

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Viet Nam***The application of the Geneva Conventions and the bombing of North Viet Nam*

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam has in its turn replied, in a letter which will be found below, to an appeal made on June 11 by the ICRC to the four belligerents concerning the application of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, on the protection of the victims of war.

One should also mention that the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam has made protests on several occasions to the ICRC against the bombing of hospital establishments (leper colonies, hospitals) which, it stated, were very clearly marked with the emblems of the Red Cross.

In accordance with practice followed in similar cases (Resolution XXII of the XVIIth International Conference of the Red Cross, Stockholm, 1948), the ICRC transmitted these protests to the American Red Cross, which in turn communicated them to the Government of the United States. In its reply the State Department declared that, as a result of the inquiry which had been made, it had collected no evidence that American aircraft had attacked buildings marked with the emblem of the Red Cross. It added that if establishments sheltering the wounded and sick had been damaged, this was because they must have been "situated in or in close proximity to military objectives" contrary to Art. 19 of the First Convention (wounded and sick) and Art. 18 of the Fourth Convention (civilians). The American Government has therefore suggested that the ICRC undertakes an inquiry on the spot and for its part declared itself prepared to supply it with all the information in its possession.

The ICRC has transmitted this reply to the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in Hanoi.

When communicating the letter of August 31 from the Government of North Viet Nam to the South Vietnamese and United States Governments, the ICRC drew their attention to the protection which is due to hospitals and other medical establishments duly marked. It reminded them that the Parties to the conflict are obliged to respect and protect, in their operations, civilians not taking part in hostilities, and that they do not have an unlimited right as to the choice of means of inflicting damage on the enemy.

Prisoners of war in North Viet Nam

The North Vietnamese Government declared on the other hand, in its letter of August 31, that prisoners had been given authorization to correspond with their relatives, but that the regulations concerning mail with the exterior having been infringed, the authorities had decided to suspend this for the time being. If the persons concerned were to conform to these dispositions, the Hanoi Government added that the question could be reconsidered.

The ICRC has requested to be informed of these regulations, to receive lists of American and South Vietnamese prisoners and authorization to visit these. In this connection it recalled the proposals already made for the sending of a delegate of the International Committee to Hanoi in order to assist in the application of the Geneva Conventions and in bringing material aid to the victims of the war, especially to the civilian population subjected to bombing.

The Central Tracing Agency has made a further despatch of mail for the American prisoners of war.

Relief actions

As a result of its communication of August 11 concerning the relief action on behalf of the victims of the war in Viet Nam, the ICRC had received by September 20 donations in cash and in kind to a value of more than 600,000 Swiss francs. These donations have come from the National Red Cross Societies of the following countries: Australia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway and Switzerland; from the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland, as well as from the

Vietnamese Committee in Finland and Oxfam (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief).

In South Viet Nam, the delegates of the ICRC visited refugee camps where they co-operated in distributions organized by the National Red Cross¹. In North Viet Nam, the ICRC informed the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the amount of available funds, in accordance with the wishes of the donors, for despatching the necessary relief. The North Vietnamese Red Cross was therefore requested to make known the victims' principal needs.

The National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam has, on the other hand, confirmed direct to the ICRC a list of its requirements in surgical equipment and medicaments already previously communicated through the intermediary of the British Red Cross. The first consignment will thus be able to leave Geneva as soon as the problem of routing has been settled.

Aid to the wounded and the war disabled

The delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Saigon has taken measures to make use of the contribution of 50,000 Sw. frs. which has just reached it from Geneva. Mr. André Tschiffeli, delegate, has studied with the Director of the Rehabilitation Centre of the Military War Disabled a programme of action for the treatment and the fitting with appliances of civilians having become disabled as a result of the war.

Aid to refugees

The delegates of the ICRC who went to the provinces of South and Central Viet Nam visited several reception centres opened by the Saigon authorities. They observed that a considerable part of the Vietnamese population, in flight from areas where bombing and fighting are taking place, have found temporary shelter. However, it seemed to them that additional aid was required, especially as regards food. They have therefore arranged, as a start, together with the Vietnamese Red Cross, to make distributions of milk in the orphanages.

¹ *Plate* : Distribution of relief by Mr. Tschiffeli, delegate of the ICRC, and the Red Cross of the Republic of Viet Nam.

Cambodia

The Royal Cambodian Government has asked the ICRC to act to relieve the plight of the South Viet Nam refugees from Duc Co, some 10 km. east of the Cambodian border. There are more than 300 of these refugees, mostly women and children, who have sought safety in Khmer territory following recent fighting in their own district.

The ICRC has agreed to come to the help of these refugees. Mr. André Durand, delegate general of the International Committee for Asia, went for that purpose on September 9 to Phnom-Penh.

He visited, on September 13 and 14, four hundred South Vietnamese refugees from the Duc Co region, admitted into Cambodia.

The ICRC has sent 15,000 frs. to the Cambodian Red Cross, which will undertake to allocate and distribute relief set aside for the victims of the events, in accordance with an aid programme prepared in co-operation with the ICRC representatives.

Japan

The International Committee of the Red Cross has just remitted Sw. frs. 2,000 to the Japanese Red Cross hospital where the victims of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima are being cared for.

The Japanese National Red Cross Society has decided to devote this sum to the improvement of the technical equipment of this hospital which was visited by the ICRC President in May.

Yemen

The announcement of the agreement between King Faisal and President Nasser at Jeddah on a cease-fire in the Yemen has not meant that the International Committee of the Red Cross may yet discontinue its activities in that country, either on the Republican or the Royalist side ¹. Mr. André Rochat, head of the ICRC delegation in the Yemen, arrived in Geneva mid-September to examine with the Committee what steps should be taken for the progressive withdrawal of the ICRC from the Yemen.

¹ *Plate* : At the Uqhd Hospital. The ICRC delegation distributing relief to refugees in Sanaa.



SOUTH VIET NAM

Distribution of relief, near Mytho, by Mr. Tchiffeli, delegate of the ICRC, and the Red Cross of the Republic of Viet Nam.



YEMEN



At the Uqhd Hospital.

The ICRC delegation distributing relief to refugees in Sanaa.



The ICRC delegation in the Yemen is, in addition, endeavouring to organize the exchange and repatriation of all prisoners of war held in the Yemen, in accordance with the agreement previously concluded by the parties in conflict.

A group of Egyptian prisoners has already been repatriated, after a few days in the ICRC hospital at Uqhd in North Yemen.

Cyprus

The events in Cyprus and their sequel continue to make life difficult for a large number of inhabitants. The delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross is constantly being approached to deal with numerous individual cases which it endeavours to settle in its capacity as a neutral intermediary. This involves frequent negotiations in favour of Greek or Turkish Cypriots wishing to emigrate or children who have been separated from their parents by the events.

Africa

Mr. Georges Hoffmann, delegate general in Africa, recently went to Guinea. He visited the Bissau prison and a number of prisoners in the Mansoa area. He then went to Lagos (Nigeria) and to Gabon, where he concerned himself, in particular during the course of that mission, with the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions.

India and Pakistan

The International Committee of the Red Cross has offered its services to the Red Cross Societies of India and Pakistan to help them come to the aid of the victims of the conflict which has broken out between the two countries.

On arrival in New Delhi on September 12, Mr. Roger Du Pasquier, delegate of the ICRC, immediately made contact with the Indian Government in order to obtain lists of Pakistani prisoners of war and authorization to visit them. He also studied with the Indian Red Cross ways of bringing relief to the victims of the conflict.

Mr. Michel Martin, ICRC delegate, arrived in Pakistan on September 22 where he made similar approaches to the Pakistan authorities and Red Cross.

In answer to an urgent request by the latter, the ICRC has sent several consignments of blood plasma and transfusion equipment. These deliveries, to a value of about 60,000 Swiss francs, were made thanks to donations from the ICRC, the Netherlands, the Swiss Red Cross and the Swiss Federal Government.

IN GENEVA

Visit by the President of the Mexican Red Cross

Some months ago, the President of the ICRC paid a visit to the Mexican Red Cross and was able to see the importance and effectiveness of that Society's work, both in Mexico City as well as in other large towns. He met the President of the Mexican Red Cross, Mr. Barroso Chavez, and various leading personalities with whom he discussed the respective activities of that National Society and of the ICRC.¹

Quite recently the Geneva institution had the pleasure of receiving at its headquarters Mr. José Barroso Chavez who, accompanied by Mrs. Barroso Chavez, was going to Vienna, after a tour in Europe, to attend the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross. On September 6 and 7, 1965, Mr. and Mrs. Barroso Chavez were the guests of the ICRC where they were received by the President, Mr. Samuel Gonard. Several members of the ICRC and of its staff were also present. A work session then took place during which the ICRC's directors explained the present work of the organization and the principal subjects for consideration at the International Conference. Afterwards a film was shown of the ICRC's activities in the Yemen.

Mr. and Mrs. Barroso Chavez were also received at the League of Red Cross Societies. The President of the Mexican Red Cross was thus able to have a wide view of the problems and activities of the International Red Cross institutions established in Geneva.

¹ See *International Review*, August 1965.