

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Indonesia

Assistance to Refugees in Borneo.—In compliance with the Indonesian Red Cross request to the International Committee of the Red Cross in February, Mr. André Durand, delegate general for Asia, was in Indonesia from March 7-25 to examine the critical situation of some 50,000 people of Chinese descent who fled from their villages last October after violent demonstrations against them.

The Indonesian government had requested the National Red Cross to assist in providing for the needs of these 10,000 families concentrated at Pontianak and Singkawang in West Borneo.

The ICRC delegate confirmed the Society's need for assistance in the form of foodstuffs and medicines for about 6 months, pending resettlement of the displaced families. Nothing short of an international appeal to National Societies would provide the humanitarian assistance so urgently required. This appeal was launched on April 19.

Donations have already been sent, both direct to Indonesia and to ICRC headquarters.

Vietnam

Geneva Conventions. — Following the appeal on February 9 to all belligerents urging them to respect the essential humanitarian rules in the conduct of the conflict in Vietnam, the ICRC received from the Republic of Vietnam and US governments the assurance that the Geneva Conventions would continue to be respected. The Vietnamese authorities denied the reports of summary executions.

Mr. Robert Jenny, Head of the ICRC Delegation in Saigon, also conveyed to the authorities the ICRC's concern about the air raids carried out on certain districts of the towns during the February fighting and the losses which occurred among the civilian population.

Visits to detention centres in South Vietnam. — In the first quarter of 1968, ICRC delegates visited prisoner of war camps at Bien-Hoa, Can-Tho, Da Nang, Phu-Quoc and Qui-Nhon, the screening centres at Nui-Dat (under Australian control), Dong-Tam, Can-Tho, Chu-Lai, Phu-Bay and Da Nang (under American control) and the Da Nang camp under Korean control. They also visited North Vietnamese prisoners held by the Americans at Da Nang and the Cong-Hoa military hospital.

The number of prisoners thus visited was 10,540. The delegates talked freely without witnesses to prisoners of their own choosing and later conveyed their observations and requests to the Detaining Authorities, following up with written reports.

Middle East

Visits to detainees. — The delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Israel have been continuing since the beginning of the year to make regular visits to detainees in prisons at Nablus, Tulkarm, Hebron, Ramallah, Gaza, Ramleh and Damoun. They were able to speak without witnesses with prisoners of their own choosing.

Thanks to the delegates' visits appreciable improvements were made in the detention conditions.

Jordan West bank. — The ICRC has continued the large-scale relief action for civilians in need undertaken since October 1967. It has sent out there a further stock of 20 tons of powdered milk which has been distributed in schools, orphanages, etc. and to needy persons by its delegates and with the help of the local branches of the Red Crescent.

Kuneitra. — On March 20, 1968, the Syrian authorities returned to the Israeli authorities, through the intermediary of the ICRC, the bodies of two Israeli soldiers who had been missing on Mount Hermon since November 20, 1967.

Syria. — As a result of a fire which destroyed a relief depot belonging to the Syrian Government in Damascus, the ICRC has forwarded to Syria, 30 tons of used clothing from the German Red Cross (Federal Republic). The Swiss Red Cross has also handed

over to the ICRC, for Syrian use, 3 tons of worn clothing, 2,000 blankets and some new clothing.

Visit to El Fatah prisoners. — The ICRC delegates in Jerusalem recently visited sixty El Fatah prisoners captured during the fighting on March 21 and who were in the Jenin prison on the Jordan West Bank. They had not so far been able to talk alone with these detainees by the end of April.

Representations are being pursued to obtain for all detainees arrested on March 21 treatment similar to that of prisoners of war, namely the right to visit them without witnesses and separate detention.

Relief to El Arish. — The delegates of the ICRC in Gaza have undertaken, in cooperation with the CARE Agency, relief distribution to some 10,000 persons in need at El Arish.

Seventy-five tons of food from the Egyptian Red Crescent are at present being distributed as daily rations to the beneficiaries of this action.

A further consignment from the UAR Red Crescent has been announced and will be distributed shortly. This will consist of food relief, cloth, clothing and first-aid medicines. Discussions are being held between the ICRC delegates in Israel and the country's authorities to decide upon methods of routing these supplies.

El Arish Red Crescent. — As a result of a number of representations made by the ICRC delegates to the Israeli authorities, the El Arish branch of the Egyptian Red Crescent has recently been reformed.

Its Committee of seven members has declared its readiness, in co-operation with the delegates of the ICRC, to draw up a plan of humanitarian work designed among other things to reactivate a first-aid dispensary.

ICRC action in Sinai. — The ICRC sub-delegation installed in Gaza has as its task to assist in the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention, not only on behalf of civilians living in the Gaza strip, but also for persons throughout Sinai. A programme of action has therefore been drawn up with the agreement of the Israeli authorities which will enable a team of two delegates freely to traverse

this vast area. They will there see to the application of the humane principles by visiting the inhabitants of Sinai so as to be in a position to draw the attention of the authorities concerned to all difficult situations, in particular in connection with food and medicine.

Repatriation to El Qantara. — The ICRC delegates in Tel Aviv and in Cairo met each other at El Qantara on March 21, 1968 at a large-scale repatriation operation of about 200 Egyptians living at El Arish and 200 Palestinians repatriated to Gaza.

On that occasion, the Israeli authorities agreed to the release and return to their own country of 7 Egyptians detained for several years. These operations were carried out in very good order.

Then, in April, two large-scale repatriations took place at El Qantara, with ICRC delegates from Cairo and Tel Aviv present.

The first of these on April 4 concerned about 200 Egyptians from El Arish and returning to the UAR and of 170 Palestinians returning to occupied territory at Gaza. The second operation repatriated 114 Egyptians also from El Arish and returning to the UAR and 114 Palestinians returning to Gaza.

Yemen

Attack against a medical unit. — On March 21, the ICRC medical unit which has been working for the past few months in the mountains near Sanaa, the capital, was attacked from the air. According to the first report received in Geneva two Yemeni porters were wounded. One of them had to have a limb amputated. Stocks of medical supplies and fuel were completely destroyed. The unit, which tended military and civilian wounded, has had to withdraw to a less dangerous area. The place where it was installed and where it was attacked from the air was nowhere near any military objective. One doctor and a medical orderly have stayed to treat patients who are in no condition to be moved.

New medical team. — Leaving Najran on April 18, a medical relief team for North Yemen guided by Mr. André Rochat, head of the ICRC delegation in the Arab Peninsula reached its destination in the interior on April 21. The convoy also comprised twelve lorries.

On arrival the team was split into two groups. The first, headed by Professor Jens Larsen of the Danish Red Cross with two Swiss male nurses has been installed on a site suitable for a dressing station which will shortly be set up.

The second group comprising Dr. Johann de Puotz, Swiss and Dr. Dagfinn Arne Ronhovde, of the Danish Red Cross with two Swiss male nurses is temporarily established on the site on which the previous medical team had been installed. They have taken over from the doctor and male nurse, placed at the ICRC's disposal by the Swiss Red Cross, who have thus been able to return home. The new team is organizing an advanced surgical post there from which seriously wounded cases will be evacuated to the dressing station in the rear.

Rwanda

Last December the *International Review* published a detailed article on the ICRC's work in Rwanda. We are now able to give the following additional information:

As a result of protracted negotiations led by Mr. Ismail El Azhari, President of the Sudanese Council, acting in his capacity as Chairman of the OAU Commission dealing with the question of the mercenaries, and with the understanding of Mr. Georges Hoffmann, Delegate General of the International Committee in Africa, an agreement was finally concluded between the ten member countries of the Sub-Commission of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), charged with settling the problem of the evacuation of mercenaries outside Africa.

The mercenaries' repatriation operation, under ICRC supervision, took place between April 21 and 25. The International Committee had chartered two DC6 aircraft from a private Dutch company. The conducting delegates were Mr. Otto Burckhardt and Mr. Jean Della Santa who were accompanied by 14 members of the "Société de surveillance Securitas". One of the aircraft, carrying about 80 mercenaries belonging to three different nationalities landed in Belgium. The other flew to three European capitals with 55 people from 8 countries, comprising mercenaries and their families.