

Far East and South East Asia

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross**

Band (Jahr): - **(1961)**

PDF erstellt am: **16.07.2024**

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FAR EAST AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

Japan

The repatriation of Koreans residing in Japan, which began in December 1959¹, continued in 1961. The Japanese Red Cross and the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea extended the agreement signed in Calcutta in 1959 which fixed the departure methods for Koreans wishing to leave for North Korea, and the ICRC delegates, therefore, continued to lend their assistance at registration and embarkation operations.

The delegates continued to go to the Japanese Prefectures to examine with the officials concerned, questions raised by the registration of departure requests. These visits enabled many cases to be clarified, principally, those concerning unaccompanied children, under 16 years of age, for whom papers certifying the parents' or guardians' consent must be produced before embarkation.

As in 1959 and 1960, ICRC delegates were also present at departure of repatriation candidates.

Although the two National Red Cross Societies of Japan and North Korea had agreed, on November 24, 1960, to accelerate the rate of departures by raising from 1,000 to 1,200 the number of places available each week on the vessels making the crossing from the Japanese port of Niigata to the North Korean port of Chong-Jin, the total of weekly departures continued to decrease during the year.

In fact, following an interruption of more than two months, requested by the North Korean Red Cross as a result of the serious influenza epidemic in Japan at the beginning of the year, the number of departures, which varied between 1,000 and 1,100 per week, in June, dropped to about 500 at the beginning of October. A further suspension of operations occurred, also at the request of North Korea, from September 11 to October 2, to enable the vessels to be repaired. The 85th convoy, and the last of the year, left on December 16 with 124 people aboard, bringing the total number of repatriations from Japan to North Korea since December 1959 to nearly 75,000. There were therefore about 23,000 departures in

¹ See *Annual Report* 1959, pp. 16-22, and 1960, pp. 20-21.

1961 as against 52,000 from December 1959 to December 1950. The large majority of those who left were of Korean nationality, but there were also some Japanese and Chinese nationals amongst them.

Laos

Throughout 1961, the ICRC had many important tasks to fulfil in Laos, where the situation, from the humanitarian point of view, continued to cause concern. The International Committee intervened on numerous occasions, in the two principal zones of the country, on behalf of military prisoners and other persons deprived of their freedom as a result of events. It also organised distributions of relief supplies in an endeavour to help the population affected by hostilities, in particular the refugees who had fled from danger areas.

Mr. A. Durand, the delegate general for Asia, carried out the greatest number of visits to detainees. In March, he was authorised by the Vientiane Government to enter four camps where 500 people were interned. He was able to talk freely with these internees and distributed relief to them. In accordance with usual custom, the report drawn up following these visits was handed over to the detaining authorities. It contained various proposals designed to improve detention conditions. At the end of the year, Dr. Baer, ICRC doctor delegate, was able to make further visits to some of the prisoners, in particular at Savannakhet.

Mr. A. Durand made similar visits to prisoners in the northern zone of Laos. He also visited four Americans detained by the Xieng Khouang Government. He talked with them in the presence of representatives of the Laotian authorities and arranged for parcels to be sent to them.

The ICRC's efforts on behalf of the population which had suffered as a result of hostilities continued with its relief action begun in December 1960 with the support of certain National Red Cross Societies.¹ The ICRC delegate co-operated closely with the Laotian Red Cross in making large scale distributions of foodstuffs, clothing and necessities.

¹ See *Annual Report 1960*, pp. 22 to 23.

During the summer, the Vientiane Government appealed to the ICRC on behalf of fresh groups of civilians who had left the trouble spots for the banks of the Mekong. Amongst these refugees, there were 6,000 members of the Meo tribes whom the authorities lodged in camps.

Mr. A. Durand went to the area to evaluate the needs and to study with the Laotian Red Cross the best means of meeting them. On August 4, he returned to Geneva to report to the ICRC. His report also included an evaluation, made during a recent visit to Xieng Khouang, of the position of the population in the northern zone of the country.

After hearing his report, the ICRC decided to withdraw funds from its relief fund to provide for relief supplies for the population hit by events in northern and southern Laos. Since the needs were so great, it also sent, on August 11, a memorandum to a certain number of National Societies, asking them to contribute to its relief action.

Favourable replies were soon received from the Red Cross Societies of eleven countries (United States, Norway, Australia, Great Britain, Switzerland, Canada, Thailand, Netherlands, India, France, Poland) offering contributions in kind valued at about 150,000 francs. To this was added a gift of 30,000 francs from the Swiss Government.

But the needs of the refugees and other victims of the events in Laos were such that, on December 18, the ICRC sent a further memorandum to various National Societies, explaining the resources which it must have to carry out the work which it had undertaken. This second appeal was followed by further generous contributions.

Meanwhile, in Laos itself, the ICRC delegates (Mr. A. Durand assisted by Mr. J. J. Muralti, and later by Dr. J. Baer) were carrying out the practical work in close co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross. They organised emergency relief distributions in several refugee camps, notably at Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, Thakhek and Pakse, and they handed over medical supplies, in particular to the Mahosot hospital in Vientiane, where military patients on both sides were being nursed.

In mid-October, Mr. A. Durand returned to the northern zone of Laos, where together with Prince Souvanna Phouma's Govern-

ment and Dr. Thao Phao, Vice-President of the Laotian Red Cross and Doctor in charge of the Xieng Khouang hospital, he studied different humanitarian questions, particularly the position of the population hit by events and of missing and detained persons in this region. During this time, Dr. Baer, the doctor delegate, continued distributions in the southern zone. He went to Saravane, where he handed over supplies to the local hospital comprising blood plasma, a gift from the Netherlands Red Cross, and various presents for the sick and wounded. In neighbouring regions, he distributed relief supplies to refugees including members of the Kha tribes belonging to an Indochinese colony.

During the last weeks of the year, the doctor delegate undertook an extensive tour of the provinces affected by the recent events. He passed through Savannakhet, Muong May (province of Attapeu), Pakse, Saravane and Luang Prabang. Dr. Baer arrived in the Laos capital with more than two tons of relief supplies, and whilst there he was accompanied by Mrs. Noup hath Chounramany, President of the Women's Committee of the National Red Cross. At each of the other stages of his trip, he handed over foodstuffs and clothing for refugees, as well as medical supplies to the hospitals, which were intended especially for military patients. This work was everywhere given the most active support by the Laotian Red Cross and its local sections.

Indonesia

The ICRC, in close co-operation with the Indonesian Red Cross, took part in the organisation of a humanitarian aid programme for Netherlands nationals living in Indonesia. This consisted of transferring pensions and allowances to them paid by the Netherlands Government. Previously, these payments had been ensured by Great Britain, which represented Netherlands interests in Indonesia. But these were interrupted in March, when the Protecting Power had to cease exercising its functions. The Indonesian Government then gave the National Red Cross Society the task of solving the humanitarian problems raised by this situation.

It was to facilitate the execution of this duty that the Indonesian Red Cross entered into co-operation with the ICRC. The latter

sent a delegate to Djakarta and also ensured liaison with the Netherlands authorities.

As a result of this co-operation, the Netherlands pensioners were once again able to receive the payments which frequently constituted the greatest part of their means of subsistence. In addition, it was decided that the Indonesian Red Cross would offer its assistance, as it had done in 1958, to Netherlands nationals wishing to leave Indonesia for the Netherlands.

Nepal

Thanks to contributions, particularly from certain National Red Cross Societies, the ICRC, from the beginning of 1961, was able to develop the relief action undertaken in 1960 on behalf of the Tibetan refugees in Nepal.¹ Acting at the request of the Government in Katmandu, it opened a delegation in the Nepalese capital and began by establishing the number of refugees in the different parts of the kingdom and their needs. The information thus obtained showed that medical aid was the most urgent requirement.

The delegation, which was led by Mr. Toni Hagen, a Swiss geologist with a profound knowledge of the country, opened seven dispensaries one after the other, in different regions of Nepal. During the course of the year, five doctors and three nurses looked after nearly 20,000 people, including a certain number of Nepalese. In other valleys more difficult to reach, the ICRC parachuted medical supplies, in particular 2,000 doses of vaccine, which enabled a smallpox epidemic to be checked.

The ICRC also carried out large-scale distributions of foodstuffs and clothing. But it made particular efforts to give refugees the means of building a new existence for themselves, independent of international aid. It therefore opened an artisan training centre at Katmandu, and in Dhor Patan, a high valley where the Nepalese Government placed land at its disposal, it is helping some hundreds of refugees to form a new community capable of meeting its own needs by means of agriculture and cattle-breeding.

¹ See *Annual Report 1960*, pp. 23 to 24.

The Indo-Portuguese conflict

Hostilities broke out between India and Portugal on December 18, and the ICRC immediately endeavoured to help the victims of the conflict, in conformity with the Geneva Conventions. On December 24, one of its representatives, Mr. C. Pilloud, Deputy Director for General Affairs, went to Goa, accompanied by Major-General Lakshmanan, Secretary-General of the Indian Red Cross. There, he met General Candeth, Commanding Officer of the Indian troops, who authorised him to visit the prison camps at will and give the prisoners any humanitarian assistance they might require.

At Panjim, Murmagao and Margao, the ICRC delegate visited three camps for Portuguese military prisoners and civilian internees to whom the local Red Cross section distributed Christmas parcels. He also visited the wounded in the hospitals and prevailed upon the Indian authorities to send the official lists of prisoners and internees to the Central Tracing Agency at ICRC headquarters in Geneva. At the same time the ICRC asked Lisbon for permission to visit Indian nationals interned in Portugal and its overseas territories. By January, this request had already achieved positive results.

Compensation to ex-prisoners of war

In 1961, the ICRC all but completed the important and delicate post-war task assigned to it some years ago: compensation to ex-prisoners of war in Japanese hands.

Article 16 of the Peace Treaty with Japan, signed in San Francisco, laid down that a sum of money withdrawn from Japanese funds, blocked abroad during the war, should be distributed to these former prisoners, to compensate them for the hardships endured during their captivity. This sum amounted to about 65 million Swiss francs and the signatories to the Treaty asked the ICRC to organise distribution to the beneficiaries.

The ICRC, therefore, asked all the countries concerned to draw up complete lists of beneficiaries. By 1956, the ICRC had received all these lists with the exception of that of the Philippines, where, as a result of the destruction of the archives during the war, it had not been possible to collect the information concerning

former prisoners. Nevertheless, the beneficiary Powers decided that the ICRC would make a preliminary distribution in the other countries to avoid the beneficiaries having to wait too long. It was agreed to set aside a lump sum for the Philippines, corresponding to the maximum estimate of the number of prisoners from this country, namely 60,000 shares, and the first distribution took place in 1957, with the exception of the Philippines.

To settle the latter case, the Philippine Red Cross made a series of public appeals, asking former prisoners of war to come forward. A list of 44,000 names was then drawn up enabling the ICRC to pay the Philippine Red Cross the equivalent of 13 million Swiss francs in August 1960.

The first distribution of Japanese funds had therefore finished, but since there were only 44,000 Philippine beneficiaries instead of the maximum 60,000 for which funds had been set aside, there remained a balance of 16,000 shares, to which had to be added the interest accumulated before the first distributions. For this reason, it was decided to carry out a second distribution to the same beneficiaries. This began in January 1961 and had not finished by the end of the year.

The total number of beneficiaries will have been about 200,000. At the first distribution each one received a sum representing the equivalent of 300 Swiss francs. Distribution to so great a number of people of the balance of the Japanese funds allotted to former Philippine prisoners would have meant that they only received very small amounts, and it was for this reason that the representatives of the Powers concerned decided that, as a general rule, this balance would not be used for individual distributions, but would be placed at the disposal of needy ex-prisoners or used for other purposes of social assistance.

AMERICA

Cuba

The ICRC renewed its attempts to send a delegate to Cuba charged with visiting persons detained as a result of the events. Unfortunately, in spite of numerous requests for intervention