



Tangfeach
news (of the hearing) is still hesitant
according to today's
the Committee is still hesitant
Russians report about
understanding its
proposed assignment.
13/11

ROMIN SIOCAI BAOERACA
FRIC
10 NOV 1962
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Mr. [Signature]
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The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross and Cuba

The request by U Thant to the International Committee of the Red Cross to watch over the transport of goods to Cuba is all the more important in that it is supported by both the United States and Soviet Governments. Indeed, both great Powers had considered the possibility of contacting the International Committee before U Thant made his approach; they preferred, however, not to communicate direct with the Committee, but rather to leave that to the Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The fact that Moscow, Washington and New York are prepared to entrust the International Committee with this delicate task in the Caribbean is, in itself, a flattering tribute to its work in the service of humanity. The new consignment does not lie within the usual sphere of activity of the organisation, and there is no precedent in the century-old history of the Red Cross from which the Committee could draw guidance as to whether it should reject or comply with U Thant's request. It is reported that the Committee is in principle prepared to offer its good offices to the United Nations in the Cuban affair and will think the matter over.

The International Committee has sent its immediate ex-President, Mr. Paul Rieger (still a member of the Commit



to discuss the question with the Secretariat of the United Nations in New York. Mr. Rügger was formerly a member of the Swiss Foreign Service and was Minister at London before his appointment as President of the International Committee just after the war.

6.11.62.

In a debate on the Cuban question on the television service two days ago, ~~gave~~ doubts were expressed as to whether it would be correct for the International Committee to become involved in what would be almost, if not entirely, a military operation. The Red Cross observers could easily find themselves in a position in which one side might accuse them of partiality in carrying out the inspection of cargoes intended for Cuba. Even though the Soviet Union is now in favour of the Red Cross doing the dirty work, so to speak, a few years ago the Soviet Government expressed dissatisfaction with the principle of all-Swiss membership of the International Committee and had hard things to say about the organisation as a whole.

On the other hand, it has also been pointed out that this case is a welcome and timely proof that Swiss neutrality is of as great advantage to the cause of world peace as ever. What would the Great Powers have done if there were no neutral instance to which ~~they~~ they could appeal for help in this particularly complicated and difficult situation? This is a very effective reply to certain gentlemen in Brussels, and in the United States too, who say that neutrality is an anachronism in the second half of the twentieth century.

The text is enclosed of a press release on the Cuban question issued by the International Committee yesterday in Geneva.



Ambassador