

Asia

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A word must be said about the work of the National Societies of Guatemala and Nicaragua. During the conflict they gave shelter to 5,000 and 2,000 Honduran refugees respectively.

The Guatemala Red Cross also assisted some 1,300 Salvadorians resident in the northern part of Honduras who sought refuge in Guatemala.

3. ASIA

From 12 March to 11 April 1969, Mr. Gallopin, member and Director General of the ICRC, was in Asia where he visited Japan, Cambodia and Indonesia. In these three countries he had discussions with several notable persons, as mentioned in the section of this report dealing with international relations.

Cambodia

Delegation.—In 1969 the ICRC maintained its general delegation for Asia at Phnom-Penh, headed by Mr. André Durand. During the latter's absence in Switzerland from 1 July to 17 October, his place was taken by Mr. Michel Testuz, delegate.

Prisoners.—In May Mr. André Durand intervened with the Khmer authorities in favour of two South Korean servicemen detained in Cambodia. The Cambodian government having decided to release these two men, Mr. Testuz visited them shortly before their release, on 16 June.

The ICRC delegate also received the authorization to deliver parcels and family messages to four Vietnamese detainees in the Phnom-Penh central prison. One of them was released in November on Cambodian Independence Day.

The ICRC delegation handed over to Mr. Khiou Bonthonn, Secretary-General of the Cambodian Red Cross, correspondence and parcels for four Thai nationals detained in the Phnom-Penh central prison.

Assistance to the population.—In 1969 the ICRC continued its action for the benefit of victims of incidents occurring on the border.

Whilst in Phnom-Penh in April, Mr. Gallopin presented to H.R.H. Princess Monique Sihanouk, President of the Cambodian Red Cross, a donation of 10,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of medical and minor surgery instruments for the Beng-Khtum infirmary in the Batambang province.

In addition, following information conveyed to it by the ICRC, the New Zealand Red Cross Society donated 50 beds to the Cambodian Red Cross for its new hospital at Phnom-Penh, on which construction work began in March.

In August the ICRC sent the Cambodian Red Cross a consignment of medicaments, including 50,000 tablets and 5,000 phials of nivaquine for the treatment of malaria.

In November the ICRC donated a further 3,000 Sw.frs. to the Society, for the benefit of victims of the incidents which occurred on the border at Dakdam.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Following the diversion of a South Korean civil aircraft to the North Korean airport of Sunduk on 11 December, the Red Cross of the Republic of Korea asked the ICRC to intervene in favour of the 47 passengers and four crew members. The ICRC immediately cabled to the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to obtain news of these people.

In addition, in view of the many petitions sent it by the families of the people who had been aboard the aircraft, the ICRC approached the said National Society pursuant to Resolution XIX of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross (Vienna, 1965) on the reunion of dispersed families.

Indonesia

Political Detainees.—In January, the ICRC asked the Indonesian Government for permission to visit persons detained as a consequence of the events of September 1965.

Whilst in Djarkarta in April, Mr. Gallopin drew the attention of the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Adam Malik, to this problem. The Minister stated that a report on the conditions of political detainees in Indonesia would be sent to the ICRC.

Assistance to Displaced Persons in Kalimantan.—In April 1968, the ICRC sent several National Societies an appeal in favour of some 50,000 Indonesians of Chinese descent who had sought refuge on the west coast of Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) due to the troubled situation prevailing in the interior. The donations received amounted to about Sw. Frs. 150,000. In addition, in July, an ICRC doctor-delegate went to Djakarta to co-operate with the Indonesian Red Cross in the relief work.

The Malaysian Red Cross having announced a further donation of some Sw.frs. 50,000, at the end of 1969, the ICRC contacted the Indonesian Red Cross to enquire how it intended to use that donation.

Laos

Delegation.—The ICRC delegation in Vientiane was headed in 1969 by Dr. Jurg Baer. In October he was joined by Mr. Werner Blatter to assist him in relief work for the benefit of displaced persons.

Relief to displaced persons.—On 26 January 1968, at the request of the Laos Red Cross, the ICRC launched an appeal for the benefit of persons who had fled the fighting areas in the northern and eastern provinces of Laos to seek refuge in the Mekong basin. A score of National Societies responded. Their contributions to the Laos Red Cross, direct and through the intermediary of the ICRC, amounted to about Sw. frs. 200,000.

Relief distributions of straw mats, mosquito nets, blankets, foodstuffs, medicaments and medical supplies were continued in 1969, particularly in the provinces of Vientiane, Khammouane, Savannakhet, Saravane, Sédone, Attopeu and Sintadone.

Since January 1968, more than 6,000 families (29,300 persons) have received the benefit of these distributions by members of the

National Society assisted by the ICRC delegate, Mr. Baer. That figure does not include the refugees at Attoupeu where relief was dropped by aircraft, the refugees in the Red Cross reception centre at Paksé and Ban Amone, refugees to whom medicaments were supplied and those in hospitals who also received relief supplies.

By way of medical assistance, the ICRC sent to Laos in March 1969 200 units of blood plasma. This consignment was divided among hospitals at Paksé, Luang-Prabang, Houeisai and Vientiane. When cholera cases were announced in the province of Savannakhet in mid-June, the Laos Red Cross immediately took counter-measures and sent 55,000 anti-cholera vaccines to the regional Committees of Savannakhet and Vang Vieng. The ICRC contributed by the despatch of 37,000 vaccine units.

Prisoners of war.—On 30 May, Dr. Baer visited the Samkhé prison in Vientiane where there were some sixty prisoners of war of various nationalities.

The ICRC also maintained contact with the Pathet-Lao representative in Vientiane, to whom he delivered a list of the 158 American nationals reported missing in Laos, asking him at the same time whether these persons were still in the hands of the Neo Lao Hak Sat.

Vietnam

I. REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Delegation.—Until October, the ICRC delegation in Saigon comprised a head of mission, a delegate and a doctor. It was strengthened in mid-October by a second delegate and in mid-November by a second doctor.

In March, Mr. Christian Hauser took over from Mr. Jean Ott as head of the mission.

Application of the Conventions.—Since 1965, the ICRC has been in touch with the governments concerned in order to know their attitude towards the conflict in Vietnam. The Republic of Korea

informed the ICRC, on 13 March 1969, that the South Korean troops in South Vietnam had been instructed to treat prisoners of war in accordance with the IIIrd Geneva Convention.

In a letter dated 15 August 1969, the government of the Republic of the Philippines informed the ICRC that it was adopting a co-operative attitude in respect of the application of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 in the Vietnam conflict.

Visits to places of detention.—In 1969 the main activity of the ICRC delegation in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) was the visiting of places of detention, namely:

- collecting points at which were assembled all Vietnamese taken prisoner by the armed forces of the RVN or of the Allied Powers;
- prisoner of war camps to which were sent those Vietnamese to whom the IIIrd Geneva Convention of 1949 was applicable (military personnel or others of similar status);
- correctional institutions to which were sent, from collecting points, detainees to whom prisoner of war status was not granted (civilians);
- interrogation centres;
- military hospitals where prisoners of war and other persons detained by reason of the events were being treated.

The ICRC delegates carried out some 130 such visits in about a hundred places of detention. Reports were issued on each visit and sent to the Detaining Powers.

Prisoners of war.—A medical commission of two Vietnamese doctors and ICRC doctor-delegates, Drs. Alain Pellet and Georges Ott, examined a further contingent of seriously wounded or sick prisoners of war with a view to their release. The ICRC informed the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) that the number of such prisoners had increased from 40 to 75 and asked it if it was prepared to receive these men who had expressed the desire to go north of the 17th parallel.

In addition, the ICRC delegation in Saigon took special action in favour of disabled prisoners, some of whom were paraplegic cases requiring constant treatment and care.

The delegation was also invited to attend the trials of prisoners of war charged with common law offences committed during their captivity. The ICRC representatives talked in private with these prisoners both during the process and after sentence.

Civilian detainees.—The visits to civilian prisons (correctional institutions) which were interrupted in February 1968 were resumed at the beginning of January 1969 and continued throughout the year. At the Tan-Hiep correctional institution, the Tay-Ninh collecting point and the Chi-Hoa national prison, the ICRC delegates talked without witnesses with detainees of their choice.

The ICRC delegation in Saigon also visited 10 North Vietnamese civilian seamen picked up by the American navy in July when their own vessels had been drifting for several days in a typhoon. The ICRC representatives talked in private with each of these men who expressed the desire to be repatriated.

Their request was conveyed to the Detaining Power and the 10 men were released three months later in the presence of two ICRC delegates. They boarded a powered junk at the Cua-Viet naval base some few miles from the demilitarised zone.

The ICRC informed the DRVN Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Republic of Vietnam was prepared to repatriate 24 civilian seamen who had been interned for three years, and 27 Vietnamese who had been transferred from Thailand and wished to go to North Vietnam (see Thailand, below). The ICRC asked the North Vietnamese authorities to inform it whether they were prepared to receive these men and through what channels.

Assistance to civilian population.—The French-speaking Swiss radio service having donated it Sw. frs. 50,000 for relief work in the RVN, the ICRC gave half of that amount to the Cua boarding-school which provides training to some 200 young *montagnards* refugees. The boarding school is operated by the Cua camp not far from the 17th parallel in which there are nearly 8,000 *montagnards* who had been compelled to flee from the fighting areas.

In addition, the ICRC, jointly with the League of Red Cross Societies, provided relief to some 5,000 displaced persons at the Hoi-an camp about forty miles from Da-Nang. The League purchased and distributed rice, dried fish and salt; the ICRC provided 1,255 blankets and 1,130 raincoats.

The ICRC also spent nearly Sw. frs. 7,400 for the purchase of foodstuffs, straw mats and blankets for the victims of the flood which ravaged part of the town of Hué for four days.

The ICRC delegation in Saigon, moreover, delivered to the Vungtau military hospital braille-watches for blind soldiers.

II. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Application of the Conventions.—On 3 June 1969 the ICRC again wrote to the Government of the DRVN to remind it of its obligations pursuant to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of war victims.

The ICRC, in that letter, pointed out that it had several times sought DRVN agreement to the entry of an ICRC mission into its territory with authorization to discharge the duties incumbent on the ICRC under the Conventions. It referred to its letter of 19 August 1965 concerning prisoners of war, in which it had asked for:

- full and up-to-date lists of all prisoners of war and interned civilians and military personnel (Art. 122, Convention III);
- authorization for ICRC delegates to visit all prisoners and interned civilians and to talk with them in private;
- authorization for all prisoners to correspond with their families and to receive relief parcels.

In November the ICRC received a memorandum from the DRVN Red Cross re-stating the North Vietnamese attitude, namely that the IIIrd 1949 Geneva Convention would not be applied to members of the armed forces of the United States detained in North Vietnam.

We would mention in this connection that the Hanoi Government considers air raids to be war crimes for which the prisoners could be held responsible before Vietnamese Courts and that the IIIrd Convention was, in consequence, not applicable. It pointed out the DRVN reservation in respect of art. 85 of that Convention (Prosecution for offences committed before capture). The DRVN had in fact stated when acceding to the four Geneva Conventions on 28 June 1957 that, contrary to the provision of article 85 of the IIIrd Convention, prisoners of war prosecuted and convicted of war crimes would no longer be entitled to the protection of the Convention.

The ICRC has not been able to share this point of view. It believes that it was not possible to conclude from that reservation that enemy military personnel taken prisoner could be deprived of their right to treatment as prisoners of war and even less so if they had not been found guilty of war crimes by a competent and properly constituted court pursuant to a procedure in keeping with the safeguards provided for in the Convention in the event of legal prosecutions.

Prisoners.—*a) Lists and Family Messages:* The Central Tracing Agency received no reply from the North Vietnamese authorities to whom lists of missing American servicemen had been sent in August and November 1968 for the purpose of identifying prisoners.

Of about 800 reported missing, some hundred appear to have sent one or two messages a year to their families.

b) Parcels.—On the other hand, the North Vietnam Government authorized the despatch of family parcels on 4 July (American Independence Day) and at Christmas. However, as no official list of prisoners has been provided by the Detaining Power and no reply has been received to individual enquiries through the Central Tracing Agency, only those families which had received mail were able to send parcels to servicemen whose capture had been confirmed.

c) Releases.—Three American prisoners were released in July, bringing the total of American servicemen repatriated since 1964 to nine.

In December, five Vietnamese, crew members of the vessel "Valiante" which set sail from Singapore in March 1966, bound for Da-Nang, but which had entered the territorial waters of the DRVN, were authorized to leave North Vietnam territory. After passing through Laos, where they were met by the ICRC delegate in Vientiane, they were handed over by the DRVN embassy in Phnom-Penh to the ICRC delegate general. They then continued their voyage to Saigon.

Thailand

Vietnamese Refugees in Thailand.—On 13 November 1968, the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) protested to the ICRC against treatment inflicted on Vietnamese nationals in Thailand. In addition, in 1969, the ICRC received from a number of Vietnamese families in Thailand petitions in respect of their members who had been arrested and transferred to the Republic of Vietnam. Some hundred Vietnamese detainees had in fact been sent to South Vietnam in October 1968.

In February and March 1969 Mr. Durand went to Thailand where he visited other Vietnamese detainees and the main refugees communities.

The ICRC Delegation in Saigon received authorization to visit 27 of the Vietnamese who had been expelled from Thailand in October 1968. These men were interned at the Tan Hiep camp. They were able to talk in private with the ICRC representatives and stated their desire to join their families in Thailand before returning to the DRVN.

In November Mr. Testuz went to Bangkok where he met the Director of the Thai Red Cross Central Bureau, Khun Bibidh Virajjakar, whom he informed of the visit to the 27 internees at Tan Hiep and to whom he handed for transmission messages written by these prisoners for their families.

In addition, the ICRC forwarded to the DRVN Red Cross the proposal of the Thai National Society and Government that the repatriation to North Vietnam of Vietnamese residing in Thailand be resumed. That operation, which began in 1960—pursuant to an

agreement concluded in Rangoon on 14 August 1959 by the two National Societies concerned—was interrupted five years later due to the conflict in Vietnam.

In a letter dated 30 July, the DRVN Red Cross informed the ICRC that it was prepared to send representatives to Bangkok to discuss with representatives of the Thai Red Cross the revision of the agreement and questions concerning Vietnamese nationals awaiting repatriation. It also asked that Vietnamese transferred to South Vietnam be returned to Thailand and that those in detention be released. The ICRC conveyed this reply to the Thai Red Cross on 5 September, requesting it to reach agreement with the DRVN Red Cross on arrangements for such a meeting.

4. EUROPE

Central Europe

In 1969 Mr. Herbert G. Beckh, ICRC delegate for Europe, carried out missions in several central European countries in connection with problems related to the reuniting of separated families (Resolution No XIX of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross, Vienna, 1965) and to the tracing of military graves (Resolution No. XXIII of the same Conference).

He went to the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania and Czechoslovakia where he had discussions on the subjects mentioned with the leading members of the National Societies and with the authorities.

Reuniting of Families. — The ICRC continued its work for the benefit of separated families in central Europe, both through the intermediary of the Central Tracing Agency, which forwards to National Red Cross Societies many applications for family reuniting, and through missions in the countries concerned.

Thanks to the efforts of the ICRC and the National Societies, nearly 15,000 people were able in 1969 to cross frontiers which hitherto had been closed to them, thus enabling them to rejoin their families.