

RESPONSES TO THE ICRC'S APPEAL TO HAVE THE RULES OF HUMANITY RESPECTED IN VIET NAM

As the *International Review* mentioned in its previous number, the International Committee of the Red Cross addressed an appeal to the Governments of the Republic of Viet Nam, of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and of the United States of America. This appeal was also sent to the National Front of Liberation. The ICRC reminded these authorities that they are bound by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions giving protection to military personnel placed "hors de combat" and persons not taking part in hostilities.

As a result of this appeal, which was recently repeated, Mr. Dean Rusk, American Secretary of State sent the following letter on August 10, 1965, to Mr. Samuel Gonard, President of the ICRC :

The United States Government has always abided by the humanitarian principles enunciated in the Geneva Conventions and will continue to do so. In regard to the hostilities in Viet Nam, the United States Government is applying the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and we expect the other parties to the conflict to do likewise.

Among the particular measures being taken to implement the Conventions at the present time, the United States Government is developing plans to assist the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam to expand and improve facilities and procedures to process and care for an increased number of captives taken in combat. The two Governments are also increasing programs of instruction for personnel in the details of the provisions of the Conventions.

As you are aware, those involved in aggression against the Republic of Viet Nam rely heavily on disguise and disregard generally accepted principles of warfare. From the outset it has therefore been difficult to develop programs and procedures to resolve fully all the problems arising in the application of the provisions of the Conventions. Continued refinement of these programs and procedures in the light of experience will thus undoubtedly be necessary.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

The United States Government will cooperate fully and communicate further with the International Committee of the Red Cross concerning the performance in Viet Nam of its traditional and valuable humanitarian mission.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Viet Nam, Dr. Tran-Van-Do, handed to the delegate general of the ICRC in Saigon, Mr. André Durand, this letter dated August 11, 1965¹:

In reference to your letter dated June 27, 1965, I have the honour to inform you that the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam is fully prepared to respect the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and to contribute actively to the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure their application. It is to be hoped that for their part the Viet Cong will show the same humanitarian concern. Appropriate measures have already been considered by our Government to accelerate the promulgation and dissemination of these conventions.

I should like further to inform you that the Geneva Conventions although not yet promulgated in Viet Nam have, in fact, always been applied. Viet Cong prisoners have always received the most humane treatment from our civilian and military authorities.

At the time of going to press, the ICRC is still waiting for a reply from the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, as well as from the National Front of Liberation.

¹ Original text in French.