

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The International Committee in Cyprus

The ICRC recently considered the time had come for a report to be published on its work in Cyprus, covering the period from July to October 1974. This report was issued in the form of an illustrated booklet and contained a foreword by Mr. R. Gallopin, President of the Executive Council :

“During the conflict in Cyprus, the 1949 Geneva Conventions once again contributed to the protection of civilian and military victims. Once again, the International Committee of the Red Cross, to which the Powers assigned the role of neutral intermediary when they signed those Conventions, had to intervene on both sides. The operations described in the following pages involved most of the functions which, in a crisis which is both internal and international, the ICRC may be called upon to fulfil in order to ensure the provision of at least the essentials of life.

From the outset of the conflict, in the emergency phase, the ICRC strove to protect and aid those who could expect help from no other quarter. At the same time it was the link between government authorities and the Red Cross bodies in Cyprus and elsewhere, in complete accord with the United Nations. In the second phase, now starting and which should lead to the gradual restoration of normal conditions, the ICRC will carry out its traditional mission to see to it, with the co-operation of the public authorities concerned, that all detainees are repatriated and the many dispersed families reunited.

May the people of Cyprus, after their tragic ordeal, soon enjoy the peace they long for and deserve.”

As several articles giving much detailed information on this subject have appeared in recent issues of the *International Review*, we shall restrict ourselves here to quoting from the booklet the following passage regarding the relief brought by the ICRC to the civilian population :

“From the very beginning, the ICRC concerned itself with the fate of the civilian populations who suffered so bitterly from the hostilities. All of these, both the Greek Cypriots who fled southward and those who remained isolated in the north, as well as the Turkish Cypriot communities isolated by the fighting, needed protection and help.

By mid-October, the ICRC had supplied displaced persons with some 150,000 blankets, 10,000 tents, 10,000 camp beds, several hundred tons of foodstuffs, including baby food and powdered milk, and 20 tons of medicines.

As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC was able to deliver relief to the isolated Greek and Turkish communities.

Some of this material was delivered with the assistance of the United Nations Forces and subsequently with that of the authorities directly concerned.

By the end of August, it was apparent that an overall estimate of needs was urgent. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, appointed by the Secretary-General as co-ordinator for aid supplied by the United Nations and other sources, drew up, in co-operation with all those engaged in relief activities, an inventory of needs which were evaluated at about 22 million dollars.

When the fighting ceased, there were about sixty isolated Turkish communities in southern Cyprus. Their situation was rapidly deteriorating, necessitating regular visits by ICRC delegates and medical teams. Close co-operation was established between the ICRC and UNFICYP, whose forces distributed relief and treated and evacuated wounded and sick.

In northern Cyprus, about 15,000 persons who had remained in their homes—mostly in the Karpas Peninsula—came under the control of the Turkish armed forces. In addition to bringing aid to the people in this area, the ICRC delegates sought out and listed several thousand Greek Cypriots—most of them old people—who

were living under conditions of extreme hardship. After having been moved by the Turkish army to Voni, Vitsadha, Gypsos, Morphou and other places, ICRC mobile teams provided them with medical assistance. The ICRC also set up a supplementary feeding programme for these people, involving the monthly distribution of some 70 tons of protein-rich food.”