

# Asia

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was able to despatch sundry relief supplies to the places of detention; it also took charge of the hospital service in one of the prisons of the capital. Thanks to its good offices, and with the help of medicaments supplied by the ICRC, health conditions returned to normal.

The International Committee's representative had been requested, on leaving Geneva, to make enquiries concerning relief which might be needed for the civilian population, with a view to the sending out of an appeal by the League of Red Cross Societies to all National Societies. The Guatemalan Red Cross Society did not think, however, that it was necessary to launch an appeal. The International Committee duly advised the League, which it had kept informed of all the details supplied by its representative in Guatemala.

## 2. ASIA

**Korea.** — Previous reports<sup>1</sup>, and the two volumes published under the title "*Le Comité international de la Croix Rouge et le conflit de Corée*", are a most pertinent illustration of the efforts made by the ICRC to aid war victims in Korea; the suspension of hostilities and the evolution in the situation which had taken place, made it unnecessary to continue its activity in this field. Its representatives received instructions from Geneva to bring their mission to a close in March 1954, and to return to Switzerland. Requests for the tracing of missing persons continue to be dealt with at the ICRC headquarters in Geneva. The chapter entitled "Central Prisoners of War Agency" gives useful information concerning this action<sup>2</sup>.

**Indochina.** — The events in Indo China imposed new duties upon the ICRC.

Hospital planes and helicopters carrying the wounded were fired upon by the Anti-Aircraft Defence and sustained damage;

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<sup>1</sup> See *Reports on the work of the ICRC*, 1950, p. 80, 1951, p. 66, 1952, p. 52, 1953, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 50.

moreover, as ground medical formations had suffered from aerial bombardment, the ICRC considered that it was necessary to call the belligerents' attention to the fundamental principles of international law, in order that persons under the legitimate protection of the Red Cross emblem might be spared.

Within the limits of the facilities available to them, the International Committee's delegates were present on several occasions during the exchanges of prisoners of war and military internees held by either of the parties concerned. They accompanied convoys of prisoners in French hands belonging to the Viet Nam People's Army, whose camps they had often visited during the past few years. With the approval of both parties the delegates were present at the exchange posts. They were also present, on several occasions, for the return of prisoners belonging to the French Union Forces who had been captured by the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam Forces. The delegates of the ICRC brought to the notice of the military commanders present the condition of the prisoners at the close of their captivity.

With the agreement of the detaining authorities, the ICRC was able to despatch letters and cards which families wished to send from Europe to members of the French Union Forces in the hands of the Viet Nam People's Army ; the transmission of these family messages took place through the Viet Nam Democratic Republic Embassy in Peking.

Following the armistice signed on July 20 in Geneva, the delegates' work was increased by other duties resulting from the tragic condition of the refugees. After the cease-fire which allowed for the free passage of civilians wishing to proceed from one zone to the other, some four hundred thousand persons flowed towards the Tonking assembly centres to be evacuated. This exodus raised serious problems for the public authorities and the Red Cross association of the Viet Nam State, who asked for the aid of the International Red Cross agencies in Geneva. Two appeals to National Societies were launched, the first by the ICRC on August 27, the second by the League on August 31 ; both received a favourable response from some twenty Red Cross Societies, who immediately sent relief supplies to the spot or promised contributions in the

near future. For technical methods of distribution the work was shared between the ICRC and the League, the latter taking charge of all Red Cross relief supplies for the Southern Zone, while the ICRC undertook similar duties in the Northern Zone <sup>1</sup>.

The cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam thus by no means lessened the commitments of the ICRC in 1954. It therefore reinforced its delegation in Indo China <sup>1</sup> by sending a delegate from Geneva to work in the zone situated to the North of the 17th Parallel ; the latter reached Hanoi just before the signature of the armistice. It may be mentioned that the delegate remained in the city after October 10, when it was taken over by Viet Nam Democratic Republic forces. Not long before the ICRC had entrusted one of its former delegates, at present at the head of the Lausanne University Hospital, with a brief mission to Viet Nam, to make a survey of various medical and pharmaceutical questions.

In Saigon the work of the International Committee's delegate which covered South Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos, increased rapidly, making it necessary to appoint a second delegate, who joined his post at the end of September. The representatives visited refugees in camps, and the dispensaries where they were given treatment by the Viet Nam Red Cross, the ICRC having considered taking measures on their behalf from its relief funds. Further, the delegates of the International Committee built up stocks in Saigon of gifts from National Red Cross Societies, to be used for possible relief actions in the north ; on behalf of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), they organised the distribution of relief supplies to the refugees, valued at Sw. Fr. 202,000, consisting of powdered milk, soap and clothing materials.

### 3. EUROPE

**Greece.** — Following requests for assistance emanating from public health officials and prison doctors, the ICRC Delegation in

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<sup>1</sup> The ICRC also took charge of the distribution, in the Southern Zone, of relief supplies not provided by Red Cross Societies.

<sup>2</sup> See the composition of the ICRC Delegation in Indo China, page 11.