

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Yemen

The International Review already mentioned last month that the ICRC has decided to prolong its medical activity at the Uqhd Hospital, as well as through its mobile medical teams.¹ This activity continues to be considerable and the brief information given below, covering a period of several weeks, gives sufficient proof of this :

During the first fortnight of April, as a result of the departure of pilgrims to Mecca the number of patients at the Uqhd hospital declined from 50 to 44. During the same period, the polyclinic treated 792 cases of which 215 were new.

The Uqhd field hospital weekly statistics showed for the week ending May 1, 66 admissions to hospital, 44 of them being war wounded.

The daily average consultations at the polyclinic amounted to 130.

*

Dr. Giovanni Bass, ICRC doctor delegate, accompanied by male nurse Ernst Zuberbühler, carried out a medical mission in the Jauf region from April 5 to 9.

The two men visited 20 Egyptian prisoners of war detained at Hajlah to whom they handed clothing, medicaments, foodstuffs and mail. They medically inspected not only the prisoners but also a number of Yemeni, before proceeding on their way to Oquaba, Boa and El Changer where they treated some local inhabitants and detainees. They then returned via Hajlah to their base at Uqhd.

*

¹ *Plate : General view of the Uqhd Hospital.*



General view of the ICRC hospital at Uqhd in the Yemeni desert.

The Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross mission to the Yemen, Mr. André Rochat, has just visited the Sheikdom of Bahrein (an archipelago in the Persian gulf), where he was officially received by the Sovereign, Sheik Khalifah bin Sulman al Khalifah. He explained to His Highness the ICRC's main activities in the Middle East, particularly in the Yemen. The Prince expressed his lively interest in the work of the Red Cross in Arab countries and by way of encouragement decided to make a special financial contribution.

On the invitation of the Sheik, Mr. Rochat visited government hospitals and also the hospital at the prison where persons wounded during recent riots in Bahrein were undergoing treatment.

*

A few days after his appointment, Mr. Hussein al Majdami, Minister of Health of the Yemen Arab Republic, convened the delegates of the ICRC in Sanaa, with whom he desired to make personal contact.

Discussions centered on the various ICRC activities in the Yemen, notably assistance to Yemeni war disabled who have been fitted with artificial limbs under the terms of an agreement between the ICRC and the Red Crescent Society of the UAR. More than half of those scheduled to benefit from this scheme have already been in hospital in Cairo for the fitting of artificial limbs. A further group of disabled is about to leave for the Egyptian capital.

The Minister personally thanked the ICRC on behalf of the Yemeni population for its relief in the form of food which it has continuously been giving since the beginning of hostilities.

In addition, the ICRC mobile teams in the Yemen Republic are still visiting regions where medical requirements are sometimes considerable and where inhabitants have often not seen a doctor for months or even years.

The ICRC delegates informed the Minister of the forthcoming arrival of a fresh team under Dr. H. Steiner, to replace Dr. Peter Möhr's team. It will work for several days among the Beni Ma'tar tribe at Hada and will then go to Damahr, south-south-east of Sanaa. As in previous actions the less serious cases will be treated

on the spot and the patients with more severe illnesses will be taken to hospital in Sanaa.

The Minister of Health thanked the ICRC delegation for its dedication to its task and gave his assurance of support for the continuation of the ICRC mission.

*

“ There is an immense need of medical supplies in the Yemen ” wrote an ICRC delegate. The situation seems particularly acute in the Medressa el Aitam school for orphans, where the ICRC has been distributing powdered milk for over a year. The well equipped infirmary is efficiently operated by an intelligent and dedicated young Yemeni ; however, it is almost completely lacking in the supplies it needs to care for the children in the school.

The shortage of medical supplies is also being felt at the Republican hospital in Sanaa. The ICRC has been requested to help by those in charge.

*

In the month of March alone, the ICRC distributed 900 kilos of milk to hospitals, schools and dispensaries in Sanaa.

*

On April 20 1965, Mr. Marcel Boisard, ICRC delegate, went to the El Kalaa Prison (citadel of Sanaa) where he delivered correspondence to prisoners, who handed him mail for distribution to their families.

On April 27, he visited the El Rahda prison, also at Sanaa. There are 65 political prisoners held here, all of Yemeni nationality. The delegate handed medical supplies of prime necessity to the infirmary.

The present head of the Uqhd hospital is Dr. Ulrich Midden-dorp ; he had already been at Uqhd at the end of 1963 and beginning of 1964 together with his wife, who is also a doctor and who is again working with him.

Mr. Rainer Siegenthaler has been appointed surgeon in charge of the second medical team in Sanaa; he left Switzerland on May 19.

Following the training course at the ICRC headquarters in Geneva, last March, two new delegates, Mr. Armand Josi and Mr. Hubert Bettin, have just enlisted under the ICRC standard. The former is stationed in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, while the second is in the eastern sector in the interior of the Yemen.

*

From the above, it can be seen that the ICRC continues to intervene on the Royalist as well as on the Republican side. Relevant figures were drawn up at the end of April, 1965. These refer to the ICRC's medical action in North Yemen since 1963, as follows :

A. Personnel

Since November 19, 1963, 7 medical teams each consisting of some thirty persons (doctors, technicians, drivers, etc.) have followed each other.

The present total personnel at the Uqhd Hospital amounts to 20, all of whom are Swiss nationals.

B. Medical activity in the Royalist zone

Number of patients hospitalized : 1,148

Average occupation of hospital :

— 110 to 130 patients in first few months.

— at present approx. 60 patients

*Number of consultations at hospital's polyclinic : 44,500
(i.e. about 13,000 persons)*

Number of consultations given by mobile teams : 10,200

*Approximate total of consultations : 54,700
(i.e. about 16,600 persons)*

Number of surgical operations carried out in the Clinobox : 1,299

C. Medical activity in the Republican zone

*Number of consultations given by the medical team at
Sanaa : 920*

D. Costs of action

*Total expenses at the Ughd Hospital : 2,700,000 Sw.fr.s.
(equipment and working charges)*

General Mission and Delegation at Jeddah : . 900,000 „

Donations received to date : 1,500,000 „

Viet Nam

After an interruption of nearly 6 years, the ICRC was able, in February 1964, to resume its visits to Vietnamese prisoners held by the authorities of the Republic of Viet Nam (South) as a result of the conflict. This action, undertaken jointly with the National Red Cross at Saigon, also enabled distributions of relief to be made.

At the same time, the Central Tracing Agency of the ICRC in Geneva received several enquiries concerning foreign nationals, chiefly American citizens, missing in South Viet Nam since 1962 and the International Committee intervened with the National Front of Liberation of South Viet Nam with a view to tracing them. The NFL delegates with whom the ICRC communicated in Algiers and Prague have not, however, so far been in a position to reply to these requests. On the other hand, the NFL in its publications and broadcasts has confirmed the capture of several Americans.

Having learnt that the NFL had agreed in early 1964 to prisoners' receiving parcels and being able to exchange news with their families through the intermediary of the Cambodian Red Cross, the ICRC sent parcels and mail which it had received to that National Society. These consignments were duly handed over on February 12, 1965, to the secretariat of the NFL delegation to the Indochinese People's Conference at Phnom-Penh. Distribution was to be made by the "Red Cross of Liberation of South Viet Nam".

Meanwhile, one of the American pilots whose aircraft had been shot down during the bombing raids in North Viet Nam in August 1964 was taken prisoner by the forces of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. At the family's request, the ICRC made contact with the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam at Hanoi which undertook to transmit family messages and parcels to the prisoners. The Central Tracing Agency has also transmitted mail from the families of American airmen captured at the beginning of 1965.

Laos

On the occasion of the Laotian New Year which took place from April 16 to 19, Mr. Jürg Baer, delegate of the ICRC, together with leading personalities of the Laotian Red Cross, visited various hospitals.

400 sick and wounded then benefited from relief, consisting of food and mosquito nets, to which the ICRC contributed.

Japan

The 123rd and 124th vessels transporting Koreans wishing to leave Japan to go places of their choosing in their country of origin, left the port of Niigata respectively on March 27 with 191 persons on board and on April 23 with 192.

The total number of persons repatriated under the auspices of the Japanese Red Cross, in the presence of ICRC delegates, since the start of operations in December 1959, has now reached 83,117.

Congo

Mr. G. C. Senn, ICRC delegate, visited the Central Stanleyville prison on April 6 ; 747 detainees, mostly political, were held there.

On April 16, he went to the Central Prison at Paulis (133 detainees).

At the N'Dolo prison, the ICRC delegation, with the help of the Red Cross of the Congo, organized a weekly distribution of foodstuffs to prisoners from Angola.

The president of the ICRC in Pakistan and India

In the course of his visit to the Far East, Mr. Samuel A. Gonard, President of the International Committee, accompanied by Mr. Jean-Pierre Maunoir, delegate, stopped for a few days in Pakistan, where he was joined by Mr. André Durand, general delegate for the Far East. On May 5, the members of the ICRC mission were received in Karachi by the Executive Chairman of the Pakistan Red Cross, Syed Wajid Ali Shah and by members of the Central Committee and on May 7, they were received in Lahore by the Begum Vigar-un-Nisa Noon, Chairman of the western branch of this National Society. The mission studied the activities undertaken by the Pakistan Red Cross and visited a number of relief institutions. On May 6, the President of the ICRC and the members of the delegation were received in audience by the head of the State, Marshal Ayub Khan. The limited time at their disposal, to their regret, did not allow them to visit the eastern branch of the National Red Cross Society.

The ICRC mission left for New Delhi on May 8, where it was received by General C. K. Lakshmanan, Secretary-General of the Indian Red Cross and by leading members of the National Society. Mr. Gonard was received on May 10 by the President of the Indian Republic, Mr. Radhakrishnan and on the same day had a discussion with Mrs. Lakshmi Menon, Minister for Foreign Affairs. He also visited the central office of the National Red Cross and that of the Red Cross for the Delhi district. He also met a group of the Junior Red Cross and was shown a number of Indian Red Cross activities.

In both countries President Gonard and the delegation were received with warm welcome; they were able to establish and renew useful contacts with the leaders of the Red Cross Societies

and with official circles in an atmosphere of mutual confidence. The ICRC President left New Delhi on May 12 for Bangkok.

We will be returning in our next number to this journey which has continued via Manila to Tokyo, where the delegation is at the time of our going to press.

Santo Domingo

The General Delegate of the ICRC for Latin America, Mr. Pierre Jequier, left on May 11, 1965 for Santo Domingo. He was entrusted with giving help to the Dominican Red Cross, which had requested the ICRC's aid in view of the numerous tasks imposed upon it by the present events.

On his arrival in the island, he made contact with those in charge of the National Society as well as with the leaders of the two opposing forces. He was received by General Imbert Barreras, head of the Government Junta, who gave him assurances as regards the application of the Geneva Conventions and also authorized him to visit all detainees arrested for political reasons.

Mr. Jequier also met Colonel Francisco Caamano, head of the Constitutional Junta. The ICRC delegate attempted to obtain from both sides the conclusion of a truce to enable the wounded to be evacuated. This proposal was accepted after numerous discussions and a humanitarian truce took place on May 21. It enabled the Dominican Red Cross to intervene by collecting the wounded, picking up corpses and partly evacuating overcrowded hospitals which it supplied with medicaments and food.

On May 27, an assistant delegate of the ICRC, Mr. Serge Nessi, left Geneva. He has been charged with seconding Mr. Jequier in his mission.
