

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Middle East**

Reuniting of families.—In the programme for the reuniting of families, organized and controlled by the ICRC delegations in Egypt and Israel, a further operation took place on November 14 at El Qantara.

This concerned 144 Palestinians returning to the Gaza area and 96 Egyptians going home to the Nile valley in the United Arab Republic.

More than 4,000 persons, of whom 2,000 Egyptians from El Arish, have returned in this way to the UAR, whilst about the same number of Palestinians displaced in Egypt as a result of the June 1967 conflict was able to return to the occupied territories of Gaza and Sinai. This required a considerable amount of detailed work by ICRC delegations in Gaza and Cairo.

In Jordan and on West Bank territory, in addition to the reunion of families regularly organized by the local authorities, the delegates of the ICRC also deal with the temporary or definite repatriation of those in difficult circumstances on account of their health or age.

Civilian messages and inquiries.—By November 1, 1968, the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross, with active support of the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian Red Crescent Societies, had transmitted half a million civilian messages between Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and the occupied territories of Gaza, Sinai, Jordan West Bank and the Golan Plateau. The ICRC has also transmitted several thousand mail items from a large number of Arab countries for the occupied territories.

In addition, in order to remedy the lack of contact between separated families, the ICRC delegations have intensified their

personal visits to families in order to give them news by word of mouth. This is much appreciated by those concerned who, through the ICRC's intermediary, now find a link re-established which had previously been cut.

By July 30, 1968, the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva initiated 382 inquiries on military personnel and by August 19 1,770 inquiries for civilians.

Mozambique

Mr. André Tschiffeli, ICRC delegate, rejoined Mr. Georg Hoffmann, delegate general of the ICRC in Africa, at Salisbury. After meeting the Rhodesian authorities, the two ICRC representatives went to Lourenço Marques in Mozambique, where Mr. Tschiffeli will be carrying out a series of visits to detainees in Portuguese hands.

Mr. Hoffmann will himself go to Ngwane, Botswana and Lesotho to visit the authorities and Red Cross circles of these three States, which have recently acceded to independence.

Vietnam

Visits to Prisoners.—The ICRC delegates in the Republic of Vietnam have throughout October continued their visits to screening centres to which are brought Vietnamese captured by the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam or by the allied forces. After interrogation, the detaining authority decides whether these captives can be released, or held as prisoners of war or as civilian detainees.

Visits were thus made to two screening centres in American hands and a prisoner of war camp. A report on each of these visits was then handed to the detaining Power.

Lists of prisoners.—The Central Tracing Agency of the ICRC continues regularly to receive in Geneva lists of Vietnamese combatants to whom the Republic of Vietnam grants the status laid down by the Third Geneva Convention of 1949 relating to prisoners of war.

The basic list on January 31, 1968, contained 10,802 names to which have been added further lists which have had the necessary verification and checking. At the beginning of November, the total number of Vietnamese prisoners of war registered in Geneva amounted to 13,735.

These lists have been sent to Phnom-Penh, in Cambodia, where Mr. André Durand, delegate general of the International Committee, has informed the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the delegation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam that he had these at their disposal.

Representations are, on the other hand, being continued to the Hanoi authorities and the National Liberation Front, in order to obtain lists of members of the South Vietnamese and allied armed forces taken prisoner either in North or South Vietnam.

Similar steps have just been resumed with the NLF in connection with civilians of American, Australian, British, Canadian, West German and South Korean nationality reported missing in South Vietnam.

Medical assistance.—Thanks to donations sent by the National Societies of 24 countries, which have responded to the joint appeal which the League of Red Cross Societies and the ICRC had made to them in February, an assortment of instruments for orthopaedic surgery was handed over to the municipal hospital of Bênh-Viên, Saigon, directed by Professor Dai. This material was brought and presented by Professor Maurice Edmond Muller, Director of the Orthopaedic Clinic of the Hôpital de l'Île in Berne.

In addition, Dr. Alain Pellet of Geneva who has succeeded Dr. Barthold Bierens de Haan as ICRC doctor-delegate in South Vietnam, has resumed visits undertaken by his predecessors to orphanages in the Saigon area. Dr. Pellet also visits places of detention.

Austria and East Europe

Recently Mr. H. G. Beckh, ICRC delegate on mission, visited several countries in Europe.

He went first of all to *Austria*, where he discussed with Mr. Sevcik, Secretary-General of the Austrian Red Cross, at its

headquarters, several matters connected in particular with the reuniting of families, a problem with which the ICRC is concerning itself in many parts of the world.

He then visited *Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia*.

In Bucarest, he met leading members of the Rumanian Red Cross, amongst whom were Mr. A. Moiescu, President, Dr. L. Fotescu, Secretary-General and Mr. Patrascu, Director of External Relations. He exchanged views in connection inter alia with the following up of a certain number of resolutions of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross, amongst which were those relating to the reuniting of families and the financing of the ICRC. Whilst in Rumania, the delegate was received by Mr. Malitsa, Deputy Chairman of Foreign Affairs.

In Sofia, Mr. Beckh had several talks with leading members of the Bulgarian Red Cross, including the President, Dr. K. Ignatov, and Vice-President G. Gospodinov, with whom he examined a number of questions which will be raised in 1969 at the next International Conference of the Red Cross in Istanbul and others connected with the practical development of humanitarian international law. Whilst in Bulgaria he met Mr. Bachev, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Ignatov, Minister of Health and Mrs. Daskalowa, Minister of Justice.

Finally, on his return journey, the ICRC delegate stopped in Belgrade where he met General D. Mesterovic, President of the Yugoslav Red Cross and Professor J. Patrnogic, Secretary-General. He had useful discussions with them on subjects of common interest connected in particular with the practical development of international humanitarian law.
