, however, performed with the consent of the Parties to the conflict. While mentioning the ICRC, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 do not prefer it to other humanitarian bodies regarding aid to the wounded and sick. As a matter of fact, they only confer on it the right to offer its services to the Parties to the conflict".³⁵

Thus, Soviet participation in the Diplomatic Conference of 1949 in no way improved relations between the USSR and the ICRC. As the historian David Forsythe has remarked, "it is a historical fact that Red Cross protection and assistance in conflict situations has not been widely accepted in the socialist world since 1949".³⁶

3. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ICRC AND THE USSR DURING THE 1950s

During the 1950s, the ICRC and the USSR had two opportunities for contact with each other. In 1950, the President of the ICRC, Paul Ruegger, went to Moscow to visit the President of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR. During his stay, he managed to meet with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko.³⁷

The second encounter took place in 1952, in Toronto, at the International Conference of the Red Cross. During the conference, the Soviet delegation launched numerous attacks against the ICRC on the subject of revising the Statutes of the International Red Cross, particularly Article VI.³⁸ The head of the Soviet delegation, General Nikolai Vassilievitch Slavin, declared that his delegation recognized "neither the Statutes nor the Rules of Procedure incorporating articles which grant the so-called I.C.R.C. the functions and rights of an

³⁵ Blishenko and Grin, p. 22.

³⁶ David P. Forsythe, *Humanitarian Politics: The International Committee of the Red Cross* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 36.

³⁷ The activities report for that year does not record the results of this meeting. See *International Committee of the Red Cross: Report on General Activities (January 1 to December 31, 1950)* (Geneva: ICRC, 1951), p. 26.

³⁸ For the most important clauses of Article VI, see note 5.

international organization. That Committee is not an impartial international organization because it has definitely taken sides. It has become the political instrument of one party and consequently neither has, nor is entitled to have, the legal right to fulfill the provisions of Article VI of the Statutes.[...] These Statutes undermine all possibilities of international co-operation at the organizational level of the Red Cross. They undermine all confidence in the impartiality of the international organization of the Red Cross, which is turned into the tool of one political party".³⁹

The Soviet delegation also accused the ICRC of perpetrating crimes against humanity and of violating the international conventions.⁴⁰ These accusations were unfounded and had no other purpose but to attack the ICRC, since, as Jacques Freymond has noted, a comparative reading of the relevant articles (Articles VII of 1928 and VI of 1952) showed that "the definition of the ICRC and its responsibilities ha[d] hardly changed", though those responsibilities might have been expanded.⁴¹ The draft revision of the Statutes was ultimately adopted by a majority of 70 to 17 (the USSR and its allies constituting the minority).

After the USSR's violent criticisms of the ICRC during the Toronto Conference, relations between the two were apparently broken off, at least to judge from public documents (the ICRC records on this subject are not available). In 1954, the USSR ratified the Geneva Conventions of 1949, but this did not reflect any improvement in its relations with the ICRC. The ICRC and the USSR did not re-establish contact until 1956, in the wake of the events in Hungary.

³⁹ XVIIIth International Red Cross Conference, Toronto, July-August 1952, *Proceedings* (Toronto: Canadian Red Cross Society, 1952), p. 35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴¹ Jacques Freymond, Georges Willemin, and Roger Heacock, *The International Committee of the Red Cross* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1984), pp. 137-138.

CHAPTER II

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USSR AND HUNGARY

1953-1956

An ally of Nazi Germany during World War II, Hungary was liberated by the Red Army in January 1945. From that time on, the presence of Soviet troops linked the country's fate to that of the USSR, and in 1949 it became a People's Democracy. When Stalin died on 5 March 1953, the Soviet leaders sought to keep the communist bloc intact, but they realized that Stalin's policy towards the People's Democracies had been disastrous and that many changes would be necessary. The changes made in Hungary during that period, however, did not alter the country's relationship with the USSR at all. Under cover of a relative degree of liberalization, the USSR continued to exercise complete control over Hungary. This was reflected in the Kremlin infighting over the leadership of the USSR, in the political, economic, and military measures that the Soviet government took with respect to Hungary, and, finally, in the endorsement of these measures and their consequences at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

Following Stalin's death, the leadership of the USSR was assumed by a triumvirate: Georgi Malenkov, the dictator's designated successor, who held the post of Prime Minister; Lavrenti Beria, who retained the position of Chief of Security; and Vyacheslav Molotov, who had been Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1939. Khrushchev replaced Malenkov as Party Secretary, although he had not as yet been officially appointed as such.

This new collective government encompassed various trends. The first, represented by Molotov, was supported by Lazar Kaganovich, and sought to maintain the Stalin model in return for a few concessions. The second group was led by Malenkov and Beria, who favoured a policy of radical economic reforms and a certain liberalization of political life. The third group, headed by Khrushchev, had centrist tendencies, meaning

that it was agreeable to some modification of Stalinist policy, but clearly upheld the primacy of party control.⁴²

Beria was removed from the collective leadership in July 1953 and executed in December of the same year. For two years (1953-1954), Malenkov took the lead in the collective government, embarking on a new policy with respect to the People's Democracies known as "the new course". As a result of internal rivalries focusing on economic policy, Malenkov was forced to resign the premiership in February 1955, but he was not executed. From that time on, Khrushchev, "who at the time of Stalin's death had seemed, like Stalin at the time of Lenin's death, the least impressive of the party leaders, was now clearly the first among them, though by no means yet undisputed autocrat".⁴³ His position weakened temporarily in 1956, following the 20th Congress, but he regained the trust of his peers in the course of 1957.

1. THE VARIOUS MEASURES TAKEN BY THE USSR WITH RESPECT TO HUNGARY

The "new course" applied in all the People's Democracies took the form of various measures: proclaiming amnesties, halting forced collectivization, reducing prices for essential consumer goods, softening repressive policies by curbing the secret police's arbitrary power,⁴⁴ and, finally, compelling governments to institute collective leadership.

The Soviet leaders realized that the economic and social situation in Hungary was particularly difficult. Accordingly, they decided to summon the Hungarian leader, Matyas Rakosi, to Moscow in May 1953. The Soviet rulers asked him to give the Hungarian Communist Party a collective leadership like the one in Moscow, because they considered that the policy implemented in Hungary in recent years was making him too unpopular. Once back in his own country, however, Rakosi ignored Moscow's instructions. He did not resolve the problem of sharing power; in the economic sphere, he opted for a five-year plan that was inspired by the Stalinist model, disregarding the Kremlin's new policy. At this "disobedience", the leaders of the USSR called Rakosi back to Moscow,

⁴² From 1955 on, Khrushchev turned "Malenkovism" to his own advantage. For details, see François Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies: Eastern Europe since Stalin* (Harmondsworth and Ringwood: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), p. 30.

⁴³ Hugh Seton-Watson, *From Lenin to Khrushchev. The History of World Communism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), p. 358.

⁴⁴ Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II: Imperial and Global* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1981), pp. 73-74.

together with his colleagues and his most dogged adversary, Imre Nagy. Moscow ordered Rakosi to adopt "the new course" in both the economic and political spheres, and Rakosi obeyed. First he castigated himself before the Central Committee, on 28 June. Then he resigned the premiership in Imre Nagy's favour, while retaining the post of First Secretary of the Party.

At the beginning of July, Nagy announced new governmental measures, notably a revision of the five-year plan, a halt to excessive industrialization and, instead, a focus on the development of light industry and food production, with increased investments in agriculture. Collectivization was to be moderated and permission would be given for the dissolution of *kolkhozes* (collective farms) at the end of the year if the majority of the members desired it. The new government program also envisioned a certain improvement in the population's standard of living, greater intellectual freedom, and a reduction in police powers.

However, the new Hungarian policy soon proved a failure, for, as the historian François Fejtő has written, "the change-over was too abrupt. Not only were the people psychologically unprepared for reform; the party organization as well was taken by surprise and alarmed. Accustomed to ruling over a terrorized population, the organization was afraid to let go of the reins, fearing the masses might take the concessions as a sign of weakness, and sweep it away".⁴⁵

The failure of the new policy, however, was in fact due more to the forced cooperation between the conservative Matyas Rakosi and the reformist Imre Nagy. Every new measure adopted by Nagy was invariably repudiated by Rakosi, and as a result never effectively implemented. Malenkov's replacement by Khrushchev in 1955 allowed Rakosi to oust Nagy, but it prevented him from simply re-establishing the previous regime, since the Kremlin wanted him to follow all but a few precepts of Nagy's policy.⁴⁶ The Hungarian leader, still opposed to the Kremlin's new policy, made just enough concessions to avoid calling down the wrath of Moscow. That the "new course" was even partially applied in Hungary was due to Soviet pressure. In relations between the USSR and Hungary, everything was decided in Moscow. In this respect, Stalin's successors continued his policy of total domination of the People's Democracies; the methods were different, but the relationship between the two countries remained the same.

⁴⁵ Fejtő, p. 40.

⁴⁶ François Fejtő, *Budapest, l'insurrection. La première révolution anti-totalitaire*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1990), p. 65.

The relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia showed that the USSR also controlled Hungarian foreign policy. June 1953 saw the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia, but it was not really until 1955 that these two countries made friends and "the Yugoslav way" ceased to be considered heretical. This reconciliation was awkward for Rakosi, since he was obliged to abandon the propaganda against Tito that had greased his way to power a few years earlier.

The Kremlin did not, in any case, leave Rakosi a choice; it expected Hungary, together with the other People's Democracies, to espouse its new policy towards Yugoslavia. In a speech delivered in Sofia in 1955, Khrushchev declared that the road lay open to the development of friendly relations between the USSR and the People's Democracies, on one hand, and Yugoslavia, on the other.⁴⁷ Rakosi followed Moscow's policy reluctantly, limiting himself to a recommendation to re-establish normal relations with Yugoslavia. This was one more instance of the persistence of the Stalinist hegemonic policy towards Hungary.

Yet another example of Soviet domination of Hungarian affairs was the international organizations in which the USSR included Hungary, namely the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), known in the West as COMECON. In short, the Soviet Union had simply replaced its former tools of regional domination with institutional ties, thereby establishing a framework for continued, if less blatant, control.⁴⁸

Signed on 14 May 1955 between the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, the Warsaw Pact served a dual political function for the USSR.⁴⁹ It was both a response to the remilitarization of West Germany and its admission to NATO in 1954, and a way of maintaining cohesion in the Eastern bloc. In fact, it served above all to legalize a *de facto* situation, namely the subordination of the armies of the People's Democracies to the Soviet command. Thus, while pretending to establish an equal alliance between the USSR and the People's Democracies, the Warsaw Pact actually subordinated those countries to Moscow. Although it provided for joint command of the armies, a closer look at the structure of the Pact shows that Moscow always played the leading role. Soviet

⁴⁷ Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p. 192.

⁴⁸ André Liebich, "Six States in Search of an Identity", *International Journal* 43 (Winter, 1987-1988): 5-6.

⁴⁹ The other members of the Pact were Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Albania, and the German Democratic Republic.

officers held the most important posts, and the entire military organization was located in the Soviet Ministry of Defence. Moreover, the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Pact, Marshal I.S. Konev, was the Soviet First Deputy Minister of Defence, and the few Eastern European staff officers had very little influence on military planning.⁵⁰

Besides subordinating the armies of the People's Democracies to the Soviet command, the Pact also provided a legal basis for the stationing of Soviet troops in those countries. With respect to Hungary, the peace treaty signed in Paris on 15 September 1947 (proclaiming the end of war between Hungary and the "Allied and Associated Powers") stipulated that all the Allied armed forces had to withdraw from Hungarian territory except for those of the USSR, which reserved the right to keep on Hungarian soil any troops that might be needed to maintain communication lines with the Soviet occupation zone in Austria.⁵¹ Logically, then, the Soviet troops ought to have withdrawn from Hungarian territory after the signature of the Austrian State Treaty on 15 May 1955.⁵² Instead, however, they remained – by virtue of the lawful authorization conferred by the Warsaw Pact, signed one day before the State Treaty with Austria. Thus, the USSR cleverly managed to "transfer" its right to remain on Hungarian territory from one treaty to another.

The presence of Soviet troops was a formidable means of maintaining control over the country. As François Fejtő has noted, "The Soviet leaders, on the whole, showed foresight. Having agreed to relax their relations with the People's Democracies by restoring certain formal attributes of independence and sovereignty, they wrote into the pact a pledge of 'mutual fraternal aid'".⁵³ The USSR would use this pledge in 1956 to justify its armed intervention during the Hungarian revolution. The Warsaw Pact was thus an instrument designed to preserve Soviet interests in the region more than it was a true military alliance.

The second multilateral undertaking to which Hungary adhered was the CMEA. Created in 1949 by Stalin, it did not play any major economic role at the time, being nothing more than a political response to the

⁵⁰ David Holloway and Jane M.O. Sharp, eds., *The Warsaw Pact: Alliance in Transition?* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 44.

⁵¹ UN, "Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary", *General Assembly Official Records*, Eleventh session, Supplement 18 (A/3592), New York, 1957, p. 49.

⁵² The State Treaty re-established Austria as an independent State within its 1938 borders.

⁵³ François Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies*, pp. 62-63.

Marshall Plan.⁵⁴ At the time the USSR was busy rebuilding its own economy, and its economic relations with the People's Democracies were limited to exploiting their resources.⁵⁵ In 1954, however, the Soviet leaders decided to revive the CMEA. Between 1954 and 1957, the association enjoyed a new vitality, but it was not until 1959 that its statutes were adopted. The economic ties that the USSR established with these countries in fact represented a means of maintaining the existing system of military security and political subordination more than they did any real search for common economic interests.⁵⁶

The CMEA and the Warsaw Pact served to keep Hungary and the other People's Democracies dependent on the USSR. They were the pillars on which a new regional identity could be built. They also permitted the creation of "an association of sovereign Soviet allies tied by common defence interests, by common economic concerns, and by a common ideology".⁵⁷

2. THE 20TH CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE USSR

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), which met in Moscow for the week of 17-24 February 1956, affirmed the new policy followed by the USSR since the death of Stalin. In the Central Committee's official report, the USSR ratified several points of the "new course", but only those concerning Hungary will be discussed here. The report also endorsed the principle of socialist pluralism – that is, the right of each Communist country to chart its own course towards socialism in accordance with its own historical, economic, and social conditions. In quoting a passage from Lenin's *Works*, "All nations will arrive at socialism – this is inevitable, but not all will do so in exactly the same way",⁵⁸ the Soviet leaders legitimized the national path of Yugoslav Communism. Surprisingly enough, however, the example the report cited was not Yugoslavia, but rather the People's Democracies: "In Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and the other European People's Democracies, this form sprang up and is being utilized

⁵⁴ Sarah M. Terry, ed., *Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 15.

⁵⁵ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Le grand frère. L'Union soviétique et l'Europe soviétisée* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), p. 302.

⁵⁶ Terry, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Liebich, p. 6.

⁵⁸ *Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 20th Party Congress* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), p. 43.

in conformity with the concrete historical, social and economic conditions, and peculiarities of each of these countries".⁵⁹

This new outlook must be understood as an expression of the Soviet leaders' desire to legitimize the hybrid situation prevailing within the Communist bloc. On one hand, Moscow had to show some tact in its handling of Yugoslavia, by offering official recognition in the 20th Congress of the possibility of alternative roads to socialism. On the other hand, it had to prevent the People's Democracies from following the Yugoslav example – that is, it had to keep them under Soviet control. This dichotomy did not escape the leaders of the People's Democracies. "Referring to the 'ideas of the Twentieth Congress', Gomulki and Nagyists in particular accused their governments of submitting to the Kremlin and automatically adopting the Soviet model".⁶⁰

The "secret speech" Khrushchev made at this Congress put Stalin on trial for the first time. In it, Khrushchev denounced the atrocities Stalin had perpetrated. He denounced the fabricated trials, the liquidation of the leadership of the Polish Communist Party in 1938, the massacres and mass deportations of certain nationalities (among others, the Kalmyks and the Chechnians), the murder of innocent Communists and most of the senior officers of the Red Army, and other crimes. In particular, however, he condemned Stalin's "personality cult", and stigmatized the *Short Biography* of Stalin: "This book is an expression of the most dissolute flattery, an example of making a man into a godhead, of transforming him into an infallible sage, 'the greatest leader', 'sublime strategist of all times and nations'. Finally no other words could be found with which to lift Stalin up to the heavens".⁶¹ This speech attributed all the acts it denounced to Stalin, not to the Party. *Pravda*, the Party organ, remarked that: "The personality cult is a superficial abscess on a perfectly healthy organism", indicating that it was indeed Stalin, not Stalinism, that was on trial.⁶²

3. THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

Reactions to the 20th Congress were very diverse in the various People's Democracies. In Poland the response was quite violent, culminating in the Poznan riots in June 1956, but in October of the same

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies*, p. 68.

⁶¹ Branko Lazitch, *Le rapport Krouchtchev et son histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), pp. 132-133.

⁶² Pierre Berstein and Serge Milza, *Histoire du vingtième siècle. De 1953 à nos jours. La croissance et la crise* (Paris: Hatier, 1987), p. 240.

year the Poles obtained what they had been demanding. The Hungarians watched events in Poland with great interest, and their goal that October was to achieve the same things that the Poles had—namely, the definitive rejection of Stalinism, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, a greater democratization of political life, a promise to put the economy back in order, and some degree of independence.⁶³ All these new measures, of course, were to be applied within the framework of the socialist order.⁶⁴ This, then, was what the Hungarian intellectuals of the Petöfi circle had in mind for their country.

During this period, however, a certain unrest developed among the students, who drew up a much more radical 16-point programme that included the organization of general competitive elections with universal suffrage by secret ballot. On 23 October 1956, the students marched in the capital, where crowds of citizens soon flocked to join them. The demonstration degenerated into violence and the panic-stricken Hungarian government asked the Soviet army to reimpose order.

Once calm had been restored, the government announced concessions. Imre Nagy, who had been removed from power in 1955, was reinstated in the Party and appointed Prime Minister. It was too late, though; the Hungarian government had lost the trust of the people, who could not forgive it for calling in the Soviets. The party apparatus fell to pieces, leaving Nagy without the administrative structures necessary to implement his decisions, and he was gradually drawn to accept the revolutionary positions adopted by the people. From the national, limited communism of the Petöfi circle, he moved to a revolutionary opposition that made demands unacceptable to Moscow. Hungary had gone too far in the de-Stalinization process, calling for the re-establishment of political pluralism, a declaration of neutral status—implying a withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact—and other measures.

Moscow's first reaction to these developments was to play for time by acknowledging past errors and offering a few concessions. On 30 October, the Kremlin published a statement expressing its willingness to "review its economic relations with the People's Democracies, to negotiate the presence of Soviet troops and advisers in various spheres".⁶⁵ But these measures came too late; Hungarian demands far exceeded Soviet concessions. The impossibility of consensus and the unacceptability, in

⁶³ The best works on the Hungarian Revolution are listed in the bibliography of this book.

⁶⁴ Fejtő, *Budapest, l'insurrection*, p. 27.

⁶⁵ Jacques Lévesque, *L'URSS et sa politique internationale de Lénine à Gorbatchev* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980), p. 181.

Soviet eyes, of Hungarian demands decided Moscow to put down the revolutionary movement by force.

On 4 November 1956, the Red Army intervened and crushed the insurrection, leaving 2,700 dead and more than 20,000 wounded.⁶⁶ The Soviets could legally justify this second military intervention on the basis of the Warsaw Pact, which, as the Soviet delegate to the UN Security Council explained, authorized the USSR "to protect Hungary against subversion".⁶⁷ Thus, the Soviet interpretation of events in Hungary was that the whole affair was a counter-revolution that had been quelled with the help of certain members of the Warsaw Pact.

The Hungarian experience showed clearly the limits that the People's Democracies could not cross without precipitating an incursion of Soviet tanks. The USSR was ready to offer the People's Democracies a longer leash, but under no circumstances to take it off altogether. Consequently, the new regime installed in Hungary after the events of 1956 remained very strongly tied to Moscow. Under the protection of the Soviet army, the Hungarian leader János Kádár gradually rebuilt the base of the system: the Communist Party. The demands of 1956 were buried.

The text of the joint statement issued by all the Communist parties in power – except for the Yugoslav party – during the international conference of Communist parties in November 1957 showed clearly the new line the Communist bloc intended to adopt. This statement proclaimed the USSR's leading role in the socialist camp and condemned revisionism. Under pressure from the Chinese Communists and leaders of some of the People's Democracies (such as Czechoslovakia), Moscow "consented" to backtrack; the new openness glimpsed at the 20th Congress was abolished. The joint statement revealed the limits of the changes that the USSR was willing to accept. It was retreating in order to ensure its control of the bloc.

It is unlikely, however, that the Hungarian Revolution and the fear it aroused in sister parties were the reasons for the USSR's about-face at the 1957 conference. The Soviet policy from 1953 to 1956 had not, in fact, produced the results anticipated. The Soviet leaders simply wanted to calm the tensions in the bloc in order to maintain unity. Their main concern was to determine what degree of decentralization would allow

⁶⁶ ICRC, *Report on the Relief Action in Hungary, October 1956-June 1957* (Geneva: ICRC, 1957), p. 15.

⁶⁷ Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies*, p. 121.

them to maintain effective control while keeping order within the bloc.⁶⁸ It did not occur to them that their new policy might be misunderstood by certain People's Democracies. Consequently, when matters came to a head in Hungary, the USSR intervened to make the "readjustments" that it thought necessary for the pursuit of its goals.

Although Moscow managed to make these "readjustments", the historian Miklós Molnár insists that the Hungarian revolution must not be regarded as a defeat:

"The Hungarian revolution is, despite its failure, worth far more than would have been a victory without a revolution. It became an event not because of the concrete facts gained by revolution, but by the very fact of the revolution itself, the very fact that for the first time since 1917 a people had rebelled. For Hungary, at any rate, that is what counts, and will still be of greater importance than its ephemeral revolutionary institutions and 150 hours of independence. In 1956 she came back into history...."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Charles Gati, *The Bloc that Failed. Soviet-East European Relations in Transition* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), p. 35.

⁶⁹ Miklós Molnár, *Budapest 1956: A History of the Hungarian Revolution* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971), p. 268.

CHAPTER III

THE ICRC'S FIRST STEPS IN HUNGARY (27 OCTOBER–11 NOVEMBER 1956)

On 27 October 1956, four days after the revolution began, the large number of casualties engendered by the fighting prompted the Hungarian Red Cross to send the ICRC an appeal for blood plasma, blood transfusion equipment, and bandages. On the same day the ICRC sent the supplies requested and a delegate, Herbert-Georges Beckh, to Vienna.⁷⁰ Thus began the first phase of the ICRC relief action in Hungary, which extended from 27 October to 11 November 1956 and encompassed three kinds of activity. The first consisted in aiding the victims of the conflict and providing them with food and medical supplies; the second aimed at protecting the victims by issuing appeals and trying to visit detainees; and the third involved responding to requests for information concerning refugees.

1. ASSISTANCE

On 28 October, the ICRC learned from the Hungarian Red Cross that a Swiss plane could be landed at the Ferihegyi civilian airfield in Budapest. It immediately launched an emergency appeal to 26 National Societies for blood plasma, medicine, and food supplies, and then made the necessary arrangements with the Swiss federal authorities and the Swiss Red Cross to charter an airplane.

The following day, the ICRC plane, escorted by two Hungarian planes also loaded with relief supplies, landed at Ferihegyi airport.⁷¹ It was the first Western plane to arrive in Budapest.⁷² The two delegates on board handed over the relief supplies to members of the Hungarian Red Cross and drew up a preliminary list of the Budapest population's needs,

⁷⁰ ICRC, *Report on the Relief Action in Hungary*, p. 5.

⁷¹ ICRC, *Annual Report 1956* (Geneva: ICRC, 1957), p. 6.

⁷² "Rapports présentés en séance plénière par M. Gallopin le 1er novembre 1956", Archives of the ICRC (hereafter AICRC), dossier 251(65), I.2.

using information collected on the spot. The Swiss and Hungarian planes then left to pick up more supplies in Vienna, which they transported back to Budapest. This airlift functioned satisfactorily, and by 30 October Budapest's requirements for medical supplies and blood plasma seemed to have been covered. Still needed, however, were the means to satisfy the great demand for food, medical supplies, and hospital equipment throughout the country.

In the meantime, relief supplies flowed uninterruptedly into Vienna. The National Societies of 21 countries, responding to the ICRC appeal, announced that they were dispatching food supplies and medicine. The value of the aid received came to approximately 1.2 million Swiss francs, and additional shipments worth SFR 1.5 million had already been pledged.⁷³ In the face of this constant influx into Vienna of donations that had to be rerouted to Hungary, the ICRC was no longer capable of managing the distribution operation. Since one of the delegates in Hungary had left Budapest for the Győr region in order to expand the ICRC action to the province, the organization now had only one delegate in the capital, and he could not possibly manage the distribution of aid by himself. Under these circumstances, the Executive Director, who was directing operations from Geneva, decided to establish permanent delegations in Vienna and Budapest. To begin with, he sent three new delegates to Vienna: Jean de Preux, Charles Amman, and Ernest Meyer. Thus, the ICRC began to mobilize increasing numbers of people so that it could carry out its activities in Hungary more effectively, but the nature of the events there made it difficult to foresee the magnitude of the action that would be required.

On the evening of 31 October, the ICRC plane had to turn back because the Budapest airport was surrounded by Russian tanks and authorization to land was refused. According to delegate Charles Amman, "the purpose of the occupation of the Budapest airfield was apparently to permit the evacuation of certain important figures of the regime".⁷⁴ Another possibility, however, was that it was due to the fact that the rebels had attacked the airfield the night before⁷⁵ in an effort to lay hold of relief supplies.

⁷³ The donor countries were: Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, East Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, and West Germany. See "Red Cross Action in Hungary", ICRC Press Release No. 524b, 29 Oct. 1956.

⁷⁴ "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre M. Amman et M. Gallopin du 1er novembre 1956", AICRC, 200(65) Hongrie 1951-1960, I.3, P.V, d'entretiens.

⁷⁵ "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre M. Amman et M. Gallopin du 30 octobre 1956", AICRC, 200(65) Hongrie 1951-1960, Généralités.

The ICRC was not deterred by this initial stumbling block. It continued to distribute aid at the Austro-Hungarian border, and beginning on 1 November relief convoys from various National Red Cross Societies, furnished with a safe-conduct from the ICRC, arrived in Budapest. A food convoy sent by the Austrian Red Cross and accompanied by an ICRC delegate also crossed the border and managed to return to Vienna the same night. To ensure its delegates' safety, the ICRC sent a memorandum to the Soviet authorities as well as to all the civil and military authorities in Hungary, asking them to facilitate its humanitarian action and to guarantee the safety of the persons and property engaged in that enterprise. The work of organizing the dispatch of aid by land began. The ICRC, working together with the League of Red Cross Societies, decided an agreement was needed to demarcate their respective responsibilities. On 2 November the two organizations signed an accord stipulating that the League would be responsible for the reception and coordination in Vienna of the supplies sent by the National Societies, while the ICRC would forward them to Hungary and distribute them with the assistance of the Hungarian Red Cross.⁷⁶ Bonabès de Rougé of the League was in charge of distributing the gift supplies among the refugees and civilian population of Hungary. The donations from the National Societies were not immediately distributed, but apportioned as needed.⁷⁷

From 4 November, when Soviet tanks intervened for the second time, the borders were closed. As a result, the ICRC convoys were no longer authorized to pass, and the ICRC had no news of its delegates. The delegates themselves, although unable to receive instructions from Geneva, continued their mission as best they could, but the situation was very confused. Jean de Preux and Melchior Borsinger (who was coordinating the action from Geneva) did not know who was in power in Hungary, and consequently did not know with whom to negotiate. Acknowledging themselves to be powerless, they went so far as to suggest a mission by the ICRC President to Moscow.⁷⁸ All the same, they did manage to establish contact with an officer of the Russian command

⁷⁶ For the text of this agreement, see Annex VI.

⁷⁷ "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre MM. Gallopin, Michel et Siordet du 20 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, Questions générales.

⁷⁸ "No one knows who and where command is stop consequently no party to negotiate. In this situation Geneva delegates powerless stop Preux's opinion: presidential mission to Moscow" [translation: MG]. "Telegramme de MM de Preux et Bovey pour le CICR à Genève du 7 novembre 1956", AICRC, 200(65) Hongrie 1951-1960.

post, from whom they requested a temporary cease-fire and authorization for the ICRC convoys stranded at the border to enter the country and then return to Vienna afterwards.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, ICRC headquarters in Geneva contacted the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR requesting news of its delegates and reiterating its plea that the Alliance facilitate their mission.⁸⁰

When the organized resistance ceased throughout Hungarian territory between 10 and 11 November,⁸¹ the ICRC convoys were once again permitted to enter the country. After long negotiations at the border post of Sopron, the first convoy arrived in Budapest on 11 November. From then on, the ICRC's white trucks travelled the Vienna-Budapest road regularly.

The course of the relief action was thus closely linked to the political events that were rocking the country. The Hungarian and Soviet authorities accepted the ICRC's presence except at crucial moments of the uprising and the repression that followed it.

2. PROTECTION

During the revolution, both the ICRC headquarters and the delegates in the field took steps to protect the victims of the conflict. Beginning on 30 October, senior officials in Geneva wondered if the ICRC ought to issue a formal appeal to the belligerent forces to respect the rules of humanity embodied in the Geneva Conventions. The Executive Director, Roger Gallopin, consulted the delegates in Hungary. René Bovey, in Budapest, felt it was not worth the trouble in the current situation. Herbert-Georges Beckh, who was in the provinces at the time, believed, on the contrary, that an appeal was necessary, for the fate of prisoners gave cause for concern; apparently, on 29 October the Communist troops had shot 120 people, while everyone the insurgents captured was immediately hanged.⁸² Finally, on 31 October, the ICRC broadcast this appeal:

“At a time when the International Committee of the Red Cross, in conjunction with the principal National Red Cross Societies, is

⁷⁹ “Rapport de M. de Preux à Vienne et Budapest”, AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

⁸⁰ “Procès-verbal de téléphone entre D.P.F. et M. Borsinger du 5 novembre 1956”, AICRC, 251(65), I.1.

⁸¹ “Les événements de Hongrie et l'application des Conventions de Genève”, AICRC, 200(65) Hongrie 1951-1960.

⁸² “Procès-verbal de téléphone entre M. Amman et M. Gallopin du 30 octobre 1956”, AICRC, 200(65) Hongrie 1951-1960.

endeavouring to give Hungary, so sorely tried, the charitable aid the country requires, it wishes to recall several fundamental principles contained in the Geneva Conventions by which all peoples are bound.

- (1) All those who take no part in the fighting must be respected. The taking of hostages, in particular, is forbidden.
- (2) It is prohibited to kill or to wound an enemy who gives himself up. Prisoners must be treated humanely. In no case can any sentence be passed on them without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court.
- (3) The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for without discrimination.

The ICRC appeals to all concerned for the principles of these Conventions, which Hungary ratified in 1954, to be strictly respected”.

This appeal was heavily influenced by Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions,⁸³ the only article applicable to non-international conflicts. Given the situation in Hungary when this appeal was broadcast, it is clear why the ICRC chose to focus on an article governing non-international conflicts. The appeal was issued on the day Radio Moscow confirmed that the Soviet government was willing to negotiate the withdrawal of its troops, indirectly implying that the resolution of the Hungarian issue would henceforth be Hungary's business. Yet on 4 November at dawn, Soviet tanks attacked Budapest, setting off heavy fighting around the city. On the same day, the ICRC issued another appeal, “to commanders and combatants in Hungary”,⁸⁴ calling on them to arrange a truce in compliance with Article 15 of the First Geneva Convention governing the search for and evacuation of wounded. It also sent two telegrams, one to Moscow and one to Budapest, to ask those governments to implement the four Geneva Conventions in the field.⁸⁵ Since the fighting showed no signs of abating, on 7 November the ICRC repeated its appeal to commanders and combatants in Hungary.

Aside from these appeals and telegrams, the ICRC headquarters did not undertake any other measures focusing on protection, leaving that area of activity to its delegates. “The International Committee is, moreover, concerned for the fate of the victims of the conflict, and our

⁸³ For the text of the article, see Annex III.

⁸⁴ ICRC, *Report on the Relief Action in Hungary*, p. 8.

⁸⁵ For the text of the two telegrams, see Annex VIII.

delegates have been instructed, in addition, to carry out all the ICRC's traditional tasks", noted Roger Gallopin.⁸⁶

On 31 October 1956, the ICRC delegate Herbert-Georges Beckh, then in western Hungary, managed to establish contact with the insurgents. In Győr he met with Attila Szigethy, President of the rebel National Committee which controlled an area of Hungarian territory populated by some 400,000 people. After some discussion, Beckh obtained from Szigethy a pledge to respect the Geneva Conventions: "President Szigethy formally declares his consent to the application of the Conventions in this civil war".⁸⁷ In Sopron, Beckh also managed to protect 200-300 prisoners who had fallen into the insurgents' hands from being shot. Moreover, he obtained permission to visit 29 civilian prisoners being held in Győr. Back in Vienna, he met with a representative of the Hungarian Embassy who thanked him, on behalf of the government, for the efforts he had made to ensure that the insurgents respected the Geneva Conventions. Beckh extracted a promise that when he returned to Hungary he would be allowed to visit detained insurgents; but the representative of the Hungarian Embassy, afraid of compromising himself, refused to provide written confirmation of this promise.⁸⁸ The ICRC delegate who had remained in Budapest also tried to obtain permission to visit detainees and internees, but in vain.

3. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT REFUGEES

The ICRC's function with respect to refugees was (and still is) to collect and convey news between refugees and their relatives, and to reunite families that have been separated; the provision of material aid was primarily the responsibility of the National Societies and the League of Red Cross Societies. The various ICRC services included the Central Information Agency, whose function was precisely to re-establish contact among the different members of a family that had been split up. Its activities were based on the 1949 Conventions, 36 articles of which govern the tasks it must perform.⁸⁹

From the beginning of the events of 1956, many Hungarians fled their country and requested asylum – mainly in Austria and Yugoslavia, but also in other States. Often the members of one family crossed the border

⁸⁶ "Rapport présenté par M. Gallopin en séance plénière du Comité le 1er novembre 1956", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

⁸⁷ "Procès-verbal du Conseil de Présidence du 15 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ CICR, *Agence Centrale de Recherches* (Geneva: CICR, n.d.), p. 1.

at different times and as a result were not taken in by the same country. Moreover, in most cases they did not have time to make enquiries about other family members and to find out where they were.⁹⁰ To help such refugees re-establish contact with their relatives, the ICRC took various measures. First of all, it began to broadcast over Radio-Intercroixrouge the names of people seeking news of their families. At the same time, it made family message forms available to those concerned, which it forwarded or used as a basis for enquiries.⁹¹ It then set up a central card-index for Hungary, organizing within its Central Agency an information bureau that registered as much information as possible about the Hungarian refugees. The ICRC was assisted in this endeavour by the National Societies of the host countries, which cooperated efficaciously in setting up and operating the Hungarian central card-index, whether by filling out the refugee personal-history cards distributed by the ICRC or by providing lists of names and leaving the ICRC to fill out the individual cards itself.

The Hungarian card-index was not operational until the beginning of 1957, when it became possible to link up the different requests for information and thus provide answers for those requiring them. All the information collected in this way remained strictly confidential, however, divulged only by the express consent of the person involved, in accordance with the ICRC's normal practice in such cases. Although the Hungarian government asked the ICRC to provide it with the names of the refugees registered in the Hungarian central card-index, the ICRC refused, explaining that only relatives were authorized to request information,⁹² and that it was not at liberty to give out such information to anyone else.

Thus, tracing activities were instituted as soon as the conflict began, and they were continued for as long as the ICRC continued to receive requests.

This chapter shows that during the first days of its action the ICRC intervened almost simultaneously in several spheres. It organized the dispatch of aid, worked to protect victims of the conflict, and dealt with requests for information concerning the refugees, all at the same time. The ICRC fulfilled its mandate, even though neither the Hungarian nor the Soviet authorities facilitated its task, and the Hungarian Red Cross, then in the process of reorganizing, was unable to provide the support needed.

⁹⁰ ICRC, *Report on the Relief Action in Hungary*, pp. 29-30.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹² "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre MM. Michel, Maunoir et Borsinger du 13 décembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.I.

CHAPTER IV

THE INSTALLATION OF THE ICRC IN VIENNA AND BUDAPEST (NOVEMBER 1956–JUNE 1957)

In the first days of November 1956, the fighting in Hungary stopped; the revolt had been largely brought under control. Peace was restored and the ICRC was able to go to the assistance of the civilian population, for the general strike continued and the country's economic situation was disquieting. In order to carry out its assistance and protection functions more efficiently, the ICRC decided to open offices in Vienna and Budapest. This chapter will examine first the organization of the operation and then the ICRC's activities on behalf of the Hungarian population and refugees.

1. ORGANIZATION OF ICRC ACTION

A. The Various Agreements

The ICRC set up two delegations, one in Vienna and the other in Budapest, on the basis of a formal agreement between the governments. Then it reorganized the relief operation in Vienna, amending its original agreement with the League of Red Cross Societies. From now on the ICRC would "undertake not only the forwarding, allocation and distribution of relief in Hungary (as provided for in the Agreement of 2 November), but also the handling in Vienna of gifts earmarked for the relief operation in Hungarian territory".⁹³ The League was thus no longer the sole agent receiving and coordinating the consignments sent by the National Societies.

From the end of organized resistance on 11 November, relief operations progressed without any major problems. Nonetheless, the ICRC decided to draw up an agreement that would provide the basis for the continuation of its relief action, and the President of the ICRC

⁹³ For the text of this amendment, see Annex VI.

entrusted this task to the Executive Director, Roger Gallopin. The latter accordingly left for Vienna to meet with the representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross. The ICRC's choice of the Hungarian Red Cross as its partner was completely consistent with the role a National Society was expected to play if a conflict broke out on its territory and the ICRC was asked to intervene. Nonetheless, Roger Gallopin wanted first to be sure that these representatives were indeed authorized to act on behalf of the Hungarian Red Cross.

As noted earlier, during the first phase of the ICRC action collaboration with the Hungarian Red Cross had not been very active, since the latter had been in the midst of reorganizing. On 1 November, the Nagy government had appointed a new director, Zoltán Zsebök, who had no time to set anything in order before the Red Army attacked three days later.⁹⁴ After calm had been restored, the Hungarian Red Cross was put under the direction of a group of five doctors who rotated the presidency between them and enjoyed the recognition of the Kádár government.⁹⁵ The doctors were Boldizsár Horváth, Tibor Nónay, Ferenc Czeyda-Pommersheim, Ferenc Földvári, and Dezső Klimkó. The Executive Director was Dr. György Killner, who also exercised the functions of Government Commissar.

The Executive Director of the ICRC, Roger Gallopin, reported that in meetings with Professors Horváth and Nónay, Dr. Killner, and Mihály Gedenyi, Head of the Foreign Relations Department, he had ascertained that these men were indeed authorized representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross and did not have any political connections. He was well aware, however, of the current situation of the Hungarian Red Cross: "certainly, for the Hungarian Red Cross, they represent a facade behind which there is now almost no edifice, since the pro-Communist elements in this Red Cross, notably the former Secretary-General, left when the Nagy Government came to power".⁹⁶ Under these circumstances, it was vital that the ICRC help the new representatives to reconstitute their Red Cross, so that it would have the necessary infrastructure and range to implement the action. The negotiations themselves were conducted completely openly, and the few members of the government who were present did not take part in the discussions. On 16 November 1956, the ICRC and the Hungarian Red Cross finally signed an agreement which

⁹⁴ Dr. Zoltán Csillag, *Data about the Activity of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Hungarian Red Cross (HRC) in 1956-1957* (Budapest: Hungarian Red Cross, 1992), pp. 4-5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁶ "Rapport de M. Gallopin du 22 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65).

was ratified on the same day by the Hungarian Minister in Vienna, in the name of the Hungarian Government.⁹⁷

Roger Gallopin was well aware of Hungary's motives for signing the agreement: "Clearly the need to accept the donations is great, and the real donations will come from the West. But the only way to ensure acceptance of relief from that quarter is to provide guarantees that the action undertaken will not lose its humanitarian character".⁹⁸ Hungary was not receiving the aid it needed from the other People's Democracies. The agreement signed with the ICRC allowed it to accept the gifts of the West, since the fact that they came through the ICRC eliminated their potential propagandistic value.⁹⁹

The agreement stated that the ICRC would be responsible for the distribution of the gift supplies entrusted to it by the National Red Cross Societies, the League, the United Nations, and certain governments and private bodies. The UN had decided to set up a relief programme to benefit both Hungarians in the country and refugees, and in an agreement it signed with the ICRC on 4 December 1956, the latter was designated as "the sole agency to carry out the relief programme on behalf of the United Nations".¹⁰⁰

Thus, Westerners agreed to give relief to the Hungarians on the understanding that the donations would be distributed "in accordance with the fundamental principles governing [the ICRC's] work, i.e. with strict impartiality and without any discrimination whatsoever other than that based on the urgency of the needs of the persons to be assisted".¹⁰¹ In this way, the ICRC served as a link between Hungary and the West.

The 16 November agreement allowed the ICRC to plan and organize its action. A delegation was set up in Budapest, but the warehouses and technical apparatus remained in Vienna, since it was impossible to forward everything to Budapest and store great quantities of supplies there.¹⁰² Moreover, the ICRC preferred to proceed moderately, forwarding donations gradually to avoid giving rise to disturbances or even political interference in Hungary. Thus, the decision to keep a

⁹⁷ For the text of the agreement, see Annex IX.

⁹⁸ "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre MM. Gallopin, Siordet et Michel du 20 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I. 1.

⁹⁹ "Annexe au procès-verbal de Présidence du 22 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, Rapports présentés en séance plénière par M. Gallopin.

¹⁰⁰ For the text of the agreement, see Annex X.

¹⁰¹ For the text of the agreement, see Annex IX.

¹⁰² "Annexe au procès-verbal de Présidence du 22 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

delegation in Vienna was not entirely due to technical problems. In addition, the ICRC was very firm about the way its action was to be carried out; if the 16 November agreement was not respected, the ICRC was prepared to cease its activities.

B. *The Delegations*

The ICRC operation actually got under way at the beginning of December 1956 with the appointment of Swiss National Councillor Georg Rutishauser as General Delegate. Rutishauser was asked to take charge of all the necessary technical services. With the help of the Swiss Red Cross, Rutishauser quickly recruited several technicians to work on transport and organization. He then set up the services required for the Vienna and Budapest delegations. Finally, he chose four assistants to help him with the general management of the relief operations. Delegate Marius Redli, responsible for supplies and finance, planned the major relief programmes together with the Budapest delegation. He also arranged, in cooperation with the ICRC Relief Section in Geneva, for the dispatch of the supplies needed to implement the programmes. Finally, he was in charge of the financial administration of the Vienna and Budapest delegations. Melchior Borsinger, who was responsible for foreign relations, acted as liaison officer between the League of Red Cross Societies, the National Red Cross Societies, and all the other relief organizations represented in Austria. He also maintained contact with the foreign embassies and legations in Vienna that contributed to the ICRC action, and was responsible for all the traditional tasks of the ICRC as well. The two other assistants were replaced several times. One of them was the head of the Information Service, who kept the press and the donor National Red Cross Societies informed of the progress of the relief operation. The other was the head of the Medical-Pharmaceutical Section, in charge of all the medical branches of the relief action and all the applications for medical relief. Together, this team constituted the general delegation that supervised the Vienna and Budapest delegations.¹⁰³

The Vienna delegation, which received and forwarded donations, had several departments. One of them was responsible for the warehouses where the supplies were stored and sorted. This department checked inventories, recorded donations, identified donors, and notified the donors of the arrival of their gifts. The second department contained the divisions of road and rail transport services. The road division was

¹⁰³ For a better understanding of the way the general delegation and the Vienna and Budapest delegations functioned, see the diagram in Annex XI.

responsible not only for maintaining and operating the automobile fleet (126 vehicles), but also for handling all the customs formalities involved in entering Hungary. It should be noted that since the closure of the airport on 31 October 1956, road transport was the only means of sending supplies to Hungary. Beginning in December 1956, however, rail and river connections resumed, and a new division was set up to organize train shipments to Hungary. The third department of the Vienna delegation, the Administration Department, dealt with all staff matters (accommodation and maintenance), accounts, equipment, and mail.

The Budapest delegation was also subdivided into different sections. One of them, in cooperation with the Hungarian Red Cross, planned the major relief programmes and drew up the distribution schedules. The latter were determined on the basis of the donations pledged or already delivered, or else in response to special requests submitted to the general delegation. The second section was in charge of the distribution of gift supplies, which it monitored by means of receipts issued by the Hungarian Red Cross and signed by the beneficiaries, as well as by visits to the distribution centres established throughout the country.

The Budapest delegation had to create a transport service, because the Hungarian Red Cross had lost all its vehicles during the fighting. This service was accordingly put at the Hungarian Red Cross's disposal for delivering relief supplies to the distribution centres. In addition, a storage facility was set up to house the relief supplies and to put together the parcels distributed to the Hungarian population.

2. THE RELIEF OPERATION

After the initial emergency measures, when the need for swift action took precedence over other considerations, the ICRC was able to address the situation in a more orderly manner. Its first task was to make a thorough study of the needs of the Hungarian population affected by the recent events. Eight thousand dwellings had been completely destroyed and 35,000 had suffered damage. Some hospitals, too, had been badly damaged in the fighting. Casualties were estimated at 2,700 dead and 20,000 wounded. In addition, the supply of coal, textiles, and shoes was very precarious, and certain foodstuffs (such as milk, eggs, salt, sugar, coffee, and tea) were unobtainable. There was a shortage of medical supplies and certain medicines, such as antibiotics and insulin. Investigation revealed that in Budapest alone, at least 250,000 people required assistance.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ ICRC, *Report on the Relief Action in Hungary*, pp. 15-16.

To assist this sector of the population, the ICRC established a number of programmes. At the outset it decided against distributing relief indiscriminately to the entire population of Budapest, because such a course could have political implications. Ralph Eckert was designated as "Programme Officer" and charged with designing specific aid programmes.¹⁰⁵ Between December 1956 and June 1957, the ICRC set up 167 programmes, three of which will be described here by way of illustration. One programme was designed to distribute 100 grams of powdered or condensed milk daily to pregnant women and children under the age of six. Another programme provided a hot meal daily for every child under six. A third programme, much appreciated by the population, distributed parcels containing four kilos of various foodstuffs providing a caloric value of 14,000 calories. Other programmes provided various other items: blankets, clothing, shoes, coal, window-glass, and medicines.

The ICRC supervised the distribution of supplies by the various programmes. It did this by monitoring receipts signed by the beneficiaries and specifying the nature and quantity of the goods delivered. In general, this system of supervision proved satisfactory. Relative to the magnitude of the action as a whole, only a fraction of the relief supplies appeared on the black market, and relatively little was stolen from the warehouses or in transit.

The ICRC also sold some of the donations to local economic agents and used the money to open a blocked account for the Hungarian Red Cross at the Hungarian National Bank. These funds were earmarked to assist people in need, to cover the operating expenses of the Hungarian Red Cross, and to re-equip hospitals and social institutions. The Hungarian Red Cross could not, however, withdraw money from this account without the prior consent of the ICRC.

Once it had set up these programmes, the ICRC had a better idea of what it needed; it was able to plan the flow of supplies and to request specific commodities. Consequently, it issued additional appeals to different donors and bought goods with the cash contributions it received. Supplies were forwarded from Vienna to Budapest by road transport until March 1957, when the Hungarian government requested that relief supplies no longer be sent by road. It forbade the last convoy to leave Vienna, because it believed that certain drivers were increasingly undertaking actions that did not conform to their mission.¹⁰⁶ The delegation tried to persuade the Hungarian authorities to reconsider

¹⁰⁵ "Procès-verbal de Plénière du 6 décembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

¹⁰⁶ "Aktennotiz entre M. Rutishauser et le CICR du 9 janvier 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1.

their position, which was becoming increasingly restrictive, even in the granting of visas;¹⁰⁷ but the ICRC did not let itself be intimidated by these restrictions and decided to dispatch its aid by riverboat. Ice in the Danube, however, soon put an end to this operation. The only means of transport left was the railroad. The Hungarian government offered to provide armed guards for the train cars, but the ICRC declined, considering this to be contrary to its principle of neutrality.

To carry out its work between December 1956 and June 1957, the ICRC sent 150 Swiss personnel to Austria and Hungary.¹⁰⁸ The monthly cost of these two delegations was half a million Swiss francs. The relief action in Hungary “clearly exceeds all those of recent years; there has been no operation of comparable scale since the relief organized during the Second World War for the Greek population or for Belgium”.¹⁰⁹ The relief action in Hungary was thus considered one of the ICRC’s major post-war operations.¹¹⁰

The ICRC was supposed to close down its delegation and leave Budapest in June 1957. This date had been selected “in consideration of the fact that as soon as the new harvest was ready to be gathered – thus bringing to an end the difficult food situation caused by the events of October 1956 – the relief action undertaken by the ICRC would no longer be absolutely necessary”.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, the ICRC wanted to stay in Hungary, for it was still waiting for a number of promised donations, including one from UNICEF. It insisted on being present to oversee their reception and distribution, and rejected any suggestion of “entrusting responsibilities of that nature to the Hungarian Red Cross, which is inclined to return to what it was before the events of October 1956”.¹¹² The Hungarian Red Cross did, in fact, undergo a reorganization; on 31 May 1957 the five professors of medicine and the Executive Director, Dr. Killner, ceased to exercise their functions and Professor Pal Gégesi Kiss took over as President, with Ambassador Joseph Karpati as Secretary-General.

With the concurrence of the government and the Hungarian Red Cross, a small delegation was left in place. On 27 June 1957, the Hungarian Red Cross and the ICRC signed a new agreement defining

¹⁰⁷ “A Relief Convoy of the ICRC for Budapest”, ICRC Press Release No. 586b, 8 March 1957.

¹⁰⁸ “Service de presse”, AICRC, 251(65), I.1.

¹⁰⁹ “Procès-verbal de Plénière du 6 décembre 1956”, AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

¹¹⁰ See Annex XII.

¹¹¹ ICRC, *Report on the Relief Action in Hungary*, p. 28.

¹¹² “Note pour l’Assemblée plénière du 28 mai 1957”, AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

the duties of the five ICRC workers remaining in Budapest. Their mission was essentially to administer the donations of textiles and hospital equipment. To that end the ICRC sent a circular out to the various National Red Cross Societies and other potential donors, telling them that from 15 September 1957 contributions would have to be addressed directly to the Hungarian Red Cross.¹¹³ From June to October 1957, the small delegation worked in close cooperation with the Hungarian Red Cross and the Hungarian Ministry of Health.

Since the food situation in the country had improved, the ICRC decided to concentrate its efforts on a medical and social programme. For the most part, it provided university clinics and major hospitals with medical supplies, as well as distributing large quantities of bedding and kitchen towels to old-age homes, pediatric clinics, and smaller hospitals. These distributions were made through 37 new programmes. The ICRC was not prevented from verifying that the beneficiaries had indeed received the gifts they were supposed to have received, and that the programmes were operating in a satisfactory manner.¹¹⁴

A second relief action involved building a new prosthesis factory to make artificial limbs for the war-disabled. In April 1957, the ICRC sent a special mission to visit the prosthesis factory already operating and to determine what innovations would be required. The mission, judging the Hungarian prosthesis models to be outdated, advised the Hungarian Red Cross and the Minister of Health to select a model manufactured abroad. These bodies selected the East German model, and the ICRC hired two East German technicians to draw up a plan of action. This plan provided, first of all, for a study exchange between East German and Hungarian technicians. Next, a special workshop would be set up for the purpose of fitting and adapting artificial limbs to those who needed them. Ultimately, the plan called for renovating or even replacing the spare-parts production line.

This plan stipulated that not only would the ICRC be responsible for training the workers, but it would provide the machinery necessary to set up the prosthesis-fitting workshop. It would also supply a certain number of spare parts for artificial limbs. The Ministry of Health, for its part, would provide the necessary premises and pay for water, gas, and electricity.¹¹⁵ In October 1957 this project was still far from completed,

¹¹³ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre M. Fischer et M. Maunoir et en présence de Mme Mathez et MM. Siordet, Chenevière, Gallopin, Pilloud", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹¹⁴ "Bericht über die IKRK-Aktion in Ungarn ab 1. Juli 1957bis, 19. Oktober 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹¹⁵ "Rapport de mission de Mlle Pfrtner (action médico-sociale) du 5 avril-9 avril 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.3.

and the Hungarian Red Cross pushed back the deadline for constructing the new factory from 1958 to 1959.

The ICRC closed its rudimentary delegation at the end of October 1957 as planned. This, however, did not mean an end to its activities in Hungary, as one of the Committee members clearly indicated: "Mr. Chenevière insists, however, that the ICRC has an interest in conserving the option of undertaking new missions in Hungary as the occasion arises — an opinion shared by the other members of the Committee. Mr. Fischer should try to prepare the ground for this before his departure or at the reception he will hold to mark his departure".¹¹⁶

Overall, the second phase of the relief action went well. Aside from certain difficulties from March 1957 onward relating to the transport of gift supplies, the Hungarian authorities did not hinder ICRC activities. They even allowed the organization to maintain a delegation in Budapest for longer than originally agreed. That is not to say, however, that there was no friction at all. For example, the Hungarian press announced that the chocolate sent by Swiss schoolchildren to their Hungarian counterparts was meant to overthrow the regime. The chocolate bars distributed in the schools were allegedly accompanied by bullets intended to kill Russian and Hungarian soldiers.¹¹⁷ Other accusations of this kind made at the time were indicative of the atmosphere of distrust in which the ICRC worked. The stress suffered by the ICRC in Hungary in connection with its assistance to the population thus derived primarily from propagandistic and psychological factors.

3. PROTECTION

Simultaneously with its relief action, the ICRC resumed, in this second phase of intervention, its protective functions. First it sought to render assistance to political detainees, then to deportees, and finally, beginning in September 1957, to medical personnel prosecuted or arrested by the Hungarian authorities.

A. Political Detainees

In its actions on behalf of political detainees, the ICRC did not adopt any specific strategy, but in each case decided "the concrete modalities of the action, considering all the circumstances apt to make the action as

¹¹⁶ "Plénière du 3 octobre 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹¹⁷ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Kapesos et Maunoir du 15 février 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1.

quick and efficacious as possible. Each individual case calls for an arrangement of its own; there is, as a rule, no set procedure".¹¹⁸ Consequently, it is difficult to compare the way the ICRC addressed the problem of political detainees in Hungary with its approach in other situations. We will therefore follow the usual practice of the ICRC itself, which does not formally define the term "political detainees".¹¹⁹

It should be recalled that there is no universally applicable and enforceable provision in international public law that imposes any kind of obligation on the State towards those of its own nationals that it detains for political reasons.¹²⁰ Since the Third Geneva Convention of 1949 concerns only prisoners of war, the ICRC's activity in this domain has no actual basis in law.¹²¹ Yet it was precisely the issue of political detainees that revealed the limits the Hungarian government sought to impose on the ICRC's activity. As long as the organization occupied itself with providing material assistance the Hungarian authorities raised no objection; but as soon as it tried to exercise its protective function, it was sternly rebuffed.

On 15 November 1956, the Geneva headquarters took up the question of political detainees. It had the Division of General Affairs prepare a document containing instructions for the Budapest delegation. First of all, information had to be obtained concerning the status and treatment of persons detained as a result of the events of October, the identity of the detaining authority, and whether anyone had been deported. In addition, the delegation was to request authorization to make visits and, where warranted, to provide aid, invoking the precedents the ICRC had established during its interventions in Greece, Morocco, Algeria, and Cyprus. It was also supposed to request that such persons be tried in regularly constituted courts, in conformity with Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions. Where possible, it was to try to prevent the conviction of those who had simply participated in the struggle, or obtain clemency for them, by stressing the general confusion that had prevailed at the time. Finally, under the circumstances, the ICRC informed its delegation that although an overly legalistic position was best avoided, it

¹¹⁸ Léopold Boissier, "La Croix-Rouge et l'assistance aux détenus politiques", *Politique étrangère* 23, no. 1 (1958): 22.

¹¹⁹ Jacques Moreillon, *Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et la protection des détenus politiques*, p. 14.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹²¹ The Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of victims of war provide the basis for ICRC activity. For more information, see Annex III.

should take Article 3 and the general principles and spirit of the Geneva Conventions as a minimal starting point.¹²² All these measures were to be undertaken gradually but purposefully.

The next day, the ICRC began to lay the groundwork for its protection policy. In the agreement of 16 November 1956 that it signed with the Hungarian Red Cross, it introduced a sentence referring to its traditional tasks: "The sole object of this agreement being the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population, it cannot be interpreted as restricting the other humanitarian activities which the International Committee of the Red Cross may be called upon to exercise in Hungary in conformity with the statutes of the International Red Cross or the provisions of the Geneva Conventions".¹²³ Thus the delegation began its applications to the authorities for information about political detainees.

Obtaining such information proved difficult, however. The Hungarian Red Cross claimed that the Kádár government had not itself made any arrests; the Soviet authorities were solely responsible for the arrests and deportations. The Hungarian Ambassador to Vienna did not deny this, but said merely that reports had been greatly exaggerated.¹²⁴ At ICRC headquarters, there was debate over the best strategy to adopt and what aspects of the Conventions should be invoked to give ICRC delegates the best chance of being able to assist political detainees. One of the Committee members considered that the ICRC should settle for invoking Article 3. He also thought that the ICRC might undertake certain steps vis-à-vis the Hungarian authorities: "I still think that the Committee should consider, at the right moment, an informal, personal approach to the Hungarian government to discuss this subject".¹²⁵

The General Affairs Division also examined the possibility of intervening. It recognized without question that in some respects the events in Hungary presented the characteristics of an international conflict between Hungary and the USSR. However, as Jean-René Wilhelm noted, "in numerous other aspects [...] – among which the interpretation of the events given by the Governments involved cannot be completely disregarded – the hostilities in Hungary called instead for the application of Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, an article that is

¹²² See Annex XIV.

¹²³ See Annex IX.

¹²⁴ "Annexe du procès-verbal de Présidence du 22 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

¹²⁵ "Note de M. Siordet à MM. Boissier, Gallopin et Pictet du 5 décembre 1956", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

valid for non-international conflicts".¹²⁶ Because of these aspects, the General Affairs Division considered that basing the ICRC's measures on Article 3 would give them the best chance of success. In its view, citing that article would guarantee a modicum of respect for human rights while leaving the door open to a possible amplification of the ICRC's powers later. Moreover, the application of this article would not affect the exact legal classification of the conflict, a classification considered as "not currently necessary for humanitarian action".¹²⁷

At the beginning of 1957, the ICRC again asked for news of political detainees. It wanted to know their names and where they were being held so it could pass this information on to their families. It also noted that under the terms of the Geneva Conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, these detainees were entitled to convey news of themselves, write to their friends and relatives, receive material aid from the ICRC or their families, and receive visits from the ICRC.¹²⁸ The Hungarian Red Cross, however, when informed of the ICRC's intentions, begged the delegates not to take any steps in the matter of the detainees, for fear of compromising all the operations already in progress.

During a meeting of the Presidency Council on 17 January 1957, the President of the ICRC expressed his disappointment over the handling of the issue of political detainees, and insisted that the problem was serious.¹²⁹ Prevented from carrying out its traditional functions, the ICRC was in a difficult position. As Committee member Jacques Chenevière remarked, "we risk drawing reproaches such as those incurred at the end of World War II, and the dangers are the same with respect to continuing the actions in progress. The problem must remain on the agenda".¹³⁰ The ICRC did not want to be accused of not having tried to do anything for political detainees. Thus, the potential impact of this problem went beyond Hungarian borders.

At the end of January 1957 the ICRC was informed by its delegate in Budapest that the political detainees' situation was becoming increasingly grave, and that all applications to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been in vain. According to ICRC

¹²⁶ See Annex XV.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ "Projet de note établi par M. Bovey pour M. Gallopin du 16 janvier 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹²⁹ "Ordre du jour du Conseil de Présidence du 17 janvier 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

delegate Bovey, "the solution is probably in Moscow..".¹³¹ Since the relief action was moving into high gear at the time, Roger Gallopin and the President of the ICRC started out by asking permission to distribute relief parcels in the prisons,¹³² but received no response during the following months. The ICRC did not give up hope, and continued to believe that it should overlook no possible avenue in its efforts to perform its traditional functions. "Although it may be difficult to make an official, general request to visit prisoners as in other countries, beginning with individual cases may be a way of achieving the same result".¹³³ According to Roger Gallopin, however, such a proceeding would not lead to anything, since if the ICRC had not achieved anything during the conflict, it was unlikely to do so now that the situation had been stabilized.

During the summer of 1957, many arrests were made – 3,000 were counted between 5 and 20 July – and they showed every sign of continuing; in fact, a prison that had been closed down was reopened. Under these circumstances, the ICRC wondered what chance it had of accomplishing anything without provoking the antagonism of the Hungarian Red Cross and the political authorities. In previous years, the ICRC's policy had been to intervene only in situations where the presence of its delegates could be expected to bring about an improvement in the physical conditions of detention. By working within the limits of what was possible, the ICRC sought to maintain the trust that was its stock-in-trade for any humanitarian action.¹³⁴ By this token, it considered that in the current atmosphere it had no prospect of intervening.

At the end of 1957, shortly before the ICRC closed its delegation in Budapest, efforts were still being made to assist political detainees. Ernst Fischer asked the Hungarian Red Cross if it would be possible to distribute gift supplies in the prisons. That organization refused to take up the matter, asserting that it was an exclusively internal Hungarian concern.¹³⁵ In meetings with the ICRC delegates, the Hungarian Red Cross always showed itself very unforthcoming, but eventually it agreed to convey the ICRC's request to distribute parcels in the prisons to the

¹³¹ "Rapport de M. Bovey présenté au Conseil de Présidence du 31 janvier 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ "Procès-verbal de Présidence du 18 juillet 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹³⁴ "Procès-verbal entre Mme Mathez et MM. Boissier, Fischer, Siordet, Chenevière, Gallopin, Pilloud, Maunoir du 7 août 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹³⁵ "Procès-verbal d'entretien avec M. Fischer et plusieurs membres du CICR du 16 septembre 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

government. The President of the ICRC even sent a letter to Karpati, the Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross, requesting a definite answer concerning the relief that the ICRC could provide to political detainees.¹³⁶ In the meantime, the ICRC settled for offering support to the families of the detainees.

This was the situation when the ICRC left Budapest at the end of October 1957. It should not be concluded, however, that the ICRC members attached little importance to the organization's lack of success in this domain. Some considered that the steps the ICRC took after completing its relief action were unsatisfactory.

"Although at the time [the beginning of 1957] the ICRC might conceivably have wanted to avoid jeopardizing its newly commenced relief action by asking for permission to visit the prisons, it is surprising that once that action had ended the ICRC – which had made almost no efforts in the interim – should show itself so shy in a domain where ample precedent [with respect to relief in prisons] had been established in other countries and under circumstances much less proximate to armed conflict".¹³⁷

But this reasoning was theoretical and unrealistic. The ICRC had adopted a circumspect approach because it had as yet no tradition on which to rely in this sphere; it was thus compelled to proceed cautiously on a trial-and-error basis.¹³⁸

Moreover, this was apparently not the only reason that the ICRC was so moderate in its demands on behalf of political detainees. The action in Hungary represented the ICRC's first intervention in a conflict in a People's Democracy. At the time the world was divided into two opposing camps, ready to take up the cudgels from one moment to the next. Fully aware of this danger, the ICRC was concerned that overly insistent demands might compromise future action in the Communist sphere. One of the Committee members expressed this clearly enough: "It is best to maintain good relations with the Hungarian authorities, as an open door to this world".¹³⁹ The ICRC Assembly, moreover, stated categorically at its plenary meeting of October 1957: "the ICRC will not undertake, for the time being, any special efforts vis-à-vis the Hungarian authorities on behalf of detained persons".¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ "Lettre de M. Boissier à M. Karpati du 17 décembre 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹³⁷ "Procès-verbal d'entretien avec M. Fischer et plusieurs membres du CICR du 16 septembre 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ "Plénière du 3 octobre 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

B. *Deportees*

Besides political detainees, the ICRC sought to protect people who had been deported as a result of the events in Hungary. It began by approaching János Kádár's government, but to no avail, since apparently the Soviets were responsible for the deportations. The two delegates in Budapest advised the ICRC to take up the matter with Moscow,¹⁴¹ but no move seems to have been made in this direction. The only document sent by the USSR to the ICRC was a letter concerning another aspect of the action. The contents of that letter, however, reflected the Soviet position:

"in regard to your telegram N A-577 concerning facilities for implementing various Red Cross measures on Hungarian territory by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the National Red Cross Societies, as well as the security of the persons participating in the implementation of these measures, allow me to inform you that to resolve all these questions you must apply to the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic".¹⁴²

The fact that the USSR was pretending to be uninvolved in Hungarian affairs implied that all applications to Moscow were doomed to failure.

According to delegate Beckh, an enquiry into the fate of the deportees was essential no matter what its result, since it would permit the ICRC to act. His reasoning was as follows: If the reports of deportations were erroneous, the East would welcome the ICRC's intervention because it would prove those reports were wrong. By rendering this service to the USSR, the ICRC would be in a better position to request access to persons who had been deprived of their liberty. If the reports were not completely wrong but simply exaggerated, the ICRC's intervention would be doubly advantageous: It would curb the deportations and it would allow the ICRC delegates to visit camps, since such visits could be expected to appease public opinion. On the other hand, if the reports were accurate and the Soviets were determined to continue in the same line, they might conceivably be all the more interested in offering a sop to humanitarian sensibilities by allowing visits to be made to persons imprisoned in Hungary itself.

¹⁴¹ "Annexe du procès-verbal de Présidence du 22 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, and "Texte de M. Beckh destiné à M. Maunoir du 27 novembre 1956", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹⁴² "Lettre de A. Gromyko au Président du CICR du 25 novembre 1956", AICRC, 251(65), I.1.

At the beginning of December 1956, János Kádár confirmed that the reports of deportations were accurate; but he also announced that all deportees had already been repatriated, hence the matter was closed. The ICRC, however, continued to worry about the problem, and tried to identify cases in which it could invoke the Geneva Conventions. If the deportees were defined as civilians, or could be considered as such, the ICRC could cite Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Part of that article stipulates: "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive".¹⁴³

If, on the other hand, the deportees had been armed at the time they were seized – which was probably the case for many of them – and they were considered prisoners of war according to the definition provided in Article 4 of the Third Geneva Convention, the ICRC could then request the application of all the articles concerning that category of persons – although it could not then oppose the removal of such persons from Hungarian territory, since the Detaining Power was entitled to move prisoners of war onto its own territory. Nonetheless, as prisoners of war these deportees would be able to enjoy visits from the ICRC.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, if the USSR were indeed to recognize them as such and authorize visits from the ICRC, this would establish a favourable precedent that the ICRC could use in future.

Except for discussion of the ICRC's methods of intervention, to the best of my knowledge there is no documentation of any concrete measures undertaken on behalf of deportees. Consequently, we do not know what was done for them. All that can be ascertained is that although the ICRC was concerned about protecting this category of people, no action was actually carried out.

C. Medical Personnel and Former Members of the Hungarian Red Cross

Since both medical personnel and former members of the Hungarian Red Cross were, in some cases, interrogated by the Hungarian government, the ICRC was concerned about protecting them. Certain members of the Hungarian Red Cross, including the five professors of medicine who shared the presidency, were dismissed from their positions

¹⁴³ *The Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949*, p. 172.

¹⁴⁴ "Note de M. Siordet à MM. Boissier, Gallopin et Pietet du 5 décembre 1956", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

in May 1957. The Hungarian government fired the five professors for many reasons. They were accused of having provided substantial assistance to the "counter-revolutionaries", of maintaining close ties with the West and, by that token, of being in the pay of the "imperialists". They were also charged with having isolated and dismissed the Communists on the Red Cross staff and of having hired counter-revolutionaries in their place. In addition, they were guilty of having encouraged the strikers by providing them with Western aid so they could hold out longer, and of having accepted substantial gifts from the ICRC, of doing business with it, and, consequently, of being at its mercy. Finally, they were accused of not defending the interests of Hungarians.¹⁴⁵ In addition to losing their jobs with the Hungarian Red Cross, some of them were arrested and others were placed under surveillance. During the summer of 1957, however, it was reported that the five professors had resumed their professional activities without suffering harassment.

The former head of foreign relations at the Hungarian Red Cross, Mihaly Gedenyi, was also arrested, but that was on account of his journalistic activities. Delegate Ernst Fischer met with Gedenyi's wife and lawyer to find out what the ICRC could do to help, but the lawyer strongly advised against any initiative from Geneva. Mrs. Gedenyi, however, expressed a wish that the lawyer's fee might be paid, and the ICRC obliged. The ICRC also learned that Mr. Sergenyi, the former head of transport at the Hungarian Red Cross, had been arrested. It therefore decided to assist his wife, a doctor who apparently desired additional training, by offering her the opportunity to attend the University of Basle.

In addition, the ICRC intervened on behalf of five Hungarian Red Cross auxiliaries accused of appropriating relief supplies not intended for them. It proved to the Hungarian authorities that they were in truth the designated recipients of the supplies. On the other hand, it did not intervene on behalf of members of the Hungarian Red Cross who had been arrested for assisting Hungarian nationals to escape and for diverting relief supplies, because they had been working at the Hungarian Red Cross before the advent of the five professors.¹⁴⁶

The ICRC was also informed that Dr. Csillag of the Hungarian Red Cross had been dismissed from both the Red Cross and the army medical

¹⁴⁵ Csillag, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴⁶ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre Mme Mathez et MM. Boissier, Siordet, Chenevière, Gallopin, Pilloud et Maunoir du 7 août 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

service. He was thus left without resources and requested assistance from one of the ICRC delegates. For various reasons delegate Fischer was inclined to refuse this request, and the members of the ICRC in Geneva concurred. However, Fischer informed headquarters that he had managed to transmit some relief supplies to those former members of the Hungarian Red Cross who had been arrested.

It should be emphasized that the members of the ICRC began dealing with this issue before the arrests and other intimidating measures actually began. One delegate, Melchior Borsinger, explained this very clearly to the Austrian Minister, Oskar Helmer: "I explained to Minister Helmer that this is a problem that also worries the ICRC, and that I had been asked, a few months ago, to convey a note from Geneva to our Budapest delegation concerning precisely this question, and that we were concerned not only for the five members of the Presidency of that society, but also for all the other members who might in future find themselves in a delicate position".¹⁴⁷

The medical personnel arrested for providing care to insurgents were in a more desperate situation. The ICRC heard from various sources that these individuals had suffered cruel treatment, sometimes with fatal results. A Committee member at Geneva headquarters urged the ICRC to adopt a very firm policy in the matter. "The situation is such", declared Mr. Chenevière, "that the ICRC might be compelled to withdraw from Hungary, if it can do nothing in the traditional sphere".¹⁴⁸

In August 1957, the ICRC accordingly decided to instruct its delegate to gather evidence on the arrest of medical personnel and to inform the former members of the Hungarian Red Cross that the ICRC intended to intervene on their behalf, the idea being to find out if they thought such intervention might improve their situation.¹⁴⁹ However, Fischer, the delegate, was unable to collect any specific documentary evidence concerning the circumstances of doctors and nurses accused of having provided medical care to insurgents. Nor did he succeed in making contact with the former members of the Red Cross.

One of the members of the Committee, Rodolfo Olgiati, wondered "if the ICRC cannot try to do more for these people, even at the risk of annoying the Hungarian authorities. Otherwise, it seems to be covering

¹⁴⁷ "Lettre de M. Borsinger à M. Boissier du 8 juin 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

¹⁴⁸ "Procès-verbal de Plénière du 8 août 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.2.

¹⁴⁹ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre Mme Mathez et MM. Boissier, Siordet, Chenevière, Gallopin, Pilloud et Maunoir du 7 août 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

up a situation that is fundamentally opposed to the principles of the Red Cross, and it may be reproached for this some day, when these people will perhaps be free".¹⁵⁰ The ICRC President reminded him that "the Committee's action is based on what is possible",¹⁵¹ and in this case it seemed difficult to do anything. According to Melchior Borsinger and Jean Pictet, it was almost impossible to act, for even "Article 18 of the First Convention ('no one may ever be molested or convicted for having nursed the wounded or sick') [was] scarcely applicable: for the USSR and Hungary, there [had] been no international war nor even a civil war, and the armed hostilities [were] long over".¹⁵²

Consequently, the Committee decided not to make any special applications to the Hungarian authorities on behalf of detainees and, in particular, medical personnel, unless its delegate in Budapest speedily came up with sufficient evidence to justify intervention. However, it would pay particular attention to the general issue of the free practice of medicine in internal conflicts and the application of Article 18 of the First Geneva Convention.¹⁵³ Moreover, the ICRC questioned the First Secretary of the Hungarian delegation to the European Office of the United Nations concerning medical personnel. The First Secretary asserted that it was "difficult for him to believe that medical personnel could be harassed as such".¹⁵⁴

Thus, in the second phase of its action in Hungary, the representations the ICRC made with a view to protecting prisoners went unanswered. The organization achieved virtually nothing. The limitations of its action were clear. Hungary, and by extension the USSR, accepted the material relief that the ICRC could give them, because they needed it; but they obstinately rejected all protection efforts, which they did not consider were properly the business of the ICRC. Here we see very clearly that the relations between the ICRC and the Eastern bloc, meaning Moscow, had not improved. In fact, the ICRC managed to penetrate the Iron Curtain only because it had supplies to distribute. The ICRC's action in Hungary could not be considered a step forward in the organization's relations with the USSR; indeed, in my view these relations are a good illustration of the tensions of the Cold War.

The ICRC's attitude towards the Eastern bloc reflected its desire to maintain friendly contacts with the USSR. The Hungarian action was

¹⁵⁰ "Plénière du 3 octobre 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Kapcsos et Maunoir", AICRC, 225(65), II.2.

conducted with extreme caution to avoid compromising future operations in the Communist camp. Recognizing the fragility of the ties it was creating with the Eastern bloc, the ICRC did its best not to provoke Moscow. Austria was aware of this attitude, and reproached the ICRC for it – or at least that was the impression Minister Helmer gave the delegate Melchior Borsinger: “I also thought I sensed in Minister Helmer’s speech that feeling that I have already reported – that the Committee’s attitude towards the People’s Democracies is perhaps not firm enough”.¹⁵⁵

4. REUNIFICATION OF DISPERSED PERSONS

As an exodus of 200,000 Hungarians fled abroad, many children left the country without their parents, or their parents, having crossed the border at a different time, were given asylum by different authorities. In addition to providing news of these individuals, the ICRC had to find some basis of agreement with the different governments so that those persons who desired it could be reunited with their relatives as quickly and efficiently as possible. This section will skip over the various agreements established in this respect between different countries of asylum in order to focus on the problems of repatriation between Hungary and other countries, that being the ICRC’s direct area of concern.

The ICRC did not become involved in the problem of family reunification on its own initiative, but at the request of the governments involved, primarily the Hungarian government. In November 1956, the Hungarian government asked the ICRC to take steps to promote the repatriation of all minor children (up to the age of 18 under Hungarian law) who had taken refuge abroad, alleging that they were sought by their parents and that their place was with their families.¹⁵⁶ The countries of asylum, however, did not consider these grounds sufficient and, feeling that the matter of repatriation was not quite so simple, they requested help from the ICRC.

The two main countries of asylum – Austria and Yugoslavia – had different views concerning the best way to solve the repatriation problem. On 7 and 16 January, the Austrian government sent the ICRC lists of unaccompanied Hungarian children, asking it to verify that the children’s parents were in fact in Hungary. Austria did not want to

¹⁵⁵ “Lettre de M. Borsinger à M. Boissier du 8 juin 1957”, AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

¹⁵⁶ “Aide-mémoire sur le problème du regroupement des familles entre la Hongrie et l’étranger”, AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

repatriate the young Hungarians without first finding out what awaited them in their homeland.

Yugoslavia, in contrast, after having announced that it wanted to work with the ICRC on the problem, ultimately adopted a different solution. The Yugoslav Red Cross gave the Hungarian Red Cross a list of 34 children whom it would be willing to repatriate on condition that it first received declarations from the parents requesting their children's return. Both the ICRC and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were surprised by this new move, which they considered "absolutely contrary to the undertakings of the Yugoslav government in this respect".¹⁵⁷

Other countries, equally concerned by the repatriation problem, asked for the ICRC's assistance in 1957. France wished to use the ICRC as an intermediary in repatriating Hungarian children, as a guarantee that it would receive valid declarations from parents in Hungary.¹⁵⁸ The United Kingdom refused to repatriate a single child until the ICRC could confirm the parents' freely expressed wish to have their children returned to them. In short, except for Yugoslavia the various host countries all wanted the ICRC to make enquiries about the parents of children on the lists that they furnished or planned to furnish, in order to find out whether the families were still in Hungary and were in fact freely requesting the return of their children.

Conversely, several National Red Cross Societies asked the ICRC to help them resolve the situation of children left behind in Hungary and claimed by their refugee parents. In February 1957, the Norwegian Red Cross asked the ICRC to arrange for the transfer of such children to Norway. This request echoed a similar one from the Italian Red Cross, received some time previously, as well as many individual requests from the parents themselves, addressed directly to the ICRC.¹⁵⁹ According to statements issued at the beginning of 1957 by the Hungarian Embassy in Vienna, the Hungarian authorities were in principle willing to allow children to leave Hungary in order to be reunited with their parents abroad.¹⁶⁰

In light of this situation, in April 1957 the ICRC decided to send a special delegate, Arthur Guillermet, to Budapest, Vienna, and Belgrade

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* For the French government, dealing directly with the Hungarian diplomatic representative in France was out of the question.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

to find out exactly how these governments stood on the issue, those being the three countries most directly concerned by the problem. It is noteworthy that the ICRC sent a special delegate for the purpose even though it already had numerous delegates in Vienna and Budapest; obviously it wanted to separate this issue from the rest of its operation.

In his meetings in Budapest, Arthur Guillermet came up against the intransigence of the Hungarian authorities, who continued to demand the repatriation of all minors under 18 and wanted the ICRC to persuade the countries of asylum to accept this principle. As for possible legal prosecution of these children following their return, the government considered that children under the age of 14 could scarcely be assumed to have left the country for political reasons. In the case of children between the ages of 14 and 18, on the other hand, it considered that "legislation and the wishes of the parents should be taken into account".¹⁶¹ The Hungarian government had already adopted a decree-law granting amnesty until 31 March 1957 to all minors under the age of 18 who had illegally crossed the border between 23 October and 1 November 1956. Now, however, it decided to extend this amnesty indefinitely. Nonetheless, as Arthur Guillermet remarked, only the offence of crossing the border illegally was mentioned; other offences, such as participating in the events of 1956, were probably not covered by the amnesty.¹⁶² Consequently, as soon as they returned to Hungary minors between the ages of 14 and 18 were vulnerable to legal prosecution.

The Hungarian government was also very firm on the matter of the lists of children's names, maintaining that they should be sent to the Hungarian Red Cross rather than to the ICRC. The special delegate thought that this was an allusion to the direct arrangements made between Yugoslavia and Hungary, as well as to the recent dispatch of a list by the Austrian authorities. As for enquiries to determine whether the children's parents were still in Hungary and had freely expressed their wish to take their children back, the Hungarian government referred the ICRC to the Hungarian Red Cross.

With respect to the emigration of wives or children who had remained behind in Hungary and who wished to rejoin their refugee husbands or parents abroad, the Hungarian authorities took a minimalist line. Deputy Minister Szarka declared that such persons could obtain visas through the usual emigration procedure; but very few visas were in fact received in this way. Although the Deputy Minister did recognize that emigration

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

was a humanitarian issue just as repatriation was, he did not conceal the fact that the Hungarian authorities attached much more importance to the latter.¹⁶³

In Vienna, Arthur Guillermet found the Austrian government's position on repatriation to be less categorical than in the past. The conditions it now posed were that the parents had to be in Hungary and had to have freely expressed their desire for the return of their children. Moreover, Austria no longer set 14 as the age of majority, an age limit recognized by no other country. Nonetheless, it always took into account the wishes of the children themselves before deciding to repatriate minors between the ages of 14 and 18. Ultimately, as suggested by the general delegate of the League of Red Cross Societies, the most urgent problem was to obtain authorization for the repatriation or emigration of children six years old and under.¹⁶⁴

Yugoslavia approached the repatriation problem differently. ICRC assistance was immediately requested for children under the age of 14. For each of these children a personal file was to be established containing, among other documents, a written request from the parents expressing their wish for their child's return.¹⁶⁵ Fearing that pressure could be brought to bear in order to obtain this document, the Yugoslav Red Cross wanted the ICRC to ascertain that the request had been freely made. It did not consider itself competent or able to carry out this sort of verification on its own.¹⁶⁶

For children between the ages of 14 and 18, however, the Yugoslav Red Cross did not require the cooperation of the ICRC, because the repatriation process was different. Each request initiated an administrative procedure before a tutelary authority, even if the child declared that he did not want to rejoin his parents. It was up to the guardian and the tutelary authority to evaluate each individual case, placing the best interests of the child first.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. The complete procedure was as follows. The Yugoslav Red Cross sent lists of children to the Hungarian Red Cross and copies thereof to the ICRC. In return, it asked the latter to send it a copy of the birth certificate of each child on the list as proof of the child's parentage; a written request from the parents asking for the return of their child; and an attestation from the competent Hungarian authority certifying that the parents had not been deprived of their right of parental authority.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. If the child wished to emigrate, the Yugoslav Red Cross notified the parents, stating the child's reasons and the name of his or her guardian. The parents had a right of appeal, but if they did not respond, the child's wishes were respected and the tutelary authority ruled on the case.

Arthur Guillermet noted that the Yugoslav attitude towards the ICRC had changed. Contrary to what the dispatch of lists to the Hungarian Red Cross had seemed to portend – namely, a direct understanding between the Hungarian and Yugoslav authorities without the participation of the ICRC – the Yugoslav Red Cross wanted very much to collaborate with the ICRC.

The special delegate came to a number of conclusions regarding his mission to Budapest, Vienna, and Belgrade. First of all, it did not seem possible that the ICRC could make the enquiries about the children's parents requested by the countries of asylum without exposing those parents to certain risks. The ICRC's main source of information was the Hungarian Red Cross, which seemed to be completely subordinate to the political authority. Moreover, the repatriation issue was becoming very urgent: tension was mounting in the refugee camps, and there were frequent instances of undisciplined behaviour among young people.¹⁶⁸

By April 1957 the ICRC possessed all the information it needed to decide what to do about these people. It sent Arthur Guillermet to Hungary again, this time with instructions to submit to the government a draft agreement on the reunification of families. Since the ICRC was rather sceptical that the agreement would be approved as it was, it also told its delegate what changes he could accept. In order to save time, the ICRC authorized him to sign the agreement "as long as any amendments requested by the Hungarian Government did not affect in any way the fundamental principles on which it was based".¹⁶⁹ The ICRC attached particular importance to the first article of the draft, which defined the principle of family reunification as the essential basis of this humanitarian action; as such, that principle had to be applied in Hungary as well as abroad. The criterion for deciding whether a family should be reunited in Hungary or abroad was, as a rule, the home or place of residence designated by the head of the family. If the family was to be reunited abroad, the Hungarian authorities would issue exit visas for the individuals in question in an accelerated procedure distinct from that normally used for emigrants.¹⁷⁰ If Article 1 could not be respected, the delegate was to "inform the Hungarian Government that since the ICRC has not obtained the necessary facilities, it must refuse to lend itself to such an action, and so inform those who have applied to it".¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ "Instructions for Monsieur A. Guillermet du Président du CICR datant du 25 avril 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.3.

¹⁷⁰ For the text of the draft agreement, see Annex XVI.

¹⁷¹ For the exact instructions given to Arthur Guillermet, see Annex XVI.

Further on in the draft, the ICRC defined three different age groups: minors aged 6 and under, minors between the ages of 6 and 14, and minors between 14 and 18. Different considerations operated for each group. Children in the first group were to be restored to their families as soon as the person with parental authority over them determined the family's place of residence. Minors in the second group could be consulted as to whether they wished to return to or leave Hungary. Minors in the last category were to be consulted in all cases. In making this age distinction, the ICRC sought to accommodate the wishes of both the Hungarian authorities and the countries of asylum. The Hungarian government wanted the unconditional repatriation of all children under the age of 18, whereas the Austrian authorities wanted to take account of the wishes of children between the ages of 14 and 18 (whom they considered to be of age).

In the end, the Hungarian authorities rejected the entire proposal. They did not see how the issue of repatriating children could possibly be linked with the issue of emigration: "the Hungarian parents who pester the Hungarian Red Cross and other organizations with their requests for the repatriation of children who escaped abroad cannot, naturally, accept a linkage between their just demands, which are urgent from the moral and humanitarian point of view, and the affairs of persons who, by going abroad and abandoning their children, demonstrated at the time something other than attachment to their children".¹⁷² The Hungarian government emphasized, however, that it did not categorically oppose emigration, and it noted the existing possibilities offered by the legislation governing emigration.

According to delegate Guillermet, the Hungarian government rejected the principle of reciprocity for reasons of prestige. If the government signed an agreement favourable to the refugees, who were considered traitors, it would lose face with the Hungarian population. Conversely, a mass return of refugees would be synonymous with success for the government.¹⁷³ Consequently, the latter proposed an agreement comprising the following provisions: The Hungarian Red Cross would give the ICRC the names of children whose parents wanted them repatriated; the ICRC would then pass these names along to the Red Cross Societies of the countries of asylum so that they could look for the children and facilitate their repatriation. The Hungarian Red Cross would then send the relevant National Societies a statement from the

¹⁷² "Lettre de M. Szarka, Ministre-Adjoint des Affaires étrangères, à M. Guillermet du 8 mai 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.3.

¹⁷³ "Deuxième rapport de M. Guillermet du 13 mai 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.3.

parents requesting the repatriation of their children. Finally, the ICRC would make sure that the National Red Cross Societies in the countries of asylum were indeed taking steps to repatriate children whose parents had requested it.¹⁷⁴ As for the costs of this repatriation, the ICRC would make arrangements with the National Societies or other organizations to cover expenses up to the Hungarian border; from there onward the Hungarian authorities would assume financial responsibility.¹⁷⁵

The arrangement proposed by the Hungarian authorities was completely different from that envisioned by the ICRC, and given these great divergencies, any solution to the repatriation problem seemed impossible. Moreover, the ICRC's family reunification initiative came a little too late, since some countries of asylum had already established agreements with the Hungarian government. The United Kingdom, for example, had set up an "intermediary arrangement" under which the British consul in Budapest was instructed to send for parents who had remained in Hungary to find out whether they wanted their children back.

In August 1957 the question of family reunification was still in limbo. The direct contacts between the Hungarian Red Cross and the National Red Cross Societies of the countries of asylum did not seem to have produced any satisfactory results. Given these circumstances, the Hungarian authorities finally realized that if they wanted to find an overall solution to the repatriation problem, they could not separate it from the issue of emigration. Nonetheless, they rejected the idea of one-on-one exchanges. The ICRC accordingly decided that the best course would be to convene the Hungarian Red Cross and all interested National Red Cross Societies of the countries of asylum to a conference in Geneva. The ICRC's view was that such a conference required neither the presence of all National Societies concerned nor unanimous decisions. It was clear, however, that the principle of two-way family reunification (emigration and repatriation) would have to be adopted as "a precondition for these negotiations".¹⁷⁶ The Hungarian Red Cross pronounced itself favourable to the idea of a conference, but proposed

¹⁷⁴ The return of children over the age of 16 who, contrary to the wishes of their parents, expressed the desire to remain in the country of asylum would be decided by the Hungarian tutelary authority. If the decision called for the repatriation of the child against his will, the ICRC would ensure that it was carried out. "Lettre de M. Szarka, Ministre-Adjoint des Affaires étrangères, à M. Guillermet du 8 mai 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.3.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre Mme Mathez et MM. Boissier, Siordet, Chenevière, Gallopin, Pilloud et Maunoir", AICRC, 225(65).

Budapest as the venue. It also asked "if it might not be possible for participants to have decision-making powers, for example through the presence of governmental delegates or councillors".¹⁷⁷ The ICRC did not object to this, since the goal of the conference was precisely to seek a basis for compromise. The National Societies invited were consequently at liberty to bring governmental experts along.

In October 1957, the idea of a conference for the parties involved was still in the planning stage. It was not until the International Conference of the Red Cross in New Delhi that the problem of family reunification was broached once more: "The XIXth International Red Cross Conference...urges all National Societies and Governments to intensify their efforts in these matters and, in particular, to facilitate by every means the reunion of persons, both adults and children, with their families in accordance with the wishes of such persons, and in the case of minor children in accordance with the wishes of the recognized head of the family no matter where domiciled".¹⁷⁸

At the time when the ICRC closed its delegations, the problem of family reunification was far from resolved. In fact, since the unfruitful negotiations concerning the agreement proposed by the ICRC, no progress had been made on the issue overall.¹⁷⁹ Enormous differences remained between the Hungarian government and the countries of asylum. As the First Secretary of the Hungarian delegation to the European Office of the United Nations remarked during a talk with a member of the ICRC, the planned conference was unlikely to engender any progress towards solving the problem, since all matters of visas and emigration were the province of the government. Moreover, the Hungarian Red Cross might fear the prospect of standing isolated against all the National Societies of the countries of asylum, who were united by their common position. The First Secretary of the Hungarian delegation ended by adding that it would be better not to link the two questions. To which the ICRC responded that it linked them because the refugees themselves were asking their children to emigrate.¹⁸⁰

Actually, the issue of family repatriation was so difficult to resolve because it had been very much politicized. The Hungarian government

¹⁷⁷ "Procès-verbal d'entretien avec M. Fischer et plusieurs membres du CICR du 16 septembre 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

¹⁷⁸ ICRC/LRCS, *International Red Cross Handbook*, 11th ed. (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross and League of Red Cross Societies, 1971), p. 467.

¹⁷⁹ "Plénière du 3 octobre 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹⁸⁰ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Kaposos et Maunoir du 4 octobre 1957", AICRC, 225(65), II.2.

did not want its nationals to leave the country under any circumstances, because that would suggest that living in the West was preferable. The Western countries, for their part, did not want to let the Hungarian children leave, being well aware of the fate that awaited them. It was very possible that if they returned they would be punished for having left the country.

The ICRC's position was difficult to judge, since it had not become involved on its own initiative; it was in a way an intermediary between the two sides rather than one of the parties involved. This position, however, allowed it to be much more demanding with the Hungarian authorities, because its mediation would have no direct impact on its current and future actions in the Eastern bloc. If the Hungarian authorities criticized its position, the ICRC could always take refuge in the fact that its intervention had been requested by the governments. Thus, if its demands were not respected, or did not suit the parties involved, it could withdraw from the negotiations without fearing negative consequences for other aspects of its action.

During the second phase of that action, then, the ICRC acted in several different spheres. First of all, it managed to organize and implement its relief operations without any major problems. In the sphere of protection, it ran up against the Hungarian veto on any action for the benefit of political detainees, and it did not intervene on behalf of deportees and medical personnel. Nonetheless, it succeeded in rendering some assistance to former members of the Hungarian Red Cross. As for the problem of family reunification, it did not manage to achieve anything concrete. The limitations imposed on the accomplishment of its tasks are evident – anything other than material aid was problematic. The ICRC's intervention during this second phase was accepted only because it allowed Hungary to receive Western donations; it did not reflect any improvement in relations between the ICRC and the Eastern bloc.

CHAPTER V

DELEGATES' TEMPORARY MISSIONS IN HUNGARY

Despite the closure of its Budapest delegation, the ICRC wanted to continue its activities in aid of Hungary. Accordingly, in early 1958 it began to send delegates to that country on temporary missions.

1. ASSISTANCE

The ICRC prolonged its relief activities not only for the purpose of assisting the victims of the conflict, but also – and especially – to maintain a presence in Hungary, in the hope that it might thus gain the opportunity to perform its traditional function. Its action on behalf of the war-disabled is proof of this, since the beneficiaries of this action were actually not victims of the events of 1956. The ICRC hoped that if it maintained contact with the Hungarian authorities it might manage to persuade them to authorize visits to political detainees. To keep this foothold in Hungary, then, it continued its relief activities in three spheres: the winding-up of the relief action, the construction of a prosthesis factory, and new material relief programmes.

On the whole, the original relief action was phased out without any major problems, but a few matters required further arrangements. The first involved the last gift supplies provided in the framework of the medical-social programme, which apparently had not been distributed in conformity with the plan established between the Hungarian Red Cross and the ICRC. In 1958, the ICRC had not yet received certain receipts for supplies distributed at the end of 1957 – the receipts that allowed it to verify that the distribution had been carried out properly and that the beneficiaries had received the supplies due them. These receipts were also vital in order to inform donors that their gifts had been distributed, so the ICRC exerted “pressure on the Hungarian Red Cross to obtain them without delay”.¹⁸¹ Finally, the ICRC delegate, then in Budapest on

¹⁸¹ “Procès-verbal de Présidence du 19 juin 1958”, AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

a mission, presented a list of the missing receipts to a representative of the Hungarian Red Cross. The latter gave him a new batch of receipts, but declared that the Hungarian Red Cross had sent a bundle of receipts to the Relief Service in Geneva, which apparently had not acknowledged receiving them.¹⁸² Thus, the receipt problem took time to resolve.

Another issue concerned the use of the money deposited in a blocked account in the Hungarian National Bank.¹⁸³ Some of these funds had already been unblocked to help buy a convalescent home for the staff of the Hungarian Red Cross and to pay labour costs for the manufacture of hospital mattresses. The rest of the money, however, had not yet been spent, and the ICRC and the National Society disagreed on the best use to make of it. The Hungarian Red Cross wanted to use part of it to set up a village for orphaned and abandoned children. The members of the Committee took a dim view of this idea, because they believed it difficult, "in the current climate of Hungary, to envision Pestalozzi villages that would not be centres of political propaganda; information received already shows that children who have returned home have been sent to re-education camps".¹⁸⁴ Although delegate Fischer visited one such village and was very favourably impressed by it, the ICRC adhered to its position.¹⁸⁵ In August 1958, the blocked account still contained a certain amount of money, and the ICRC awaited suggestions from the Hungarian Red Cross as to what to do with it.

The programme of assistance to the disabled, initiated when the ICRC still had its small delegation in Budapest, continued to operate during this third phase of the action. At the beginning of January 1958, the ICRC decided not to await the construction of new premises before sending certain machinery, which then had to be installed in the old factory. This would contribute to a clear improvement in the conditions of prosthesis manufacture.¹⁸⁶ The machinery arrived in Hungary in the summer of 1958. During the same period, the plans for building the new factory were completed and submitted for approval to the relevant ministry. The ICRC urged the Hungarian Red Cross to take any steps it

¹⁸² "Rapport sur la mission de MM. Fischer et Maunoir en Hongrie (31 juillet-9 août 1958)", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

¹⁸³ See p. 36.

¹⁸⁴ "Plénière du 3 octobre 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹⁸⁵ "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre MM. Fischer et Amman du 7 février 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹⁸⁶ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Fischer, Gallopin, Amman et Maunoir du 6 janvier 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

could with the authorities to expedite the start of construction. The work was not well under way until 1961, and its completion was forecast for 1962. According to the ICRC, the delay in this programme was in no way due to unwillingness on the part of the Hungarian authorities, but to the difficulty of finding land and constructing new housing for the people who had been – and in some cases still were – residing on the land chosen for the new factory.¹⁸⁷

In addition, the Hungarian Red Cross requested more machines, which were to be delivered by the ICRC in the autumn of 1961, and a fitter had to be sent as well to provide the necessary technical expertise. Machinery was still being delivered in 1962. Certain models requested by the East German technicians proved to be very difficult to find in Western Europe, and the ICRC planned, if necessary, to order them from East Germany, which it thought would be an additional proof of its neutrality.¹⁸⁸ It also decided to help finance the construction of the prosthesis factory with money drawn directly from the blocked account, a move that definitively closed out the account.

On balance, the action on behalf of the disabled progressed satisfactorily, if slowly. During his mission in 1965, delegate Jean-Pierre Maunoir visited the new factory, which was finally functioning. The joint project had succeeded, but it had taken more than five years. The delay was unintentional; in fact, it had always been in the Hungarian government's interest to get the ICRC off Hungarian soil as quickly as possible. In this respect, it is interesting to note the ICRC's determination to implement this action despite the difficulties and the fact that such a project had no direct connection to the events of 1956. Its beneficiaries were not actually victims of 1956: "about a third of the beneficiaries of the prostheses now being manufactured are war victims. The others were injured in work or road accidents, or suffer from post-operative handicaps".¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the project was doubly advantageous: not only did it provide assistance to this category of victims, but it also gave the ICRC the opportunity to maintain contact with the Hungarian authorities and the local Red Cross so that it could attempt to carry out its traditional tasks.

¹⁸⁷ "Rapport sur la mission de MM. Fischer, Züst et Maunoir à Vienne et Budapest effectuée du 13 au 25 mars 1961", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

¹⁸⁸ "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre MM. Maunoir et Fischer du 7 mars 1962", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

¹⁸⁹ "Rapport sur la mission de MM. Fischer, Züst et Maunoir à Vienne et Budapest effectuée du 13 au 25 mars 1961", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

The ICRC's new relief programme involved the dispatch of medicines to the Hungarian population. At the time local pharmaceutical production was insufficient and all imports had been halted, resulting in a scarcity of medicaments. In fact, during October and December of 1957, the ICRC received 600 individual requests for medicines. After much discussion within the organization,¹⁹⁰ the Committee allocated credit totalling 15,000 Swiss francs, which could be drawn on at a rate of SFR 2,500 a month for six months, thus permitting the Hungarian Red Cross to satisfy individual requests for essential medicines not manufactured in Hungary.¹⁹¹ Thanks to the funds provided by the ICRC and the British and Swiss National Societies, shipments of individual medicines continued past 1963, for as long as the Committee had the means to maintain the operation.¹⁹²

At the beginning of 1958 the ICRC received a plea for medicines worth close to half a million Swiss francs. It wondered whether this massive request could still really be considered part of the emergency action begun in 1956, and whether conditions of supply in Hungary were not adequate to meet this need.¹⁹³ The Hungarian Red Cross tried to justify the magnitude of the request by citing the scarcity of medicines stemming from the events of 1956, an epidemic of poliomyelitis in 1957, and the impossibility of purchasing pharmaceutical products abroad. Still sceptical, the ICRC decided to ascertain the truth of these claims. During their mission in July 1958, the delegates learned that the supply of pharmaceutical products to hospitals was normal, although certain items continued to be unavailable in Hungary.¹⁹⁴ Very probably the matter was dropped, since there is no further reference to it anywhere in the ICRC archives.

Obviously, the ICRC continued its assistance programme for the disabled and initiated the dispatch of medicines because it was still hoping that such relief operations would allow it to carry out its

¹⁹⁰ For details of these discussions, see "Procès-verbaux du 6 janvier 1958 et du 7 février 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹⁹¹ This system was proposed by delegate Fischer. The ICRC now referred all requests for medicines to the Hungarian Red Cross. The latter sorted these requests exclusively on the basis of the product's availability in the country and criteria of medical urgency, and forwarded the resulting list to the ICRC, which then made bulk shipments. If requests exceeded the fixed monthly sum, the ICRC carried the deficit over to the next month.

¹⁹² "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre Mme Koltai et M. Maunoir du 20 février 1963", AICRC, 225(65), III.4, 1961-1970.

¹⁹³ "Rapport sur la mission de MM. Fischer et Maunoir en Hongrie (31 juillet-9 août 1958)", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

protective function. One of the Committee members suggested this very clearly; Jacques Chenevière proposed that under cover of distributing medicaments, delegate Fischer might go to Budapest from time to time to continue the ICRC's protective measures.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the ICRC realized that the Hungarian Red Cross was beginning to abuse Western generosity, and decided not to respond to all of its requests.

2. PROTECTION

The ICRC remained active in the sphere of protection. It attended first to political detainees, for whom it made every effort, then to medical personnel, and finally to persons who had been convicted and faced execution.

A. *Political Detainees*

We saw that the ICRC's final effort to assist political detainees was an attempt to send them relief parcels, and that the failure of this action led the Committee to resolve not to undertake any special measures on behalf of this group. At the end of 1957, however, the President of the ICRC sent a letter to the Hungarian Red Cross reiterating the proposal to distribute parcels in the prisons, but received no answer. The ICRC repeated its request, specifying that it would like the Hungarian Red Cross to send it a plan for a programme to distribute 200-300 individual parcels.¹⁹⁶ The Hungarian Red Cross did not react until February 1958, when it finally announced its willingness to distribute 500 parcels to detainees.

During June 1958, the ICRC learned that the 500 parcels delivered at the beginning of the year had indeed been distributed. It entertained no illusions, however, as to the significance of that distribution. This first successful action on behalf of political detainees could be credited in large part to the Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross, Joseph Karpati; it did not mean that the Hungarian government was any more inclined to accept protection activities.

The situation with respect to visits to political detainees also changed. The Hungarian Red Cross had offered relief for Greek political detainees,

¹⁹⁵ "Procès-verbal de Présidence entre MM. Fischer, Boissier, Olgiati et Chenevière du 10 octobre 1957", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

¹⁹⁶ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Fischer, Gallopin et Maunoir du 6 janvier 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1.

thereby providing ammunition for the ICRC in its efforts to obtain permission to visit detainees in Hungary. It reminded the Hungarian Red Cross that action on behalf of the Greek political detainees came under the heading of a general action for the needy population. Since the Hungarian population had already benefited from that part of the programme, the ICRC would be happy if its action in Hungary could now be extended to detainees and internees.¹⁹⁷ Despite this new turn of events, the chances of a delegate's receiving permission to visit political detainees remained very slim. The Hungarian government refused, in fact, to equate Greek political detainees with Hungarian ones. It seemed clear that the government would never accept "the idea of a foreign organization inspecting places of detention".¹⁹⁸

Yet the ICRC persevered in its efforts. The issue resurfaced during the mission that delegates Maunoir and Fischer carried out in July-August 1958. One of the delegates reminded the Hungarian Red Cross that the ICRC had already made visits of this kind in other countries and that they did not have the character of inspections, their sole purpose being to enquire into the material conditions of detention.

With respect to Hungary's particular circumstances, the existence of an internment camp had been confirmed by a communiqué in April 1958 from the Hungarian Embassy in Bern. Accordingly, delegates Maunoir and Fischer sought authorization to visit this camp and, while they were about it, to distribute relief supplies there.¹⁹⁹ The Hungarian Red Cross refused, asserting that detention conditions in Hungary were outstanding. The Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross, Joseph Karpati, announced that the next time the ICRC delegates were in Budapest, he would have information on the Hungarian detention system ready for them. He added that they would "be amazed to see how favourable those conditions are compared with those of Western penitentiary facilities".²⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the delegate insisted on the importance the ICRC attached to this issue, and stressed that "if Hungary really wants to stop the currently uncontrollable rumours circulating in the West, the Hungarian Red Cross should realize that the ICRC's offer to visit is the best way to do it".²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ "Conseil de Présidence du 19 juin 1957", AICRC, 251(65), 1.2, 1957-1964.

¹⁹⁹ "Rapport sur la mission de MM. Fischer et Maunoir en Hongrie (31 juillet-9 août 1958)", AICRC, 251(65), 1.2, 1957-1964.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

While visiting Geneva in September 1958, Joseph Karpati announced that he had not yet received the report on detention conditions that he had promised the ICRC. As for the ICRC's offer of relief supplies for prison infirmaries and hospitals, the Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross asserted that it was under consideration. During Karpati's visit, the ICRC did not ask again to visit the prisons.²⁰² Two months passed before the ICRC President sent off another letter on the subject.

Seven months later, in June 1959, Joseph Karpati informed the ICRC that he had asked the Ministry of the Interior if a delegation could visit the detainees. Although he had not obtained permission for an official visit, he could provide some news of them: they were regularly fed and supplies were adequate.

Although according to the latest news "the prison and camp populations have reportedly been cut down considerably",²⁰³ Karpati continued to request, on behalf of the ICRC, permission to visit detainees, and hoped to obtain it in time for Ernst Fischer's next mission. In light of the slow progress of this process, in September 1959 the ICRC President wrote another letter. The ICRC wondered at the Hungarian attitude towards political detainees: "It is rather shocking to consider how little has been achieved in this sphere in Hungary and the interest shown by the Hungarian Red Cross in the issue of political detainees in Greece".²⁰⁴

At the beginning of 1960, the ICRC President wrote to the Hungarian Red Cross for the third time, on this occasion to request a resumption of the modest parcel-distribution programme in the prisons.²⁰⁵ The President's determination to attend personally to protection tasks showed clearly here. He had been chagrined, moreover, to see how quickly the authorities and the Hungarian Red Cross acted in the sphere of material relief, compared with their lack of urgency in responding to requests concerning protection.²⁰⁶

Finally undertaking to speak to the Minister of the Interior about political detainees, Joseph Karpati requested exact documentation on what the ICRC had already done elsewhere in this domain. He also promised complete support for the plan to send parcels, even drawing up

²⁰² "Note de Mme Mathez à M. Maunoir du 29 septembre 1958", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

²⁰³ "Bericht über die IKRK-Mission (1er-14 juin 1959)", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

²⁰⁴ "Procès-verbal de Présidence du 25 février 1960", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ "Rapport de mission de Mme Pfrter et M. Fischer fait au Conseil de Présidence du 2 mai 1960", AICRC, 251(65), I.2.

a list to aid in their composition, which he gave to the ICRC. He warned, however, that if the ICRC continued to link the issue of Greek political detainees to that of Hungarian internees, he would cut off all contact. According to him, these two situations could not be compared; the Greek camps were completely destitute, which was not the case in the Hungarian camps.²⁰⁷

During his 1961 mission, Ernst Fischer received a response from the Hungarian government concerning the distribution of parcels. The Hungarian government did not object to such a distribution, and even proposed to send political detainees a shipment of 500 parcels containing underclothes and multivitamin tablets. The authorities imposed the condition, however, that the parcels be put together by the Hungarian Red Cross and their contents be purchased in Hungary.

The question of visits, in contrast, remained thorny. Joseph Karpati explained that the Minister of the Interior was reluctant to approve them because he did not grasp their humanitarian purpose. Like his government, Karpati was surprised "that the ICRC is so concerned about people considered in Hungary as 'war criminals', whereas in so many other countries its intervention seems much better justified".²⁰⁸ But the ICRC stood firm. Seeing that it could not visit political detainees itself, it asked the Hungarian Red Cross to do so and to send it a report afterwards. Karpati objected to this idea, since he did not see how, in his capacity as Secretary-General, he could report to the ICRC on matters pertaining exclusively to Hungary's internal affairs.²⁰⁹

Nonetheless, a few months later the Hungarian Red Cross announced to the ICRC that two of its representatives had visited detainees and that they would report their impressions to Geneva headquarters.²¹⁰ One member of the ICRC argued that although these visits represented a step forward, the ICRC must not stop there. In fact, he was of the opinion that Karpati had taken these steps because of the ICRC's insistence, which meant that the ICRC could demand more.²¹¹

The Hungarian Red Cross had visited the Vac and Kalocsa prisons, and reported that the treatment of female detainees in the Kalocsa prison was perfectly satisfactory. They were kept busy with sewing work, and

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ "Rapport sur la mission du CICR à Vienne et Budapest effectuée du 13 au 25 mars 1961", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ "Lettre de M. Karpati à M. Boissier du 30 août 1961", AICRC, 225(65), III.4.

²¹¹ "Lettre de M. Maunoir à M. Fischer du 27 septembre 1961", AICRC, 225(65), III.4.

enjoyed the use of a constantly replenished library. In addition, they were entitled to family visits once a month.²¹² The Hungarian Red Cross announced, however, that after these two prison visits it did not intend to make a regular habit of this kind of intervention. Its activities on behalf of detainees were limited to providing them with clothing preparatory to their release.²¹³

Carrying out the planned parcel distribution posed problems. The price the Hungarian Red Cross charged for making up the parcels was exorbitant. The ICRC received the impression that the authorities, if not the Hungarian Red Cross itself, meant not only to obtain the maximum financial benefit from the operation, but also to discourage its repetition.²¹⁴ An arrangement was made so that the distribution could take place, but it was to be the last. The ICRC repeated its request in 1963 in vain.²¹⁵

As for visits, it was not until 1964 that the ICRC finally received permission to visit a prison. As Maunoir, the delegate entrusted with this mission, remarked,

“the visit of 12 October – which did not take place earlier because I was not free last summer – constituted the first visit to a place of detention in Hungary since 1945. Although it gave us an idea of the Hungarian penitentiary system, it did not afford the ICRC any opportunity to gain access to those prisoners – numbering 460, according to the estimate of the association of former Hungarian political detainees in exile – who, despite the two amnesties (the second in 1963), are still being held as a result of the 1956 Revolution”.²¹⁶

The two prisoners questioned by the ICRC during this visit had been arrested in 1964 and 1965, respectively. Their arrest therefore had no connection with the events of 1956.

Thus, the ICRC never managed to see a single person who had been arrested for his or her participation in the events of 1956 – a real failure from the ICRC point of view. As the Executive Director, Roger Gallopin,

²¹² “Procès-verbal d’entretien entre Mmes Koltai et Pfirter ainsi que M. Maunoir du 7 décembre 1961”, AICRC, 225(65), III.4.

²¹³ “Rapport de mission du 19 juin 1962”, AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

²¹⁴ “Lettre de M. Maunoir à M. Fischer du 19 février 1962”, AICRC, 225(65), III.4.

²¹⁵ “Procès-verbal d’entretien entre Mme Koltai et M. Maunoir du 19 décembre 1963”, AICRC, 225(65), III.4.

²¹⁶ “Rapport de mission de M. J.-P. Maunoir en Hongrie du 10 au 13 octobre 1965”, AICRC, 225(65), III.1.

noted, "although we have managed, during the past years, to contribute largely to the Hungarian Red Cross's actions on behalf of the civilian population affected by the events of 1956, it was not possible to implement the terms of Article 3 with respect to persons detained as a result of participating in the events in question".²¹⁷

For their part, the Hungarian authorities felt they had done all that was necessary to meet the requirements of Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions: "authorization granted to the Hungarian Red Cross to visit, in 1961, two places of detention and to send relief parcels, and, finally, the authorization granted to Mr. Maunoir to visit the Penitentiary Centre of Thöko on 12 October 1965".²¹⁸ Once again the divergence between the ICRC and Hungary with respect to political detainees was strongly in evidence.

B. Medical Personnel

The ICRC also continued its action on behalf of medical personnel. Unfortunately, it had not made much progress. In 1958, lacking evidence of ill treatment, it did not plan any intervention on behalf of these persons.²¹⁹ In 1959 the ICRC was told several times, though always orally, that doctors and nurses had been imprisoned, ill-treated, or even executed for providing medical aid to insurgents. However, it was not able to obtain any concrete details of these cases – as though the potential witnesses were anxious to keep silent. Having no tangible evidence, the ICRC refrained from intervening.

Similarly, it did not take any steps to assist former members of the Hungarian Red Cross. In the meantime, too, the former Head of the Foreign Relations Department, Mihály Gedenyi, had been released from prison.

C. Persons Convicted and Threatened with Execution

During this third phase of its activities, however, the ICRC was confronted by a new problem. At the end of 1959, Hungary carried out mass executions of mostly young people who had just reached majority, the Hungarian government having awaited that moment in order to implement the death sentence. This news aroused strong feelings in the

²¹⁷ "Lettre de M. Gallopin à M. Rostás du 12 janvier 1966", AICRC, 225(65), III.4.

²¹⁸ For the full report, see Annex XVII.

²¹⁹ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Fischer, Gallopin, Amman et Maunoir du 6 janvier 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

West, and many National Societies, associations, and individuals contacted the ICRC asking for more information and urging it to intervene. Since the Hungarian government completely denied the reports, the ICRC responded to all petitions by repeating the official statements. János Kádár in fact formally denied these executions in the Hungarian paper *Népszabadság* on 1 November 1959.

“Mr. Kádár notes how far the spiritual arsenal of the architects of the Cold War has declined of late. That is why they strive to come up with a point or two and then try to bicker over them. [...] In the last few days they have invented a report that a whole series of young people were in prison in Hungary, and that the government was waiting for them to reach the age of 16 in order to hang them. It goes without saying that here everyone knows full well that such assertions are nothing but base lies and vile provocations.”²²⁰

From testimony gathered by one of its delegates, the ICRC learned in 1960 that the executions of Hungarian minors who had participated in the insurrection had indeed taken place. At that point the ICRC took a clear position. If it received any more requests for information on the matter, it would no longer comment on whether the executions had taken place. However, it would continue to ask applicants to provide names, which it needed in order to request information from the Hungarian authorities. Otherwise, the ICRC resolved to await its delegates' next mission to decide if and how it would intervene. During their 1961 mission, delegates Ernst Fischer, Félix Züst, and Jean-Pierre Maunoir raised the question of the execution of minors with the members of the Hungarian Red Cross, who denied everything. Under these circumstances, no intervention seemed possible, and the ICRC apparently did not alter its position thereafter. It thought that the young Hungarians had probably been executed long before.²²¹

Despite the ICRC's many efforts during this last phase of its action, its protection activities remained limited. It did manage to visit one prison, but this seems a derisory accomplishment compared with the approximately 50,000 tonnes of relief supplies, worth close to 88 million Swiss francs, distributed in Hungary between October 1956 and December 1957.²²² The gap between the relief action and the protection

²²⁰ “Traduction de l'article paru en hongrois dans le *Népszabadság*, organe officiel du Parti communiste de Hongrie, XVII^e année, no. 257 du 1^{er} novembre 1959”, AICRC, 225(65), III.4.

²²¹ “Note de dossier de M. Maunoir du 23 décembre 1960”, AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

²²² Jean-François Golay, *Le financement de l'aide humanitaire. L'exemple du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 102.

action persisted; Hungary accepted any ICRC intervention that gave it material aid, but rejected any intervention relating to measures of repression.

3. FAMILY REUNIFICATION

During this last phase of its action, the ICRC was still working on the problem of reuniting families, but without much success. The Hungarian Red Cross disregarded the problem of emigration and gave priority to repatriation. The ICRC explained the Hungarian position to the National Societies of the countries of asylum, but refrained from comment. The National Societies expressed their disappointment. The various parties concerned apparently did not reach any satisfactory agreement. The conference planned in 1957 that was supposed to bring all the sides together was cancelled.²²³

In addition, the Hungarian Red Cross wanted the ICRC to finance the repatriations. The ICRC was willing to bear the costs only if family reunification was achieved in both directions, through repatriation and emigration.²²⁴ The Hungarian Red Cross also wanted to obtain the lists of minors drawn up by the ICRC, but the latter refused to cooperate in any way with the Hungarian Red Cross, since it had declined to ratify the agreement proposed in April 1957.

Solving the problem was increasingly urgent, however, since moral standards were declining among young people in the refugee camps, to a disturbing degree. Teenage pregnancies were not unusual. According to the mission delegate, no time was to be lost if the situation was not to turn against the West.²²⁵ In May 1958, the ICRC sent the Hungarian Red Cross a letter explaining its position:

"The ICRC, having examined the question, does not feel able to abandon the position it has held until now. [...] The problem of repatriating Hungarian children is the responsibility of the authorities of the countries of asylum and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. [...] Please note that the ICRC, for its part, is ready to accord a favourable examination to any proposal the

²²³ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre Mme Mathez et MM. Kapcsos et Maunoïr du 21 janvier 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

²²⁴ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Fischer, Gallopin, Amman et Maunoïr du 6 janvier 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

²²⁵ "Procès-verbal de téléphone entre MM. Amman et Fischer du 7 janvier 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.1, 1957-1964.

Hungarian Red Cross may make concerning the reunification of dispersed Hungarian families".²²⁶

During their mission in July 1958, Maunoir and Fischer raised the issue again. They reminded the Hungarians that the ICRC had given up trying to find a global solution to the problem of family reunification, and that it had left the National Societies of the Red Cross to arrange the matter directly among themselves. The ICRC had not altered its position. It still refused to be party to a one-way reunification operation. Moreover, it was tired of having to seek solutions. If the Hungarian authorities wanted the ICRC's assistance, "it is now their responsibility to come up with a general idea or to suggest a specific plan".²²⁷

The Hungarian authorities, for their part, continued to give repatriation priority over emigration. They contended that the children had emigrated not out of fear of the regime, but in a spirit of adventure, and that was why their parents were rightly calling for their return. The problem was that the countries of asylum were concealing the truth about Hungary from the children and preventing them from corresponding freely with their families. The Hungarian authorities therefore asked the ICRC to use its influence with the countries of asylum to facilitate the children's return.

The fate of repatriated children no longer depended on the general amnesty declared in 1957; that amnesty had been replaced by individual measures allowing the Hungarian authorities to decide each case when entry visas were granted. In addition, the Hungarian Red Cross offered the ICRC access to its tracing service files in order to examine the cases of some 30 repatriated children and find out whether they had in fact been restored to their families and were leading normal lives. The ICRC did not consider this offer very significant, since no useful survey conclusions could be reached thereby. Accordingly, it relinquished the idea of monitoring the fate of repatriated refugees in any way.

At a meeting in September 1958, the members of the Hungarian Red Cross gave the ICRC delegates a list of 18 people authorized to leave Hungary as well as a list of 475 requests for repatriation. It also handed over a list of Hungarian refugees who were said to have committed suicide in countries of asylum, a list of those hospitalized abroad for mental disturbances, and a list of children imprisoned in various countries. The ICRC merely accepted the lists and assured the

²²⁶ "Procès-verbal d'entretien entre MM. Fischer et Gallopin et Mme Mathez du 22 mai 1958", AICRC, 251(65), I.2, 1957-1964.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

Hungarian Red Cross that it would hand them on to the National Societies concerned, as it had in the past.²²⁸

During 1959, no global solution was found to the problem of family reunification. Some countries, such as Yugoslavia, arranged matters in their own way. In June 1959, Belgrade organized a fourth transfer of Hungarian children back to their country of origin. The Hungarian Red Cross claimed that these transfers derived from the border shared by the two countries and thus had nothing to do with the issue of refugees from the 1956 events. The ICRC's actions in 1959 were limited to conveying requests for information to the Hungarian Red Cross and verifying their accuracy.

The High Commissioner for Refugees asserted that certain repatriated refugees had been arrested and prosecuted. The ICRC decided to seek confirmation of this information from the Hungarian Red Cross. During his mission to Hungary in June 1959, delegate Fischer learned that repatriated refugees who were escaped convicts were indeed arrested when they returned to Hungary. Juvenile delinquents were placed in reformatories.

Between 1960 and 1962 the ICRC handled several cases of family reunification, but no general measures could be applied. Instead, it solved individual problems on a case-by-case basis in response to requests from the High Commissioner for Refugees or the people involved.

In short, the ICRC never managed to achieve a general agreement governing family reunification, and its role as an intermediary between Hungary and the countries of asylum was useful only in a few isolated cases. This, then, represented yet another failure for the ICRC in the protection sphere.

²²⁸ "Note de Mme Mathez à M. Maunoir du 29 septembre 1958", AICRC, 225(65), II.4.

CONCLUSION

Of all the world organizations – including the United Nations – only the ICRC was authorized to intervene in Hungary following the events of 1956. Entrusted with the task of maintaining relations between the West and Hungary, it played a key diplomatic role. Naturally its mission was humanitarian above all, and in that sphere it achieved notable success, despite the restrictions placed on its activities.

It was most successful in the provision of material aid. Fifty thousand tonnes of relief supplies, worth close to 88 million Swiss francs, were distributed between October 1956 and December 1957. In the emergency stage (27 October-11 November 1956), the ICRC action consisted primarily in distributing supplies and medicines donated by countries all over the world. Subsequently (November 1956-June 1957), two delegations were established, one in Vienna and the other in Budapest, in order to administer 167 food and clothing assistance programmes. During the last phase of its action, the ICRC operated longer-term, more socially oriented programmes, the main one being the construction of a prosthesis factory to benefit the war-disabled.

The ICRC did not prolong its aid programmes merely to assist the victims of the Hungarian Revolution, but also to maintain a foothold in Hungary so that it could attempt to carry out its traditional function of protection. It was precisely in this domain, however, that the ICRC's action in Hungary proved particularly difficult.

During the fighting, the ICRC had called on the belligerents to respect the Geneva Conventions and had tried to visit detainees. It was able to do this in the insurgent camp, but all its efforts failed with the Soviet forces. After the initial emergency period, protection activities took on particular importance for the ICRC. It badgered the Hungarian authorities incessantly in its attempts to offer protection to political detainees, deportees, and medical personnel persecuted for having provided care to insurgents – but all in vain. In addition, the ICRC played a coordinating role in family reunification, but in this sphere, too, obstruction by the Hungarian government made the task impossible. As for its work with political detainees, it was not until 1965, 9 years after submitting its request, that the ICRC finally managed to visit a prison.

Nor was it able to follow up on this action. It succeeded only in organizing the distribution of relief parcels in the prisons.

Clearly the ICRC's action was essentially limited in the sphere of protection. Anything that did not relate to material assistance was problematic. Hungary – and by extension the Soviet Union – accepted the material relief that the ICRC could give them because they needed it; but they obstinately rejected most of its protection initiatives. This rejection reflected Moscow's ideological insistence on Western, and, by the same token, ICRC, non-interference in the affairs of the Eastern bloc.

It should be recalled that since World War II relations between the ICRC and the Soviet Union had been difficult. At the 1952 International Conference of the Red Cross, the Soviets had made harsh attacks on the ICRC, accusing it of being in the pay of the capitalists. After the ICRC's intervention in Hungary, however, the USSR appeared to be less hostile. At the 1957 International Conference of the Red Cross, there were no more accusations like those voiced in 1952. This improvement was limited, however; invited to the USSR by the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 1958 and 1960, the President and Vice-President of the ICRC were allowed no contact with USSR authorities. It was not until the Cuban crisis in 1962 that the ICRC actually entered into contact with the Soviet government. The USSR gave the ICRC permission to monitor its ships en route to Cuba to make sure that they were not carrying any missiles – although no inspection actually took place, since the Soviet ships turned back.

After 1956, relations between the USSR and the ICRC remained ambiguous, apparently reflecting the ideological contradictions between Marxism as understood by the Soviet Communist Party and the humanitarian doctrine of the Red Cross, which was based on the primacy of the individual.²²⁹ In fact, only the ICRC's behaviour towards the Soviet Union can be explained. In the context of the Cold War, the international community was certain that a third world war was imminent. Following the events of 1956, the American President Dwight Eisenhower wondered whether “with the deterioration of the Soviet Union's hold over its satellites might not the Soviet Union resort to extreme measures, even to be tempted to start a world war? This possibility we must watch with utmost care”.²³⁰

²²⁹ Jiří Toman, “Les pays socialistes et le droit des conflits armés”, undated manuscript lent by the author.

²³⁰ Miklós Molnár, *Budapest 1956. A History of the Hungarian Revolution*, p. 218.

The ICRC had been worrying about this for a long time. On the eve of the Diplomatic Conference of 1949 it was already drawing its conclusions from World War II and providing itself with better means of intervention in the expectation of an impending world conflict. However, it kept its concerns to itself, partly in order to avoid fueling the Communist claims that it preferred war to peace.²³¹

Hence, throughout its action in Hungary, the ICRC understandably took care not to “rush anything and especially [not] to break off valuable contacts”²³² of greater significance than its activity on Hungarian territory. As the delegate Melchior Borsinger remarked, in its Hungarian action the ICRC was trying to “maintain contact with certain groups that distrust everything emanating from our regions, precisely so that it can act effectively if the worst happens. This also works to the advantage of the American people, since it constitutes a sort of ‘disaster insurance’ for the future”.²³³

²³¹ Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952*, p. 37.

²³² “Lettre de M. Borsinger au président du CICR du 8 juin 1957”, AICRC, 251(65), L2. For the full text of this letter, see Annex XVIII.

²³³ *Ibid.*



Hungary 1956-57

Austria, 1956: Return of a relief convoy after the Hungarian uprising.
ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-14/10)



Hungary 1957

An ICRC convoy transporting medicines from the League to Hungary in January 1957.
ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-14/4)



Hungary 1956 – Aid

An ICRC convoy crosses the Austro-Hungarian border
(from Klingenback to Sopron Votava) on 11 November 1956.
ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HIST.1993)



Hungary 1956-57

Budapest: Children's relief action.

ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-21/21) (Reproduced negative)



Hungary 1956-57
Budapest: Children's relief – Rädga Barnen.
ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-21/16) (Reproduced negative)



Hungary 1956-57

Budapest: Children's relief action.

ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-21/19) (Reproduced negative)



Hungary 1956-57

Freudenau warehouse. These relief supplies were intended for the population of Budapest.

© Franz Hausmann, Vienna

ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-21/34)



Hungary 1956-57

Budapest (photo provided by Hungarian Red Cross).
ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-21/30) (Reproduced negative)



Hungary 1956-57

Vienna-Budapest airlift and mission of Messrs Bovey and Beckh –
Visit to political prisoners and detainees.

© ICRC/H.G. Beckh (Ref. HU-21/32) (Reproduced negative)



Hungary 1956-57

Budapest, Dec. 1956-April 1957: Distribution of standard food parcels.
ICRC Photo Archives (Ref. HU-21/27) (Reproduced negative)



Hungary 1956-57

Signing in Geneva (4 December 1956) of the agreement between the United Nations
and the ICRC concerning the distribution of relief supplies in Hungary.

Photo ICRC Hungary 5/2



Hungary 1956

Vienna-Budapest airlift, 29-31 October 1956. The first relief supplies arrive in Budapest.

Photo Hungarian Red Cross (Ref. HU-19/10)

ANNEX I

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ICRC

The ICRC was born of the initiative of one man, Henry Dunant, who, confronted by the atrocities of the Battle of Solferino and the lack of military medical services, improvised, with the assistance of the local population, a relief operation for the wounded who had been abandoned to their fate on the battlefield. On the strength of that experience, in 1862 Dunant wrote a book entitled *A Memory of Solferino*, in which he described not only what he had seen on that battlefield, but also the solutions he had conceived to provide relief to all wounded soldiers without discrimination. He proposed concerted international action on two levels. First, in peacetime, in every country, national relief committees²³⁴ could be established that would intervene during conflicts; second, States would be urged to respect a certain number of provisions protecting the action of these national committees. To promote these new ideas, in 1863 he created, together with four Genevans,²³⁵ the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded, which, on 20 December 1875, officially became the International Committee of the Red Cross.

From the outset the ICRC had a rather vast field of activities. Since it had founded the International Red Cross Movement, it was responsible for recognizing new National Red Cross Societies that wanted to join the Movement. It was also charged with ensuring that international humanitarian law was respected, specifically the First Geneva Convention of 1864, which it had originated and promoted. Finally, it was supposed to try to protect and assist victims of conflict on the battlefield, as Henry Dunant had done at Solferino in 1859.

2. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ICRC IN THE 1950s

Although the ICRC employed 3,700 people at the end of World War II, its staff had diminished to about 300 by 1952, and 200 in 1962. These figures included

²³⁴ These national relief committees were later called National Red Cross Societies, and the first of them, founded in 1867, was the Netherlands Red Cross. See Paul Ruegger, "The Juridical Aspects of the Organisation of the International Red Cross", *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law* 82, Vol. 1 (1953): 492.

²³⁵ Gustave Moynier, Guillaume-Henri Dufour, Théodore Maunoir, and Louis Appia.

both headquarters and field staff, paid employees and volunteers. The small scale of the staff allowed information to circulate easily between the different divisions.

The ICRC was structured like a pyramid, the highest authority of the organization being the Committee, numbering at most 25 members²³⁶ co-opted from among the Swiss citizenry – most of them in easy circumstances and university-educated. Of the 18 Committee members in 1956, only eight did not have doctorates.

Members of the Committee in 1956:

Max Huber	Doctor of Laws, former President of the Permanent Court of International Justice, <i>Honorary President</i>
Léopold Boissier	Doctor of Laws, Honorary Professor at the University of Geneva, former Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, <i>President</i>
Jacques Chenevière	Honorary Doctor of Literature
Lucie Odier	Former Head of the District Nursing Service, Geneva Branch of the Swiss Red Cross
Carl J. Burckhardt	Doctor of Philosophy, former Swiss Minister to France
Martin Bodmer	Honorary Doctor of Philosophy, <i>Vice-President</i>
Ernest Gloor	Doctor of Medicine
Paul Carry	Doctor of Laws, Professor at the University of Geneva
Edmond Grasset	Doctor of Medicine, Professor at the University of Geneva, Director of the Geneva Institute of Public Health
Paul Ruegger	Former Swiss Minister to Italy and the United Kingdom, Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration
Henri Guisan	General, former Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army
Alfredo Vannotti	Doctor of Medicine, Professor at the University of Lausanne
Rodolfo Olgiati	Former Director of the Don Suisse
Marguerite von Berchem	Former Head of Section, Central Prisoners of War Agency
Frédéric Siordet	Lawyer, ICRC Adviser since 1943, <i>Vice-President</i>

²³⁶ 'The Statutes adopted by vote at the meeting of 10 March 1921 established 25 as the maximum number of people able to meet together'. Diego Fiscalini, *Des élites au service d'une cause humanitaire: le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge* (history dissertation, University of Geneva, 1985), p. 12.

Marcel Junod	Doctor of Medicine, ICRC Delegate from 1935 to 1946
Ernest Nobs	Former Federal Councillor
Guillaume Bordier	Certified Engineer EPF, MBA Harvard, Banker

Directorate:

Roger Gallopin	Executive Director
Jean S. Pictet	Director for General Affairs
Edouard de Bondeli	Assistant Director
Claude Pilloud	Assistant Director for General Affairs

The social status and education of the Committee members were important, since certain governments, notably that of the USSR, considered the process of recruiting Committee members too selective. In addition, most of the Committee members also had professions completely independent of the ICRC, since the latter required their presence only once a month, at the plenary meeting of the Committee.²³⁷ During those meetings, the Committee exercised its mandated functions, namely to define ICRC policy and the principles that must guide it, to take the initiatives it saw fit in accordance with those principles, and to supervise the executive and administrative bodies of the organization.

In between the Committee's plenary sessions, the Presidential Council was in charge of directing affairs and carrying out decisions. This Council met once a week and consisted of the President, the two Vice-Presidents, and three other Committee members. The day-to-day management of affairs and the implementation of measures undertaken at the Committee's bidding were the responsibility of a central administration divided into three divisions supervised by two directors. Since 1950, Roger Gallopin had been the director of both the Executive and Administrative Divisions.

Under his authority, David de Traz, Deputy Executive Director, managed the Executive Division and Edouard de Bondeli, Assistant Director, managed the Administrative Division. The Executive Division dealt with all issues involving assistance to conflict victims.²³⁸ The Administrative Division took care

²³⁷ Certain members of the Committee were also members of the Presidential Council, so attended meetings every week. For more details on the activities of ICRC members, see "Annexe: fiches biographiques" in Fiscalini, *Des élites au service d'une cause humanitaire*.

²³⁸ This division included the following services:

- 1) Central Prisoners of War Agency;
- 2) Prisoners and Civilian Internees;
- 3) Delegations Abroad;
- 4) Relief;
- 5) Medical;
- 6) Pharmaceutical;
- 7) War Invalids;
- 8) Nursing.

of current administrative and financial matters, and consequently consisted of only two services, that of administration and staff, and the accounts section.

The third division was directed by Jean Pictet, assisted by Assistant Director Claude Pilloud. This division took responsibility for all permanent services except for the conduct of operations.²³⁹

This was the set-up at ICRC headquarters. The ICRC organization in the field was divided between two kinds of delegations, those considered "permanent", and those set up to deal with specific conflicts. In 1952, there were 32 permanent delegations scattered over five continents.²⁴⁰ In countries where the ICRC had no permanent delegation – as was the case in Hungary and the USSR in 1952 – the ICRC maintained ties with those countries by means of traveling delegates who went where needed.

The second kind of delegation fluctuated in number as conflicts arose to which the ICRC had to respond. The number and role of the personnel employed by these delegations changed constantly: "The ICRC may appoint delegates for its outside activities. It shall determine, in each given case, the powers and duties of such delegates".²⁴¹ Nonetheless, their main task was to represent the ICRC and to implement the actions dictated by it. The delegates played an extremely important role, since often, for one reason or another, they were compelled to make decisions on their own, in the name of the ICRC: "The delegates, although only a cog in the machine in terms of the total organization, are the pillars of the ICRC".²⁴²

Given the relative complexity of this system of organization, it is difficult to understand how information circulated within it. In this respect, the explanation provided by Melchior Borsinger, a former delegate,²⁴³ remains the most

²³⁹ This division incorporated the following services:

- 1) The Secretariat of the ICRC and of the Presidential Council;
- 2) Legal;
- 3) Information and *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge/International Review of the Red Cross*;
- 4) Archives and Mail;
- 5) Translation.

All information concerning the central administration was taken from ICRC, *Report on General Activities (January 1 to December 31, 1950)* (Geneva: ICRC, 1951), p. 8.

²⁴⁰ ICRC, *Report on the Work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (January 1 to December 31, 1952)* (Geneva: ICRC, 1953), p. 10.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁴² Jacques Freymond, *Guerres, Révolutions, Croix-Rouge: Réflexions sur le rôle du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge* (Geneva: Graduate Institute of International Studies, 1976), p. 11.

²⁴³ Author's interview, 1 July 1994, with Melchior Borsinger, an ICRC delegate during the events of 1956.

satisfactory. At the ICRC, communication was two-way, moving from the "bottom" (that is, the field) towards the "top" (the Committee) and vice-versa, passing through all the bodies between the two. The Committee received information through the intermediary of the Presidential Council, in which the directors presented reports on the situation in the field. It then conveyed its decisions to the various intermediary bodies, which had the task of passing them on to the delegates in the field. Generally speaking, it can be said that the Committee was responsible for the major decisions, while the delegates took the initiative only to unblock a situation; they did not decide the general course of ICRC actions.

ANNEX II

THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

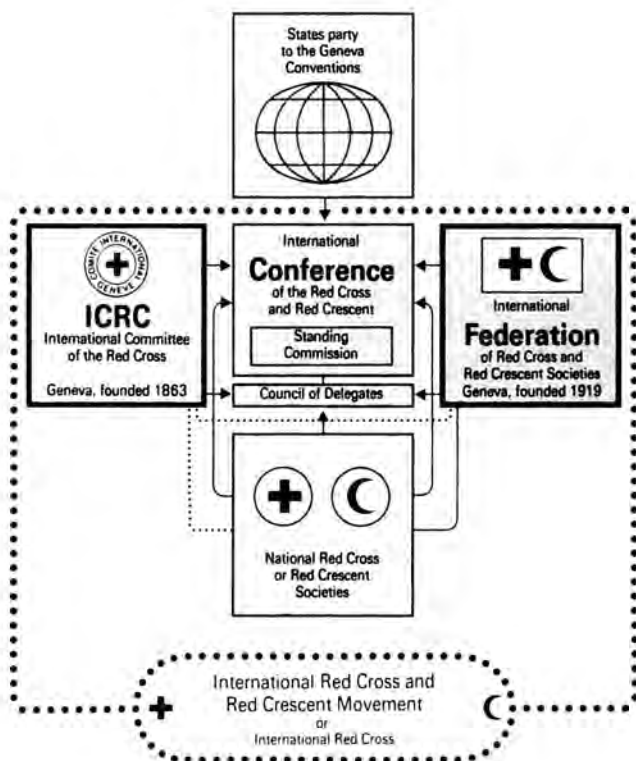
The members of the International Red Cross are clearly listed in the first article of the Statutes of the Movement, originally adopted at The Hague in 1928, revised at Toronto in 1952, and adopted in its present form by the 25th International Conference of the Red Cross at Geneva in October 1986: "The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement [...] is composed of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies recognized in accordance with Article 4 [...], of the International Committee of the Red Cross [...] and of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies".²⁴⁴ Today, as they did in the 1950s, these components maintain direct contact through the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, at which, as a rule, they all meet together every four years.

In addition to the delegations of these bodies, the International Conference is attended by delegations from the States party to the Geneva Conventions. These delegations play a key role in the Red Cross Movement through their participation in the International Conference, since this body is the supreme deliberative authority of the organization. The International Conference has the task of making recommendations, taking decisions, and expressing wishes concerning the orientation of the International Red Cross. It is supposed to coordinate the efforts of the different components of the Movement, and, when necessary, to assign specific mandates to the ICRC and the Federation. It may make proposals concerning humanitarian and other international conventions relating to the International Red Cross. Finally, it alone is competent to revise its Statutes and Rules of Procedure, and to resolve any disputes between the ICRC and the Federation.²⁴⁵ In the intervals between International Conferences, the Standing Commission coordinates the relations between the different components of the Movement. It is also responsible for making the preparations for the next International Conference, cooperating with the institution scheduled to host the Conference.

²⁴⁴ ICRC/International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Handbook of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, 13th ed. (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1994), p. 419.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

Structure of the International Red Cross²⁴⁶



²⁴⁶ Françoise Bory, *Red Cross and Red Crescent. Portrait of an International Movement* (Geneva: ICRC, 1992), p. 29.

ANNEX III

THE 1949 GENEVA CONVENTIONS

The major part of ICRC action, today as in 1956, is based on the Geneva Conventions for the protection of war victims. It should be recalled, however, that the Geneva Conventions were not the first agreements ever made between different parties to a conflict; certain agreements governing the exchange and ransom of prisoners of war, or the surrender of fortresses, already contained clauses relating to the treatment of the sick and wounded and sometimes even provisions for the protection of the civilian population. These agreements, however, were drawn up for specific cases and were not universally applicable at all times.²⁴⁷

Thus, neither the ICRC, nor even – by the same token – Henry Dunant, originated the “codification” of respect for persons during armed conflicts; but they had the genius to universalize their rules in the form of conventions that the States were called upon to ratify during peacetime. Accordingly, the States attending the 1864 Diplomatic Conference in Geneva signed the First Geneva Convention, making it, by their ratification or adherence, part of universal international law. From then on, the ICRC never ceased in its efforts to adapt humanitarian law to the developments of international society. Between 1864 and 1949 it in fact drafted seven conventions that were ratified one after the other by most of the States.²⁴⁸

The First Convention deals with the protection of the wounded and sick in armies in the field, implying an obligation for each belligerent to care for enemy wounded. It also confers privileged status on anyone bearing the sign of the red

²⁴⁷ Henri Coursier, *Course of Five Lessons on the Geneva Conventions* (Geneva: ICRC, 1963), pp. 5-6.

²⁴⁸ After the First Convention of 1864 for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field, there were seven more conventions:

- the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field (1906);
- two Geneva Conventions: one covering the same material as the Conventions of 1864 and 1906, and the other relative to the treatment of prisoners of war (1929);
- four Geneva Conventions relative to the protection of victims of war: the First and Third Conventions are revised versions of the Conventions of 1929; the Second is a revision of the Tenth Hague Convention of 1907; and the Fourth covers new material dealing with the protection of civilian persons in wartime. For more detail, see Stanislaw E. Nahlik, “A Brief Outline of International Humanitarian Law”, *International Review of the Red Cross* 241 (July-August 1984): 192-193.

cross, the red crescent, or the red lion and sun. The Second Convention provides protection for the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked members of armed forces at sea, while the Third Convention relates to the treatment of prisoners of war, constituting a real code of captivity that governs the living conditions of prisoners. The Fourth Convention protects civilians in wartime, whether civilian internees or the inhabitants of occupied territories.

These four Conventions are applicable only during international armed conflicts. Yet since World War II the nature of conflicts has changed: "[...] in the contemporary international system, the great powers have considerably enlarged the range of interventions and they prefer indirect and if possible camouflaged ones. Hence the very clear predominance of 'non-international conflicts' as compared to international conflicts".²⁴⁹ Only Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions is properly applicable to non-international conflicts, although it has a fairly wide scope. "As a Delegate expressed it, Article 3 is a 'Convention in miniature.' Giving up the idea of an integral application of the Conventions as a whole, it requires the application of their principles only. But it defines these principles and adds certain formal obligations".²⁵⁰ Given this article's relevance to the events in Hungary, it is worth quoting in full:

"In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

1) Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed *hors de combat* by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.

To this end, the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

- a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- b) taking of hostages;
- c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment;
- d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court

²⁴⁹ Jacques Freymond, Georges Willemin, and Roger Heacock, *The International Committee of the Red Cross* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1984), p. 31.

²⁵⁰ Frédéric Siordet, "The Geneva Conventions and Civil War", *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge, supplement III*, no. 11 (Nov. 1950): 210.

affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

2) The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.

An impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the Parties to the conflict.

The Parties to the conflict should further endeavour to bring into force, by means of special agreements, all or part of the other provisions of the present Convention.

The application of the preceding provisions shall not affect the legal status of the Parties to the conflict."

Paragraph 2 merits special attention, for it concerns the ICRC. It should be noted first of all that the ICRC is in no way obliged to offer its services to parties in conflict, and, similarly, the parties may reject any proposal offered by the ICRC. The entire article in fact merely affirms a practice that the ICRC adopted long ago. In the past it had already intervened in non-international conflicts, one example being its intervention in Hungary in 1919, when Béla Kun instituted the dictatorship of the proletariat. At that time, Rodolphe Haccius, an ICRC delegate who happened to be in Budapest for other reasons, intervened on behalf of certain Hungarians and even received permission to visit some political detainees. "On 28 April 1919, in the prison of Gyűjtőfogház, the ICRC, for the first time in its history, visited exclusively political detainees (48 political detainees and 131 hostages), with the express authorization of the government of the State whose nationals they were".²⁵¹

In any case, the Statutes of the International Red Cross already authorized the ICRC to act in such conflicts; Article 3 merely confirmed and expanded that right. At the time of the events in Hungary, Article 6 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross described the ICRC as "a neutral institution whose humanitarian work is carried out particularly in time of war, civil war, or internal strife [...]". And Article 4 of the Statutes of the ICRC stated: "the special role of the ICRC shall be: [...] (d) to take action in its capacity as a neutral institution, especially in case of war, civil war or internal strife [...]". The third paragraph of Article 3 invited the parties to the conflict to conclude special agreements permitting the implementation of other provisions of the Conventions. In other words, the door was open to a wider application of the Conventions.²⁵²

Although the Geneva Conventions clearly authorize the ICRC to intervene in various types of conflicts, it still must face the problem of determining the nature

²⁵¹ Jacques Moreillon, *Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et la protection des détenus politiques* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, and Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1973), p. 49.

²⁵² Michel Veuthey, "Les conflits armés de caractère non international et le droit humanitaire", in *Current Problems of International Law*, ed. Antonio Cassese (Milan: Giuffrè, 1975), pp. 219-223.

of the conflict. The distinction between an international conflict and a non-international one is not self-evident. In most cases, including the events of 1956, the ICRC has in fact refrained from pronouncing on the nature of the conflict, in order to leave itself a wider margin of manoeuvre. In any case, establishing such a definition is not its responsibility, nor that of any of the parties.²⁵³

From a practical standpoint, however, the ICRC is nonetheless obliged to decide which articles form the basis of its intervention, which indirectly implies a definition of the conflict. If it decides to intervene under the terms of Article 3, for example, that means it recognizes the conflict as non-international in nature. David Forsythe has written:

“While it is widely accepted that the ICRC can assert its view as to the legal protection that should be applied, parties frequently disagree with that ICRC view on the basis either of an honest difference in interpreting the facts or of a difference in priorities. The ICRC is interested in the welfare of individuals; a party to the conflict may be primarily interested in securing control of the government, or putting down a challenge to one’s rule, among other things. Such priorities lead the conflicting parties to seek to reduce their obligations under law to a minimum in order to maintain their freedom of action”.²⁵⁴

Although the Geneva Conventions permit the ICRC to intervene in many kinds of conflicts, they do not spell out the strategy the ICRC must apply if it is to intervene most effectively. As we have seen, defining the conflict is an essential starting point for the development of the ICRC’s action, and therefore the ICRC is very attentive to the way the parties interpret the conflict, since it will have to work with those interpretations. Its role is not to judge their validity, but to provide as much protection and assistance as it can to all who need it.

²⁵³ Forsythe, *Humanitarian Politics*, p. 137.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

ANNEX IV

THE NATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, once founded or recreated, are recognized as such by the ICRC.²⁵⁵ The latter exercises no other authority over them; each National Society is an independent institution.

Unlike the ICRC, which always operates on the international level, National Societies as a rule work within their own countries. In peacetime, they collaborate with their respective governments, assisting them in the humanitarian sphere (creation and administration of hospitals, training nursing staff, providing aid for the disadvantaged, the handicapped, and the elderly). They also administer emergency relief when natural disasters occur such as floods, earthquakes, or tidal waves. Occasionally, the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies calls on them to go to the aid of another National Society in difficulty.

In wartime, National Societies also have a role to play. They are bound to assist all the victims of the conflict, regardless of party or nationality. Accordingly, they take care of prisoners, the wounded, and the civilian population in general. If the ICRC intervenes on their territory, they help it to carry out its traditional tasks of protection and assistance, introducing the ICRC representatives to their governments and pleading the humanitarian cause.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ "The role of the International Committee, in accordance with its Statutes, is in particular: [...] b) to recognize any newly established or reconstituted National Society, which fulfils the conditions for recognition set out in Article 4 [...]" Article 5, paragraph 2, of the Statutes of the International Red Cross, in ICRC/International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Handbook of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, 13th ed. (1994), p. 422.

²⁵⁶ ICRC, *Guide for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to Activities in the Event of Conflict* (Geneva: ICRC, 1990), p. 45.

ANNEX V

THE LEAGUE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

Today's Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies began life as the League of Red Cross Societies in 1919, after Henry P. Davison, a member of the American National Society, suggested federating the National Societies of the victors of World War I and the neutral States in an organization similar to the League of Nations. The League's first Statutes sanctioned the exclusion of the National Societies of the defeated countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, and the USSR), and they were indeed excluded.

The main role of the League of Red Cross Societies was clearly defined in paragraph 3 of Article 7 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross.²⁵⁷ On the international level it also coordinated the relief actions of National Societies vis-à-vis their fellow Societies, and provided assistance to refugees who had fled the conflict zone.²⁵⁸

Although completely independent of each other, the League and the ICRC were in constant contact in order to coordinate their activities. To this end, League and ICRC representatives were accustomed to meet at least once a month.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ "For this purpose, the functions of the League are:

- (a) to act as the permanent organ of liaison, co-ordination and study between the National Red Cross Societies and to co-operate with them;
- (b) to encourage and promote in every country the establishment and development of an independent and duly recognized National Red Cross Society;
- (c) to be the official representative of the member Societies in the international field on any matters in connection with resolutions adopted by the Board of Governors, and to be the guardian of their integrity and the protector of their interests;
- (d) to accept the mandates entrusted to it by the International Conference of the Red Cross".

Article 7, paragraph 3 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross, in ICRC/LRCS, *International Red Cross Handbook*, 11th ed. (1971), p. 277. The same material, with minor modifications, appears in Article 6, paragraph 4 of the revised Statutes. See ICRC/International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Handbook of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, 13th ed. (1994), pp. 423-424.

²⁵⁸ ICRC, *Getting to Know the ICRC* (Geneva: ICRC, n.d.), p. 21.

²⁵⁹ Article 8, *International Red Cross Handbook*, p. 278.

ANNEX VI

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LEAGUE
OF RED CROSS SOCIETIES AND THE ICRC**

1. *Agreement of 2 November 1956*
2. *Amendments of 27 November 1956*

*

* *

[letterhead – see original, p. 94]

**Agreement between the LRCS and the ICRC
concerning the administration
of Red Cross gift supplies intended for Hungary**

1) In consideration of the troubled conditions in Hungary at the present time, and in accordance with the Statutes of the International Red Cross and the Agreement concluded between the League and the Committee in 1952, all operations connected with the forwarding, allocation, and distribution in Hungary of gifts of National Societies are placed under the direction of the ICRC Delegation in Hungary, acting in cooperation with the Hungarian Red Cross and possibly with other qualified relief organizations.

2) As circumstances have made it necessary that a large part of the relief supplies from National Societies intended for Hungary should first be assembled in Vienna, the handling of gifts from National Societies already in Vienna or which may subsequently arrive in Vienna, is placed under the direction of the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies, acting in cooperation with the Austrian Red Cross.

3) The ICRC Delegation in Hungary and the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies in Vienna will exchange Liaison Officers in order to ensure the coordination of their respective operations.

4) In pursuance of the above, it will be for the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies to coordinate gifts of National Red Cross Societies on their arrival in Vienna, and to arrange for their safe-keeping, warehousing and sorting, and for the taking of a daily inventory, by category of article.

5) It will be for the Representative of the League of Red Cross Societies to place at the disposal of the ICRC Delegation in Hungary whatever relief supplies it may request according to needs, and in conformity with a plan established in agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross or other qualified relief organizations. These relief supplies will be handed over to the Representatives of the ICRC either in Vienna or at a frontier post for forwarding by them and subsequent distribution by the Hungarian Red Cross or other qualified bodies under the auspices of the ICRC.

6) The transport vehicles of the National Societies, with the exception of those belonging to the Hungarian Red Cross, will be assembled in a car park under the management of the League Representative in Vienna, who will make available the vehicles required by the Delegation of the ICRC in Hungary for the forwarding of relief supplies in that country.

7) If the relief supplies assembled in Vienna or promised by the National Red Cross Societies are not adequate to meet the requirements of the ICRC Delegation in Hungary, the latter will inform the ICRC, which will send the necessary appeals to the National Red Cross Societies for additional relief.

8) It is understood that the delegates of donor National Red Cross Societies shall be given the opportunity, whenever circumstances permit, of personally observing the manner in which their gifts have been utilised on the spot.

9) It is also understood that, as soon as circumstances permit, the ICRC will facilitate the establishment in Hungary of any medical units which the National Societies may desire to send there. Their establishment on Hungarian territory will however have to be arranged under a plan drawn up by agreement between the ICRC and the Hungarian Red Cross, in order to ensure their most efficient use.

10) In order to ensure as perfect a balance as possible between supply and demand of relief for Hungary, the International Committee and the League will endeavour to centralise in Geneva as much information as possible on non-Red-Cross relief destined for Hungary.

11) The above provisions constitute the general principles on the basis of which the ICRC Delegation and the Representative of the League will settle practical details of application.

Geneva, 2 November 1956

B. de Rougé

[Signed]

Léopold Boissier

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

[letterhead – see original, p. 97]

Geneva, 27 November 1956

**Agreement between the LRCS and the ICRC
concerning the relief action for the benefit of Hungary
and Hungarian refugees**

Following the joint decision to entrust the League with the relief work on behalf of refugees from Hungary in Austria, it has been agreed to make the following amendments to the Agreement concluded on 2 November 1956 between the ICRC and the League:

1) The ICRC shall undertake not only the forwarding, allocation and distribution of relief in Hungary (as provided for in the Agreement of 2 November), but also the handling in Vienna of gifts earmarked for the relief operation in Hungarian territory.

2) The League will undertake, in Austria, the handling and distribution of relief assigned to Hungarian refugees on Austrian soil. This work will be carried out with the cooperation of the Austrian Red Cross and in accordance with the undertakings entered into by the League.

3) The gifts in cash or in kind which have not been earmarked for a specific purpose will be allocated by common agreement according to needs, by the representatives of the ICRC and the League representative in Vienna. They will determine the share of this relief to be sent to Hungary and placed at the disposal of the ICRC, and the share to be used for refugees, for whom the League is responsible.

4) The ICRC and the League will consult together on the appeals to be addressed to National Societies in order to obtain additional relief supplies for the above-mentioned operations.

5) The technical measures relating to the execution of the present Agreement will be the subject of a special arrangement.

[Signed]

B. de Rougé

Léopold Boissier

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original texts of annex VI (French)

LIGUE DES SOCIÉTÉS DE LA CROIX-ROUGE
GENÈVE



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE
GENÈVE

Adr. télégraphique : LICROSS
Téléphone : 4 13 60

Adr. télégraphique : Interscrlarouge
Téléphone : 2 05 60

Accord entre la LSCR et le CICR concernant l'administration
des dons de la Croix-Rouge à destination de la Hongrie.

1) Vu les troubles qui règnent actuellement en Hongrie et conformément aux statuts de la Croix-Rouge internationale et de l'Accord passé entre la Ligue et le Comité en 1952, toutes les opérations relatives à l'acheminement, la répartition et la distribution en Hongrie des dons des Sociétés nationales sont placés sous la direction de la Délégation du CICR en Hongrie agissant avec le concours de la Croix-Rouge hongroise et éventuellement d'autres organismes de secours qualifiés.

2) Les circonstances ayant exigé qu'une part importante des secours des Sociétés nationales à destination de la Hongrie soient préalablement assemblés à Vienne, l'administration des dons des Sociétés nationales qui se trouvent déjà dans cette ville ou qui y seront ultérieurement, sont placés sous la direction du représentant de la Ligue des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge agissant avec le concours de la Croix-Rouge autrichienne.

3) La délégation du CICR en Hongrie et le représentant de la LSCR à Vienne échangeront des agents de liaison afin d'assurer la coordination de leurs opérations respectives.

4) En conséquence de ce qui précède, il appartiendra au représentant de la Ligue des Sociétés de la

Croix-Rouge de coordonner l'arrivée à Vienne des dons des Sociétés nationales de la Croix-Rouge, en assurer la garde, l'entreposage, le tri et l'établissement d'un inventaire établi journellement par catégorie de marchandises.

5) Il appartiendra au représentant de la LSCR de mettre à disposition de la délégation du CICR en Hongrie les secours dont celle-ci fera la demande selon les besoins et selon un plan établi d'entente avec la Croix-Rouge hongroise ou d'autres organismes de secours qualifiés. Ces secours seront remis aux représentants du CICR soit à Vienne soit à un poste frontière pour être transmis par leurs soins et distribués ultérieurement par la Croix-Rouge hongroise ou d'autres organismes qualifiés, sous les auspices du CICR.

6) Le matériel de transport des Sociétés nationales à l'exception de celui appartenant à la Croix-Rouge hongroise, sera réuni en un parc automobile géré par le représentant de la LSCR à Vienne, lequel tiendra à la disposition de la délégation du CICR en Hongrie les véhicules nécessaires à l'acheminement des secours dans ce pays.

7) Si les secours rassemblés à Vienne ou annoncés par les Sociétés nationales de la Croix-Rouge ne permettent pas de satisfaire aux demandes de la délégation du CICR en Hongrie, celle-ci en avertira le CICR qui adressera aux Sociétés nationales de la Croix-Rouge les appels nécessaires pour obtenir des secours complémentaires.

8) Il est entendu que les délégués des Sociétés

3

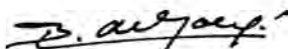
nationales de la Croix-Rouge donatrices auront la possibilité, chaque fois que les circonstances le permettront, de se rendre compte eux-mêmes des conditions dans lesquelles leurs dons auront été utilisés sur place.

9) Il est entendu également que, dès que les circonstances le permettront, le CICR facilitera l'installation en Hongrie des unités médicales que les Sociétés nationales désireraient envoyer dans ce pays. Leur installation sur territoire hongrois devra cependant se faire dans le cadre d'un plan établi d'entente entre le CICR et la Croix-Rouge hongroise afin d'assurer la meilleure utilisation de ces unités.

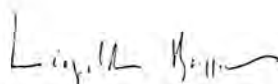
10) En vue d'assurer un équilibre aussi harmonieux que possible entre l'offre et la demande des secours destinés à la Hongrie, le Comité international et la Ligue s'efforceront de centraliser à Genève autant d'informations que possible sur les secours non Croix-Rouge destinés à la Hongrie.

11) Les dispositions qui précèdent constituent les principes généraux sur la base desquels la délégation du CICR et le représentant de la LSCR fixeront les modalités pratiques d'exécution.

Genève, le 2 novembre 1956.



B. de Rougé



Léopold Boissier



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

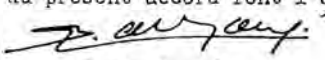
Genève, le 27 novembre 1956.

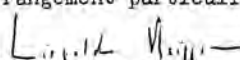
Accord entre la L.S.C.R. et le C.I.C.R.

concernant l'action de secours en faveur de la Hongrie
et des réfugiés hongrois.

A la suite de la décision prise en commun de confier à la Ligue l'oeuvre de secours en faveur des réfugiés de Hongrie en Autriche, il a été convenu d'apporter à l'accord conclu le 2 novembre 1956 entre le CICR et la Ligue les amendements suivants :

1. Le CICR assurera non seulement l'acheminement, la répartition et la distribution des secours en Hongrie (comme prévu par l'accord du 2 novembre), mais également l'administration, à Vienne, des dons affectés à l'action de secours en territoire hongrois.
2. La Ligue assurera en Autriche l'administration et la distribution des secours affectés aux réfugiés hongrois se trouvant en Autriche. Ce travail se fera avec le concours de la Croix-Rouge autrichienne et selon les engagements pris par la Ligue.
3. Les dons en nature ou en espèces sans affectation spéciale seront répartis d'un commun accord selon les besoins constatés, par le représentant du CICR et le représentant de la Ligue à Vienne. Ceux-ci détermineront la part de ces secours qui sera destinée à la Hongrie et placée à la disposition du CICR, et celle qui sera destinée aux réfugiés, sous la responsabilité de la Ligue.
4. Le CICR et la Ligue se consulteront sur les appels à adresser aux Sociétés nationales en vue d'obtenir des secours complémentaires pour les actions ci-dessus indiquées.
5. Les modalités techniques relatives à l'exécution du présent accord font l'objet d'un arrangement particulier.


B. de Rougé


Léopold Boissier

ANNEX VII

ARTICLE 15 OF THE FIRST GENEVA CONVENTION OF 1949

At all times, and particularly after an engagement, Parties to the conflict shall, without delay, take all possible measures to search for and collect the wounded and sick, to protect them against pillage and ill-treatment, to ensure their adequate care, and to search for the dead and prevent their being despoiled.

Whenever circumstances permit, an armistice or a suspension of fire shall be arranged, or local arrangements made, to permit the removal, exchange and transport of the wounded left on the battlefield.

Likewise, local arrangements may be concluded between Parties to the conflict for the removal or exchange of wounded and sick from a besieged or encircled area, and for the passage of medical and religious personnel and equipment on their way to that area.

ANNEX VIII

**TELEGRAMS FROM THE ICRC
TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRIES OF MOSCOW
AND BUDAPEST**

JP/MLB

4 November 1956

Ministry Foreign Affairs MOSCOW

Given current events Hungary and in accordance with its traditional mission International Committee Red Cross asks your Government practical application four Geneva Conventions 1949 for protection wounded war prisoners and non-combatants ratified by 58 States including USSR and Hungary stop International Committee ready assume tasks provided for it by these Conventions and offers its help for any humanitarian action considered useful stop same communication being sent simultaneously to Government Hungary stop President

Intercroixrouge A593

Same message to Budapest

Payable by ICRC

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

JP/MLB

4 November 1956

Ministry Foreign Affairs BUDAPEST

Given current events Hungary and in accordance with its traditional mission International Committee Red Cross asks your Government practical application four Geneva Conventions 1949 for protection wounded war prisoners and non-combatants ratified by 58 States including USSR and Hungary stop International Committee ready assume tasks provided for it by these Conventions and offers its help for any humanitarian action considered useful stop same communication being sent simultaneously to Government USSR stop President

Intercroixrouge A594

Payable by ICRC

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original texts of annex VIII (French)

JP/MLB

4 novembre 1956.

Ministère Affaires étrangères MOSCOU

En présence événements actuels Hongrie et conformément sa mission traditionnelle Comité international Croix-Rouge demande à votre Gouvernement mise en application pratique quatre Convention Genève 1949 pour protection blessés prisonniers guerre et non combattants ratifiées par cinquante-huit Etats dont URSS et Hongrie stop Comité international prêt assumer tâches prévues pour lui par ces Conventions et offre son concours pour toute action humanitaire qui serait jugée utile stop adressons simultanément même communication à Gouvernement Hongrie stop Président

Intercroixrouge A593

Même message à Budapest

A la charge CICR

copie ami

JP/MLB

4 novembre 1956

Ministère Affaires étrangères

Budapest

En présence événements actuels Hongrie et conformément sa mission traditionnelle Comité international ~~à~~ Croix-Rouge demande à votre Gouvernement mise en application pratique quatre Conventions Genève 1949 pour protection blessés prisonniers guerre et non combattants ratifiées par cinquante-huit Etats dont URSS et Hongrie stop Comité international prêt assumer tâches prévues pour lui par ces Conventions et offre son concours pour toute action humanitaire qui serait jugée utile stop adressons simultanément même ~~communication~~ communication à Gouvernement URSS stop Président

Intercroixrouge A594

à la charge du CICR

ANNEX IX

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ICRC AND THE HUNGARIAN RED CROSS

Between the Managing Committee of the Hungarian Red Cross, represented by Dr. Georges KILLNER, Executive Director of the Hungarian Red Cross, and Dr. Prof. Tibor NÓNAY, member of the Managing Committee of the Hungarian Red Cross

and

the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, represented by Mr. Roger GALLOPIN, Executive Director,

the following agreement was made in Vienna on 16 November 1956:

1. The International Committee of the Red Cross assumes the control of the distribution in Hungary of relief supplies for the Hungarian population, which have been or which will be entrusted to it by national Red Cross Societies, either directly or through the League of Red Cross Societies.
2. The International Committee of the Red Cross will also assume the control of the distribution of donations made on behalf of the Hungarian population which have been or which will be entrusted to it by governments or private organizations, either directly or through the Secretary-General of the United Nations acting in agreement with the Hungarian Government.
3. The distribution of these supplies through the neutral intermediary of the International Committee of the Red Cross shall be carried out in accordance with the fundamental principles governing its work, i.e., with strict impartiality and without any discrimination whatsoever other than that based on the urgency of the needs of the persons to be assisted.
4. Towards this end the International Committee of the Red Cross shall, in agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross, draw up various programmes of assistance which shall be carried out progressively according to the urgency of the needs to be met and the supplies available. As an example, it is planned to give assistance in the first place to the sick, the wounded, infants, expectant mothers, the aged and the infirm.

5. All facilities shall be given to the International Committee of the Red Cross to enable it to establish a delegation in Hungary which will include the staff immediately required to:
- (a) draw up, in agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross, the programmes of assistance mentioned above,
 - (b) ensure the protection and running of the warehouses which the International Committee of the Red Cross will set up in the principal distribution centres,
 - (c) transport supplies to or from these warehouses,
 - (d) be present during the actual distribution of supplies and to report to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva on these distributions for the information of donors.

This staff, consisting mainly of Swiss citizens, shall be placed under the orders of a Delegate-in-Chief, with Headquarters in Budapest, who will act in close liaison with the representatives designated by the Hungarian Red Cross for this purpose.

6. In order to allow the ICRC to carry out its strictly humanitarian action efficiently, the Hungarian Red Cross and the Hungarian Government shall ensure that in the exercise of its functions, the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Hungary receives all aid and protection from all authorities, civil or military.
7. The general provisions of this agreement shall be supplemented by a practical working plan drawn up by agreement between the representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross and the Delegate-in-Chief of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Budapest.
8. The sole object of this agreement being the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population, it cannot be interpreted as restricting the other humanitarian activities which the International Committee of the Red Cross may be called upon to exercise in Hungary in conformity with the statutes of the International Red Cross or the provisions of the Geneva Conventions.

For the International Committee
of the Red Cross:

[signature]

For the Hungarian Red Cross:

[signature]

Seen and approved by the Minister of the People's Republic of Hungary in Vienna

[signed] Frigyes Puja

(F. Puja)

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original text of annex IX (French)



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

Entre le Comité directeur de la Croix-Rouge hongroise,
représenté par

M. le Dr. Georges KILLNER, directeur exécutif de la
Croix-Rouge hongroise et

M. le Dr. Prof. Tibor NÓRAY, membre du Comité directeur
de la Croix-Rouge hongroise

et

le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge à Genève,
représenté par M. Roger GALLOPIN, directeur exécutif,
réunis à Vienne, le 16 novembre 1956, il a été convenu
ce qui suit :

1. Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge assume le contrôle de la distribution en Hongrie des secours destinés à la population hongroise qui lui ont été ou qui lui seraient confiés par les Sociétés nationales de la Croix-Rouge, soit directement, soit par l'intermédiaire de la Ligue des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge.
2. Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge assume également le contrôle de la distribution des dons pour la population hongroise qui lui ont été ou qui lui seraient confiés par des gouvernements ou des organismes privés, soit directement, soit par l'intermédiaire du Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies agissant d'entente avec le gouvernement hongrois.



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

- 2 -

3. La distribution de ces dons par l'intermédiaire neutre du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge se fera selon les principes fondamentaux régissant son action, à savoir la stricte impartialité et l'absence de toute discrimination autre que celle dictée par les besoins des personnes à secourir.
4. Dans ce but, le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge établira d'entente avec la Croix-Rouge hongroise différents programmes d'assistance qui seront réalisés progressivement selon l'urgence des besoins et en fonction des secours disponibles. A titre d'exemple, il est prévu de venir en aide en premier lieu aux malades, aux blessés de toute catégorie, aux enfants en bas âge, aux femmes enceintes, aux vieillards et aux infirmes.
5. Toutes facilités seront accordées au Comité international de la Croix-Rouge aux fins d'installer immédiatement en Hongrie une délégation disposant du personnel nécessaire pour :
 - a) établir d'entente avec la Croix-Rouge hongroise les programmes d'assistance mentionnés plus haut;
 - b) assurer la garde et la gestion des entrepôts que créera le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge dans les principaux centres de distribution;



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

- 3 -

- c) acheminer les secours à destination des entrepôts ou en provenance de ceux-ci;
- d) assister à la distribution proprement dite des secours et faire rapport au Comité international de la Croix-Rouge à Genève sur ces distributions à l'intention des donateurs.

Ce personnel, principalement de nationalité suisse, sera placé sous la direction d'un délégué en chef, siégeant à Budapest et agissant en étroite liaison avec les représentants que la Croix-Rouge hongroise désignera à cet effet.

- 6. Afin de permettre l'accomplissement efficace de l'action strictement humanitaire du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, la Croix-Rouge et le gouvernement hongrois veilleront à ce que la délégation du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge en Hongrie reçoive, dans l'exercice de ses fonctions, aide et protection de la part de toutes les autorités civiles ou militaires.
- 7. Les dispositions générales du présent accord seront complétées par un plan d'opérations technique établi d'entente entre les représentants de la Croix-Rouge hongroise et le chef de la délégation du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge à Budapest.



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

—•—

- 4 -

8. Le présent accord ayant pour seul objet la distribution des secours destinés à la population hongroise, il ne saurait être interprété comme limitant les autres activités humanitaires que le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge pourrait être appelé à exercer en Hongrie conformément aux statuts de la Croix-Rouge internationale ou aux dispositions des Conventions de Genève.

Pour le Comité international
de la Croix-Rouge:

Pour la Croix-Rouge hongroise:

Vu et approuvé par le
Ministre de la République
Populaire de Hongrie à Vienne
Frigyes Pujás
[F. Pujás]



ANNEX X

**THE ICRC'S RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE UNITED NATIONS**

1. *Letter from the European Office of the United Nations to the ICRC*
2. *Letter from the President of the ICRC
to the Secretary-General of the United Nations*
3. *Agreement between the ICRC and the United Nations*

*

* *

Original texts of annex X (English)

EUROPEAN OFFICE
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



OFFICE EUROPÉEN
DES NATIONS UNIES

Télégrammes : UNATIONS, GENEVE

Téléphone : 33 1009 332009 334000

Palais des Nations
GENEVE

REF. No.:

(à rappeler dans la réponse)

4 December 1956

Sir,

The General Assembly of the United Nations, at its Second Emergency Special Session, has requested the Secretary-General to take immediately the necessary measures to bring aid to the population of Hungary.

Considering that the International Committee of the Red Cross has been engaged in emergency relief activities in Hungary and has concluded an agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross to this effect, I wish to ask you if the International Committee would accept to co-operate with the United Nations in this humanitarian programme, under the following conditions:

1. The Committee, at the request of the Secretary-General, agrees to use any funds as may be transferred to it by the United Nations for the exclusive purpose of providing immediate aid to the population of Hungary, in particular by furnishing medical supplies, foodstuffs and clothing. The responsibility assumed by the Committee in this respect will commence upon receipt of any such funds and will terminate after the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population or, in the event of cessation of the programme, upon return to the United Nations of any unused portion of such funds or of supplies purchased with such funds.
2. The Committee will undertake responsibility for the distribution of such supplies as may be furnished by the United Nations. The Committee may indicate to the United Nations the types of relief goods regarded as most appropriate for the purposes of the programme.
3. In accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, the Committee will distribute relief under this programme without discrimination and on the basis of need alone.
4. While making every effort to carry out this programme as rapidly as possible, the Committee will retain sole responsibility for the schedule of distribution of relief supplies. In the event of difficulties or obstacles arising in the execution of the programme, the Committee will, if necessary, report to the United Nations but it will be solely responsible for taking appropriate measures.
5. The Committee will supply all organizational, supervisory and technical personnel, services and equipment required for the operation of the programme.

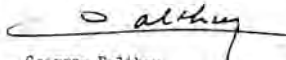
Mr. Leopold Boissier,
President,
International Committee of the Red Cross,
GENEVA

6. The United Nations will defray such administrative and operational costs of the Committee attributable to the performance of the United Nations relief programme as may be agreed between the United Nations and the Committee.
7. The Committee will be the sole agency to carry out the relief programme on behalf of the United Nations with the contributions made pursuant to resolution 399 adopted by the General Assembly at the Second Emergency Special Session on 9 November 1956. This shall not be construed to limit the right of other United Nations agencies to carry out assistance programmes in accordance with their terms of reference and in agreement with the Hungarian authorities.
8. The United Nations recognizes the Committee as an independent and autonomous organization which undertakes to perform the services envisaged in this agreement. The performance of such services will not in any way place the Committee in a subordinate position towards the United Nations, and the Committee will not be required to carry out any other task than those set forth in this agreement.
9. The Committee will submit to the Secretary-General monthly operational reports and financial reports of costs incurred in the performance of its responsibilities under this agreement.
10. The United Nations and the Committee will act in close collaboration in regard to the planning and the implementation of the programme. In particular, the Committee will extend full co-operation to any representative who may be sent to Hungary by the Secretary-General in connexion with the programme.
11. Nothing contained in this agreement will affect any of the other activities which the Committee already is carrying out or may carry out in Hungary in the performance of its traditional role.
12. This Agreement may be terminated by either party on one week's notice subject, if possible, to prior consultation. The termination of this Agreement will not affect the responsibilities of either party under the Agreement with respect to the completion of the distribution of supplies still outstanding at the date of termination.

I should greatly appreciate receiving your confirmation that the International Committee of the Red Cross accepts the proposals contained in this letter. Following such confirmation, the Secretary-General will inform the Hungarian Government of this agreement.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration,

for and on behalf of the Secretary-General



Georges Falthey
Deputy Director, European Office of
the United Nations

Geneva, 4 December 1956

His Excellency
Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Organization
New York

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

The International Committee has received your letter of 4 December 1956 concerning the United Nations relief action on behalf of the population of Hungary and the assistance that our organization could provide in this situation.

I am pleased to inform you that the International Committee, already engaged in conveying to Hungary and distributing there the relief provided by the National Red Cross Societies, agrees to take responsibility for the relief supplied by the United Nations as well, under the terms mentioned in your letter, to wit:

1. The Committee, at the request of the Secretary-General, agrees to use any funds as may be transferred to it by the United Nations for the exclusive purpose of providing immediate aid to the population of Hungary, in particular by furnishing medical supplies, foodstuffs and clothing. The responsibility assumed by the Committee in this respect will commence upon receipt of any such funds and will terminate after the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population or, in the event of cessation of the programme, upon return to the United Nations of any unused portion of such funds or of supplies purchased with such funds.
2. The Committee will undertake responsibility for the distribution of such supplies as may be furnished by the United Nations. The Committee may indicate to the United Nations the types of relief goods regarded as most appropriate for the purposes of the programme.
3. In accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, the Committee will distribute relief under this programme without discrimination and on the basis of need alone.
4. While making every effort to carry out this programme as rapidly as possible, the Committee will retain sole responsibility for the schedule (French "cadence") of distribution of relief supplies. In the event of difficulties or obstacles arising in the execution of the programme, the Committee will, if necessary, report to the United Nations but it will be solely responsible for taking appropriate measures.
5. The Committee will supply all organizational, supervisory and technical personnel, services and equipment required for the operation of the programme.
6. The United Nations will defray such administrative and operational costs of the Committee attributable to the performance of the United Nations relief

programme as may be agreed between the United Nations and the Committee.

7. The Committee will be the sole agency to carry out the relief programme on behalf of the United Nations with the contributions made pursuant to resolution 399 adopted by the General Assembly at the Second Emergency Special Session on 9 November 1956. This shall not be construed to limit the right of other United Nations agencies to carry out assistance programmes in accordance with their terms of reference and in agreement with the Hungarian authorities.

8. The United Nations recognises the Committee as an independent and autonomous organization which undertakes to perform the services envisaged in this agreement. The performance of such services will not in any way place the Committee in a subordinate position towards the United Nations, and the Committee will not be required to carry out any other task than those set forth in this agreement.

9. The Committee will submit to the Secretary-General monthly operational reports and financial reports of costs incurred in the performance of its responsibilities under this agreement.

10. The United Nations and the Committee will act in close collaboration in regard to the planning and the implementation of the programme. In particular, the Committee will extend full co-operation to any representative who may be sent to Hungary by the Secretary-General in connexion with the programme.

11. Nothing contained in this agreement will affect any of the other activities which the Committee already is carrying out or may carry out in Hungary in the performance of its traditional role.

12. This agreement may be terminated by either party on one week's notice subject, if possible, to prior consultation. The termination of this Agreement will not affect the responsibilities of either party under the Agreement with respect to the completion of the distribution of supplies still outstanding at the date of termination.

Much pleased by the agreement thus concluded between the United Nations Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Léopold BOISSIER

cc: archives 5
The President
Mr. Michel
Mr. Gallopin
WHM/AGu
280 (65)

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

**Agreement between the ICRC
and the United Nations for Relief to Hungary**

1. The Committee, at the request of the Secretary-General, agrees to use such funds as may be transferred to it by the United Nations for the exclusive purpose of providing immediate aid to the population of Hungary, in particular by furnishing medical supplies, foodstuffs and clothing. The responsibility assumed by the Committee in this respect will commence upon receipt of any such funds and will terminate after the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population or, in the event of cessation of the programme, upon return to the United Nations of any unused portion of such funds or of supplies purchased with such funds.
2. The Committee will undertake responsibility for the distribution of such supplies as may be furnished by the United Nations. The Committee may indicate to the United Nations the types of relief goods regarded as most appropriate for the purpose of the programme.
3. In accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, the Committee will distribute relief under this programme without discrimination and on the basis of need alone.
4. While making every effort to carry out this programme as rapidly as possible, the Committee will retain sole responsibility for the schedule (French: "cadence") of distribution of relief supplies. In the event of difficulties or obstacles arising in the execution of the programme, the Committee will, if necessary, report to the United Nations but it will be solely responsible for taking appropriate measures.
5. The Committee will supply all organizational, supervisory and technical personnel, services and equipment required for the operation of the programme.
6. The United Nations will defray such administrative and operational costs of the Committee attributable to the execution of the United Nations relief programme as may be agreed between the United Nations and the Committee.
7. The Committee will be the sole agency to carry out the relief programme on behalf of the United Nations with the contributions made pursuant to resolution 399 adopted by the General Assembly at the Second Emergency Special Session on November 9, 1956. This shall not be construed to limit the right of other United Nations agencies to carry out assistance programmes in accordance with their terms of reference and in agreement with the Hungarian authorities.

8. The United Nations recognizes the Committee as an independent and autonomous organization which undertakes to perform the services envisaged in this agreement. The performance of such services will not in any way place the Committee in a subordinate position towards the United Nations, and the Committee will not be required to carry out any other task than those set forth in this agreement.
9. The Committee will submit to the Secretary-General monthly operational reports and financial reports of costs incurred in the performance of its responsibilities under this agreement.
10. The United Nations and the Committee will act in close collaboration in regard to the planning and the implementation of the programme. In particular, the Committee will extend full co-operation to any representative who may be sent to Hungary by the Secretary-General in connexion with the programme.
11. Nothing contained in this agreement will affect any of the other activities which the Committee is already carrying out or may carry out in Hungary in the performance of its traditional role.
12. This agreement may be terminated by either party on one week's notice subject, if possible, to prior consultation. The termination of this Agreement will not affect the responsibilities of either party under the Agreement with respect to the completion of the distribution of supplies still outstanding at the date of termination.

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original texts of annex X (French)

distribution :
archives 5
M. le Président
M. Michel
M. Gallopin

WHM/AGu
280 (65)

Genève, le 4 décembre 1956.

Monsieur le Secrétaire Général,

Le Comité international a reçu votre lettre du 4 décembre 1956 relative à l'action de secours des Nations Unies en faveur de la population de Hongrie et du concours que notre institution pourrait prêter en l'occurrence.

J'ai le plaisir de vous faire savoir que le Comité international, qui s'occupe déjà de convoier en Hongrie et de distribuer dans ce pays les secours de Croix-Rouges, accepte de se charger également des secours fournis par les Nations Unies et ce dans les conditions prévues par votre lettre, c'est à dire :

1. The Committee, at the request of the Secretary-General, agrees to use any funds as may be transferred to it by the United Nations for the exclusive purpose of providing immediate aid to the population of Hungary, in particular by furnishing medical supplies, foodstuffs and clothing. The responsibility assumed by the Committee in this respect will commence upon receipt of any such funds and will terminate after the distribution of relief supplies to the Hungarian population or, in the event of cessation of the programme, upon return to the United Nations of any unused portion of such funds or of supplies purchased with such funds.

Son Excellence
Monsieur Dag Hammarskjöld
Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies
Organisation des Nations Unies
New York

- 2 -

2. The Committee will undertake responsibility for the distribution of such supplies as may be furnished by the United Nations. The Committee may indicate to the United Nations the types of relief goods regarded as most appropriate for the purposes of the programme.

3. In accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, the Committee will distribute relief under this programme without discrimination and on the basis of need alone.

4. While making every effort to carry out this programme as rapidly as possible, the Committee will retain sole responsibility for the schedule (French "cadence") of distribution of relief supplies. In the event of difficulties or obstacles arising in the execution of the programme, the Committee will, if necessary, report to the United Nations but it will be solely responsible for taking appropriate measures.

5. The Committee will supply all organizational, supervisory and technical personnel, services and equipment required for the operation of the programme.

6. The United Nations will defray such administrative and operational costs of the Committee attributable to the performance of the United Nations relief programme as may be agreed between the United Nations and the Committee.

7. The Committee will be the sole agency to carry out the relief programme on behalf of the United Nations with the contributions made pursuant to resolution 399 adopted by the General Assembly at the Second Emergency Special Session on 9 November 1956. This shall not be construed to limit the right of other United Nations agencies to carry out assistance programmes in accordance with their terms of reference and in agreement with the Hungarian authorities.

8. The United Nations recognises the Committee as an independent and autonomous organization which undertakes to perform the services envisaged in this agreement. The performance of such services will not in any way place the Committee in a subordinate position towards the United Nations, and the Committee will not be required to carry out any other task than those set forth in this agreement.

- 3 -

9. The Committee will submit to the Secretary-General monthly operational reports and financial reports of costs incurred in the performance of its responsibilities under this agreement.

10. The United Nations and the Committee will act in close collaboration in regard to the planning and the implementation of the programme. In particular, the Committee will extend full co-operation to any representative who may be sent to Hungary by the Secretary-General in connexion with the programme.

11. Nothing contained in this agreement will affect any of the other activities which the Committee already is carrying out or may carry out in Hungary in the performance of its traditional role.

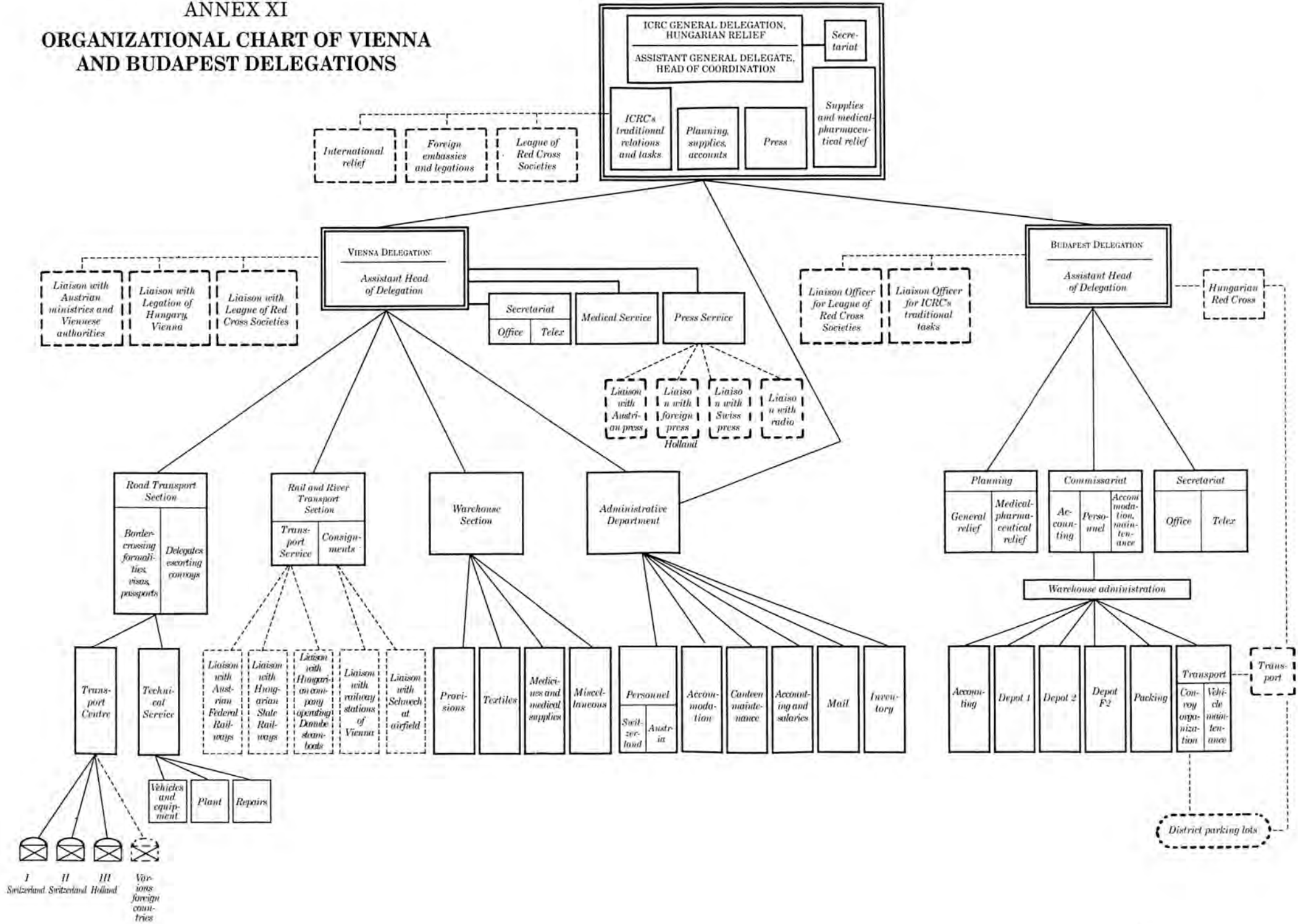
12. This agreement may be terminated by either party on one week's notice subject, if possible, to prior consultation. The termination of this Agreement will not affect the responsibilities of either party under the Agreement with respect to the completion of the distribution of supplies still outstanding at the date of termination.

En me félicitant de l'accord ainsi intervenu entre l'Organisation des Nations Unies et le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Secrétaire-Général, l'assurance de ma haute considération.

Léopold DOISSIER

ANNEX XI

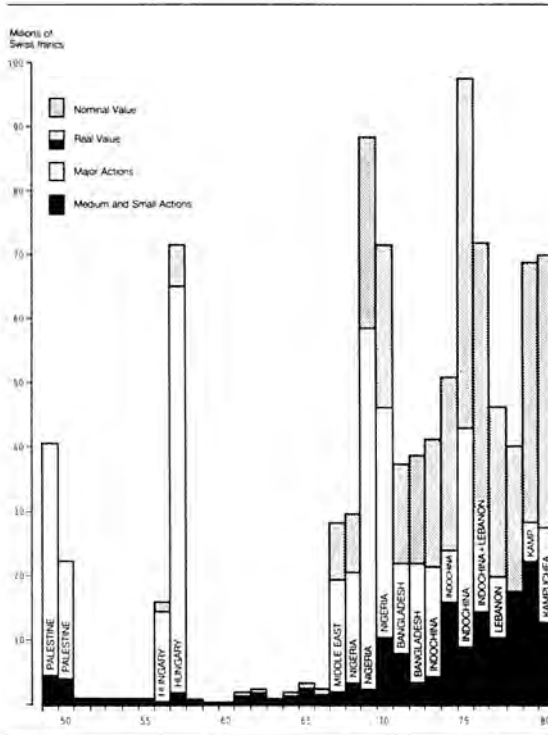
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF VIENNA AND BUDAPEST DELEGATIONS



ANNEX XII

RELIEF DISTRIBUTED BY THE ICRC IN THE WORLD, 1949-1980

Relief Distributed or Transmitted



Source: Jacques Freymond, Georges Willemin, and Roger Heacock, *The International Committee of the Red Cross* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1984), p. 85.

ANNEX XIII

ICRC AID TO HUNGARY: SITUATION IN JUNE 1957

SUMMARY OF GIFT SUPPLIES

received for the relief action of the International Committee
of the Red Cross on behalf of the Hungarian people,
from November 1, 1956 to June 25, 1957

I. GIFTS IN KIND

1. Gift supplies received at Vienna and carried to Budapest:

	Kg.	Sw. Fr.
(a) <i>Foodstuffs</i>		
Condensed and powdered milk	6,155,681	13,782,675
Tinned meat and fish	684,601	3,717,631
Tinned fruit and vegetables	115,548	316,621
Infant foods	121,745	316,537
Fats, oil and butter	1,961,124	4,082,289
Cheese	1,220,543	4,112,456
Sugar	443,486	388,463
Coffee and tea	27,866	295,292
Chocolate and cocoa-powder	152,857	735,813
Rice	646,895	582,205
Flour	7,513,563	4,508,137
Other cereals	34,505	25,313
Pulse	79,550	66,026
Pasta	59,395	65,334
Salt	10,100	5,858
Sundry foodstuffs (bread, biscuits, etc.)	224,491	317,013
Fruits	92,833	117,838
Potatoes	30,470	3,351
Food parcels	5,551,750	13,747,274
Total	25,307,003	47,186,131
(b) <i>Textiles and leather goods:</i>		
Clothing and underwear	2,131,889	6,929,939

	Kg.	Sw. Fr.
Footwear	244,812	1,224,060
Blankets	354,415	1,127,321
Sheets	36,423	91,057
Sundry bedding	21,140	52,850
Sundry textiles	10,498	76,976
Leather bags	2,393	11,965
Total	2,801,570	9,514,168
(c) <i>Various supplies:</i>		
Toilet requisites (soap, razors)	67,441	113,670
Kitchen utensils and household goods	50,546	106,101
Bed-frames and mattresses	73,117	197,003
Window-glass	105,515	131,894
Coal	9,223,370	1,106,804
Seeds (through the FAO)	9,600,000	4,308,500
Vehicles (ambulances, cars and lorries)	—	258,000
Sundry articles	212,696	94,200
Total	19,332,685	6,316,172
<i>Total of gifts in kind (medicaments and medical equipment not included)</i>	47,441,258	63,016,471
* Medicaments and medical equipment (these particulars are given separately as the weight and value of the bulk consignments of medicaments received at the beginning of the relief action had to be estimated)	445,701	10,651,416
* Up to June 25, 1957, the following relief supplies were purchased and sent to Hungary by means of the cash donations received by the ICRC:		
Sugar	100,000	73,500
Chocolate	7,000	43,400
Tinned meat	60,000	119,463
Sundry textiles	20,900	244,414
Medicaments and medical equipment	29,710	397,384
Total	217,610	878,161

2. List of donors

	Kg.
(a) <i>National Red Cross Societies:</i>	
Argentine Republic	1,800
Austria	89,973
Belgium	142,914
Canada	16,928
Denmark	490,789
Finland	89,763
France	26,060
German Federal Republic	6,914,615
Greece	22,122
Italy	115,768
Liechtenstein	1,792
Luxemburg	8,900
Mexico	3,080
Netherlands	1,136,945
Norway	331,676
Portugal	2,971
Spain	8,763
Sweden	902,011
Switzerland	1,068,750
Thailand	22,360
United Kingdom	1,435,272
United States	707,936
Uruguay	4,460
Total	13,545,729
N.B.	
* Some gifts of governmental and non-governmental origin were sent to the ICRC through the National Red Cross which, in such cases, is listed as the donor of the supplies.	
* All the gifts mentioned above were sent through the ICRC. In addition, the Polish Red Cross sent directly to the Hungarian Red Cross 1,200,000 kg. of gift supplies (food-stuffs, clothing, medicaments, window-glass and cement), which were distributed in part according to the programmes drawn up by the ICRC in conjunction with the Hungarian Red Cross. Further, the Turkish Red Crescent sent 15,400 kg. of fruits directly to the Hungarian Red Cross, which were also distributed according to a joint programme.	

	Kg.
(b) <i>Governments:</i>	
German Federal Republic (including FAO seeds)	10,961,335
Greece	33,478
France	1,248,784
Israel	3,870
Luxemburg (FAO seeds)	100,000
Netherlands (FAO seeds)	2,500,000
Spain	480,000
United States	12,374,742
Total	27,702,209
N.B.	
The relief supplies furnished by the Governments were, in many cases, purchased with the product of public collections.	
(c) <i>Sundry donors:</i>	
UNICEF	90,347
CARE	2,300,000
ICRC	36,478
Various individual donors	3,766,495
Total	6,193,320
(d) <i>Total of gifts in kind (not including medicaments and medical equipment)</i>	47,441,258

II. CASH DONATIONS

	Sw. Fr.
1. <i>National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies</i> (these donations include all sums remitted up to June 25, 1957, either for purchases or for covering operational costs):	
Australia	255,500.33
Belgium	174,650.00
Brazil	12,987.20
Canada	447,250.00
Chile	707.90
Colombia	1,071.00
Ecuador	13,672.85
Finland	2,666.70
France	244,401.31
German Federal Republic	463,500.00
Guatemala	3,097.45
India	6,386.25
Iran	27,932.50
Italy	12,096.30
Japan	174,365.05
Lebanon	667.55
Liechtenstein	20,000.00
Luxemburg	35,129.75
Monaco	15,528.13
Netherlands	150,000.00
New Zealand	262,160.00
Pakistan	2,253.12
Sweden	194,026.00
Switzerland	1,000,000.00*
Thailand	10,710.52
Union of South Africa	646,867.65
United Kingdom	1,049,600.20
United States	527,846.15
Uruguay	64,256.25
Viet Nam	2,140.00
Total	5,821,470.16
* (Including Sw. Fr. 700,000 to cover operational expenses.)	

	Sw. Fr.
2. <i>Governments</i> (through the United Nations):	
Australia	191,670.35
Ceylon	13,803.00
United Kingdom	180,231.00
Total	385,704.35
3. <i>Sundry gifts:</i>	
ICRC Fund for Relief Action	30,000.00
Donation P. Nenni – G. Giorgini	28,000.00
American Joint Distribution Committee	20,000.00
Other non-governmental organisations (through the United Nations)	43,143.10
Private donors	427,562.81
Total	548,705.91
Total of cash donations	6,755,880.42
N.B.	
(The above total of Sw. Fr. 6,755,880.42 does not include the sum of Sw. Fr. 54,000 representing the donations of persons residing in Switzerland, handed over to the Swiss Red Cross to cover the costs of its participation in the ICRC relief action in Hungary (purchase of relief supplies and operational expenses.)	

III. FINAL SUMMARY

List of the gifts in kind (not including medicaments and medical equipment) and cash donations contributed by the various countries:

Country	Gifts in kind	Cash donations	Total
	Sw. Fr.	Sw. Fr.	Sw. Fr.
Argentine Republic	4,509	—	4,509
Australia	—	447,171	447,171
Austria	192,049	—	192,049
Belgium	307,592	174,650	482,242
Brazil	—	12,987	12,987
Canada	69,280	447,250	516,530
Ceylon	—	13,803	13,803
Chile	—	708	708
Colombia	—	1,071	1,071
Denmark	1,148,767	—	1,148,767
Ecuador	—	13,673	13,673
Finland	534,359	2,667	537,026
France	971,751	244,401	1,215,152
German Federal Republic	12,320,629	463,500	12,784,129
Greece	60,608	—	60,608
Guatemala	—	3,097	3,097
India	—	6,386	6,386
Iran	—	27,932	27,932
Israel	5,225	—	5,225
Italy	565,171	40,096	605,267
Japan	—	174,365	174,365
Lebanon	—	668	668
Liechtenstein	5,850	20,000	25,850
Luxemburg	27,281	35,130	62,411
Mexico	10,164	—	10,164
Monaco	—	15,528	15,528
Netherlands	2,799,246	150,000	2,949,246
New Zealand	—	262,160	262,160
Norway	1,054,642	—	1,054,642
Pakistan	—	2,253	2,253
Portugal	10,489	—	10,489
Spain	492,022	—	492,022
Sweden	2,447,205	194,026	2,641,231
Switzerland	3,805,963	1,000,000	4,805,963
Thailand	20,249	10,711	30,960
Union of South Africa	—	646,868	646,868

Country	Gifts in kind	Cash donations	Total
	Sw. Fr.	Sw. Fr.	Sw. Fr.
United Kingdom	4,286,671	1,229,831	5,516,502
United States	26,463,289	547,846	27,011,135
Uruguay	8,066	64,256	72,322
Viet Nam	—	2,140	2,140
FAO (seeds from the German Federal Republic, Luxemburg and the Netherlands)	4,308,500	—	4,308,500
UNICEF	195,915	—	195,915
ICRC	—	30,000	30,000
Various donors	900,979	470,706	1,371,685
<i>Total (not including medicaments and medical equipment)</i>	63,016,471	6,755,880	69,772,351

N.B.

* The total value of gifts in kind and cash donations received up to June 25, 1957 (including medicaments and medical equipment) amounts to Sw. Fr. 80,423,767 (i.e. 69,772,351 plus 10,651,415 Swiss francs).

* The total weight of gift supplies received up to June 25, 1957, amounted to 48,104,569 kg. i.e.

Gifts in kind (not including medicaments and medical equipment)	47,441,258 kg.
Medicaments and medical equipment	445,701 kg.
Supplies purchased with cash donations	217,610 kg.
Total	48,104,569 kg.

Source: ICRC, *Report on the Relief Action in Hungary, October 1956-June 1957* (Geneva: ICRC, 1957), pp. 45-50.

ANNEX XIV

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BUDAPEST DELEGATION CONCERNING PERSONS DETAINED IN HUNGARY FOLLOWING THE DISTURBANCES

PV [minutes] Presidential Council
of 15 Nov. 1956

Annex No. 2

SP 103

Instructions Concerning Persons Detained in Hungary Following the Disturbances

For Gallopin following conversation with Siordet and decision Presidential Council we suggest initial instructions for you to give Budapest delegation besides relief action and that should be implemented gradually as opportunities arise stop firstly obtain information on persons detained because of events stop on their status and treatment stop who are detaining authorities stop on any deportations secondly request authorization for ICRC to show interest in these persons through visits and if necessary by delivering relief supplies citing precedents Greece Morocco Algeria Cyprus thirdly request regular trials under Article Three and if possible try to obtain non-conviction or clemency for simple participation in struggle with no other charges, emphasizing general confusion fourthly under circumstances we do not consider appropriate to adopt overly legalistic position but advise taking as minimum basis Article Three especially paragraph before last, as well as general principles and spirit Geneva Conventions.

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original text of annex XIV (French)

PV Conseil de Présidence
du 15.11.1956

Annexe No 2

SF 103

Instructions concernant les personnes détenues
en Hongrie à la suite des événements

Pour Gallopin suite conversation avec Siordet et décision Conseil Présidence suggérons premières instructions que donneriez à délégation Budapest en dehors action secours et qui seraient mises à exécution progressivement selon possibilités stop primo obtenir informations sur personnes détenues en raison événements stop sur leur statut et leur traitement stop quelles sont autorités détentrices stop sur déportations éventuelles secundo demander autorisation pour CICR s'intéresser à ces personnes par visites et si nécessaire par remises secours invoquant précédents Grèce Maroc Algérie Chypre tertio demander jugement régulier selon article trois et si possible tenter obtenir non condamnation ou clémence pour simple participation à la lutte non accompagnée par autres accusations en faisant valoir confusion générale quarto vu circonstances ne jugeons pas opportun adopter position juridique trop stricte mais conseillons prendre pour base minimum article trois dont soulignons avant-dernier alinéa, ainsi que principes généraux et esprit Conventions de Genève.

ANNEX XV

**DOSSIER NOTE CONCERNING THE LEGAL ASPECT
OF THE CONFLICT IN HUNGARY**

JW/RRB

10 December 1956

NOTE

Attached hereto you will find a clear copy of the internal note that I had drafted following our conversation on the legal aspect of the Hungarian conflict, which served notably as the basis for the instructions conveyed to Mr. Bovey through the agency of Mr. Gallopin.

It is interesting to find that the idea expressed in the last paragraph of page 3 (possible prisoner of war status for deportees) echoes the suggestions recently made by Mr. Beckh in his note of 6 December 1956.

R.J. Wilhelm

cc: Messieurs Siordet, Pietet, and Maunoir
(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

12 November 1956

10 December 1956

Dossier Note

In re: Fate of participants in the fighting in Hungary who fell into the hands of the adversary

Along with all the various kinds of assistance that the ICRC can provide for the Hungarian civilian population and civilian and military wounded, the fate of persons who participated in the fighting in Hungary and fell into the power of the adversary must now become a focus of concern for the ICRC and its delegation in Budapest.

1) Having examined the issue with the assistance of Mr. Siordet, the administration of the General Affairs Division can, first of all, make the following comments regarding the *legal basis* on which the ICRC and its delegates might find their measures on behalf of these persons.

Undeniably, in certain respects the events in Hungary present the characteristics of an international conflict between two Parties – the USSR and Hungary – bound by the Geneva Conventions of 1949. This was the justification for the ICRC's request to the Governments of these two countries (telegram of 4 November) concerning the practical application of these Conventions – a request to which, incidentally, these two Governments have not so far responded.

In numerous other aspects, however – among which the interpretation of the events given by the Governments involved cannot be completely disregarded – the hostilities in Hungary called instead for the application of Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, an article that is valid for non-international conflicts. Moreover, in the appeal it broadcast to Hungary by radio on 31 October 1956, the ICRC referred merely to certain fundamental principles of the Geneva Conventions, principles that in the main corresponded to those laid down in the aforementioned Article 3 (although the appeal did not mention the article).

In light of all this and the necessity of basing the Committee's action on the principles giving it the greatest chance of effectiveness, the Division of General Affairs considers that the measures to be undertaken with respect to participants in the fighting who have fallen into the hands of the adversary in Hungary must be based above all on Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. It is understood, however, that the guarantees provided by that article must be considered as a minimum in the case of Hungary.

We must underline, moreover, that this acknowledgment of Article 3 as the most appropriate legal basis for action must in no way be considered to constitute an exact legal definition of the conflict in Hungary; such a definition is not currently necessary for humanitarian action.

2) This being the case, the view of the General Affairs Division is that the practical activity by the ICRC and its delegation in Budapest on behalf of participants in the fighting in Hungary who have fallen into the hands of the adversary should focus on the following points:

1. The delegation in Budapest should strive to find out if persons of any nationality are detained or interned in Hungary as a result of the recent events, particularly for participating in the fighting, and, if so, what authorities are holding them.

2. If there are such persons, the delegation should find out their status and what is to become of them. It should request that, in accordance with Article 3, these persons be treated humanely and given medical care if required, that notification of their internment be sent to their families, and that they be allowed to correspond with the latter, if necessary by "civilian messages".

3. Where possible, the delegation should request that persons be spared harassment, prosecution, or punishment by law for the mere fact of taking sides, particularly taking up arms on behalf of one camp or the other. In support of such a request, it might emphasize in particular that there is all the more reason to excuse these persons since they fought partly against troops of foreign nationality and took up arms in response to a call from authorities whom they might have considered to be their legitimate Authorities.

Whatever the case, the delegation could ask that if these persons are prosecuted they not be convicted except upon judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples (Article 3, para. d).

4. Where possible, the delegation should ask to be allowed to visit persons interned in Hungary for having participated in the hostilities, in order to give them relief supplies.

5. The ICRC delegation should also try to ascertain the accuracy of the reports that persons who participated in the hostilities have been deported to Russia or other Eastern countries.

If the reports are true, such a transfer of persons abroad would reinforce the international aspect of the conflict and the ICRC would be justified in intervening on behalf of these persons, and considering them as prisoners of war or civilian deportees.

[signed]
R.J. Wilhelm

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original texts of annex XV (French)

JW/RRB

Le 10 décembre 1956

N O T E

... Vous trouverez ci-joint, mise au net, la note interne que j'avais établie en son temps, à la suite de notre entretien sur l'aspect juridique du conflit de Hongrie, qui a servi notamment de base aux instructions communiquées à M. Bovey, par l'entremise de M. Gallopin.

Il est intéressant de relever que l'idée exprimée dans le dernier alinéa de la page 3 (statut éventuel de prisonniers de guerres pour les déportés) rejoint les suggestions faites récemment par M. Beckh dans sa note du 6 décembre 1956.

RJ. WILHELM

DISTRIBUTION : MM. Siordet - Pictet et Maunoir.

12 novembre 1956

10 décembre 1956

NOTE DE DOSSIER

Concerne : Sort des personnes qui ont pris part aux combats en Hongrie et qui sont tombées aux mains de l'adversaire.

A côté des secours de toute nature que le CICR peut apporter à la population civile hongroise ainsi qu'aux blessés civils et militaires, le sort des personnes ayant pris part aux combats en Hongrie et étant tombées au pouvoir de l'adversaire doit, dès maintenant, faire l'objet de l'attention et des préoccupations du CICR et de sa délégation à Budapest.

1) Après avoir examiné la question avec le concours de M. Siordet, la Direction de la Division des Affaires générales peut tout d'abord préciser ce qui suit quant à la base juridique sur laquelle peuvent se fonder les démarches du CICR et de ses délégués en faveur de ces personnes.

Il est incontestable que, sous certains aspects, les événements de Hongrie présentent le caractère d'un conflit d'ordre international entre deux Parties - l'URSS et la Hongrie - liées par les Conventions de Genève de 1949. A ce titre se justifiait la demande que le CICR a adressée aux Gouvernements de ces deux pays (télégramme du 4 novembre) en vue de l'application pratique de ces Conventions - demande à laquelle ces deux Gouvernements n'ont d'ailleurs pas répondu jusqu'ici.

Toutefois, par de nombreux autres aspects - au nombre desquels l'interprétation des événements donnée par les Gouvernements* ne peut être totalement négligée - les hostilités survenues en Hongrie ont appelé plutôt l'application de l'article 3 des Conventions de Genève, article valable pour les conflits de caractère non international. Aussi, dans son appel radiodiffusé à destination de la Hongrie du 31 octobre 1956, le CICR s'est-il borné à rappeler quelques principes fondamentaux des Conventions de Genève, principes qui correspondaient dans l'ensemble à ceux que prévoit l'article 3 précité (bien que l'appel ne fit pas mention de ce dernier).

En raison de ce qui précède et eu égard également à la nécessité de fonder l'action du Comité sur des bases lui donnant les plus grandes chances d'efficacité, la Direction des Affaires générales estime que les démarches à entreprendre en vue des personnes ayant combattu et étant tombées aux mains de l'adversaire

2.

en Hongrie, doivent se fonder avant tout sur l'article 3 des Conventions de Genève. Il est entendu, cependant, que les garanties prévues par cet article doivent être considérées comme un minimum dans le cas de la Hongrie.

En outre, soulignons que le fait de regarder l'article 3 comme la base juridique la plus appropriée en vue des démarches à entreprendre ne doit nullement être considéré comme la qualification juridique exacte du conflit survenu en Hongrie, la recherche de cette qualification n'étant actuellement pas nécessaire pour l'action humanitaire.

2) Ceci étant posé, de l'avis de la Direction des Affaires générales, l'activité pratique du CICR et de sa délégation à Budapest en faveur des personnes ayant combattu en Hongrie et étant tombées aux mains de l'adversaire devrait porter notamment sur les points suivants :

1. - La délégation à Budapest devrait s'efforcer de savoir si des personnes, de quelque nationalité que ce soit, sont détenues ou internées en Hongrie, par suite des récents événements et notamment pour avoir pris part aux combats, et au pouvoir de quelles Autorités elles se trouvent.

2. - S'il y a lieu, la délégation devrait s'informer du statut et du sort réservés à ces personnes. Elle devrait demander que ces personnes, conformément à l'article 3, soient traitées avec humanité, qu'elles soient soignées si besoin est, que leur internement soit notifié à leur famille et qu'elles puissent correspondre avec celle-ci, au besoin par "message civil".

3. - Selon les possibilités, la délégation devrait demander que les personnes ayant pris parti, en particulier, par les armes, pour l'un ou l'autre camp, ne soient ni inquiétées ni poursuivies ou punies judiciairement de ce seul fait. Elle pourrait faire valoir notamment, à l'appui d'une telle demande, qu'il y a d'autant plus de raisons d'excuser ces personnes qu'elles ont lutté en partie contre des troupes de nationalité étrangère et qu'elles ont pris les armes à la suite d'un appel d'autorités qu'elles ont pu considérer comme leurs Autorités légitimes.

La délégation pourrait demander, en tout état de cause, que si ces personnes sont poursuivies, elles ne soient pas condamnées sans un jugement préalable rendu par un tribunal régulièrement constitué assorti des garanties judiciaires reconnues comme indispensables par les peuples civilisés (article 3, lett. d)

3.

4.- Selon les possibilités, la délégation devrait demander de pouvoir visiter les personnes détenues internées en Hongrie pour avoir pris part aux hostilités en vue de leur apporter des secours.

5. - La délégation du CICR devrait également s'efforcer de savoir si les nouvelles selon lesquelles des personnes ayant pris part aux hostilités auraient été déportées en Russie ou dans d'autres pays de l'Est sont exactes.

Si tel était le cas, un tel transfert à l'étranger renforcerait l'aspect international du conflit et le CICR serait justifié à intervenir en faveur de ces personnes, à les considérer comme des prisonniers de guerre ou comme des civils déportés.

R.-f. Wilhelms

ANNEX XVI

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ICRC
AND HUNGARY ON FAMILY REUNIFICATION**

1. *Instructions for M.A. Guillermet.*
2. *Draft Agreement between the Hungarian Government
and the International Committee of the Red Cross
on Family Reunification between Hungary and Other Countries.*
3. *Draft Declaration to Be Signed by the Competent Authorities
of Host Countries that Have Taken in Hungarian Refugees.*

* *

* .

234(00-65)
TM/BT

25 April 1957

Instructions for Mr. A. Guillermet

=====

In re: Reunification of families dispersed between Hungary and other countries.

1. Mr. Guillermet is going to Hungary as a special delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to request from the Hungarian Government the necessary facilities to reunite families dispersed between Hungary and other countries.
To that end, Mr. Guillermet will submit the draft agreement attached hereto to the Hungarian Government.
2. Mr. Guillermet is authorized to sign the aforementioned agreement as long as any amendments to it requested by the Hungarian Government do not in any way affect the fundamental principles on which it is based.
Mr. Guillermet will especially consider as fundamental principles the entire first article. In particular, if the Hungarian authorities reject the principle of family reunification or reciprocity in the application of this principle, Mr. Guillermet will inform the Hungarian Government that the ICRC, not having been afforded the necessary facilities, is compelled to refuse to lend its assistance to such an action, and to inform those who have applied to it accordingly.
3. If amendments are requested on essential points, or points that the ICRC delegate considers incompatible with fundamental principles, Mr. Guillermet will merely make a formal note of the matter and refer it to the ICRC. If he sees fit, he may ask the Hungarian Government to draft a written counter-proposal, which he will submit to the ICRC.
4. If an agreement can be concluded exclusively for the purpose of reunifying families involving minors in the first age category, or the first and second age categories, Mr. Guillermet is authorized to sign it without first referring it to the ICRC.
5. Mr. Guillermet will inform the Hungarian Government that as soon as the agreement has been signed, the ICRC will apply itself to obtaining equivalent guarantees from the other governments involved.
6. When his negotiations with the Hungarian Government have been completed, Mr. Guillermet will go to Vienna to report to the ICRC. He will not tell the Austrian authorities or other governments about the attached draft agreement until he has submitted it to the Hungarian Government.

Geneva, 25 April 1957

Léopold Boissier
President

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

23 April 1957

DRAFT AGREEMENT
between the Hungarian Government
and the International Committee of the Red Cross
on Family Reunification between Hungary and Other Countries

Many Hungarian families were dispersed following the events of October 1956, and it appears that family members, some in Hungary and others abroad, are not able to join their relatives through their own efforts.

Given this situation, the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic, the Governments of several host countries, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have requested the intervention of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In response to these appeals, the International Committee has agreed to lend its good offices in order to find a solution to this problem, in accordance with the humanitarian principles that guide its action.

Consequently, the Government of the People's Republic of Hungary and the International Committee of the Red Cross agree as follows:

- 1) The principle of reuniting families dispersed as a result of the events of October 1956 will constitute the basis for the humanitarian action that the present agreement is intended to facilitate.

This principle will apply both to Hungarian nationals currently abroad who wish to join their families in Hungary or whose families have requested their return, and to Hungarian nationals currently in Hungary who wish to join their families abroad, or whose families have so requested.

Such reunions will take place on an individual and voluntary basis.

As a rule, they will take place in the home or place of residence designated by the head of the family.

In consideration of the principle of family reunification, the authorities will issue the exit visas for persons to be reunited with their relatives according to a more rapid procedure, distinct from that usually applied for emigration purposes.

- 2) The family reunifications described above will be undertaken simultaneously for Hungarian nationals currently abroad who wish to join their families in Hungary, or whose families have requested their return, and for Hungarian nationals currently in Hungary who wish to rejoin their families abroad, or whose families have requested it.

In both cases, where minors are concerned the following age categories will be taken into consideration:

1st age category: minors who are under 6 years old on 1 May 1957;

2nd age category: minors who have attained the age of 6-14 years by 1 May 1957;

3rd age category: minors who have attained the age of 14-18 years by 1 May 1957.

Reunification operations will be undertaken successively for each of the three age categories defined above, beginning with the first one.

- 3) The International Committee of the Red Cross will invite both parents, or, failing parents, the person or persons exercising parental authority, to state in writing their decision concerning the return to or departure from Hungary of the minor in question, whatever the latter's age category. This statement will constitute the necessary basis for an examination of the child's individual case. The statements received will subsequently be passed on either to the Hungarian Government, in the case of minors currently in Hungary who wish to join their families abroad or whose families wish it, or to the host country, in the case of minors currently abroad who wish to join their families or whose families have requested their return.
An analogous procedure will be applied to spouses separated as a result of the events of October 1956 who wish to be reunited.
- 4) Minors in the first age category will be reunited with their families as soon as both parents, or, failing parents, the person or persons exercising parental authority, have stated their wishes.
Minors in the second age category may be consulted by the ICRC and the authorities of the country where they are staying concerning their wish to return to or leave Hungary.
Minors in the third age category will be consulted in all cases.
- 5) The family reunifications operations described above will be supervised and monitored by the International Committee of the Red Cross and its representatives in Hungary.
The Hungarian authorities will accord every facility to the representatives designated by the International Committee of the Red Cross to accomplish this mission. The representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who will be of Swiss nationality, will receive in particular the necessary entry and exit visas.
In addition, its representatives will be empowered at all times to establish direct contact with the petitioning head of the family, with the minors or adults whose departure from or return to Hungary is requested, and with the persons lodging them.
The National Red Cross Societies may be called upon for assistance in the actual accomplishment of family reunification, notably in the provision of qualified people to accompany minors.
- 6) All family-reunification expenses incurred on Hungarian territory shall be borne by the Hungarian authorities.
The International Committee of the Red Cross will apply to host countries and the relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations to cover family-reunification expenses incurred outside of Hungary.

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

23 April 1957

Draft
Declaration to Be Signed by the Competent Authorities
of the Host Countries that Have Taken in
Hungarian Refugees

X.....has read the agreement signed between the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic concerning the reunification of Hungarian families dispersed as a result of the events of October 1956. X.....subscribes, for his part, to the basic provisions of that agreement.

Consequently, X..... undertakes to facilitate the execution of that agreement under the same terms.

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original texts of annex XVI (French)

234(00-65)
TM/BT

Instructions

pour

Monsieur A. Guillermet

====

Concerne : Regroupements de familles entre la Hongrie et l'étranger.

1. M. Guillermet se rend en qualité de délégué spécial du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge en Hongrie en vue de demander au Gouvernement hongrois les facilités nécessaires à la réalisation des regroupements de famille entre la Hongrie et l'étranger.

A cet effet, M. Guillermet soumettra au Gouvernement hongrois le projet d'accord ci-joint.

2. M. Guillermet est habilité à signer l'accord sus-mentionné dans la mesure où les modifications qui lui seraient éventuellement demandées par le Gouvernement hongrois n'affecteraient en rien les principes fondamentaux sur lesquels il repose.

M. Guillermet considérera notamment comme principes fondamentaux l'ensemble de l'art. 1er. En particulier, si les autorités hongroises rejettent le principe des regroupements de famille ou la réciprocité dans l'application de ce principe, M. Guillermet fera savoir au Gouvernement hongrois que le CICR n'obtenant pas les facilités nécessaires, est contraint de renoncer à prêter son concours à une telle action et d'en informer ceux qui se sont adressés à lui.

- 2 -

3. Au cas où des modifications seraient demandées sur des points essentiels ou que le délégué du CICR considérerait comme incompatibles avec des principes fondamentaux, M. Guillermet se bornera à en prendre acte pour en référer au CICR. S'il le juge à propos, il demandera au Gouvernement hongrois de formuler une contre-proposition par écrit qu'il soumettra au CICR.
4. Si un accord peut être conclu exclusivement en vue du regroupement de familles intéressant les mineurs de la première-classe d'âge, ou de la première et de la deuxième classe d'âge, M. Guillermet est autorisé à la signer sans en référer au préalable au CICR.
5. M. Guillermet fera savoir au Gouvernement hongrois que sitôt l'accord conclu, le CICR s'emploiera à obtenir des garanties équivalentes de la part des autres Gouvernements intéressés.
6. Lorsque ses négociations avec le Gouvernement hongrois seront terminées, M. Guillermet se rendra à Vienne pour en rendre compte au CICR. Il s'abstiendra de donner connaissance du projet-d'accord ci-joint aux autorités autrichiennes ou à d'autres gouvernements avant de l'avoir soumis au Gouvernement hongrois.

Genève, le 25 avril 1957

Léopold BOISSIER
Président

23 avril 1957

PROJET D'ACCORD

entre le Gouvernement hongrois et le Comité International
de la Croix-Rouge sur
les regroupements de familles entre
la Hongrie et l'étranger

De nombreuses familles hongroises se sont trouvées dispersées à la suite des événements d'octobre 1956 et leurs membres, qui sont les uns en Hongrie et les autres à l'étranger, ne paraissent pas en mesure de se réunir par leurs propres moyens.

En présence de cette situation, le Gouvernement de la République populaire de Hongrie, les Gouvernements de plusieurs pays d'accueil et le Haut-Commissaire des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés ont demandé l'intervention du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge.

Répondant à ces sollicitations, le Comité international a accepté de prêter ses bons offices en vue de rechercher une solution à ce problème, conformément aux principes humanitaires qui guident son action.

En conséquence, le Gouvernement de la République populaire de Hongrie et le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge conviennent de ce qui suit :

- 1) Le principe du regroupement des familles dispersées à la suite des événements d'octobre 1956 constituera la base de l'action humanitaire que le présent accord aura pour but de faciliter,

- 2 -

Ce principe s'appliquera aux ressortissants hongrois actuellement à l'étranger demandant à rejoindre leur famille en Hongrie ou dont le retour est demandé par cette famille, comme aux ressortissants hongrois actuellement en Hongrie demandant à rejoindre leur famille à l'étranger ou dont la sortie est demandée par cette famille.

La réunion aura un caractère individuel et volontaire.

En règle générale, elle s'accomplira au lieu de séjour ou de résidence que désignera le chef de famille.

Compte tenu du principe du regroupement des familles, les visas de sortie en faveur des personnes à réunir avec leurs proches parents seront accordés par les autorités intéressées selon une procédure accélérée et distincte de celle appliquée généralement en matière d'émigration.

- 2) Les regroupements de familles prévus ci-dessus seront entrepris simultanément pour les ressortissants hongrois actuellement à l'étranger demandant à rejoindre leur famille en Hongrie ou dont le retour est demandé par cette famille comme pour les ressortissants hongrois actuellement en Hongrie demandant à rejoindre leur famille à l'étranger ou dont la sortie est demandée par cette famille.

Dans les deux cas, et en ce qui concerne les mineurs, les classes d'âge suivantes seront prises en considération.

1ère classe d'âge, mineurs jusqu'à 6 ans révolus au 1.5.1957							
2ème	"	"	"	de 6 à 14 ans	"	"	" "
3ème	"	"	"	de 14 à 18 ans	"	"	" "

- 3 -

Les opérations de regroupements seront entreprises successivement pour chacune des trois classes d'âge définies ci-dessus, en commençant par la première.

- 3) Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge invitera les deux parents ou, à défaut, celui ou ceux qui exercent la puissance paternelle, à se déterminer au moyen d'une déclaration écrite, sur le retour en Hongrie ou la sortie de Hongrie, du mineur intéressé, quelle que soit la classe d'âge à laquelle il appartient. Une telle déclaration constituera la base nécessaire à l'étude du cas particulier de chaque enfant.

Les déclarations reçues seront transmises pour la suite à donner, soit au Gouvernement hongrois dans le cas des mineurs actuellement en Hongrie et demandant à rejoindre leur famille à l'étranger ou dont la sortie est demandée par cette famille, soit aux pays d'accueil dans le cas des mineurs actuellement à l'étranger et demandant à rejoindre leur famille ou dont le retour est demandé par cette famille.

Une procédure analogue sera appliquée aux conjoints séparés à la suite des événements d'octobre 1956 et désireux d'être réunis.

- 4) Les mineurs de la première classe d'âge seront réunis avec leur famille sitôt que les deux parents, ou à leur défaut, celui ou ceux qui exercent la puissance paternelle, se seront déterminés.

- 4 -

Les mineurs de la deuxième classe d'âge pourront être consultés par le CICR et les autorités du pays où ils se trouvent, sur leur désir de retourner en Hongrie ou leur désir de sortir de Hongrie.

Les mineurs de la troisième classe d'âge seront dans tous les cas consultés.

- 5) Les opérations de regroupement de familles décrites ci-dessus seront placées sous la surveillance et le contrôle du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et de ses représentants en Hongrie.

Les autorités hongroises accorderont toutes facilités aux représentants que désignera le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge pour l'accomplissement de cette mission. Les représentants du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, qui seront de nationalité suisse, recevront en particulier les visas d'entrée et de sortie nécessaires.

D'autre part, ses représentants seront en tout temps habilités à prendre directement contact avec le chef de famille demandeur, avec les mineurs ou les adultes dont la sortie de Hongrie ou le retour en Hongrie est demandé, comme avec les personnes qui les hébergent.

Il pourra faire appel au concours des Sociétés nationales de la Croix-Rouge pour la réalisation matérielle des regroupements de familles, notamment pour l'accompagnement des mineurs par des personnes qualifiées.

- 5 -

- 6) Tous les frais de regroupement de familles encourus sur territoire hongrois seront couverts par les autorités hongroises.

Pour la couverture des frais de regroupement de familles encourus hors de Hongrie, le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge interviendra auprès des pays d'accueil et des organisations gouvernementales et non-gouvernementales intéressées.

23 avril 1957

Projet

d'une déclaration à signer par les autorités responsables
des pays d'accueil ayant accueilli des réfugiés hongrois.

X a pris connaissance
de l'accord passé entre le Comité international de la
Croix-Rouge et le Gouvernement de la République populaire
hongroise au sujet du regroupement des familles hongroises
dispersées à la suite des événements d'Octobre 1956. X
souscrit, en ce qui le concerne, aux dispositions de
principe contenues dans cet accord.

En conséquence, X
s'engage à faciliter l'exécution de cet accord dans des
conditions identiques.

ANNEX XVII

MISSION REPORT BY DELEGATE BECKH

Report by M.H.G. Beckh on Mission to Vienna and Budapest, 11-21 October 1966

From the 11th to the 13th of October, I held meetings, described below, in Vienna. On 14 October, I went to Budapest, this date having been decided upon in Geneva during meetings between the League and Mr. Rostas, the Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross. In Budapest, accordingly, I exchanged views with representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross and of the Hungarian Lawyers' Association.

VIENNA

Austrians Missing in the USSR

The three-way meeting between Presidents von Lauda and Miterev and a representative of the ICRC could not be organized during the League meetings. Originally the plan had been for Mr. von Lauda to request an interview with Mr. Miterev, at which he would propose the participation of the ICRC. However, Mr. von Lauda was obliged to return suddenly to Vienna because his wife had to undergo an operation. Mr. Sevcik, for his part, has not had the opportunity to speak of the matter to the President of the Alliance.

Accordingly, Mr. Sevcik intends to write to the Alliance and lay before it the problem of Austrians who have disappeared in the USSR. At the time of my visit, he was hesitating between two possibilities: to write to the Alliance now and afterwards request the support of Mr. Jonas, President of the Austrian Republic, who was expecting a visit from Mr. Potgorny, President of the Soviet Union; or to leave it to Mr. Jonas to take up the issue with his guest in the name of the Austrian government.

Minister Krippel-Redlich, head of the Legal Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rather regretted the contretemps in Geneva, since, he said, it would have been better if Mr. Jonas could have recommended to his Soviet colleague a Red Cross action that was already in progress. The Minister thought that this would have been preferable since a request by the Austrian Embassy in Moscow had already been refused (see HGB report, no. 1792, 27.10.66, page 2).

Family Reunification

My trip to Vienna gave me the opportunity to discuss a few cases of family reunification and to give instructions.

BUDAPEST

Political Detainees

Mr. Rostas, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross, received me immediately, in the presence of Mrs. Koltai. Since returning from Geneva, he had once again contacted the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for the administration of penitentiary facilities, but the attitude there was very negative.

The Hungarian authorities in fact seem to think they have done everything necessary to meet the humanitarian requirements of Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions: authorization granted to the Hungarian Red Cross to visit, in 1961, two places of detention and to send relief parcels, and, finally, the authorization granted to Mr. Maunoir to visit the Thökol Penitentiary Centre on 12 October 1965.

It would, of course, be desirable to extend aid to political detainees all over the world; but why concentrate on Hungary, when everyone knows that the situation of political detainees in Spain is terrible? If the Hungarian Red Cross could tell the competent authorities that the ICRC also visits political detainees in Spain, our delegates would have a greater chance of obtaining new visiting permits.

I did not endorse Mr. Rostas's unfavourable attitude, an attitude all the more surprising because he had intimated other views to me in Geneva. Accordingly, I tried to get the Red Cross and the authorities to reconsider their decision during two other talks with the leaders of the National Red Cross Society, as well as with Mr. Benedek, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Lawyers' Association.

My general argument and the responses I received were as follows:

The Hungarian Red Cross seems rather surprised that Mr. Maunoir's prison visit in October 1965 has not been mentioned in our publications (*Revue*, general report, etc.).

I explained that Mr. Maunoir's visit could not be characterized as a visit to prisoners in the sense of Article 3. First of all, he had not been able to speak with prisoners who had taken part in the events of the autumn of 1956, but only with two other political detainees of a different category, and he had been allowed to do that only with prison administrators present.

Mr. Rostas expressed the opinion that this was perfectly reasonable, since the Third Geneva Convention does not stipulate private meetings with prisoners – an opinion that I refuted by citing Article 126 of the Third Geneva Convention. Mr. Rostas acquiesced. In addition, the Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross maintained that it did not matter which category of detainees Mr. Maunoir managed to speak with, since all the prisoners were subject to the same conditions; according to him, a spy who had collaborated with the enemy would be a political prisoner like any other.

With respect to political prisoners in Spain, I emphasized that the ICRC had made indefatigable efforts to gain access to detainees. However, whereas in Hungary the issue was the application of Article 3 of the Conventions, the

situation in Spain was different. As far as we know, none of the political prisoners currently in detention there had been arrested for participating in the civil war. If the Hungarian government did not agree to the application of Article 3, the ICRC's chances of achieving any success in Spain would dwindle still further. Mr. Rostas and Mrs. Koltai seemed to understand this argument. Moreover, I pointed out again that when a delegate spoke with a political detainee, he was supposed to discuss only the material conditions of detention.

At the conclusion of our conversation, I submitted a list containing the names of 35 political detainees, particularly those who had taken part in the events of the autumn of 1956, and I specified that I wanted to speak to a dozen of them. As for the other detainees on the list, the ICRC would be grateful to the Hungarian Red Cross and authorities for any recent information on their state of health, as well as their chances of a prompt release. I gave them to understand that if the Hungarian authorities agreed to authorize an ICRC delegate to speak privately with those dozen prisoners, it would probably be possible to mention the mission in our publications. The text might take the following form: While the authorities had, in 1965, allowed one of the ICRC delegates to look at the various facilities of a place of detention, the same authorities have in the meantime granted another delegate the opportunity to speak with a dozen political detainees of his choice, freely and without witnesses.

After speaking to the penitentiary authorities again, Mr. Rostas and Mrs. Koltai finally informed me that the administration would in principle be favourably disposed to this request. Although the visit could not be made during 10th anniversary of the counter-revolution, I could probably make it during my next mission to Hungary. Since I am expected in Bulgaria in the first week of December, also to visit a place of detention, the date of this stop in Budapest was tentatively set for mid-December.

For his part, Mr. Benedek, the Secretary-General of the Hungarian Lawyers' Association, unofficially promised me to support our plan if possible. In addition, he advised me to go to the Ministry of Justice myself and talk with the Minister's deputy. Upon reflection, however, I decided not to do this, in order to avoid antagonizing the Hungarian Red Cross, which seemed to me to be doing everything it could to support us.

Moreover, I referred to a letter from Amnesty International, dated 26 September, on the subject of political detainees in Hungary. This organization had sent us a photocopy of a letter from the Hungarian Lawyers' Association in which the Association advised Amnesty to contact the ICRC because the latter had been informed, by a letter from the Hungarian Red Cross dated 23 August 1966, of the fate of a certain number of political prisoners.

Before responding to Amnesty, I decided to discuss the matter with both the Hungarian Red Cross and the Hungarian Lawyers' Association. These two organizations stated that we could cite the information contained in the letter from the Hungarian Red Cross, but that we must advise the London organization to ensure that this information was not revealed in the press.

The Lawyers' Association obligingly obtained a translation of the Hungarian penal code for me. This code is rather draconian with respect to penalties for all acts or omissions considered hostile to "the public and social order of the Hungarian People's Republic".

* *
*

Mr. Fuchss, Ambassador of Switzerland, very kindly assisted me as much as he could by providing me with useful information.

From another source, I was told that the Minister of Justice, Mr. Ferenc Nezval, is a very restrained, suspicious person, which explains why the ICRC, despite Mr. Maunoir's indefatigable efforts, has not yet obtained authorization to visit political prisoners in accordance with Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

[signed]
H.-G. BECKH

3.XI.1966

HGB/gj

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original text of annex XVII (French)RAPPORT DE MISSION DE M. H.G.BECKHà Vienne et Budapest du 11 au 21 octobre 1966

Du 11 au 13 octobre, j'ai eu à Vienne des entretiens que je relate ci-dessous.

Le 14 octobre, je me suis rendu à Budapest, date qui a été fixée à Genève lors des réunions de la Ligue avec M. Rostas, secrétaire général de la Croix-Rouge hongroise. J'ai donc eu, à Budapest, des échanges de vues avec des représentants de la Croix-Rouge hongroise et de l'association des juristes hongrois.

VIENNEAutrichiens disparus en ~~Autriche~~ URSS

L'entretien tripartite entre les présidents von Lauda et Miterev ainsi qu'un représentant du CICR n'a pas pu être organisé lors des réunions de la Ligue. En effet, il avait été prévu que M. von Lauda demande un entretien à M. Miterev où il aurait proposé la participation du CICR. Or M. von Lauda a dû rentrer précipitamment à Vienne, sa femme ayant dû subir une opération. M. Sevcik, de son côté, n'a pas eu l'occasion d'en parler au président de l'Alliance.

M. Sevcik a donc l'intention d'écrire à l'"Alliance" pour lui soumettre le problème des Autrichiens disparus en URSS. Lors de ma visite, il hésitait entre deux possibilités : soit écrire maintenant à l'Alliance et demander par la suite l'appui de M. Jonas, président de la République autrichienne, qui doit recevoir prochainement la visite de M. Potgorny, président de ~~la~~ l'Union soviétique, ou laisser à M. Jonas le soin d'entamer ce problème au nom du gouvernement autrichien auprès de son hôte.

Le Ministre Krippel-Redlich, chef de la Division juridique du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, a regretté quelque peu le contretemps qui s'est produit à Genève, car, selon lui, il aurait été préférable que M. Jonas puisse recommander à son collègue soviétique une action de la Croix-Rouge déjà commencée. Selon le ministre, cette manière de faire lui aurait semblé plus opportune vu le refus qui avait déjà été opposé à une demande de l'Ambassade d'Autriche à Moscou (voir rapport HGB, enr. 1792 du 27.10.1966, page 2).

Regroupement de familles

Mon passage à Vienne a permis de discuter de quelques cas de regroupement de familles et de donner des directives.

BUDAPESTDétenus politiques

M. Rostas, secrétaire général de la Croix-Rouge hongroise, m'a reçu aussitôt, en présence de Mme Koltai. Depuis son retour de Genève il avait repris contact avec le Ministère de la Justice qui assume l'administration des établissements pénitentiaires, qui a eu une attitude très négative.

En effet, les autorités hongroises seraient d'avis d'avoir fait tout le nécessaire pour répondre aux exigences humanitaires contenues dans l'art. 3 des Conventions de Genève : autorisation accordée à la Croix-Rouge hongroise de visiter, en 1961, 2 lieux de détention et d'envoyer des colis de secours et, finalement, l'autorisation accordée à M. Maunoir de visiter, le 12 octobre 1965, le Centre pénitentiaire de Thököl.

Il serait bien, sans doute, d'étendre dans tout le monde l'assistance aux détenus politiques; mais pourquoi se concentrer sur la Hongrie, alors que tout le monde sait que la situation des détenus politiques en Espagne est terrible. Si la Croix-Rouge hongroise pouvait dire aux autorités compétentes que le CICR visite également les détenus politiques en Espagne, nos délégués auraient plus de chance d'obtenir de nouvelles autorisations de visites.

Je n'ai pas acquiescé à cette prise de position défavorable de M. Rostas, qui était d'autant plus étonnante qu'il m'avait fait entrevoir d'autres perspectives, à Genève. J'ai donc tenté de faire revenir la Croix-Rouge et les autorités sur leur décision au cours de deux autres entretiens avec les dirigeants de la Croix-Rouge nationale, ainsi qu'avec M. Benedek, secrétaire général de l'Association des juristes hongrois.

J'ai à peu près fait valoir l'argumentation suivante, et voici les réponses qui me furent données :

La Croix-Rouge hongroise semble s'étonner quelque peu de ce que la visite de prison faite par M. Maunoir en octobre 1965 n'ait pas été mentionnée dans nos publications (Revue, rapport général, etc.)

3.

J'ai expliqué que cette visite n'avait pas le caractère prévu pour une visite à des prisonniers tombant sous le coup de l'art. 3. Tout d'abord, M. Maunoir n'a pas pu s'entretenir avec des prisonniers qui avaient pris part aux événements de l'automne 1956 mais seulement avec 2 autres détenus politiques d'une autre catégorie, et il n'a pu le faire qu'en présence des dirigeants de la prison.

M. Rostas a émis l'opinion que ceci aurait été tout à fait naturel étant donné que la 3ème Convention de Genève ne prévoit pas des entretiens en privé avec les prisonniers, opinion à laquelle j'ai pu opposer l'article 126 de la 3ème Convention de Genève. M. Rostas acquiesça. D'autre part, le secrétaire général de la Croix-Rouge hongroise était d'avis que la catégorie de détenus avec lesquels M. Maunoir avait pu parler n'avait pas d'importance, car les prisonniers avaient tous le même régime; selon lui, un espion ayant collaboré avec l'ennemi serait un prisonnier politique comme un autre.

Quant aux prisonniers politiques en Espagne, j'ai souligné que le CICR avait déployé des efforts inlassables pour avoir accès auprès des détenus. Toutefois, alors qu'en Hongrie il s'agirait en fait de l'application de l'article 3 des Conventions, la situation se présente différemment en Espagne. Pour autant que nous le sachions, aucun des prisonniers politiques actuellement détenus n'a été arrêté du fait de sa participation à la guerre civile. Si le gouvernement hongrois n'accordait pas l'application de cet article, les chances pour le CICR d'aboutir en Espagne diminueraient encore. M. Rostas et Mme Koltai donnèrent l'impression de comprendre cet argument. En outre, j'ai répété que lorsqu'un délégué a un entretien avec un détenu politique, il est sensé s'occuper uniquement des conditions matérielles de la détention.

À l'issue de notre conversation, j'ai soumis une liste de 35 noms de détenus politiques, particulièrement ceux qui avaient pris part aux événements de l'automne 1956, et j'ai précisé que je désirais parler à une douzaine d'entre-eux. Pour les autres détenus mentionnés dans la liste, le CICR serait reconnaissant à la Croix-Rouge et aux autorités hongroises de bien vouloir lui fournir des informations récentes sur leur état de santé ainsi que sur les possibilités éventuelles de leur prochaine libération. J'ai fait entrevoir qu'au cas où les autorités hongroises seraient d'accord d'autoriser un délégué du CICR de parler, seul à seul, avec cette douzaine de prisonniers, ceci nous donnerait probablement la possibilité de faire mention d'une telle mission dans nos publications. Le texte pourrait avoir la teneur suivante : Alors que les autorités avaient donné la possibilité à un des délégués du CICR, en 1965, de prendre connaissance des diverses installations d'un lieu de détention, ces mêmes autorités

ont entretemps accordé à un autre délégué la possibilité de s'entretenir avec une douzaine de détenus politiques de son choix, librement et sans témoin.

Après avoir parlé à nouveau avec l'administration pénitentiaire, M. Rostas et Mme Koltai m'ont finalement déclaré que cette administration serait en principe favorable à cette demande. Toutefois, cette visite ne pourrait pas se faire au moment du 10ème anniversaire de la contre-révolution. En revanche, je pourrais, en toute probabilité, réaliser ce projet de visite lors d'une prochaine mission en Hongrie. Etant donné que je suis attendu dans la première semaine du mois de décembre, en Bulgarie, également pour me rendre dans un lieu de détention, la date de cette halte à Budapest a été provisoirement fixée pour la mi-décembre.

De son côté M. Benedek, secrétaire général de l'association des juristes hongrois, m'a officieusement promis d'appuyer si possible notre projet. Il m'a du reste conseillé de me rendre moi-même au Ministère de la Justice et de parler avec l'adjoint du Ministre. Après réflexion, j'ai quand même renoncé à me rendre à ce Ministère pour ne pas indisposer la Croix-Rouge hongroise, qui m'a semblé faire tout son possible pour nous appuyer.

Je me suis du reste référé à une lettre d'"Amnesty international" du 26 septembre, au sujet de détenus politiques en Hongrie. Cette organisation nous adressait la photocopie d'une lettre de l'"Association des juristes hongrois" d'où il ressortait que cette dernière conseillait à "Amnesty" de s'adresser au CICR, étant donné que celui-ci avait été informé par une lettre de la Croix-Rouge hongroise datée du 23.8.1966, du sort d'un certain nombre de prisonniers politiques.

J'ai préféré avoir, avant de répondre à "Amnesty", un échange de vues tant avec la Croix-Rouge hongroise qu'avec l'Association des juristes hongrois. Ces deux organisations ont déclaré que nous pourrions faire état des renseignements contenus dans la lettre de la Croix-Rouge hongroise mais que nous devions recommander à l'organisation de Londres de veiller à ce que ces renseignements ne soient pas divulgués dans la presse.

L'association des juristes a bien voulu me procurer une traduction du code pénal hongrois. Ce code est draconien en ce qui concerne les sanctions contre tous agissements ou toutes omissions, lesquels sont considérés comme hostiles à "l'ordre étatique et social de la République populaire hongroise."

5.

M. Fuchs, Ambassadeur de Suisse, m'a très aimablement aidé dans le cadre de ses possibilités en me fournissant d'utiles renseignements.

Par une autre source, il m'a été dit que le Ministre de la Justice, M. Ferenc Nezval, est une personnalité très fermée et méfiante, ce qui explique pourquoi le CICR, malgré les efforts inlassables de M. Maunoir, n'a pas encore obtenu l'autorisation de visiter les prisonniers politiques, conformément à l'article 3 des Conventions de Genève.



H.-G. BECKH

ANNEX XVIII

**LETTER FROM DELEGATE BORSINGER
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE ICRC**

PERSONAL

Vienna, 8 June 1957
MBB/EBr.

Professor Léopold Boissier
President of the International Committee of the Red Cross
7, Avenue de la Paix
ICRC
Geneva

Dear Mr. President,

I am most eager to thank you for your very kind personal letter (no. 322) of 3 June, which I value highly. I am writing now not only to express my gratitude, but also to give you some additional information on the subject of our relations with the authorities and diplomatic representatives here.

What I particularly appreciated was your confirmation that the ICRC does not wish to rush anything or, especially, to break off valuable contacts that are of greater importance than our activity in Hungarian territory. This is in fact the line that we endorse each time differences seem to be imminent, whether with certain donors or with the Austrian government in the sphere of family reunification. Particularly since December, I have been trying to make the Americans understand that if in operations of perhaps secondary importance – such as that in Hungary – the ICRC may occasionally appear to hesitate or to progress extremely slowly and carefully, this is because it must always remember that its main task is not necessarily to provide material relief, but, on the contrary, to be constantly in a position to fill the role accorded to it by the Geneva Conventions, now in force almost universally. Any concessions the Committee may make in the course of some secondary action are made advisedly and are intended to maintain contact with certain groups that distrust everything emanating from our regions, precisely so that it can act effectively if the worst happens. This also works to the advantage of the American people, since it constitutes a sort of “disaster insurance” for the future. It seems to me that the Americans are beginning to understand this, and I have not really felt any very great resistance on the part of the United States Embassy here to the

continuation of our operations as planned until 30 June, despite the changes that have taken place within the Hungarian Red Cross.

The foregoing obviously applies, though admittedly in a lesser degree, to our relations here with the League and the Embassies of Great Britain and France. An interesting observation in this respect is that the minor European powers seem much closer to us, with a better grasp of our *modus operandi*, and support our action in Hungary almost unreservedly. I am thinking in particular of the Scandinavian States, as well as the Benelux countries, Switzerland, and West Germany. As regards family reunification, the Austrians are clearly rather disappointed by the failure of our talks with the Hungarian government on this subject, but their disappointment is fortunately tempered by outright hostility towards the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which saves us from being the black sheep of this operation!

I must tell you that the last time Mr. de Rougé passed through, he invited Minister Helmer to dinner, last Tuesday, and was kind enough to extend the invitation to me. Other people you know were present as well: the section head, Hantschk, who is Permanent Secretary of State for internal affairs; the ministerial advisor Lieher; Mr. Schaeffer, General Delegate of the League; Mr. Page of the American Red Cross; Messrs Elliot and Frings, the respective Assistant Directors of the offices of the High Commissioner and the ICEM here; General Hickmann and Mr. Sevcik, respectively Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary of the Austrian Red Cross; and Count Goess, Vice-President of that society, Mr. de Lauda being absent.

At the end of the dinner, Mr. Helmer delivered a beautiful speech to mark the occasion of Mr. Schaeffer's departure and to thank Mr. de Rougé for the League's assistance to the Hungarian refugees in Austria. However, this heartfelt speech, which lasted half an hour, dwelled for 20 minutes on the ICRC's action in Hungary. This, I know, was no accident on Minister Helmer's part; he looked at me too often, using this means to send a message to the ICRC.

What was visibly preoccupying this remarkable man was what would happen to the five professors, particularly later when we will have left Hungary. He fears, in fact, that their days of relative freedom are now numbered. He apparently wants the ICRC to aid and protect them, or even get them out of Hungary. He even added: "The key used to lock the office you have been asked to leave is often – behind the iron curtain – the same that locks your cell".

I explained to Minister Helmer that this is a problem that also worries the ICRC, and that I had been asked, a few months ago, to convey a note from Geneva to our delegation in Budapest concerning precisely that question, and not merely with respect to the five members of that society's presidency, but all other members who might in future find themselves in a delicate position. I delivered that note to Mr. Kull, but do not know what our delegation has done since then. I will seize the next opportunity to recall the matter to our delegation. I also thought I sensed in Minister Helmer's speech that feeling that I have already

reported – that the Committee's attitude towards the People's Democracies is perhaps not firm enough.

Here you have, Mr. President, the scraps of information I wanted to give you. I would not wish, however, to end this letter on an overly negative note. It goes without saying that alongside the reservations or criticisms, sometimes veiled, concerning certain aspects of our activities, there is also much praise and admiration for our relief work in Hungary and for the way that this action has been carried out from Geneva as well as by Mr. Rutishauser here. For example, I am convinced that the perhaps rather unfortunate impression made on the Americans by our failure in North Korea has now, to a large extent, been erased, and that they have more confidence in the ICRC than they did four or five years ago.

I remain, Mr. President, your devoted servant,

[signed]

Melchior Borsinger

(Trans. from the French: M.G.)

Original text of annex XVIII (French)



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

PERSONNEL

Vienne, le 8 juin 1957
MHB/EBr.

Monsieur le Président,

Je tiens tout particulièrement à vous remercier de votre très aimable lettre personnelle no. 322 du 3 juin, qui m'a été, et qui m'est très précieuse. Si je vous écris, ce n'est pas seulement pour exprimer ma reconnaissance, mais aussi pour vous donner quelques éléments d'information complémentaires au sujet de nos relations avec les autorités et représentations diplomatiques ici.

Ce qui m'a été particulièrement précieux, était votre confirmation que le CICR ne désire pas brusquer quoique ce soit et surtout rompre des contacts précieux, dont la signification dépasse celle de notre activité sur le territoire hongrois. C'est en effet une ligne que nous nous permettons de défendre ici chaque fois que des divergences semblent être sur le point de se produire, soit avec certains donateurs, soit avec le gouvernement autrichien dans le domaine de la réunion de familles. Au près des américains, notamment depuis le mois de décembre, je m'efforce de faire comprendre que, si dans les actions presque secondaires - comme celle de Hongrie - le CICR peut, quelquefois, paraître hésitant ou progresser avec une extrême lenteur et prudence, c'est qu'il doit toujours garder en

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mémoire que sa tâche principale n'est pas nécessairement d'apporter des secours matériels mais au contraire de toujours être à même de remplir le rôle qui lui est dévolu par les Conventions de Genève, maintenant presque universellement en vigueur. Si le Comité fait certaines concessions au cours d'une action secondaire quelconque, il le fait sciemment et afin de garder le contact avec certains milieux qui se méfient de tout ce qui vient de nos régions, afin précisément de pouvoir agir efficacement au cas où le pire viendrait à se produire, agissant ainsi également à l'avantage du peuple américain, car il s'agit d'une sorte "d'assurance catastrophe" envers l'avenir. Il me semble que nos interlocuteurs commencent à comprendre cela et je n'ai, à la vérité, pas senti une très forte résistance de côté de l'Ambassade des Etats Unies ici pour la poursuite de nos opérations comme prévu jusqu'au 30 juin, malgré les changements intervenus au sein de la Croix-Rouge hongroise.

Ce qui précède s'applique évidemment, mais dans une moindre mesure, il est vrai, à nos relations ici avec la Ligue et les Ambassades de Grande-Bretagne et de France. Une constatation intéressante dans ce domaine est que les petites puissances européennes semblent beaucoup plus proches de nous, saisissant mieux notre façon de procéder et soutiennent notre action en Hongrie quasiment sans réserves. Je pense surtout aux Etats Scandinaves ainsi qu'aux pays du Benelux, la Suisse et l'Allemagne occidentale. En ce qui concerne la réunion de familles, il est évident qu'il y a une légère déception de côté autrichien à la suite de l'échec de nos conversations avec le gouvernement hongrois dans ce domaine, heureusement atténué par une franche hostilité envers le Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés et toutes leurs œuvres, ce qui nous value de ne pas être les brebis noires de cette opération!

Il faut que je vous informe qu'à l'occasion du dernier passage de M. de Rougé, celui-ci a offert un dîner au Ministre Helmer, mardi dernier auquel il a eu la grande aimabilité de me convier et auquel assistaient également divers personnalités que vous connaissez; soit le chef de section Hantschk, secrétaire d'état permanent de l'intérieur, le conseiller ministériel Lieher, M. Schaeffer, délégué général de la Ligue, Mr. Page

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Croix-Rouge américaine, MM. Elliot et Frings, respectivement directeurs-adjoints des bureaux du Haut Commissaire et du CIME ici, ainsi que le Général Hickmann et M. Sevcik, secrétaire-général et secrétaire adjoint de la Croix-Rouge autrichienne, Le Comte Goess, vice-président de cette société - M. de Landa étant absent.

A l'issue du dîner, M. Helmer a fait un très beau discours pour le départ de M. Schaeffer et pour remercier M. de Rougé pour l'aide de la Ligue envers les réfugiés hongrois en Autriche. Toutefois ce discours, qui a duré une demie heure et venait du coeur, traitait pendant 20 minutes l'action du CICR en Hongrie. Il s'agissait pas, je le sais, d'une confusion de l'esprit du Ministre Helmer qui m'a trop souvent regardé et adressait ainsi un message au CICR.

Ce qui préoccupe visiblement cet homme remarquable est le sort des 5 professeurs dès maintenant, mais surtout plus tard lorsque nous aurons quitté la Hongrie. Il craint, en effet, que leurs jours de liberté relative soient maintenant comptés. Il aura souhaité que le CICR puisse leur assurer aide et protection, voir même les sortir de Hongrie. Il a même ajouté: " La clef qui sert à boucler le bureau qu'on a été prié de quitter est souvent - derrière le rideau de fer - la même qui verrouille votre cellule."

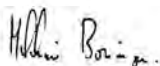
J'ai expliqué au Ministre Helmer qu'il s'agit ici d'un problème qui préoccupe également le CICR et que j'avais été prié, il y a quelques mois, de remettre une note de Genève à notre délégation de Budapest concernant précisément cette question et qu'il s'agissait la non seulement des cinq membres de la Présidence de cette société, mais de tous les autres membres qui pourraient à l'avenir se trouver dans une situation délicate. J'ai remis cette pièce à M. Kull, mais j'ignore ce que notre délégation a fait depuis lors. Je saisirai la prochaine occasion pour rappeler la chose à cette délégation. J'ai cru sentir, aussi, dans le discours du Ministre Helmer ce sentiment au sujet duquel j'ai déjà fait rapport: soit que l'attitude du Comité envers les démocraties populaires n'est peut-être pas assez ferme.

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Voici, Monsieur le Président, les quelques éléments d'information que je tenais à vous donner. Je ne voudrais pas, cependant, terminer cette lettre sur une note trop négative. Il va sans dire qu'à côté des réserves ou critiques, quelquefois voilées, quant à certains aspects de nos activités, il y a également beaucoup d'éloges et d'admiration pour notre œuvre de secours en Hongrie ainsi que pour la façon dont cette action a été exécuté aussi bien de Genève que par M. Rutishauser ici. Je suis, par exemple, convaincu que l'impression, peut-être un peu fâcheuse qu'à laissé dans l'esprit des américains, notre échec Corée du Nord est maintenant, dans une large mesure, effacée et qu'ils ont plus de confiance dans le CICR qu'il y a quatre ou cinq ans.

Croyez-moi, Monsieur le Président, avec ma déférence votre très sincèrement dévoué,



Melchior Borsinger

ANNEX XIX

MAP OF RELIEF DISTRIBUTION CENTRES
VISITED BY THE DELEGATES



Source: "L'action du CICR en Hongrie", *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge* 39 (May 1957): 269.

ANNEX XX

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ICRC OPERATION IN HUNGARY, 1956-1957

1956

- 23 October Beginning of unrest in Budapest.
- 27 " *Appeal by the League to the National Red Cross Societies – departure of Mr. Beckh with the first relief shipment.*
- 28 " *Appeal by the ICRC – departure of Mr. Bovey on board a Swissair DC-3.*
- 29 " First air link established with Budapest.
- 31 " The sixth flight is refused permission to land – *ICRC appeal to respect the principles of the Geneva Conventions.*
- 1 November *First road convoy (of the Austrian Red Cross, led by Mr. de Preux) reaches Budapest.*
- 2 " First agreement *between the League and the ICRC.*
- 3 " Mr. Bovey and Mr. de Preux remain in Budapest.
- 4 " ICRC appeal for a *truce.*
- 11 " Another road convoy crosses the Austro-Hungarian border with Dr. Willener.
- 14 " Mr. Gallopin meets Mr. Bovey and the leaders of the Hungarian Red Cross in Vienna. The first shipment by boat arrives in Budapest.
- 17 " *Agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross concerning the forwarding of relief supplies. Establishment of a technical delegation in Budapest.*
- 27 " *Second agreement between the League and the ICRC.*
- 29 " ICRC appeal to National Red Cross Societies to register refugees and the establishment of a *Hungarian card-index* at the ICRC Central Agency.

- 4 December *Agreement with the United Nations.*
- 7 " First letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations stating the needs perceived in Hungary.
- 10 " Beginning of refugee registration operations in Vienna.
- 18 " First report by Mr. Rutishauser.
- 19 " Agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross and the Füzert concerning the sale of *flour* and the opening of a *blocked account*.
- 20-21 " Visit to Geneva by representatives of the Hungarian Red Cross.
- 28 " Memorandum to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on *general relief*.
- 1957
- 4 January Seynes-Wahlen mission to Budapest
- 17 " *Report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the UN-FAO mission.*
- 25 " Provisional Rutishauser-Wahlen agreement for the transport of FAO seeds throughout Hungary.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Isabelle VONÈCHE CARDIA

HUNGARIAN OCTOBER

**Between Red Cross
and Red Flag**

On the basis of the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Isabelle Vonèche Cardia analyses the action taken by the humanitarian organization during the events in Hungary in 1956 and subsequently into the 1960s. The author brings out a little-known dual aspect of East-West relations in the Cold War period: how on the one hand an uncompromising political system took advantage of everything that "bourgeois humanism" could offer, while on the other hand the ICRC, aware that it was being used, allowed itself to adapt to the realities of the Communist world in the hope of gaining access one day to political detainees on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

This example represents a type of ICRC operation which was later repeated in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Cambodia and, by analogy, in the context of other totalitarian regimes.