

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Korea**

The ICRC has received an inquiry from the American authorities concerning the crew of the USS "Pueblo" captured on January 23 by the forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

A request for news of these men and especially of the wounded was addressed on January 26 to the North Korean Red Cross in Pyongyang.

**Laos**

At the request of the Lao Government and Red Cross, the ICRC launched an appeal<sup>1</sup> on January 26 to the National Red Cross Societies on behalf of 25,000 refugees who have fled from the fighting areas in the North and South of the country to the Mekong river and of 500 wounded as a result of military operations which took place in the first fortnight of January on the outskirts of Luang-Prabang and in the southern provinces. These new refugees, added to the many Laotians who had preceded them in the past few years, have found temporary refuge in pagodas, other public buildings and in tents, but the government has not sufficient stocks available to provide them even with basic food supplies in the North. In addition, mosquito netting, blankets, matting and medicines are required.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *International Review*, Feb., 1968.

<sup>2</sup> *Plate.* — *Ban Dane*: Distribution of blankets and mosquito netting by the ICRC delegate in Laos.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Laos, Prince Souvanna Phouma (*facing*) examining a medical kit, donated by the ICRC, being shown him by Dr. Oudom Souvannavong, President of the Lao Red Cross (*right*) and Dr. J. Baer, delegate of the ICRC.

The ICRC has also asked for relief for the population of the northern and eastern provinces under the control of the Pathet-Lao forces. In accordance with ICRC tradition, Dr. Baer is in contact with the Pathet-Lao representative in Vientiane, with a view also to providing relief for the victims of the hostilities in those territories.

Thanks to a first consignment despatched already on January 19 by the Australian Red Cross, Dr. Jürg Baer, ICRC delegate in Vientiane, was able to bring the necessary blood plasma to the hospitals of Luang-Prabang, Vientiane and Savannakhet. The Canadian Red Cross has sent several consignments of clothing. The Indian Red Cross has announced a direct despatch of 200 blankets for displaced persons in the South and 100,000 tablets of Mepacrine for the northern and eastern provinces. The French Red Cross for its part has sent 3,000 flasks of Streptomycine direct to the Lao Red Cross.

These first contributions and the funds sent by the ICRC as an advance have enabled the Lao Red Cross, assisted by Dr. Baer, to start distributions in the Houa-Khong province on the borders of Burma and Thailand.

By February 20 the National Societies of the following countries had announced cash contributions:

Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Sweden, Luxemburg, France, United States, South Africa, Lebanon, Ecuador, Belgium, United Kingdom.

## **Thailand**

Mr. André Durand, delegate general of the ICRC in Asia, was in Bangkok from January 19 to 25 to discuss with the Thai authorities and Red Cross the situation of Vietnamese in Thailand and in particular of detainees.

It should be recalled that in August 1959 the ICRC delegate had taken part in the Rangoon talks between delegations of the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and of the Thai Red Cross with a view to the repatriation of 70,000 Vietnamese having

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taken refuge in Thailand in 1946, and who expressed the wish to be repatriated. By June 1962, 34,209 persons, in 55 sailings, had returned to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

## Rwanda

*Repatriation of a wounded ex-mercenary.* — The International Committee of the Red Cross, following on a number of representations made since December 1967, has obtained permission from the African governments concerned to evacuate on strictly humanitarian grounds a former mercenary, of French nationality, who was seriously wounded during the siege of Bukavu and paralysed since then. The Belgian and French National Red Cross Societies arranged the transit and reception at Le Bourget airport, Paris, where he arrived on February 16 escorted by an ICRC delegate, Mr. Jeangros, and a nurse.

## Nigeria

*Medical relief.* — After making several unsuccessful attempts, the latest of which was on February 16, the International Committee of the Red Cross is continuing to make representations to the Federal Government and the authorities of secessionist Biafra in order to arrange air transport of 7 tons of medical relief supplies expected for the past two months and a surgical team to replace the Swiss medical team which had to return to Europe towards the end of January on the expiry of its contract.

Mr. K. H. Jaggi, ICRC delegate in Biafra, with whom the Committee remains in touch through radio liaison established by the ICRC, has informed it of medical requirements which are critical, as well as a shortage of vitamins and powdered milk essential for children suffering from under-nourishment.

The ICRC is also considering the possibility of sending relief by sea, provided agreement is given by both sides.

*New medical teams.* — The medical team placed at the disposal of the International Committee by the Swedish Red Cross on

December 9, 1967, was replaced on February 10 by a surgical team provided by the Finnish Red Cross.

Installed in the hospital at Makurdi, a town in Federal territory North of the fighting area, it consists of a surgeon, Dr. Mauri-Aaro Koskela and two nurses, Miss Aini Kärkkäinen and Miss Raija-Liisa Hypen. The necessary medical equipment for their mission was offered by Oxfam.

The Lutheran Church, for its part, has informed the ICRC that it will provide two fully equipped mobile medical teams, which the delegates will set up in the Nsukka area and further East near Ogaja. Their task will be to care for the civilian population and also distribute food relief.

It should be recalled that UNICEF had supplied the ICRC, for its programme for Nigeria, with a considerable donation consisting of more than 200 tons of powdered milk and vitamins. These have been sent to areas where needs are acute in the Federation and in Biafra.

The Nigerian Red Cross, assisted by personnel from the Scandinavian Red Cross Societies, is actively participating in these relief distributions.

*Visits to detainees.* — The delegates of the ICRC have continued visiting prisoners of war and civilian detainees in Biafran and Federal hands.

*Appointment of a new delegate to Lagos.* — The ICRC has appointed Mr. J. R. Pierroz, formerly its correspondent in Togo, to replace Mr. Georg Hoffmann, delegate general in Africa, as head of the ICRC delegation in Lagos.

## Near East

*The ICRC and the Allenby Bridge Incident*<sup>1</sup>. — Since the beginning of the Israeli-Arab conflict the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan has played a rôle of prime importance. After being partly demolished, it was the site of exchanges and repatriation operations

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<sup>1</sup> See *International Review*, Feb. 1968.

of prisoners of war, refugees and civilians, between Israel and Jordan, arranged under the auspices of the International Committee, in agreement with the parties to the conflict.

On January 25, 1968, Mr. Jean Munier, ICRC delegate in Amman, Mr. Pierre Tacier and Mr. Pierre Gachoud, delegates in Jerusalem, together with Jordanian and Israeli liaison officers, made a rendez-vous on Allenby Bridge in order to decide upon methods of reuniting Jordanian families. This meeting, as the previous ones, took place with the full agreement of the authorities concerned.

At about 3 p.m. firing suddenly broke out. Shortly afterwards, during a lull, the Israeli officer and the two ICRC delegates from Jerusalem who were present at the ICRC meeting, found themselves on the Jordan East bank and wanted to cross over to the West bank. Whilst they were crossing the bridge firing was renewed. Two Israeli soldiers were killed and two others wounded. Mr. Tacier and Mr. Gachoud immediately went to their aid when they too were fired upon. Taking advantage of a further pause of over an hour after these incidents, Mr. Munier was able to have the wounded evacuated and the two delegates taken by car to Jericho whence a helicopter of the Israeli army transported them to the Hadassa hospital in Jerusalem.

Mr. Tacier's wounds from four bullets are fairly serious; Mr. Gachoud has less severe injuries.

The Israeli Minister of Defence, General Moshe Dayan, personally visited the two wounded men on January 26 at the Hadassa hospital. Mr. Abba Eban, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel, as well as the permanent representative of Israel in Geneva sent messages of sympathy to the President of the ICRC.

The Jordanian authorities too made a point of conveying, through the ICRC Amman delegate, their good wishes for the recovery of the two wounded delegates who have declared their intention of continuing their mission in Jerusalem as soon as they are healed.

As a result of this incident, the ICRC has decided that no further meeting or repatriation of civilians can take place at the Allenby Bridge so long as the Israeli and Jordanian Governments are unable to ensure the safety of ICRC delegates and civilians repatriated through their efforts from both banks of the Jordan.

In addition, safety measures taken by the two Governments involved will have to be communicated to the ICRC in Geneva.

A suggestion made by Mr. Michel Martin, ICRC delegate in Israel and Mr. Munier, delegate in Jordan, to demilitarize to a depth of one km. behind the Allenby Bridge during meetings and repatriations, seems to have met with the approval of the Israeli and Jordanian Governments. Its implementation is now being studied.

*Reuniting of families.* — On January 20, the ICRC delegates at Tel Aviv and Cairo went to El Qantara for a repatriation operation of fifty Palestinian families coming from Egypt and going to Sinai and of four families of Egyptian prisoners of war to Egypt.

*Exchange of prisoners of war.* — As expected, the exchange of all prisoners of war between Egypt and Israel came to an end on January 23, 1968, with the repatriation of a certain number of Egyptian civilians interned at Ramleh, in exchange for the remaining Israeli prisoners of war.

Mr. Abba Eban, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a message addressed to the ICRC in Geneva, personally thanked the ICRC delegates who mounted and supervised this vast operation.

The UAR authorities for their part expressed their gratitude to Mr. Marcel Boisard, ICRC delegate in Cairo, for the excellent organization of that exchange.

## Yemen

*North Yemen.* — The Swiss medical team placed at the disposal of the ICRC by the Swiss Red Cross left Geneva on January 22 for Djeddah and Najran. It was joined on the 26th by a French Red Cross doctor. Under the direction of Mr. André Rochat, delegate general of the ICRC in the Arab Peninsula, the medical team reached its place of work on February 8 behind the Royalist lines near Sanaa.

This new team relieves the one which has just returned to Switzerland and which was directed by Dr. Peter Kuhn and Dr. Tibor Modly with the co-operation of male nurses Heinrich

Hefti, Hans Gerber and Mr. Jean-Paul Hermann, the latter having extended his engagement.

On his return to Geneva, Dr. Kuhn described the pitiful situation of the wounded in the Royalist army and the civilian population. The only medical relief from which they benefit is that brought to them by the ICRC.

“ Any seriously wounded man is condemned to die without aid, in the firing line as well as in the rear ”, commented the doctor-delegate on returning from Jihana, a small village situated on the edge of the desert.

The ICRC teams are safe only at night under cover of which they work continuously, operating and treating the wounded lying in heaps on the ground.

To alleviate this shocking state of affairs to some extent, the ICRC has decided to develop its medical action in North Yemen by installing a completely equipped field hospital which will probably be sited at Marib one day's drive from Jihana.

*Sanaa.* — Dr. Ulrich Middendorp, doctor-delegate of the ICRC, accompanied by Mr. Alfred Isler, delegate, left Aden for Taiz from where they reached Sanaa on January 30. They were received the next day by General Amri, in the presence of the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Economy. Medical needs of the Republican capital were discussed at the meeting. Dr. Middendorp after having talked with the authorities and visited the hospitals was able to assess how very great the needs were. There are only five doctors at present in Sanaa (three Chinese and two Italians).

## Aden

*New ICRC medical teams.* — The Rumanian and Bulgarian Red Cross have placed at the disposal of the International Committee, for its medical action in Aden, two surgeons Dr. Clement Baciu and Dr. Nicolas Ionescu, who arrived there on January 25, followed on January 28 by the Bulgarian surgeons, Dr. Isanin Dobrev and Dr. Stanislas Baev.