

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Middle East**

Exchange of prisoners. — The Israeli and Egyptian authorities have mutually decided to release all prisoners of war held by them as a result of the conflict in June 1967 and to carry out this exchange as soon as possible at El Kantara.

The ICRC delegates in Israel and Egypt went to El Kantara on January 11 to make definite arrangements for this exchange which was to have started the next day and end on January 18. Unfortunately this action was held up by bad weather, the Sinai road having become impassable through violent sandstorms. The exchange could only be resumed on January 18. The delegates of the ICRC took part in this large-scale release operation on the Suez Canal.

Simultaneously, the Israeli Government repatriated to Jordan the last prisoners of war still held at Atlith.

Repatriation of Civilians. — On December 26, the ICRC delegates in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem organized and supervised the repatriation of a certain number of Palestinians coming from Egypt and returning to Gaza. At the same time several persons of Egyptian origin living in occupied territory at El Arish were able to return to Egypt. The repatriation operations of Palestinian and Egyptian civilians were resumed once the exchange of prisoners of war had ended on January 23, 1968.

Reuniting of families. — At the beginning of January 1968, the Israeli authorities handed over to the ICRC delegation in Amman a new list of 115 persons, originating mostly from Qalkilya and

authorized to return to their families on the West bank of the river Jordan. This is the twelfth list to appear since November 27, 1967.

Meeting of an ICRC delegate with General Moshe Dayan. — During a meeting on December 21, 1967, with Mr. Laurent Marti, the head of the ICRC delegation in Tel Aviv, General Moshe Dayan gave authorization for visits to civil prisons in occupied territory, as well as freedom of movement of ICRC delegates in all those areas.

Relief Parcels to POW's. — For the fast of Ramadan, the delegation of the ICRC in Tel Aviv handed a parcel containing food, cigarettes, soap and one blanket to each of the 4,500 prisoners in Atlith camp, who were released shortly after.

Visit to civil prisons. — After receiving permission to visit detained civilians in West bank territory, the ICRC delegation in Israel went to Nablus on December 24 where it made a thorough visit of the municipal prison. It was able to observe that the detainees were living under satisfactory hygienic conditions. Visits to other prisons on the West bank of the river Jordan will take place shortly.

In this connexion, it should be recalled that the delegates of Kuneitra received permission to visit the municipal prison there several months ago which they have done on various occasions.

The ICRC and the Allenby bridge incident. — Greatly alarmed at the incident which took place at the Allenby Bridge on January 25, 1968, the ICRC has asked its representatives in Israel and Jordan to send it a detailed report on the circumstances in which its two delegates, Mr. Pierre Tacier and Mr. Pierre Gachoud, were wounded.

This distressing incident occurred during an operation for reuniting Jordanian families, which was taking place with the assistance and full agreement of the competent Jordanian and Israeli authorities.

The Allenby Bridge has been the scene of operations for the repatriation of prisoners and refugees between Israel and Jordan under ICRC auspices since as far back as June 1967.

In view of this incident, the ICRC, being concerned for the welfare of the people it repatriates and of its delegates, will discontinue these operations until it receives from the responsible authorities binding guarantees that precautions will be taken to ensure adequate safety.

Rwanda

Since the group of 1,300 Katanga gendarmes left Rwanda, the International Committee of the Red Cross has been continuing its aid to the refugees and mercenaries from Bukavu.

Mr. Jacques de Heller, ICRC delegate, has had discussions in Rwanda with the authorities and diplomatic representatives concerned with the problem of the mercenaries' evacuation.

He also went to the camp at Shagasha where he took part in the weekly visit made by the ICRC delegates in connexion with their work of assisting the internees.

Nigeria

The International Committee of the Red Cross had chartered a "Balair" DC 6 aircraft which was ready to leave on January 16 for the secessionist State of Biafra. With a load of eight tons of medicines provided by various donors to a value of around 500,000 Sw. frs., it was also to have flown two medical teams, ten doctors, surgeons and male nurses in all, intended to relieve the medical team of the Achi hospital (Enugu) in full activity since November 17, 1967, and to strengthen the ICRC's medical action in Biafra.

Because of last minute difficulties made by the Biafra authorities and the Nigerian Federal Government, the aircraft's departure had to be cancelled. Yet, according to the latest information from the ICRC medical team in Biafra, the need for medicines has become acute.

The International Committee has therefore been trying to convince the authorities concerned of the urgent necessity of allowing this flight to proceed, otherwise thousands of people in an area devastated by war will find themselves deprived of the basic medical relief laid down in the Geneva Conventions.

Yemen

Medical Missions

Since December 20, Mr. André Rochat, head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Arabia, accompanied by five members of the ICRC's medical mission to the Yemen, has been discharging a difficult mission in the hinterland.

This consists of tending the numerous casualties of the recent fighting, many of whom would be abandoned in the desert, for only minor casualties can make their way to the ICRC's medical base at Najran; the intervening Jauf desert becomes the graveyard of many of the wounded who try to cross it. Victims of the fighting are not only soldiers, but also women, children and aged people seriously wounded in air raids.¹

In order to continue this assistance to these victims, a Swiss medical team comprising Dr. Hans Rudolf Wolfensberger and three medical orderlies, Mr. Berthold Conod, Mr. Alfred Moser and Mr. Jürgen Sitzner, left for North Yemen on January 22, to take over from the team at present on the spot. It was later joined by Dr. Maximilian Récamier of the French Red Cross, who has already carried out a mission in the Yemen and left Geneva on January 26.

At the request of the Yemen Arab Republic, the ICRC appealed to several National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to send surgeons quickly to Sanaa, the Republican capital. Dr. Ulrich Middendorp, the ICRC's head doctor for this operation, left on January 10 for Aden, where he will be joined by Mr. Alfred Isler, delegate, before proceeding to Sanaa in order to examine with the authorities ways and means of carrying out this new medical relief action.

An Appeal by the ICRC

The ICRC was informed at the beginning of January that heavy fighting was taking place around Sanaa. Mr. André Rochat,

¹ *Plates.* Convoy of food and medical supplies makes a stop in the Jauf desert on the way to the ICRC medical teams in the eastern sector of the Yemen.

Doctor-delegate treating a casualty.

head of the International Committee mission who was in the rear of the Royalist forces, stated that the civilian population near the capital had incurred many casualties.

An ICRC medical team which had been stationed in the North of the country has been able to reach the rear of the Royalist lines after a difficult march across the desert. This team consisting of Dr. Modly, Dr. Kuhn and male nurses Hermann, Hefti and Gerber, all of Swiss nationality, are caring for the victims especially women and children who have been seriously wounded by bombing attacks.

The ICRC has received from the Government of the Arab Republic of the Yemen an urgent request for medical personnel, surgeons in particular, to treat the wounded who have flowed into the Sanaa hospitals. The International Committee immediately made contact on the subject with several National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

Mr. Rochat himself tried to reach Sanaa in order to contribute to the organizing of this medical aid.

In view of the ferocity of the fighting the ICRC has made an urgent appeal to the military leaders of the two parties in conflict requesting them in particular to respect the elementary rules of the Geneva Conventions relative to the protection of the victims of war.

Vietnam

ICRC delegates have continued visiting places of detention in which Vietnamese are held by the army of the Vietnam Republic.

After visiting these camps, hospitals and screening centres, of which the inmates have been granted prisoner of war status, the ICRC representatives went to the reform centres where most of the Vietnamese arrested in connection with the hostilities are held. The delegates visited centres at Pleiku, My-Tho, Phuoc-Le, Chi-Hoa, Phu-Cuong, Rach-Gia, Bac-Lieu, Cantho, Long-Xuyen, Thu-Duc and Than-Hiep.

A doctor-delegate generally took part in the inspection visits and relief parcels were delivered to detainees.

YEMEN



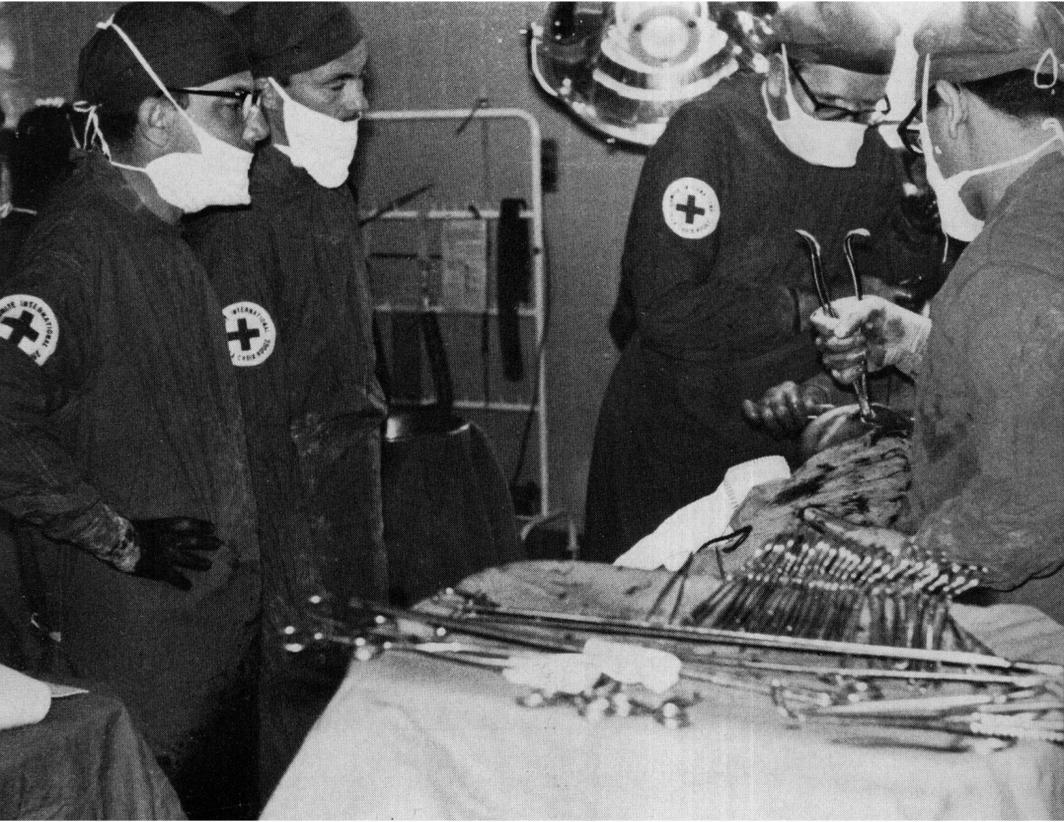
Convoy of food and medical supplies makes a stop in the Jauf desert on the way to the ICRC medical teams in the eastern sector of the Yemen.

YEMEN



Doctor-delegate treating a casualty.

ADEN



ICRC surgeons operating at government hospital in the South Yemen Republic.

SYRIA



ICRC delegate distributes blankets to refugees.

Greece

Another tour of inspection of detention centres in Greece, the fifth since the events of April 21, 1967, has been started by Mr. Laurent Marti, delegate, who went to Athens on January 16.

He was joined a week later by Mr. Charles Ammann, head of the ICRC Relief Bureau and Assistant Director.

Aden

In view of the serious shortage of medical services in Aden, the ICRC sent out on November 28, three doctor-delegates, Dr. A. Narakas, Dr. J. Parramore and Dr. A. Bloudanis.¹

This team returned to Switzerland on December 28 and for January its place has been taken by Dr. A. Pellet and Dr. H. Delgado; they arrived in Aden on December 20 and 28 respectively.

IN GENEVA

A Booklet on the Geneva Conventions

Miss A. Pfirter, head of the ICRC Nursing Personnel Service, has written a series of articles intended for nurses. She comments on those provisions of the Geneva Conventions which concern particularly military and civilian medical services and their personnel and also on those which regulate the use of the red cross sign.

These articles have now been published in French and German in a booklet.² Part of the production has been reserved by the ICRC, which can supply anybody placing orders with it. The Swiss Red Cross is the distributor for Switzerland.

¹ *Plate.* — ICRC surgeons operating at government hospital in South Yemen Republic.

² A. Pfirter: "Les Conventions de Genève", off-print of *Revue suisse des infirmières*, Soleure. Available from ICRC, price Sw.frs. 0.50. A mimeographed English version has been produced by and is available from the ICRC at the same price.