

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

The activity of the ICRC in Laos. — *Since the last weeks of 1960, the International Committee of the Red Cross has, in various ways, come to the aid of victims of the conflict which broke out in Laos, in particular by distributing relief and visiting detained persons.*

It recently received an appeal from the Government of Vientiane on behalf of a certain number of displaced persons. This concerned civilians who had left those areas in which fighting had taken place. Amongst these refugees there are notably 6,000 Meos lodged in camps in the Mekong valley.

Mr. A. Durand, delegate of the ICRC, proceeded to the spot to discover the amount of relief which was needed for these refugees and to discuss the problem with the Laotian Red Cross and with the authorities of Vientiane.

On his return to Geneva on August 4, when submitting his report, Mr. Durand gave further information on the needs of the population in the Northern provinces, based on that which he had collected on the spot during his visit at the end of June to the Red Cross and to the authorities at Xieng-Khouang.

The ICRC has opened credit accounts, by way of advances, out of its own relief funds, in order to come to the aid of these displaced persons, as well as of the civilian population in the Northern provinces.

In addition, in view of the extent of the need, the ICRC forwarded on August 11 a memorandum to a certain number of National Societies requesting them to contribute to its relief action. At the end of August

favourable responses had already been given by the American, Australian, Indian, Netherlands, Norwegian and Swiss Red Cross Societies.

In order to carry out the execution of the first steps of this plan on the spot, Mr. J.-J. Muralti, a specialist in relief matters, recently arrived in Vientiane.

Emergency relief distributions are taking place at present through the Laotian Red Cross in the refugee camps at Veintiane, Luang-prabang, Savannakhet, Pakket and Paksé.

Mr. André Durand, delegate, has now returned to Laos in order to direct the relief action which the International Committee of the Red Cross decided to carry out. The beneficiaries will be mainly the members of the Meo tribes who left the areas where fighting was in progress and who have been lodged in territories administered by the Government of Vientiane.

The ICRC is, moreover, trying to send a further consignment of relief supplies on behalf of the civilian population in the northern provinces of Phong Saly, Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang.

After the appeal which the ICRC sent to various National Societies on August 11, notification was received of the following contributions towards the relief action in Laos :

Cash contributions from Red Cross Societies (Sfrs.) : United States, 43,125 ; Norway, 6,035 ; Australia, 4,801 ; Great Britain, 9,300 ; Switzerland, 20,000 ; Canada, 42,000 ; Thailand, 1,024.

The Red Cross Societies of the following countries have notified us of contributions in kind (Sfrs.) : Netherlands, 30,000 (blankets & blood plasma) ; India, 10,000 (cloth & medicaments) ; France, 3,000 (blankets & milk) ; Poland (medicaments—value not yet stated).

Furthermore, the Swiss Government has also donated 30,000 Sfrs. for this action in Laos. With the addition of the credit of 50,000 Sfrs. already voted by the ICRC, the total amounts to over 200,000 Sfrs.

Negotiations are also in progress in order to obtain surplus US food stocks which would enable 6,000 refugees to be fed for six months.

Mr. Jean-Jacques Muralti, also an ICRC delegate, visited the Mahosot hospital in Vientiane, where 82 sick and wounded military persons from the two sides were being treated. He handed over relief supplies to them.

The ICRC has also taken steps in order to trace missing persons. During his visit to Xieng Khouang in June, Mr. Durand presented the Government, at that time presided over by Mr. Khamsouk Keola, acting Prime Minister, with a list of about twenty missing American, French and Philippine nationals. He moreover obtained confirmation that the American Major Lawrence Bailey, reported missing as from March 23, had been captured, and he handed over to the authorities letters from this officer's family. The ICRC is continuing its efforts with a view to obtaining news of missing persons.

Delegates of the ICRC in Katanga. — *The ICRC was considering bringing its mission in the Congo to a close when the recent events in Katanga developed. As soon as it was confirmed that the fighting which had broken out was continuing and spreading to several parts of the province, the ICRC made a point of carrying out its humanitarian activity of neutral intermediary there, in order to help all the victims of the conflict, ensure the respect of the principles contained in the Geneva Conventions and to protect the victims by means of the Red Cross emblem. One of the ICRC delegates in Leopoldville received instructions to proceed to Elisabethville; he was, however, obliged to wait until September 19 before being able to fly to Katanga. At the same time, the ICRC sent another delegate from Geneva to Rhodesia, from where he was to try to reach Elisabethville.*

Compensation to victims of pseudo-medical experiments. — *As the International Review of the Red Cross already mentioned in its edition of June 1961, the ICRC has agreed to act as an intermediary for transmitting financial assistance which the Government of Bonn has decided to allocate to certain victims of pseudo-medical experiments, inflicted on them in German concentration camps under the Nazi régime. This concerns those survivors who are at present residing in countries with which the German Federal Republic does not maintain diplomatic relations, chiefly in Hungary and Poland.*

A mission of the International Committee consisting of Dr. J. de Rougemont and Mr. J.-P. Maunoir went to Poland in order to complete on the spot, in agreement with the Polish Red Cross, the files which the German Federal Republic had already forwarded to the ICRC, to examine the victims, to study their medical documents and

to make contact with their medical practitioners. A similar mission was carried out in Hungary by Dr. F. Züst and Mr. J.-P. Maunoir.

The files were then handed over to a neutral commission consisting of three experts appointed by the ICRC. These were : Dr. Jean Graven, Professor at the Faculty of Law, Vice-Rector of the University of Geneva, Dr. René S. Mach, Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of Geneva, and Dr. Sylvain Mutrux, Assistant Medical Director of the Bel-Air Psychiatric Clinic in Geneva. Dr. Edouard Loizeau, Head of the Clinic at the Cantonal Hospital of Geneva, was appointed a deputy member.

The Commission held its first meeting from August 21 to 24 at the headquarters of the ICRC, at which also took part the rapporteurs : Dr. J. de Rougemont, doctor-delegate of the ICRC for Poland, and Dr. F. Züst, doctor-delegate of the ICRC for Hungary ; the observers, Mr. Viktor Karasz, Assistant Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross, Dr. Joseph Nowkunski, doctor-delegate of the Polish Red Cross, and Miss Danuta Zys, Head of the Department of External Relations of the Polish Red Cross, and the secretary of the meeting, Mr. J.-P. Maunoir, delegate of the ICRC.

This Expert commission, which had 63 Hungarian and 73 Polish cases before it, had the task of :

- 1) pronouncing on the substantiation of the claims submitted, by basing itself on criteria which had been applied in the cases of victims residing in countries maintaining diplomatic relations with West Germany ;
- 2) deciding upon the amount of financial assistance to be allocated, such assistance being intended in particular to contribute towards the rehabilitation expenses of each victim.

Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations interested in Migration. — The 8th Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations interested in Migration was held in the United Nations' building, Geneva, from August 7-11 and presided over by Mr. H. Coursier, representing the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Convened under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization and of the Director of the International Labour Office, the Conference adopted a certain number of proposals

concerning the following subjects: accommodation for immigrants, children and migration, non-European migrants, the mental health of migrants and refugees, the prevention of silicosis, legal and social aid for migrants, the elimination or reduction of the status of stateless person.

It also adopted a resolution concerning the future of the Conference and providing for its fusion with the Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies working for Refugees within a body intended to succeed it, whose statutes will be definitely drawn up by a joint commission appointed by the two Conferences.

During the closing meeting, Mr. A. Durand, ICRC delegate, gave a survey of the position of the refugees in Laos.

Action on behalf of political detainees. — *As is known, the ICRC is continuing its action on behalf of political detainees. Thus, various places of detention are being visited in countries whose authorities grant the International Committee the necessary facilities.*

Within the framework of such action, Mr. H. G. Beckh, delegate of the International Committee, went once more at the end of August to West Germany where he was received by the Attorney-General of the Federal Republic and his assistant, as well as by a senior official of the Federal Ministry of Justice. These personalities made a point of emphasizing how much they appreciated the work accomplished by the ICRC in this field and they reaffirmed that the delegates of our institution would always have free access to places of detention on the territory of the Federal Republic.

Mr. Beckh visited three prisons where he spoke freely and without witnesses with political detainees in those establishments, 12 persons in all.

It should be pointed out in this connection that since the beginning of this action until the end of August 1961, the delegate of the ICRC made 57 visits to prisons in West Germany and 5 visits to prisons in West Berlin. He had a total of 274 interviews with political detainees.

Visits to political detainees in Rhodesia and Nyasaland. — *Since the beginning of 1961, the delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland visited ten prisons in which Africans, detained for political reasons and under common law, had been incarcerated as a result of the events.*

On each of these visits the representative of the International Committee was able to speak without witnesses with detained persons of his own choosing.

As has been customary, the reports relating to these visits have been submitted to the Federation authorities and the delegate of the ICRC has given further support to these reports by a number of personal representations.

The repatriation of Koreans resident in Japan. — *The repatriation of Koreans resident in Japan, which has been in progress since the end of 1959 under the auspices of the Japanese Red Cross and in the presence of ICRC delegates, was momentarily interrupted from September 11 to October 2. This was due to the need to repair, after 74 trips since December 14, 1959, the Soviet ships which have been carrying out a shuttle-service between the Japanese port of Niigata and that of Chonzjin, in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Until that date, 72,000 persons left Japan for Northern Korea, according to their own freely expressed wishes. The number of persons registered for the coming departures is still 20,000.*

Relief consignments. — *To the Congo: At the request of the Central Medical Depot at Leopoldville, transmitted to Geneva through the Delegation of the ICRC, the International Committee forwarded to the latter in August 250,000 doses of anti-smallpox vaccine, basic pharmaceutical products and laboratory equipment to a total value of 26,000 Swiss francs. The necessary funds for this consignment were made available by the British Red Cross.*

Furthermore, and in co-operation with the League of Red Cross Societies, a considerable consignment of medicaments and test serum, the donation of the Danish Red Cross, left the stores of the ICRC in mid-July and was despatched on board the SS "Baden" for Matadi.

To Greece: A mission of the ICRC consisting of Mr. Germain Colladon and Dr. René Bergoz left for Greece at the end of August to visit exiles and Greek political detainees once more and to distribute food, medicaments and clothing to them. The delegates of the International Committee were also entrusted with handing over relief supplies to the families of the detained persons.

Relief consisted of gifts in kind which had been offered by the Hungarian and Czechoslovak Red Cross, as well as by private individuals, and to which the ICRC contributed a donation out of its own relief funds.

To Tunisia: At the end of August, the ICRC despatched two consignments of 10,000 packets of cigarettes each, one intended for military and civilian Tunisian prisoners in French hands, the other for French civilians interned by the Tunisian authorities.

Compensation to former prisoners of war in Japanese hands. — *The Revue internationale has mentioned on several occasions, in particular in its number of February 1961, the successive stages in the task undertaken by the ICRC with a view to allocating and distributing shares to former prisoners of war in Japanese hands, nationals of the Powers Party to the Peace Treaty of San Francisco, by way of compensation as provided by Article 16 of that treaty.*

Continuing the distribution of the balance of the Japanese funds, namely some ten million Swiss francs, including interest, the subject of a second distribution, the ICRC has made payments to the Belgian, British, Canadian, Chilean and Norwegian Governments.

Revised handbook of the International Red Cross. — *The tenth edition of the handbook of the International Red Cross, published jointly by the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, consisted of a collection of the Conventions (in particular of the Geneva Conventions of 1864, 1906, 1929 and 1949 and the Hague Conventions of 1899, 1904 and 1907), the Statutes and regulations of the various organs of the Red Cross, as well as the resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and of the Board of Governors of the League.*

It should be pointed out that the International Committee and the League are at present in the process of preparing a new edition of this handbook, which will appear on the occasion of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross.

International Office for military medicine documentation. — *The ICRC was represented by Mr. F. Siordet, member of the International Committee and Mr. J.-P. Schoenholzer, of the Legal Depart-*

ment, at the 23rd session of the International Office for military medicine documentation which was held in Athens between September 19 and 22, 1961.

Competition in Arabic. — *In co-operation with the League, the ICRC organized a competition within the frame-work of its broadcasts in Arabic. The competition, which opened in October 1960 and closed in March 1961, was an undoubted success, since 133 entries were submitted for scrutiny by the jury. The first prize was won by Mr. Numan Abdel-Dayim, of Jordan. Further mention of this competition will be made at a later date.*

Visits to the ICRC. — *The following: Abbé Jacques Kapanga, member of the Committee of Kasai Province of the Congolese Red Cross; Mr. James H. Browne, member of the Board of Directors of the Wyandot branch of the American Red Cross; the Permanent Norwegian delegate in Geneva, Mr. Sören Chr. Sommerfelt; Mr. Arne Fremm, Director-General of the Danish Red Cross; Mr. Sisouk Na Champassak, permanent Laotian delegate with the United Nations in New York; the President of the Portuguese Red Cross, Dr. Leonardo de Castro Freire and Colonel José Victor Mateus Cabral, Secretary-General of that Society; the Tunisian permanent deputy in Geneva, Mr. Mohammed Memmi; the deputy director of the Arab League bureau in Geneva, Mr. El Wakil; Mr. Peter Benenson, one of the two directors of the "Appeal for Amnesty" on behalf of political detainees; Mr. W. Nicuta, acting legal adviser to the UNO's Secretary-General's representative in the Congo; Dr. Robert G. Gordon, national director of the Education Office of the American Red Cross; Mr. K. Shanker Nigam, deputy secretary to the Indian Red Cross, director of the Junior Red Cross of that country and who has been appointed special assistant to the Secretary-General of the League; Dr. Daoud S. Ali, member of the executive Committee of the Iraq Red Crescent; Mr. Frank de Vivie de Régie, Secretary-General of the French Red Cross in Algeria; Mr. Wilhelm von Starck, head of the legal commission of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic; Mr. François Silou, first Vice-President of the Congolese Red Cross; General Georges Glain, new head of the Foreign Relations section of the French Red Cross; the Delegate-General of the French Red Cross in Algeria, Mr. Jules Lefèvre-Paul; the President of the Red Cross of the Republic*

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of Korea, Mr. Doo-Sun Choi ; Dr. Chadli Zouiten, Vice-President of the Tunisian Red Crescent, and Mr. Salah Boulakbèche, Secretary-General of that Society.

The ICRC also had the pleasure of receiving the visit of a certain number of groups such as the "Red Crusaders" ; two groups of pupils attending holiday courses of the Ecole Benedict in Neuchâtel, students attending courses on international institutions organized by the University of Geneva, Junior Quakers, members of the American Red Cross in Europe, Juniors of the Canadian Red Cross, pupils of the "Geneva Summer School", Juniors of the British Red Cross, members of trade-unions from Algeria, Cameroun, the former Belgian and French Congo, Morocco, Tunisia, on study visits to Switzerland, and a group from the British National Union of Teachers.

GENEVA CONVENTIONS

By the terms of a letter which was received by the Federal Political Department in Berne on June 20, 1961, the Government of the Federation of Nigeria has confirmed the participation of that State in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, participation which took effect on the date of the independence of that country, namely on October 1, 1960.
