

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Vietnam**

The delegates of the ICRC in South Vietnam continued their visits in February and March to prisoner of war camps in which the authorities of the Republic of Vietnam have interned combatants captured under arms. They also had access to several screening centres in American and South Korean hands.

These visits took place in I Corps military region located immediately South of the 17th parallel. In each town, the International Committee's representatives made contact with the military authorities responsible for the camps. They also went to civilian and military hospitals where prisoners or internees were undergoing treatment. In addition, they visited a certain number of provincial prisons, some of which for the second time. The delegates thus visited some twenty places of detention in I Corps military region where they saw about 5,600 prisoners of war and detainees.

Every facility was granted to the ICRC delegates by General Lam, commanding I Corps, and by American and South Korean officers. After each visit, the delegates of the International Committee submitted their observations and suggestions to the head of the establishment concerned, a report of the visit was then handed to the Detaining Power. The ICRC delegation in Saigon has also received further lists of Vietnamese prisoners of war in government hands. It arranged for the despatch of blankets and mosquito netting to prisons lacking these items.

ICRC President in Asia

During the first two months of this year, Mr. S. A. Gonard was on a mission to *Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, Nepal, India and Afghanistan*. He was accompanied by Mrs. Gonard and was joined in January by Mr. Durand, ICRC delegate for Asia, and later by two other delegates, Mr. de Chambrier and Mr. Du Pasquier. In each country he was able to explain to the Heads of State and the various Ministers the present-day tasks undertaken by the International Committee and discuss with them a number of important problems, including the matter of dissemination of knowledge on the Geneva Conventions. He was received everywhere most cordially by the directing bodies of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The press, radio and television widely publicized his trip and took the opportunity to explain the essential principles of the Red Cross and some of the activities undertaken by local Societies. The ICRC President was able to see for himself that local Societies are endeavouring to make the humanitarian ideals known to the public at large and particularly among youth, and also that they are intensively developing their activities in the field of emergency relief. Natural disaster is frequent in these countries and National Societies consider it their primary aim to bring relief to victims as quickly and effectively as possible.

One of the major functions of these Societies is the teaching of first-aid. In several places, exercises were held during Mr. Gonard's visit; he also saw the dispensaries which provide medical treatment for all and advice on family planning. The *International Review*¹ published an article on the work in this field which is being undertaken by the Red Cross in West Pakistan.

Other social work which, in company with Mrs. Gonard, the ICRC President was able to observe demonstrates, by its variety, the many humanitarian activities in these countries, such as homes for handicapped children, boarding schools for blind children, flood relief squads, service to victims of leprosy, blood transfusion and hospitals for the needy. He was also shown certain

¹ May 1966.

aspects of National Society activities in the medico-social field, such as occupational therapy for convalescent soldiers.

In the course of his long mission in Asia, the ICRC President was able to make useful contacts in the eight countries he visited and he was pleased to observe the increasing importance of the activities carried out under the sign of the red cross and the red crescent.

IN GENEVA

ICRC Training Courses

The *International Review*, in April 1965, brought to the notice of its readers the training course which the ICRC had organized for people prepared to offer their services, particularly for missions abroad. A second course took place from April 3 to 7, 1967, at the International Committee headquarters. This was attended by some forty people, including several young girls.

During that week, the students acquired greater knowledge of the Red Cross principles and tasks, as well as of ICRC functions in Geneva and throughout the world.

A large part of the time was devoted to legal questions, particularly the study of the Geneva Conventions, while practical aspects were also dealt with, such as the activities of the Central Tracing Agency, and relief missions, both of which were thoroughly studied.

In addition, each participant was able to discuss with the officials responsible for various geographic sectors the missions devolving on ICRC delegates in the Middle East, in Asia, in Africa or in South America. Two practical exercises gave an air of reality to the courses, one a simulated visit to a prison, the other an exercise in relief to displaced persons.

Following a description of a National Society's organization by Mr. Pascalis, Assistant Secretary-General of the Swiss Red Cross,