

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

In Vietnam

On several occasions the *International Review* has published information about the work initiated by the ICRC for civilian disabled in Vietnam. Since then this assistance programme has developed in co-operation with the Red Cross and authorities of the Republic of Vietnam, as well as with other organizations interested in this activity.

Amputated cases are sent by hospitals to the Civilian Disabled Reception Centre, set up in the grounds of the Vietnamese Red Cross headquarters in Saigon, in a hut provided by the British "War on Want" organization and equipped with the aid of the American Red Cross. The reception centre is directed by Miss U. Spitzer, specialist nurse, sent by the Swiss Red Cross and who is a member of the ICRC delegation.¹

The disabled are then taken in due course in ambulances of the Vietnamese Red Cross to the orthopaedic centre in Saigon where they receive modern prostheses thanks to the joint action of the Vietnamese authorities and of the World Rehabilitation Fund. The Vietnamese Red Cross provides the necessary personnel to ensure the transport of the disabled and the functioning of the reception centre.

The ICRC sets aside cash contributions sent to it by National Societies for the upkeep of the disabled whilst at the reception centre and for the acquisition of the necessary appliances for their rehabilitation. Miss Spitzer has given some details as follows to Geneva concerning the Saigon Reception Centre's work.

¹ *Plate*—Two young amputees arriving at the Disabled Reception Centre.



Saigon — Two disabled children on the threshold of the Disabled Persons Reception Centre.

The Centre at present shelters 36 adults and 6 children, several of whom have had either two legs or two arms amputated. In spite of all the suffering a remarkable atmosphere prevails. In the evenings there is football and the women, in spite of the daily effort required for rehabilitation, make clothes on two sewing machines obtained by the nurse. A man rides on a bicycle in the yard although he has only just been provided with an artificial leg.

Several first-aiders help the nurse in the rehabilitation. They do walking exercises with the disabled one of whom, with both legs amputated, arrived at the centre by dragging himself on two pieces of motor tyre. So far treatment has been given here to one hundred and twenty-five people, some of whom still have open wounds.

It should be added that the ICRC's assistant delegate also has the task of placing the disabled when fitted with an artificial limb. She sees to it that they learn a trade and subsequently, as far as possible, that they find work.

The ICRC President in the Netherlands

At the invitation of the Netherlands Red Cross, Mr. Samuel A. Gonard, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross went last month to Holland accompanied by Mr. P. Basset, Head of ICRC Administration. They went first to The Hague and later to various other places.

As the National Society's new President, Jonkheer G. Kraijenhoff had been injured in an accident, Mr. Gonard went to his bedside.

At the Netherlands Red Cross headquarters in The Hague, Mr. Gonard was received by the First Vice-President, Baron van Odeneel tot Oldenzeel, and by the Director-General, Mr. A. van Emden. Other leading members of the National Society were also present.

He then had the pleasure of seeing some aspects of the work which the Netherlands Red Cross carries on with zeal and efficiency, such as the circulating library for the handicapped; the central warehouse for relief supplies, the fleet of motor vehicles; the central

blood transfusion laboratory at Zeist ; the " J. Henry Dunant House ", a holiday home for the disabled ; the " Red Cross Bungalow " near Eindhoven run by Mrs. van Riemsdyk-Philipps, all of which testify to the National Society's social sense and providence.

The ICRC President also visited the hospital ship " J. Henry Dunant " which is used to give the chronically sick or the disabled one-week cruises on the canals. This vessel sails under the red cross flag : its function is an original idea which has already been brought to the attention of our readers.¹

During his stay in Holland the ICRC President met several members of the Government, particularly Mr. Karls, Prime Minister, Mr. Luns, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Veldkamp, Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health.

¹ See *International Review*, May 1965.