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Relief and Rehabilitation

FILE NUMBER

NO. DU DOSSIER

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535/1

ICRC

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FILE BEGINS October 1956

ENDS May 1958

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8/1	1957 Harrick										
23/1	Taylor	2925									
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1/11	Taylor	2925	BF	11/11/58	(RD)						
12/11	Taylor	2925	PA	21/11	K.W.7.						
24/11	Taylor	2925	BF	5/1	ef						
5/1	Taylor	2925	PA	5/1	ef						
1/11	Taylor	2925	PA	1/11	ef						

CR. 37 '5-55)

FOR CONNECTED FILES SEE INSIDE COVER  
POUR LES DOSSIERS CONNEXES VOIR AU VERSO

**CONFIDENTIAL**

G.II.A.1/14 (1510).  
ATB/DA.

7 November 1957.

Dear Mr. Maunoir,

Reconciliation contributions received for  
Hungarian Relief and remitted to the  
International Committee of the Red Cross.

Thank you for your letter of 1 November 1957, enclosing  
a copy of the International Committee's Report on its relief action  
in Hungary from October 1956 to June 1957.

We have passed the information contained in paragraph two  
of your letter to our Headquarters. I would add that we did  
receive a copy of the preliminary report but inasmuch as Headquarters  
asked us for confirmation of the points referred to in my letter to  
you of 25 October 1957, it was thought that the best solution would  
be to have this in a written statement from you.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Coidan,  
Head, Administrative and Financial Services.

Mr. J.P. Maunoir,  
Executive Division,  
Comité International de la Croix-Rouge,  
Genève.

cc: Mr. P.C.J. Kien, New York.  
Mr. C. Rehling.

Mr. P. C. J. Kien, Chief,  
Accounts Division, Office of the Controller, New York.

Paul Coidan, Head,  
Administrative and Financial Services, New York.

8 November, 1957.

G.II.A.1/14 (1510).

Reconciliation contributions received for  
Hungarian Relief and remitted to the  
International Committee of the Red Cross.

....  
With reference to your letter to me of 19 September 1957  
and to Poudrier's interim reply of 25 October 1957, I enclose a  
copy of a letter addressed to me by the International Committee of  
the Red Cross, dated 1 November 1957, which I think satisfactorily  
answers the question raised by you.

....  
I also enclose the copy of the International Committee's  
report on its relief action in Hungary from October 1956 to June 1957.

cc: Mr. C. Rehling.  
Mr. S. van Moppes.

(COPY)

COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA

CROIX-ROUGE.

Geneva, November 1, 1957.

JPM/GRo 280 (65).

Dear Mr. Coidan,

We thank you for your letter (Ref.C.IIA.1/14 (1510)  
of October 25, 1957.

The preliminary report which we sent on August 26, 1957,  
to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in New York and of  
which, incidentally, a copy was sent to Mr. Bronsma in your Division  
in Geneva, covered the period up to June 30, 1957. It therefore  
included all the payments we had received up to that date i.e., the  
three governmental contributions mentioned under (a) of your letter  
and the first contribution under (b). A later statement will mention  
the second payment under (b) i.e., the remittance of August 2, 1957,  
to the amount of \$5,639.85 (Swiss francs 24,166.75).

We take the opportunity of sending you by this same mail  
a copy of the International Committee's report on its relief action  
in Hungary from October 1956 to June 1957. As you will see we have  
indicated in the table of donations received between September 1,  
1956, and June 25, 1957, the total value of the contributions in kind  
received from each country (governmental and non-governmental gifts).  
The value of these donations has been calculated on world market prices.

Yours sincerely,

J.P. Maunoir  
Executive Division.

Mr. Paul Coidan,  
Head of Administrative & Financial Services,  
European Office of the United Nations,  
Palais des Nations,  
Geneve.



EUROPEAN OFFICE  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



OFFICE EUROPÉEN  
DES NATIONS UNIES

Télégrammes : UNATIONS, GENEVE  
Téléphone : 3 10 00 3 20 00 3 40 00

REF. No. : G. I 30/1 20496 CAR/mb  
(à rappeler dans la réponse)

Palais des Nations  
GENÈVE

4 November 1957

NOV - 5 1957

ACTION

TO	<i>Mr. Taylor</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acknowledged
<input type="checkbox"/>	No Action Required

Dear Mr. Taylor,

*So 535/1 ICRC.*

We note from the ICRC letter of 28 October to Mr. de Seynes that copies in French of the Report on the Relief Action in Hungary have been sent to Headquarters.

... We have received a mimeographed version of the English text of the report which we send herewith to you in case it has not been received at Headquarters. The ICRC has promised to send to Mr. de Seynes printed copies of the English edition when they become available.

Yours sincerely,

*C.A. Rehling*  
C.A. Rehling  
External Relations Officer

Mr. D.W. Taylor  
Office of the Under-Secretary for  
Relief to the Hungarian People  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL  
DE LA  
CROIX-ROUGE

October 1956 - June 1957

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The purpose of the International Committee of the Red Cross is to give relief and protection to the victims of wars, civil wars and internal disturbances. Its neutral status enables it to gain the confidence of the parties to the conflict and the material assistance it gives is afforded without attachment to any party or opinions, on the sole basis of the urgency of the requirements. It strives to enable the wounded, sick, prisoners and the civilian population to receive the protection to which they are entitled as prescribed by the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, to which all States are bound at the present time.

REPORT ON THE RELIEF ACTION

from the beginning of the events in Hungary in 1956, the ICRC gave its assistance to the civilian population of that country. Thanks to the movement of solidarity aroused throughout the world and particularly among the National Red Cross Societies, the International Committee was able to set in motion one of the greatest relief actions of post-war years. It was deemed of interest to describe the main features of the relief action in the following pages; it was also wished to pay a tribute to the activity and generosity shown by all those who made it possible.

\* International Committee of the Red Cross \* ICRC

Geneva  
October 1957

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

## Report on the Relief Action in Hungary

October 1956 - June 1957

### Introduction

It is the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross \* to give assistance and protection to the victims of wars, civil wars and internal disturbances. Its neutral status enables it to gain the confidence of the parties in conflict, and the material assistance it gives is afforded without distinction as to nationality or opinions, on the sole basis of the urgency of the requirements. It intervenes to enable the wounded, sick, prisoners and the civilian population to receive the protection to which they are entitled, as prescribed by the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, by which 66 States are bound at the present day.

It was in application of these principles that, from the beginning of the events in Hungary in October 1956, the ICRC gave its assistance to the civilian population of that country. Thanks to the movement of solidarity aroused throughout the whole world, and particularly among the National Red Cross Societies, the International Committee was able to set in motion one of the greatest relief actions of post-war years. It was thought that it might be of interest to describe the main features of the relief action in the following pages; it was also wished to pay a tribute to the devotion and generosity shown by all those who made it possible.

November 1 - Several relief columns of various National Red Cross Societies arrived in Hungary. A relief train of the German Red Cross was also sent by the ICRC. One of the International Committee's delegates, Mr. de Preux, accompanied a food convoy of the Austrian Red Cross as far as Budapest and managed to return to Vienna the same evening. The Hungarian Red Cross announced



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL  
DE LA  
CROIX-ROUGE

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

REPORT ON THE RELIEF ACTION  
IN HUNGARY

October 1956 - June 1957

Geneva

October 1957



## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

Report on the Relief Action  
in Hungary

October 1956 - June 1957

## Introduction

It is the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross \* to give assistance and protection to the victims of wars, civil wars and internal disturbances. Its neutral status enables it to gain the confidence of the parties in conflict, and the material assistance it gives is afforded without distinction as to nationality or opinions, on the sole basis of the urgency of the requirements. It intervenes to enable the wounded, sick, prisoners and the civilian population to receive the protection to which they are entitled, as prescribed by the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, by which 88 States are bound at the present day.

It was in application of these principles that, from the beginning of the events in Hungary in October 1956, the ICRC gave its assistance to the civilian population of that country. Thanks to the movement of solidarity aroused throughout the whole world, and particularly among the National Red Cross Societies, the International Committee was able to set in motion one of the greatest relief actions of post-war years. It was thought that it might be of interest to describe the main features of the relief action in the following pages; it was also wished to pay a tribute to the devotion and generosity shown by all those who made it possible.

\* International Committee of the Red Cross - ICRC

## I. - FIRST RELIEF MEASURES AND THE TRADITIONAL

## WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

November 4 - All communications were cut off. Two delegates of the ICRC, Mr. Bovey and Mr. de Preux, remained at Budapest where violent fighting was going on, from November 5 to 8, to obtain authority to pass through the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav territories.

## 1. - First relief measures.

October 27, 1956 - The fighting which was going on in Budapest had already caused very many casualties. The ICRC received a first appeal from the Hungarian Red Cross, which wished to receive blood plasma, blood transfusion equipment and dressings. The first delegate of the ICRC left for Vienna.

October 28 - A telephone conversation took place with the Hungarian Red Cross, whose headquarters had suffered heavy damage. It was confirmed that the situation was serious and relief supplies urgently required. The same day the ICRC obtained 600 units of human albumen ready for transfusion and chartered a Swissair plane which took off the same evening to carry the supplies to Hungary.

October 29 - The ICRC aircraft landed at Ferihegyi Airport, with two delegates of the International Committee, Mr. Bovey and Mr. Beckh, on board, who handed over the relief supplies to the Hungarian Red Cross, and left immediately for Vienna to pick up the gift supplies which were continuing to arrive in Austria. Two Hungarian aircraft escorted the plane to the Vienna-Schwechat Airport.

October 30 - The air-lift thus inaugurated worked satisfactorily. The blood plasma requirements appeared to have been met; but the general strike prevented food supplies from reaching the capital. Powdered milk and infant foods were lacking. One delegate, Mr. Bovey, remained in Budapest. The other, Mr. Beckh, undertook to visit the Győr area. The refugees started to arrive in Austria.

October 31 - On Wednesday evening, on its sixth flight, the ICRC aircraft was refused permission to land at Budapest and was obliged to turn back. Communications by land were still cut. The ICRC appointed two new delegates to receive relief supplies in Vienna (Mr. Ammann and Mr. de Preux). It instructed Mr. W. Meyer to co-ordinate the ICRC relief action between Vienna and Budapest where the situation appeared to have improved.

November 1 - Several relief columns of various National Red Cross Societies crossed the frontier at Hegyeshalom. A relief train of the German Red Cross managed to reach Budapest under a safe-conduct supplied by the ICRC. One of the International Committee's delegates, Mr. de Preux, accompanied a food convoy of the Austrian Red Cross as far as Budapest and managed to return to Vienna the same evening. The Hungarian Red Cross announced

the loss of all its vehicles and made an urgent request for ambulances, surgical instruments, medicaments, food and building materials for the rebuilding of hospitals.

November 4 - All communications were cut off. Two delegates of the ICRC, Mr. Bovey and Mr. de Preux, remained at Budapest where violent fighting was in progress. Attempts were made, from November 5 to 8, to obtain authority to pass through the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav territories.

Motor convoys of several National Red Cross Societies were held up in Vienna.

November 9 - A convoy composed of 15 lorries, carrying 27 tons of foodstuffs, medicaments and medical equipment, left Vienna for the frontier. The ICRC notified the Hungarian and Soviet authorities of the departure of this convoy and requested them to help it to pass the frontier.

November 10 - Negotiations started at Sopron frontier post.

November 11 - The convoy passed the frontier at 11 p.m. It was placed under the responsibility of Dr. Willener, delegate of the ICRC, who proceeded immediately to Budapest where the relief supplies were handed over to the Hungarian Red Cross.

On November 2, the ICRC also sent a memorandum to the Hungarian and Soviet authorities asking them to assist in its humanitarian action and to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the persons and property engaged in that undertaking, and making special reference to the fact that this was the start of the second phase of the relief action in Hungary; that of the road transports. In view of the successful crossing of the frontier on November 11, the ICRC immediately made up a second convoy of 38 lorries loaded with 120 tons of foodstuffs and medicaments for Budapest. From that time and up to March 15, 1957, the white lorries of the ICRC were seen regularly on the road from Vienna to Budapest. As soon as the first difficulties had been overcome, the ICRC also started to send supplies by rail and by large along the Danube.

The ICRC immediately broadcast the following appeal:

## 2. - Traditional work of the ICRC.

From October 31 onwards, the ICRC broadcast over the Swiss Short Wave Service, and on its own wave-length, the following appeal which was repeated on several occasions:

It makes an urgent appeal to commanders and combatants to call a truce by mutual agreement in order that the wounded may be collected and evacuated. The present appeal is made by the ICRC in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

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

On November 2, the ICRC also sent a memorandum to the Hungarian and Soviet authorities, requesting them to assist in its humanitarian action and to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the persons and property engaged in that undertaking, and making special reference to the presence of two ICRC delegates and a convoy of the German Red Cross in Budapest, and of two supply columns of the Austrian Red Cross in South and South-West Hungary.

On November 4, during one of the last telephone calls received from Budapest, the Hungarian Red Cross appealed for the intervention of the International Committee, to ensure that the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention for the protection of the civilian population were applied during the fighting which was taking place in the city.

The ICRC immediately broadcast the following appeal:

"The International Committee of the Red Cross makes a solemn appeal to commanders and combatants in Hungary: The International Committee of the Red Cross is informed that combats are still raging in Budapest, and that numerous wounded have not yet been collected and cared for. It makes an urgent appeal to commanders and combatants to call a truce by mutual agreement in order that the wounded may be collected and evacuated. The present appeal is made by the ICRC in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the Fourth Geneva Convention".



The appeal was repeated on November 7.

At the same time the delegates continued their unsuccessful efforts to obtain an armistice to allow the collection of the wounded lying in the streets.

In East Hungary, another ICRC delegate, Mr. H. Beckh, got in touch, on November 1 and 2, with the National Committee in Győr, from which he obtained an undertaking to respect the Geneva Conventions. At Sopron, he was successful in preventing the shooting of some two to three hundred prisoners who had fallen into the insurgents' hands. On November 3, the delegate of the ICRC visited 29 civilian prisoners and political detainees at Győr. On his return to Austria he visited the principal refugee assembly centres.

The ICRC delegates in Budapest have also endeavoured to obtain authority to visit persons detained or interned on account of their participation in the rising; their efforts have not been successful so far.

On November 16 a delegation of the Hungarian Red Cross composed of Professors Horváth and Nonay, Dr. Killner and Mr. Michel Gedenyi, Head of the Foreign Relations Department, proceeded to Vienna and signed with Mr. H. Galopin, Executive Director of the ICRC, the agreement which was to serve as a basis for the ICRC relief action in Hungary.

## II. - THE RELIEF ACTION

### 1. - Basic Agreements

#### (a) Agreement with the League of Red Cross Societies.

The mass arrivals of relief supplies from all parts of the world and the magnitude of the relief action which it was necessary to organise both on behalf of the victims of the fighting in Hungary and for the assistance of the refugees in Austria, called for a clear apportionment of responsibility between the various Red Cross bodies.

On November 2 a first agreement was concluded between the International Red Cross organisations; the League was entrusted with the reception and co-ordination in Vienna of the gift supplies sent by the National Societies, whereas the ICRC was to forward the supplies to Hungary and distribute them in conjunction with the Hungarian Red Cross.

Assistance to refugees was to be the concern of the Austrian Red Cross.

However, on November 27, the flow of refugees from Hungary grew to such proportions that an amendment of the Agreement of November 2 was found to be necessary; henceforth, the ICRC would not only ensure the



forwarding and distribution of relief supplies in Hungary, but also the handling in Vienna of gifts earmarked for the relief action in Hungarian territory. The League, for its part, would handle and distribute the relief supplies assigned to Hungarian refugees on Austrian soil. Consultations were to be held between the two organisations with regard to gifts not earmarked for special purposes and appeals to National Societies.

(b) Agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross.

In early November the Hungarian Red Cross was re-organised.

The Secretary General, Mr. Béla Nemeth, gave up his post. The Society has been directed since then by a group of five well-known doctors (Professors Boldizsar Horvath, Tibor Nonay, Ferenc Pommersheim, Ferenc Földvary and Dezső Klimko) who acted in turn as President.

An Executive Director was appointed, Dr. Georges Killener, who was also the Government Commissioner.

On November 16 a delegation of the Hungarian Red Cross composed of Professors Horvath and Nonay, Dr. Killner and Mr. Michel Gedenyi, Head of the Foreign Relations Department, proceeded to Vienna and signed with Mr. R. Gallopin, Executive Director of the ICRC, the agreement which was to serve as a basis for the ICRC relief action in Hungary.

The Agreement provided that the ICRC would assume the control of the distribution in Hungary of the gift supplies entrusted to it, and ensure that the distribution was carried out in accordance with the fundamental Red Cross principles, 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". All facilities were to be granted to the ICRC for carrying out the tasks entrusted to it.

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

(c) Agreement with the United Nations.

During its special sessions in November 1956, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, on November 6 and 9, two resolutions expressing the wish for a large-scale relief programme to be undertaken to assist the Hungarian people. In accordance with these decisions an agreement was then concluded in Geneva on December 4 between the United Nations and the ICRC, which agreed to use the funds which might be transferred to it by the United Nations in order to provide immediate aid for the people of Hungary. This Agreement, which recognised the total independence of the ICRC, also stipulated that distribution would be made in accordance with Red Cross principles and in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, and stated that the ICRC would be the sole agency to carry out the relief programme on behalf of the United Nations.

## 2. - Organisation

### (a) General Delegation.

Mr. Ammann, Head of the ICRC Relief Section, returned from Greece where he was on a mission and, in early November, took the first steps required for the reception of gift supplies in Vienna and the organisation of the road convoys.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. W. Meyer and Mr. Ralph Eckert, former delegates of the ICRC, members of the UNICEF staff, were placed by that organisation at the International Committee's disposal. They immediately started to make enquiries in Budapest, with a view to estimating the needs and the quantities of commodities required. Mr. Meyer made out the first distribution programmes required to supply food to those in need in Hungary.

Following these important preparatory missions, the ICRC appointed Mr. Georges Rutishauser, Swiss National Councillor, a specialist on food questions, to organise the necessary technical services.

With the help of the Swiss Red Cross, Mr. Heinrich Bircher, a transport specialist, and Mr. Marius Redli, a financial expert, Mr. Rutishauser (appointed ICRC General Delegate for Hungarian relief) quickly recruited several technicians for transport and organisation. Numerous Swiss firms also placed at the International Committee's disposal qualified staff, whose co-operation proved to be most valuable in carrying out the considerable task involved.

A two-way service was thus set up between Vienna and Budapest under the direction of the General Delegate.

At the headquarters in Vienna, Mr. Rutishauser had four assistants working directly with him:

- (1) The delegate in charge of relief supplies and financial matters, whose duty was to draw up (in conjunction with the Budapest Delegation) the large-scale relief programmes (with the exception of the medical programmes) based on the quantities and types of relief supplies which, after investigation, had been found to be necessary, to arrange, with the ICRC Relief Section in Geneva, for the despatch of the supplies required to fill the programmes, and to deal with the financial administration of the Vienna and Budapest Delegations (Mr. Markus Redli).
- (2) The Delegate appointed as liaison officer between the ICRC, the General Delegate of the League of Red Cross Societies, the National Red Cross Societies and other relief organisations represented in Austria, and the foreign embassies and legations in Vienna, and also responsible for the traditional tasks of the ICRC (Mr. Melchior Borsinger).

(3) The head of the Information Service, who kept the Press informed of the progress of the relief action and supplies the donor Societies with information enabling them to keep up the charitable movement arising from the events in Hungary.

(4) The head of the Medico-Pharmaceutical Section, in charge of all the medical branches of the relief action (drawing up of lists of medical needs, sorting, warehousing and transport of supplies), who dealt with applications for medical relief supplies. The staff of this section was composed of several doctors and pharmacists, and many students from the two Faculties.

The heads of the two last-mentioned sections changed on several occasions.

(b) Vienna Delegation.

The Vienna Delegation was the very hub of the action as practically all the gift supplies were channelled to the Austrian capital. Under the direction of Mr. Bircher (and later of Mr. Vollmar) the essential work of the Vienna organisation was to receive in warehouse and forward the supplies.

(1) Warehouses - The main warehouse was set up in Vienna. This department's work was to assemble and sort the mass of gift supplies deposited in various places, or still loaded on railway trucks. For this purpose, three warehouses with a floor area of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> were rented through the Vienna town authorities. In spite of their size, the warehouses proved to be too small and it was impossible to find other premises.

The warehouse staff was also engaged in checking lists of supplies, registering the gifts received and notifying the senders of their safe arrival.

The handling of the supplies was made considerably easier by the use of modern appliances supplied, with the necessary staff, by the Swiss Federal Railways.

(2) Road transport - With the stoppage of the air-lift, road convoys were the only means of sending supplies from Vienna to Budapest. The Transport Section, which had available 126 vehicles in all, nevertheless also had to transport supplies and personnel in Vienna itself; the staff also dealt with applications for visas and customs formalities.

(3) Rail and river transport - In December 1956 the resumption of rail traffic enabled the rate of shipment and quantities shipped to be considerably increased. A Rail and River Section was set up the purpose of which was to organise, in conjunction with the Austrian Federal Railways



and the warehouse staff, complete trains for Budapest and the provinces, as well as consignments in transit through Vienna, and direct transports from Trieste to Budapest.

(4) Administrative Department - All matters concerning the staff, their accommodation and maintenance, were dealt with by the Administrative Department, which also covered the special sections concerned with the accounts, equipment and mail registry.

With a view to reducing administrative expenses as far as possible, the ICRC was able, in most cases, to arrange for the qualified staff it required to be placed at its disposal by their employers. Thanks to the generous help of Swiss firms and administrative services, which were willing to do without their employees for a few months, the ICRC had only to provide for their accommodation, maintenance and a small "per diem". During the entire relief action 443 persons (out of 669) whose hours worked totalled 596 months, were placed at the International Committee's disposal free of charge. At the rate of an average salary of 800 fr. per month, the amount saved was nearly half a million Swiss francs.

Moreover, the Delegation headquarters, housed at the beginning at the Wandl Hotel, were transferred in December to the Stiftskaserne, made available free of charge by the Austrian Ministry of Defence. Thanks to the understanding attitude of the Austrian authorities, the majority of the staff could thus be lodged in the same building, where a canteen was opened, thus avoiding heavy hotel expenses.

(c) Budapest Delegation.

From the start of the relief action, the Budapest Delegation was installed in an office building near the Parliament. The Delegation was placed under the direction of M. Ernst Fischer, with the co-operation of the ICRC delegate, Mr. R. Bovey.

(1) Programmes - A special section, under the direction of the delegate in charge of supplies, and in close co-operation with the Hungarian Red Cross, made plans for the most important relief programmes including the distribution schedules. When their suggestions had been approved by Mr. Rutishauser, the General Delegation (in agreement with the ICRC) asked for the despatch of the supplies required. The other programmes were drawn up on the spot by the Budapest Delegation on the basis of the gift supplies announced or already delivered. Two sub-sections were set up, of which one dealt with foodstuffs, textiles, coal, etc., and the other with medico-social relief.

(2) Supervision - A check was kept of distributions by means of the receipts given by the distribution sections of the Hungarian Red Cross, and numerous visits of inspection to the distribution centres in Budapest and the provinces.



(3) Transports - As the Hungarian Red Cross had lost practically all its vehicles during the fighting, the Budapest Delegation organised its own services for the transport of persons and supplies. The vehicles of the ICRC were, in particular, placed at the Hungarian Red Cross Society's disposal for delivering relief supplies to the distribution centres.

(4) Warehouses - A spacious warehouse was set up at the port of Csepel, in South Budapest, where several premises were available. A Packing Centre was also organised in direct liaison with the warehouse. In five months 750,000 parcels were packed at the Centre; two other depots were opened at the South and East Stations to hold stocks of other relief organisations working in co-operation with the ICRC.

(3). - Investigation of requirements and drawing up of relief programmes

The principal duties of the General-Delegates were to find out the type and quantity of the relief supplies required before drawing up relief programmes, and to arrange for deliveries accordingly.

After the first relief measures, where the need to take immediate action took priority over other considerations, the first step required was to make a thorough study of the needs of the Hungarian people affected by the events. After a personal visit to the spot, and several discussions with the authorities concerned, the General-Delegate and his staff worked to merge the numerous requests for assistance into a general plan, after judging them on their merits, to estimate the quantity of commodities involved and to comply with the requests in so far as the possibilities allowed. At the same time they endeavoured to make the best use possible of the gift supplies which were continuing to flow into Vienna.

According to investigations made in mid-December 1956, 8,000 dwellings had been completely destroyed, and 35,000 had suffered partial damage. Several hospitals in Budapest, especially in the 9th District where the fighting had been particularly bitter, were badly damaged. Many hundreds of thousands of window-panes had been shattered. Casualties were estimated at 2,700 dead and 20,000 wounded.

Coal supplies were extremely precarious; weeks of strikes and damage to the mines had considerably reduced output. The heating in the hospitals was barely adequate.

The food position, however, showed no serious signs of crisis and the threat of famine in Budapest was dispelled when the transport strike came to an end. Meat, vegetables, fruit and bread were available in sufficient quantities. Nevertheless, there was a great shortage of milk, eggs, salt and groceries. Moreover, victims of the events, destitute through the loss of their dwelling or their bread-winner, were unable to obtain even essential foodstuffs. The situation of Hungarian nationals who had suffered

expropriation or removal from their homes to other districts before the events of October 1956 deserved special consideration.

There were great difficulties as regards textiles and footwear since large stocks had been destroyed by fire and factories had been shut down for weeks at a time. The only essential medicament in urgent need at first was insulin. There was also a cruel lack of diagnostic and therapeutic apparatus for hospitals. Further investigation showed that antibiotics, dressings and X-ray films were also urgently required.

It was found that, in Budapest alone, at least 250,000 persons were in need of assistance.

The population was informed through the Press and radio of the relief action in progress and the methods pursued, and those in need were requested to register at the relief centres. The lists of names were kept open until March 31, 1957.

In order to benefit by the distributions of relief supplies, the applicants had to belong to one of the following categories:

- (a) Survivors of victims
- (b) The wounded and their families
- (c) Destitute persons (homeless)
- (d) Large families (3 children and over)
- (e) Aged persons (60 years and over), the sick and disabled
- (f) Tuberculous patients under treatment at home
- (g) Needy persons in general (insufficient means)

According to information supplied by the Hungarian Red Cross, 615,000 persons, i. e. 32% of all the Budapest inhabitants, were thus given assistance; this figure includes all members of a family, even if the family was deprived of its bread-winner, or if the head of the family were found to be eligible for assistance. By adding 400,000 persons in need in the provinces to the above figure, it will be seen that over a million people were given assistance.

When the requirements and categories of persons in need had been determined, the General Delegation and the Budapest Delegation drew up long-term programmes. The relief actions already in progress were continued or, in some cases, stopped; the most important distributions consisted of medicaments, blankets, window-glass, coal, clothing and milk.

In principle, each programme covered one category of goods only. It was the subject of a written agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross, the distributing agency, and it was put into effect as soon as the beneficiaries and the quantity of relief supplies required had been clearly notified. This procedure ensured a fair distribution of gift supplies and efficient supervision of the undertaking.

By the end of June 1957, 167 programmes had been put into operation, of which the majority are now finished. Some are still in progress (see appended list).

#### 4. Distribution methods

##### (a) Principal programmes

The object of the distribution plan set up by the Hungarian Red Cross in 22 Budapest districts and in the provinces was to ascertain which persons were eligible for assistance and to supply them with the relief supplies received. Its staff was mainly composed of voluntary workers, with the addition of 500 salaried workers.

Without entering into the details of the 167 relief programmes thus organised, it seems of interest, however, to give a short account of some of the most important:

Parcels - This relief programme was the most important and the most appreciated. It consisted of the distribution of food parcels, each weighing about 4 kgs., containing sugar, rice, pasta, fats, tinned meat, powdered milk and, in so far as possible, chocolate, coffee, tea and cigarettes. Each parcel contained an average of 14,000 calories.

During this relief action 1,861,076 food parcels were distributed, of which 745,000 were packed by the ICRC in Budapest by means of the gift supplies received from the various countries; the remainder were placed directly at the International Committee's disposal by the following countries: United States (800,000), Sweden (102,500), West Germany (65,000), Denmark (64,580), Switzerland (52,000), Norway (15,000), United Kingdom (9,996), Netherlands (5,000), and France (2,000).

Milk - The object of this relief programme was to provide with milk from 120,000 to 150,000 expectant mothers, and infants, in Budapest, by distributing 100 gr. of powdered milk per day and per head. The total amount of powdered milk used for this programme reached 1,707,000 kgs. The programme was carried out from November to June but, as local milk supplies proved to be insufficient, it had to be resumed in June.

Meals for children - The original programme was to provide a hot meal daily for 66,000 Budapest children under 14 years of age. Owing to various circumstances, however, the programme had to be limited to children up to 6 years; 530,000 kgs. of foodstuffs were necessary for carrying out this relief action.

Blankets - The requirements were so great in needy families and among the victims of events, as well as in hospitals and institutions, that the gift supplies received by the ICRC were not, unfortunately, sufficient to meet all the needs. Ten programmes were put into operation for the purpose, during which 205,000 blankets were distributed.

Clothing and footwear - From the great quantity of gifts, of varying quality, which reached the ICRC, 1,460,607 kgs. of clothing and



footwear could be distributed to those in need. Mention should be made, in this connection, to the particularly valuable gift of new clothing sent from Poland, which included 5,037 men's overcoats, 2,500 men's suits, 9,000 articles of clothing for men, women and children, and 35,000 pairs of shoes. The United States Government also made a gift of new clothing: 1,300 pairs of leather shoes, 23,787 pairs of rubber boots and 99,960 of socks.

The sorting of consignments of used clothing caused some delay in distribution.

Coal - Only a small proportion of the requirements ascertained in December 1956 could be covered. Nevertheless, the delivery of 8,696 tons of coal enabled the hospitals to overcome the acute shortage of coal which had made it necessary to cut off, almost entirely, the heating of their premises. Mention should be made here of the most welcome gift of the American organisation CARE, which made available 92,335 parcels of 25 kgs. of coal for families.

Window-glass - Many hundreds of thousands of panes of window-glass had been shattered during the fighting in Budapest, so that the heating problem (which was already serious on account of the shortage of fuel) became worse still, especially in hospitals and nursing homes. The ICRC therefore undertook to replace window-panes missing in hospitals, clinics and homes. The gifts of window-glass, 23,000 m<sup>2</sup> in all, were divided between four relief programmes.

Cars and ambulances - During its action on behalf of the victims of the fighting in Budapest, the Hungarian Red Cross lost practically all its vehicles. In response to its request for assistance, the ICRC placed at its disposal 17 motor vehicles, including 12 ambulances; 6 other vehicles were handed over to various hospitals in Budapest.

Chocolate - Acting on a suggestion put forward by their teachers, Swiss school children organised at Christmas and Easter a collection of chocolate, which brought in 470,000 slabs. These gifts were distributed when the schools in Budapest and the provinces were re-opened in January and April. In addition, 6,098 kgs. of chocolate were distributed in orphanages, sanatoria for tuberculosis patients and children's homes in the country.

Food supplies for hospitals - Investigations in the provinces showed that there was a great shortage of foodstuffs in hospitals, institutions and homes; 561,000 kgs. of foodstuffs were distributed, under several programmes, to sanatoria, hospitals, homes for the blind and mental institutions in Budapest, and in the provinces at Pecs, Szeged and Debrecen.

Medico-social assistance - During the first phase of the relief action, the supply of insulin played a particularly important part



(following the issues of blood plasma and dressings during the fighting period). As all reserve stocks were exhausted and the manufacture of the product was at a standstill, the ICRC was obliged, for several months, to supply the whole country with this vitally important medicament. In addition, considerable deliveries were made of antibiotic and tuberculostatic and therapeutic apparatus. The greater part of the medicaments and medical equipment received were issued to nursing homes, hospitals and pharmacies through the Hungarian Red Cross, the Ministry of Public Health and the State Office for the purchase of pharmaceutical products. The direct distribution of medicaments to the population was entrusted to a pharmacy set up especially for the purpose by the Hungarian Red Cross in Budapest, under the direction of a Hungarian chemist.

During the second part of the relief action, it was found that instead of concentration on foodstuffs and clothing, supplies of which were gradually getting back to normal, the Committee could now place the main emphasis on meeting medico-social needs. A new appeal was therefore launched, early in April, to National Red Cross Societies and donor Governments, in order to obtain the necessary quantities of medicaments, dressings, dental equipment, instruments and apparatus, textiles for hospitals and artificial limbs. Important gift supplies were then placed at the International Committee's disposal; the distribution is now in progress and will be continued until September.

Special mention should be made of the valuable assistance given by the French people, represented by the Comité interministériel de coordination de secours aux sinistrés, which organisation alone gave entire sets of hospital equipment valued at Sw. Fr. 2,600,000 (which filled 53 railway trucks), the gift of the Swiss Red Cross and the Swiss Government, of a value of about 400,000 Swiss francs, and the Scandinavian countries' gift of modern X-ray equipment worth over 250,000 Swiss francs.

(b) Supervision.

The distribution of the gifts was made under constant supervision, by a section specially set up for the purpose at the ICRC Delegation in Budapest. The Hungarian Red Cross also had 40 supervisors at its disposal.

For all gift supplies distributed the Delegation issued receipts stating clearly the nature and quantity of the commodities delivered. Spot checks were made to see whether the beneficiaries were actually in possession of the relief supplies.

This system of checking gave satisfactory results; no misuse of any great importance was found. Small quantities of relief supplies no doubt appeared on the black market, in spite of all supervision, when beneficiaries wished to obtain a commodity which was still more essential to them than the gifts received. Likewise, it was not possible to avoid thefts during transport and in the warehouses. Nevertheless, the proportion of these losses and irregularities was extremely small as compared to the action as a whole.

(c) Distribution of certain gift supplies against payment.

The majority of the relief programmes put into effect by the ICRC, although they benefited the persons most in need, only covered a small proportion of the population. In many respects, however, and particularly in Budapest, the whole population was affected by the events of October 1956. It therefore appeared advisable to consider a certain number of general relief programmes, for instance, for supplying coal and bread grain.

These general programmes provided for the distribution of the commodities through normal economic channels, that is to say, through flour mills and bakeries in the case of the bread grain and through coal merchants for the distribution of coal intended exclusively for hospitals, schools and universities. In each case, the product of the sales to the distributing agents was remitted to a blocked account of the Hungarian Red Cross with the Hungarian National Bank, on which that Society could not draw without the consent of the ICRC, and the commodities were then sold to the population at local market rates. The funds remitted to the bank account were, in accordance with an agreement between the ICRC and the Hungarian Red Cross, to be used to assist people in need, to cover the cost to the Hungarian Red Cross in giving this assistance, and for the re-equipment of hospitals and charitable institutions. The total amount of the funds placed in the bank up to the end of June, and the product of the sales of flour, medicaments coal and seeds, amounted to 35 million forints.

The most important sale was that of seeds, a gift made through the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) by the Governments of the German Federal Republic, the Netherlands and Luxemburg, which produced 17,800,000 forints. The purchasers could not be considered as persons in need and the sale of seeds was the only means of ensuring fair and practical distribution (for further details see press releases published by the United Nations Information Service).

5. - Arrival of supplies

(a) Planning

In the first phase of the relief action, relief supplies had been despatched exclusively on the basis of the appeals made by the Government, or by the Hungary Red Cross. In view of the emergency, gifts arrived without plans being made in advance, which led to a surplus of some commodities and an almost entire lack of others. In addition, the indiscriminate despatching of consignments, instead of sending them at regular intervals, caused considerable warehousing costs.

However, as soon as the investigations carried out on the spot had given a clearer view of the situation, an appropriate plan was drawn up and long-term arrangements were made to give the most efficient assistance on the most economical basis.

The following table was drawn up to show the estimated quantity of relief supplies required for the first four months of 1957, to cover the principal needs reported:

Powdered milk.....	2,800 tons
Tinned meat.....	1,000 "
Fats.....	470 "
Cereals (not including flour)....	1,400 "
Flour.....	1,700 "
Sugar.....	500 "
Salt.....	250 "
Coal.....	34,500 "
Blankets.....	205,000 "

The estimation of the medical supplies required, and which had not been covered by the first consignments sent, did not take place until March. At that time a fresh investigation of other needs was made, so that the second part of the relief action could be undertaken.

It had been possible to cover the majority of the requirements with the gift supplies received in November and December. For the remainder, further appeals were made to donor National Red Cross Societies and Governments, and purchases were made with the cash contributions received by the ICRC in Geneva.

#### (b) Origin and quantities of gift supplies

It had not been possible, by the end of June 1957, to give definite figures for the total quantity of gift supplies placed at the International Committee's disposal, as several large consignments had not yet been delivered at the time.

The following particulars are, therefore, merely provisional and will be adjusted later, when the winding-up of the relief action, now in progress, has been finished.

According to the information available at the present time, the total value of gifts in cash and in kind received up to June 25, 1957, amounted to over 80 million Swiss francs, i.e. about 19 million dollars; the total weight of gifts in kind was over 48,000 tons. The value of the gift supplies has been calculated on the world market rates.

Statistics are appended giving the details of the figures mentioned above. It will suffice to state in these pages that the ICRC received gift supplies from 40 countries of the five Continents; 36 National Red Cross Societies contributed to its relief action and 11 Governments sent gifts, either directly or through the United Nations. Spontaneous contributions were made by numerous private organisations and individuals.

The contributions in cash received up to the end of June 1957 amounted to about 7 million Swiss francs. This sum includes the gifts



received at Vienna and Geneva, but not the product of the sale of some relief supplies (1) paid in to the blocked account of the Hungarian Red Cross (35,000,000 forints).

The total value of contributions in kind, consisting of foodstuffs (including food parcels), textiles and footwear, medicaments and medical equipment, and sundry supplies (window-glass, coal, FAO seeds, vehicles, etc.) amounted at the end of June to about 73 million Swiss francs, that is to say, over 17 million dollars.

By the end of June, one country (the United States) had contributed over 25 million Swiss francs towards the International Committee's relief action in Hungary. Another (the German Federal Republic) gave over 10 millions and the United Kingdom over 5 millions.

The contributions of six other countries (Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland), to the same date, ranged from 1 to 5 millions.

## 6. - Transport

### (a) Various means of transport employed

In the first phase of the relief action, the stoppage of land communications and the urgent need for giving the medical assistance required made it necessary to have recourse to air transport. However, the air-lift inaugurated on October 29, came to a stoppage on October 31 already, permission to land having been refused.

Road transport was faced with the same difficulties as transport by air, i.e. small loads and heavy costs. Nevertheless, for several weeks, road convoys were the only means of forwarding relief supplies to Hungary.

However, when rail traffic again became normal, the number of road convoys was reduced. As from January 1, one of the four columns of 10 to 15 lorries employed until that date was used for occasional journeys. The three others were kept in reserve, but held in readiness to resume their service within 48 hours, in the event of a further stoppage of rail traffic. At the request of the Hungarian Government, road transport finally came to an end in mid-March.

Transport by boat on the Danube, a most suitable and economical means of carriage, was only used for a very short period in December 1956, for a consignment of 2,608 tons of flour. Other consignments by boat were planned but could not be carried out as the ice on the Danube prevented river traffic.

(1) See page 15



#### 7. - Operational costs

As the relief action was not finished at the time this report was issued, it will be understood that it has not been possible so far to submit the total figures for the whole of the expenditure incurred for the staff, transport, office premises, etc. Nevertheless, the figures available show that the operational costs of the relief action were kept at a relatively low level, so that the gifts received had to support only a minimum of costs. Thus the administrative costs (salaries, insurance, office premises, telephone and teleprinter charges, etc.) represent slightly more than 3% of the total donations. It should be said, in this connection, that it was through a special appeal sent to the National Red Cross Societies taking part in the relief action that it has been possible, so far, to meet the operational costs which had not already been taken over by the donors. This appeal produced the sum of 4,868,000 Swiss francs, which represents approximately 70% of the total contributions in cash.

It would appear, from the estimates drawn up at the end of June, that the actual amount of the operational costs will be much less than anticipated, so that it has already been possible to refund to the donor Societies part or the amounts they so generously placed at the disposal of the ICRC to ensure the smooth running of the relief action.

#### 8. - Co-operation with other relief organisations

Without taking into account the numerous relief actions of various organisations or individuals during or shortly after the fighting in Hungary, several great international organisations worked in Hungary in co-operation with the ICRC. In order to co-ordinate the work of all these bodies, and to avoid overlapping, the ICRC and the Hungarian Red Cross concluded agreements with l'Actio Catholica (the Hungarian branch of Caritas Internationalis), the relief association of the Protestant Churches in Hungary (HPK) and the Rädde Barnen (the Swedish branch of the International Union for Child Welfare). These agreements stipulated that the ICRC would deal with the forwarding of gift supplies from Vienna to Budapest, through its transport services, and that the supplies should be distributed in accordance with Red Cross principles and with the consent of the ICRC and the Hungarian Red Cross.

The ICRC also despatched and distributed, in co-operation with the Hungarian Red Cross, the gifts of a great many national and international relief organisations:

First Aid for Hungary  
National Catholic Welfare Conference  
Women's Voluntary Service  
Oxford Committee for Famine Relief  
Schweizerischer Lehrerverein  
Studentische Direkthilfe Schweiz-Ungarn  
Quäkerhilfe  
UNICEF

#### 9. End of the relief action

As the ICRC has already announced on several occasions, the relief action came to an end, in theory, on June 30, 1957. This date had been fixed 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 in October 1956 - the relief action undertaken by the ICRC would no longer be absolutely necessary. The General Delegation and the services set up in Vienna were therefore closed down on June 30.

However, as all the deliveries provided for in the Programmes established in agreement with the Hungarian Red Cross had not been carried out within the time-limit prescribed, it seemed advisable, to ensure, in particular, the safe delivery of gift supplies to the beneficiary Red Cross Society, to maintain a small delegation in Budapest until September 30, 1957. A new agreement (to replace that of November 16, 1956) was therefore concluded on June 27, 1957, with the Hungarian Red Cross, to specify the work of this mission of five members, whose essential task was to deal with the gifts of textiles and hospital equipment which were still being sent to Hungary.

For its part, the Hungarian Red Cross was again re-organised. The five professors of the Faculty of Medicine who had presided over the Society since November 9, 1956, and the Executive Director, Dr. Killener, gave up their posts on May 3, 1957. On June 25, the Ministry of Public Health appointed a new President, Professor Pal Gégesi Kiss, and a former Ambassador Joseph Karpati, was nominated as Secretary-General.

In general, after the initial difficulties had been overcome, the relief action went according to plan. Co-operation with the National Red Cross Societies, Governments and governmental and non-governmental relief organisations was always cordial. For their part, the Hungarian and Austrian authorities never ceased to grant the ICRC the support and freedom of movement required for carrying out its humanitarian mission.

In many Hungarian families the relief supplies transmitted on behalf of the generous donors by the ICRC provided, for days and weeks on end, an appreciable supplement to insufficient food rations and, in some cases, were in fact their only food. Clothing and footwear, as well as textiles of all descriptions, filled requirements which would otherwise have remained unsatisfied through lack of means. The re-equipment of hospitals destroyed or damaged during the fighting enabled many patients to receive better treatment by giving the medical profession new opportunities and new aids.

All the National Red Cross Societies in the countries of refuge gave their support to this work and their active co-operation in the setting up and operating of the ICRC Central Card-Index in Geneva. They filled in the personal history cards printed in four languages which had been prepared for the purpose by the ICRC, or supplied lists of names on the basis of which the ICRC made out the individual cards. In accordance with the practice usually followed in such cases by the ICRC, no information concerning a refugee is supplied without his consent.

### III. - WORK OF THE ICRC INFORMATION BUREAU

#### AND THE RE-UNITING OF FAMILIES

##### 1. - The activities of the Information Bureau of the ICRC

The exodus of some 200,000 Hungarians who sought refuge in Austria and Yugoslavia following the events in October 1956, and the rapid measures taken for their evacuation to other countries of asylum, dispersed numerous families whose members were in many cases unable to find each other. If often happened that members of the same family crossed the Hungarian frontier at different times and were resettled in various countries without having had the time to make enquiries about missing members and to find out where they had been sent. It was with a view to helping them to get in touch with their members, and if possible, re-uniting them, that the ICRC undertook to identify them and organise the exchange of family news.

##### (a) Messages and requests for news

On November 13, 1956, the International Committee started to broadcast over the Radio-Intercoeurouge short wave -length the names of persons wishing to receive news of their families. At the same time the ICRC placed Civilian Message Forms at the disposal of the persons concerned, to be forwarded by its services, which would open enquiries: 16,155 requests for news were broadcast and 41,722 written messages were transmitted until postal communications were resumed between Hungary and other countries. The ICRC continued, however, to receive and deal with the requests for enquiries sent to it from all parts. Up to the end of June, it had opened 2,000 enquiries.

##### (b) The Hungarian Central Card-Index

As from November 1956, the ICRC organised at its Central Agency an Information Bureau on the lines of that provided by the Geneva Conventions for the protection of war victims. For this purpose it undertook to register all particulars possible concerning the refugees, firstly while they were in Austria and Yugoslavia, and secondly when they had been sent on to other countries.

All the National Red Cross Societies in the countries of refuge gave their support to this work and their active co-operation in the setting up and operating of the ICRC Central Card-Index in Geneva. They filled in the personal history cards printed in four languages which had been prepared for the purpose by the ICRC, or supplied lists of names on the basis of which the ICRC made out the individual cards. In accordance with the practice usually followed in such cases by the ICRC, no information concerning a refugee is supplied without his consent.



Consequently From the beginning of 1957 this card-index started to fulfil its purpose by enabling tallies to be made and replies to be sent to numerous requests for information. By the end of June 1957, 35 persons were working at the Central Card-Index, to which Enquiry and Correspondence Sections had been attached. At that date the card-index contained 249,437 cards and 11,871 checks had been made, in 8,800 cases with successful results.

This work is being continued, since requests for enquiries continue to flow in to the ICRC and some countries have not yet finished sending in personal history cards or lists of names of the refugees in their territory.

The Central Card-Index has given satisfactory results. It should be pointed out, however, that it met with technical difficulties at first which were essentially due to the lack of systematic registration, both in the first or second countries of refuge and those of final resettlement. In addition, it sometimes occurred that, for technical or legislative reasons, some countries merely supplied the identity particulars of refugees on their soil without giving their addresses. The ICRC was therefore obliged to open a great many enquiries with National Societies which caused considerable delay in the communication of the information required.

## 2. - Re-uniting of families

### (a) The problem

As may be imagined, the question of re-uniting families did not affect only Hungarian families dispersed in the various countries of refuge, but also families some of whose members were in Hungary and some in other countries. From the outbreak of the events in October 1956, an appreciable number of unaccompanied children crossed the Austrian and Yugoslav frontiers and, likewise, many parents left Hungary in a hurry without taking their children. It was therefore normal, later on, for many parents and children to ask to be re-united, either in Hungary or abroad.

However, whereas the repatriation of children was in fact arranged in Yugoslavia and - in a few cases - in Austria, the majority of the countries of asylum did not feel able to take part in operations on which no effective check could be kept, particularly as regards applications for the repatriation of children submitted by parents in Hungary.

### (b) Negotiations with the Hungarian Government

In view of this situation and at the request of the Hungarian Government and the authorities of several countries of refuge, in April 1957 the ICRC submitted to the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs in Hungary a draft agreement based on the principle of re-uniting dispersed families. According to the terms of this general plan, the reunion was to take place at the home or place of residence designated by the head of the family.

Consequently, the International Committee's services were to be given for repatriation both to and from Hungary. In addition, the reunion was to be of an individual and voluntary nature and, on the basis of the principle of the re-uniting of families, the exit visas for persons to be re-united with their near relatives were to be issued by the authorities, according to a more rapid procedure, distinct from that usually applied for emigration purposes. Finally, the operation as a whole was to be placed under the supervision of the ICRC.

These suggestions did not meet with the approval of the Hungarian Government.

While admitting that the emigration problem itself required to be settled, the Government was of the opinion that it was a question of lesser importance; the first thing to be done was to organise the repatriation to Hungary of minors who had gone to other countries. In its reply the Government stated that children who had, in fact, according to their parents' wishes, been entrusted to the care of their grandparents or near relatives in Hungary (and remained therefore within the family circle) could not be placed on the same footing as children who had left their homes to go to other countries where they were separated from their families.

In its counter-proposals, however, the Hungarian Government made no provision for the ICRC to be given any supervision or check; its role was to be confined to transmitting to the National Societies of the countries of asylum the lists of the children claimed by their parents, and requesting those Societies to take steps for the children's repatriation.

In the circumstances, the ICRC was obliged to give up its attempt to find a general solution to the problem of the re-uniting of families. As the Hungarian Government was in favour of the conclusion of direct agreements between the Hungarian Red Cross and the National Societies of the countries concerned, there was no longer any point in the International Committee offering its services, all the more so as diplomatic relations existed between Hungary and the countries of asylum. Moreover, the ICRC did not wish, by prolonging negotiations in view of a general agreement, to run the risk of delaying repatriations which could take place under bilateral agreements.

Nevertheless, the ICRC stated that it was prepared, if a settlement could not be reached by direct agreement between Hungary and a particular country of asylum, and if it was requested to do so by both parties concerned, to co-operate in the work of re-uniting dispersed families, provided that both the parties afforded it freedom of movement and right of supervision commensurate with the responsibility assumed.

(a) Special mention should be made of the food parcels sent by the Norwegian Red Cross. The food in these parcels could be heated in the containers which, when empty, provided a watertight utensil.

#### IV. REMARKS AND SUGGESTIONS

At the close of the relief action undertaken in Hungary from October 1956 to June 1957, it would seem advisable to try to draw useful lessons from the experience gained. In an undertaking of this description, where unforeseen circumstances, and hence the adoption of improvised methods, are likely to play a large part in spite of any precautions taken, it would certainly be useless to try to eliminate such contingencies by previous planning. Nevertheless, armed conflicts, whatever they may be, have certain unchanging or at least similar features from which general conclusions may be drawn. It is on this basis that the following comments are made.

##### 1. - Standardisation of relief supplies

- (a) - The relief action of the ICRC took the form of traditional aid to people of whom the majority (not including the homeless) were already provided with the bare necessities (housing, basic food, cooking facilities, essential clothing), as compared to the complete maintenance given to refugees who had to be provided with lodging, food, upkeep, clothing, etc. Relief programmes applicable in one case could not, therefore, be applied in the other.
- (b) The clearest example of this difference is to be found in the relief given in the form of food parcels, not advisable in the case of complete maintenance but very suitable, however, for use as additional food supplies. The programme for the distribution of food parcels of 4 kgs. in Budapest and the provinces was certainly one of the most popular.
- (c) Although the packing of parcels of food drawn from bulk supplies, as organised at Budapest, gave satisfactory results, the sending of parcels already prepared by the donor countries is preferable. It takes the burden of making arrangements for packing off the shoulders of the receiving organisation and enables it to devote itself entirely to its technical work (clearance through Customs, drawing up programmes, distribution, supervision, etc.).
- (d) A study could be made of the standardisation of food parcels. Experience has shown, nevertheless, that in spite of the difference in food habits between the donor country and the beneficiaries, it is possible to vary the composition of the parcels in order to take into account the possibilities and needs of each recipient.
- (e) Special mention should be made of the food parcels sent by the Norwegian Red Cross. The food in these parcels could be heated in the containers which, when empty, provided a watertight utensil.



- (f) As regards clothing, the particulars noted during the relief action in Hungary, or in the refugee camps, were the same; the sending of used clothing, often in rags, obliged the receiving organisations to organise the sorting and matching of clothing which caused a considerable loss of time and money. For a future relief action it would therefore be advisable for the donor Societies to consider providing new, or almost new, clothing, duly sorted and classified by size before its despatch, even if they have to sell the used clothing they receive to obtain new stocks. A study could also be made of certain methods of standardisation in the preparation of sets of clothing ready to be despatched.
- (g) The above remarks also apply to medicaments; it is highly important that the quality should give no cause for criticism. The ICRC received antibiotics in Vienna for which the date for use expired in 1956. Further, the sorting of the consignments received took three months and cost 18,000 Swiss francs.
- (h) In many cases pharmaceutical specialities reached the ICRC without any indications of their formula. It would be desirable, in future relief actions, for the formula to be stated, if possible in a language known to the doctors of beneficiary countries.
- (i) The standardisation of medical supplies could be studied, not only to determine the assortment required of first aid medicaments, but also in making up first aid kits. In disasters or conflicts, the needs of the wounded are the same: blood plasma, blood transfusion equipment, dressings, medicaments for emergency treatment, and possibly surgical equipment. It should be possible to plan a model first aid kit for use in any circumstances.

## 2. - Standardisation of international appeals

- (a) Experience has shown that whereas action must be rapid to be effective, too much haste causes confusion and loss. The ICRC Delegation in Vienna saw considerable quantities of gift supplies arrive, thanks to the rapid action and generosity of the donor Societies. However, in view of the confused situation in Hungary at the time, and the interruption of all means of communication, it was impossible to forward the badly needed goods to their destination. The result was great congestion which once again caused a great loss of work and time. Thus, some 200 railway trucks were held up at the station at the same time, and it took eight weeks to unload some of them.
- (b) It seems necessary, therefore, in so far as it is possible to forecast needs at all, to draw up, first of all, general relief programmes which could be applied/appropriate changes in each specific case, according to the season of the year, geographical position, standard of living and customs of the beneficiaries.

- (c) At the moment when the relief action is put in motion, the first appeal to the National Societies should request them to send immediately the emergency relief supplies found to be necessary (dressings, blood plasma, etc.), but to wait until they receive detailed information before sending other relief supplies (clothing, textiles, less urgent medicaments, etc.).
- (d) In the meantime, the receiving organisation would make a rapid survey of the position, and a brief list of the kinds and quantities of relief supplies required. Only then should another appeal be made to the National Societies, stating the relative urgency of requirements, to enable the consignments to be spaced and avoid, as far as possible, the cost of warehousing and demurrage.
- (e) The Red Cross Societies should also be invited to adjust their consignments to the general information given in the appeal, and to keep the receiving organisation informed of the despatch of each consignment. It happened on several occasions that varied gift supplies reached Vienna without previous notice from the sender. In such cases the ICRC had then to decide (in conjunction with the beneficiary Society) what use could be made of the gift supplies. In future relief actions it would be most advisable for donor Societies to abstain from sending supplies before assuring themselves, beforehand, that they meet the requirements noted on the spot.
- (f) Some confusion arose at the beginning of the relief action, owing to consignments being wrongly addressed. The first appeal should therefore inform National Societies of the address (as short as possible) of the recipients, and the name of the railway station. In addition, the contents of the trucks should be correctly stated on the way-bills; the description "gift supplies" is not sufficient.
- (g) Particulars of the sender and the indication of the country of origin should, in any case, be given for each consignment. These essential details were lacking for numerous gifts which arrived without any indication as to their origin, or merely that of the country of transit, so that, on several occasions, the donor could not be identified.

### 3. - Financing of the relief action

- (a) The comparison of the contributions in cash and in kind towards the International Committee's relief action show that the majority of donors prefer, for various reasons, to send commodities rather than to place funds at the disposal of the receiving organisation. In addition, if the outbreak of a conflict promotes a movement of solidarity which results in a flow of contributions in cash, the funds immediately available for the purchase of relief supplies come in very gradually.
- (b) It therefore seems necessary to take steps to dispose, in the event of a conflict, of sufficient reserve funds to make purchases of emergency relief supplies on the spot when the sending of supplies would be too costly

on account of the distance, or at least to enable the relief action to be started. It might be advisable to study the possibility of obtaining a loan in the event of a conflict from an international bank under pre-arranged conditions.

- (c) The establishment of a vast distribution system and the organisation of road convoys from Vienna to Budapest led to heavy operating costs being incurred from November onward, and especially in December 1956. As the ICRC had not at its disposal the financial means necessary to meet the situation, it was obliged to appeal to the National Red Cross Societies and other donors for funds.
- (d) The ICRC gave up the idea of asking each National Red Cross to make a contribution based on the proportionate tonnage handled by its Vienna and Budapest Delegations it preferred to make an appeal, in the hope that each Society would contribute towards the overhead expenses according to its means.
- (e) Judging by the results of this special appeal for funds, and the fact that it has been possible to refund part of the contributions received, this procedure seems to have met with the approval of the National Societies.

Would it not be advisable, however, to have the means of raising a loan in the conditions referred to above, if only to permit the launching of the relief action, for instance by acquiring the means of transport required, and for putting the distribution programme in motion ?

#### 4. - Transports

- (a) The ICRC cannot maintain a fleet of vehicles to meet, at any time, a crisis resulting from a conflict. In the event of a conflict breaking out, it would have to find means of transport immediately which in a crisis would be all the more difficult. To send relief supplies to Hungary it available vehicles lent by certain National Red Cross Societies, and borrowed vehicles from Swiss firms, in most cases free of charge. With the funds immediately placed at its disposal it was able, but not without difficulty, to purchase a few vehicles to build up its first road convoys.
- (b) In this field also, it would no doubt be advisable, with a view to reducing overhead expenses in peace-time, and preventing loss of time in a crisis, to have vehicles in reserve, in a state of readiness at all times, if possible lent from of charge or at a low cost. A fleet of reserve vehicles could be built up, not only in Switzerland where the ICRC has its headquarters, but also in all countries where the National Societies would have the means of supplying vehicles, either from those belonging to them, or through the principal business houses, by agreement. The vehicles chosen could be a few well-known types, in order to avoid difficulties in obtaining spare parts in case of need.