

Indonesia

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II. Indonesia

In July 1947, hostilities between the Dutch and Indonesian forces began afresh, and with particular violence in the Island of Java. The Republican Government at Jogjakarta launched an urgent call for medicaments for the Indonesian population, who had received practically none since the beginning of the Japanese occupation.

The Republican Government asked the ICRC to sponsor this undertaking, and the Committee agreed.

As Singapore is relatively close to Indonesia, the ICRC instructed its Delegation there to organise the scheme. The co-operation of the Dutch authorities and the support of the British had already been assured.

Contributing organisations and private individuals were placed in direct contact with Singapore, which acted as a collecting and forwarding centre for gifts in kind and cash donations. With the latter the Delegation purchased medicaments to a list supplied by the Indonesian Red Cross organisation, and paid transport and other charges.

As medical supplies were urgently needed, the first consignments were sent by air. Arrangements were made by the Singapore Delegation, using mostly transport aircraft chartered from the R.A.F. at Singapore and flying the Red Cross flag for these trips. Each plane was escorted by an ICRC Delegate. Strict time-tables were applied and safe-conducts issued, to avoid the risks inseparable from passage through a fighting zone.

Eight trips by air were made between Singapore and Jogjakarta, where the supplies were handed over to the Indonesian Red Cross organisation. The distance, about 1,900 miles, involved a stop at Batavia, both on the outward and return journeys,

to allow inspection by the Dutch, receive flight instructions and refuel.

The first flight took place on August 27, 1947, in a plane chartered by the Indian Red Cross. In addition to medicaments, this Society sent a team of three doctors on a three weeks' mission to Indonesia. The plane also carried three Egyptian doctors, with medical supplies and field hospital equipment sent by the Egyptian Red Crescent.

A large proportion of the supplies was sent by sea and taken over by the ICRC Delegate in Batavia, where it was landed.

Two consignments were dispatched to the Indonesian Red Cross organisation in Republican Sumatra by a fifty-ton motor boat, which crossed the Straits of Malacca and reached the interior by river. There was an ICRC Delegate on board.

Gifts in kind were issued, as far as possible, as the donor wished. Supplies purchased in Singapore with cash from donations were to be divided as previously arranged : one half in Republican territory for the Indonesian population, and the other half in territory under Dutch control for equal division between Indonesian and Chinese, of whom there are great numbers in the Island. In practice, however, more than half the supplies were sent to Republican territory, where the needs were greatest.

The following is a summary of the medical supplies dispatched :

	Kilos
To <i>Jogjakarta</i> for the Indonesian Red Cross organisation and Chinese welfare organisations, for Indonesian and Chinese civilians, in Republican territory	12,000
To <i>Batavia</i> for the Dutch Red Cross (Indonesian Section) and for Chinese welfare organisations, for Indonesian and Chinese civilians in Dutch-controlled territory	5,100
To <i>Sumatra</i> , for the Indonesian Red Cross organisation, for civilians	7,300

Supplies in kind included medical stores and equipment of all descriptions, contributed by the Indian Red Cross, the Egyptian Red Crescent, the Siamese Red Cross, some Swiss chemical manufacturers, and the ICRC.

Almost half the cash donations were given by the Australian Red Cross. The remainder consisted of sums received from

the Indonesian Red Cross organisation, and collections made in Singapore and Malaya. The total reached some 150,000 Swiss francs and enabled the Delegation to purchase medical supplies locally from British war stocks¹.

Relief supplies sent later were conveyed to Republican territory by aircraft of the United Nations Goodwill Commission, and of the American and Australian observers for the application of the Truce, as from January, 1948.

At the request of the Netherlands Red Cross (Indonesian Section), medicines were supplied for the treatment of yaws. This required large quantities of neo-salvarsan and similar drugs which were very scarce. The Delegation was able to supply 50,000 vials of Mapharsan; these were sent to Batavia, together with 12,000 paludrine tablets. Large quantities of drugs had already been sent to Jogjakarta by one of the planes chartered by the ICRC.

This undertaking for Indonesia came to an end in the second half of 1948. Two last consignments were made, one in July to Dutch-controlled territory, the other in December to the Indonesian Republic.

It may be of interest to note that relief supplies were sent not only to Jogjakarta (Java) and Bukkit Tinggi (Sumatra), but also to districts which were entirely cut off from these two centres. Thus, five consignments were forwarded to Bantan (West Java) by fishing boat or military aircraft; Lampong (South Sumatra) was supplied with the means of fighting an epidemic of dysentery. In both cases the supplies came in part from the Dutch Health Service and were sponsored by the United Nations Goodwill Commission.

When hostilities were resumed towards the end of December 1948, the ICRC Delegate made contacts with the Dutch Red Cross and the Indonesian Red Cross organisation, enabling them to cooperate in helping the population until a political settlement could be reached.

During this troubled period, the chief work of the ICRC in Indonesia was relief, but its efforts to secure the release and repat-

¹ These purchases were on very favourable terms, as the current market price would have been about 700,000 Swiss francs.

riation of Indonesian prisoners after the events of July 1947, also deserve mention. In March and July 1948, the Delegates visited Indonesian prisoners captured during breaches of the truce of September 1947.¹

The Delegates also obtained safe-conducts to Jogjakarta, where they saw German civilians residing in Republican territory, and members of the Dutch forces held by Indonesian troops.

From March 1947 to November 1948, the ICRC Delegation in Indonesia forwarded to Batavia 200,000 Civilian Messages and dealt with 30,000 enquiries. Messages were broadcast to Republican territory, then practically cut off from the outside world.

The ICRC also helped with the evacuation into Dutch-controlled territory of a great many persons who had come from the Republican area.

After repatriation of the Dutch and Indo-Dutch internees, the evacuation took place of 15,000 Chinese who had left home to escape the fighting, and were held in territory under Republican command. The Chinese Consulate-General in Batavia having approached both parties, evacuation was agreed upon in principle. The Republicans insisted that the operation should be sponsored by the ICRC, and the latter agreed, since both parties accepted. The operation took place as follows.

The Chinese Red Cross, assisted by the Dutch Red Cross and a Chinese welfare organisation, dealt with all questions of food, clothing, registry and accommodation in the territory under Dutch administration. In territory under Republican control, the Chinese associations, acting with the help of the Indonesian Red Cross organisation, was responsible for convoys to points fixed for the passage into territory held by the Dutch.

The scheme comprised four sectors : Soerabaja and Malang (East Java), Salatiga (Centre) and Banten (West).

Operations started according to schedule early in December 1947, and parties of 762 and 237 Chinese were evacuated in the Soerabaja region. Convoys were then suspended. At the beginning of January new arrangements were made and operations resumed.

¹ Renewed in January 1948, following the agreement in principle that finally led to the formation of the Dutch-Indonesian Union.

On January 4, 8, 12 and 18, 1,953 Chinese were evacuated and removals in this sector ended.

It was arranged that Chinese nationals in the Malang region should follow the same route. On January 23 and 28, 1948, 634 persons were placed in the care of the ICRC Delegate, who took them to their destination in Dutch-controlled territory.

Evacuation from Central Java took place in April, and over 7,000 Chinese were thus able to return to their homes in the Island, or to travel to China.

The last part of the scheme — the evacuation of the Western sector — was arranged by the Chinese themselves.