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## REPATRIATION OF GREEK CHILDREN

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to communicate to the Members of the General Assembly the third general report of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 382 C (V) of 1 December 1950.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraph</u>
Part I: Chronological account	1 - 71
Introductory	1 - 5
I. Yugoslavia	6 - 57
II. Bulgaria	58 - 59
III. Hungary	60
IV. Romania	61 - 66
V. Czechoslovakia	67
VI. Albania and Poland	68

## Part II: General

(The memorandum to the Secretary-General dated 3 August 1951 has already been reproduced and distributed to the Members of the General Assembly as document A/1848.)

Annex: Letter dated 15 February 1951 from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies to the central committees of the national Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Red Sun) societies.

PART I - CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

INTRODUCTORY

1. On 1 December 1950 upon the conclusion of its debate on the repatriation of displaced Greek children, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a new resolution <sup>(1)</sup> the text of which is as follows:

"The General Assembly

"Noting with grave concern the reports of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies and of the Secretary-General, and particularly the statement that 'not a single Greek child has yet been returned to his native land and, except for Yugoslavia, no country harbouring Greek children has taken definite action to comply with the resolutions unanimously adopted in two successive years by the General Assembly',

"Recognizing that every possible effort should be made to restore the children to their homes, in a humanitarian spirit detached from political or ideological considerations,

"Expressing its full appreciation of the efforts made by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies and by the Secretary-General to implement General Assembly resolutions 193 C (III) and 288 B (IV),

"1. Requests the Secretary-General and the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies to continue their efforts in accordance with the aforementioned resolutions;

"2. Urges all States harbouring the Greek children to make all the necessary arrangements, in co-operation with the Secretary-General and the international Red Cross organizations, for the early return of the Greek children to their parents and, whenever necessary, to allow the international Red Cross organizations free access to their territories for this purpose;

"3. Establishes a Standing Committee, to be composed of the representatives of Peru, the Philippines and Sweden, to act in consultation with the Secretary-General, and to consult with the representatives of the States concerned, with a view to the early repatriation of the children;

"4. Requests the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies to co-operate with the Standing Committee;

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(1) Resolution 382 C (V)

"5. Requests the Secretary-General to report from time to time to Member States on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution, and requests the international Red Cross organizations and the Secretary-General to submit reports to the General Assembly at its sixth session."

2. The International Committee and the League had been informed on 10 November of the general tenor of the terms of the draft resolution which was to be submitted to the General Assembly. At that time, our two organizations did not know exactly what the sponsors of the draft resolution intended the functions of the proposed Standing Committee to be. The International Committee and the League duly informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations by cable that, while realizing that the object in establishing the new body appeared to be largely to give effect to the conclusions of their general report of 18 September 1950 <sup>(2)</sup>, yet, in view of their special position and in the interests of their work, they considered it essential that they should consult with the Committee, as soon as it was established, with a view to reaching agreement on the division of their respective functions and responsibilities in order to avoid any confusion or overlapping.

3. By letter dated 21 November, the International Committee and the League were informed that the sponsors of the draft resolution had, indeed, proposed the establishment of the Standing Committee in order to provide our two organizations with the assistance requested by them in their last report. The intention was that the Committee would be essentially an advisory body at the disposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, whose efforts it was to assist. We would, of course, be kept regularly informed of its activities and plans, and hence there was no reason to fear the confusion or overlapping we were anxious to avoid.

4. On 6 December 1950 the Secretary-General of the United Nations communicated the text of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly to the Committee and the League for their information.

5. On 12 and 16 January 1951, the Committee and the League informed the Secretary-General that they were prepared to continue to co-operate with a view to contributing to the solution of the problem of the displaced Greek children.

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## I. YUGOSLAVIA

6. It may be recalled that, in its letter of 23 June 1950, the Yugoslav Red Cross, besides transmitting a list of 63 Greek children identified by it in Yugoslavia, informed us of the conditions which it felt ought to be fulfilled before proceeding with their repatriation (see our report of 18 September 1950, page 13).

7. On 6 October, the Greek Red Cross, to which the list had been transmitted, forwarded to us the civil status documents asked for in respect of these 63 children, and in a telegram of 10 October informed us that, reversing its earlier decision, it accepted all the conditions stipulated by the Yugoslav Red Cross, which we immediately notified accordingly.

8. After the Yugoslav Red Cross had, by telegram of 25 October, expressed the wish to repatriate the first party promptly, we acted upon its request and sent a representative to Athens who was able, early in November, in agreement with the Greek Red Cross, to make the necessary arrangement for the reception of the children and to make practical arrangements, in accordance with his instructions, for supervising the return of the children to their families.

9. It may be mentioned at this point that on 8 November the Yugoslav Red Cross sent us a second list of Greek children identified by it in Yugoslavia. The list contained 174 names, 63 of which were already known to us.

10. We immediately transmitted the list to the Greek Red Cross to enable it to assemble the requisite civil status documents forthwith.

11. On 20 November 1950, the Yugoslav Red Cross informed us that an unspecified number of Greek children identified by it could be repatriated on Saturday 25 November at Termalna Banja, a place in Yugoslavia near the Greek frontier to which our representative and the Greek members of the repatriation committee would have access.

12. The practical arrangements having been completed both on the Greek and on the Yugoslav side, a first party of 21 children from Yugoslavia was thus able to return to Greece on the morning of 25 November.

13. A formal report concerning this operation was drawn up, bearing witness to the fact that on 25 November the members of the repatriation commission, consisting of the representative of the Committee and of the League, representatives of the Yugoslav and Greek Red Cross Societies, and a Greek and a Yugoslav doctor, had effected the return and reception of 21 Greek children repatriated from Yugoslavia.

14. A list of the children, and also 21 individual certificates of repatriation prepared for each child after verification of identity and medical inspection, were annexed to this formal report.

15. On the same day, the children were taken to Salonika to be housed temporarily in a hostel prepared by the Greek Red Cross where, still under our representative's supervision, they awaited the arrival of their families.

16. On 29 November the 21 repatriated children, who had in the meantime undergone further medical examination, were handed over to their parents in the presence of our representative. Each parent made a written statement declaring that his child had been returned and these 21 statements were authenticated by a competent official.

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17. On 7 November, we were informed that, as a consequence of an agreement between the Greek and Yugoslav delegations to the United Nations General Assembly, the Swedish Red Cross was to be asked to set up a small commission to help the Yugoslav Red Cross in its task of identifying the Greek children in Yugoslavia with a view to their early repatriation.

18. On 8 November we informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations by telegram that we were, of course, in agreement with this scheme and that we welcomed any proposal likely to hasten the settlement, even the partial settlement, of the problem of the displaced Greek children.

19. A few days later we received the text of the Secretary-General's statement on this subject, which read as follows:

"The Greek Government has on numerous occasions urged that the exact number of Greek children eligible, under the General Assembly resolutions, for repatriation to Greece from the various countries concerned should be determined on the spot with the assistance of the International Red Cross or other impartial authority. The Secretary-General has held a number of consultations on this matter and the Swedish Red Cross has now been invited by the Greek and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies to lend its assistance. Acting on this invitation, the Swedish Red Cross has agreed to assist the Yugoslav Red Cross in its task of identifying the Greek children in Yugoslavia and of returning them to their parents, and it proposes to send representatives to Belgrade for this purpose at an early date. This arrangement has been made in full agreement with the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross and is welcomed by the Greek and Yugoslav Governments."

20. The Swedish Red Cross set up its mission at once and a working team was quickly sent out as soon as the necessary arrangements had been made with the Yugoslav authorities and the Yugoslav Red Cross and agreement had been reached with them concerning the conditions on which any children thereafter located in Yugoslavia were eligible for repatriation<sup>3)</sup>.

21. As early as 28 January 1951, we received a list from Belgrade giving the names of 173 Greek children who were anxious to return to Greece and whose repatriation had been requested by their parents, and those of 187 children who also wished to return to Greece but who did not seem to have been included in the lists transmitted by us to all the host countries. Nine similar lists, with a total of 722 names, have been communicated to us so far by the Swedish mission. All these have been transmitted by our services to the Greek Red Cross to enable it to assemble the civil status documents and certificates necessary for the repatriation of the children identified.

22. On 13 February 1951, we were able to transmit to the Yugoslav Red Cross documents which had reached us from Greece concerning 70 Greek children living in Yugoslavia. On 28 February, the Yugoslav Red Cross told us that a further party of children for repatriation would leave Belgrade about 13 March, and on 6 March it informed us that repatriation would take place on 14 March at Termalna Banja. Four days later, the Yugoslav Red Cross, in reply to our enquiry, informed us that this second party would consist of 53 children.

23. The representative of the Committee and the League arrived at Athens on 11 March, and on 14 March supervised the repatriation operations which proceeded along the same lines as on 25 November 1950 (see paragraphs 11 - 16 above). Altogether 54 children returned to Greece on this occasion.

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3) This special mission of the Swedish Red Cross, together with the Yugoslav Red Cross, has been working hard for almost a year. So far it has been concerned chiefly with enquiring into the case of every child living in a Yugoslav Red Cross Home. Each one of these Greek children has been interrogated, although the process was often long and difficult owing to the children's age. The principal task remaining is to deal with those children who are living in places other than these homes.

24. On 18 and 19 March the repatriated children were returned to their families at Salonika, still under the supervision of our representative. Thirty of them were returned to their fathers, twenty-one to their mothers, two to uncles and one to a brother. One of these last three was returned to his uncle because his parents had shortly before left Greece for Canada, as officially noted in the formal report drawn up. In the case of the second child, the mother had died and the father was no longer in complete possession of his mental faculties. The uncle formally gave his undertaking to look after the child. In the case of the third child, the father was paralyzed and the mother seriously ill, so that, according to evidence produced by the brother, they had been unable to travel to meet the child.

25. Our representative was informed at the time of this second repatriation that a third convoy of Green children would probably leave Belgrade at the end of April or early in May.

26. On 17 April, we sent the Yugoslav Red Cross civil status documents in respect of eighty-two Greek children who had been located in Yugoslavia by the Yugoslav Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross mission.

27. On 4 May, we sent similar documents relating to 123 Greek children to be repatriated. By telegram of 9 May, the Yugoslav Red Cross informed us that there would probably be a further repatriation on 19 May.

28. Finally, on 24 May a third convoy of 214 Greek children left Yugoslavia and returned to Greece, in the presence and under the supervision of the representative of the Committee and the League. On this occasion, the Joint Repatriation Committee had fulfilled the usual formalities on 21 and 22 May at Arandjelovac, a place in Yugoslav territory some 70 kilometres south of Belgrade, where the children had been assembled by the Yugoslav Red Cross.

29. As in the past, the children were returned to their families at Salonika, under our representative's supervision. Of these children, 117 were returned to their mothers, 84 to their fathers and 13 to close relatives acting as guardians or duly authorised by a father or mother who had been prevented from travelling to Salonika. In the case of 143 children, both parents were in Greece; 38 had one parent in Greece and the other in a country in eastern Europe other than Yugoslavia; 6 had one parent in Greece and the other in Yugoslavia; 10, one parent in Greece and the other overseas;

9, one parent in Greece, the whereabouts of the other being unknown; 8 had returned from Yugoslavia with their mothers; the parents of one child were dead and the whereabouts of those of another were unknown.

30. In the course of the repatriation, the Yugoslav Red Cross told our representative that it would organize a further party of about 300 children as soon as it received the civil status documents which were still missing.

31. Accordingly, altogether 289 Greek children have so far been repatriated from Yugoslavia.

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32. These first repatriations and the work done in Yugoslavia by the special mission of the Swedish Red Cross have given rise to some misunderstandings and attacks - often sharp attacks - against our two institutions, and in some cases an echo of these criticisms reached the General Assembly of the United Nations.

33. We shall not recapitulate these misunderstandings and attacks. This and the two earlier reports are sufficient to dispel misunderstanding and to meet attacks. We would, however, for the sake of clarity, mention at this point that we thought it advisable at the time to prepare, chiefly for circulation to all the national societies of the Red Cross, a short account of the efforts made by our two institutions over the last two years to find, in agreement with all the parties concerned, an equitable solution to the problem of the repatriation of the displaced Greek children. This document, which was published on 15 February 1951, was communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his information and is annexed to this report.

34. As will be seen, that document first recapitulates in broad outline the further proposals and suggestions made by us to the harbouring countries, with a view to studying the problem as a whole with them and subsequently



drawing up, with their active assistance, lists of Greek children who could be repatriated. We also said in that circular that, faithful to the principles by which the work of the Red Cross is guided, we were ready - in this respect going beyond the limits of our own terms of reference - to take steps to facilitate the return to their families of all Greek children at present separated from them, wherever the actual place of residence of those children or of their parents might be, provided, of course, that all the parties concerned agreed to give us the necessary facilities for checking and supervision.

35. We should like at this point to refer to one part of our work which was not mentioned in our earlier report, because, strictly speaking, it exceeds the scope of the General Assembly resolutions.

36. On 7 June 1950, the Greek Children's Aid Committee (EVOP) at Budapest forwarded to us the text of a letter which it had that day addressed to the Yugoslav Red Cross and in which it requested that a number of Greek children living in Yugoslavia should be returned to their parents, then living in Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

37. The Greek Children's Aid Committee asked us to support its initiative.

38. We replied that we were perfectly ready to act, in the particular case in question, on the lines adopted by us for dealing with requests from parents living in Greece. We therefore suggested that the Red Cross Societies of the countries in which the parents of the Greek children now in Yugoslavia were living should communicate to us the original requests made by those parents for their children's return. On the basis of those documents, we would draw up lists which we would send to the Yugoslav Red Cross.

39. We added that if it were necessary and if it would help in the speedy return of those children to their families, we were ready to send one of our representatives to verify on the spot the applications submitted in this way through us to the Yugoslav Red Cross.

40. On 25 July 1950, the Yugoslav Red Cross told us that it had received this letter, of which we already had a copy, from the Greek Children's Aid Committee together with a list of the names of 149 Greek children claimed. It was willing to allow the return of those children to their parents, on the same conditions as those stipulated in the case of the repatriation of Greek children in Yugoslavia claimed by their parents in Greece.

41. On 4 November, when the Greek Children's Aid Committee had still not replied to our offer, the Yugoslav Red Cross, referring to its letter of 25 July 1950, sent us a telegram asking us to send it as promptly as possible the documents it had requested as a prior condition for the return of these 149 children to their parents.

42. By letter dated 14 November 1950 we informed the Yugoslav Red Cross of the offer we had made to the Greek Committee at Budapest, and also pointed out that if it insisted on stipulating the same conditions for the return of these children as in the case of the repatriation of the children claimed in Greece, it would be necessary for the Red Cross Societies of the various harbouring countries to send it, through us, a number of documents the most important of which could be obtained only in Greece itself -- a condition which was bound to raise a fresh practical problem.

43. On the same date we informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations of our correspondence on this novel aspect of the question of the displaced Greek children.

44. At the end of December we received from the Czechoslovak Red Cross the original of a letter dated 28 December 1950 addressed to the Yugoslav Red Cross in which it drew attention to the case of the Greek children resident in Yugoslavia, but having their relatives in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak Red Cross enclosed with this letter a first list containing the names of 257 Greek children in this category, and requested the Yugoslav Red Cross to arrange for the conveyance of these children as far as the Hungarian-Yugoslav frontier, at which point it proposed to **take** charge of them.

45. The list included the children's first names and surnames, the dates of birth of 51 of them and, in every case, their place of birth and the first name of the applicant (relationship not being stated). The Czechoslovak Red

Cross added that it was authorized to state that it could also take over children resident in Yugoslavia whose relatives were in Eastern European countries other than Czechoslovakia.

46. We transmitted this letter to the addressee.

47. On 10 February 1951 the Yugoslav Red Cross sent us the original of a letter in similar terms, also dated 28 December 1950, addressed to the International Committee, which had by mistake been sent to it by the Czechoslovak Red Cross. On the same date the Bulgarian Red Cross transmitted to us a memorandum from a group of relatives living in Bulgaria which contained the names of fifteen Greek children living in Yugoslavia who were claimed by them.

48. On 5 April we sent this list and -- for the second time -- the list sent to us by the Czechoslovak Red Cross with its letter of 28 December 1950, to the Yugoslav Red Cross, pointing out that, if it wished to have our assistance in studying the problem of these requests for the return of children to their families, our services were at its disposal.

49. On 18 June the Czechoslovak Red Cross communicated to us by letter 104 applications submitted to it by Greek nationals who were living in Czechoslovakia and who were claiming their children then in Yugoslavia (forty-five of these 104 names had also been included in the list of 28 December).

50. We then received from the Romanian Red Cross a list, dated 20 June, of thirty-one children also in Yugoslavia whose relatives wished them to rejoin their families in Romania.

51. Once again, by letter of 20 July, we transmitted these various applications to the Yugoslav Red Cross in the form of a list, and asked the Society to inform us exactly what conditions it required to be fulfilled before returning to their families any of these children identified in Yugoslavia. We referred to our letter of 14 November (see above, paragraph 42) emphasizing our desire for an early reunion of the Greek families still separated, irrespective of the place of residence of the relatives and children, and again offering the assistance of our two organizations in studies concerning a suitable procedure and ways and means of putting it into effect. We further informed the Yugoslav

Red Cross that according to checks made by our specialists, the repatriation of twenty-eight of the children claimed through the Czechoslovak Red Cross had previously been applied for by families in Greece. A list of these twenty-eight children was attached to our communication.

52. On 19 and 20 July we replied to the Romanian and Czechoslovak Red Cross Societies and communicated to them the essential points of our letter to the Yugoslav Red Cross.

53. On 3 September 1951 we transmitted to the Yugoslav Red Cross four new lists of a similar nature, based on applications which had reached us from relatives resident in Poland and from the Czechoslovak and Bulgarian Red Cross Societies. These lists contained in all the names of forty children and fifteen adults.

54. On 12 September 1951 the Hungarian Red Cross transmitted to us thirty-eight applications from Greek families at present in Hungary asking for the return of their children, now in Yugoslavia. We transmitted the list of children claimed, and photostat copies of the original applications, to the Yugoslav Red Cross by letter dated 2 October 1951.

55. To date no Greek children resident in Yugoslavia have yet been returned to their families in other countries of Eastern Europe.

56. Furthermore, it is relevant to note that in September 1950 the Yugoslav Red Cross sent us seven lists comprising the names of 2,512 Greek children, presumed to be at present in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Poland, who were being claimed by their families in Yugoslavia. As requested by the Yugoslav Red Cross, we forwarded these lists to the Red Cross Societies in the harbouring countries.

57. On 17 September 1951 the Yugoslav Red Cross enquired what action had been taken by the countries in which these 2,512 children are now resident on the applications submitted by their families. We replied on 5 October 1951 that the Red Cross Societies of these countries had not advised us of their intentions.

## II. BULGARIA

58. On 9 March 1951 we again communicated with the Bulgarian Red Cross, proposing that conversations should be arranged at an early date with a view to studying the question of the repatriation of the displaced Greek children from all angles. We referred to the circumstances in which and the reasons for which the General Assembly of the United Nations had asked for the co-operation of our two organizations, and again pointed out that the practical results achieved to date were very fragmentary and covered only a very small number of children. We added that in conformity with their guiding principles our two organizations would be prepared to lend their services to facilitate the return of all Greek children separated from their families, whatever the present place of residence of the children or their families.

59. We pointed out that much of the delay which had occurred in overcoming the problem of the Greek children was due to the fact that we had not yet been able to study it jointly in all its aspects. To remedy this state of affairs, we therefore proposed that conversations should be held at the earliest possible date between the Bulgarian Red Cross and our two organizations, and for this purpose suggested that representatives of the Committee and the League might be sent to Sofia, or that representatives of the Bulgarian Red Cross might come to Geneva, or even that more general conversations might be held in a place to be agreed upon, when representatives of the national societies of a number of harbouring countries might exchange views with our representatives. We asked whether any of these methods met with the approval of the Bulgarian Red Cross or whether it had any other solution in mind. We informed the Bulgarian Red Cross that we were sending similar letters by the same post to the Red Cross Societies of Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia, and that the final position of our two organizations would be defined in accordance with the replies received from the Bulgarian Red Cross and these other three Societies. The Bulgarian Red Cross has not so far replied to this letter.

### III. HUNGARY

60. As stated in Section II, on 9 March 1951 we also sent the Hungarian Red Cross a letter identical with that sent to the Bulgarian Red Cross. To date there has been no reply from the Hungarian Red Cross.

### IV. ROMANIA

61. The Romanian Red Cross, to which a similar letter was sent on the same date, replied on 28 May.

62. The Romanian Red Cross stated that since we had proposed taking as basis for discussion in the proposed conversations the lists communicated since 1949 to the harbouring countries, and since these lists were not only false but prepared in bad faith (referring in this connexion to the Partial study of these lists made by the Greek Children's Aid Committee at Budapest (EVOP), the results of which were published in a brochure entitled "The Truth about the Requests for Repatriation Submitted by the International Committee of the Red Cross"), therefore the proposed conversations could take place only if the basis for discussion offered the fullest guarantee of the correctness of the position stated and of the accuracy of the data.

63. On 15 June we cabled to the Romanian Red Cross that we were in full agreement with the proposal it had made in the final part of its reply, and that we should be glad to meet its representatives either at Geneva or at Bucharest.

64. On 20 June we confirmed this telegram by letter, stating once again that it had never been our intention to proceed solely on the basis of the lists of children claimed transmitted to the harbouring countries. On the contrary, it was precisely in order to obtain all the necessary information and ensure all the essential guarantees that we had on repeated occasions proposed holding informal conversations. We had always considered that our task could not be effectively discharged unless all the parties interested in the problem of the displaced Greek children -- both Red Cross Societies and official authorities -- lent us their active co-operation, and provided us with all the information in their possession likely to be of use in the solution of this problem.

65. We concluded by saying that we were at all times ready to study, in conversations with the Romanian Red Cross, a practical solution on the lines indicated by it in its letter of the 28 May. We were anxious that such conversations, whatever form they took, should be held at an early date.

66. The Romanian Red Cross has not so far replied to this letter.

#### V. CZECHOSLOVAKIA

67. We shall not in this context revert to the case of the 138 Greek children whose presence in Czechoslovakia was established more than two years ago, but who have not yet been repatriated. The latest developments of interest are mentioned in the second part of this report (see A/1848, page 8 et seq). A letter, identical in terms with that sent to the Bulgarian, Hungarian and Romanian Red Cross Societies, was sent to the Czechoslovak Red Cross; no reply has been received.

#### VI. ALBANIA AND POLAND

68. In view of their earlier statements, reproduced on our previous reports, we have made no new approaches to the Red Cross Societies of these two countries.

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69. In conclusion we would mention that we have so far received from Greece, through the Greek Red Cross, 12,172 applications for the repatriation of children at present separated from their families.

70. Our two organizations have recently published the sixth volume of the general list of Greek children for whom applications have been received from their families living in Greece.

71. The sixth volume reproduces, in Greek characters, lists drawn up by the Greek Red Cross on the basis of applications from families. Our two organizations have noticed that some of these names had appeared in previous lists, and have therefore decided for the moment to consider this sixth volume as provisional. To avoid any loss of time, however, it was nevertheless sent on 15 October to all the harbouring countries in its existing form. The Committee and the League have requested the Greek Red Cross to revise the lists comprising the sixth volume and to remove the names of children mentioned in any of the five volumes published earlier.



ANNEX

Letter dated 15 February 1951 from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies to the Central Committees of the National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Red Sun) Societies

Geneva, 15 February 1951

DISPLACED GREEK CHILDREN

For over two years the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies have been making the most strenuous effort to solve, in agreement with all parties concerned, the problem of the repatriation of the displaced Greek children. This work has not always been fully understood; it has given rise to criticism which was often due to insufficient accurate information.

With a view to arousing the interest of the national societies of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, the Red Lion and the Red Sun, we shall describe, in general outline, the principal steps we have taken and the results so far achieved.

1. Early in 1949, in conformity with the terms of reference of the United Nations General Assembly, we made every effort to establish contact with the Greek Red Cross and the Greek authorities, as well as with the Red Cross societies and the authorities of the countries now harbouring Greek children. We were anxious to learn their views on the question we had been asked to deal with and to receive their practical suggestions concerning possible solutions which might be acceptable to all parties concerned. These efforts have been continued unremittingly since January 1949 and are still continuing. However, no really constructive proposals have so far been made to us by the harbouring countries. On the contrary, no satisfactory response has been forthcoming to the proposals which we ourselves submitted to these countries, even though these have invariably intimated, or even expressly stated, that they approved the principle of repatriation.

2. For the purpose of ascertaining the whereabouts of each of the children claimed, the countries in question were asked for lists of the Greek children living in their territories; it was intended to compare these lists at Geneva with the parents' requests and so discover the names of the children actually resident in each country, which would in turn have made it possible for us to determine later, in consultation with each of the States concerned, which of the children were genuinely eligible for repatriation.

The proposal was variously ignored by some of the countries or else agreed to but not acted upon. Another method was then tried: on the basis of applications received by us through the Greek Red Cross from parents in Greece, we ourselves drew up lists of the children claimed and sent them to each of the harbouring countries with the request that they should inform us which of the children named on the lists were actually living in their territories. We did not, in transmitting these lists, mean to imply that every child named thereon was being legitimately claimed; the lists merely constituted a basis for considering the cases.

So far, only the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies have communicated to us the names of a small number of the Greek children mentioned in the lists who are living in their countries. We have repeatedly suggested to the various national Red Cross Societies concerned that we should delegate a representative to make an entirely objective study of these lists, as described, and take note of their comments.

This would have enabled us to sort out any doubtful cases and so to forestall any later disputes of the kind which has now arisen (the Press has reported on it) in connexion with the two children who were repatriated from Yugoslavia at the request of their fathers in Greece, but whose mothers, according to reports received only very recently, are living abroad.

These practical suggestions were not accepted by the harbouring countries, and our repeated applications for the necessary visas for our representatives have been left unanswered.

3. Being still most anxious to reach a solution, in spite of these setbacks, we enquired at the end of March 1950 from all the countries concerned what conditions they felt ought to be fulfilled to enable them to make prompt and practical arrangements for the return to Greece of the Greek children in their territories who could be repatriated. With the exception of the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies, none of the Red Cross Societies approached has responded with any constructive suggestion.

Moreover, being most anxious ourselves that our action should proceed in complete equity, we had obtained a guarantee from the Greek Authorities as early as February, 1949, that any children returned would be returned directly to their parents. In cases where, for technical reasons this could not be done immediately -- for example, because the parents had a long way to travel to the locality where their children were temporarily assembled -- the

children were to remain under our supervision until they were restored to their families. Accordingly, we are in a position to give the assurance that the children would not be placed in internment camps on their return to Greece. In this way, the 21 children repatriated from Yugoslavia in November last were accommodated in a hostel placed at our representative's disposal and five days later all had been returned to their families.

4. We consider the efforts we have been making for more than two years on behalf of the Greek children parted from their families as an attempt to solve, in one of its forms, the general problem of reuniting families dispersed by the war or through circumstances. We are prepared to lend our good offices in restoring to their families all the Greek children now parted from them, irrespective of the present whereabouts of the children or of their relatives. It is clear, however, that we must be able to act under the same conditions in every country. For this purpose it is essential that all the parties concerned should agree to give us the necessary facilities for verification and supervision. These facilities were granted to us in connexion with considering the merits of the applications made by Greek families in Greece concerning children whose presence in the one or other harbouring country had been admitted by that country.

5. Precisely because we were anxious to discuss the problem of Greek children as a whole, and in particular to clear up by joint consultation, any cases where the legitimacy of applications for repatriation was challenged, we invited the Red Cross Societies of all the countries concerned to a conference to be held at Geneva in March, 1950. The Bulgarian, Romanian and Czechoslovak Red Cross Societies declined the invitation. The Yugoslav Red Cross, accepted in principle, but did not send a representative. No reply was received from the Hungarian and Polish Red Cross Societies. The Greek Red Cross was the only one to send representatives to Geneva.

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The foregoing account describes in general outline, and occasionally in detail, our attempts, over a period of more than two years, to find a solution to the problem of the displaced Greek children. Despite the obstacles we have encountered, we still do not want to despair of the final result. We have therefore every reason to be gratified by any endeavours made or likely to be

made in future by one or other of the national Red Cross Societies on behalf of the Greek families who are still not reunited.

We have the honour to be, etc.

For the League of Red Cross Societies

G. MILSOM

Under-Secretary-General.

For the International Committee of the  
Red Cross

D. de TRAZ

Deputy Executive Director.