

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Middle East**

Assistance to Displaced Persons in Syria.—In December 1968 the International Committee of the Red Cross appealed to several National Societies for relief supplies for some 100,000 persons displaced from the occupied Golan territory now living in camps outside Damascus. Their plight has been aggravated by the rigours of a severe winter. By the end of the month 100 tons of flour, 73 tons of powdered milk, 20 tons of rice, 3 tons of cheese, meat and 5115 blankets had been sent to Damascus. Part of these supplies was conveyed in an aircraft chartered twice by the ICRC.

Distribution is in the hands of the National Red Crescent Society, in co-operation with the Syrian Government.

Families re-united on the Golan Plateau.—The Israeli authorities have agreed to the return of some 700 persons to the Golan Plateau. A number of authorizations were delivered to the ICRC Damascus delegation which, in co-operation with the Syrian Red Crescent, will inform the persons concerned. The family re-union operation will start in the near future.

In addition, the ICRC delegates in Kuneitra and Damascus organize the weekly transport by lorry to Damascus of possessions abandoned at Kuneitra and return them to the families.

Permits to Return West of the Jordan.—In November 1968 the Israeli government authorized the return of 7,000 persons who had been unable to use the permits issued to them at the time of the refugee repatriation operation in August 1967. It also authorized transfer of the permits.

According to the Israeli authorities, 2,000 permits had been re-issued by 15 January 1969.

Visits to Arab detainees in Israel and the Occupied Territories.—During January 1969 the ICRC sent the national governments of detainees and the Detaining Power reports on its second series of visits to prisons in Israel and the occupied territories, which its delegates had carried out in the autumn of 1968.

Laos

In the course of last year the Lao Red Cross, in close co-operation with the ICRC delegate to Vientiane, continued its regular relief distributions to displaced persons who had fled the combat areas to seek refuge in the Mekong basin, mainly in the southern provinces.

On 17 January, Dr. Jürg Baer, Dr. Oudom Souvannavong, President of the Lao Red Cross, and other members of that Society's Committee, went to Paksé to provide relief to newly displaced persons in the provinces of Sedone, Attopeu, Saravane and Khong.

The supplies they distributed consisted mainly of mosquito netting, blankets, straw mats, clothing, condensed milk, medications, multivitamins, two emergency surgical kits for hospitals, etc.

Vietnam

Visits to detention centres.—ICRC delegates in the Vietnam Republic continued visiting civilian detainees arrested for reasons connected with hostilities.

Mr. Jean Ott, head of the delegation, Mr. Philippe Tardent, delegate, Dr. Alain Pellet, doctor-delegate and an interpreter from the Vietnam Red Cross also visited the re-education centres at My-Tho, Vinh-Long and Can-Tho in the Mekong delta, and the Con-Son penitentiary on the island of that name.

A report on each place visited was sent to the authorities of the Vietnam Republic.

Prisoners of War.—On 16 January 1969 the ICRC delegates went to the POW camp on Phu-Quoc island, where Dr. Pellet examined some sixty seriously wounded and sick who might be released in view of their condition.

Mr. Ott attended the Can-Tho court-martial of several prisoners of war charged with offences during captivity. He also talked with the Attorney-General, the counsel for the defence and the accused.

At the end of the year, the ICRC was asked to attend the release of 140 prisoners of war. These prisoners' names were communicated to the Central Tracing Agency, Geneva.

Poland

Dr. Jacques F. de Rougemont, member of the ICRC, Mr. Jean-Pierre Maunoir, Assistant Director and Miss Lix Simonius, delegate, were in Poland from the 5th to the 16th January. They examined a further 64 Polish nationals who had applied for an allocation under the Federal Republic of Germany's scheme of indemnification to victims of pseudo-medical experiments in concentration camps during the National Socialist reign.

The examinations were carried out in Warsaw and Krakow hospitals, and were attended by a judge from the Ministry of Justice Central Commission on War Crimes in Poland, the three doctors on the Polish Red Cross Medical Commission, and the head of that National Society's Tracing Service.

The next meeting of the Neutral Commission to decide on indemnity awards will take place at the beginning of May.

Mr. Maunoir and Miss Simonius then went on 17 January to Prague where they had talks with the Czechoslovak Red Cross and the organization concerned for the welfare of former deportees, which compiles case histories of victims of pseudo-medical experiments now resident in Czechoslovakia.