

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE'S ACTION IN THE YEMEN

Only too aware of the distress throughout almost the whole of the Yemen as a result of the interminable conflict involving the Republican Government and the tribes which have remained loyal to the Imam El Badr, the ICRC has continued and even intensified its relief action.

As we have already pointed out, the medical facilities provided in the Yemen Republic by government hospitals and by the medical service of the Egyptian army have enabled the International Committee to develop its relief action in this region—unlike its activity in the Royalist camp—with special emphasis on feeding.

Indeed, each morning, the two delegates in Sanaa distribute sweetened vitaminized milk to more than 600 war orphans, whilst in the evening 200 young detainees are given the benefit of this much-needed nutrition.

In order to carry out this daily task, which is appreciated both by the beneficiaries and by the authorities, the ICRC delegation has often to meet a situation which calls for a talent for improvisation. For instance, being able to lay hands on only a very limited number of cups and glasses, it organized a collection in the town of empty food tins which were sterilized and transformed to be used as mugs.

Relief to prisoners.—Apart from this milk distribution, which is supplemented by the supply of cheese, medicines and tonics, the ICRC is carrying out its traditional mission of relief to prisoners. The delegates regularly visit detainees incarcerated in Sanaa, bringing them food and checking on the condition of their detention.

The delegates are also allowed by the authorities to transmit correspondence from Egyptian prisoners held by the Royalists to their families.

The Red Cross in the front line.—To bring home to all concerned the presence of the Red Cross at the front line separating the

Royalist and the Republican forces, and also at the same time to group Egyptian prisoners disseminated at advance posts, the head of the ICRC in the Yemen, Mr. André Rochat, organized an expedition which set out from the field hospital at Uqhd and arrived a few days later at Sanaa after having covered several hundred miles in the difficult and dangerous territory of North-East Yemen by truck and camel.

To make such an operation possible, both belligerents agreed to a cease-fire on this sector of the front. The manoeuvre was completed uneventfully although it must be said that the mission, including the chief, a doctor, an assistant-delegate, an interpreter and native-guides, was confronted with numerous difficulties on the way.

At the Uqhd hospital.—In the course of this expedition across the Eastern front, the delegates obtained the Royal Forces Command's permission to evacuate a sick Egyptian prisoner to the field hospital set up by the ICRC at Uqhd. The arrival of this prisoner was in the nature of a test case, for it was a practical manifestation that this important medical centre is for the benefit of all victims of the conflict, without any discrimination.

The latest figures received in Geneva clearly illustrate that this hospital is more essential than ever. In the month of March alone, fifty surgical operations were performed in the "Clinobox", the policlinic treated over four thousand patients and the doctors attached to the mobile teams in the interior of the Yemen have given attention to 150 wounded and sick.

At the present time, there are 92 Yemenites in the field hospital, whilst the number of consultations since its inception at the end of last November amounts to 15,000.

Release of hostages.—At the end of January, thanks to the negotiations undertaken by the International Committee, 15 Egyptian prisoners undergoing treatment in hospitals in Saudi Arabia were released. In response, the UAR authorities ordered, in their turn, the release of 24 members of the Yemenite Royal family—composed of women and children who had been interned in Egypt. These latter arrived in Jeddah on March 30 by air.

Relief for the hospital staff at Uqhd.—The medical personnel at the ICRC hospital at Uqhd, who were recruited by the Swiss Red Cross, were relieved between April 22 and 27.

In view of the forthcoming tropical heat, it will hardly be possible for Europeans to withstand for more than 2½ months the climate of this region of the Arab peninsula, which is one of the hottest regions of the world, with temperatures rising to over 50° C (122° F) in the shade. Two nurses recruited by the British Red Cross will form part of the next team. It will be recalled that the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany has made available for service in the hospital at Uqhd a doctor and a nurse who are already working there.

Medical action.—In response to urgent appeal, the ICRC is to intensify its medical action in the Western sector. A delegate and a British medical orderly are at present in the highlands, whilst two doctors from the Red Cross have gone South to take over from two Swiss Red Cross doctors in a region where there are many wounded.