

## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE'S ACTION IN THE YEMEN

There has been a recent intensification of military operations in various parts of the Yemen where the civil war continues between the Republican Government of Sanaa and the Imam El Badr, entrenched in the mountains which are difficult of access. This situation accentuates the importance of the task assumed by the International Committee of the Red Cross whose medical personnel sent to the spot is caring for the largest possible number of victims. Conditions of work, in view of the seasonal oppressive heat, are extremely hard, but the ICRC delegates are none the less continuing their mission of which the present events demonstrate the absolute necessity.

*At the Uqhd field hospital.*—From April 29 to May 31, 99 wounded and sick have been admitted to the ICRC hospital. Of these, 32 are convalescent cases, 25 were treated for wounds, 13 have had to undergo one or more operations, 13 have serious tropical diseases, 13 are suffering from tuberculosis.

In the same month, 107 operations were performed in the "Clinobox", with its modern operating theatre, its X-ray theatre (446 X-ray examinations in one month) and its laboratory in which 989 analyses were performed in May alone.

During the same period 6,685 consultations were given at the dispensary, that is to say, 1,257 more than in April. Since the hospital was set up, the number of consultations has almost reached 26,000.

All this work has been accomplished by a team of about 30 persons, including six or seven doctors assisted by nursing and technical staff.

Work continues to exceed its normal capacity. The wounded, coming from various fighting zones, arrive there almost daily, but as seen by figures given in our last issue, the doctors and their assistants also care for large numbers of civilians.

These for the most part, are also victims of the conflict. In fact, the military operations have in many places resulted in destruction to crops and fruit thus forcing considerable numbers of the pop-

ulation to fall back on areas lacking in resources. As a result under-nourishment and the absence of hygiene are causing much sickness. Furthermore bombing continues to cause deaths and wounds amongst the civilian population, several of whom are also suffering from nervous shock. In general, it can be seen that fear of aerial bombing diminishes physical resistance. In normal times the inhabitants could have their sick treated at the hospital at Sanaa, but this has been prevented by the hostilities and they now have no other alternative but to transport them to Uqhd, the only hospital establishment in North Yemen.

*At Sanaa.*—Thanks to the International Committee of the Red Cross, 900 wards of a large orphanage in Sanaa, whose ages range from 6 to 15, receive a ration of milk each morning. By degrees the ICRC delegates have arranged for the daily distribution to be carried out by the staff and children themselves. The same milk allowance is also given to 170-180 children in another institution in the town. There are therefore over one thousand children receiving ICRC assistance each day in the form of 20 kilos of whole milk, 22½ kilos of skimmed milk, 15 kilos of sugar, 400 packets and 4 bottles of vitamin products. The ICRC delegates, in their reports, emphasize the distress which is rampant, not only in the capital where milk should be distributed in all schools, but also in provincial centres such as Taiz and Hodeida where the living standard is very low, and in such places as Saada and Marib which are directly affected by the war.

In co-operation with the Yemeni Ministry of Health, the ICRC has distributed soap to the women undergoing treatment in the two Sanaa dispensaries and also cheese to the most needy patients.

*Doctors' impressions on returning from the Yemen.*—The ICRC in Geneva has just been visited by two doctors who devoted themselves for several months to Yemeni victims of the events. These were Dr. Johann de Puoz, until recently Head Medical Officer of the Uqhd field hospital and Dr. Ernesto de Villagas, a Spanish surgeon delegated by the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic, who has worked for five months in the Yemen. Dr. de

Puoz stressed the fact that the Uqhd hospital, both by its location and by its equipment and size, was adapted as well as possible under the circumstances. He noted that, in order to bring effective relief to the distress caused by the civil war, the Red Cross could not have been able to be contented with less technical means. As regards the geographical position of the hospital he considers that it could not be more satisfactory, since Uqhd is relatively sheltered from the military operations and can receive wounded from nearly all the fighting areas to the East and North-East of Sanaa.

Dr. de Villegas, for his part, emphasized the hospital's effectiveness and stated: "Thanks to the many laboratory examinations and observations made by the first doctors to arrive at Uqhd, it is now possible to cure certain tropical illnesses more rapidly. In surgery as well, the doctors of the Red Cross have made progress as can be seen by this example: at the outset, cases of "madura foot" (swelling gangrene of the foot or leg) resulted in amputation, now this disease can be treated medically and the affected limb saved in time".

After having traversed numerous regions of the Yemen, Dr. de Villegas described as "disastrous" the medical situation of the civilian population, especially on the Royalist side. "The inhabitants there", he said, "are completely out off from the outside world. In the arid mountains in which they have taken refuge, there is a shortage of water and a total absence of vegetation. Under-nourishment diminishes physical resistance, especially amongst the women and children. In spite of a relatively healthy climate, tuberculosis causes increasing havoc. The war, by making the Yemenis abandon the few rules of hygiene which they used to observe, has resulted in an increase of such diseases as bilharzia, gangrene, typhus and even malaria. The polluted water of the oases, generally the only available supply, contains every sort of harmful germ and encourages the spreading of disease."

*Many wounded in the Western sector.*—Fighting has become intensified chiefly to the North-West of Sanaa, resulting in large numbers of dead and wounded. Dr. Maximilien Récamier and Dr. Jean-Pascal Grellety-Bosviel, who are working in this sector, are

at present overwhelmed and they can no longer give treatment to all who require it.

Accompanied by Dr. Reinhold Wepf, the new Head Medical Officer of the Uqhd Hospital and two other delegates, Mr. André Rochat, Head of the ICRC mission in the Yemen, has left Sanaa, capital of the Republic, for the Western sector in order to give a helping hand to the medical team. He has the intention, in agreement with the two belligerents, to cross the lines and to proceed to the Royalist lines where needs are greatest. At the same time, the representative of the ICRC counts on bringing aid to prisoners held by the Royalist forces in this sector and ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken for their safety.

*Action on behalf of Republican war disabled.*—A delegate of the ICRC, Mr. Charles de Blonay, has escorted a group of eight amputated war disabled from Sanaa, capital of the Yemen Republic, to Cairo. This makes a total of 18 who have benefited from this joint action of the ICRC and the Red Crescent of the United Arab Republic.

The disabled are admitted to the Red Crescent hospital in Cairo, where they are fitted with artificial limbs from the workshop of the "Centre of the Organization of aid to veterans of the UAR". At the Centre, the disabled are given rehabilitation treatment enabling them to become adjusted to their artificial limbs. In some cases, Red Crescent surgeons even make rectifications to amputated limbs. Other members of this National Society give moral support to these unfortunate ones, who also receive a weekly allowance whilst in the Egyptian capital.

The ICRC contributes financially to this action and the Egyptian authorities assure free transport from the Yemen to Cairo.

*A letter of joyful news.*—The Central Tracing Agency at ICRC headquarters in Geneva continues to ensure the exchange of correspondence between prisoners of war held in the Yemen and their families. The arrival of a letter from a close relative of whom the family has had no news for a long time and transmitted by Geneva, is always a great event, as can be seen by the following extracts of a brother's reply to a prisoner: . . . "It was as if a new

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life was beginning for us when we had your letter, since we knew nothing of you for the past ten months . . .”.

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**GENEVA CONVENTIONS**

In its number of June last, the *International Review* mentioned the participation of the Republic of Niger in the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, thus bringing to one hundred the number of countries definitely parties to the Conventions.

Two further countries of Africa have since confirmed their participation in the Conventions. These are Rwanda, which has declared the Geneva Conventions applicable to that country by reason of their previous ratification by Belgium in 1952, and Uganda, whose declaration of accession to the said Conventions will take effect on November 18, 1964.

There are now one hundred and two States bound to the Conventions by ratification, accession or declaration of continuity.

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