

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

The ICRC continues its activity in Laos.¹ — *Mr. André Durand, Delegate General of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Far East, has been, since mid-October, in Xieng Khouang, the seat of Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government in North Laos.*

There he is examining with the Government and with Dr. Thao Phao, Vice-President of the Laotian Red Cross and Chief Medical Officer of the Xieng Khouang hospital various humanitarian questions, especially the condition of the population in the Northern provinces which has suffered from the recent events, and the fate of missing persons and prisoners in the hands of the authorities of that region.

On the other hand, Dr. Jurg Baer, delegate of the ICRC, is continuing, in co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross and the Vientiane authorities, distribution of relief to the victims of the events. Most of these beneficiaries are persons who had fled from the unsettled areas to take refuge in the large centres in the Mekong valley.

Mission in the Balkans. — *During a recent visit to Greece and Yugoslavia, Mr. G. H. Beckh, delegate of the ICRC, was able to study various problems connected with the reuniting of families with the Heads of the National Red Cross Societies and the authorities of those two countries.*

Furthermore, during his mission in Yugoslavia, Mr. Beckh took the opportunity of visiting two penal establishments where he spoke freely and without witnesses with twenty political detainees of his own choosing.

We would point out in this connection that the Yugoslav authorities, wishing to contribute towards the development of international humanitarian law, granted, as did various other countries, authorization to visit persons detained for political reasons.

¹ *Plate.*

The action of the ICRC on behalf of political detainees and exiles in Greece. — *Mr. Germain Colladon, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Dr. René Bergoz, doctor-delegate, have recently completed, as we noted in our November issue, a mission in Greece, where they had made a further round of visits to places of detention and internment for detained persons and political exiles. They thus have continued the series of periodic visits which the representatives of the ICRC have made since 1947. The Greek Government had then authorized the International Committee to occupy itself with the condition of persons deprived of their liberty after the events which had taken place in 1945 and 1946.*

The delegates were thus able to visit the camp on the island of Aghios Efstratos in which there are approximately 200 political exiles to whom they distributed relief consisting of clothing, food and medicaments. Accompanied by the doctor whom the Greek Red Cross had placed at the disposal of the exiles, Dr. Bergoz ascertained the medical situation in the camp and examined several of the sick.

After Dr. Bergoz' return to Geneva, Mr. Colladon visited seventeen penal establishments in which there were detainees condemned to prison sentences, although the exiles of Aghios Efstratos are under an administrative decree. The delegate of the ICRC also distributed relief supplied by certain National Red Cross Societies, by non-governmental organizations as well as by the International Committee to detainees under fixed sentences.

The mission lasted two months. It benefited from the full co-operation of the Greek Red Cross and from the local authorities which helped in the transport and the storage of the relief supplies. These reached a value exceeding 120,000 Sw. francs.

On the other hand, Mr. Colladon, complying with the request made by the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, intervened with the Greek authorities on behalf of Greek subjects at present living in North Viet Nam and wishing to be repatriated. This concerned former members of the Foreign Legion who had remained there after the end of the war of Indochina.

Mission in India and Nepal. — *Two representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Claude Pilloud, Assistant Director for General Affairs, and Mr. Charles Ammann, Head of the*

Relief Section, had left Geneva on November 23 for New Delhi where they had discussions on various humanitarian problems of common interest with the heads of the Indian Red Cross. They went then to Katmandu, capital of Nepal, where a delegation of the ICRC is engaged in coming to the aid of certain groups of refugees.

Inauguration of the new headquarters of the Monegasque Red Cross.

— *The inauguration ceremony took place on November 17, in Monaco, at which were present Their Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Monaco, Mr. E. Pelletier, Minister of State and numerous official and Red Cross personalities.*

The Secretary-General, Mr. E. Boeri, reviewed the activities of the Society, then, after the Bishop of Monaco had blessed the new buildings, the Princess of Monaco, President of the Society, held an investiture.

In his speech, Mr. J.-G. Lossier extended the congratulations and good wishes of the ICRC, which he represented, and recalled the effective and generous support which the royal couple were good enough to accord the Society. Mr. H. Beer also spoke on behalf of the League, of which he is Secretary-General.

A reception followed, together with a visit to the spacious and completely renovated villa, where the Monegasque Red Cross is now installed. It is here that the Society's work continues and the ICRC representative was able to observe its effectiveness and diversity while visiting on the same morning several departments installed in the Monaco hospital.

Financial aid to victims of pseudo-medical experiments. — *The authorities of the German Federal Republic have now placed at the disposal of the International Committee of the Red Cross amounts for compensation to Polish and Hungarian victims of pseudo-medical experiments, carried out in concentration camps under the National-Socialist regime. As we mentioned in our June and October issues, the ICRC had agreed to act as intermediary in the handing over of financial aid offered by the Bonn Government to this category of victims. At the end of August, a neutral Expert Commission met at its headquarters in order to come to a decision regarding requests for financial aid which had been submitted by 136 persons in view of the German offer.*

The Commission's first task was to establish the substantiation of these requests. In particular it had to decide whether the treatment of which the victims were complaining corresponded in fact with the definition of convictable pseudo-medical experiments mentioned in the verdict pronounced on August 20, 1947 by the 1st American Military Tribunal at Nuremberg in the so-called "trial of the doctors". It then had to assess the correlation between the experiment and the present state of health of the victim. The Commission thus dismissed one case, since it was unable to be convinced that the claimant had in fact been subjected to a pseudo-medical experiment.

In so far as a sum of money, whatever its amount, can be considered adequate compensation for such suffering, the Commission had also to decide the amount of allocation in relation with the seriousness of the observed after-effects.

In agreement with the proposals made by the doctor-delegates of the ICRC in Poland and in Hungary, as well as by the doctor-delegates of the two National Red Cross Societies, the Commission was of the opinion that, independently of its conclusions, the experiment to which the victim had been subjected by itself justified a first basic allocation. This amount, which was similar for all beneficiaries, was to be allocated even if the victims no longer showed, nearly 20 years later, visible traces of attacks on their health or on their physical integrity. On the other hand, in cases in which after-effects, had been discovered by the doctor-rapporteurs, the neutral Commission had determined a supplementary allocation of which the amount varied according to the seriousness of the victim's state of health. It also acted in the same way where moral damage resulting from the experiment had seemed especially heavy, and where, for example, the victim's life had been permanently affected.

As a general rule, the Commission only took into consideration the victim's state of health at the time of the most recent medical examinations. Only as an exception did it consider as an aggravating factor the future course of the illness following on the pseudo-medical experiment. On the other hand, it rejected acts which could not be satisfactorily connected with the experiment, even when brutality or maltreatment was inflicted in a concentration camp.

All these decisions were taken unanimously. The observers of the two National Societies concerned who had taken part in the delibera-

tions of the neutral Commission expressed their satisfaction and gratitude for the way in which it had carried out its mission.

As soon as the first session had completed its work, the ICRC informed the Government of the German Federal Republic of the decisions which had been taken by the neutral Commission on behalf of the 135 victims whose claims had been accepted.

A further session of the neutral Commission will be arranged when the files of a second group of Polish and Hungarian victims will have been completed. The neutral Commission will also be advised later of requests for financial aid from victims residing in Czechoslovakia.

The activity of the Central Tracing Agency on behalf of Hungarian refugees. — In view of the existing uncertain situation in the world, the ICRC is unceasingly being faced with fresh tasks. But our institution must also pursue activities following on events which are not, properly speaking, of a topical character. Thus the Section for Hungarian refugees of the Central Tracing Agency is still dealing, five years after the events in Hungary, with 250 to 300 cases each month and has carried out more than 630 inquiries in the first three quarters of 1961. Every day new inquiries are received swelling its card-index, which contains about 300,000 files representing on an average 170,000 refugee cases.

On the one hand it is a question of rediscovering the trace of Hungarian nationals who have been separated, since 1956, from their families remaining in that country. The Central Agency also receives inquiries from refugees established in Europe or overseas, who wish to be joined there by their children or parents who have remained in Hungary.

In these operations of the reuniting of families, the Central Agency can lean on the Hungarian Red Cross, the guardian Hungarian authorities responsible for looking after children who have been left alone in Hungary, as well as on the National Societies of the countries of destination.

The Central Agency also lends its good offices to facilitate representations relative to refugees, whether adults or children, wishing to return to their country of origin.

In the same way, it does everything it can to reunite families whose members find themselves in various countries of asylum. We should in

fact remember that during the exodus in 1956 numbers of people had not succeeded in crossing the frontier at the same time as their own parents. Having subsequently left the country, they were not at once able to trace parents who had preceded them in flight. Thus, owing to circumstances, some refugees have found asylum in one or other of the European countries, whilst their parents had emigrated overseas.

It should besides be added that the guardian Hungarian authorities have appealed to the Central Agency in order to ensure that heads of families who have fled abroad pay maintenance allowances for their children left behind in Hungary.

In the countries signatory to the Convention of 1956 "on the recovery of maintenance abroad", anyone avoiding his responsibilities for maintaining his family is liable to prosecution. Elsewhere, this is not the case, and persuasive measures must be employed to induce a father to assume his responsibilities towards his children. In such an action, which involves the intervention of social workers, the Central Tracing Agency can fortunately call upon the International Social Service to co-operate.

Red Cross Centenary. — Closer studies have been made relative to the exhibition, more especially with regard to the history and philatelic sections. The Thai Red Cross has offered 300 poisonous snakes so that a replica of the Bangkok Serpentarium can be shown. Each day there will be demonstrations of venom being collected and of serum being prepared, and this contribution from the Thai Red Cross will undoubtedly be a popular attraction with the public.

There is an important event to point out: the musical part of the commemorative day will include works which Frank Martin, Benjamin Britten and Dimitri Chostakowitch have agreed to compose, and which will be played by the Orchestre de la Suisse romande.

Preparatory work for the organization of study centres is continuing, in particular with regard to the World Conference of Educationalists.

Finally, some more information: Following contacts recently entered into with the Agencies specializing in the distribution of photographic documents, a programme of information has now been established, and a second meeting of editors will decide on the plan for the press campaign. The first meeting of the jury for the striking of a special coin of legal tender has been held in Berne and has drawn

up the rules for a competitive design. The Red Cross Centenary Committee in Switzerland was represented at the meetings of the League Committee for the Red Cross Centenary and of its working party, during the 26th session of the Board of Governors in Prague. A Centenary emblem was proposed to the Board of Governors, which recommended its use throughout the world.

Geneva, meeting place for nurses. — *For about the last five years, an extremely welcome custom has been growing more and more widespread: visits of entire classes of Swiss and foreign nursing schools to the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies.*

The school of "Le Bon Secours" in Geneva, and that of "La Source" in Lausanne, had for a long time been in the habit of visiting the international Red Cross institutions, but we are now happy to welcome student nurses from neighbouring countries. It was the French Red Cross which inaugurated these visits to Geneva. Then about fifty directors of German Red Cross nursing schools in the Federal Republic took part in a seminar organized jointly with the League.

In 1957, on the occasion of the 11th Congress of the International Council of Nurses in Rome, the ICRC and the League were visited by groups of nurses from Great Britain and even America.

Visits are continuing at the moment, from Italy, Switzerland, France, Yugoslavia, etc.

Nor should it be forgotten that numerous individual visits are made by nurses who, in the framework of refresher courses, or during study tours, come to gather information in Geneva and learn how close the tasks of the Red Cross are to their professional activity, frequently merging with it.

The medical personnel section of the ICRC attaches great importance to the contacts which are thus made. They contribute towards an understanding of the Red Cross work on a national and international level and they encourage one of the most useful activities that exists, since it consists of caring for and assisting human beings in suffering.

Guests of the ICRC. — *From mid-October to early November, the ICRC was privileged to welcome several personalities to its headquarters, among them H. E. Mr. Kay Keolouangkhout, Ambassador and Vice-President of the Laotian Red Cross; Mr. Gyalo Thondup,*

brother of the Dalai Lama, accompanied by Mr. Sadut-Chang Riucken ; Mr. and Mrs. L. Ficq Van Crugten, of the Roermond (Limburg) Branch of the Netherlands Red Cross ; Dr. T. Calasanz, Director of the Philippine National Red Cross and Dr. Arsenio M. Tionson, President of the Palangsilang Branch of that Society ; Dr. Bellerive, World Health Organization representative in the Congo ; M^e Henri Meyrowitz, Lawyer at the Cour d'Appel in Paris ; Mr. I. Muller, Deputy Head of the Swedish Civil Defence, who took part in the meeting of experts on civil defence which the ICRC held in June 1961 ; two Mexican journalists, Mr. Ignacio Gomez and Mr. Enrique Gajardo Z. ; H.E. Mr. Moshé Bartur, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Israel in Geneva, accompanied by Mr. Nissim Yaish, Deputy Permanent Representative ; two personalities from Ruanda-Urundi, Mr. Michel Hayihura, Vice-President of UNAR and Mr. Michel Rwagasana, Secretary-General of that party and a member of the legislative Assembly of Ruanda ; H.E. Mr. Luis F. Thomen, the new Permanent Delegate of the Dominican Republic in Geneva.

The International Committee also had the pleasure of welcoming a group of students from "La Source" Nursing School in Lausanne.