

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

The ICRC and the cease-fire in Algeria

Since the beginning of the fighting the International Committee of the Red Cross has tried to give help and protection to all victims, such as detainees or prisoners, regrouped populations in the interior of Algeria and, during the first phase of their exile, refugees in Tunisia and Morocco.

Now that the cease-fire has been announced, the ICRC is ready for any emergency. It is in any case singled out in the text of the Evian Agreement on the cease-fire. Article 11 of this treaty, which schedules release (within twenty days of the cease-fire) of prisoners of both sides taken in combat, stipulates amongst other things :

“ The two parties will inform the International Committee of the Red Cross where their prisoners are and of all measures taken for their release ”.

Since the cease-fire, the French authorities have communicated certain information to the ICRC regarding Algerians captured while armed, whom they are detaining and certain of whom are already being released. The ICRC has asked the GPRA for information on Frenchmen detained by the ALN and likely release procedure.

ICRC aid to the resettled population

The International Committee of the Red Cross has transmitted further relief supplies destined for the resettled population in Algeria. These included, in particular, 50 tons of powdered milk offered by the Netherlands Government at the suggestion of the Netherlands Red Cross, and of 10 tons of powdered milk out of surplus supplies of the Swiss Confederation. These two consignments together represent a value exceeding 100,000 Swiss francs.

Relief supplied up to the present by the ICRC to the resettled population in Algeria has reached a total value of about 1,531,000 Swiss francs. This was distributed by the French Red Cross, often in the presence of an ICRC delegate.

Thanks to an arrangement which has been made between the ICRC and the Swiss Confederation, it will be possible to despatch, until the end of 1962, periodic consignments to resettled groups of Algerians and thus to provide them with all the powdered milk which they may require. To these will be added other consignments, especially of melted cheese.

The ICRC is thus continuing its action on behalf of the regrouped populations largely through the French Red Cross and its mobile teams.¹ It has sent two delegates to Algeria, Mr. J.-J. Muralti and Mr. J. de Heller, who are helping Mr. R. Vust, delegate resident in Algiers. Their mission is of a technical nature, consisting of taking part in distributions and evaluating current needs and needs likely to arise from regrouped persons returning to their homes.

The United States Government has informed the ICRC of its intention to send it important relief supplies in kind for regrouped persons. These will be surplus foodstuffs consisting of white flour, Indian meal, rice, barley, beans, powdered milk and possibly oil and sugar. The quantities and the value have not yet been announced.

New tasks

When the fighting broke out in Algiers and Oran, ICRC delegate Roger Vust, accompanied by local representatives of the French Red Cross, called on the Prefect of Police of Algiers. He requested that doctors be allowed to circulate more freely, that a greater number of pharmacies remain open, and that the military detachment installed in a clinic be withdrawn. The French Red Cross teams were given permission to distribute milk to children.

The ICRC visits European prisoners in the Congo

The delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Jean de Preux, visited four European military prisoners held by United Nations troops after having served in the Katanga forces. These four men were detained at Fort Garnier at Limete near the Congolese capital. Steps taken on their behalf by the delegate resulted in their transfer to another internment camp at N'Djili where considerable improvements have been made to their conditions of detention.

¹ See *International Review of the Red Cross*, January and February 1962.

The activity of the ICRC in North Katanga

Mr. G. C. Senn, delegate, has continued his activity in North Katanga, where he has attempted to bring the aid of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the victims of the events. Since there were certain disquieting rumours circulating about the situation in Albertville, he went to that town where in fact calm reigned. Accompanied by the UNO civilian representative and by the administrator of the territory, he visited the prison which held 33 detainees, although there is room in its cells for 230. Indeed, several days previously, all the detainees, against whom no definite charges could be upheld, were released.

The delegate also visited a group of about thirty women and forty children who had just arrived by air from Manono, where they had placed themselves under the protection of the UNO forces, when the hostilities had broken out between the National Congolese Army and the Katanga forces. In co-operation with UNO, which had assured their supplying and protection, Mr. Senn made arrangements for these women and children to be evacuated by air to Elisabethville where they would be offered the possibility of rejoining their husbands and returning to their native villages in South Katanga.

Furthermore, following up a request from ecclesiastical quarters concerning the precarious situation of a certain number of missionaries in the Kongolo area, Mr. Senn made representations with UNOC at Elisabethville for their evacuation.

Enquiries regarding a Congolese personality

The International Committee of the Red Cross which, since the beginning of the disturbances in the Congo, has tried to protect persons deprived of their freedom for political reasons, has also been giving its attention to the position of Antoine Gizenga, the well-known political leader who succeeded Lumumba and who is at present detained by the Congolese Central Government. Although the ICRC delegate has not yet been given permission to visit Mr. Gizenga, he has made enquiries about him, and has been assured that Mr. Gizenga is in good health and that his internment conditions are satisfactory.

On the basis of this information, the ICRC has replied to the Red Cross Societies of the USSR, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, which had expressed their anxiety over the Congolese leader's fate. The ICRC intends to continue its enquiries to make certain that detention conditions conform to humanitarian requirements.

ICRC delegate honoured

In accordance with a decision approved by H. M. the King of Sweden, the Silver Medal of the Swedish Red Cross will be bestowed on Mr. G. C. Senn, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Katanga. This distinction thus expresses Sweden's gratitude to the delegate whose efforts resulted in the release on January 15, 1962, of the eleven Swedish military personnel of UNO held by the Katanga forces.

Study mission of the ICRC in Central Africa

The study mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Central Africa, consisting of Mr. S. Gonard, Vice-President, and Mr. G. Hoffmann, delegate, left Dar-es-Salaam, capital of Tanganyika, for Zanzibar, then for Mombasa, chief port of Kenya. It then proceeded to Entebbe and Kampala in Uganda. It was everywhere warmly welcomed by the local branches of the Red Cross, and by the civil and military authorities. The two ICRC representatives then visited Ruanda Urundi, the former Belgian Congo and the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville).

After a journey lasting two months they returned to Geneva at the beginning of April.

Goa and Mozambique

As we have already mentioned, the ICRC has made a further round of visits to Portuguese prisoners and internees in Goa. Accompanied by the deputy Secretary-General of the Indian Red Cross, Mr. Jolly, the delegate of the ICRC, Mr. Jacques Ruff, visited members of the Portuguese armed forces captured in Goa, Damao and Diu, all interned in Goa in the Vasco da Gama and Ponda camps and in the fort of Aguada. There are over 4,000 prisoners and internees.

The Portuguese Red Cross in Lisbon has requested the ICRC in Geneva to have medicaments sent to Portuguese held in Goa. The necessary steps are being taken in this connection which are likely to prove successful in the near future.

Furthermore, in Mozambique, Mr. Robert Guinand, ICRC delegate, has terminated his visits to places of internment in which about 2,000 Indian nationals are being held by the Portuguese authorities. He has visited nine internment camps located in various districts in that territory. At Lourenço Marques and at Beira, the International Committee's representative was accompanied by delegates of the Portuguese Red Cross.

The activity of the Central Tracing Agency on behalf of Portuguese prisoners

On his return from his mission in Goa, where he visited interned Portuguese military personnel, Mr. Jacques Ruff, ICRC delegate, brought back to Geneva 4,348 capture cards for the card-index of the Central Tracing Agency, as well as 2,896 messages addressed by the prisoners to their families in Portugal. The Central Agency immediately transmitted these messages to the Portuguese Red Cross.

In this connection it should be recalled that, when the conflict broke out in Goa, the Central Agency concerned itself in establishing liaison between the prisoners and their relatives. Postal communications between Goa and Portugal being at that time interrupted, it enabled family messages to reach the Portuguese prisoners through the Indian Red Cross at the end of December. These messages, drawn up on forms, were then returned to Geneva, bearing on their reverse side the reply of the person concerned. The news thus given by the prisoners was immediately communicated to the respective families through the channel of the Portuguese Red Cross.

In March, the Indian Red Cross sent a further despatch of 587 messages to the Central Agency.

The repatriation of Indonesian prisoners from New Guinea

After having been held for nearly two months in New Guinea, the 52 Indonesian members of the armed forces, survivors of the naval engagement of January 15 in the waters of the Aru islands, were released by the Netherlands authorities. Accompanied by Mr. André Durand, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross for Asia, they were taken from New Guinea to Singapore on March 11 in an aircraft on charter by the United Nations. They were met on arrival by a team of the Indonesian Red Cross, directed by Dr. Sukmadi, member of that Society's Central Committee and immediately transferred themselves to an Indonesian aircraft for Djakarta. After they had arrived in that town, the Central Committee of the Indonesian Red Cross telegraphed the ICRC in Geneva, expressing its compliments on "the success of the ICRC delegates' mission".

Another survivor (the 53rd), wounded during the course of the engagement, is still undergoing treatment at the Central hospital at Hollandia in New Guinea. He will be repatriated as soon as his condition will allow.

This repatriation operation, as is known, took place after the Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations asked for the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The matter having been successfully completed, Mr. Thant sent the following telegram to Mr. Léopold Boissier, President of the ICRC :

“ Having received the good news that the transfer of the Indonesian prisoners had been successfully accomplished, I wish to express both to you and to your personnel, my very great gratitude for the competent manner in which this mission was carried out. I consider that the operation constitutes a definite landmark in the history of the co-operation between our two organizations. I would greatly appreciate it, if you would kindly transmit the following message from myself to Mr. Durand : “ Wish to express my deep gratitude to you for your effective and tireless efforts resulting in the transfer of the Indonesian prisoners carried out with such success on March eleventh ”.—“ U Thant, Acting-Secretary-General ”.

ICRC action in Laos to continue for some months

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which recently considered terminating its activity in Laos, has finally decided to continue till June 1962 its relief mission begun in August 1961 on behalf of the victims of events. It has taken this decision because of the size and urgency of the needs, which have been confirmed by a fresh request from the Vientiane Government. The beneficiaries of this action are for the most part refugees from combat areas or danger zones who have flocked to the principal settlements along the Mekong valley.

The ICRC is working in strict co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross, and particularly with the women's groups and provincial committees using gifts sent by the ICRC. Since December, this National Society has, amongst other things, been carrying out thrice daily distributions by a women's group to 400 hospitalized wounded and has delegated another group to look after about 5,000 disaster victims, comprising some 750 families. The Society has also given aid to 12,412 refugees, distributing large quantities of food, clothing and other goods to them. It has handed over cases of blood plasma to the hospitals of Saravane, Vientiane, Savannakhet, Attopeu, Paksé, Luang-Prabang and Thakhak. Distributions have also been made in various internment camps and prisons.

The ICRC also intends to renew its relief supplies to the Laotian Red Cross in the Northern part of the country, which is under the Xieng-Khouang Government.

In order to continue its activities in Laos, the ICRC has decided to raise a further sum of 75,000 francs from its relief funds, bringing its total contributions to 276,000 francs. In addition to this the ICRC has received since August 1961, contributions from National Red Cross Societies of the following countries for its action in Laos : Australia, Austria, Belgium, Burma, Canada, France, Great Britain, India, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Switzerland, Thailand and the United States. These contributions have been in kind. To this should be added other gifts from various sources, in particular £5,000 given by the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief.

Relief supplies from the ICRC to Laos during the last eight months total over half a million Swiss francs.

A delegate of the ICRC at Djakarta

Mr. Pierre Vibert, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, has left Geneva for Djakarta, in order to continue the mission which he had already carried out there from October to December 1961¹. He will again concern himself with the question of the payment of pensions and allowances allocated by the Netherlands Government to some of its nationals established in Indonesia. The Indonesian Government had decided to entrust arrangements for these payments to the Indonesian Red Cross, to which the ICRC transmits funds sent from the Netherlands.

Mr. Vibert will also have to deal with the repatriation of Netherlands nationals wishing to proceed to their country of origin.

An appeal by the ICRC to Mr. Fidel Castro

For several months past the International Committee of the Red Cross has had an ever-increasing number of requests made to it to intervene on behalf of political and military detainees in the hands of the Government of Cuba. Recently the ICRC has received numerous appeals connected with the trial of military personnel captured in April 1961 after the landing on the Giron beach.

Following these requests, the ICRC sent a telegram on March 23 to Mr. Fidel Castro, President of the Cuban Government, referring to the forthcoming trial on March 29 which stated in particular : " We presume that the provisions of article 3 of the Geneva Conventions ratified by the Cuban Government will be fully applied. We would recall our previous offer of our services to you, which we now renew with the hope that, in accordance with custom, these prisoners will be able to be visited by a delegate of the ICRC for purposes of strictly humanitarian assistance."

¹ See *International Review*, January 1962.

Closing of the ICRC delegation in Madrid

The International Committee of the Red Cross has closed down its delegation in Madrid. Having reached the age limit, its delegate, Mr. Eric Arbenz has been appointed honorary delegate.

Mr. Arbenz has rendered valuable service to the Red Cross cause, especially during the Spanish Civil War. With great devotion he had come to the assistance of numerous victims, thus gaining their profound gratitude. He subsequently carried out a multiple number of humanitarian tasks, in close co-operation with the Spanish Red Cross.

Transmission of relief

The Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR has informed the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva of its intention to despatch relief parcels to detainees and political exiles in Greece. The ICRC has consulted the Greek Red Cross about this matter, which has agreed to the distribution of relief to the most needy amongst the detainees and exiles. Steps are at present progressing satisfactorily and the Greek Red Cross has agreed to make these distributions itself. These relief supplies, in the transmission of which the ICRC will have acted as an intermediary, will comprise 200 parcels whose contents are as yet unknown.

The Geneva Conventions in African languages

The International Committee of the Red Cross has just produced in the most widespread languages of the Congo a " Brief Summary of the Geneva Conventions for the use of members of the armed forces and the general public ". These languages are Lingala, Swahili, Tchiluba and Kikongo. The translation of this publication has been made by Congolese students at the University of Geneva.

The ICRC has sent a certain number of these pamphlets to the Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations for distribution in the Congo through UNOC. Furthermore, the delegates of the ICRC, Mr. J. de Preux at Léopoldville, and Mr. G. C. Senn at Elisabethville, will disseminate this summary as widely as possible in agreement with the authorities concerned.

Car given to the ICRC

The motor manufacturing firm of Volkswagen at Wolfsburg (German Federal Republic) has just made a gift to the International Committee of the Red Cross of its five millionth car to leave its

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factory. On March 14, at the entrance of the 32nd Geneva Motor Show, due to open on the following day, the vehicle was presented by Mr. Budde, head of the Volkswagen Press Services at Wolfsburg, to Mr. François de Reynold, head of the ICRC liaison Service, in the presence of Mr. Hans Staneck, director of the firm of Amag, representing Volkswagen in Switzerland, and of Mr. Haechler, director of publicity at Amag.

The car was then driven to ICRC headquarters at the Avenue de la Paix. Mr. Léopold Boissier, President of the International Committee and members of the directing staff welcomed the representatives of the German firm. Mr. Boissier thanked them warmly for this generous gift, which will render the ICRC valuable service.

Guests of the ICRC

From mid-February to the second week of March, the ICRC received several personalities at its headquarters, amongst them : Major-General C. K. Lakshmanan, Secretary-General of the Indian Red Cross ; Mr. A. W. Haley, President of the National Blood Service and the Blood Donors' Committee of the Canadian Red Cross ; Mrs. L. Quinn, District Commandant and Welfare Officer of the South African Red Cross ; Mr. Hahn Been Lee, Minister Plenipotentiary, the new Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea in Geneva ; Lieutenant-Colonel S.S. Mitra, Commander of the Gurkha contingent of the United Nations' Forces in Katanga ; two members of the Administrative Council of the French Red Cross, Mr. Denys Cochin and Mr. Roger Angebaut, President and Rapporteur respectively of the Centenary Commission set up by that National Society ; Mr. Hans Sjöholm, of the Swedish Junior Red Cross ; Dr. Karel Blaha, Head of the Foreign Section of the Czechoslovakian Red Cross ; Miss Maud Jones, Director of the Junior Red Cross of Great Britain ; Mr. George McGovern, Special Assistant to President Kennedy and Director of the " U.S. Food for Peace program ", accompanied by his colleague, Miss Donovan, as well as Mr. William H. McCahon, " Chief Council of the U.S. Food for Peace program " ; Mr. John McDonald, Adviser and Mr. George H. Lawrence, First Secretary of the " U.S. Mission Refugee and Migration Affairs " in Geneva ; Mrs. Isabelle Blume, member of the Bureau of the World (Peace) Council ; Mr. Armando Koch, Delegate of the Order of Malta ; Mr. Rishikesh Shaha, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs of Nepal ; Mr. L. B. Jones, Judge of the High Court of Sierra Leone ; Mr. Henry A.H.S. Grant, Ambassador Extraordinary, new Permanent Representative of Ghana in Geneva ; Mrs. Eleonore L. Robbins, Chairman of the

Office of Public Information and International Activities Committee of the New York State Chapter of the American Red Cross, Westchester County.

The ICRC was also privileged to receive several groups of visitors including Congolese students, on grants from the United Nations in Geneva, students from the School of Social Studies which has its headquarters in Geneva, and German students attending the Begeman School in Geneva.

GENEVA CONVENTIONS

The International Committee of the Red Cross has received from the Federal Political Department in Berne, duly certified copies of the instruments by which the Governments of Paraguay and Colombia have ratified the Geneva Conventions of 1949. These two ratifications will take effect on April 23, 1962 for Paraguay and on May 8, 1962 in the case of Colombia.

Furthermore, the Republic of Upper Volta has confirmed to the Federal Political Department the participation of that State in the Geneva Conventions, by virtue of their having been ratified by France on June 28, 1951. That State has therefore been bound by these agreements since acceding to independence, namely on August 5, 1960.

The Governments of Dahomey, Ivory Coast and Togoland have also for their part declared the Geneva Conventions to be applicable to these three Republics, by virtue of their previous ratification by France. The dates of the entry into force of the Conventions are those on which these States acceded respectively to independence ; August 1, 1960 for Dahomey, August 7, 1960 for Ivory Coast and April 27, 1960 for Togoland.

There are thus eighty-seven States now formally participating in the 1949 Conventions.