Florence Nightingale Medal

(Under Item VIb of the Agenda of the General Commission.)

Whilst the War lasted no award of the Florence Nightingale Medal could be made. On February 3, 1941, the International Committee sent out its Circular-letter No. 363, informing the National Societies that it was considered advisable to postpone until the end of the War the eleventh award which, according to Article 2 of the new Regulation, should have taken place in March 1941.

In November 1946, the International Committee by a further Circular-letter (No. 376) informed the National Red Cross Societies that it proposed to make awards in 1947. At the same time, it requested authority to distribute more than the maximum number of 36 medals for which the new Regulation provides, on the grounds that it had not been possible to make any award in 1941, 1943 and 1945.

The names of 91 nurses and nursing auxiliaries were sent in by twenty Central Committees. From these the International Committee chose 71 candidates for the eleventh award, details of which were given in its Circular-letter No. 382 of May 12, 1947.

The International Committee has already received reports from several National Red Cross Societies describing the ceremonies of the awards of this high honour and the deep impression they made.
In one case however the medals could not be presented to the recipients of the award. In Japan, the Supreme Command Allied Forces (S.C.A.P.) in Tokyo informed the Committee through the American Red Cross, on September 5, 1947, that the award of medals by the Committee and their acceptance by the Japanese Red Cross, was inappropriate at that time.

Although the International Committee, supported by the American Red Cross, has approached the Supreme Command on this matter, the medals have not yet been presented and are still in the hands of the Committee’s delegation in Japan.

The International Committee deeply regrets this attitude. In its opinion, the work of Red Cross nurses and voluntary aids is always, and should continue to be, quite outside all strife or discord. When they are called upon to care for the wounded, they give their services to all alike, without any national or racial discrimination; they are, in turn, entitled to all due respect for the task they have assumed, and to an appreciation of the risks they accept in the course of their duties.

The International Committee would therefore be grateful if the XVIIth International Red Cross Conference would express an opinion on this point, and perhaps adopt a recommendation which might run as follows:

The XVIIth International Red Cross recommends that the Florence Nightingale Medal, founded by the IXth International Red Cross Conference held in Washington in 1912, as a tribute to nurses or voluntary aids who have given distinguished service in their devotion to the care of the sick and wounded, in time of war or in time of peace, should be presented at all times, in conformity with the regulations in force, to the person to whom it has been awarded, without such presentation being delayed, postponed or prevented for national or political motives of any kind.

The International Committee wishes to draw the attention of the Conference to another matter. In some coun-
tries, the nurses to whom the medal has been awarded are not allowed to wear it on their uniform as members of the Army Medical Service. It is true the Florence Nightingale Medal is not an honour awarded by the State, but the fact that it was founded by an International Red Cross Conference and that it is awarded with absolute impartiality by the International Committee, in accordance with the statutes and regulations passed by the International Red Cross Conferences, makes it an international distinction. In this respect also, the International Committee ventures to suggest that the XVIIth Conference should adopt a recommendation to the following effect:

Considering that the Florence Nightingale Medal is a decoration founded by the International Red Cross, that it is awarded with absolute impartiality and with the sole aim of paying tribute to nurses and voluntary aids who have given exceptionally distinguished service, the XVIIth International Red Cross Conference recommends that National Red Cross Societies should approach their respective Governments in order that sanction may be given for nurses and voluntary aids who have been awarded this medal to wear it on their uniform.
Accounts of the Florence Nightingale Medal Fund
(Year ending December 31, 1947)

Initial capital, Fr. 25,000 plus the income
accumulated up to December 31, 1946         Fr. 44,894.19
Income from securities for the year 1947.    ,      1,047.75
                                              Fr. 45,941.94

Less:
Cost of auditing, bank charges, printing,
purchase and engraving of medals,
despatch and correspondence                   Fr. 12,970.90
Total capital, as at December 31, 1947       Fr. 32,971.04

Of which the realizable value is represented by:
Nominal value                                   Fr. 34,000.00
Cash in hand at the Swiss National Bank        ,      1,344.44
                                              Fr. 35,344.44

To be deducted:
Payments outstanding for 1947                  Fr. 2,373.40
Net balance as above                           Fr. 32,971.04