

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE IN NORTH YEMEN

**SIX YEARS ACTION IN THE FIGHTING**

In accordance with the decision reached by the ICRC, the medical mission in North Yemen has come to a close. Although the needs of the population are still considerable in this region, the ICRC has found itself obliged to put an end to its action, already very much reduced since the beginning of the year, as local conditions no longer enable the safety of the teams on the ground to be assured.

The ICRC action in Yemen territory under royalist control started at the beginning of 1963 with the sending out of a medical mission consisting of two doctors.

In October of that year, a field hospital was set up in a relatively calm area, amongst the rocks at Uqhd.

Several medical teams comprising doctors, surgeons, nurses and technicians, recruited by the Swiss Red Cross, succeeded each other in taking over responsibility for that hospital.

The medical teams also went to the interior and the front, in order more rapidly to distribute relief to the victims of the fighting.

During 1964, a series of visits to prisoners of war in royalist hands were made in risky conditions as mentioned many times in the *International Review*. The ICRC delegates distributed relief and ensured the transmission of news between the prisoners and their relatives, through the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva.

At the same time, the ICRC often intervened on behalf of royalist prisoners and internees held by the republican authorities and their Egyptian allies.

From the medical point of view, the year 1964 was one of intense activity which did not decrease even when military oper-

ations had abated. At the end of the year, the total number of patients treated by the ICRC reached a figure of 14,600 which represented over 45,000 consultations.

Although 1965 was noteworthy, on the political level, for the conclusion of a cease-fire, the activity of the ICRC teams was not correspondingly reduced. The delegates had in fact to intervene repeatedly to arrange exchanges, releases and the repatriation of military prisoners and political detainees.

The cessation of fighting led, in November 1965, to the closing of the hospital, after two years of activity. Over 1,700 persons had been hospitalized there, 2,088 operated on and the doctors had given 60,500 consultations.

Part of the equipment was then taken to Najran, a frontier locality on Saudi territory and turned into a clino-dispensary. The medical teams transferred there continued their considerable activity.

In 1966, the situation appearing calmer, the ICRC considered closing down its action in North Yemen. However, a few months later hostilities were intensively renewed and two ICRC teams were again sent to the Jauf area near the fighting. ICRC numbers were subsequently strengthened with the arrival of two additional teams.

This medical assistance to the wounded and sick in the northern part of the country in 1966 and 1967 was the essential action of the ICRC. Incidents were multiplied during that period and ICRC delegates were themselves victims on two occasions.

The recrudescence of hostilities resulted in a sudden increase in the number of wounded. Some of these being incapable of being transported, the ICRC cared for them on the spot at Jihanah in the fighting area where it set up a field casualty station.

At the end of 1968, two surgeons, a doctor-anaesthetist and three male nurses were working for the Red Cross in northern Yemen where they treated and operated a great many sick and wounded.