

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

India and Pakistan

Prisoners of War. — Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross in both India and Pakistan have been permitted to visit prisoners of war; both governments have demonstrated their intention to apply the Geneva Conventions of 1949 on the protection of victims of war. Mr. Roger Du Pasquier in India and Mr. Michel Martin in Pakistan were therefore given access to several places of internment and were authorized to interview prisoners without witnesses. The delegates' reports were conveyed each time to the Detaining Power and the government of the prisoners' country of origin. Mr. Du Pasquier was also able to see prisoners of war who had been wounded in the course of the fighting.

The prisoners in India have been authorized to write to their families and the first batch of letters and capture cards has been sent to Geneva, from where the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency will transmit them to Karachi. Mr. Du Pasquier has also transmitted the first lists of Pakistani prisoners and these were immediately forwarded to the Pakistan Embassy in Berne.

In Pakistan, Mr. Martin requested that Indian prisoners be authorized to correspond with their families. At the beginning of October, the Pakistan Red Cross sent some letters to Geneva and these were immediately forwarded to New Delhi. In addition, Mr. Martin has received lists of prisoners of war and interned Indian civilians.

Refugees. — Military operations and air raids in both countries have given rise to serious population movements. According to

information gathered by Mr. Du Pasquier and observations in the course of several visits in the border regions of the Punjab and of Jammu, the number of refugees in India is estimated to be over 200,000.

Mr. Martin too has visited several reception centres set up by the West Pakistan authorities in the border regions where some of the 120,000 civilians fleeing from the fighting zones have been given shelter.

In spite of the measures taken by the authorities and the National Red Cross Societies and despite the generosity of the local population, the plight of these refugees is distressing. They left their homes in haste without any possessions and after several days' journey in the high valleys their clothing was worn to rags. Their homes have been destroyed so that for most of them there is no prospect of returning to their villages in the near future. Approaching winter makes urgent assistance in the form of food, clothing, blankets, tents and medical supplies all the more necessary. After despatching its first emergency consignments whilst fighting was still going on, the ICRC asked the League of Red Cross Societies to appeal to National Societies to contribute to the action undertaken by the Indian and Pakistan Red Cross Societies for the benefit of refugees.

*

Viet Nam

On behalf of refugees in the South. — Mr. André Tschiffeli, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in South Viet Nam, went with representatives of the Viet Nam Red Cross on September 30 to the village of Vinh-Kim in the Mytho region, in order to distribute relief supplies of rice, milk, children's food, material and blankets to 200 refugee families. These families consisted mainly of elderly people, women and children.

A second distribution in the same district took place on October 3 to a further 200 families, also in distress, living in the disused sheds of an abandoned brick works. Some refugees living on the river banks in "sampan" (small boats frequently found in the Far East) were also given supplies.

During these distributions, young men and women from the local Red Cross assisted the doctors and nurses who had come from Saigon with the ICRC delegate, and who, in an ambulance and under canvas, examined and treated many patients.

Relief consignments to the North and to the NLF.—The ICRC has sent to Hanoi by air, via Peking, a consignment of relief supplies in the form of antibiotics and dressing material for the benefit of victims of the conflict. This consignment was sent to the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, to which the ICRC had already sent Sw. Fr. 50,000 from its reserve funds. Several National Red Cross Societies have announced their intention to participate in this action and have sent donations to the ICRC.

Thanks to the contributions received, the International Committee of the Red Cross has also sent medical and surgical supplies to the delegate in Moscow of the National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam for the benefit of the war victims on territory under NLF control.

The President of the ICRC in the Irish Republic and in Great Britain.

Following an invitation from the Irish Red Cross Society, the President of the ICRC and Mrs. Gonard, accompanied by Mr. Borsinger, spent several days in Ireland. They were present at the Society's Triennial Convention which met at Athlone in the centre of the country and which was attended by some hundreds of delegates representing its provincial branches.

The President of the ICRC had the opportunity of describing the Institution's present activities and of commenting on the favourable development of the XXth International Red Cross Conference.

The ICRC President, after being received by Mr. de Valera, President of the Republic, paid a visit to the Prime Minister, Mr. Sean Lemass, and also to General MacEoin, Chief of the General Staff of the Irish Army.

The ICRC delegation left Dublin for London, where it met various leading personalities of the British Red Cross and visited one of the hospital centres of this National Society.