

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

The ICRC intervenes with UNO

In order to support the delegates' action, Mr. Léopold Boissier, President of the ICRC, sent a telegram to Mr. Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, insisting on the urgent necessity of evacuating the wounded, the sick and elements of the civilian population who found themselves in the zones of military operations in various parts of Elisabethville and Katanga. He asked him to see to it that the representatives of the United Nations in the Congo help the delegates of the ICRC to accomplish their strictly humanitarian mission.

In his reply to Mr. Boissier, Mr. Thant stated : " I wish to take this opportunity of assuring you that the troops of UNO Command will continue to do everything possible to protect the life and property of the civilian population and that it will co-operate with your representatives in Katanga in every possible way in the accomplishment of their humanitarian mission ".

The ICRC at work in different Parts of Laos

The general delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. André Durand, has just completed a visit to Xieng-Khouang in Northern Laos, where he was concerned with various humanitarian questions. He visited four American prisoners in the hands of the Xieng-Khouang Government, three civilians, Mr. Grant Wolfkill, Mr. Edward Shore and Mr. John McMorrow and one soldier, Sergeant Orville J. Ballenger. The ICRC delegate was able to speak with them in the presence of representatives of the Laotian authorities. He enquired as to their needs, so as to be able to send them the necessary relief. He has already handed over parcels for them to the authorities. The prisoners declared that they were in good health and they also said that they had received letters which the ICRC had previously sent them.

Similarly, Dr. Jürg Baer, ICRC doctor-delegate, is continuing his activities in Southern Laos. He recently went to Savannakhet, where he revisited prisoners and Laotian internees in the hands of the Vientiane Government. Previous visits had been made in the spring.

Working in close co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross, Dr. Baer has also continued relief distributions to the refugees in the Mekong valley. In this connection, he went to the Saravane region, where he handed over relief to two villages built by the refugees. In this part of Laos many of the refugees are Khas who are of early Indochinese origin.

In a Saravane hospital, Dr. Baer handed over four cases of blood plasma, a gift from the Netherlands Red Cross. Still in co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross, he also distributed relief parcels to the sick and wounded.

Further relief distributions are scheduled for the southernmost part of Laos.

During these different tours, the ICRC doctor-delegate took particular interest in the state of health of the refugee populations who, in general, are suffering from a lack of vitamins and from diseases such as beriberi, amoebic dysentery and malaria. The needs to which this alarming situation has given rise have resulted in the contributions made since August by a dozen National Red Cross Societies being exhausted. The ICRC intends to ask for further contributions to this relief action.

Relief consignments to Algeria

The ICRC is also continuing its work on behalf of the resettled population. Thus 20 tons of powdered milk from dairy surplus provided by the Government of the Swiss Confederation, are on their way to Algeria. This gift is the continuation of previous consignments, totalling 150 tons, which made it possible for the mobile teams of the French Red Cross to carry out numerous distributions of milk, in co-operation with the ICRC delegate in Algeria, to the children in the resettlement centres.

Artificial Limbs supplied to Algerian War-Disabled

This autumn saw the end of an action by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which was responsible for bringing aid to Algerian war-disabled in Morocco. From 1958 to the present date, the ICRC has supplied 25 temporary and permanent artificial limbs, 8 pairs of orthopaedic footwear for those with foot amputations or leg wounds, 70 pairs of crutches, 112 artificial eye-pieces of various types and 2 invalid carriages.

This relief action was undertaken following a request by the Algerian Red Crescent and visits by ICRC delegates. Already in 1957, a delegate had gone to Lousteau hospital, in Oujda, where the senior physician advised him of the requirements of the disabled.

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A number of steps had then to be taken to obtain equipment corresponding exactly to these requirements.

Relief consignment to Togo

In order to contribute to the action which the Togolese Red Cross is undertaking on behalf of refugees settled in Togo, the ICRC sent relief to Lomé at the end of November. This consignment consisted of two tons of concentrated soup.

Aid to Netherlands subjects in Indonesia

The Indonesian Government has decided to entrust the National Red Cross Society with the task of dealing with the humanitarian aspect of the problems concerning Netherlands subjects remaining in Indonesia.

The Indonesian Red Cross, which is the sole organization empowered to do this, thus has the task of transmitting Netherlands Government pensions and allowances to its beneficiaries. These payments were previously made through the intermediary of Great Britain, which represented Netherlands interests in Indonesia. These were, however, interrupted when the Detaining Power was obliged to cease exercising its functions last March.

Thanks to the Red Cross, Dutch pensioners can consequently once more receive payments upon which they mainly rely for their subsistence. The Indonesian Red Cross can also be called upon to assist, as it did in 1958, Netherlands subjects who might decide to leave Indonesia to return to the Netherlands.

In order to facilitate the carrying out of humanitarian tasks thus devolving on the Indonesian Red Cross, practical co-operation has been established with the International Committee of the Red Cross, which ensures liaison with the Netherlands authorities. There is a representative of the Committee at present at Djakarta.

The ICRC at a Congress of Radiation Medicine

In reply to an invitation from the German Red Cross in the German Federal Republic, the International Committee of the Red Cross was represented by one of its members, Brigade Colonel Hans Meuli, former Director of the Swiss Army Medical Service, at the Vth Session of Medical Specialists in Radiation (5. Tagung der DRK-Strahlenschutzärzte). This meeting, which was organized by the German Red Cross, discussed problems raised by the protection of the civilian population against the risks incurred from radiation in time of peace as in time of war. It took place between November 23 and 25 at the Nursing Centre of the Bavarian

Red Cross at Munich (Mutterhaus der Schwesternschaft München des Bayerischen Roten Kreuzes).

The participants, numbering about 200, were greeted by Dr. G. Denecke, Head Medical Officer of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic. The President of the German Red Cross, Ritter von Lex, who had just come from Geneva where he had been received by the ICRC, also spoke. Brigade Colonel Meuli, the only foreign guest to be invited, brought greetings from the ICRC.

It was brought out at this meeting, that over the past four years about 200 German doctors had been specialising in the treatment of radiation and that they could in future undertake the instruction of nursing and auxiliary personnel in this subject. This will be of immense value to the Red Cross.

Brigade Colonel Meuli took the opportunity, whilst he was in Munich, of visiting hospital establishments for the war-disabled and for accidents. He thus visited the Hermann Schramm Hospital at Murnau, as well as the clinics and rehabilitation centres of Bad Tölz. He also visited an exhibition of vehicles for the disabled and was most impressed by the remarkable work which has been accomplished in that field.

Course at the ICRC

During November, Mr. Ricardo Bermudez, Director of the Nicaraguan Red Cross, made a study visit to the International Committee during which he followed closely the work of the different departments of our institution with great interest. Mr. Bermudez then made a study visit to the League of Red Cross Societies.

Red Cross Centenary

At its last meeting the Committee of the Centenary Celebrations adopted its statute and decided to call itself in future: "Committee for the Red Cross Centenary in Switzerland".

The preparatory work for the exhibition has progressed and the first model, on town planning, has been approved.

During an information session organized for its benefit, the personnel of the ICRC, the League and the Swiss Red Cross heard speeches on the preparation of the Centenary Celebrations and the XXth International Conference, as well as on the recruitment campaign scheduled by the Swiss Red Cross.

With regard to publicity for the Centenary, contacts have been made with agencies specializing in public relations.

Those responsible are also concerned with ensuring accommodation for the numbers of people who will be taking part in the Centenary Celebrations and the XXth International Conference and, to this effect, they have approached the competent services.

Guests of the ICRC

From the beginning of November to early December the ICRC was privileged to welcome several personalities to its headquarters, among them ; Dr. Ha Vinh Phoong, the Republic of Vietnam Chargé d'Affaires in Bonn ; Dr. Oucharef, Vice-President of the " Algerian Red Crescent " ; Mr. Chao Sopsafana, Laotian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs ; accompanied by Mr. Tay Keoluanchot, Vice-President of the Laotian Red Cross ; Dr. El-Wakil, permanent observer of the Arab League ; Count Decazes, Assistant-Delegate of the Order of Malta to the International Organisations in Geneva ; Mr. E. Bighinatti, Assistant National Director of the National Disaster Relief Services of the American Red Cross ; Mr. Nedim About, Assistant Director-General of the Turkish Red Crescent ; Mr. Faustino Mercado, Assistant-Director of the national disaster relief services of the Philippine Red Cross ; Mr. Vernon Zimmerman, Assistant-Director of the National Disaster Relief Services of the American Red Cross ; Miss Jane Martin, Director of the Nursing and Social Welfare Bureau of the French Red Cross ; Miss Evelyn Bark, Counsellor for Relief and International Relations of the British Red Cross ; Mrs. E. Koltai, Director of the Department of External Relations of the Hungarian Red Cross ; Lt. Col. Haakon Mathiesen, Secretary-General of the Norwegian Red Cross and Mr. Björn Deichmann-Sorenson, Director of Public Relations of the Norwegian Red Cross.

The ICRC was also privileged to receive various groups, namely students from the " Bon Secours " Nursing School in Geneva, students from the International School in Geneva, as well as the presidents of national students associations of various countries who had been invited to take part in the Congress of the National Union of Students in Switzerland.