

WHAT IS THE RED CROSS?

By ED. EGLE

Never before has a war involved such enormous areas and so many nations. Hence never before have such vast numbers of people benefited from the only organization that still works with all the belligerents to bring aid to the victims of war—the Red Cross. Yet while millions of people use its inestimable services, there are not many who know anything about it. We have asked the Delegate of the International Red Cross for China to explain to our readers what the Red Cross is and how it works. He has written this account with great restraint and impartiality, without mentioning any specific nations.

Mr. Ed. Egle is a native of Switzerland and came out to China thirty-three years ago. Up to the outbreak of the Greater East Asia War he was the Shanghai manager of the oldest Swiss firm in the East. Through his wide business associations, he has made many friends in Japan and all over East Asia. After December 8, 1941, he offered his services to the International Red Cross Committee in a voluntary capacity and was appointed Delegate for China. He intends to resume his business activities when the war is over.—K.M.

HENRI DUNANT AT SOLFERINO

IT is a long road from the battle cry of Solferino on June 24, 1859, when 150,000 men of the Austrian armies flung themselves against Napoleon III's advancing might of 200,000 fighters and when the plains and hills around Solferino were transformed within twenty-four hours into a quagmire of blood, with 40,000 wounded left to their terrible fate. Into this field of terror and desolation stepped Henri Dunant, then a young man thirty-one years old, descendant of a well-known Geneva family, who, since his youth, had followed in the footsteps of his parents in strict and practical application of Christian love and charity.

During those days Henri Dunant knew no fatigue in bringing aid to the wounded of Solferino; yet, with the assistance of only a small number of doctors and nurses and in view of the almost complete absence of medicaments and hospital accommodation, he could do very little indeed. Appalled by the terror, suffering, and misery he had witnessed, Henri Dunant returned to Geneva with the firm determination to devote his life and all his means to the creation of an organization which would in the future regulate the conduct of war, especially with regard to rendering the last honors

to the dead on the battlefields, providing care for the wounded by neutralizing military hospitals, ambulances and their staffs, assuring humanitarian treatment to prisoners of war, and giving protection to noncombatants.

FIRST CONVENTION AND TEST

In spite of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, Henri Dunant succeeded by persistent efforts in enlisting the co-operation of other prominent citizens of Geneva; and so energetically was the pioneer work of this group pursued that a first convention could be held at Geneva as early as 1864, attended by representatives of many governments. The resolutions adopted at this convention referred mainly to the neutralization of the wounded and the protection of the medical and nursing staffs. Other governments were subsequently invited to adhere to the rules laid down by the Convention, and within a few years fifty-five sovereign states had deposited their ratification with the Committee at Geneva.

The regulations thus laid down received their first real test during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, and it must be recorded to the credit of both belligerent powers that they scrupulously observed the provisions of the Conven-

tion to which they were signatories. After this positive demonstration of the practical application of the ideals fostered by Henri Dunant and his supporters, all civilized nations in every part of the world rallied to the call. National Red Cross Societies were founded in all countries, and a Central Organization was created at Geneva. It would take volumes to render an account of the work achieved since that time both by the National Red Cross Societies and the Central Organization. Many and lengthy conferences had to be held to amplify existing regulations and rectify errors and omissions. The work of the Committee at Geneva was especially tedious when it was necessary to obtain the ratification of more than fifty different governments to every amendment or new regulation before it could be made effective.

Henri Dunant died in Geneva on October 30, 1910, having sacrificed his health and business career for the realization of his ideal. The memory of this noble man will live forever through the great work which he created.

SWISS ORGANIZATION OF MERCY

The Red Cross organization of the world today consists of :

(a) National Red Cross Societies, such as the German Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, American Red Cross, etc.

(b) The League of National Red Cross Societies with a Secretariat at Geneva.

(c) The International Red Cross Committee of Geneva.

The International Red Cross Committee is a kind of executive organ, whose activity comes to the front especially in time of war. The name "International Red Cross Committee" is somewhat misleading as it is purely a Swiss society, the Committee and all Delegates being of Swiss nationality: only the scope of the Committee's work is international. The Committee and its Delegates are pledged to strict neutrality and are responsible in this respect directly to the Swiss Federal Council. About eighty per

cent of the funds to meet administrative expenses are raised by voluntary subscriptions in Switzerland; the remaining twenty per cent are provided by National Red Cross Societies or by income from endowments. The Swiss Federal Government for the year 1942 made a special grant of three million Swiss francs to enable the Committee to carry on in the face of ever-increasing expenses caused by the expansion of the world war and the many new tasks placed on its shoulders; but even so the worries of the Director of Finances of the International Red Cross Committee were by no means at an end.

This may be better realized when it is known that the Head Office at Geneva operates at present with a staff of 7,300 assistants, maintaining in addition 54 offices abroad with 83 Swiss Delegates and approximately 8,000 helpers, mostly of Swiss nationality. It is a tradition with the Delegates that they give their services entirely free of charge, and most of the helpers lend their assistance in a voluntary capacity.

COUNTLESS INDEX CARDS

In order to convey to the reader an idea of the enormous volume of work handled by the International Red Cross Committee, some figures may prove of interest. At the Head Office in Geneva an index card is kept for every prisoner of war or civilian internee, on which are noted his name, nationality, age, place of detention, names and addresses of his relatives, and all other pertinent references such as sickness, hospitalization, death, etc. Although the number of these index cards has passed the six-million mark, it takes less than ten minutes to trace the record of any prisoner.

Needless to say, these index cards can only be established and kept up-to-date if the necessary information is supplied by the belligerent powers concerned who hold the prisoners. Every signatory power is under obligation to report to Geneva the names of prisoners immediately after their capture. Unfortunately, it

must be said that during the present war some of the belligerent powers have been very slow to co-operate. In some instances the names of prisoners have been reported a year or even later after their capture, and even today the Head Office lacks the names of tens of thousands of prisoners of war who were captured more than a year ago.

During 1942, over 230,000 telegraphic messages passed through the Head Office at Geneva, many of them containing more than 1,000 words (one message ran to 32,000 words!). During the same year, over three million letters were transmitted via Geneva to prisoners of war and civilian internees, while the number of civilian twenty-five-word messages which passed through the Head Office exceeded eight million.

TRAINLOADS OF PARCELS AND FOOD

Over two million comfort parcels were transmitted to prisoners of war. In order to handle this service, large "deposits" had to be established at Cossonay (near Geneva) and at Basel, and numerous long extra trains are operated through Switzerland in both directions. As connections between the continent of Europe and other continents could only be maintained via Genoa and Lisbon, a shuttle service has been established between these two ports; and although the International Red Cross Committee operates no less than fourteen steamers under its ensign on this service, as much as 15,000 tons of comfort parcels and relief goods accumulated at certain periods in Lisbon.

The International Red Cross Committee also undertakes relief work for the civilian population in areas devastated by the war, either with the co-operation of the respective National Red Cross Societies or independently if, for certain reasons, the National Society in question cannot function. The most difficult problem which the International Red Cross Committee was called upon to tackle was the situation in Greece and her neighboring islands, where thousands of inhabitants were literally doomed to starvation. The International Red Cross

Committee at present supplies those districts with 15,000 tons of foodstuffs every month in vessels placed free of charge at the service of the International Red Cross Committee by the Red Cross Society of Sweden.

THE DELEGATES

The Delegates of the International Red Cross Committee are appointed by the Head Office at Geneva and must have the approval of the belligerent governments in whose territory they are called upon to function. The Delegates have the special duty of looking after the welfare of the prisoners of war and civilian internees. To this effect they must visit the camps and submit reports to the Head Office at Geneva.

The facilities granted to the Delegates of the International Red Cross Committee for the execution of their mandate vary considerably in different countries. Many belligerent powers allow the Delegates free entry to any camp and at any time, free intercourse with internees, free access to hospitals, etc., supplying full records as to the names of internees, transfers, and deaths. Other belligerent powers, however, impose rather severe restrictions in this respect.

WORK IN THE EAST

The civilian message service has proved a boon to a great many residents in China who have no other means of communicating with their relatives and friends in Europe, America, Africa, and British and American possessions. The fact that during the first ten months after the establishment of the Shanghai office more than 100,000 messages passed over its counters attests to the popularity of this service.

The application of the stipulations of the Convention of 1929 relative to the treatment of prisoners of war proved a rather thorny problem and exposed the Delegates of the International Red Cross Committee to much unfavorable criticism from all directions. When the regulations were framed, insufficient consideration had been given to the difference in

the way of living between European and Asiatic people. In the end, however, it was possible to compromise on these problems thanks to the understanding and liberal attitude adopted by the powers concerned, difficulties caused by military exigencies or other reasons being amply compensated for by privileges in excess of the obligations imposed by the Geneva Convention being granted to prisoners of war and internees by the detaining power.

TASKS FOR A POSTWAR CONVENTION

The rules and regulations at present in force concerning the humanitarian principles to be observed by the belligerent parties in the conduct of the war are based mainly on what is known as the "Geneva Convention of July 27, 1929." These rules were drawn up after many years of painstaking effort and the most exhaustive investigations. The protocol incorporates the principal stipulations of all previous conventions, modified and amplified as motivated by the experience gained over a period of more than sixty years, especially in the practical tests of the Great War of 1914/18. Nevertheless, it is evident that these existing rules will again require substantial additions and corrections when the Convention is rewritten after this war. Some points which appear to deserve particular attention are:

(a) A clearer definition of objects of war which may be attacked and destroyed. In the present war, no place appears to offer safety to the civilian population, a position in the front line of battle being about as safe as a civilian's residence. It is a sad and well-known fact that not even schools, hospitals, churches, etc., are immune from attacks against which the victims have no means of defense whatsoever.

(b) An elaborate code regarding aerial warfare.

(c) The stipulations of the Geneva Convention of 1929 provide that, if prisoners of war are transferred on land from one place to another, the transfer must be effected over territory which is

not affected by operations of war, in order that the prisoners of war may not be exposed to danger. Unfortunately, there are no identical provisions regarding the transfer of prisoners of war by sea, and it has happened on several occasions during this war that ships carrying prisoners of war have been attacked and sunk by naval forces of the prisoners' own nationality.

(d) Until a few years ago it was a principle conceded by all civilized nations that operations of war should be confined to armed forces in uniform, and that the noncombatant civilian population should not be subject to attacks by armed forces. Our civilization has now produced new implements and horrors of warfare which have brushed aside formerly respected principles of humanitarian warfare. Not only are helpless men, women, and children being killed by deliberate armed attacks, but attempts have been and are still being made to force the enemy into submission through starving his civilian population.

(e) Some clear regulations appear to be necessary regarding the internment of noncombatant men, women, and children, as well as the confiscation of their private property by the belligerents. All these measures run contrary to the idea that wars should be conducted between uniformed armed forces only. At present, all steps of this kind taken by the belligerents appear to be based on the principle of retaliation and reciprocity, a state of affairs that can hardly be called satisfactory.

UNWAVERING BEACON OF MERCY

The ideal of service to humanity has always been and must forever be the leitmotiv of the International Red Cross Committee and its staff. There can be no discrimination between races, nations, and religions, since all human beings are children of the same Supreme Creator. Wherever heroes sacrifice their lives in battle for the glory of their respective countries, they leave behind mourning mothers, fathers, wives, relatives, and friends, whose heartstrings all respond to

the same emotion of sorrow, and all of whom, without distinction, are entitled to whatever modest comfort the International Red Cross Committee can provide to ease their anxiety and suffering. Even in cases where effective assistance cannot be given, kind words and practical advice can go a long way. Whatever the circumstances may be, every International Red Cross Committee worker must strive to see that any visitor leaving its office is at least a little happier than when he or she entered its doors.

The International Red Cross Committee, keeping strictly to the basis of complete neutrality, must in time of war be the medium which bridges the gaps between the belligerent countries, to maintain the ties between families and friends living in different parts of the world. It must exemplify by its own conduct the spirit of universal tolerance and love, which alone can be the true foundation for the casting out of feelings of hatred and the restoring of sincere and lasting peace.

The following excerpts are taken from the book "Henri Dunant" by Fernand Gigon, published in 1942 by the Rascher Publishing Co. in Zürich and Leipzig. It is the life story of the creator of the Red Cross. Henri Dunant, the son of a wealthy merchant family of Geneva, went to northern Italy for quite other than charitable purposes: he wished to obtain certain commercial concessions in French North Africa from Napoleon III. By chance, his search for the Emperor took him to the battlefield of Solferino, where 40,000 wounded French and Austrians were lying in anguish.

SOLFERINO, 1859

When the sun rose on Saturday morning over Solferino, it shone upon a scene of horror: ruined villages, destroyed harvests, piles of corpses, dying, wounded, mutilated, and thirst-crazed men.

A few ambulances were working; but their number was too small in the face of the magnitude of such misery. They were carrying wounded into a tent erected under a tree. The army surgeons worked ceaselessly, amputating, cutting, and sewing. Hundreds, thousands were hopelessly waiting for help. It was such a vast task that every effort seemed useless.

But there was one man there who did not despair—Henri Dunant. Actually he had no business to be on the battlefield. It was surprising enough that he had not been arrested on the suspicion of being a spy. He took up the fight against suffering and misery. But he had to summon up all his courage, for he was shaken by revulsion and disgust. Contrary to all common sense, he took it upon himself to go from man to man. He allowed no doubts to rise in himself. Here were men who were suffering, who were perishing; he had to help them.

With the aid of a few sturdy men, Dunant organized a voluntary service. As soon as he had assembled one group, he sent it out and formed a new one. Everywhere he was the driving force, encouraging, strengthening with words of faith, infecting all with his energy. Noon went by without his finding the time to eat even a piece of bread. And yet he worked more easily. He no longer felt revulsion when he had to look at terrible mutilations. He acted with dreamlike confidence, almost in a trance.

This man in white was playing the role of a general. No one asked him by what authority he gave his orders. The devout ardor of his personality was transferred to the will of the others. He happened to hear that a few Englishmen, inquisitive tourists, had been arrested. Dunant hurried to them at once. They were released, and Dunant immediately enrolled them as helpers. He could use everyone.

Beginning in the early morning as almost the only man trying to alleviate the suffering of 40,000 wounded, Henri Dunant had more than 300 voluntary helpers by the same evening.

After having completed his work at Solferino, there was only one way in which he could free himself of the burden of his experiences: the writing down of all he had seen and felt. He returned to Geneva, left his papers about the concession in North Africa to collect dust in a drawer, abstained from all social contacts and entertainment, and began to write the book which was to become the book of his life, *Un Souvenir de Solferino*, in which he outlined the main problem:

"Should it not be possible in times of peace and quiet to found societies of aid whose purpose it would be to grant every possible care in war time to the wounded, and this, moreover, by means of volunteers who, filled with zeal and devotion, possess the necessary qualities for work of this kind?"