

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

Cyprus

The presence of a delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross continues to be of the greatest usefulness for the Greek and Turkish communities. No day passes without it being called upon to solve difficult humanitarian problems arising from the events.

Because of the blockading of certain areas inhabited by Turkish Cypriots, the ICRC has been trying, together with the United Nations, to obtain relaxations enabling these localities to receive food supplies.

On the other hand, thanks to their prestige, the delegates are able to facilitate, as far as possible, visits and the transfer of families in different parts of the island.

We would also mention that Professor Michel Jéquier and Dr. Paul Rüggi, the two doctors whom the ICRC has sent to Cyprus to give treatment to persons deprived of medical care as a result of the events, have been able to respond to a certain number of urgent appeals. They have, on the other hand, attempted to negotiate an agreement by which Turkish Cypriot doctors could travel freely in the interior of the island, in order to care for the members of their community.

Yemen

For some time past, medical personnel and patients at the ICRC hospital at Uqhd in North East Yemen have once more a sufficient water supply. The water-truck graciously offered by Prince Faisal, Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, in fact arrived at

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the field hospital on August 29 after three days' hard going on desert tracks.

Having left Taïf, in the centre of the Hejaz, the truck with a capacity of 10,000 litres was driven by two members of the Swiss team working at Uqhd and was accompanied by a Saudi escort. It was welcomed with joy and relief by the hospital's small community which had for several weeks been restricted to only a few hundred litres of water a day. This is indeed a small amount when one considers that the temperature often reaches 50°C in the shade.

Dr. Hoffmann, the Head Doctor of the hospital, had moreover already drawn the attention of the ICRC to this critical state of affairs. The previous vehicle had been rendered unserviceable as a result of the sand storms and the excessive heat prevailing and it was consequently necessary to use the most rudimentary methods to fetch water 18 miles away.

The departure of the U.N. observer mission, whose mandate in the Yemen officially expired on September 4, is making the task of the ICRC's delegation even more difficult. Delegates, especially those who were stationed at Sanaa, in fact benefited from United Nations' support as regards air and radio communication. The loss of these facilities will involve the International Committee in further expense at a particularly critical moment of its mission.

In Sanaa, capital of the Arab Republic of the Yemen, the two ICRC delegates are continuing their daily distributions of milk, which have in fact been taking place for many months. These have been made to 600 war orphans and another group of 200 young boys being educated under government auspices. The delegation has also distributed certain quantities of cheese.

It should be added that three tons of powdered milk and a consignment of medicines left Geneva for Sanaa.

Congo

The ICRC was requested to carry out a humanitarian programme on behalf of the civilian population in the territories under the control of the "National Liberation Committee of the Congo". Consequently the ICRC has directed Dr. J. M. Rubli to join the ICRC delegates already on the spot, Mr. G. Hoffmann and Mr. G. C. Senn, in order to co-ordinate with them any possible action to help the victims of the armed disturbances in the Congo. Various steps have been taken in order to make arrangements to send an ICRC mission to the towns controlled by the Stanleyville authorities.

The military operations which are taking place in the Congo (Leopoldville) have caused much suffering and considerable anxiety concerning the civilian population in certain areas of that country. Wishing to come to the aid of the victims of these events, the International Committee of the Red Cross, after long and difficult negotiations, succeeded in obtaining the agreement of all parties concerned for a mission to be sent to Stanleyville.

The ICRC immediately chartered a DC 4 aircraft which left on September 25 for Stanleyville with red cross markings. On board were six delegates, five of whom are doctors. These are Mr. G. C. Senn, Drs. Jean-Maurice Rubli, Wolfgang Schuster, Edwin Spirgi, Markus Knoblauch and Hans Kummer. The aircraft transported six tons of equipment, four of which consist of medicines and surgical supplies.

The object of this mission is to come to the aid, irrespective of race or nationality and in accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions, of all those in need of assistance as a result of the events.

The delegation of the ICRC was met on arrival by Mr. Soumialot and Mr. Gbenye, in the name of the local authorities, who thanked the ICRC representatives for having come to carry out their humanitarian task at this difficult time.

The foodstuffs and medical supplies were unloaded and were received gratefully by the authorities. This relief consignment will alleviate the critical situation.

On taking off for Bangui, the aircraft carried some 800 family messages from civilian residents in Stanleyville. These messages were immediately forwarded to the addressees.

The ICRC is continuing its discussions with the Stanleyville authorities with a view to carrying out its mission on a larger scale.

Rwanda

Mr. J. P. Boillot, of the Protestant mission at Remera, on the request of the ICRC delegate, Mr. G. C. Senn, has agreed to organize during the next few months and in his capacity as leader of the Central Committee of the Rwanda Red Cross, the setting up of five branches of the Red Cross in the main administrative districts, i.e. at Butare, Gitarama, Nyanza, Ruhengeri and Kigali. This project has received the unqualified approval of the President of the Republic of Rwanda, Mr. Kayibanda.

Accompanied by Mr. Laurent Marti, assistant delegate, Mr. Senn visited the Ruhengeri prison where he prevailed on the authorities to apply the humanitarian principles laid down in the Geneva Conventions.

Burundi

H. M. the Mwami Mwambutsa IV, King of Burundi, received Mr. G. C. Senn, ICRC delegate, in audience in the presence of Mr. Bimpenda, head of protocol. This took place following a recommendation by Dr. Pie Masumbuko, Minister of Health.

The discussion mainly concerned the repatriation of sixteen Congolese militia who are under the protection of the Burundi gendarmerie, the immediate future of some 10,000 Tututsi refugees in the Burundi camp of Murore and the improvements which could in general be effected for the benefit of all victims of events such as detainees, refugees and hospital patients.

During their visit to Burundi, Mr. Senn and Mr. Laurent Marti inspected the main prison at Bujumbura.

Laos

Following the appeal launched on June 8 by the League of Red Cross Societies in agreement with the Laotian Red Cross and the ICRC, donations have been pouring into Vientiane, where Dr. Jurg Baer, ICRC delegate, has been attending to their distribution.

On a proposal from its general delegate for Asia, Mr. André Durand, and from Dr. Baer, the International Committee of the Red Cross decided to contribute to the refugee relief by a donation of 2,500 dollars. This will make it possible to erect five huts at the reception centre. So far the only accommodation has been in covered stands at That Luang. These homes will be the first step towards resettlement of the refugees.

The reception centre near Ban Sam Khé, a few miles from Vientiane, consists of 50 houses and will be called Ban Ammon (the village of those who have escaped death).

Mr. Keo Viphakom, Secretary of State for Social Welfare, is contemplating the construction of other villages for refugees.

Viet Nam

The International Committee, which has already made a number of visits this year to detainees held by the authorities of the Republic of Viet Nam (South) as a result of the events, has recently made representations on behalf of American nationals, military and civilians, captured by the forces of the "National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam". It has approached the NLF delegates in Algiers and Prague to that effect, but so far it has received no reply.

The ICRC communicated with the Cambodian Red Cross, which replied that it would not be in a position to ensure transmission of mail and parcels. For their part the Khmer authorities stated that they knew nothing of any suggestion along these lines. In spite of these disappointing replies, the ICRC is continuing to take steps. It does not despair of reaching some positive result as was previously the case at the time of the revolts similar to the one which is at present taking place in South Viet Nam.

Brazil

At the request of the Chinese Red Cross the ICRC approached the Brazilian authorities through the intermediary of its honorary delegate, Mr. Eric Haegler, in order to obtain permission for the wives of three of the nine Chinese interned in Brazil to spend some time in Rio de Janeiro so that they might visit their husbands.

The negotiations were successful and the three Chinese wives from Peking arrived in Brazil on August 24. With official agreement they were able immediately to see their husbands in prison. This first visit was followed by several others.

Stamps issue for the benefit of the ICRC

To commemorate the Centenary of the Red Cross the Vatican is to make a special issue of postage stamps.

The countervalue of 50,000 sets will be remitted to the ICRC as a contribution towards its actions, particularly in the Yemen.

Transparencies: Henry Dunant and the ICRC

The ICRC has produced three series of colour transparencies on Henry Dunant and the movement which he founded.

These series are entitled respectively : " Henry Dunant, 1828-1910 ", " The First Years of the ICRC " and " The ICRC in Geneva ". Each one consists of six views of a high technical standard and the three series together cover everything interesting to be seen and known about Dunant and the ICRC. They are very useful to illustrate lectures or to explain the Red Cross to young people. Each picture has an appropriate sub-title in French, German, English and Spanish, and a small explanatory booklet in each of these four languages goes with the slides, and can be obtained from the ICRC, Geneva.