

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

Visits to European Detainees in Algeria

On September 17, 1962, two representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Jean-Jacques Muralti and Mr. Joseph Gasser, were authorised to visit the thirty-four Europeans detained in the Maison-Carrée prison near Algiers. They spoke freely and without witnesses with these prisoners, whose nominal roll was then transmitted to the French authorities by the ICRC. From their visit they brought messages destined for the families of the detainees.

On September 26, the ICRC visited the Maison-Carrée prison near Algiers for the second time. Its representatives noted the presence of forty-three European detainees, with whom they also spoke freely and without witnesses. They obtained the nominal roll of these prisoners of whom they transmitted messages to their families.

On behalf of the missing and interned in Algeria

Two representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Pierre Gaillard and Mr. Roger Vust, have completed a mission in Algeria. Instructed to make contact with the authorities, they were received by Mr. Ferhat Abbas, President of the Constituent Assembly and Mr. Rabah Bitat, Vice-President of the Government. The delegates were also able to have talks with Colonel Houari Boumedienne, Commander-in-Chief of the National People's Army and Minister of Defence, and Mr. Ahmed Medeghri, Minister of the Interior ; they examined with them the problem of missing persons and former military (harkis) presumed to be detained in internment camps, and obtained assurances from

them on the subject. The ICRC representatives also met Mr. Medjad, Head of National Security, and Mr. Hacène, Director of Penal Establishments, who promised to undertake new investigations to discover the whereabouts of missing Europeans.

Finally, Mr. Gaillard and Mr. Vust spoke with Dr. Oucharef, Vice-President of the Algerian Red Crescent, with whom they studied the question of the organization of that National Society in the process of being formed.

The ICRC has charged Mr. Vust, its permanent delegate in Algeria, to continue to make representations on behalf of Harkis, Moslem auxiliaries who had served in the French Army. The International Committee in Geneva, as well as its representatives in Algeria, have in fact for some time past received various enquiries concerning their fate. These drew attention in particular to the existence of internment camps for Harkis.

The ICRC has good reasons for hoping, therefore, to be able to visit these internment camps. It considers it to be its duty to extend its help to the Harkis, since their position is one of the after-effects of the Algerian war.

Help for the Civilian population

It should also be pointed out that two representatives of the ICRC, Mr. Vust and Mr. Gasser went to Tablat at the request of the Sub-Prefect of the district, to examine the problem of assistance to the civilian population. Among other things, they studied the conditions in which it would be possible for a French Red Cross mobile team to resume its activities in this region where the needs remain considerable.

The Sub-Prefect of Tablat also asked for the ICRC's support in finding a medical team ready to work in his area, which holds 50,000 inhabitants without a single doctor.

In Nepal

After a slowing-down due to the monsoon rains, the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Nepal is again working at full stretch helping the Tibetan refugees. Its two planes grounded by technical difficulties and the persistent bad weather since the beginning of the summer in these Himalayan regions, are flying again.

These Swiss manufactured Pilatus Porter aircraft, which are specially adapted for high altitude flights, have already enabled refugees to be supplied with valuable relief. Thanks to these machines, the ICRC doctor delegates succeeded in 1961, in checking a smallpox epidemic which had broken out in the Walungchung

valley, in the East of the country. They parachuted medical supplies including 2,000 doses of anti-smallpox vaccine into the valley, accompanied by instructions in Tibetan and Nepalese for the local doctors.

The two planes have completed a number of other missions in the high valleys of Nepal. They land on makeshift strips which are among the highest in the world, and this is not without its hazards. On several occasions already, the aircraft have been seriously damaged on take-off or landing. This summer, large scale repairs were needed and the pilots, Mr. Claude Jacot and Mr. Emile Wick, assisted by the mechanic, Mr. Herbert Steinmann, carried out technical checks and statutory test flights, in order to prepare the machines to continue their missions in the high valleys where the refugees live.

It was in 1961 that the first ICRC aircraft began flights in regions which had never before been overflown. The initiative is due to Mr. Toni Hagen, who in a voluntary capacity directed the action on behalf of the Tibetan refugees in its first phase and rendered considerable service, thanks to his profound knowledge of Nepal.

Visit to foreign volunteers detained in Léopoldville

The delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Congo, Mr. G. C. Senn, has been to Léopoldville, where he visited four foreign nationals interned there, who are considered as volunteers in the service of Katanga. Following a complaint by one of them, he instituted a medical enquiry with the agreement of UNO, the Detaining Power.

It should be noted that the ICRC is prompted by purely humanitarian reasons in its concern with the condition of these persons, one of whom does not, in any case, consider himself as a foreign volunteer. As always, in such cases, its intervention is based solely on the fact that these persons are detained as the result of a conflict.

After the incidents in Gabon

Following on the incidents which took place at Libreville (Gabon) between Congolese and Gabonese between September 16 and 18, the Government of the Congo (Brazzaville) asked the International Committee of the Red Cross by telegram to lend its assistance to the Congolese victims. The ICRC advised the Gabonese Government of this request, asking it to supply it with the necessary details.

The ICRC, which has transmitted the reply received from the Gabonese Government to Brazzaville, is remaining in contact with the two governments.

The ICRC in Laos

The International Committee of the Red Cross has decided to maintain its delegation in Laos until the end of 1962, in order to continue its work of assisting refugees. In fact, if their number has considerably decreased since the cease-fire agreements, there are still large groups, especially in the Mekong valley, which have not returned to their villages of origin. The ICRC will therefore continue to bring its aid to them for some time longer, in close co-operation with the authorities and the Red Cross in Laos.

Departure of a further batch of repatriated Koreans

The repatriation of Koreans resident in Japan which has been in operation since 1959 under the auspices of the Japanese Red Cross and in the presence of ICRC delegates, is at present the subject of negotiations between the Red Cross Societies of Japan and of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. While awaiting the outcome of these talks, the 98th vessel transporting Koreans wishing to return to the north of their country of origin, left the Japanese port of Niigata on October 4, for Chongjin. Two representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross recently visited the reception centre at Niigata to see the 192 people waiting to board the ship.

The 97th transport left Niigata on July 21, with 164 passengers on board. The total number of repatriated persons was thus brought to 77,085.

A request to Geneva from Buenos Aires

The Argentine Red Cross in Buenos Aires has requested the intervention of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva in connection with the recent events in the Argentine Republic. Following this request the ICRC has instructed its delegate in Buenos Aires, Mr. Jacques de Chambrier, to contact the Argentine Red Cross in order to examine with them humanitarian problems raised by the recent events, which might come within its sphere of competence.

Compensation for the victims of pseudo-medical experiments

The Commission of neutral experts appointed by the International Committee of the Red Cross to examine the case of victims of pseudo-medical experiments carried out under the Nazi regime, to which the Government of the German Federal Republic is prepared to pay compensation, met in September in Geneva under

the presidency of Professor Jean Graven, Rector of the University of Geneva, President of the Supreme Court of Appeal. It studied the files of a further group of 107 Hungarian victims of such experiments, files drawn up in Budapest, then submitted to a mixed commission consisting of doctors appointed by the Hungarian Red Cross and the ICRC. The neutral experts meeting in Geneva held all the cases which were submitted to it, with one exception. Their decisions will result in indemnities being paid in proportion to the extent of the experiments subjected and to the damage still being suffered thereby.

On the other hand, the files of a fresh group of Polish victims of the same experiments are at present being studied. They will be the subject of a forthcoming meeting of the expert Commission.

The Government of the German Federal Republic has already placed at the disposal of the ICRC all the funds allocated to the first group of Polish and Hungarian victims. In December 1961, the ICRC transmitted these amounts to the beneficiaries.

Consequences of the Civil War in Greece

A number of Greek families still apply to the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva, either directly or through the intermediary of the Greek Red Cross, to discover the fate of their relatives missing during the civil war in Greece, now more than thirteen years ago.

The absence of all news does not leave much hope that the person sought has survived the struggle and could be found amongst the Greek refugees established in several countries of Eastern Europe. It is however a matter of obtaining proof of decease to put an end to a family's painful uncertainty.

To this end, the Central Agency has had recourse to the cooperation of the Committee of Greek political refugees in Budapest, which exercises its activity in the various countries of asylum. This Committee has opened enquiries, the results of which it periodically communicates to the Central Agency, in the form of lists containing detailed information concerning the circumstances of the decease of combatants fallen during the course of operations.

These lists are transmitted by the ICRC to the Greek Red Cross, which is then in a position to settle cases which have remained outstanding for many years.

The Red Cross and aid to the victims of internal conflicts

How can the aid of the Red Cross to victims of internal conflicts be made more effective? This was the question which the International Committee of the Red Cross submitted to a commission

of international experts which had its first meeting in Geneva on October 25 at the headquarters of the ICRC

Two similar consultations had taken place in 1953 and 1955. As at these two previous meetings the experts had chiefly to examine the application of article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, as well as their effects on the international level.

It should be recalled that this article 3 consists of a minimum of humanitarian rules to be respected "in the case of armed conflict not of an international character". It also mentions that "an impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the Parties to the conflict."

Since the signing of the new Conventions in 1949, many situations presented themselves in which article 3 was applied in a more or less satisfactory manner. Its terms in fact lay themselves open to fairly wide interpretation.

The consultations which took place in Geneva was of a purely private character. The experts had been convened to take part in them in a private capacity. Three members of the ICRC also participated with a deliberative voice, as well as three experts appointed by the Danish, Mexican and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies. The following personalities took part in this consultation: Prof. Roberto Ago (Rome), Prof. Frede Castberg (Oslo), Mr. Paul Cornil, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Justice (Brussels), Prof. Nihat Erim (Ankara), Prof. Jean Graven (Geneva), Prof. Erik Husfeldt (Copenhagen), Mr. Bosko Jakovljević (Belgrade), Prof. Roger Pinto (Paris), Mr. J. J. G. de Rueda (Mexico), Prof. Georges Ténekidès (Athens). Mr. Erim is President of the commission, in whose work representatives of the ICRC also participated.

The Red Cross Centenary

The following indications will give some idea of how preparations are progressing. The detailed models set up by the draftsmen of the different sections of the Exhibition, which opens in Geneva next August, have been made up into a complete model which has been shown to the members of the Centenary Commission, to the representatives of the patron institutions and of the federal, cantonal and municipal authorities of Geneva. It was also shown to the delegates of the National Societies attending the recent meetings of the League.

A letter of invitation has been sent to the National Societies, asking them to participate in the different study centres, the programme of which has now been settled. They will shortly receive a questionnaire relative to the contribution which they expect to make to the organization of Commemoration Day:

strength of delegations, equipment made available for the processions, etc.

In the field of information, it should be noted that a team of journalists who are co-operating voluntarily in writing articles for the Centenary press service has had two meetings. A press conference has been held in Geneva and numerous papers, as well as radio and television, have drawn the public's attention to the celebrations planned. We should also like to point out that the Federal Department of the Interior, at Berne, in liaison with the Swiss Commission of Applied Arts, has opened a competition for an official Exhibition poster.

The problem of accommodation is being carefully studied and a list is now being made of hotels which can accommodate delegates and visitors coming to Geneva next August and September.

Guests of the ICRC

Various personalities of the Red Cross World took the opportunity of their stay in Geneva, during the 82nd session of the Executive Committee of the League of Red Cross Societies, to have talks with the directors of our institution. Thus, the ICRC successively welcomed : Dr. F. Janouch, President of the Czechoslovakian Red Cross and Dr. K. Blaha, Head of the Foreign Section ; Mr. Masutaro Inoue, Director of the Department for Foreign Affairs of the Japanese Red Cross, Mr. S. Sato, Director of the Information Department of the Japanese Red Cross, accompanied by Mr. K. Watanabe and Mr. S. Yasubuchi ; the Countess of Limerick, Vice-Chairman of the British Red Cross ; Professor Z. Kreiji, President of the Junior Red Cross of Czechoslovakia ; Dr. I. Domanska, President of the Polish Red Cross and Miss Danuta Zys, Head of the Department of External Relations ; Mr. Hans Ritter von Lex, President of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, and Dr. A. Schlögel, Secretary-General, accompanied by Mr. H. Ritgen and Dr. K. Wagner ; Colonel C. Arroyo, Relief Director of the Chilean Red Cross ; Dr. Werner Ludwig, President of the German Red Cross in the German Democratic Republic, accompanied by Mr. J. Zimmering, former Permanent Representative of the German Democratic Republic in Geneva ; Dr. G. C. Caridad, Head of the Medical Services of the Philippine National Red Cross.

From mid-September to the beginning of October, the International Committee received several visitors at its headquarters, among them : Mr. William M. Gibson, Minister Plenipotentiary and Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States in Geneva ; Dr. Rascaë D. Whatley, Director of the Birmingham Chapter of the American Red Cross, returning from a relief mission

in Indonesia ; Mr. K. Z. Mohammed, travelling regional delegate of the Junior Red Cross of Nigeria and Mr. R. Gossmann, a member of the Junior Red Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany, both holding UNESCO scholarships, on a study visit to the League of Red Cross Societies ; Mrs. Gabrielle Bollet, President of the Donnemarie-en-Montois Committee of the French Red Cross ; Mrs. Elen Habib Rihan, Secretary of the Lebanese Red Cross ; Mr. J. Emmanuel Berry, Executive Secretary of the Liberian National Red Cross, who devoted a day's study visit to the ICRC ; Miss G. Bura and Miss E. Düblin, Press Chiefs of the Swiss Red Cross.

The ICRC also welcomed various groups, amongst which we would mention members of the Swiss Union of Press Attachés ; students belonging to the " Helft Europas Jugend " from west Germany ; a group of travel agents from the German Federal Republic.
