FRANCISCO JAVIER MARTÍNEZ-ANTONIO

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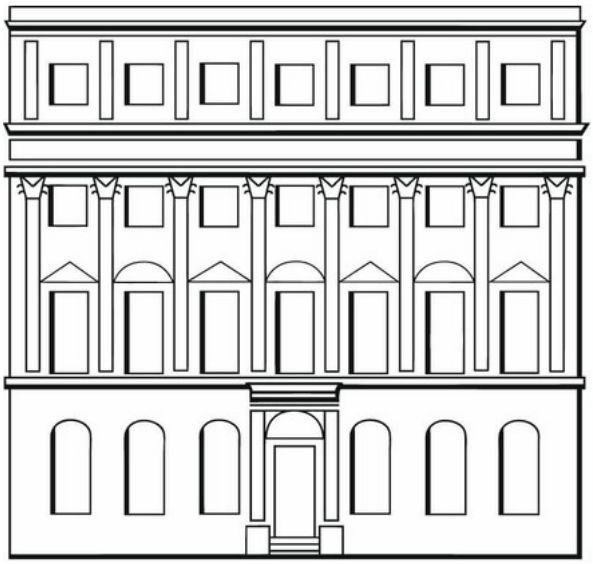

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Francisco Javier Martínez-Antonio

Introduction

During the inter-war period, nation-states continued to be the crucial vectors of the international system of humanitarian aid, despite serious moves to overcome the perceived function of official charities such as the Red Cross 'as outlets for the patriotism of noncombatants'.[1] Only the onset of the now dominant 'new humanitarianism' from the early 1970s finally succeeded in displacing the nation as the pivotal element in conceiving, organizing, launching, and receiving relief.[2] Over these last decades international organizations and multinational NGOs have substantially increased in relevance as actors in the humanitarian sphere, while subnational communities, marginalized social groups, and oppressed ethnicities have become preferential aid recipients. And, as Fiona Fox has put it, human rights groups and aid agencies have welcomed 'the willingness of Western powers to reject national sovereignty as an obstacle to humanitarian interventions'.[3] Like all historical transformations,

CIDEHUS, Universidade de Évora, Portugal. This essay was written within the frame of the UID/HIS/00057/2013 (POCI-01-0145-FEDER-007702)—FCT, COMPETE, FEDER, Portugal2020, and also with the support of an Investigator contract of the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT) of Portugal, FCT project IF/00835/2014CP1232/CT0002.

[1] John Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder, Colo., 1996), 275; id., '"Custodians of the Sacred Fire": The ICRC and the Postwar Reorganization of the International Red Cross', in Paul Weindling (ed.), *International Health Organizations and Movements, 1918–1939* (Cambridge, 1995), 17–35.

[2] Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), 30–1.

[3] Fiona Fox, 'Conditioning the Right to Humanitarian Aid? Human Rights and the "New Humanitarianism"', in David Chandler (ed.), *Rethinking Human Rights: Critical Approaches to International Politics* (Basingstoke, 2002), 13–37, at 21.

this one has opened up new possibilities and brought new risks, as critics of the 'new humanitarianism' and the introduction to this volume remind us.[4]

This essay proposes to take a look back at a time when nationalism was still the shining star in the firmament of humanitarianism. My contention, though, is that its centrality was often seen more clearly in unconventional conflicts (civil wars, separatist rebellions, colonial uprisings, social revolutions). In them, the non-recognized, non-existent, or fractured nature of the nation-state in one or several warring parties posed serious and sometimes insurmountable problems for humanitarian action as it had generally been conceived and displayed in Europe since the mid-nineteenth century. I shall explore the particular case of the Rif War of 1921–7 in Morocco, one of the main unconventional conflicts of the inter-war period. I start by analysing the singular, complex nature of that conflict, and then attempt to show how shaky nation-state realities stood behind the relief shortcomings of the main warring parties and the troubled course of international aid operations. Because of its close but incomplete similarity to humanitarian displays in European conflicts, the case of the Rif War will highlight the centrality of the nation-state in the humanitarian system of the early twentieth century.

The Rif War: Colonial Campaign or International Conflict?

The vast majority of historians dealing with Morocco's Rif War have defined it as an anti-colonial uprising of the Rifian[5] population against the Spanish Protectorate established in 1912.[6] Although this is the dominant interpretation, it has important limitations

[4] Chris Stout (ed.), *The New Humanitarians: Inspiration, Innovations and Blueprints for Visionaries* (Westport, Conn., 2008).

[5] The Rifians are the Berber/Amazigh population of northern Morocco. They are named after the Rif mountain range, which stretches along the Mediterranean coast, roughly between the cities of Tangier and Melilla. The Rifians do not inhabit the whole Rif range, however, but just its eastern half.

[6] Rupert Furneaux, *Abdelkrim: Emir of the Rif* (London, 1967); David Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd el Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Stanford, Calif., 1968); David M. Hart, *The Ait-Waryaghar of the Moroccan Rif* (Tucson, Ariz., 1976); Germain Ayache, *Les Origines de la guerre du Rif* (Rabat-Paris, 1981); Charles R. Pennell, *A Country with a Government and a Flag: The Rif War in Morocco, 1921–26* (Wisbech, 1986); Daniel Rivet, *Lyautey et l'institution du protectorat français, 1912–25* (Paris, 1988); Susana Sueiro-Seoane, *España en el Mediterráneo: Primo de Rivera y la cuestión marroquí, 1923–1930* (Madrid, 1992); Juan Pando, *Historia secreta de Annual* (Madrid, 1999); Sebastian Balfour, *Abrazo mortal: de la*

that have been pointed out by certain scholars, whose work has so far had little impact because it is too challenging or too recent. Some of them have questioned the colonial nature of the conflict. Thus the French sociologist Jean-Paul Charnay regarded the Rif War as a 'transitional' case between a colonial uprising and a national revolutionary war because the Rifians' aim was less to resist European conquest than to create an independent nation-state amongst the ruins of a crumbling empire (as Atatürk was doing in Turkey at precisely this time).[7] In his opinion, the Rifians strove not to become but to remain independent, their part of Moroccan territory being not yet occupied in 1921. Claiming their right over it obliged them to reject the sultan's sovereignty and propose a new political regime. The Rif War had a distinctive 'European flavour' in military terms too because of the size of the armies (Spain: 100,000 troops; France: 200,000; Rifians: 20,000 regulars plus thousands of irregulars); the large number of casualties (tens of thousands dead and injured); the extensive use of trenches and artillery (by all sides); and the air raids and use of chemical weapons by the Spanish and French.[8]

Other authors have shown how the Rif conflict involved France almost as much as Spain. A recent study by Vincent Courcelle-Labrousse and Nicolas Marmié has demonstrated that involvement in detail.[9] Well before the Rifian offensive against the French Protectorate in the spring of 1925 the High Commissioner, Marshal Hubert Lyautey, had closely followed and subtly influenced events in the Spanish zone. Later, between April and July 1925, the Rifians dislodged dozens of French military posts; captured hundreds of

guerra colonial a la guerra civil en España y Marruecos, 1909–1939 (Barcelona, 2002); María Rosa de Madariaga, *En el Barranco del Lobo: las guerras de Marruecos* (Madrid, 2005); María Rosa de Madariaga, *Abdelkrim el Jatabi: la lucha por la independencia* (Madrid, 2009).

[7] Jean-Paul Charnay, *Technique et geosociologie: la guerre du Rif, le nucléaire en Orient* (Paris, 1984), 15.

[8] On the Spanish use of chemical weapons see Carlos Lázaro Ávila, 'La forja de la aeronáutica militar en Marruecos (1909–1927)', in Antonio Carrasco García and Roberto Muñoz Bolaños (eds.), *Las campañas de Marruecos, 1909–1927* (Madrid, 2001), 165–93; Balfour, *Abrazo mortal;* María Rosa de Madariaga and Carlos Lázaro Ávila, 'Guerra química en el Rif (1921–1927)', *Historia 16*, 26 (2003), 50–85, 324. On the alleged French use of gas bombing see SIPRI, *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare*, i. *The Rise of CB Weapons* (Stockholm, 1971), 142; Michel Veuthey, *Guerrilla et droit humanitaire* (Geneva, 1976), 84.

[9] Vincent Courcelle-Labrousse and Nicolas Marmié, *La Guerre du Rif, 1921–1926* (Paris, 2008).

French, North African, and Senegalese soldiers; seized large quantities of field guns and ammunition; reoccupied *kabyles* recently ceded to the French; and came close to cutting the Rabat–Oran railway line and besieging the cities of Wazzan, Taza, and Fez. The Rifian leader, Muhammad ibn-Abdelkrim al-Khattabi (hereafter Abdelkrim), planned to enter Fez during the Aid el-Kebir, the Islamic Feast of the Sacrifice, in order to gain both political and religious legitimacy in his bid to become the leader of a fully independent Morocco. The French government forced Lyautey to hand over control of military operations to the Verdun hero Marshal Philippe Pétain, who could count on around 200,000 soldiers, tens of air squadrons, and hundreds of pieces of mountain artillery. The human and economic cost of military operations in the Rif was so great that it sparked tensions in France, where the Communist Party, intellectuals, and artists openly sided with the Rifians, and put pressure on the government to abandon Morocco by means of labour strikes and pro-desertion propaganda.[10]

Finally, the German historian Dirk Sasse has further enlarged the Rif War's scope.[11] Beyond Spanish and French involvement, Sasse's work reveals the extent to which other European and non-European countries and groups took part in the conflict,[12] giving it a relevant international dimension. Sasse also shows how Abdelkrim made several attempts to obtain international recognition for the 'Rif Republic' during the war. On the one hand, British sympathizers who acted as delegates of the Rifian government appealed to the League of Nations and several national governments.[13] They circulated Abdelkrim's 'Declaration of State and Proclamation to All Nations' of July 1923, but failed to get any official response. On the other hand, several Rifian missions travelled to France and Britain to try to obtain recognition there either of their independence or of their status as belligerents, with an equal lack of success.

In my opinion, the work of these scholars challenges our tradi-

[10] David H. Slavin, 'The French Left and the Rif War, 1924–25: Racism and the Limits of Internationalism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26/1 (1991), 5–32; David Drake, 'The PCF, the Surrealists, Clarté and the Rif War', *French Cultural Studies*, 17/2 (2006), 173–88.

[11] Dirk Sasse, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche im Rifkrieg 1921–1926: Spekulanten und Sympathisanten, Deserteure und Hasardeure im Dienste Abdelkrims* (Munich, 2006).

[12] European: Britain, Germany, Italy; non-European: Egypt, Turkey, British Indian Muslims.

[13] See also Pablo La Porte, 'Rien à ajouter: The League of Nations and the Rif War, 1921–1926', *European History Quarterly Journal*, 41/1 (2011), 66–87.

tional understanding of the Rif War and is closer to the British and American articles and military reports of the 1920s, which usually referred to the conflict as a 'little war' without colonial tags.[14] Following this line, the American military historian Andrew Birtle has recently affirmed that 'of all the small war operations of the interwar years, those conducted by France and Spain against the Berber tribesmen of the Moroccan Rif attracted the most interest in U.S. military circles'.[15] The somewhat vague concept of a 'small war' actually comes from the field of military history and has been applied to conflicts 'falling somewhere in the middle bit of the continuum between feisty diplomatic words and global thermonuclear war'.[16] Despite this definition, American authors have shown an excessive tendency to equate the concept with counter-insurgency operations. By contrast, I prefer to subscribe to a concept of 'small war' that focuses on its intermediate character. In other words, I take it to designate any contemporary armed conflict of significant duration and size, but whose number of casualties did not attain the level of major nineteenth- and twentieth-century international wars, owing to the debilitated, peripheral national status of the various parties involved. The Rif War can be seen as a small war featuring Spain, France, and Rifian/Moroccan nationalists as main actors. In my opinion, this view helps to capture the 'transitional' nature of a conflict placed somewhere between an anti-colonial uprising and an international war. It also reflects the national/state weakness of those actors more deeply involved (Spaniards and Rifians) and the limited or indirect intervention of the others.[17] As a small war, the Rifian conflict entailed significant but, at the same time, troubled and atypical displays of humanitarianism, as I shall try to show in the following sections.

[14] See e.g. *Manchester Guardian*, 19 May, 20 July, and 10 Aug. 1925; *Illustrated London News*, 17 Oct. 1925; *Times of India*, 26 Oct. 1925; *Daily Telegraph*, 28 May 1926.

[15] Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1860–1941* (Washington, 1998), 255.

[16] Definition taken from the website of the *Small Wars Journal* ⟨http://smallwarsjournal.com/content/about⟩ [accessed 3 Sept. 2012].

[17] France's involvement was limited, while Britain, Germany, Italy, Egypt, and Turkey participated only indirectly.

The Atypical Mobilization of Humanitarian Relief by Spain and the Rifians

The Rif War apparently provided the ideal occasion for the Spanish Red Cross (SRC) to consolidate its structure, institutions, and personnel once and for all. Despite the impact of the Third Carlist War (1872–6) and the Cuban and Philippine wars of independence (1895–8), and early attempts to create a Red Cross Society in Morocco under Spanish control, in 1921 the SRC still lacked a permanent basis on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar.[18] Its few hospitals and dispensaries were usually housed in provisional, inadequate premises. Physicians worked on a voluntary basis, as did nurses, who had to wait for the opening of Schools of Professional Nurses in the Red Cross Hospital of Madrid in 1917 and the University Hospital of Barcelona in 1918 before they were able to receive specialized training.[19] SRC funds were scarce because of the reduced number of associates and the meagre contributions of the Spanish government. In the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco set up in 1912, SRC activities were geographically fractured, their effectiveness hindered by a mismatch between projects' goals, models of organization, and legal regimes.[20]

By contrast, during the Rif War new legal statutes were passed (in 1923 and 1924), and the SRC budget was substantially increased by government provision, lottery profits, nationwide fundraising campaigns, and even the proceeds of bullfights.[21] By May 1922 the number of SRC peninsular hospitals had already risen from six to twenty, having treated more than 100,000 war-related cases.[22] Many were transformed into permanent institutions installed in new buildings, as was the case in Barcelona, Seville, and San Sebastián.[23] Dispensaries were also opened—for example, in Ferrol, Córdoba, Madrid, and Irún.[24] In Spanish Morocco and adjacent locations,

[18] On the early SRC initiatives in Morocco see Francisco Javier Martínez-Antonio, 'Resilient Modernization: The Red Cross and Moroccan Agency from Hassan I to the Rif Republic (1921–26)', *Asclepio*, 66/1 (2014), 32–56.

[19] Josep Carles Clemente, *Historia de la Cruz Roja Española* (Madrid, 1986), 104; Francisco Javier Martínez-Antonio, 'La Cruz Roja en la guerra del Rif (1921–1926): ensayo bibliográfico', *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos*, 7 (2009), 1–16, at 7.

[20] Martínez-Antonio, 'Resilient Modernization'.

[21] Josep Carles Clemente and Juan Francisco Polo, *La prensa humanitaria en la España contemporánea 1870–1989* (Madrid, 2003), 129.

[22] Ibid. 126.

[23] Ibid. 128.

[24] Ibid.; José Luis Blanco, *La Cruz Roja de Ferrol en la monarquía de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, 2011), 79.

the development of the SRC was even more impressive.[25] At the end of the war three permanent hospitals, three temporary hospitals, one emergency clinic, four dispensaries, two milk stations, one hospital train, several field ambulances, and four hospital ships were in operation.[26] The staff comprised dozens of army medical officers and professional Red Cross nurses, while a network of local committees organized activities to raise funds on their behalf, and for the annual Aguinaldo del Soldado (Soldier's Christmas Box), a present of cigars and food given to every officer and soldier of the Spanish army in Morocco.[27] For all these reasons, the Rif War is still regarded by official SRC accounts as 'the origin of the institution's present-day hospital network and its nursing corps'.[28]

However, this impressive SRC development was not the product of a vigorous Spanish nationality, but rather the expression of its ever-increasing shortcomings. On the one hand, it was linked to a sustained process of militarization of the country that reached a peak with General Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923–30). Since 1916, the SRC had ceased to be a royal foundation and was directly attached to the Ministry of War. Similarly, its central and local boards were progressively made dependent on military authorities, and its relief activities increasingly placed under the supervision of the Army Medical Service.[29] In the following years, and especially during Primo's regime, the SRC became a sort of extension of the army: military officers and their wives presided over many local committees; military physicians directed the SRC medical services and staffed its hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries, which mostly provided care for officers and soldiers; and so on. Such militarization did not, it is true, disconnect the SRC from civil society. In fact, it was officially assigned growing public health tasks to complement Spain's defective preventative and medical care schemes: the opening of clinics, dispensaries,

[25] Clemente, *Cruz Roja Española*, 131–40; Ignacio Angolotti, *La Duquesa de la Victoria* (Madrid, 1958).

[26] Francisco Javier Martínez-Antonio, 'State of Need: The Spanish Red Cross in Morocco (1886–1927)', *Història, Ciências, Saúde: Manguinhos*, forthcoming..

[27] Cruz Roja Española, *Memoria de la distribución del 'Aguinaldo del Soldado' efectuada por la Cruz Roja Española en nuestra zona de protectorado en África el año 1925–1926* (Madrid, 1927).

[28] Clemente and Polo, *La prensa humanitaria*, 125.

[29] 'Bases para la reorganización de la Sección de la Cruz Roja Española: Real Decreto del Ministerio de la Guerra de 16 de enero de 1916', *Gaceta de Madrid*, 18 (18 Jan. 1916), 180.

and milk stations; the promotion of hygiene and the protection of children and the disabled; collaboration with anti-tuberculosis and anti-alcohol leagues. But this meant only that the SRC was used by the Army Medical Service to extend its intervention in civilian society, not the other way round.

On the other hand, the SRC owed its development to its restructuring along authoritarian lines. Primo de Rivera's dictatorship enforced executive centralization and the social, territorial, and functional standardization of SRC structures aimed to create a 'Cruz Roja nacional', although there had been previous moves in that direction. In the preface to the new 1924 regulations, Primo claimed that the charity association had reached a stage of such 'extraordinary development' that it had become necessary to avoid 'dulling and sterilizing duplicities' through implementation of 'an intimate and permanent co-ordination among its various elements, which can be obtained only through an absolute unity of command, direction, and criteria and through a rational, methodical assemblage of services not based on empirical and whimsical distinctions that practice rejects because of their inefficiency'.[30]

This led, in the first place, to the end of the division between male and female branches of the SRC. The new regulations enforced suppression of the two gendered Asambleas Centrales (central boards), turning the Asamblea Suprema into the only higher executive organ. Similarly, male Comisiones Locales and female Juntas Locales were united in mixed Asambleas Locales (local boards).[31] Secondly, the 1924 regulations attempted to homogenize the functions of SRC local boards, which varied greatly depending on their territorial location. For example, in Las Palmas (Canary Islands) the local board created in 1896 had soon focused on health care and prevention in order to compensate for the lack of an adequate municipal health scheme.[32] In the case of Ferrol (Galicia), the SRC directed its early efforts towards the creation of an anti-tuberculosis dispensary to complement the nearby anti-tuberculosis sanatorium at Oza (Coruña).[33] In the North African enclave of Melilla, the local

[30] 'Estatutos por que ha de regirse la Cruz Roja Española: Real Decreto de la Presidencia del Directorio Militar de 16 de abril de 1924', *Gaceta de Madrid*, 108 (17 Apr. 1924), 346–51, at 346–7.

[31] Ibid. 348.

[32] Javier Lahuerta, *La Cruz Roja en Canarias: 125 años de labor humanitaria 1874–1999* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 2004), 161–2.

[33] Blanco, *La Cruz Roja de Ferrol*, 31–50.

board had always been closely connected with the army.[34] The 1924 regulations did not intend to root out local strengths but to lay down a set of common functions (social, sanitary, humanitarian, patriotic) that every local board would have to guarantee. Finally, the reform was meant to curtail the large degree of independence from the Asamblea Suprema that some local boards enjoyed.

But it was perhaps another feature which most clearly revealed that the SRC's development was fuelled by a failing Spanish nation-state: the half-occupied, meagre, 20,000 km² Moroccan Protectorate and its immediate surroundings (Tangier, Ceuta, Melilla, south-east coast of Spain) concentrated a disproportionate part of the SRC's human and material resources, in sharp contrast to other peninsular areas. This was partly a consequence of Primo's dictatorship surreptitiously treating the territory of Spanish Morocco as an almost direct extension of peninsular Spain for all purposes, including Red Cross activities. Primo was fighting against the fact that, from its very beginning, the Spanish Protectorate was often regarded in the international sphere as legally subordinate to the French (it was sometimes alluded to as a 'sub-Protectorate'). For Red Cross matters this meant, for example, that the French could theoretically decide to stop SRC activities in Morocco at any given moment in favour of the French Red Cross (FRC).[35] Primo decided to pursue annexation in order to avoid the risk of undesired French intervention, but instead of being taken as proof of aggressive colonialism, this strategy only served to reveal a fragile nationalism: the centre of gravity of the SRC was displaced to the margins of a sort of trans-Mediterranean Spain. Finally, this local SRC development, however atypical, contrasted with Spain's failure to mobilize humanitarian aid from outside the country. Of course, Spain lacked a substantial empire in whose different colonial settings funds could be raised. The tiny Spanish Protectorate in Morocco was the only location available. The other Spanish African possessions—Equatorial Guinea, Ifni, and Sahara—had not even been completely occupied by the 1920s, although their limits had been fixed since the French–Spanish treaty of 1900.[36] The only foreign relief came from Spanish

[34] Francisco Saro, 'Centenario de la Cruz Roja en Melilla', *El Periódico Melillense*, 2007 ⟨http://www.melillense.net/paginas/historia/saro/cruzroja/paginas/cruzroja01.html⟩ [accessed 1 July 2012].

[35] Martínez-Antonio, 'State of Need'.

[36] Alejandro Díez Torre (ed.), *Ciencia y memoria de África* (Alcalá de Henares, 2002), 499–514.

communities in locations historically related to Spain but no longer under Spanish rule. One was the city of Oran in French Algeria, a Spanish possession from 1509 to 1708 and again from 1732 to 1792. After 1830, tens of thousands of Spaniards had moved to the Oran region to work on the country farms of French settlers.[37] Many had preserved their nationality, and from time to time Spanish governments tried to use their expertise in colonial plans for Morocco and Guinea. During the Rif War soldiers were recruited in Oran for the Spanish army and an SRC delegation existed in the city, which raised funds among the Spanish community.[38]

Substantial aid also came from Cuba, a Spanish territory for almost four centuries until its loss in 1898. Tens of thousands of Spaniards had decided to stay in Cuba after independence and more than a hundred thousand migrated to the island in the first two decades of the twentieth century, looking for jobs they could not find at home.[39] As a result, significant Spanish communities existed in the main cities of the newly established republic, among which the Spanish government sought help. In April 1921, three months before the Rif War started, the SRC had sent a 'special delegate' to Havana.[40] The new delegation managed to collect money and goods from Spaniards living in Havana and soon received donations from Spanish communities in Gibara, Morón, Aguacate, Mayarí, Fomento, and other cities.[41] From October 1921 to April 1922, the SRC delegation sent the Asamblea Suprema in Madrid 77 bundles containing 25,000 cigars, 53,000 packets of cigarettes, 8 barrels of rum, 21 sacks of sugar, 612 pounds of guava fudge, and 192 cans of condensed milk, plus 21,300 pesetas in cash.[42] Later, from June 1922 to May 1923, five shipments with cigars, cigarettes, canned sweets, hospital clothes, and drugs were sent to the SRC board in Melilla.[43] The Cuban Red Cross gave the SRC delegation permission to organize balls and parties to raise additional funds, and itself made a donation of 100 pesos.[44] Tobacco and canned fruit sent by the

[37] On the history of Spaniards in French Algeria see Juan Bautista Vilar, *Los españoles en la Argelia francesa, 1830–1914* (Murcia, 1989).

[38] *La Vanguardia*, 10 May 1922.

[39] César Yáñez, *La emigración española a América: siglos XIX y XX* (Gijón, 1994).

[40] Cruz Roja Española, 'Delegación General en la República de Cuba', in *Informe elevado a la Asamblea Suprema recopilando los hechos más importantes realizados por esta comisión, durante el periodo comprendido desde junio 6 de 1921 hasta marzo 31 de 1925* (Habana, 1925), 5–6.

[41] Ibid. 22.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid. 24.

[44] Ibid. 23.

SRC delegation in Cuba were included in the Soldier's Christmas Box from 1923 to 1926.[45]

In sum, the SRC mobilized relief for the Rif War quite atypically. It combined a local, distorted, Morocco-oriented overdevelopment with a lack of appeals for solidarity outside the country, the exception being not current but past overseas territories. As the weakest party in the conflict, their nation-state only embryonic, the Rifians were even more unconventional than Spain in their mobilization of humanitarian relief. The gap in quantitative terms was, however, less substantial than might have been expected, the main differences being the predominantly foreign origin and the lack of official status of aid received by the Rifians. For example, early and crucial support was provided to Abdelkrim's insurrection by caid Haddu ben-Hammu, a Rifian whose family had been exiled to Oran at the end of the nineteenth century.[46] With the tolerance of French authorities in Algeria and Morocco, Haddu managed to supply the Rifians with all kinds of equipment, from drugs to aeroplanes.[47] Between 1921 and 1924 he succeeded in smuggling into the Rif a number of Algerian and French doctors and nurses, who performed surgical operations, launched campaigns for smallpox vaccination, and took measures to prevent the spread of typhus.[48] A second atypical initiative consisted of obliging captive Spanish army doctors to care for Rifians,[49] and of seizing a part of the SRC relief convoys sent to Spanish prisoners held in the Rif for their own use.[50] The Spanish newspaper *ABC* reported in June 1926 that when the Spanish troops entered Abdelkrim's residence in Axdir they found a quantity of 'those drugs that used to be sent to prisoners'.[51] The French magazine *Le Correspondant* reported that the French had found among Abdelkrim's possessions 'a batch of boxes and packets; on a small case it was still possible to read "medicamentos por [*sic*] los prisioneros": it contains a bottle of alcohol 90°'.[52]

Other relief initiatives in favour of Rifians were undertaken in and

[45] Ibid. 32.

[46] Madariaga, *Abdelkrim el Jatabi*, 425–44; Sasse, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche*, 160.

[47] Sasse, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche*, 125, 157.

[48] Ibid. 68–9.

[49] Francisco Javier Martínez-Antonio, 'Entre la diplomacia médica y la política sanitaria: médicos militares en el protectorado español en Marruecos', *Revista de Historia Militar*, suppl. 2 (2012), 203–42.

[50] See Francisco Basallo, *Memorias del cautiverio* (Madrid, 1923).

[51] *ABC*, 1 June 1926.

[52] 'La Fin d'Abdelkrim', *Le Correspondant*, 1533 (10 Aug. 1926), 321–57, at 355.

from Tangier, taking advantage of the city's international regime. Only a few were launched by Moroccans. For example, the *mendub* (representative of the sultan in Tangier) funded several Muslim charitable institutions that were used by some of the thousands of refugees cramming the city in 1925.[53] He also took charge of a daily distribution of 2,000 to 3,000 francs' worth of bread for these refugees, plus 150 loaves for people sleeping in night shelters.[54] The three sons of the *mendub* entered the Rif in 1925 to join Abdelkrim's uprising, one of them, Hassan al-Tazi, devoting most of his efforts to working as 'volunteer nurse' in a field hospital 'for the wounded in the Rif's holy war'.[55] This hospital, located in the Alhucemas bay area, was actually the result of a sort of pan-Islamic relief initiative. In December 1924 Prince Omar Tousson of Egypt contacted the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) for the purpose of aiding the Rifians.[56] Tousson, a Coptic Christian member of the royal family, had already created a Comité du secours aux sinistrés rifains in Cairo in 1923,[57] and had been chartering boats loaded with guns for Abdelkrim since December 1924.[58] At the end of January 1925 the ERC decided to send a 'medical mission comprising five physicians, a chemist, and forty nurses'.[59] Its leader would be the Syrian Mohammed Said el-Din el-Djibaoui, an agent sent by Abdelkrim to the Middle East and British India, and the physicians would be students from the Damascus Medical School.[60] Although the mission seems eventually to have been sent to the Hejaz, Tousson managed to gather equipment and send it to the Rif, where it was used to set up the above-mentioned field hospital.[61]

In addition, Tousson acted as a go-between in sending £500 collected by the Khilafat Committees of British India to a private London-based pro-Muslim charity called the British Red Crescent (BRC).[62] The BRC, which despite its name had no connection with the Red Cross movement, had been attempting to send its own medical mission to the Rif since mid-1924, but had failed on several occasions to obtain the official backing of the British government.[63] The BRC used the money collected in Britain and the sums sent

[53] Henri Mentha, 'Mission à Tanger', *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge* (*RICR*), 84 (Dec. 1925), 971–81, at 980.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (SHAT), 3H262, 5.
[57] Sasse, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche*, 78.
[58] The National Archives (NA), Foreign Office, 141–819.
[59] SHAT, 3H262, 5.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Sasse, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche*, 78.
[62] Ibid. 73.
[63] Sasse, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche*, 71–3.

by Tousson to buy drugs and medical supplies, which it sent to the Rifians through its delegate in Tangier.[64] Medical staff were also hired to work for Abdelkrim and smuggled into the Rif with the help of pro-Rifian British individuals in Tangier. A German-born masseur called Walter Hutyens worked as surgeon in the Spanish army hospital seized by the Rifians in Chefchaouen.[65] The other practitioner was Mahbub al-Mahmud, supposedly a 'black pharmacist or druggist' but actually a physician trained in modern, European-style medicine in the School of Medicine in Algiers.[66] Al-Mahmud had worked for over fifteen years in Casablanca, Tangier, and Wazzan, first attached to Moroccan army units, later in the French Hospital of Tangier as assistant to Dr Paul Fumey, and finally in Wazzan in the personal service of the renowned Shariff. Al-Mahmud became Abdelkrim's personal physician, took charge of the Alhucemas bay field hospital, and proceeded to organize a modern medical service for the Rifian army.[67]

There were various other atypical foreign sources of humanitarian aid for Rifians. First, there were the above-mentioned Khilafat Committees. These Muslim associations had been created in British India to defend the institution of the Caliphate, at risk of dissolution after the Ottoman defeat during the First World War, although they continued to exist after Kemal Atatürk suppressed it in 1923.[68] The Khilafat Committees backed BRC projects by raising money and sending it via Prince Tousson in April 1925; another sum was sent in November 1925, this time for the benefit of Rifians and Syrians.[69] Second, there were several initiatives by American and British missionaries. For example, the Society of Friends (Quakers) sent delegates to Tangier in 1925 to help with the distribution of food to refugees, amounting to 3,000 kilos of flour twice a week.[70] Dr Liley of the North Africa Mission Hope House Hospital assisted Moroccan patients gratis without asking how and why they had been injured.[71] Finally, the Russian (Soviet) Red Cross sent 1,000 roubles

[64] Ibid. 74.

[65] Ibid. 75–6.

[66] Ibid. 74–5; Archive du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères de France (AMAEF), Sous-fond Maroc 1897–1918, 407.

[67] Martínez-Antonio, 'Entre la diplomacia médica y la política sanitaria'.

[68] M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924* (Leiden, 1999).

[69] NA, Foreign Office, 141–819.

[70] Sasse, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche*, 84–5; Archive du Comité Internationale de la Croix-Rouge (ACICR), CR 138 Rifains, I, 116; Mentha, 'Mission à Tanger', 977.

[71] A. C. P. Sims, 'The English Hospital, Tangier, 1883–1908', *Medical History*, 16 (1972), 285–90.

to help refugees in Tangier.[72] Many other individual and collective relief initiatives in favour of Rifians were undertaken during the conflict.

Failed Initiatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Rif War

If the weakness of Spain and the Rif Republic stood behind the modest, unorthodox, humanitarian mobilization outlined above, it also explains the troubles experienced by international relief organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Committee's involvement in the Rif War did not begin until the second half of 1924, when the conflict began to transform itself into the 'small war' referred to earlier. On 12 July the ICRC was for the first time asked for information about its humanitarian activities in the war by the British Near and Middle East Association (NMEA), another London-based group, many of whose members were also affiliated to the BRC. Abdelkrim ben Jillali, one of Abdelkrim's agents in Tangier, had triggered this démarche by asking Captain Robert Gordon-Canning, a BRC associate, to get in touch with his 'British' friends and 'seek every means possible to persuade them to extend their hand to us in politics, also specially in our Red Cross which is in so much need'.[73] Gordon-Canning contacted Dr Ernst H. Griffin, another BRC associate and secretary of the NMEA, who promoted the latter association's request to the ICRC. Griffin lamented the great suffering of Rifians: 'owing to the lack of funds the work of the Red Crescent (or Red Cross) is severely hampered . . . so that the wounded and dying have perforce to be left to endure the utmost suffering'.[74] He feared that 'reports of wide-spread suffering among the Moslems of the Rif are likely to be only too well founded'.[75] He thus asked the ICRC whether any mission had been sent to the Rif, and if not, urged that such a mission should be organized 'with the utmost speed'.[76]

The Vice-President of the Committee, Paul des Gouttes, replied some days later that no demand for intervention had hitherto been received and, as a consequence, no enquiry had been made. He

[72] AMAEF, Sous-fonds Maroc 1917–1940, 136; ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 126.
[73] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 94.
[74] Ibid. 1. [75] Ibid. [76] Ibid.

reminded him that the ICRC could not intervene unless one of the warring parties or Red Cross/Red Crescent societies involved had made a formal request. Regarding assistance to the Rifian and Spanish diseased and injured of both parties, nothing could be done without 'the demand or the formal consent' of the SRC.[77] Despite this negative reply, des Gouttes immediately forwarded Griffin's letter to the SRC president, the marquis of Hoyos, and asked him whether an international relief mission would be accepted.[78] Hoyos replied on 1 August that the entire population of the Spanish Protectorate was duly assisted 'by the Spanish government, the Makhzen [Moroccan government supported by Spain] and the SRC'.[79] He bolstered his refusal by confirming that

> the SRC, in agreement with the Spanish government and the Makhzen, does not consider appropriate the aid of an international commission for relieving the sufferings of Rifians on the occasion of the police operations required for restoring the order altered by the rebels, not belligerents, who despise the legal authority of the Makhzen, protected by the Spanish government in accordance with international treaties.[80]

The Rifians then tried to force the ICRC's involvement indirectly by pressing the British government either to support a BRC/NMEA medical mission to the Rif, or to intervene in the Rif question for political or humanitarian reasons. A press campaign was started in October 1924 with a letter sent to *The Times* in which the BRC denounced the suffering of the Rifians and their lack of doctors, drugs, and medical equipment.[81] Letters were later sent to other newspapers, such as one to the *Manchester Guardian* in November, alleging gas bombings by Spanish aeroplanes.[82] The British government, however, refused to support a BRC/NMEA medical mission. As the Tangier correspondent of *The Times*, Walter Harris, put it:

> no matter how discreetly a British medical mission might carry out its duties, the fact of its nationality would undoubtedly be politically exploited by the Rifi [*sic*] tribesmen, and would thus render more distant than ever the solution of this difficult problem and any understanding between Spain and her enemy. Should such a mission be internationalized its political aspect would disappear.[83]

[77] Ibid. 2.
[78] Ibid. 3.
[79] Ibid. 4.
[80] Ibid.
[81] *The Times*, 18 Oct. 1924.
[82] *Manchester Guardian*, 25 Nov. 1924.
[83] *The Times*, 29 Oct. 1924.

In any case, the Rifian tactic had an impact on the ICRC. After the press campaign had started, the Committee decided to appoint a special delegate for the Rif's conflict, Raymond Schlemmer.[84] In October 1924 Schlemmer held unofficial meetings in Paris with a representative of the BRC/NMEA, Mrs L. Cobham, the chief of Lyautey's political cabinet, and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand.[85] He then travelled to Madrid in the first days of November in a second attempt to persuade the Spanish government to accept an ICRC or BRC medical mission that would look after the Rifian wounded and Spanish prisoners.

Schlemmer met the marquis of Hoyos and the chief of Primo de Rivera's political cabinet. Both rejected Schlemmer's proposals on the following grounds. (1) Only the Spanish government was entitled to ask for relief. (2) If the Rif War was considered a civil war between the Makhzen and the Rifians, either of the two parties should ask for help. (3) Humanitarian relief risked prolonging the suffering by recognizing the Rifians as belligerents. (4) There were no Rifian civilian victims, and Spanish prisoners had not been relieved because Rifians were unable to use or appreciate modern medicine. (5) Sending drugs and medical supplies was useless because Spain had already tried this and they had been dispersed or destroyed by Rifians. (6) Finally, several Spanish medical missions had entered Abdelkrim's territory and had found it impossible to act according to the rules of humanity; an international mission should not expect to be permitted to enter.[86] Some of these arguments rested on false premisses. For example: no SRC doctor, delegate, or mission had ever been allowed to enter the Rif; there were many Rifian civilian victims; the Rifians valued modern science; and medical relief had been of some use to Spanish prisoners.

Abdelkrim and his agents must nevertheless have realized that the BRC's unofficial status was as much an impediment to ICRC involvement as the SRC's false allegations, so a new tactic was devised. In January 1925 a letter signed by one Dr Lucien Jacquin was received by the Red Cross societies of Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Sweden, as well as the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC).[87] The letter regretted that there still existed in the twentieth century a

[84] Schlemmer, a pioneer of the Scout movement in France and its colonies, had previously been involved in the negotiations on behalf of the League of Nations for exchanging Greek and Turkish prisoners in 1922–3: *Official Journal of the League of Nations* (Geneva, 1922), 690.

[85] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 35, 36.

[86] Ibid.

[87] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 66.

place in the world 'where fighting men, when injured, die without receiving any assistance'.[88] That place was the Rif, and those men were the Rifians fighting against Spain. The author was persuaded that pointing out to 'your Red Cross society this great suffering would lead you to get in touch with the Red Cross societies of other countries so that a medical mission of relief is sent there'.[89] Dr Jacquin was actually a former physician of the French Troupes Coloniales who had served in New Caledonia and Morocco.[90] He had witnessed the 'Fez events' of April 1912, namely, the mutiny of Moroccan soldiers against their French instructors and the subsequent siege of the city by surrounding Berber/Amazigh *kabyles*.[91] We do not know how Jacquin was contacted and by whom, but he lived in Paris and Abdelkrim's foreign agents were frequently present in the French capital. Jacquin's letter had a real impact. The Swedish Red Cross (SwRC) became the first Red Cross society officially to ask the ICRC for information on the Rif War;[92] the Dutch Red Cross declined to take any action but forwarded the letter to the ICRC and the League of Nations;[93] Dr Akil Muhtar Özen of the TRC sent the ICRC a telegram informing it about Jacquin's letter and reminding it that several 'Turkish and Muslim countries' had previously demanded that a Red Cross medical mission should be sent to the Rif.[94] Pressure from these national societies led the ICRC to prepare a first report on its démarches regarding the Rif War, which was published in the February 1925 issue of the *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge*.[95]

The humanitarian emergency in the Rif was thus given a semi-official character, though the ICRC made no further move towards intervention on the legal grounds that it 'had never received a direct appeal from the Rifians themselves, and the Central Committees of the aforementioned national societies seem to be in the same position'.[96] The SRC's stance did not change either. The ICRC contacted the Spanish branch for the third time, but the marquis of Hoyos rejected its suggestions, responding that the SRC itself

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Drs Aubert et Jacquin, 'Géographie médicale: notes sur l'épidémie de peste qui a régné dans le nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (juillet–septembre 1903)', *Annales d'Hygiène et de Médecine Coloniales* (*AHMC*), 7 (1904), 564–75.

[91] Lucien Jacquin, 'Notes du service de santé en campagne au Maroc (défense de Fez et colonnes autour de Fez)', *AHMC*, 16 (1913), 369–79.

[92] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 62.

[93] Ibid. 66.

[94] Ibid. 67.

[95] 'Comité International. Demandes d'intervention. Secours aux blessés du Riff', *RICR*, 74 (Feb. 1925), 113–16.

[96] Ibid. 116.

would take charge of sending a medical mission.[97] So time went by and no international intervention seemed close to materializing despite a recrudescence of the conflict in the first months of 1925. The BRC sent the ICRC news clips documenting the gunning down of civilians while trying to reach Tangier for food; the capture of Spanish prisoners in Andjera, who were then taken to the Rif; and the plight of villagers, 'particularly women and children . . . victims of the high explosive and gas bombs which are being used'.[98] An alarmed ICRC asked the SRC about the latter issue, but accepted Hoyos's unequivocal (and untrue) reply: 'I have had to gather information from my government before giving a response. My government informs me that our army does not use asphyxiating gases.'[99]

In May 1925 Gordon-Canning sent a letter to des Gouttes denying allegations that the Rifians had not appealed to the ICRC for relief.[100] They had actually asked for 'the aid of the Red Cross' eighteenth months earlier and he had then proceeded to inform the BRC/NMEA, which, in turn, had got in touch with the ICRC. To make things clear, Gordon-Canning now told the ICRC that the Rifians' need for Red Cross relief was 'more necessary than ever before' (they had launched their offensive against French Morocco just a month earlier).[101] He argued in favour of the international recognition of Rifians as belligerents, something he had 'written a lot about but had failed to achieve'.[102] In his opinion, there were three main reasons for this: (1) the Rif had remained unconquered for 2,000 years; (2) the Rif had always been considered by the Sultans as *bled es-siba* (rebellious territory); (3) half of the Rif had never been occupied by the Spanish army and thus the Rifian uprising was legally backed by international law, which stated that 'The population of a territory which has not been occupied who, on the approach of the enemy, spontaneously take up arms to resist the invading troops shall be regarded as belligerents if they carry arms openly and respect the laws and customs of war.'[103]

[97] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 81.

[98] *The Times*, 13 Feb. 1925; in ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 84.

[99] 'Comité International: La Croix-Rouge et le Rif', *Bulletin Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge* (*BISCR*), 66/274 (Nov. 1925), 941–8, at 944.

[100] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 94.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid. This provision corresponded to the second article of Ch. 1, Section I (On Belligerents) of the Annex to the Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land signed at The Hague on 29 July 1899.

Most of the points made by Gordon-Canning were not true. The Rif had long been integrated into Morocco, however incompletely. The Rifian uprising had not been a spontaneous movement because local militia forces (*harkas*) had been organized by Abdelkrim well before July 1921. Finally, the Rifians had not fully respected the laws and customs of war. As *The Times* correspondent Walter Harris put it: 'the darkest page of all this war has been the barbaric treatment of the surrendered Spanish garrisons and the inhumanity with which the Spanish prisoners taken at Annual were treated in 1921'.[104] Despite all, Gordon-Canning's letter should have helped the Rifians to comply with the obligation to ask for help required by the ICRC and the SRC. But the fact that it was not Abdelkrim personally who made the request was a legal pretext that allowed the Committee to postpone a commitment. After France's involvement in the conflict, the ICRC was conscious that any careless action would be likely to spur tensions between European countries that had barely been defused in the aftermath of the First World War.

The war raged on in the summer of 1925, and denunciations of humanitarian emergencies were then related to the main fighting between the French and the Rifians, although they closely resembled those previously publicized during the clashes between Spain and the Rifians. For example, the international press reported on the alleged use of chemical weapons by the French, despite official denials.[105] A correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* in Morocco, Henry Wales, affirmed that aeroplanes and gas had nevertheless proved to be 'fiascos' in the French campaign:

> Despite the fact that the enemy did not possess gas masks to protect himself from the deadly fumes and had no aviation nor anti-aircraft guns to combat bombing planes, the French discovered that these two arms were practically useless and they had to rely on infantry and artillery, with a little cavalry. . . . The French tried gas shooting against some Riffian columns but this was ineffective because they were not able to obtain sufficient concentration to give deadly intensity to the gas.[106]

Another correspondent for the same newspaper, Larry Rue, tran-

[104] *The Times*, 24 Oct. 1924.

[105] On 24 July 1925 the French government issued the following statement: 'Some foreign newspapers have repeatedly reported that the French army has used asphyxiating gases in the Moroccan war. Such reports are completely unfounded' (*La Libertad*, 25 July 1925).

[106] *Chicago Tribune*, 31 May 1925.

scribed a tense conversation with Abdelkrim after being allowed to meet him in the Rif:

> I told the emir that the French say they are fighting for humanity. 'No one fights for humanity by bombing villages and killing noncombatant women and children', he replied. I asked the emir about atrocities, saying that bodies of French soldiers had been mutilated. 'Never has a single one of my soldiers mutilated a body' he retorted emphatically.[107]

The full involvement of France in the Rif War had a paradoxical effect on humanitarian action. On the one hand, it seemed to make the prospect of an international relief mission less likely than ever. France sided with Spain in opposing any ICRC attempts to intervene in the Rif. For example, in September 1925, in parallel with the sixth Assembly of the League of Nations that was held in Geneva, the ICRC president Gustav Ador pleaded with Aristide Briand for France to allow an ICRC medical mission to enter the Rif, while Raymond Schlemmer proposed the same thing to the Spanish ambassador in Paris and delegate to the League, José Quiñones de León.[108] The French rejected the proposal on 26 October. Ador then asked the French for evidence that they had really managed to assist their prisoners in the Rif with Abdelkrim's consent. French and Spanish officials confessed no agreement had been reached with the Rifians and no evidence existed as to whether humanitarian aid had reached their prisoners.[109] Despite this, the French again blocked Ador's initiatives by telling him on 15 November that

> the French and Spanish governments act together so that their prisoners find acceptable and improve their condition and fortunes as a result of a tacit agreement with the Rifians, and that both governments fear that any official initiative undertaken by international organizations does nothing but complicate this situation and deprives us, to the detriment of our prisoners, of the means of communication and supply which stand as only warranty [for the prisoners' survival] despite their precariousness.[110]

On the other hand, the involvement of a strong nation such as France in the Rif War made international intervention seem closer than ever. New, unexpected actors felt legitimized to try to help the Rifians in their sustained attempt to involve the ICRC in the conflict

[107] Ibid., 22 June 1925.

[108] André Durand, *From Sarajevo to Hiroshima: History of the International Committee of the Red Cross* (Geneva, 1978), 200.

[109] Ibid.

[110] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 114.

and obtain international recognition for their cause. For example, after the big Franco-Spanish offensive launched in September 1925, a public debate began in Swedish newspapers on the humanitarian crisis in Morocco.[111] An article by Sven Hedin, world-famous explorer of Central Asia, published in Stockholm's *Svenska Dagbladet* in October, had a large impact in Sweden, Germany, Norway, and other European countries. Hedin denounced the passivity of the Red Cross while Rifian villages were being bombarded and no doctors, hospitals, or drugs were available.[112] As a result, the Swedish Red Cross officially addressed the ICRC for the second time on the Rif's situation, while publicizing its own past démarches in relation to the conflict.[113] The French ambassador in Stockholm protested against Hedin's 'Francophobe' tendencies, informing Paris about a supposed entente between him and the Swedish Red Cross secretary, Baron Stjernstedt.[114]

These new pressures from national societies made the ICRC decide to send a medical mission to the Rif, with or without permission from France and Spain. At the end of October it announced its plan to both governments, but the mission was finally cancelled. Nevertheless, a new report on the ICRC's démarches was published in November and at the end of that month the Committee sent a delegate, Dr Henri Mentha, to the international city of Tangier to report on the situation of refugees. Mentha estimated the total number at 6,000 and described the various relief initiatives undertaken to tackle the problem in a detailed report published in the December issue of the *Revue*.[115] The ICRC publicly deplored Franco-Spanish opposition to its planned mission, insisting that 'a humanitarian action, practical, accomplished on its own, for relieving the victims of hostilities would not confer on Rifians the status of belligerents which governments refuse to grant them'.[116] But, surprisingly, it insisted again that 'it is remarkable that no appeal has been addressed to any national Red Cross or Red Crescent society, nor to the International Committee, by Abdelkrim or by any of his subordinates; and it might be wondered whether the Rifians want and would willingly accept a foreign medical mission'.[117]

[111] 'Comité International: La Croix-Rouge et le Rif', *BISCR*, 66/274 (Nov. 1925), 941–8, at 944.
[112] *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2 Oct. 1925.
[113] Ibid., 3 Oct. 1925.
[114] AMAEF, Sous-fonds Maroc 1917–1940, 136.
[115] Henri Mentha, 'Mission à Tanger', *RICR*, 7/84 (Dec. 1925), 971–81.
[116] 'Comité International: La Croix-Rouge et le Rif', *RICR*, 7/83 (Nov. 1925), 941.
[117] Ibid.

In sum, the more the Rif War resembled an international multilateral conflict, the more likely the ICRC was to intervene in it. Stronger opposition from France and the FRC was balanced by mounting support from other European and Islamic countries and Red Cross societies. Another initiative conceived in Sweden would, in fact, put the ICRC on the brink of direct action in the Rif. Following continuing press debates, Sven Hedin sent letters personally to the ICRC in December urging its intervention and suggesting that the absence of a direct appeal for help by Abdelkrim was probably due to his ignorance of 'the Committee's will to provide relief; that is why it would be desirable for him to be informed on this issue'.[118] Hedin would go beyond words. Although we still do not know how, it seems that he was instrumental in the despatch of Hans Alexander Langlet, a journalist for Stockholm's *Dagens Nyheter*, to the Rif as war correspondent from December 1925 to March 1926. Langlet wrote many articles for his newspaper that were also published in other Swedish and international journals. He often referred to the lack of doctors and hospitals in the Rif and hinted at the use of chemical weapons.[119] A fellow countryman in Tangier, Waldemar Lanke, also published a short article in Stockholm's *Aftonbladet* in which he accused France and Spain of mounting 'gas attacks against villages and marketplaces'.[120] French and Spanish diplomats in Stockholm immediately denied this in official statements summarized by the press.[121]

But Langlet also managed to obtain, at last, a personal letter from Abdelkrim in which the Rifian leader appealed to the president of the SwRC, Prince Carl of Sweden, for 'some assistance to our wounded, untended and having no other remedy but patience'.[122] Abdelkrim acknowledged that the Red Cross had 'given us great help. But the enemies of humanity have greatly baulked it; they have prevented us from receiving what had been sent for our assistance.'[123] This letter, dated 21 March 1926, was sent by Langlet to Stockholm and then translated into French and forwarded by Prince Carl to Gustave Ador on 30 April. In Sweden's opinion, the ICRC should proceed to send a medical mission because the eleventh International Red Cross Conference in 1921 had given the Committee a mandate to take

[118] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 125.
[119] *Dagens Nyheter*, 25 Apr., 6 May, 27 May, 20 June 1926.
[120] *Aftonbladet*, 6 May 1926.
[121] Ibid., 7 May 1926.
[122] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 199.
[123] Ibid.

decisions on 'Red Cross intervention in civil war situations'.[124] The ICRC, which had had to 'bow down to the opposition of the Spanish and French governments', considered that now all requirements had been fulfilled and a medical mission could be sent.[125]

Raymond Schlemmer travelled to Rabat on 5 May and French Morocco's authorities proposed to attach the ICRC mission to a Franco-Spanish medical mission already under way. Their main goal would be to provide assistance to Rifian wounded and European prisoners, and the only condition was that the ICRC 'would not act in the territory of the French Red Cross'.[126] Schlemmer travelled to Madrid on 19 May and met General Gómez-Jordana, head of the Morocco Bureau, whom he assured that the Committee had 'sought to reconcile its humanitarian duty with the diplomatic precautions required not to cause disturbance to the powers involved in the war'.[127] Spanish consent was obtained for everything that had been previously discussed and agreed between France and the ICRC.[128] The Committee decided to appoint as its delegate Dr Albert Reverdin, who had previously worked for the ICRC in the First Balkan War of 1912–13, in the Upper Silesia crisis of 1921, and during the Ruhr occupation in 1923.[129] The German, Dutch, and Swedish Red Cross societies, as well as the TRC, were asked to send aid for Reverdin's mission.[130] On 26 May the president of the FRC sent a carefully worded letter to Gustave Ador in which he stated that

> the installation of a Franco-Spanish medical mission in the territory occupied by Abdelkrim, agreed in the Oujda negotiations [of April 1926], provided the opportunity to use the channel of the Protective powers themselves to send an agreed mission of the International Committee which, led by a doctor of the International Committee and joining the Franco-Spanish mission, would not act in any way as a diplomatic delegation, but would be purely technical in nature.[131]

Final Considerations

The ICRC had finally found a way to act in the Rif. Abdelkrim's letter to the SwRC helped to overcome the sterility of unofficial British initiatives, the timid démarches of several national societies,

[124] Ibid. [125] Ibid. 198.
[126] Ibid. 140. [127] Ibid. 185.
[128] Ibid. [129] Bernard Bouvier, 'Albert Reverdin', *RICR*, 122 (Feb. 1929), 92–9.
[130] ACICR, CR 138 Rifains, I, 168. [131] Ibid. 186.

and Franco-Spanish opposition to international intervention. However, Dr Reverdin never travelled to Morocco. On 27 May 1926 Abdelkrim surrendered and the Rif Republic was dismantled, though the fighting against some minor leaders dragged on for another year. The ICRC decided to cancel its mission.[132] France had successfully neutralized the unavoidable risk inherent in any ICRC intervention—that of international recognition for Rifians—through its own medical mission (Spanish participation was prevented at the last moment by obscure means). The French mission entered the Rif in advance of Reverdin's planned trip and actually helped to obtain Abdelkrim's surrender to the French army. But the failure of the ICRC against French manœuvres cannot hide the fact that it was precisely the involvement of a strong nation such as France in the Rif War that was about to trigger an international humanitarian intervention. When the conflict had been restricted to Spain and the Rifians, both unable to mobilize enough relief for their own humanitarian needs in conventional ways, such intervention had seemed highly unlikely.

In sum, I have tried to show how, during the inter-war period, humanitarian relief initiatives presented atypical features and experienced serious problems if the warring parties were weak nation-states. International organizations such as the ICRC took such weakness either as an argument for non-intervention or as a justification for excessive precautions, often on the grounds of technical and legal issues. The ICRC moved with difficulty in the particular context of diplomatic obstruction, manipulation tactics, and self-delusion, which seemed to repeat itself in other major unconventional conflicts of the period, such as the Ethiopian War of 1935–6 and the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9, and would continue to do so in later decades, in the Nigerian–Biafran War of 1967–70 and Pakistan's civil war of 1970–1.

[132] Ibid. 168.