

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Viet Nam

ICRC medical teams ready to go into action. — With a view to alleviating the suffering caused by the prolongation of the war to the Vietnamese population both in the North and in the South, the International Committee of the Red Cross on December 27, 1965 offered the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Hanoi and Saigon and the National Liberation Front (NLF) to send medical teams to the spot, each consisting of two doctors and one male nurse, all of Swiss nationality. These could, in accordance with the principles of the Red Cross, care for all wounded, sick and disabled, victims of the events.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vietnam has replied to the ICRC, accepting that offer of assistance.

Dr Ulrich Middendorp, former chief medical officer of the ICRC field hospital at Uqhd in the Yemen desert, has therefore gone to Saigon in order to organize this medical action in which the Swiss Red Cross has already announced its participation.

An improvised emergency hospital. — Amongst the various humanitarian problems to be faced, that of overcrowded hospitals is of particular urgency. In fact, convalescence for amputated cases necessitates a long period of hospitalization. On two occasions, disabled persons arrived in Saigon from Danang asking the ICRC delegation to fit them with appliances, although their stumps had not yet healed. With great difficulty and with the help of the Ministry of Health, the delegates were able to find accommodation for five of them in a hospital in Cholon. Five others were hospitalized in a dispensary in the suburbs which was just as overcrowded.

Faced with this critical situation, the Vietnamese Red Cross and the ICRC then decided to set up a small hospital ward at the headquarters of the local Red Cross which can accommodate from twenty to thirty patients.

A young girl recovers her wish to live.—One of the first civilian disabled cared for by the ICRC has finished being fitted with an appliance and her rehabilitation at the Centre for the Disabled in Saigon, and has been able to return home. We would recall that mention has been made in a previous number of the *International Review* of the ICRC's concern in bringing orthopaedic aid to the disabled by supplying them with artificial limbs.¹

Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions.—On the initiative of the Vietnamese Red Cross in Saigon, all units of the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam have received precise instructions on the application of the Geneva Conventions of August 21, 1949.

They contain, in four pages, seven main points concerning the treatment of prisoners of war, the protection of civilians and the rules to be followed to mitigate distress caused by the war.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese Red Cross has had an official translation made of the Third and Fourth Conventions and has distributed it to the commanders of units. They have been asked to make these texts known and applied by their troops.

Visit to a prisoner-of-war camp.—The delegates of the ICRC in South Vietnam, Mr. Werner Muller, Mr. André Tschiffeli and Mr. Alain Modoux, accompanied by a representative of the Vietnamese Red Cross and officials of various ministries, on December 22 last visited the Tan Hiep camp, situated about twenty miles from Saigon. This holds 950 detainees, of whom 137 are classified as prisoners of war and the remainder as "political". The ICRC representatives were able to talk without witnesses with the prisoners of war whom they were free to select. The political prisoners live in the same conditions. A report on the visit has been forwarded to the Government of the Detaining Power.

¹ *Plate.* Crutches being presented to the disabled by an ICRC delegate in Vietnam.

Aid in the form of donations to the three parties.—The total of relief sent, or in the process of being despatched, to Vietnam through the intermediary of the ICRC amounted to 700 000 Swiss francs at the end of December 1965.

This figure does not include contributions sent direct to Vietnam by the National Red Cross Societies. Most donors expressed the wish to have their donations divided equally between the North, the South and the NLF. Others handed their contributions to the ICRC leaving it to decide upon their best use. Some donors also asked that their contributions be given to the victims on one or other of the three sides. In all cases, donations are sent in accordance with the donors' wishes.¹

Indonesia

After a short stay in Switzerland, Mr. André Durand, delegate general of the ICRC, again returned to Asia. His first call was at Djakarta where he resumed contact with the Indonesian Red Cross with which he studied in particular the position of Indonesian detainees in Malaysia and the despatching of 300 parcels and family mail for them.

After a series of talks with representatives of the Indonesian Government, Mr. Durand left for Cambodia.

India and Pakistan

Meetings under ICRC auspices.—On three occasions already, the International Committee of the Red Cross has organized meetings on the Indo-Pakistan frontier of the two National Red Cross Societies in order to exchange parcels for prisoners of war. These exchanges took place near Ferozepore in the Punjab, south of Lahore, where the former international boundary meets the cease-fire line; these arrangements have now become established practice.

The last two meetings were on December 27, 1965 and January 19, 1966. On each occasion, the ICRC delegates, Mr. Michel Martin

¹ *Plate.* ICRC relief for displaced persons being distributed by the Red Cross of the Republic of Viet Nam.

and Mr. Pascal Julmy on the Pakistan side, and Mr. Roger Du Pasquier (who has been replaced since the beginning of January by Professor Egon Wildbolz) and Mr. Jacques Moreillon, on the Indian side, first made contact on the border and made final practical arrangements for the exchange. The representatives of each of the Red Cross Societies then came forward and gave instructions for their lorries, loaded with parcels for exchange, to come forward to the rendez-vous point. These meetings, at which a cordial atmosphere prevailed, provided useful opportunities for exchanges of views, not only between the ICRC delegations but also between the two National Societies.¹

The parcels mainly contained clothing, foodstuffs, toilet articles and reading matter.

The majority of prisoners of war detained in the two countries have now received parcels either from their National Red Cross Society or from their relatives. On both sides the ICRC delegates personally attended to the distribution of the parcels in the camps and every recipient signed a receipt.² These receipts were then transmitted to the senders of the parcels. Both the Indian and Pakistani prisoners expressed their warm appreciation to the organizers of this operation which made their captivity less of a hardship.

Assistance to interned civilians.—Pending the implementation of the provisions of the Tashkent agreement in favour of prisoners and internees who are to be repatriated, the ICRC is continuing its activity for these victims, in conformity with the Geneva Conventions. In this connection, Professor Wildbolz, delegate in India, has just visited a camp of interned Pakistani civilians whose homes are in the zones which were occupied by the Indian army during hostilities.

Assistance to refugees.—On both sides of the cease-fire line the ICRC is carrying on its action in favour of refugees. Mr. Martin and Mr. Julmy, delegates in Pakistan, have visited the Mirpur

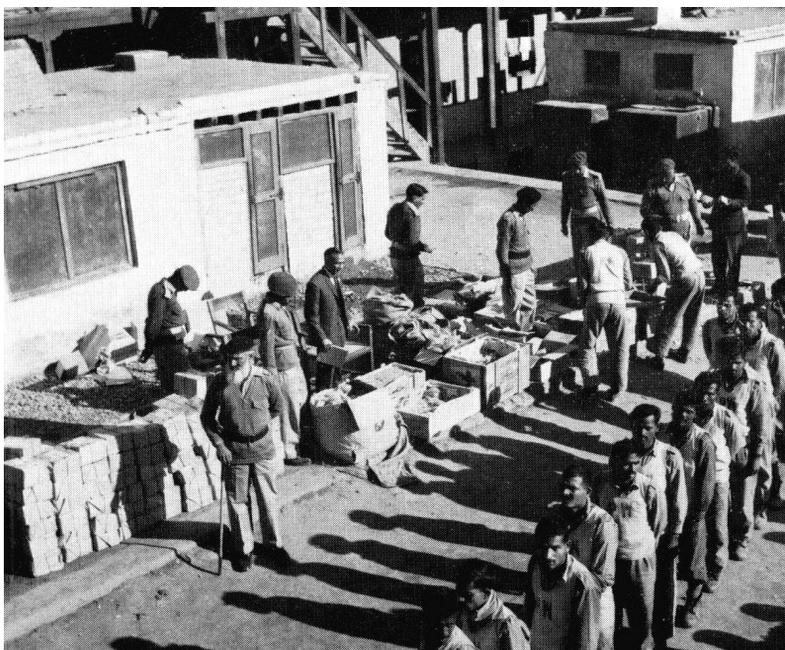
¹ *Plate.* At the Indo-Pakistan frontier, meetings arranged by the ICRC took place during the exchange of parcels for prisoners of war.

² *Plate.* Parcels being handed over by the ICRC's delegate to Indian prisoners of war. The prisoners sign receipts.



At the Indo-Pakistani frontier, Mr. W. Ali Shah, Chairman of the Red Cross of Pakistan (right) and Colonel P. Bhatia, Assistant Secretary of the Indian Red Cross, shaking hands. These meetings, arranged by the ICRC, took place during the exchange of parcels for prisoners of war. (In background, Begum Noon, President of the West Pakistan Red Cross and right, Mr. R. Du Pasquier, ICRC delegate).

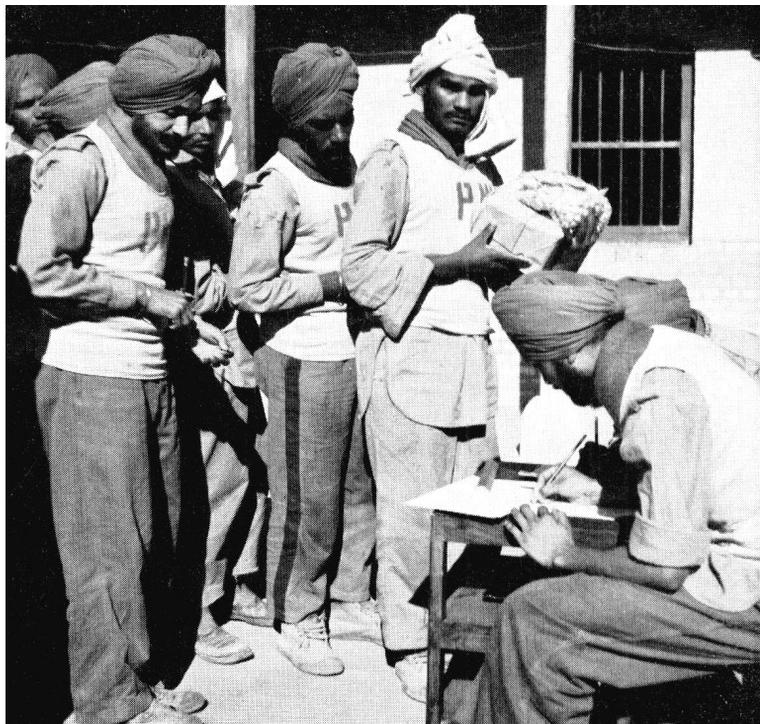
Indian prisoners of war at the distribution of parcels...





... which are being handed over by Mr. Michel Martin, ICRC delegate...

... for which they sign receipts.



district, a section of Kashmir attached to Pakistan, where there are some 75,000 refugees, half of whom are under 15 years of age. Accompanied by the Begum Viquar-un-Nisa Noon, President of the West Pakistan Red Cross, and also by government officials, they inspected arrangements made for refugees and attended distributions of relief supplies.

The ICRC delegates in India, Professor Wildbolz and Mr. Moreillon, for their part, went to Jammu Province and Kashmir where they distributed 10,000 blankets contributed by the British Red Cross. They endeavoured to distribute them to those villagers and inhabitants of mountainous regions who had suffered most from the recent military operations. These were mostly families who, after a stay in refugee camps, have now returned to their villages, only to find their homes destroyed and where they are now living in distressful conditions. The rigours of the winter in these mountainous regions make their plight one of extreme hardship and the blankets distributed by the ICRC, in co-operation with the Indian Red Cross and the Ministry of Rehabilitation, were received with great eagerness. The ICRC delegates personally attended distributions in various places in the Poonch valley, a region which has been particularly affected by hostilities.

Yemen

Assistance on Republican territory.—The International Committee of the Red Cross has just sent a large consignment of relief material to Sanaa, the capital of the United Arab Republic of the Yemen. It included 645 jackets, 1800 bedsheets and 90,000 cigarettes. These were delivered to the WHO Centre in Hodeida, the WHO Child Clinic in Sanaa—which is concerned with many needy families—and the Sanaa orphans school. Parts of the consignment will be distributed in Dhamar, Ibb and Taiz. The cigarettes are mainly intended for detainees and the orthopaedic hospital in Sanaa.

The Swedish Red Cross has just sent 18 tons of clothing and medical supplies to Sanaa. This relief material will also be distributed among the various hospital centres of the Yemen Republic.

The ICRC which has been carrying out regular distributions of relief material to the civilian population in Sanaa (milk, cheese and soap), has continued this activity until the end of January, when the delegation was withdrawn.

Mobile medical teams.—After having worked in the Dhamar hospital, Dr Peter Spreng's medical team since the end of November 1965 has been in Manakha half-way between Sanaa and Hodeida. Dr Rainer Siegenthaler and male nurse Joseph-Hans Arnold had already spent the month of August in that area. Apart from operating a polyclinic service, Dr Spreng, assisted by Mr. Edwin Haederli, male nurse, and Mr. André Meyer, a medical student, has organized an anti-smallpox vaccination campaign in schools at Manakah and the surrounding villages. At the beginning of January, this team went to Zebid in the Tihama coastal plain, between the Red Sea and the chain of Yemen mountains. In view of the lack of medical facilities in this part of the country, the ICRC has decided to concentrate its medical assistance in that region, where, apart from other diseases, malaria, bilharziosis and purulent tuberculosis are endemic.

Another doctor, Dr Eric Lüthi, assisted by a male nurse, has been working since January 5 in Beit el Fagih, in the same region, three hours' journey over rough tracks to the south of Hodeida. These two teams, which are carrying out their activities with the agreement of the Ministry of Health, remained until the end of January at Zebid and Beit el Fagih, where there are no doctors to attend the 15 to 20,000 inhabitants.

The "Clinobox" at Najran.—After the withdrawal of the Uqhd hospital at the end of November 1965, the ICRC's "Clinobox" operating theatre was temporarily transferred—not without some difficulty—to Najran, where it is being put to good use.

The medical statistics drawn up by Dr. Heinrich Staebler show that in 37 days, more than one thousand people have been given free consultations at the clinic-dispensary. Each day the ICRC Medical Centre attends not only to the needy Yemeni population, but also to a large number of Saudi Arabians.