

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Vietnam

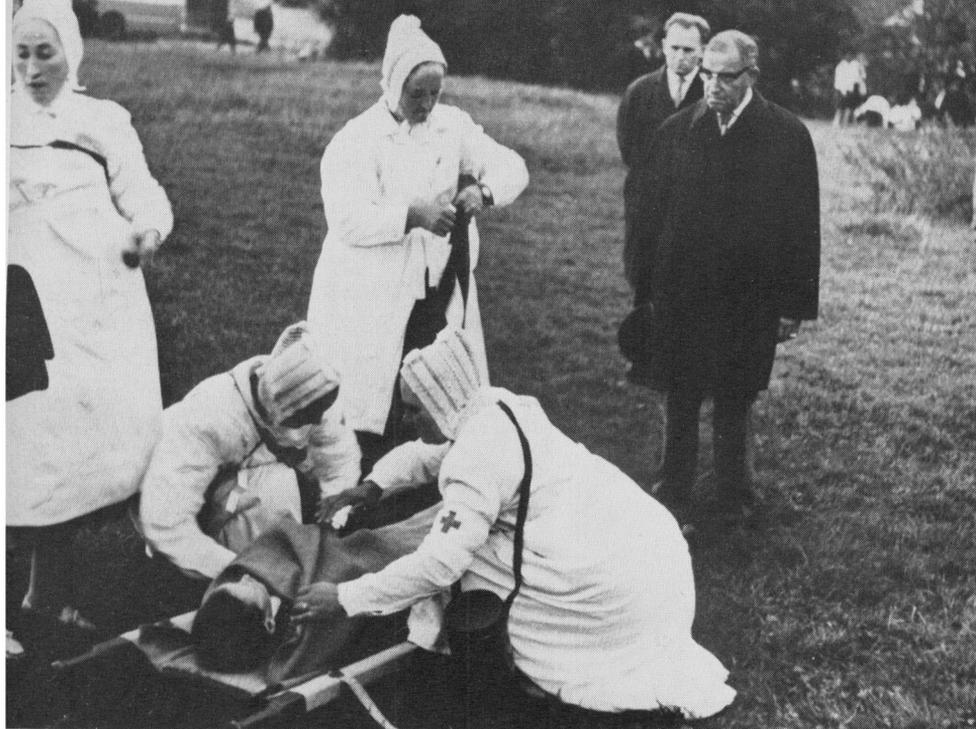
Relief to North and South.—The International Committee of the Red Cross has recently sent a considerable amount of relief, chiefly medical, for the victims of the war in Vietnam. Some of these supplies went to Hanoi, others to Saigon.

The consignment to North Vietnam consisted of 121 parcels weighing 3,484 kgs and valued at 115,000 Sw.frs. These comprised medicines (antibiotics, sulphamides and antimalarial sera) offered by the Swiss Medical Centre as well as blood plasma and antibiotics from the Swiss Red Cross laboratory and supplied thanks to a contribution of 40,000 frs. made by the Confederation. Routing was as follows : Prague-Moscow-Peking-Canton-Hanoi.

The ICRC also received a donation of 100,000 Sw.frs. from Radio Romande as a result of collections from the " Chaîne du Bonheur ". It has decided to distribute this sum in the following way : 50,000 Sw.frs. will go to mountain refugees in the Dalat area, 25,000 frs. for the purchase of medical relief for victims in the Southern zone and the balance of 25,000 frs. will be used for a forthcoming despatch of medicines to Hanoi.

We would also mention that the Union of Newspaper Editors of West Berlin have just made a further contribution on behalf of the victims in South Vietnam. This consists of 115 parcels of medicines which have left for Saigon. Taking their two previous consignments into account, the amounts contributed by Berlin editors total a value of D.M. 440,000.

An experiment.—The ICRC delegation in Saigon has just taken delivery of 18 rabbits which arrived by air from France. This is the



In Czechoslovakia, the President of the ICRC watching an exercise by first-aiders of the Red Cross.

First-aiders of the South Vietnamese Red Cross bringing up relief supplies near Saigon.



result of an experiment made on the suggestion of Catholic Relief in South Vietnam which frequently co-operates with the ICRC, in particular as regards assisting displaced persons. The rabbits, which come from a breeding establishment at Marles-en-Brie (Seine et Marne), are of a robust breed called "Géants du Bouscat". They can weigh as much as 3 kg and are adaptable to tropical climates, as previous experiments in Africa have proved. Those which have just arrived in Vietnam are first of all for orphanages in which there is a scarcity of meat. If the experiment is successful, it will be continued for refugees.

Action for refugees.—The ICRC proposes to organize "a" wide-scale relief action for groups of refugees belonging to mountain tribes who have fled the fighting areas. It has for this purpose sent to the Dalat region a member of its delegation in Saigon, Mr. J.-F. de Chambrier, who has studied the needs of these displaced persons.

The South Vietnam Government has set up several camps for them where they receive a sufficient amount of food and medicines. However, in the more remote areas of Dalat, large numbers of mountain people live in extremely difficult conditions, being short of rice, drinking water and medicines to fight sickness which causes many victims. The ICRC representative has made several proposals for them to obtain the most urgently needed relief.

The Vietnamese Red Cross for its part, with which the ICRC delegation works in close touch, has now prepared a relief programme for the refugees. It proposes to distribute to 30,000 families, not benefiting from government aid, a standard parcel consisting of clothing, food and tonics.

It should also be mentioned that Miss U. Spitzer, the Swiss nurse engaged by the Swiss Red Cross to care for the patients undergoing treatment at the Disabled Fitting Centre of the Vietnamese Red Cross in Saigon, went to Hué at the request of a priest doing relief work in the outskirts of the town. She handed a medicine chest over to him. Miss Spitzer states that there are about 15,000 refugees in that area who also have great need of assistance.

We would add that Miss Spitzer was able to be present at relief distributions carried out in the Saigon area by the South Vietnamese Red Cross. The Society's first-aiders ensured the despatch

and the handing over of these relief supplies to schools.¹ They also distributed milk and medicines.

North Vietnamese prisoners.—The ICRC has sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi a report on the visits made by its delegates on August 3 and 4, 1966, to 19 North Vietnamese prisoners of war held by the American naval forces. These 19 men, belonging to the North Vietnam navy, had been captured after a naval engagement on 1 July 1966. The ICRC delegates visited these prisoners again on 18 August. Hanoi will be receiving a further report on this visit.

Visits to prisoners in South Vietnam.—Two ICRC delegates, Mr. de Heller and Mr. de Chambrier visited the camp of Bien-Hoa in which the South Vietnam authorities are holding members of the adverse forces captured during military operations. They then obtained a further list of prisoners.

The delegates also visited a number of prisoners undergoing treatment at the military hospital in Saigon.

In Saigon.—On 29 August, Mr. Jacques de Heller, head of the ICRC delegation in South Vietnam, was received by General Nguyen Cao Ky, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam. He explained to him the tasks which the ICRC, as a neutral and independent humanitarian institution, attempts to accomplish on behalf of all the victims of the conflict.

Mr. de Heller discussed various aspects of the ICRC's mission with many other personalities amongst whom were Dr. Nguyen Luu Vien, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Social and Cultural Affairs, Dr. Nguyen Phuc Qué, General Commissioner for refugees, and Dr. Vi, Director of the Disablement Centre depending on the Ministry of Defence.

Cambodia

Mr. André Durand, delegate general of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Asia, remitted the sum of 28,300. Sw.fr.

¹ *Plate.* Near Saigon, first-aiders of the South Vietnam Red Cross ensuring the forwarding of relief.

to the Cambodian Red Cross for the benefit of the inhabitants of Khmer villages destroyed during military operations on the Cambodia/South Vietnam border.

Laos

When recently in Laos, Mr. André Durand, ICRC delegate general in Asia, observed in the region of Luang-Prabang some twenty thousand refugees from the danger areas. Their plight, in his opinion, was serious enough to warrant his asking Geneva to undertake further relief action for their benefit and to send out a delegate.

In response, the ICRC sent Dr. Jürg Baer, doctor delegate, who has already carried out several similar missions in Laos. An initial fund of 38,000. Sw.fr. was made available to start this relief action.

Japan

The Japanese Red Cross has informed the ICRC of the renewal for a further year (from November 1966 to November 1967) of the Calcutta agreement it concluded with the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on repatriation of Korean nationals resident in Japan. It asked the ICRC to prolong its special mission to Japan accordingly, to which the International Committee agreed.

It was after negotiations at the ICRC headquarters in Geneva that the Red Cross Societies of Japan and North Korea signed in Calcutta, on August 13, 1959, an agreement on repatriation of Koreans residing in Japan. The Japanese Red Cross asked the ICRC to send a delegation to verify that repatriation was the free choice of the persons concerned. Consequently, since the end of 1959, a special ICRC mission has held a watching brief over applications and attended embarkation of Koreans desiring to return to their country of origin.

Pursuant to the Calcutta agreement, and attended by ICRC representatives, 86,233 Koreans have so far left the Japanese port

of Niigata in 140 sailings bound for Chongjin in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The President of the ICRC in Czechoslovakia

Mr. Samuel A. Gonard went to Czechoslovakia in September. Mr. Serge Nessi, delegate, accompanied him on this voyage during which he first visited Prague, then Bratislava and other parts of the country.

Officials of the National Society gave him a warm welcome everywhere. In Prague he discussed several problems of common interest with Dr. Stich, President. During a meeting of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Red Cross its members described the Society's main activities, particularly in the field of health.

The Czechoslovak Red Cross has a membership of 1,266,590 with 14,000 local sections. It has already given first-aid courses to more than two million children between the ages of nine and fifteen. Each year it organizes study centres for youths from sixteen to eighteen years and also summer camps for the disabled and for convalescents.

At the same session of the Council, interesting information was given on the Society's news service. It publishes three journals, booklets, and handbooks on health education, and it co-operates closely with the press, radio and television.

Mr. Gonard then went to Bratislava, where he met the Slovak Committee whose efforts are mainly concentrated on youth and first-aid.

The ICRC President had the opportunity to become acquainted with the work of the Red Cross in various fields. In Prague he visited a nutrition research institute in which the Red Cross co-operates by instituting investigations and by organizing a card-index system ; he also visited a school where many pupils take courses in first-aid. In Bratislava he saw a nursery and a blood transfusion centre whilst at Strbá he watched first-aid exercises.¹ In this village, 160 of its two thousand inhabitants are members of

¹ *Plate.* The ICRC President attends an exercise for Czechoslovak Red Cross first-aiders at Strbá.

the Red Cross ; they are divided into fifteen teams and perform useful service for the agricultural co-operative and in a small health centre.

In the course of this trip of unflagging interest, Mr. Gonard had an interview with Mr. Skoda, Vice-President of the Czechoslovak National Assembly.

Missions in Central Europe

During the summer, Mr. H. G. Beckh, delegate of the ICRC, carried out missions in Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia.

As in previous years, the purpose of these journeys was to exchange views on questions of common interest. This time it was a question of discussing problems connected with the resolutions of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross, amongst which was that of the reuniting of families.

IN GENEVA

Central Tracing Agency

The Central Tracing Agency at the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva has received from Napier, in New Zealand, the following letter from a former prisoner of war.

“ At this late date and however inadequately, may I try and express heartfelt thanks to your organization, those who were its founders, and those who have carried it on.

In April 1941, I was captured with several thousand others at Kalamata, Southern Greece . . .

No words of mine can adequately thank you and your organization for the help, the mercy and the assistance received.”