

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE LEAGUE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

THE LEAGUE



2nd QUARTER 1986
VOL. 3

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THE LEAGUE



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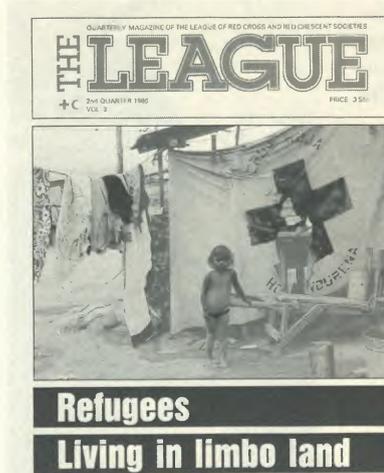
OPINION

Big heart - small brain? p. 38

Photofile

MEXICO 86

Football fever turns the world's attention back to Mexico. But behind the "Mundial", the victims of last year's catastrophic earthquake are not forgotten. The Mexican Red Cross and the League are helping to rebuild shattered homes and shattered lives and limbs. p. 18



COVER PHOTO - Liliane de Toledo
A young Nicaraguan in Los Guasimos camp, run by Honduran Red Cross, May 1986.

COVER STORY

REFUGEES... Living in limbo land

Every day, somewhere in the world, a headline cries out "People on the move!" More and more refugees, crossing borders, fleeing persecution, or war, or a combination of politics and natural disasters. There are more than TEN MILLION refugees in the world today, and TEN MILLION MORE people displaced within their own countries. As political conflicts become more intractable and countries of traditional asylum become less amenable to new influxes, more and more people become victims of an artificial existence - life in a limbo land.... p. 8



INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS: Some positive "fallout"... perhaps?

An accident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant near Kiev in the USSR sent a cloud of radioactivity round parts of Europe and clouds of concern around the world. Complex industrial or nuclear disasters cannot be handled by good will and voluntary help alone. What can the Red Cross and Red Crescent do faced with potential catastrophes of this magnitude? p. 29



MEDINA'S BIGGEST REGRET

All over Africa one dramatic consequence of the drought has been the suffering of the nomads - independent livestock herders and breeders who have never been much concerned with national boundaries or the industrial world. With the loss of their animals many of Africa's nomads face a stark choice for survival: to settle down in one place and begin to learn another way of life. Medina Hayas, an Afar of Ethiopia, is a mother who has come to some hard conclusions that she believes will benefit her children, so that their future will no longer be a life on the move.... p. 34



My predecessor, Henrik Beer, had the reputation of having signed more appeals for the victims of earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and typhoons than any man in the world.

And yet when he retired from the League, he wrote: "I have felt a growing frustration that what has been done has, in many cases, had only superficial effects."

Henrik was not, I am sure, disputing the fact that Red Cross and Red Crescent relief is essential in easing the suffering of victims in the short term.

He was simply indicating that natural disasters are such an integral part of life in much of the Third World that unless their root causes – poverty, underdevelopment, degradation of the environment – are tackled, they will happen again and again.

This analysis poses a basic problem for the League, which has traditionally been perceived as an Emergency Force – the "firemen" of international catastrophes.

If our Federation is to commit itself to longer-term involvement, however, we face a whole range of complex and inter-related issues: agricultural development, prevention and environmental questions, community-based programmes and a series of socio-economic issues.

Do we, at the Secretariat, have the resources and the people to do the job effectively? Above all, can we get the funds to underwrite the infrastructure costs involved year after year?

Or is this work better handled bilaterally, between National Societies?

I touched on these questions at the last Executive Council and indicated that, after vastly increased activity in 1985, we are now facing a sudden downturn in income.

In some areas we are in danger of becoming over-extended, and running into deficit. While food is still generally available, hard cash needed for personnel, transport and warehousing is not.

We also have to be aware of the risk of creating permanent food dependency in some countries, to the detriment of the local farmer.

The reality is that of the 19-million people still in an emergency situation in Africa, at least 80% are in Ethiopia, Sudan, Mozambique and Angola. Elsewhere, the need comes in pockets and is not spread



"We must match needs and resources, concentrating on those areas where people are genuinely at risk."

across entire countries.

Against that background, we must guard against the assumption that we can continue with the magnitude of the operation which marked our presence in Africa last year.

Our donors will not fund it. And as our Under-Secretary General Andrei Kisselev, arguing for proper nutritional surveys as an essential component of all appeals, put it during a recent meeting with Societies: we must guard against "administrators dominating technical expertise".

As most readers will be aware, I have now set up a Task Force to assess and run our African Drought Relief Operations on an interim basis.

We shall be consulting fully with both operating and participating Societies, but already several general principles have emerged:

* We must match needs and resources, concentrating on those

areas where people are genuinely at risk.

* We must ensure that personnel, structures and staffing are at an appropriate level.

And then we must cost our conclusions, and price our promises. I can understand the frustrations of Henrik Beer having to get in – and out – fast during emergencies, without tackling the underlying causes.

But is that a job for the League, or for National Societies bilaterally, or primarily for governments?

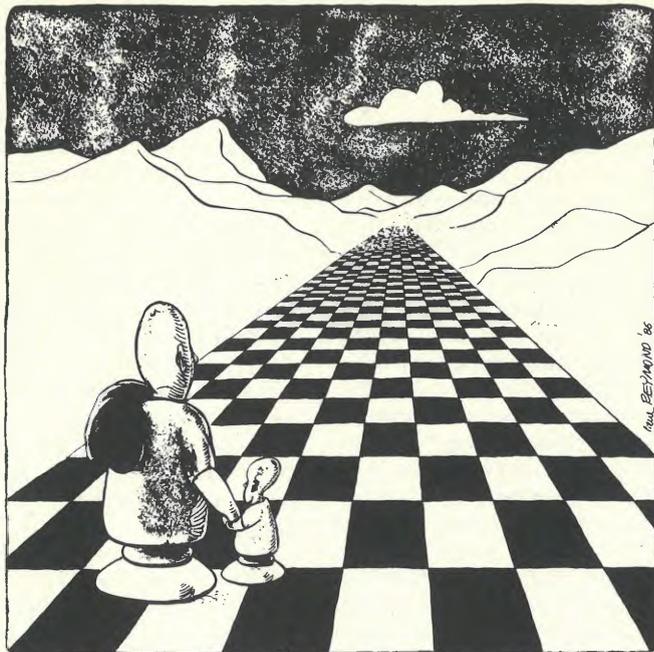
The Red Cross and Red Crescent has plenty of experience in agreeing objectives. Too often, though, we have not paid enough attention to the inevitable financial consequences.

At our General Assembly this October, I hope we can both debate and agree the answers to the question: "After relief – who, what where, why and when?" Only then can we really decide "How?"

Hans HØEGH
Secretary General

“REFUGEE GAMBIT”

Pawns on a global board?



Pierre Raymond is the cartoonist of “La Tribune de Genève”

“Thanks to the international media, it has been possible to follow the work of the Red Cross in third world countries and especially in Africa. We have seen it get involved in the Sahel in sensible programmes of assistance to refugees and development. It is the latter which hold our attention. Is the Red Cross preparing to spread this assistance wider and make it systematic?”

“For many observers, national as well as foreign, Red Cross accomplishments like the market gardens of Gao in Mali and Bol in Chad and the great areas of out-of-season cultivation in Niger are a living model of assistance to development. There ▶

FAMILY MATTERS

From high above, the small barrio is almost invisible under smoke from coconuts drying over damp fires. The bitter-sweet tang of copra drifts up to us through green undergrowth. The stillness of a subsistence economy in a far-away land. Pepe, who looks like a professorial teenager with his huge glasses, is using coconut oil to clean his light machine-gun. It is not a manufacturer's recommendation, but guerrillas use what they can get. Pepe was born twenty years ago in the barrio in the valley. It is now the front-line of what he calls the “liberated areas”.

Lito, the unit commander, is a few years older, but tufts of beard give him added authority and a certain vain savageness. He is in charge of a unit of ten or twelve. The number is approximate, since people seem to wander in and out of this “war”.

“We had a visit from the Red Cross,” Lito is saying, while his eyes never cease to dart nervously over the landscape. “They're with the government, aren't they?” The government, of course, is “the enemy”. The moment is tense, for the unit, tired after a long march through the mountains, is still alert and hostility is not far from the surface. Lito defuses things himself.

“What is this neutrality business, anyway?”

“The art of doing nothing!” Pepe interrupts, philosophically. Exactly the opposite. It's not easy, discussing the finer points of principles under a torrid, tropical sky, surrounded by men with guns. It's difficult enough under the protective roof of a conference hall. Trying to show how only the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement

commits itself to neutrality and impartiality as the core of its means of action. As if they are the visas in the Red Cross passport that allow the movement to enter fields of conflict as a functional and credible intermediary, not taking sides, and through non-discrimination, being able to work with all and any sides.

“That's telling you what not to do, rather than what to do,” says Pepe.

Not “what” to do, but “how”. These are not “passive” principles. A movement that interpreted its own principles passively would be in danger of becoming passive itself, stagnating, losing its very epithet of “movement”.

“And these Conventions,” the word sounds alien in the humid jungle, “they're signed by the governments, aren't they?” From Lito, it's like an accusation.

How to explain that the movement is not based only on Conventions signed by states? That it may try to act as the guardian of such Conventions concerned with the conduct of war, and derive part of its status from them, like the status of its emblem, but that it is also based on its own unique principles, all of which combine to promote an active role in the relief of suffering. And that these principles, in this imperfect world, are ideals which the work of the Red Cross must try to transform into reality.

“You don't have to be Swiss to be neutral?” It's only just a question, or maybe Lito is joking. But the neutrality of states is not the same, even though there are similarities. A state which chooses to keep out of a conflict takes on certain obligations and duties, and is accorded

certain rights, in international law. The neutrality of the Red Cross is not a restriction, but a means of enabling the movement to work. Active in almost all nations, it is not governmental, or should not be, and so can remain apart from political and ideological controversy, in particular.

“But everything's political, man.” Without his gun, Pepe could be a university student, anywhere. “Every breath is ideological. Every step you take.”

And the answer to that must be tempered by the interaction of all Red Cross principles together, for no one stands alone. At nightfall, they go down to the silent barrio, where friends and relations give them solid food for the first time in two days. Later, they will melt away. There will be more clashes with their opponents. There will be more suffering, on both sides. And the Red Cross, caught up in the particular tragedy of internal conflict, will try again, as only it can.

For if the credibility of the movement is specially anchored in the related ideals of neutrality and impartiality, the Red Cross and Red Crescent family has an obligation to “activate” all of its principles, all of the time. And never allow any of them to become an excuse for inactivity, either on behalf of the victims of suffering it exists to help, or on behalf of future generations whose potential for suffering it should seek to reduce.

John ASH

LETTERS ▶

is no question that these projects provoke lively interest and have great success, for not only do they help to check the immediate and urgent problems of food supply, but they are integrated harmoniously with the concerns of the indigenous people, thus aiding their own efforts towards food self-sufficiency.

"The traditional role of Red Cross work has always been to "Fly to the rescue" everywhere where there is need; that work will become yet nobler if in the same way and with the same efficiency it is committed to following the "development" track."

Honoré KPONTON
Switzerland

"I've known for a long time that our own American Red Cross is a part of this world-wide organization of Red Cross Societies, yet I've wondered just how - and where - our Red Cross Society fits it with our international partners. Well, after inspection of the first two copies of the magazine, I think "The League" can answer my questions and describe the 'how' and the 'where'.

"It is this partnership in the League that clearly suggests to me the oneness of Red Cross in our world. We are not, and cannot remain apart from the humanitarian needs of our brothers and sisters around the globe.

John A. SHELBURNE
American Red Cross (Montana Territory)

"I believe that this excellent periodical "The League" is proper necessary and useful:

"Proper, because it adds to the grandiose presence of our World Humanitarian Movement the dynamism of a new splendid journalistic organ which forms authentically an attractive dimension of a more extensive presentation and consideration of the great and many-sided work of our International Federation.

"Necessary, because it offers an effective, official and reliable means of more direct, regular and clear communication between the League and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies all over the world as well as among the Societies themselves.

"Useful, because this new

magazine contributes resolutely to the responsible and fuller awareness, information and guidance of National Societies on problems of international character in which the World Red Cross Movement is greatly interested.

Professor Or. LOURIDIS
President of the Hellenic Red Cross

"I watched the film "Something New From Africa" and I do not see how Daniel Kinnear can claim to have viewed it 'through the eyes of an African'. ("The League", 1-86)

"His main criticism is that the children are in school uniforms, but so they are in England and in many Socialist countries in Europe, where the uniform helps level out economic differences among the pupils.

"Then he writes: "It is important not to act, but to ACT". What does he mean? If young Africans cannot take action in the fields of health, farming and the protection of the environment, what else can they do for their Continent?

John MUYESHI
Nairobi, Kenya



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The League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the international federation of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It is one of the three components of the International Red Cross, the others being the International Committee of the Red Cross and the national Red Cross and Crescent Societies. The League's function is to contribute to the development of the humanitarian activities of National Societies, to co-ordinate their relief operations for victims of natural disasters, to care for refugees outside areas of conflict and, in so doing, to promote peace in the world.

"Knowing that you stand by the neutrality of the texts appearing in publications bearing the Red Cross symbol, may I say I was somewhat astonished by the article entitled "Family Matters" in the last edition of "The League".

"It is not, in effect, taking a political standpoint to write: "that if we did not insist on giving ourselves titles and flags and uniforms, we

More a "malaise" than mere "incidents"

"In the previous edition of "The League" Dr. Nesh-Nash voiced his concern about the 1985 General Assembly in Geneva. I welcome and share this concern. I believe, however, that what Dr. Nesh-Nash has labelled "incidents which coloured the meeting" were expressions of a much deeper malaise within the organization.

"In my view Dr. Nesh-Nash's reference to a confrontation between "reformists" and "conservatives" is a superficial characterization. The conflicting views were mainly associated with the election of the President of the League. I did find "conservatives" and "reformists" quite well represented in all the main voting blocks.

"If the General Assembly really had provided an opportunity for an open debate between "reformists" and "conservatives", I believe the organization would be in better shape today. Presently we run a great risk that the measures needed to strengthen League and Red Cross authority have become blurred in a mess of diffuse ideas and ambitions where it is not clear what issues really are at stake.

"I can't agree more with Dr. Nesh-Nash when he states that "the League must take into consideration the wish of National Societies from the developing world to participate actively". This is a unanimous wish of all of us who have been engaged in the past in different programmes aimed at strengthening Societies in the developing countries. It must, however, also be recognised that this wish has only partly resulted in a real change of attitudes among many Societies and individuals who hitherto have dominated the movement.

"Dr. Nesh-Nash refers to the danger that the League might be "UN-ised", thereby implying something negative about the UN. Let us recognize all the virtues of having a global organization, and in this respect the Red Cross can be quite proud of being close to the UN in global representation. One of many reasons why our expectations of the UN have not been fulfilled is that its officers are nominated according to a rather strict quota system. They have become much more national representatives within the organization than true servants of the noble UN ideals. The Red Cross must avoid falling into this trap of wheeling and dealing with posts in the League secretariat based on regional representation.

"Most important of all, however, is that necessary changes of direction must not be made at the expense of efficiency in carrying out our humanitarian tasks. The General Assembly provided evidence that among both "conservatives" and "reformists" there were those who were ready to sacrifice suffering victims of disasters in order to take part in a kind of global game of musical chairs. The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and its difficult challenges were many times absent in the debates.

"In this sense I hope with Dr. Nesh-Nash that we learned a lesson and that this General Assembly will serve as a reference in order to gain strength and emerge as firmly devoted as ever to developing true humanitarian ideals into practical actions."

Anders WIJKMAN
Secretary General
Swedish Red Cross

might realise we are all part of a same and single universe?"

And later: "without nations and groupings and artificial borders set one against the other..." Is there not even a flagrant contradiction between these wishes and the reality of the Red Cross based on its Conventions themselves signed by States? "I was further really shocked by the reproduction of a cartoon

from Belgrade entitled "Go on, fill your bowl with that..." This publication is in the first place addressed to the very Red Cross activists who apply themselves to sending to the hungry something else than bombs."

G. JASSERON
Director General of Services
Rouen Branch, French Red Cross



Refugees in Sudan, 1986

Photo: Bengt Ericsson/Swedish Red Cross

Refugees Living in limbo land

There is a man somewhere in a no-man's land about to start a new existence. The shirt he is wearing has been given to him by someone else. Yet another has lent him an axe. He himself has found logs of wood which he cuts with considerable skill: he is making himself a bed. His hut is made of a few tiny branches and a strip of cloth, to give him shelter from the scorching sun. . . . Shena, a woman in her thirties is one of the lucky ones. She has a tent. She also has three children and a husband so stooped he looks a lot older than he is. She opens the tent flap. No mats

to lie on. Only the bare earth. In one corner a fire is burning under a pan. The pan is their only other piece of property. Or did they borrow it?"

Stefan Hafstein, the Icelandic journalist who reported for the League last year from Wad Sherife, a shelter in Sudan for thousands of Ethiopians, sketches in a few bleak words a picture of a phenomenon that is beginning to become overwhelming in scale. A picture of people in need. People in need of protection and help. A picture of refugees.

WHO IS A "REFUGEE"?

Someone who:
"... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..."

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and its Protocol of 1967.

For in this complex, crowded modern world, though most of us can take it for granted, we all need the protection of a country's laws and services and influence. We need nationality, as well as food and shelter. We need a basic identity.

Fear of persecution is, in international law, the motivation that leads to the status of "refugee" once the border into a foreign country has been crossed. In Africa, the Organization of African Unity extends this motivation to causes arising directly from conflict and civil disturbance:

"The term 'refugee' shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality." OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, 1969.

Today, over all continents, there are more than TEN MILLION people who conform to these legal definitions of 'refugees'. And maybe TEN MILLION MORE called 'Displaced Persons' – people who have had to leave their homes, and

sometimes their countries, for a variety of other reasons, but who still need to seek security elsewhere. And more and more thousands of 'asylum seekers', the technical term for people who enter, or try to enter a foreign country to ask for the status of 'official' refugee from a government that is not their own.

All of them – Ethiopians in Sudan or Somalia, Afghans in Pakistan, Guatemalans in Mexico, Chileans in Sweden or Canada, Vietnamese Boat People in South-East Asia, Iranians in Western Europe, the hundreds of thousands displaced within their own countries, in Angola, or El Salvador, or Lebanon, in arid deserts or overburdened cities – all are looking for a kind of asylum: a safe place of refuge that for the moment, at least, their own homes cannot provide. And almost all of them, as in the picture of Wad Sherife, leave those homes with almost nothing, in great distress, entering a no-man's land where the way out is almost never clearly marked.

Some will one day return home, as most would surely like to do. Some will stay where they are, often almost within sight of their former homeland. And others, many others, will try to start a new life in a different country, a different culture, a different world, where they may not be much



Refugees in Sudan, 1986
Photo: Bengt Ericsson/Swedish Red Cross

wanted and where they may not want to be. Some will adapt, and enrich the new society that gives them refuge. Some will carry the trauma of events with them for ever. Children will be born and hear stories of horror they will never understand and hopefully will never live through. Old people will die dreaming of a life lost forever. Whoever they are, wherever they come from, wherever they arrive, they all start out with the same basic need: safety, food and water, shelter from the storms of man and

THREE R's...

Red Cross, Red Crescent and Refugees

The Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is in no doubt about its concern for refugees and displaced people. Declarations ring out from international meetings:

"... the fundamental mission of the Red Cross includes the provision... of protection and assistance to those who need it, in the event of armed conflict and other disasters..."

1977 – XXIIIrd International Conference of the Red Cross.

"The Red Cross should at all times be ready to assist and to protect refugees, displaced persons and returnees..."

"The services offered by a National Society to refugees should conform to those offered to victims of natural disasters..."

"Societies, when possible, should use their influence to encourage their Governments to accept refugees for resettlement..."

1981 – Statement of Policy, XXIVth International Conference.

"Providing shelter for refugees, whether temporarily or permanently, helping them live, forwarding their messages, tracing missing persons and uniting

families, is to give inner peace, dignity as human beings and hope to those who have left all. It is an essential contribution of the... Movement to the bringing of true peace to a world where individuals are threatened by so much violence."

1984 – 2nd World Conference on Peace, Aaland.

With such inspiring exhortations, it is surprising that refugees, in the widest sense of the term, are not more often an object of Red Cross activity.

The ICRC's Central Tracing Agency has been working for years with millions of files in an unending cycle of identifying, searching for and reuniting people separated from their families and homes. Many National Societies have also been involved in tracing and mailing services for decades.

nature, and help from institutions like the Red Cross and Red Crescent that exist to help people in need.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Who looks after these millions of people? The agency to which the international community gives primary responsibility for conventional refugees is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR has been at work since 1951, though the first international Commissioner, Fridtjof Nansen, was appointed by the League of Nations in 1921.

Today the High Commissioner is a man well-known to the Red Cross world: Jean-Pierre Hocké (see box), for the past twelve years Director of Operations of the ICRC.

UNHCR has its mandate in international law, in particular the Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951 and its Protocol of 1967. Today, 99 states, or more than two-thirds of the whole international community have ratified this treaty.

The first duty of UNHCR is to extend international PROTECTION to refugees, which often also means encouraging and reminding governments of their

obligations in law to refugees on their territory. At this stage of temporary asylum, refugees need help just to survive, and to be able to help themselves.

The ultimate aim of UNHCR is to find permanent solutions to refugee problems, be they *voluntary repatriation*, the ideal solution where the refugee goes home, *local integration*, where the refugee becomes self-supporting in the country where he is already living, or *resettlement*, where a refugee is effectively helped to emigrate to another country and another life.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also has a mandate for PROTECTION, in particular covering people displaced *within* their own countries by conflict, and will also encourage governments to live up to their obligations defined by the Conventions. Whereas the ICRC has its own unique role in situations of armed conflict, both it and UNHCR call upon the resources of the international community, resources like the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the League, to provide for the material and other needs of refugees and displaced people in the short term. ●

ACTION MAN

Interview with Jean-Pierre Hocké - UNHCR

The last International Conference of the Red Cross pledged, in Manila in 1981: "the unremitting support and the collaboration of the Red Cross with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in their respective activities in favour of refugees and displaced persons..."

Today, the High Commissioner is a well-known figure from the Red Cross world. Jean-Pierre Hocké, 48, became the sixth UN High Commissioner for Refugees on 1 January 1986. A native of Lausanne, he is the third Swiss to hold this post. Before joining UNHCR, he was ICRC Director of Operations for twelve years, and a member of ICRC's directorate from 1978. He joined the ICRC in 1968, was Head of Delegation in Nigeria and Lebanon, in charge of operations in the 1971 South Asia conflict and Delegate General for the Middle East. His years with the International Committee coincided with the biggest operational expansion in the institution's 123-year history.

Jean-Pierre Hocké was interviewed for the League by George Reid.

J.A.

But in the field, where UNHCR acts as the catalyst in bringing together organisations to make relief and assistance programmes work, it is not often the Red Cross that is first in line.

Of course, there are exceptions. National Societies are sometimes major operational partners, as is the League (The ICRC has its own special mandate in situations of armed conflict).

In Asia, the Malaysian Red Crescent is not only the government-designated coordinator of all international assistance to the Vietnamese Boat People in Malaysia, but also runs the medical and educational facilities on the island of Pulau Bidong, where more than 5000 refugees still wait disconsolately to start a new life somewhere else.

The Indonesian Red Cross has medical and social welfare programmes for Boat People on the island of Galang, near Singapore, and the Philippine National Red Cross provides medical and nutritional services to first asylum refugees on Palawan Island and to refugees in transit to resettlement countries at the Bataan Refugee Processing Center. In Hong Kong and Macao, local Branches continue to work with the Boat People and in Papua New Guinea, the Society is UNHCR's operational partner in response to one of the world's

Boat People on Pulau Bidong, Malaysia.

Photo: Dominique Barrier/Reporters sans frontières.





Photo: UNHCR/E. Knüsti

The League: You have moved from a private, uni-national, non-governmental organisation to become head of an organisation all of whose members are governments. What are the main changes?

J.-P. Hocké: I'd rather concentrate on the similarities. The basic action and mandate of UNHCR is very similar to that of the Red Cross – to protect and assist victims. The whole spirit and motivation of both bodies is the same.

You've been involved with refugees since the start of your ICRC career in Biafra. How have the status and circumstances of refugees changed?

You have to remember that the '51 Convention dealt with refugees after the Second World War. It was a classic example of international law sanctioning existing and past situations, but being unable to anticipate new situations – for example, the combination of man-made and natural disasters in the Third World, which has thrown millions of people out of their countries.

One of the main differences between the refugees of the '50s and today is that most of them expect to return home. So we must immediately look into the possibility of some of them going back whenever circumstances permit.

But the situation is often static, is it not?: Afghans in Pakistan, Ethiopians in Sudan, Nicaraguans in Honduras...

We have to avoid the situation becoming "static". Experience shows that people want to go home, so long as they can retain their dignity.

Those who say that if we offer refugees the opportunity to work they will stay for good, are totally wrong. If they are self-sufficient, they will go back. But if they become destitutes, there's a drop in morale and they can no longer react sufficiently to return home.

You have to think in terms of a combination of solutions. Where they can't go back because of war, to do something both for them-

selves and for the country of asylum. Where some can never go back, to settle them in a country of permanent asylum. And where people are utterly determined to return, they will.

Some of the traditional countries of refuge are now showing signs of negative attitudes. What can the Red Cross do when it may find itself opposed by public opinion?

It should work on that public opinion, disseminating basic Red Cross principles. There is a tendency in some European countries to regard these people as representing some sort of danger or insecurity... not a real enrichment in human relations.

During the Second World War these countries received many refugees. It was perhaps culturally easier. But the public discovered just how enriching it was to talk to, and work with a refugee.

There's been a good deal of talk of preventing, or foreseeing refugee situations. But is it really practical?

It has to be, or no-one will try to do anything! No one leaves his country, or sometimes his family, for the pleasure of it. UNHCR and the Red Cross have to explain that people are forced to leave, often under very inhuman conditions. They have to expose the root causes: wars, poverty, and underdevelopment.

The problem is about the sharing ▶

newest problems 10,000 Melanesians from Indonesia, who are receiving food, medical and agricultural assistance.

In Pakistan, with the world's largest refugee population of nearly 3 million Afghans, the Pakistan Red Crescent, helped by the League, the Swiss Red Cross and the German Red Cross (Fed. Rep.), is setting up a 70-bed hospital, runs an eye care programme, and has small medical and relief operations in the North-West Frontier Province. Drops in the ocean in proportion to the scale of the problems.

In Central America, the Honduran and Costa Rican Societies run camps for Nicaraguan refugees under UNHCR auspices. And in Africa there are international operations in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Rwanda, Senegal and Zaire.

Sudan has Africa's largest refu-

gee population, a problem exacerbated by the recent drought, by its own internal conflict in the south, temporary home to thousands of Ugandans, by parentless children from Ethiopia running wild on the streets of its capital, Khartoum, more thousands of Chadian refugees on its western border, where the local population has already suffered terribly from the ravages of nature, and nearly half a million Ethiopians (according to government estimates) in the eastern part of the country.

Sudan may be Africa's largest country in area, but it is also one of the world's poorest, and certainly the Sudanese Red Crescent can do little with a crisis of this magnitude. It is a harrowing problem for all of Africa.

"We know how much our countries consider hospitality a sacred right as part of our ancestral traditions," says Mme Siga Seye Coulibaly, President of the Senegalese

Red Cross and Vice-President of the League. "But in these times of economic difficulty, the will alone is not enough... we need the material resources to give meaning to this primary value of African culture."

Even in parts of the world where resources might not be thought so critical a problem, refugee-linked activities are often quite modest. Societies of Norway and Belgium and France have, among others, been active on behalf of the special problem of unaccompanied minors, especially from South-East Asia.

Societies, often in countries with long-established traditions of asylum, run a variety of services in collaboration with governments and national refugee councils: legal advice, helping to prevent cases of refoulement (the involuntary repatriation of people seeking refuge), helping asylum seekers who must sometimes wait long periods for verdicts on their applications for refugee status, helping, as the Swiss ▶

of resources, and about trade patterns which often do not permit refugees to look after themselves in their own country. If we look at the situation this way, we can perhaps create more stable conditions where the pressures leading to an exodus of refugees are diffused.

At the ICRC, you had the reputation of a man of action. Like it or not, the media does tend to present the UN as top heavy and inward-looking. What role does that leave for a man of action?

Let's not forget that I've joined an organisation which, while it belongs to the UN system, was set up specifically to act. Not to study or hold discussions. UNHCR was established – like the Red Cross – to ease the suffering of mankind. We shall be judged by what we do, not by what we think or write.

If we don't act, people will not only suffer but it will cost the international community more – since disaster and tragedy will have been permitted to get deeper and deeper.

So the only answer is to act.

▲ "People have confidence in the Red Cross," says Mariana Buzalgo, a former refugee from Latin America working as a psychologist at the new Swedish Red Cross Centre for Refugee Victims of Torture.

▶ Even after 40 years people cannot forget terrible experiences like the concentration camps, says Judit Horvath-Lindberg, a social worker at the Swedish Red Cross and herself a former refugee.



Red Cross has started to do, those who fail to gain refugee status and must leave, assisting refugees begin new lives in alien surroundings, and, as in Sweden, sometimes starting specialised projects, like the Stockholm-based Red Cross Centre for Refugee Victims of Torture.

Mariana Buzalgo is a psychologist working in the new Swedish Red Cross Centre which opened in October 1985. A former refugee herself from Latin America, she put her finger on an important and inescapable fact. "People know the Red Cross. From almost anywhere in the world, if they are in trouble and they see the Red Cross, they feel a sense of confidence once again."

Becoming a refugee or displaced person almost inevitably involves some kind of psychological disturbance or trauma that many will carry with them for years. Most are fortunately not victims of deliberate torture, though experience in Den-

mark, Canada, France and now Sweden suggests that too many are, even if they never get to talk about it. "Forty years ago," says Swedish Red Cross social worker Judit Horvath-Lindberg, another ex-refugee, "terrible experiences like the concentration camps led people to think that to be able to continue, they had to try to forget, to repress the memory of what they had been through. After 40 years, we can see that it is never really possible."

Today, as the refugees, the displaced, the seekers of asylum grow more and more numerous, there is a two-fold danger. People still need help to adjust to new lives or to return to where they came from, but they also need **not to be forgotten themselves.**

If the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is to live up to its stated goals and to the power of its symbol as a beacon of hope and confidence, there is clearly a great deal more to do.

Taking a lead in spurring National Society involvement in refugee issues, the League's new Refugee Service, started in April 1985, has begun a series of workshops in different regions. With UNHCR and ICRC representatives, European Societies have met in Geneva. French- and Portugese-speaking Societies of Africa have met in Kigali, Rwanda. English-speaking African Societies have met in Mbabane, Swaziland. And there are tentative plans for similar workshops in Asia and Latin America. The workshops are a first opportunity for Societies to get together specifically to discuss refugee questions and exchange ideas and experience on how to help the more than 20 million refugees and displaced people round the world. As Mme Mireille Desrez of the French Red Cross said in Geneva: "Why couldn't it have happened before?"

J.A.



Shagarab East One Home from home?

A cluster of brown canvas tents pegged to a square kilometre of dry, sandy earth. Symbols of hope in the Kassala region of Sudan, 33 kms from the Ethiopian border.

The harrowing images that exploded from television screens and newspaper pictures in early 1985, rigid people, frightened and frightening, are now memories of the past.

Shagarab East One (formerly Girba North) emerged from that desolation in April 1985. The nightmare is over, progress has been made, control has replaced chaos.

The camp is quite a contrast to the hordes of destitute people who dotted the arid Sudanese landscape at the height of the drought, famine and war that has ravaged northern Ethiopia. Today it is home for over 12,000 men, women and children, mostly from Eritrea.

Luk Henskens from the Belgian Red Cross and League administrative and technical delegate for seven months in Shagarab East One, saw it like this: "Every situation is different, and Shagarab East One is no exception. What we achieved here in such a short time is the result of regular consultation with the local authorities and the population we set out to assist."

From the outset, it was collaboration with both governmental and other non-governmental organisations that counted. The League set up registration and screening centres to determine the number of refugees and their nutritional status, and to plot a plan of action.

The systematic planning involved health care and basic health training, medical and supplementary



Refugees in Sudan, 1986

Photo: Bengt Ericsson/Swedish Red Cross

feeding assistance, and an immunisation campaign against measles, diphtheria, polio and tuberculosis.

Anne Mahony, a nurse from the British Red Cross, was reassuring: "The number of malnourished cases has diminished tremendously, and the overall health status of the camp is good," she reported.

But the League delegates' work is not confined to the camp. Sudan, with the largest refugee population in Africa, is one of the poorest countries in the world, and its own people lack basic medical facilities too.

"Although our primary task is to assist the camp population," Luk explained, "we also extend our services to the local population from nearby villages and settlements who have no access to medical treatment. In fact, since conditions in the camp have got better, we are treating a larger number of Sudanese in our outpatients department."

In the camp, life is gradually picking up. There are now grocers stocked with a few basic supplies. Shoemakers, tailors and butchers are in business. Women in colourful clothes and exotic jewellery cast splashes of colour on an otherwise dull background and the laughter of children fills the air in the playground built for them with funds

from the Norwegian Red Cross.

Shagarab East One has become a kind of home from home, though it can never be considered a permanent substitute. Long-term solutions still have to be found to the plight of these human beings.

"It has all too often been the view of certain administrations that because humanitarian intervention will take care of the victims, the political situation can be allowed to degenerate. This is an illusion," says Jean-Pierre Hocké, the new United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

But still, in the meantime, the League continues to care for thousands of refugees, "the new 'untouchables' of the 20th century?" as Jean-Pierre Hocké wonders aloud.

With each day in exile, unable to leave the border locations, or captive in their camps, the refugees become increasingly dependent on international aid, and their human dignity is increasingly eroded, however humane an environment international relief tries to create for them. Shagarab East One is for the moment a response to urgent human tragedy. At best a temporary home from home. ●

E. Daniel KINNEAR

Honduras/Nicaragua

Waiting to go home

For the past decade Central America has been one of the hot-spots on the world geo-political map. Hundreds of thousands of victims of international tension and internal political conflict have been driven to seek asylum with their neighbours.

Honduras, despite problems of its own, is host to more than 40,000 refugees of different origin: nearly 600 Guatemalans, 20,000 Salvadorans and nearly 20,000 Nicaraguans, the majority Miskito Indians.

The Honduran Red Cross works with UNHCR coordinating the general organisation of three camps and two villages of Nicaraguan refugees. The Red Cross camps have two characteristics in common: they are "open camps" and they do not include Miskito Indians who are in a different region.

"Our idea is to return home one day. In Nicaragua we were only simple farmers but we had a good life. We owned our land and we grew rice and maize and beans," says Juan Alberto Gonzalez, a father in his forties and a refugee in "Los Guasimos" camp less than 40 km from the Nicaraguan border. Most of his compatriots say the same thing.

"Here we don't see the colour of money. But we have a kind of barter system. Nothing we get is unneeded, but some things we don't like so much, or they aren't right for us. For example, I preferred to keep my old shirt from last year and swap the new one for a hat I badly needed to protect me from the sun."

It is true that in the camps under Honduran Red Cross coordination formal regulations have been instituted by the different humanitarian organisations involved: UNHCR, Caritas and Médecins sans Frontières. But life is not easy, and even

if one day they intend to return home, the refugees have had to make their own survival rules too.

In the heart of the camp tasks are shared out among the most active and motivated. Wooden houses with galvanised iron roofs are lined up in squares. Each row of houses has a 'coordinator' who checks his neighbours' needs and acts as intermediary between them and the Red Cross official in the camp. When one of the people in his row falls sick, he is responsible for calling the doctor or getting the patient to the clinic run by Médecins sans Frontières. And these camp leaders have to make sure their neighbours get the goods meant for them.

Caritas distributes clothes: one pair of trousers, one shirt, one pair of shoes per person per year. The Red Cross distributes blankets, mats and cooking utensils, as well as basic foodstuffs which normally come from the World Food Programme. Each family receives a weekly ration of rice, flour, sugar, salt, beans, powdered milk, coffee, oil, meat, maize and lime (for stripping the maize to make tortillas, the equivalent of bread).

Water distribution is also organised. And again it is the refugees themselves who supervise this vital job. To avoid waste, the supervisor of each water tap or well is present at the regular family water supply sessions, for two hours in the morning, two in the afternoon, two in the evening.

At night each camp organises its

▲ Maria de Robledo was a teacher in Nicaragua. Since her arrival at Los Guasimos camp, Honduras, she and a doctor help organise the Red Cross distribution of milk to 132 children under five years old. Photo: Liliane de Toledo

► Control over water distribution in the camps is vital. Refugees themselves supervise the wells and taps for two hours every morning, afternoon and evening.



own guard system, and refugee volunteers do the rounds to see that no-one gets in without authorisation. The guards have to check that everyone is inside by six o'clock in the evening, and they have to keep order too.

It is a microcosm that reflects the problems of any society on earth: there are the well-integrated, the drop-outs, workers, alcoholics, members of different religious sects etc... "Some of the students who came to Honduras fleeing military service don't know how to work on the land, or even in the chicken-runs. They only have one idea in their heads: Politics!" says one of the coordinators of "La Hortaliza" camp near Teupasenti.

For the most part, the Nicaraguan refugees work to improve their own living conditions and they collaborate with the Red Cross. "The refugees' standard of health is higher than in the local village because new-arrivals get continuing medical check-ups and their food is well-balanced and doesn't run out," says Alejandro Salgado, Red Cross coordinator in "La Hortaliza".

Such "favouritism", even though the local people feel it to be a privilege accorded to foreigners on their own territory, has not given rise to serious tensions between the two communities.

The villagers have found certain compensations. For example, they have been able to rent some of their houses to the international institutions as lodgings for some refugees, creating a considerable source of income in a relatively impoverished agricultural region. And at Jacaleapa, near "Los Guasimos" camp, the UNHCR programme has made a gift of an electric generator and a motor pump for moving water.

Personal ties have also developed between the Hondurans and Nicaraguan refugees who are often in the village to attend the vocational training workshops. That's one of the advantages of open camps, making the integration of refugees into their host country that much easier. ●

Isabel GARCIA-GILL



NORTHERN EUROPE

Volunteers

An antidote to xenophobia

“**X**enophobia” comes from the ancient Greek – a fear of something strange, or different, or foreign. And fear is the mother of intolerance, and prejudice, and hate. Attitudes the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement must, by principle, disavow and work to eradicate.

Today in Western Europe, xenophobia is on the rise again, always ready to be fuelled by those who will make political capital out of the misfortunes and differences of new immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers.

Even countries with strong traditions of social tolerance and the reputation as safe havens for the persecuted are not immune. Even the countries of Scandinavia, like Sweden, whose murdered Prime Minister Olof Palme set great store by the humanity that Sweden’s hospitality could demonstrate to the world.

States now enter into discreet accords with their neighbours, seeking to stem access routes to their borders. Policemen make unilateral decisions, without appeal, on the fate of individuals and families who arrive at border posts. As the recent tide of asylum seekers, especially from the Middle East, rises inevitably against existing economic problems, unemployment, less confidence in social security, so it becomes more and more difficult to keep humanitarian imperatives in the public eye.

The Red Cross, of course, has different responsibilities in different Scandinavian countries. In Sweden, a legal advisory service, a new centre for refugee torture victims. In Denmark, the total care of asylum seekers from the moment of entry until decisions are made on each case. Finland is mainly a transit country, and in Norway the Red Cross provides counselling and



REFUGEES 86 – Helping hands...

moral support. In Iceland, help in reception and integration is always at-hand.

In each case, the national Red Cross has a link to public opinion that governments and other organisations often do not: its volunteers. People in their communities who are best placed to help with the two-way cultural and social transitions involved. New arrivals have to learn a very different way of life, and the communities that receive them have also to learn that “other people” live differently, whatever their present misfortune, and that they cannot overnight become instant local citizens.

For Jørgen Chemnitz, Head of Asylum Administration for the Danish Red Cross, education is at the root of both the fight against xenophobia and the integration of new arrivals. “Denmark does not suffer from racism,” he says. “Our motto here is ‘Take it easy!’ But it is true to say that if the authorities

do not constantly educate the population, there is a potential bomb waiting under the system.”

The Danish Red Cross itself got involved with a bang. Jørgen’s phone rang at 8 o’clock on the evening of 4 August 1984. And the authorities had one message: “We can’t cope anymore. Help!” Two hours later, with a group of volunteers and Secretary General Eigil Pedersen in shirt-sleeves while his wife made the tea, an empty nursing home had been turned into the first reception centre for asylum seekers and the first bus from police headquarters arrived. 15 more centres were opened for some 2,000 asylum seekers in 1984, and by the end of the year more than 4,000 had arrived.

Today, there are nearly 3,000 waiting for decisions in 22 centres, looked after by a permanent staff of 400. And always helped by volunteers, right from the moment it is necessary to create a new centre. And that’s always with a few hours’ notice.

NORWAY

A Refugee's Story



In February 1942 a 15-year-old schoolboy was on the run from the Gestapo. For the next three years he was to be a refugee.

His work as a runner for the Norwegian Resistance had become known to the Nazis, and he had to get out of Oslo fast. He was given a false passport in the false name of Harald Haug.

At the Swedish frontier he was stopped by German soldiers. "It was a narrow shave," he says. "They wanted to check my papers with headquarters, but the local switchboard girl kept cutting the line."

He escaped, and spent the night in the snow, in temperatures of -30°C . Next morning there was a full alert, and the Gestapo came within 5 metres of his hiding place.

Again his luck held. It would become legendary. The Nazis asked a farmer's wife, who'd seen him, whether she had noticed a boy. "My heart was thumping," he recalls, "there were Quisling families in the area. But she just said-'No, not a thing'."

In Sweden he was put in a camp for two months, and then given refugee status. He was sent to school, but made to work in the forests too.

"There's all the difference in the world, of course, between arriving in a country with much the same language, culture and standard of living, and the conditions of many refugees in Asia, Africa and Latin America," he says today.

"But I think I gained an insight into part of the refugee condition. The fear of persecution – frankly, of being killed – for a start, and the absolute need for protection.

"Then there's the loneliness. Would I ever get home again? Would I ever see my family again? Would I spend the rest of my days in another country...?"

After the war, the former schoolboy became active in the Norwegian Refugee Council. He was on the first plane into Amman after the Seven Days War.

"Conditions were absolutely horrific. 200,000 people in one 'camp' with no tents, food or blankets, and only a single British nurse to look after their medical needs."

From his experiences then, he has retained a special concern for the Palestinians. "I was a refugee once, for three short years. But can you imagine what it's like to be a refugee not once or twice, but three times—being forced to move on, and on, constantly throughout your life?"

Since then he has visited refugees worldwide. He was in South-East Asia when Boat People were making headline news everywhere. "They dominated newspapers and television. And then, though they continued to put to sea, media interest slackened. They became a forgotten disaster."

He is adamant that this must not happen again, and in 1985 he set up a Refugee Service at the League to encourage debate and action by National Societies.

It was a gesture he could make because, of course, his real name has always been Hans Høegh, and today he is Secretary General of the League.

"Our mandate is quite clear," he comments. "Every one of our publications carries the statement: 'The League's function... is to care for refugees outside areas of conflict'."

Just as Hans Høegh himself was cared for in Sweden, forty-four years ago.

J. A.

George REID

Photo: Bengt Ericsson/Swedish Red Cross

"The involvement of the volunteers is not important because they are cheap, quick labour," explains Jørgen Chemnitz. "It's the quality of human involvement that counts. Working with refugees means learning about different situations in the world. Learning from the horse's mouth. It doesn't matter if someone is rich or poor. If he is a victim, he is entitled to help."

It is a process which works both ways. The volunteers take their better understanding back into their own communities – the communities that will receive those who are permitted to stay. And unpaid volunteers are a motive for refugees themselves to involve themselves more in the new life around them. Motivations that can help consign xenophobia to the distant past where the word belongs.



The epicentre of the earthquake of 19 September 1985 was 100 km from the Pacific coast. The regions the most affected are in the triangle made up of the states of Guerrero (Red Cross headquarters are in Zihuatanejo), Michoacan and Colima.

MEXICO 86 “DO-IT-YOURSELF” ASSISTANCE

“You can’t talk about Mexico City without thinking of the earthquakes!” declares one of the brochures welcoming football fans to the World Cup this June.

Yet the cataclysm of 19 September last year did not only hit the capital. It covered a triangle of three provinces with Mexico City at the top: Guerrero, famous for its beaches and most of all for Acapulco, Michoacan, and Colima, which includes the city of Ciudad Guzman.

And it is in Colima and Guerrero, as well as the capital, that the Mexican Red Cross, with help from the League, is concentrating its relief and reconstruction efforts.

Eight months after the disaster, the Guerrero project is the most advanced. Here 4000 houses were destroyed. Now Red Cross volunteers are spread out over 32 villages from their headquarters in the coastal town of Zihuatanejo.

Ever since the earthquake, Daniel Real Navarrete, engineer, has left his daughter in charge of

the family business and Dr. Francisco Gomez Garza has closed his private medical practice. Both now work as volunteers exclusively for the victims of the disaster.

In the first six months of the operation, they even slept on camp beds right in the middle of the Red Cross relief centre.

“After assessing the damage in each village in the region,” says Daniel Real, “we went to the local rural community heads with the idea that they get involved in the project themselves. The success and strength of our programme rests on involving those who will benefit from it.”

The engineer and the doctor have toured the villages to explain what is meant by “do-it-yourself” assistance. The villages receive all the necessary materials if the whole community contributes its working capacity. The work is supervised by a Red Cross mason who gives practical help to those with no building knowledge. The mason himself builds houses for the old and the

invalid.

Water supplies will also be developed with the project. The Red Cross will bore new wells, protect the water sources, and provide pumps for wells which already exist.

Leo Horvath, League Delegate from the United States, also hopes at a later stage to develop primary health care services in the 32 project villages.

In Mexico City, reconstruction has taken much longer to get under way. For a number of reasons. The mega-city has a population of 18 million, and following the right procedures is a long and complex business.

Still, with League help, the Mexican Red Cross has started an artificial limb centre for earthquake victims. It has been operating since October. And nearly 400 amputees have received psychological care, rehabilitation courses and, best of all, new limbs.

Eva Muñoz Carranco is one case among many. When the earthquake struck, she had just given birth in ▶

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MEXICO 86

1 Architect Klaus Darmstadt (German Red Cross-FRG) supervises the progress of work in Mexico City at "La Colonia Doctores".

2 A "Vecinidad" (neighbourhood community) rebuilt by Red Cross in the Tepito District of Mexico City. After living in tents for 7 months, 9 families have been able to move into their new apartments.

3 Eva Munoz Carranero (R) is one of 300 patients fitted with artificial limbs in the Mexican Red Cross prosthesis centre.

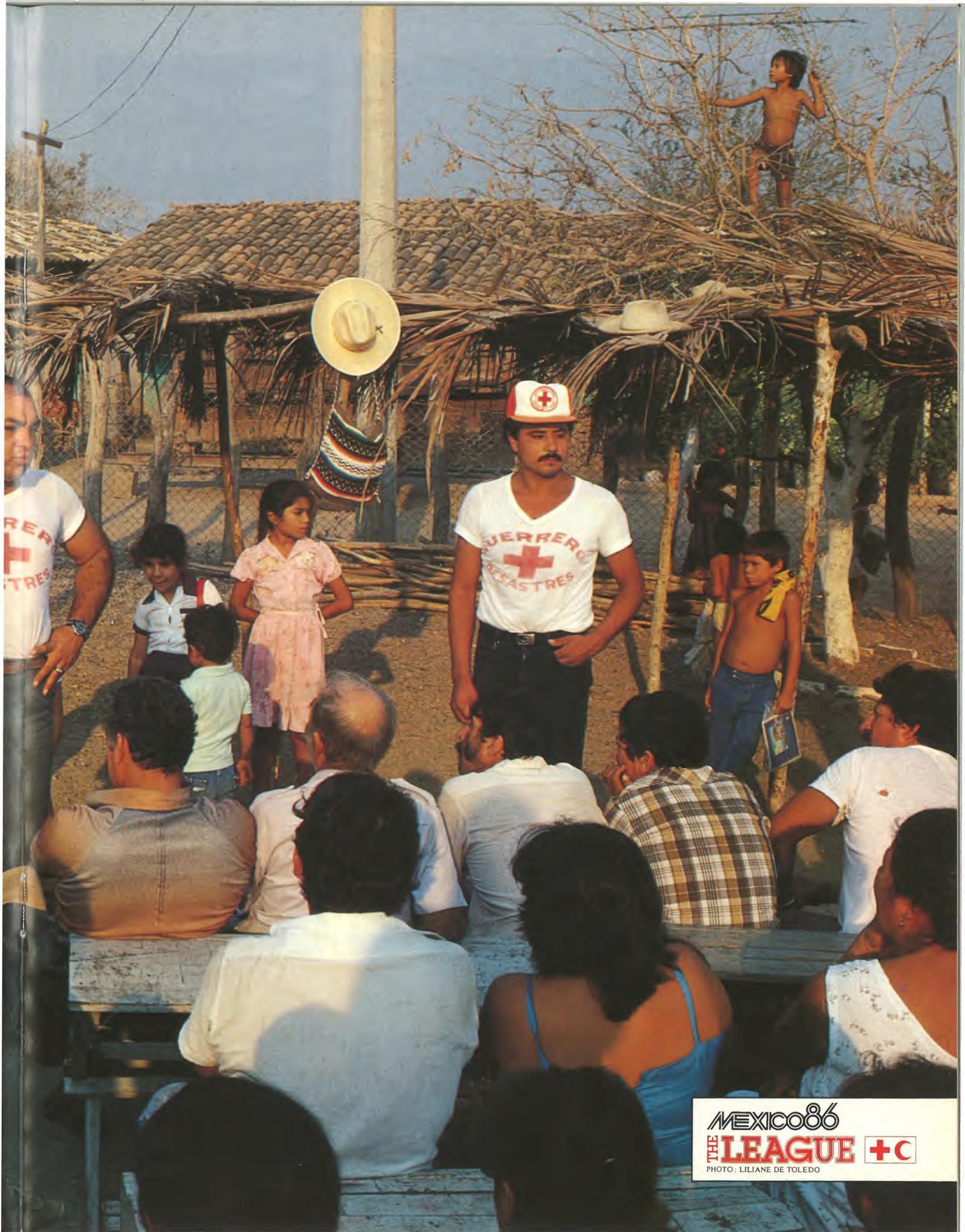
4 Eva first had to get over the trauma of events (see article facing page) before she could learn to use her new arm.

5 The centre has not only given Eva a new arm, but has helped her daughter Rosita accept it too. Special sessions with a psychologist have helped Rosita lose her fear of the artificial limb.

5







MEXICO86
THE LEAGUE +C
PHOTO: LILIANE DE TOLEDO



MEXICO86

1 One of the houses destroyed in the village of San Miguelito on the Guerrero Coast.

2 The Red Cross reconstruction team on the Guerrero Coast: Daniel Real Navarrete (engineer) and Dr. Francisco Gomez in charge, with 3 supervisors, 2 administrators, 39 masons and 5 drivers.

3 Dr. Francisco Gomez Garza and one of the highway billboards announcing the villages in the Red Cross reconstruction programme.

4 In every project village a Red Cross mason teaches villagers the basic rules of house-building.

5 Red Cross masons themselves rebuild the homes of the elderly with no family of their own. Lucina Huerta, 80, watches the mason at work on her own house-to-be in the village of Joluta (Guerrero Coast).

6 As well as technical expertise and training, the Red Cross supplies all the materials needed for building or rebuilding homes.

7 Juan Hernandez and family in front of their newly finished home in Piedra Ancha.

8 Each new house gets a number and a small Red Cross when it is ready.

Village meeting between the Red Cross and the people of Feliciano (Guerrero Province) on the Pacific Coast north of Acapulco.

Before each project begins, Dr. Francisco Gomez Garza, volunteer deputy coordinator of the Guerrero operation, explains how things will work: the Red Cross supplies the materials and the technical expertise, but each family must do the work to rebuild their own houses.

the city's general hospital. She was buried under the debris, her baby clutched in her arms. The baby died. And a few days later, Eva's own arm had to be amputated.

Back home after a month more in hospital, her 3-year-old daughter Rosita would not touch her. "Mama has lost her arm," she went on and on crying.

But with Red Cross help, Eva's life began to get back to normal. She, her daughter Rosita and her mother all received psychological guidance. "The victim needs to adapt to new circumstances, and so do those around her," explains Rosa Maria Caraza, psychologist and

director of the programme.

"I've just got my new arm," Eva says, smiling. "Now Rosita is happy again because she can see my new hand. She has confidence in me again. At first I was in despair, but now thanks to my family and the Red Cross staff, I feel I really want to learn new movements and gestures."

In the capital, Klaus Darmstadt, League Delegate and architect from West Germany, is in charge of all Red Cross rebuilding projects. Each is based on the same principle: families should return to the same "vecinidad" or neighbourhood group they were living with

before the disaster.

If all the projects can be achieved, 2000 families will be rehoused by the Red Cross in Mexico City.

Meanwhile at Ciudad Guzman in Colima Province, where 40% of the houses were destroyed or seriously damaged, a plot of 371 new houses is almost ready.

Mexico 86 means all the passion of football for millions of people around the world. For the Red Cross, behind the scenes, it means that thousands of earthquake victims have not been forgotten. And that's the best goal of all. ●

The Poet of Piedra Ancha

While the sportswriters and the fans sing paeans of praise for modern gladiators in striped shorts and for keepers in their nets; while the penalties are paraphrased and the honour of nations is expressed on digital scoreboards; while a hundred tongues say "offside!" in a newly universal language, and lovers of baseball and cricket and real tennis and snooker and golf cringe away from hysterical television sets, a little village in Mexico's Guerrero Province has been quietly getting back to life, away from all

the fuss.

You wouldn't notice Piedra Ancha in normal times. But the earthquake put paid to normalcy, and now a large sign on the highway near the coast proclaims how the Mexican Red Cross, with help from the League, is rebuilding a number of villages again. And the result are in stark contrast to the villages where rebuilding has not yet begun.

"Since our village has become beautiful again, I think all our neighbours get on better together. Because we're happier," muses

Juan Hernandez, one of Piedra Ancha's residents who gets daily work on the surrounding farms.

In Piedra Ancha 19 houses have been rebuilt, and each is numbered and marked by a small Red Cross. Only one family in the village stayed out of the project. And that by its own wish. A red fringe runs along the base of the new white-washed houses with fresh tiles on the roofs. Little flower pots decorate the fronts of buildings, and new white fencing keeps the cattle in once again.

At the entrance to their village, the people of Piedra Ancha have erected a little monument to the work that has gone on, and here Margarito Perez Covarrubias, poet of the community, disdains the drama of the stadium, and recites to local children some words they may remember when the last shout of "Mundial!" has long disappeared into the ionosphere:

"Lo limpio es como una flor
Que a todos se nos antoja
Aqui en el rancho La Piedra
No existe la gente floja
Aunque no tengan frigoles
Pues ni maiz en la troja
Unidos como un solo hombre
Al trabajo no le aflojan
Gracias a toda la gente
Que trabaja en la Cruz Roja."

"Cleanliness is like a flower
We all would wish to have...
Here at the Piedra ranch
There are no lazybones
Even if there are no beans
And maize in the storerooms
Together as one
We work without pause
Thanks to all those
Who work in the Red Cross."



Margarito Perez Covarrubias, poet of Piedra Ancha, recites his paean to the Red Cross - words the village children may remember long after the last roar of the Mundial. Photo: Liliane de Toledo



The first "volunteer" designated in Char Chandia was able to convince other women to join in a survey of their community's health.

BANGLADESH

Where survival is an accident

Long before dawn, the highway running southeast from Dhaka is jammed with people, cattle, goats and bicycle rickshaws. People and rickshaws carry loads many times their own size, and weaving in and out of this top-heavy traffic is a stream of big, fast-moving trucks and buses, just as loaded with goods and people. There is a sort of random rhythm to it: accelerator, horn, brakes... swerve! But the wrecks on the roadside embankments are evidence that not everyone swerves in time.

We are in the middle of all this in a van of the Bangladesh Red Cross (BDRCS), heading for the Society's CHILD ALIVE project in a cluster of villages called Char Chandia on the Bay of Bengal. With us is the Bangladesh physician who is coordinator of the project. He was in Char Chandia last year during the BDRCS relief operation after the disastrous cyclone, and is known and respected by the villagers for his services then.

Now he is back to help them find

solutions to the health problems that claim many more lives than the cyclone did, especially among children.

His first move was to recruit seven volunteers, two men and five women, to carry out a house-to-house survey. This was not easy, for women in this area do not normally undertake activities of this sort outside their own homes. But he knew that women interviewers were essential to get clear, complete answers from the mothers who were the survey's main source of information. As he knew the male leaders of the community quite well, he was able to persuade one or two of them to "volunteer" the services of women in their own families. With that example, he soon had the team he needed.

The aim of the survey was to learn as much as possible about local health conditions. Not just to know what is happening, but to find out *why*. That's the first step to doing something about it.

Among other things, the survey

learned that of the approximately 275 children under five, 18 had died during the past year. Eleven of these deaths were related to diarrhoea. Why so many fatalities?

In one case a young mother told them how her baby woke up one morning with diarrhoea. Not knowing what to do herself, she decided to wait until her fisherman husband came home that evening to ask him if they should take their son somewhere for help. Unfortunately, a fisherman's day is a long one in this part of the world. By the time he arrived, it was too late.

But the survey takers know now that things don't have to be this way. They are looking forward to the further training they will receive as part of their involvement with the Red Cross. Then they will be able to teach the mothers and fathers, the schoolchildren and other key people in Char Chandia how diarrhoea deaths can be avoided.

They will explain why it is important that children are fully immun- ▶

ised and they'll help to see it happens. They will reassure pregnant women that tetanus toxoid injections will protect them and their newborn children against tetanus and are not, as some women in the survey feared, part of a family planning programme to make them sterile.

Swerving in and out of the traffic again on the way back to Dhaka, we can't resist asking, rather pointedly, if many children die from accidents? The project coordinator, a gentle man full of folk wisdom, replies softly, "Here, we say that survival is an accident."

We had the feeling that he doesn't intend to let it stay that way for the children of Char Chandia. ●

Pat SMYKE

MALI

The sun has a date with the rain

A landscape of the moon. Black rocks on ochre sand. And skeletons of animals, too. Bleached by the sun. This is Gao, in northern Mali. "A year ago everything had been destroyed by the drought.

There was nothing left. Nothing!" relates Diallo Saidou, a former public health administrator now working with the League. But since the 1985 rains whole areas of green have appeared and the millet and sorghum harvests are significantly greater than in previous years. Still, they are on the whole not enough to cover the needs of the nomads. The cereal deficit stands at 164,000 tons.

"The situation is better compared with the last two years, but the drought is a long way from finished. Our only hope is the next rains. If they don't come, we are back to square one."

Gérard Xavier, in charge of the League delegation for this region, knows there is still plenty to worry about. He has noticed that the level of the River Niger has been falling rapidly for several months... Not to mention the exceptional heatwave that covers Gao at the moment...

So the relief operation started in July 84 must stay in place. Food aid programmes for the most vulnerable groups must continue. Rations for 90,000 people are foreseen. And most of them nomads.

Eating.. but eating cleanly. Feeding people is not enough. All the nutrition delegates in the field agree: nutritional programmes must be pursued side-by-side with health and hygiene education.

"Look at this child," points out Véronique Bouyer of the French Red Cross, "he is full of worms. Only a third of what he received this morning will do him any good."

Cleanliness is essential in the relief supply centres. "No child gets his porridge before he has washed his hands," notes Josiane Rivoux of the Belgian Red Cross. And mothers are helped by regular courses in hygiene and basic health care.

"Improving hygiene," says Josiane, "is a process of one step at a time. It takes time. A lot of time. For what was said yesterday must be repeated tomorrow. And again the day after. All members of the population have to make hygiene and cleanliness their own personal concern. And this is one of the major development programmes of the Mali Red Cross. It has begun to organise regional training workshops for young healthcare workers from 16 to 25, recruited by the local branches of the Society.

With the help of League Development Delegate Richard Hunlede, and with teaching support from films and practical exercises, the recruits receive basis training which will allow them to play a determining role in health and hygiene at the heart of their own communities.

But in Gao, while waiting for these medium-term programmes to produce results, immediate needs must be taken care of. And people must wait, and hope.

Most of the nomads who sought shelter on the edge of town have left again. Others have gone into out-of-season cultivation, trying to make the best of things.

"If the region again receives plenty of rain," predicts the District Chief of Djebok, "they will abandon cultivation and go back to raising animals. For they are breeders and herdsmen before anything else."

Their cattle are their only source of wealth, and milk their main source of nourishment. What's more, it normally takes five years to restock a herd... But the June rains have still to keep their date...

If not... ●

Marie-Jeanne
MACHERET-NIKLEV



Waiting for the rain....

Photo: Liliane de Toledo

Profile:
William Cassis

**Take the work
seriously,
not yourself!**



The easy-going humour and sharp intellect of a genuine Levantine who knows how to count and never forgets a thing.

It is not difficult to believe him when he still claims, at 60, a sense of belonging to four places at once: Lebanon, land of his ancestors, Egypt his native soil, France, his cultural home, and Switzerland, his adopted country since 1961.

For William Cassis remains a part of all these at once. And all those who have known him in his 23 years as Head of Administration and Personnel at the League know it too.

He has preserved, from those distant, byzantine roots, a taste for debate and a sense of subtlety well-tempered by the discipline and realism inherited from his school-days with the Jesuits in Cairo, and later from his management training in Geneva.

And even if he should wish it, he will never be able to deny those Mediterranean beginnings. The warm voice, the ringing laugh, the expansive gestures, the infectious cordiality, would soon give him away. The same with the easy-going humour that is no disguise for the sharp intellect of a genuine Levantine who knows how to count and never forgets a thing, whether it concerns the problems of residence permits or housing for a new arrival at the League or the complex rules of protocol that govern the life of a large international organisation.

"Everything should be done seri-

ously, without at the same time taking yourself seriously," he is fond of repeating, and thereby demonstrates the very paradox he personifies. For if he has remained Mediterranean, he has also managed to become Swiss.

The proof is in his skill at organisation and his concern for efficiency like punctuality, all the while wrapped up in unflinching urbanity and an apparently imperturbable calm. Cardinal virtues for the daily administration of a secretariat of nearly 200 people of some 40 different nationalities, and for the regular handling of international meetings that can involve delegations from more than 137 countries.

A calm nature, patience, tact and "savoir-faire". He has needed strong doses of them all over the years, charting his way by eye through the political whirlpools, the administrative twists and turns, the waves of change and the mists of an international climate in constant evolution. And, without ever losing sight of his heading, keeping the vessel running perfectly, according to the fundamental aims of the movement.

"I have always had an excellent compass to guide me," he explains. "A profound respect for the institution, and absolute loyalty towards those whose duty it is to run it."

And well he knows that institution and its people. He could have confined himself to the strict role of administrator and remained unmoved by the great issues underlying the whole Red Cross and Red Crescent organisation. He could have let himself remain at the helm, simply following a course set by other people, without considering the deeper motivations of his travelling companions.

But that would have been against the real nature of the ambivalent man he has always been. As a student, with French his mother tongue, he chose to take his final school exams in Arabic in 1942. "In a way, a homage to the language of my ancestors..."

Never satisfied intellectually, as a teenager and young man his spare time was given to the Catholic Scouts of Egypt. And, passionately interested in philosophy, sociology and religious history, he began his working life with a wife and three young children, at the head of a family business in the textile industry. Then, after the political upheavals of Egypt, he emigrated to Europe, where at Lyon he began an unfinished thesis on the problems of minorities in the Middle East. And finally in Geneva, a diploma in business administration, equivalent today to an MBA, which opened the doors to the League Secretariat. And the youthful dream of teaching international law was replaced by the constant struggle for respect of the human rights of the world's most dispossessed.

He is proud of his Arab descent, but makes no mystery of old and solid friendships with several Jewish families. With his own roots now deep in Geneva, his children today are living in England, France and Germany. His work has taken him to the four corners of the earth. From Mexico to Manila, from Teheran to Bucharest, from Vienna to Istanbul. But it is from his modest office in Chemin des Crêts that the engine is kept running, without fuss, as if the problems didn't exist. As if it were quite natural that disparate forces, diverse mentalities, contradictory tendencies all worked in the same direction, towards a common goal that coincidentally summarises the character of William Cassis: "Through humanity to peace". ●

Pierre GRAVEL

Open door at the League

They come from all over the world. More and more of them. Witness the Visitors' Service register in the League's Secretariat.

Random pages: comments in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, Russian... Dates and signatures and names of countries that make the Visitors' Book a sort of boarding card for a voyage round the world: Norway, Sudan, Brazil, Australia, Hungary, United States, Liberia, Finland, Mexico, Malaysia, Holland, Canada...

And judging by statistics compiled since 1952, the number has not stopped growing. Back then, they were just 337 visitors. In 1985, 3,418, of whom nearly a third had no direct connection with the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

Except for peak times when the movement's important international meetings are held in Geneva, the flow of visitors remains pretty steady.

A typical day in the life of the Visitors' Service: Twenty-two Swiss scouts, an American television crew en route to the Sahel, three members from the Tunisian Red Crescent, a delegation from the Mexican Red Cross and 15 or so nurses-to-be from France.

And everyone will feel on arrival that they are expected, that a programme has been prepared that takes account of their interests, their knowledge of the organisation, and, to every extent possible, their own language.

"Among all the nationalities we have here," explains Denise Martin-Royot, head of the Visitors' Service, "we can generally find someone to cope with a language known to our visitors."



But to tell them what? And show them what? Is there anything, finally, less spectacular than a secretariat?

"It's true that the League, as the federation of National Societies, really comes into its own in terms of visible Red Cross and Red Crescent operations at the level of those same Societies, at ground level. Here, we are limited to showing films, slide shows, photos, brochures of general activities or details of operations, like health care, relief, blood transfusion programmes. Unfortunately, our limited means do not allow us to maintain complete audio-visual programmes, in several languages, on all the facets of our activities, especially the most recent and up-to-date."

Yet if, in toto, there is not too much to show, there is plenty to say. Hence the enthusiastic comments visitors leave behind them. "Here we are well equipped to provide all the explanations. To reply to all the questions on the origins and development of the movement, the types of involvement, the cost of operations, the control mechanisms on the use of funds. When we know in advance the special interests of our visitors, we try to let them meet and talk to whoever is specially well-informed to satisfy their concerns."

And the rest? Those who arrive without warning? Those tourists, who have heard of the Red Cross or the Red Crescent, and want to take advantage of their trip to Geneva to learn more? "For them we have to improvise, of course. With the means and the people available." And experience often shows that, once back home, many of them become more active supporters of a movement they have got to know better.

Even people in difficulty, attracted by the symbol on the front of the building, receive an attentive welcome from the Visitor's Service. "Even if we cannot help them directly here, we can at least give them a human welcome, listen to them with sympathy, and then direct them to whichever organisation may be able to come to their help."

For Denise Martin-Royot and her small team of three female colleagues "there are never two classes of visitor. Everyone should be able to arrive here to an equally warm welcome." For the Visitors' Service, it must be said, non-discrimination is a principle that is not just an empty word, but is alive and well in Geneva! ●

P. G.



The personnel policy gap

by Stephen DAVEY

Imagine, if you will, an organisation with one hundred and thirty-seven national components counting a quarter of a billion members. Imagine an organisation with an international secretariat and international programmes on all continents, moving millions of dollars and thousands of tons of supplies around the world. Imagine such an organisation without any international career development policy whatsoever.

It is almost unimaginable, and yet there is an organisation with all these elements. It exists. It is yours. It is the League.

In the ten short years I have spent working with the League in Geneva and with National Societies

and League operations in the field, one conclusion has emerged above all others. It is that unless and until personnel recruitment and management can be developed more effectively, other problems cannot and will not be solved, and the full potential of the League will not be realised.

It must be said that many people at different levels in National Societies and in the League realise this. At the same time, nothing adequate has been done this far to tackle the problem.

It is a problem that is recognised in different ways in different parts of the organisation.

For Societies that provide assistance, it is often seen as a problem of recruiting and retaining personnel well enough qualified for international work in a Society that is of necessity limited in size and scope. There is also the problem of involving branches, of making development mean something at this level. Feedback on even major contributions is often insufficient or not sufficiently inspiring.

At the League's Geneva secretariat, the problem is that too few of the present staff have significant recent field experience themselves.

The League secretariat, Societies that contribute and Societies that receive all recognise that it is difficult to find well-qualified and experienced people at short notice for short-term contracts.

It is also frustrating to realise that all too often delegates who have proven their capacity in the field are not available for further assignments since there is no possibility of offering them longer-term engagements.

So each new operation tends to begin with a new and, all too frequently, inexperienced team.

Yet there is a way to solve these problems, I believe, to the potential satisfaction of all involved.

The first step is for the League secretariat to define and project its needs for high calibre personnel over the next five to ten years, both for Geneva and the field. This projection should cover a range of services including management, finance, logistics and health.

The secretariat should then ask National Societies to help by identifying people in these fields – people who would be their investment in the future – and, it needs saying, people of outstanding ability, not those who are simply problems themselves at home!

Such personnel would then be available to the League for a five-year contract, for example, and would spend a period in the secretariat as a desk officer or technical specialist, a period in the field as a senior delegate, and a period within their own Society, keeping in touch with policy and organisational developments and providing feedback to branches on what is going on in the field.

There is already some experience, though very limited, to indicate that this approach can have very effective results. Some Societies have already provided staff on loan to the League, who have returned home with greater experience to develop their national careers. The secretariat has sometimes made members of its staff available to work in or head key delegations, and occasionally people have been recruited by the secretariat as full-time National Society staff members on the basis of proven field success. But up till now, all this has been far too limited and haphazard.

One of many advantages of introducing a well-planned long-term staff development scheme at the international level would be that National Societies would increase their opportunities to attract and develop their own staff for eventual senior positions at home. Involvement with operations would also increase through their own contract staff working with the League.

For Societies that receive assistance internationally, there would be advantage in a higher calibre of advice and assistance, and added experience, from League delegates. And the secretariat would benefit from better qualified and more experienced personnel both in Geneva and in the field.

The initiative for this development should come from the League's secretariat. That is surely one of its primary coordinating functions. Both the Federation and its secretariat stand to gain from taking a longer look at where we are all going. Personally, I am going to take my own advice. After ten fascinating years, I am going back to the British Red Cross, to take up the challenge from the inside. ●

(Stephen Davey takes up a position as Director of Branch Development in the British Red Cross Society in July this year, having most recently been Head of the Eastern and Southern Africa Department of League Operations in Geneva.)



Courage and skill in large measure are needed to deal with the effects of nuclear or industrial accidents.

INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

Some positive 'fallout' .. perhaps?

Chernobyl, Bhopal, Three Mile Island... unknown names on a map suddenly catapulted to world renown, new signposts on the modern road of potential horror. The horror of a new kind of man-made disaster. Disaster that cannot be met with bare hands alone.

Courage, generosity and skill may be what are needed to successfully tackle the problems caused by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or cyclones. But a great deal more is needed to deal with intense radiation or clouds of toxic gas. Here the specialists have first call, and sheer good will or humanitarian feelings must take a second place.

It is the same for the Red Cross.

"We are effectively defenceless faced with this sort of disaster," admits William Gunn, a doctor and special adviser to the League's Secretary General.

"Defenceless really is the word, since we are equipped neither with the information nor the equipment to deal with these highly dangerous situations where simple dedication is not enough."

A recent example following the events at Chernobyl: in the early hours after the announcement of the accident, the Soviet Red Cross reported to the League that preliminary relief operations and evacuation of the danger zone were under the responsibility of the com-

petent authorities. A few days later, Dr Vladimir Miliukov, Head of the External Affairs Service, confirmed that the Red Cross had begun to assist in "controlling levels of radioactivity and distributing relief supplies to evacuated people."

The large Tracing Department within the Soviet Red Cross (see page 37) was also available to help displaced families reunite with each other and to reassure families worried about their relatives.

Large industrial accidents provoke a feeling of impotence almost everywhere. In India, eighteen months after the disaster, the Red Cross is still looking after victims in Bhopal. In the light of such a tragic

experience, the Indian Red Cross today says it is able to work in "certain categories of industrial disaster" by making special training available to relief workers. But it all depends on the type and size of the problem.

Every National Society contacted just after the Chernobyl accident recognized its limitations in the face of nuclear or other chemical accidents. From Stockholm: "The Swedish Red Cross has no special training programme for its relief workers in these two high-risk cases. Only basic information is including in the normal training certificate course."

In the USA the American Red Cross works closely with government units on preparedness and response to peacetime nuclear accidents. It provides emergency mass care services for evacuees and emergency workers. Its Disaster Health Services maintain liaison with public health authorities on needs for decontamination and special health problems. And the American Red Cross keeps in contact with plant operators and insurance companies to assist evacuees in making claims for assistance for maintenance and long-term recovery needs. Red Cross assistance may also be available when insurance is inadequate and no other resources are available.

In Britain too, immediate disaster relief would only be carried out by experts, with the British Red Cross principally involved in welfare work for victims and their relatives. The last major nuclear incident was in 1957 at Sellafield – the Windscale nuclear re-processing plant. Today members of the Cumbria Branch of the British Red Cross, within whose boundaries the plant falls, say they would not be allowed near the plant in the event of a further incident. From June, however, they are starting industrial first aid courses for Sellafield employees.

The French Red Cross, as well as giving basic training courses to its own relief workers, has for six years been working with military health services, training personnel who would, in the event of conflict or disaster, become voluntary health auxiliaries. "Up till now," admits Dr. Andrei Kisselev, Under-Secretary General of the League in charge of Health Services, "nuclear or chemical accidents have not been a priority. But a recent World Health Organization meeting on

AIDS

A Disaster of our times

Aids has hit Denmark hard. Since the first case of a little-known disease was discovered in 1980, there are now over 80 cases, increasing in the past months, especially among the drug addicts and prostitutes of Copenhagen. Up to two thousand new patients are predicted in the next five years.

Outside the United States, Denmark with a population of just over 5 million is one of the countries with the most cases registered. More than half have already died. Statistics like these are frightening for a public without real information about the disease, with the press in sensational mood and predictions of "the catastrophe of the century".

That Aids is the latest "natural disaster", "man-made" in its most epidemic transmission, there is no doubt. And that public health authorities in many countries have been slow to inform their populations and help reduce a rising tide of panic is unfortunately also not in question.

Faced with an understandably nervous public and national authorities unwilling at first to find budgets to get out the necessary factual information themselves, the Danish Red Cross did what it would do faced with any other disaster: it acted. In August and September 1985, with the authorities still silent and the media still ringing the plague bell, the Danish Red Cross got together with the National Board of Health and produced the first sober, reassuring pamphlet on Aids for the Danish public.

"What is Aids? A disease you should know something about!" sets out the facts, without drama and without innuendo. An easy-to-read brochure that by October had been distributed to all libraries, pharmacies, doctors, dentists,

emergency operations asked WHO to look into this question with the aim of supplying concerned organizations with fuller information about how to deal effectively with this kind of disaster."

Better preparedness and more

clinics and community administrations in the country. Even many schools, and in seven foreign languages for immigrants and refugees. Plans to distribute the pamphlet to the whole population were shelved through lack of money, and the inability of county administrations even then to put aside bureaucratic pride for the public good.

The county administrations then felt they had to do their own thing. And they did – another pamphlet, long and far too detailed for the lay public – in lurid yellow and showing on the cover the disease as the tip of an iceberg. Hardly reassuring at all. The Danish Red Cross has not stopped there. It feels duty-bound to act in times of emergency, times like these. Discussions are now underway to set up counselling centres for victims of Aids and their relatives.

Lis Ehmer Olesen, Head of the National Department, feels that much remains to be done by the state and not left to private organisations, but that the Danish Red Cross has provided a real public service, and has in return received some benefits. "Our action certainly introduced many people in Denmark to the idea that Red Cross is involved in health education."

In Denmark, despite increased health awareness and the Society's successful public health courses each year, the Red Cross is still very much associated with its international activities. When the Aids pamphlet came out, Lis Ehmer Olesen received an unusual call from a member of the gay community which has again become a target of public hostility after years of gradual social acceptance. "Perhaps you are helping," the caller said, "but perhaps the opposite is true. Perhaps the public will think the gay community is taking money from the starving in Africa."

Which goes to show at times like these, it really is impartiality and humanity that help to keep the Red Cross out in front.

J. A.

suitable relief actions – maybe this will be some positive "fallout" from Chernobyl, Bhopal and Three Mile Island.

Pierre GRAVEL



Surigao City, Mindanao, Philippines. Even the Red Cross headquarters was blown away after the big typhoon of 1984.

Disaster management:

State of the art in Asia

There is something rather rarefied about the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). All those whirring computers in the middle of nowhere miles outside Bangkok. Earnest strictures about "technology transfer". "Problem-oriented", of course. Just a bit too much jargon for ordinary people perhaps.

It may be as well that Brian Ward, 54, Director of the new Asian Disaster Preparedness Center which came into being in the bosom of AIT on 30 January 1986, is not much given to jargon. Former League Chief Delegate in Uganda (83) and with many League and UNDRO missions in Asia under his ex-Army belt, Brian Ward exudes an earthy enthusiasm about the new Center.

"This Asian initiative is the first of its kind in the world," he points out. "Sixty per cent of major disasters occur in Asia. So a Center for disaster management should prove a real service to countries of the region, helping people to help themselves." Drawing on technical support from the extensive resources of AIT, the Center's immediate aims are to set up a regional disaster information network and to begin the training of trainers.

The first training course is scheduled for June, with participants encouraged to attend as nat-

ional teams. For example: representatives from a government national disaster coordinating body, a technical agency like a Meteorology Department, an NGO like the Red Cross and from the private sector, an oil, chemical or insurance company.

Course members will have considerable experience of disaster management in their own countries which they will be able to share in a forum that is all too rare today – a workshop of different perspectives on exploring solutions to common problems, like the relationship between pre-disaster planning and long-term development and environmental issues.

Contingency planning and crisis management techniques will be demonstrated in simulation exercises. A role here for those computers, which the Center sees as a major tool in future disaster management development.

It sounds a bit rarefied again. "Not so," says Brian Ward, admitting a layman's reserve before state of the art electronics. "The bottom line is always people. Saving lives and property. Reducing suffering. If we have the technology to help us achieve that, let's put it to work."

J. A.

ASIA

Disaster management:

A little front-line scepticism

The aftermath of a recent major typhoon. The harbour front, Surigao City, on the Southern Philippine island of Mindanao. Surrounded by sacks of rice and clothes and medicines and battered, roofless buildings, Miss Lourdes Masing is in her element – the front-line of a Red Cross relief operation.

Assistant Director of the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Service of the Philippine National Red Cross since 1978, Acting Director since July 1985, and concurrently, since 1980, Head of the Tracing and Mailing Service, Miss Masing has the kind of on-the-job experience of real disaster management that no textbooks or computer programmes are ever likely to match.

Lourdes Masing is not too sure about the new Asian Disaster Preparedness Center opened at AIT in Thailand. In between the front-line relief work, the training of trainers for disaster action teams, the supervision of emergency stocks delivered to every Red Cross Chapter before the start of each rainy season, in between a League mission of emergency assistance to displaced people in Sri Lanka in 1983, she has plenty of experience of high-level talking too.

"In Asia we are used to disasters," she points out. "We are in the typhoon belt, the volcano belt, the earthquake belt. Even untrained people are quite used to helping themselves. Except when everything is destroyed. The key then is a coordinated effort between government and people."

And that's where things tend to go wrong. Regional cooperation is all very well. But even in a real catastrophe there may be little need for regional help if a government believes it can take care of its own. What is more important is how the government performs in its own country.

The Philippines has a National Disaster Coordinating Council, a ▶



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BELGIUM

“SMURFING” THE RED CROSS ...

Who would believe it? Captain Haddock swearing – by the Red Cross and only the Red Cross! Boule and Bill getting into First Aid and the Smurfs going on about

giving blood!

In the last ten years, a number of National Societies have come to understand how effective comic strips can be as ways of spreading

humanitarian messages. And among them, it hardly needs saying, is the Belgian Red Cross, in a country which practically breeds comic strip artists of world renown.



Lourdes Masing: experience gained at first hand in the field will never be rivalled by any computer or manual.

▶ monitoring body which Miss Masing believes has not been very effective. “What we take up at the top level should find its way down. We talk and talk at the top, but what we talk about never seems to get down to the local levels, where it matters.”

Now an Officer of the League’s Asia/Pacific Department, Lourdes Masing has a more international

view of her home region. She knows that on the ground there is no substitute for the regular and continual training of the real “disaster managers” – the staff and volunteers who work on the front-line. And she wonders how and when those at the top will get their act together to support their own front lines, regional cooperation or not. ●

Willy and Waldy have taken over from Boule and Bill. For the fourth time running, the Belgian Red Cross is using comic strip characters to support its annual Information and Fund-raising Fortnight. After the Smurfs, Tintin and Boule and Bill, now for 1986 it is Willy Vandersteen’s Willy and Waldy “bobbing” to the League’s chosen theme: “Give Blood, Save Life.”

For more than ten years Belgian Red Cross volunteers have been

... ELSEWHERE

The French Red Cross has published three comic strip books. The first was “Here are the Babus”, for children from 7 to 10. Then “Do you know First Aid?” for a junior public from 11 to 14. The third, “Run for their lives” (a pun on “Run for your life”) for 15 to 16-year-olds.

Fictional characters linked to and liked by children can successfully convey the basic ideas needed to introduce children to First Aid and assistance to others.

Some National Societies are using comic strips to explain basic health care or to teach children the



selling stickers illustrating Red Cross activities: First Aid, blood donation, health education, loan of equipment, hospital libraries etc.

Comic strip characters were used for the first time in 1982. The result: nearly two million stickers sold among a population of ten million!

The experiment proved a convincing success, attracting a youthful public and giving the Red Cross a more dynamic image. Comic strip characters are now used to illustrate posters, media announcements and brochures. They appear in video clips. So all media support developed for the campaign is built around the characters in their own settings.

fundamentals of personal hygiene.

The ICRC has been involved in comic strips since March 1978, in Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe, after two ICRC Delegates and a Zimbabwean colleague had been killed in an ambush. It was clear that in this region the role of the ICRC was not understood as it should have been. Later, in 1983, the same comics were distributed in Zaire as part of a test of public opinion. To the question "Do the characters in this comic resemble Zaireans?" the answer was 65% "No".

Identification with the characters is essential. Readers must be able to recognise themselves in the way of speaking, in the clothes, in the way of life described. And this is especially true if you are trying to reach

The Belgian Red Cross uses comic strips like any commercial enterprise: under contract. The author receives a fee for his artwork. Rights are paid for the use of his characters over a fixed period. Belgium is a fertile breeding-ground for comic strip artists. It's a well-known phenomenon. But it is still necessary to choose characters that are popular in the eyes of the country's two language groups, and you have to accept the humour of the artist, of course...

Comic strip characters help the public form a better understanding of sometimes unprepossessing Red Cross activities. They are a real publicity boost for the many small objects (key-rings, pencils, flags, first aid packs) sold in public by the volunteers.

But let's not deceive ourselves! This type of campaign is hard to run, even if the last two have had the benefit of advice from an advertising agency. In the end they will only succeed through the hard work of volunteers, who can sell so much and no more.

The Belgian Red Cross intends to go on with this magic formula, but in the cultural cauldron of our times, it's the power of imagination that counts. As they say in the comics: "To be continued..."

Jean-Pierre COLLIGNON

an audience that is semi-literate or illiterate.

Two years after this test run, the ICRC published a new comic series, aimed directly at the people of Zaire and called "Red Cross—with you and for you."

In June 1984 the Philippine National Red Cross, in collaboration with the ICRC, published a series of comics for schools with the specific aim of publicising the neutral and humanitarian role of the Red Cross and encouraging respect for the essential rules of international humanitarian law. This series, complete with teachers' guide, has been so successful that a new edition, in both English and Tagalog, has been reprinted for 1986.

LIBYA

A Cross, a Crescent and a Green Mountain

Father Bernardo Duchinsky was, to say the least, somewhat surprised when his superiors at the Vatican informed him he would shortly be celebrating Mass on Libya's Green Mountain, the Djabal Al-Akhdar.

Whisked out of Rome, and transferred by fast car from Benghazi to El Beida, he found the next surprise awaiting him: a makeshift altar, prominently featuring the Red Crescent, in a building which housed a blood and dental clinic, as well as a room set aside as a mosque.

Even as he unpacked his canonicals, however, he was in for a third surprise: an expatriate congregation of 500, including 29 nuns, pouring into the Red Crescent branch where the service was to be held, while El Beida first-aiders and ambulance drivers strung fairy lights and prepared a picnic in the grounds outside. "It was," he said "one of the most moving moments of my whole ministry."

The Cross and the Crescent came together through the initiative of the local Red Crescent chairman, Solayman Leghmary. "We work together with many of these people," he said. "We respect them. So why not help them to hold their own religious service?"

In El Beida, a market town on the Benghazi to Tobruk road, no one finds such an initiative particularly surprising. The farmers working in the green fields give the region a pastoral air, but in the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, decision-making belongs to the people which, in Red Crescent terms, means with the branches.

"We are a federation, not a rigid centralised structure," says Secretary General Ahmed El Sherif. "At headquarters we look after international affairs, and have a coordinating role within the national plan. After that, it's up to the branches to get on with the job... If they want to organise a religious service, why not?"



A Red Crescent on a makeshift altar: one of the surprises awaiting Father Bernardo Duchinsky when he was called on to celebrate mass in the heart of Libya.

In the twelve years since it was founded, the "job" of the El Beida branch has expanded enormously. In its motor pool there are 24 ambulances, all four-wheel drive with radio link, and a mobile hospital. The team of full-time and volunteer drivers have their own "divan", comfortably furnished with outsize cushions, a television, and an apparently endless supply of mint tea.

From here they have been called out to handle everything from earthquakes to shipwrecks on the coast to emergencies deep in the desert.

The branch compound has its own diabetes clinic – serving 1600 patients – blood service, pharmacy and dental unit. There is a mother and baby shop, piled high with nappies, powders, oils and teething rings. And there is an impressive blood service, though it is still short of regular donors.

"The main problem," says Solayman Leghmary, who joined the Red Crescent when a student at the American University of Beirut, "is that people give for their immediate

families, but for mass donations we have to go to the army and students..."

There is also some difficulty with rhesus negative groups, who make up about 8% of the population. So the branch has set up the El Beida "Negative Club" – a regular get-together where this minority group can pledge to interchange blood in an emergency.

Ahmed El Sherif, who has built up the Society to 30 branches and 6000 members – with another 5000 in the Youth Section – believes strongly in such local initiatives. "We are a voluntary service body," he comments. "Within our overall plan, branches should anticipate local needs."

Examples? A dry-cleaners set up by the Red Crescent in Khurfa in the south-east. A Red Crescent vehicle workshop at El Regeba in the deep south. A Red Crescent farm meeting a garlic shortage in the desert. And in the former royal villa in El Beida, a Red Crescent barber for the old folks who are now housed there.

All these schemes are financially self-supporting. As are such money-spinners as eye-testing for driving licences, medical examinations for foreigners wanting a visa, and a range of specialised dental work.

"Without a developed structure of branches with their own regular income, we are not going to advance," says El Sherif. "Now that we do have a solid base," adds Solayman Leghmary – who speaks not just as Beida chairman but as national Vice-President – "we hope to do much more internationally."

He cites the recent example of all branches contributing to an appeal for Sudan, the goods being assembled at Khurfa, and then a long convoy making its way through the desert to the border. "This land used to be the granary of the Roman Empire," he adds. "Before that, we had the Greeks and Phoenicians. Afterwards, the Ottomans, Italians, Germans and British.

"Now this land is ours, it is a privilege of our Movement to serve not just our own people, but others as well."

Which is why the Cross and Crescent got together on the Mountain.

George REID

ETHIOPIA

In the search of a new life

MEDINA HAYAS is not exactly a typical Afar woman. For one thing she is Hamad Abedella's only wife, a rarity in Afar culture where men can marry two, three or even more wives, depending on their wealth.

Apart from being a strong-willed woman who has forced her husband to remain monogamous, Medina is also one of the first Afars to realise how vulnerable their life has become.

"We depended on our herds of cattle for everything. We discouraged our children from going to school, because we thought that keeping the cattle was the best possible way of life for our people. Now all our cattle have vanished before our eyes. Now we are completely destitute. Now we realise how foolish we have been all along. We could not even afford to slaughter the few goats traditionally required for the funeral of my three children who died because of the drought."

Medina is one of the 16,000 Afars now being assisted at the Red Cross shelter in Gewane, Hararghe Region. Another 14,856 Afars are being helped through the distribution of dry ration supplies in nearby satellite centres.

"Before the drought," she ex-

JOAN'S ONLY PROBLEM

Today there are two League nurses in Mille Shelter which is temporary home to 7000 Afars trying to escape death. Trying to get dry rations, water, medicines.

Joan, who comes from Ireland and Sumi from Japan, usually come twice a month in their jeep after a rough ride of two hours from Bati. Not far from the shelter that came to symbolise the horror at the end of 1984.

"All of us are happy when Joan and Sumi are here," says Shieferau Gersil, head of the shelter. "It simply



Proud and independent, the Afar people have for centuries crossed and recrossed the deserts. Today, the drought is forcing them to adapt to a more settled way of life, but a life with some hope for the future.

plains, "my family had more than 250 cows and many goats. Our staple food was milk and we sold our surplus milk, butter and cattle to buy sorghum with which we baked our 'mufe' (a traditional bread baked in a preheated hole in the ground). I was so busy the days were always too short for me. Now the only thing I do is go to the feeding centre three times a day with my youngest daughter."

Medina can attend the centre because she is pregnant. Her youngest daughter is accepted be-

means many problems will be solved." And a young Afar woman adds: "Thanks to them my two kids are alive..." Because two nurses are happy with their work.

"We know the people rely on us," Joan smiles. "Luckily, the highlanders are back at home, working on their farms. But for the Afars it's more difficult. They've lost everything. And as nomads without camels or cattle, they have nowhere to go." "That is the main reason we can't close the shelters," Mr. Gersil says, "and why we shall be relying on the League's aid next year."

But Joan is more optimistic: "because the League's approach is now development, not relief," she exp-

cause of her malnourished status. Her ten other children and husband are not so lucky. They have to share the dry ration supply - allotted to six people per family - with Medina's parents, in-laws and other relatives who live far from the shelter.

Her family knows very well that the dry rations are not sufficient for so many people and that they will go hungry long before the next distribution. Nevertheless they are unwilling to change, since "sharing" remains a cardinal principle

lains. Recently Joan had a wedding anniversary. Her husband Gerd Venghaus, a League delegate based in Addis Ababa could only contact her on the radio at Bati. "India, Luxembourg, Oregon, Venezuela, Egypt..." he radioed; and she replied: "Me too." Last year, September 21, 1985, it was Joan's birthday. She had no flowers, only a chocolate saved from Geneva. Joan was delighted: "I prefer Swiss chocolates to flowers..."

There was only one problem. In that heat, the chocolate was almost liquid. "Don't worry", said Joan, "I'll put it in the fridge." But the fridge was 150 km away, at Bati.

Encho Gospodinov

among the Afars, not to be broken at any cost.

When I asked about her plans now that the rains have come, Medina said: "The rain? The rain no longer has a meaning for us since we have lost our cattle. If it were not for 'Key Meskel' (Red Cross in Amharic) we would all have perished by now. As for me, I am determined to sell everything I have or will ever possess to educate my children. Even this one," laughing she pointed to the baby she was expecting soon, "will go to school." Outside the feeding hall, Afar children who had learnt of the closure of nearby shelters were singing. Literally translated, the chorus of their song went like this, over and over again: "Key Meskel, Key Meskel, our kind benefactor, tie its feet, do not let it go, tie its feet, do not let it go..."

If there are any feet to be tied, I thought sadly, maybe it is those of our Afar friends. The feet which have carried these proud and fiercely independent people across the desert for hundreds of years. The drought has brought home a sad reality that suggests the time has come to try a different and hopefully more stable way of life. ●

Elizabeth KASSAYE



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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

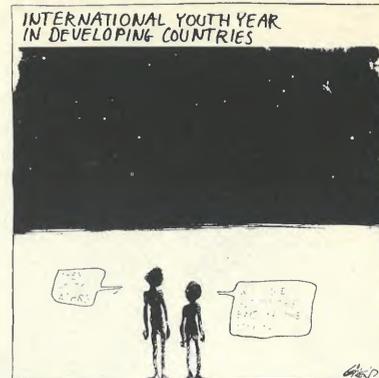
Who can say whether they all understood the message that resulted in such a gift?

The first edition of *The League*, last October, printed a cartoon by the Canadian artist Jean-Pierre Girerd. The subject was the International Youth Year in developing countries, highlighting the gap between industrial societies and the people affected by the famine. The artist felt he should do something more, especially for the children. So instead of taking a fee he provided artists' materials which, with a little help from the Ethiopian Red Cross, found their way to the Asai Elementary School Art Club in Addis Ababa.

A gift like that doesn't arrive every day. And from so far away. So for two hours the forty-two children who belong to the art club worked away to make some beautiful pictures that could say "Thank you" to Jean-Pierre.

And each painted the world as he or she saw it, without real reference

▶
"They'll go to Mars"
"Will we get to the end of the month?"



to the cartoon's message: farms, villages, horsemen, even the Red Cross relief operation! Watching the children work, Elizabeth Kas-saye, Information Officer of the Ethiopian Red Cross, wasn't sure what to think. "I first thought that I had not properly explained the car-

toonist's idea," she said. "Later, seeing the results, it dawned on me that they were too young and unaware of the gap shown by Girerd. Would it be too naive to hope that they will grow up without ever becoming aware of this gap? I suppose it would."

UNITED STATES

Profession: volunteer!



In 1957 a plane crashed in a schoolyard in the San Fernando Valley just outside Los Angeles. Pat Snyder has just moved with her new husband into a house not ten minutes away from the crash site.

She rushed to the school and introduced herself to the Red Cross Relief Co-ordinator: "Hello, I'm Pat Snyder and I'm a nurse. Can I help?"

She worked through the night doing whatever was needed, not just medical help but making calm, common-sense decisions to help ▶

◀ Pat Snyder was able to put all her national volunteer experience to good use when she was asked to be an American Red Cross delegate in Mexico after last year's earthquake.

people. And she's never looked back.

"I've been a Red Cross Volunteer nurse for almost 30 years now," says Pat proudly. "It's the most rewarding volunteer work I've ever undertaken. Both major and minor help is supplied. We could provide a variety of assistance all the way from first aid for hundreds of victims of tornadoes or floods to getting sheets of plastic to cover blown-out windows and keep five children warm." Pat Snyder did not move immediately into disaster relief.

"When I started out," she explains, "I was just married, working, and had two young children. I started out teaching mother and baby-care in the evenings, but at the same time, I was "on the list". Being on the list meant that Pat was called out to brush fires and house fires and the other frequent emergencies that occur in California.

Pat's first encounter with earthquake disaster relief came in 1971, where for 4 months she worked in the relief effort following the San Fernando Valley earthquake.

Her first out-of-town assignment was in 1977, when she spent one month in the eastern part of the United States where floods extended over five States and isolated homes and villages.

The Mexican earthquake was Pat Snyder's first international mission. She spent three weeks helping the Mexican Red Cross organise the follow-up to their immediate earthquake relief work.

When the American Red Cross identified the need for an earthquake preparedness programme, Pat Snyder was chosen to head up the development.

What keeps Pat Snyder involved? "Seeing time after time how Red Cross becomes a rallying point in time of disaster. It makes me proud to see how people who have never even spoken to their neighbors will take them into their homes when the needs arise. I've seen it a hundred times in the United States and later in Mexico. I was proud to be there in Mexico City as a Red Cross representative and I hope we have been able to fulfill the objective we always have - to leave behind a Society even stronger and even better prepared to respond to human need." ●

Lesley SPENCER

USSR

Needles in a haystack

SOCIETIES



A staff of 24, mostly women like Nina Golovanova, Olga Shaydulina, Nadejda Haritonova and Marina Denisova, devote hours of concentrated patience to the complex puzzle of tracing and reuniting missing people and separated families.

Last year Galina Eremenko, an old lady from Kharkov in the USSR, was still looking for some trace of a daughter who had been transported to a labour camp in Germany in 1942.

"I am very old and I only want one thing more, to have good news of my daughter" she wrote to the Tracing Department of the Soviet Red Cross. There was no real clue to the fate of her daughter, only a faint rumour that she might now be living in Canada.

The Department's staff was deeply moved by the old lady's letter, and the first enquiry was despatched to Canada. After a long wait, a second, more urgent letter was sent. "Please try to find out quickly... it concerns a very elderly mother..." Shortly afterwards the Canadian Red Cross transmitted the address of her daughter.

One case among thousands of letters addressed to 18/7 Kuznetsky Most, Moscow. Always with the same message: "Please help! You are our only hope!" Hundreds of thousands of families separated by the war, whose members are still searching, waiting, hoping. A staff of 24, mostly women and with several foreign languages to draw on, look after these requests. Patient investigations which sometimes requires a year, two years, even more. The slow reconstruction of a puzzle whose pieces are perhaps to be found in the millions of files registered in Moscow or elsewhere in the world. Enquiries which travel to Geneva, home of the International

Committee of the Red Cross, to Arolsen in West Germany, location of the International Information Centre on former inmates of the concentration camps, and to different Red Cross Societies around the world.

And all by ordinary mail, for the Department has no special communications means of its own.

The 40th anniversary of the end of the Second World War provoked a new surge of requests to the Department. Families still separated, friends or fellow-inmates of camps to be found.

M. Velichko, a former inmate of Ravensbruck, wanted to trace a partner in an escape attempt. The only clues: two camp numbers. But the ending is not always a happy one.

Like the case of the son of Gavriil Ivanovich Chufarov who came to learn that his father died of starvation in Buchenwald. Sometimes the enquiries end not in emotional reunions, but in locating the last resting place of a loved one.

Whatever the ending, in nearly 40 years of its existence, the Tracing Department of the Executive Committee of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR has brought half a million investigations to a positive conclusion. Half a million human destinies! A figure that speaks eloquently for the humanitarian activities of the Soviet Red Cross. ●

Igor MARTYNOV

The Henry Dunant Institute in Geneva is the study centre of the International Red Cross. In December 1985 its member institutions, the ICRC, the League and the Swiss Red Cross, adopted four new programmes in addition to the Institute's ongoing research, seminars and training activities: a documentation programme on humanitarian law and Red Cross action; a programme of exchanges with external academic centres; seminars on the treatment of detainees for heads of penitentiary administrations; and a study programme on the development of third world Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

JAN EGELAND, who contributed this OPINION to THE LEAGUE, is the coordinator of the Institute's new development programme, which began in March with support from the Norwegian Red Cross. A series of studies is planned to evaluate the development experience of specific Societies. The first study is being undertaken with the Kenya Red Cross Society. Also planned is a comparative study on the development strategies of the International Red Cross compared with those of other international organisations.



RED CROSS:

Big heart – small brain?

For several years I edited a monthly Norwegian national radio programme on international humanitarian assistance. Including the development agencies, we described and evaluated the work of some 40 international organisations.

The International Red Cross constituted a category of its own.

It was the only group with a *global* network of National Societies with, at the same time, a real capacity for internationally coordinated action. It had the most impressive history, and was the only non-governmental institution with a recognised mandate for humanitarian initiatives provided in international law. And it often managed to be first on the spot with the greatest volume of relief to victims of disasters.

Yet, like most journalists, we were interested in analysing the quality and impact of assistance, beyond mere data on speed and volume. And here we found many smaller and younger groups clearly ahead of the Red Cross in terms of action evaluation and 'quality control'. These are areas which affect publicity as well as finance. Studying the trends in governmental and non-governmental funding, we found that in some countries the Red Cross was losing out to organisations which could *document* their ability to learn from, and correct, mistakes.

I believe the Red Cross and Red Crescent family can change that trend. And National Society advice to a feasibility study on the Henry Dunant Institute confirms increased interest in strengthening Red Cross action through research and evaluation. As the Finnish Red Cross pointed out, if we want to develop our own work in step with a rapidly changing world, and influence development itself, there is a pressing need for greater intellectual input into what we do.

Close analysis can help us concentrate on the work we do best. Take Africa, where there are now more than 80,000 expatriate "aid experts" and 1,600 registered "human development" organisations in Kenya alone. We have to avoid duplicating others and concentrate on our unique mission as a universal, non-political, non-religious and voluntary humanitarian movement.

We need to prevent the repetition of our mistakes. National and international coordinators of Red Cross programmes seem to change every two or three years. This lack of institutional memory causes us to relaunch old relief or development mistakes.

We also need to make our assistance less donor-oriented, and establish whether there are mechanisms on the donor side that make some development cooperation more responsive to the needs of the participating side than the operating side.

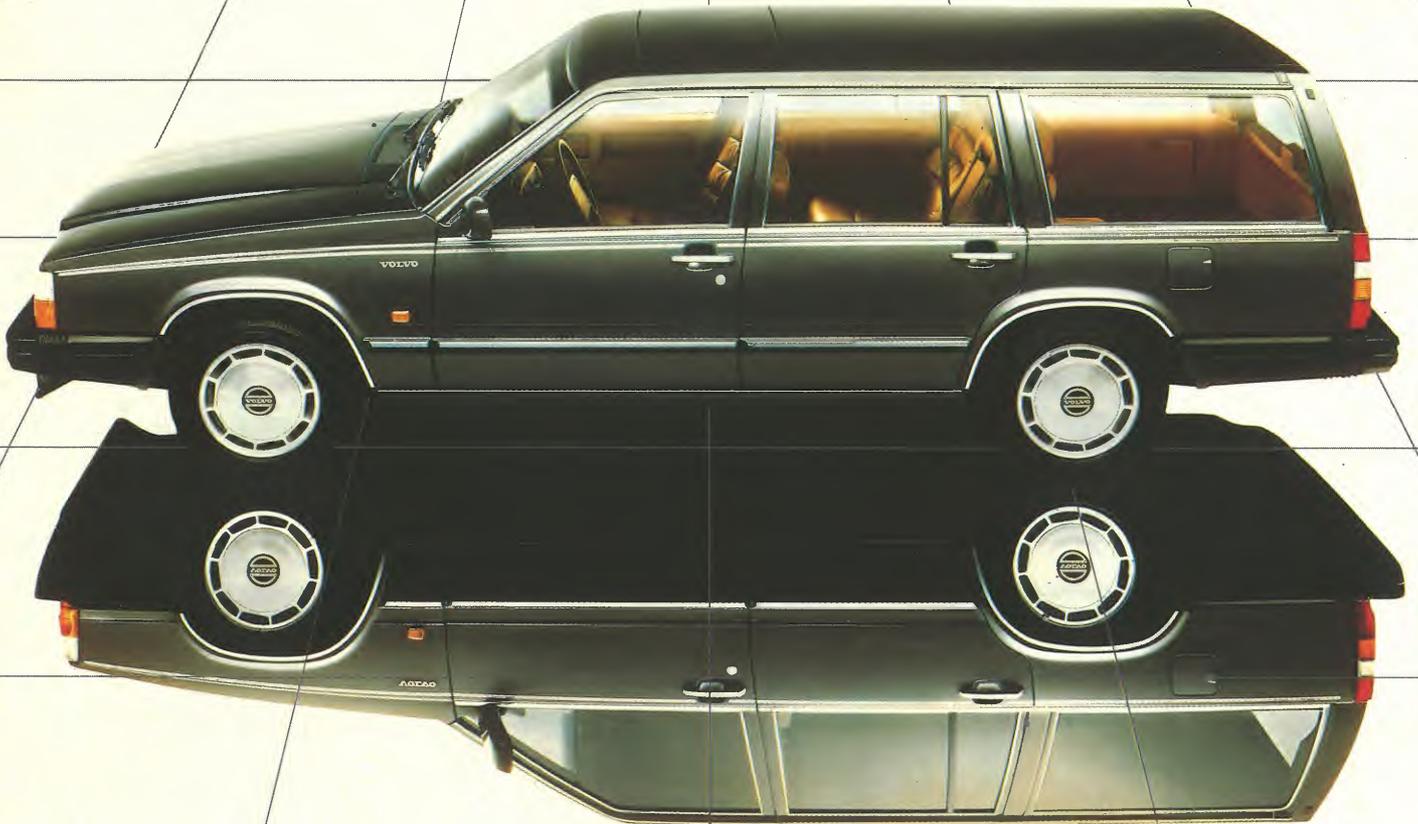
We need to avoid situations where large percentages of assistance may go to expatriate delegates rather than the infrastructure and programmes of the developing Society.

And we need to document the importance of Red Cross development, the positive effects of assisting the development of active Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, reaching, through the uniqueness of our movement, those very 'grass-roots' other agencies often cannot reach.

We hope the Henry Dunant Institute can now help to build up the capacity of the world's greatest humanitarian movement to respond to these questions, intelligently at last.

JAN EGELAND

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