

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Vietnam

Relief Mission.—Thanks to generous donations, mainly from National Red Cross Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross has so far been able to continue to carry out its relief mission, the benefits of which it endeavours to bring to the greatest possible number of victims of the war in Vietnam. The latest donation it has received consists of £5,000 sent by the British Red Cross which entrusts the ICRC to use this amount for equal benefit to victims in North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the territory occupied by the NLF.

A number of donors have asked the ICRC to divide their donations into three equal parts to be used for relief in Vietnam. Others required their remittances to be used for the benefit of victims in one or two of the three sectors into which Vietnam is split by the war. The ICRC complied with the wishes it received in this connection.

Since August 1965 it has received contributions from 18 National Societies in addition to those donated by the Swiss and Danish Governments, the Swiss radio network and two non-governmental organizations. The total value thereof—Swiss francs 766,300—was increased by the sum of Swiss francs 100,000 raised by this year's annual collection among the Swiss population.

These funds are used in three ways, namely:

- 1) provision of medical and surgical supplies to the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Hanoi;
- 2) despatch of medical supplies for the “ National Liberation Front of South Vietnam ”;

- 3) relief distributions, by the Red Cross of the Republic of Vietnam, with assistance from the Saigon delegates of the ICRC, to the wounded and the sick, to war disabled, and to displaced persons.

Despatch to Hanoi and to the NLF.—Several National Societies have sent direct consignments to Hanoi. The International Committee also forwards donations entrusted to it by National Societies and various non-Red Cross organizations. The consignments sent by the Committee for the benefit of war victims in North Vietnam are made up in accordance with indications received from Hanoi. Extensive transport facilities have been granted in the USSR and in China thanks to the intervention of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Soviet Union and the intervention of the Red Cross of China. The Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has acknowledged receipt of all consignments.

On the other hand, no acknowledgments have been received from the NLF, to which similar consignments have been and will continue to be sent in accordance with donors' wishes.

Aid to refugees in South Vietnam.—The National Red Cross Society of the Republic of Vietnam has carried out numerous relief distributions for the benefit of civilian victims of the war, mainly refugees from the fighting and bombing. It has organized groups of young first-aiders who are proving to be extremely keen, working even in the least accessible regions. These missions, attended by the ICRC delegates are, of course, not without risk; but they also demonstrate that the red cross emblem is held in high esteem.

During the Executive Committee of the League in Geneva from October 4-8, the South Vietnam Red Cross representatives requested National Societies present to increase their assistance to the victims of the war. The League, which had been requested by the South Vietnam Red Cross to launch an international appeal in favour of the wounded and the sick and of refugees, contacted the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Reception Centre for Civilian War Disabled.—This National Red Cross activity has developed in a gratifying manner, thanks to the contributions it has received from various quarters, particularly from the Swiss Red Cross, which participated to a considerable

extent in this work by delegating at its own expense a nurse, Miss Spitzer, who has been working for many months with the National Society in the running of this reception centre. Her tour being terminated, she will return to Switzerland and her replacement, Mr. Ulrich Schüle, nurse, is already in Saigon.

From December 16, 1965, to September 16, 1966, the Civilian Disabled Reception Centre admitted 205 persons, of whom 118 were men (15 % being under 30 years of age), 50 were women and 37 were children under 15. Total patient-days amounted to 5634.

The Vietnam Red Cross has begun construction of an additional hutment to increase the capacity of the Centre from 35 to 135 beds. Plans are being made to extend assistance to the war disabled in the provinces.

Medical teams.—The medical team of the Red Lion and Sun Society of Iran, the first such National Society team to operate in South Vietnam, returned to Teheran on October 1, after caring for the civilian population of Kien-Hoa in the Mekong delta.

The Swiss Red Cross medical team is still in action in Kontum in the high central plateau, and the team of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, which recently arrived in Saigon, has become operational in the capital, where it has set up a dispensary on a plot of land belonging to the Vietnam Red Cross. Patients are also treated aboard the hospital ship “*Helgoland*” which is anchored in the Saigon river near the city centre.

Prisoners.—The Red Cross of the Republic of Vietnam has also participated in the visits carried out by ICRC delegates to Vietnam prisoners held by the Government. Members of its Central Committee accompany the International Committee representatives, for whom they act as interpreters. Vietnamese first-aiders assist in relief distributions. Delegates of the Vietnam Red Cross and of the ICRC have been authorized to go again to the island of Con-Son (Poulo-Condore) where they were able to visit prisoners of war and interview a number of them.

In addition, the ICRC Central Tracing Agency has received further lists of prisoners' names, thus bringing the total of notified prisoners of war held by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam

to 516. The number of North Vietnamese prisoners held by the American forces, and of which the list has been communicated to Geneva and transmitted to Hanoi, is 19.

Laos

Doctor Jürg Baer, ICRC doctor delegate, has returned to Laos where, prior to the spring of 1965, he had made a number of prolonged stays to assist refugees. His present mission is to organize, in co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross, a relief programme for the benefit of persons who have been forced by recent events to flee from the northern and eastern parts of the kingdom to seek refuge in the Mekong valley. The ICRC delegate also attended relief distributions to the victims of the floods which occurred towards the end of summer. The relief supplies were provided by several National Red Cross Societies through the intermediary of the League.

Cambodia

After receiving from Mr. André Durand, delegate general of the International Committee of the Red Cross for Asia, the sum of Riels 282,719 (28,300 Swiss francs) for relief to the victims of border incidents, H. R. H. Princess Norodom Rasmi Sobhama, President of the Cambodian Red Cross, wrote to the ICRC President in Geneva, expressing "our satisfaction for the relief in favour of our people who are victims, and our heartfelt thanks for the humanitarian gesture which you have so kindly made".

Indonesia

Whilst in Indonesia, to study various humanitarian problems arising in the archipelago, in conjunction with the National Red Cross Society, Mr. André Durand, delegate general of the International Committee of the Red Cross for Asia, went to the island of Lombok, east of Bali, where a serious famine was reported. He was accompanied by the Indonesian Red Cross Secretary-General Mr. Tirtopramono.

According to observations made by these two Red Cross representatives, some 10,000 persons have died as a result of the

famine, caused by a drought which has continued for almost two years. In addition, some 80,000 are in various stages of starvation. In one village of 2,000 inhabitants the death roll is estimated at 600. The situation is aggravated by epidemics, particularly smallpox: this year alone no less than 5,500 cases have been reported, 500 of them fatal.

The local authorities and the central government are endeavouring to remedy the situation by importing emergency food supplies to the island. These are distributed among the whole population. The authorities have just carried out a survey of requirements which will provide a basis for planning a large-scale assistance programme. The Indonesian Red Cross is closely associated in this work.

Federation of Malaysia

The 538 Indonesian nationals detained in the Federation of Malaysia during the conflict between the two countries have just been repatriated. They boarded ship at Port Swettenham, in the presence of Mr. André Durand, International Committee delegate general for Asia.

The ICRC intervened on behalf of these prisoners from the very beginning of their captivity. Mr. Durand visited most of them in places of detention in the peninsula and in North Borneo. The ICRC also made arrangements for detainees to correspond with their families and to receive parcels from the Indonesian Red Cross.

Although the Government in Kuala Lumpur did not admit the applicability of the Geneva Conventions in its conflict with Indonesia, it facilitated ICRC activity in favour of victims, particularly the now repatriated Indonesian detainees.
