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PART II

Part II of this Report gives an account of some of the International Committee's activities on behalf of victims of disturbances and conflicts which have occurred since the close of the World War, in Asia and Europe.

I. — ASIA

1. SOUTH EAST ASIA

(Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia)

In view of the situation in Indochina, the ICRC maintained the delegation in Saigon. The delegate continued to pay visits, in increasing numbers, to prisoners of war and military internees.

Early in the year the delegate was called to Geneva to report upon his work. After returning to his post he made over thirty visits in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The majority of the places of internment were thus visited. On each visit the delegate of the ICRC was able to suggest improvements to the detaining authorities which in some cases were found to be expedient and were put into practice.

Moreover, the delegate of the ICRC was authorised by the French authorities to visit prisons where prisoners of war and military internees were detained. He thus visited some prison establishments in South Vietnam.

A doctor-delegate of the ICRC visited hospitals in Saigon, Hanoi and Haiphong, and Camp Infirmaries Nos. 1 and 17 where wounded and sick prisoners of war were under treatment.

In the course of these visits relief supplies were distributed in some of the camps. The ICRC placed at the disposal of its delegate in Indochina: 50 Braille watches for war-blinded, 240,000 Isoniazide tablets for tubercular war-disabled, and also the sum of Sw. Fr. 2,000.— for the purchase of artificial limbs for war-mutilated.

In April, the hostilities having spread to North Laos, the ICRC informed the Royal Government of Laos that it was prepared to lend its services for all humanitarian work where its aid would be considered appropriate. The delegate went immediately to the combat area.

In order to reply to very numerous enquiries received from the families of combatants held by the Vietnam Democratic Republic, the ICRC made an approach to the latter on the matter of forwarding the mail for those prisoners. After an exchange of correspondence with the representatives of the Vietnam Democratic Republic, the ICRC was authorised to transmit the mail. From September to December 1953, about 600 letters were forwarded by its offices.

2. KOREA

In *South Korea* the ICRC was able to carry on its normal activities on behalf of prisoners of war.

Early in 1953 it had to temporarily strengthen the delegation by sending a doctor; the mission of the doctor-delegate, from April 2 to July 7, 1953, comprised all medical duties associated with prisoners of war.

During the year the delegates of the ICRC made 36 camp visits. Points which they noted in the course of their visits were regularly brought to the attention of the United Nations Command by the delegation; the latter intervened with the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations forces, responsible authorities at headquarters and camp commanders, to obtain improvements which appeared to be necessary or to submit suggestions for the amelioration of conditions which had been found deficient. Their interventions were given careful consider-

ation in all cases. Further, by a memorandum dated March 10, 1953, the ICRC informed the United States Government of its views in regard to the situation in prisoner of war camps, and called its attention to a certain number of essential points.

When visiting two civilian prisons, the delegates of the ICRC ascertained that considerable improvement had been made in internment conditions, in comparison to those previously reported to the South Korean authorities.

On several occasions, and in particular by its appeal of May 8, 1951¹, the ICRC recommended the conclusion of an agreement between the parties to the conflict for the exchange of wounded and sick prisoners of war. In December 1952, the League of Red Cross Societies made a similar recommendation during a meeting of the Board of Governors. The exchange took place from April 20 to May 3, 1953. The agreement only referred accessorially however to the Third Geneva Convention of August 12, 1949, relative to the treatment of prisoners of war, and did not provide for the appointment of Mixed Medical Commissions as specified in Article 112 of the Convention. Moreover, it made no reference to the " Model Agreement concerning direct repatriation and accommodation in neutral countries of wounded and sick prisoners of war " contained in Annex I of the said Convention.

The ICRC participated in the exchange of prisoners. Its four delegates took note of the preparations for the exchange in the South Korean camps, accompanied and assisted prisoners being repatriated until they reached Musan, at the limit of the Pan Mun Jom neutral zone, and suggested to the United Nations Command, with successful results, that 85 Chinese soldiers and 600 wounded and sick North Koreans should also be included in the exchange. Following those interventions, on May 19, 1953, the ICRC sent a memorandum to the United Nations Command, to convey the comments of its delegates and to bring certain questions to its notice which the ICRC

¹ See *Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et le conflit de Corée*, Collection of Documents, Vol. I and II, Geneva 1952, 4to, 255 and 159 pages.

thought worthy of consideration in the event of other exchanges being made.

As the ICRC Delegation had no access to *North Korea*, it could not carry out similar duties there, or assist, during their transfer, repatriated prisoners who belonged to South Korea, or members of the United Nations forces.

The armistice negotiations were concluded in July 1953, and the general repatriation of prisoners took place from August 5 to September 6, 1953. In accordance with the clauses of the armistice, National Red Cross Societies of the belligerent parties lent their services for the operation. Some of the Societies were in contact with the ICRC and kept it regularly informed of the arrangements made in that connection.

As soon as it was informed of the conclusion and terms of the armistice in Korea, the ICRC—esteeming that its services in that field were no longer essential—considered bringing the work of its delegation for prisoners of war in South Korea to a close. It informed the United Nations Command of its decision. The latter, on August 1, 1953, requested the ICRC to continue its work on behalf of prisoners of war who had not been directly repatriated, until they could be handed over to a neutral Repatriation Commission in a non-military zone. The delegates of the ICRC continued therefore to assist those prisoners, to visit camps and to accompany some convoys to the demarcation line.

As mentioned in the previous Report, the ICRC took steps to assist the civilian population and persons under detention in South Korea. Plans were made to distribute medical relief supplies donated jointly by the ICRC and the Swiss Government (for a value of Sw. Fr. 133,000.—) and the distribution started in 1953.

In addition, the ICRC made available to the South Korean Red Cross Society during the year—

(February) medicaments valued at Sw. Fr. 16,000.— for use in the mobile dispensaries which had been set up by the South Korean Red Cross for the medical care of the civilian population living outside the great centres ;

(June 19) 4,000 dollars for former South Korean prisoners of war repatriated from North Korea during the exchange of wounded and sick prisoners of war ;

(December) 300 Braille watches for the war-blinded ;

The ICRC made distributions, as in previous years, of relief supplies, books, sports gear, etc. in prisoner of war camps in South Korea.

The United Nations Command continued the practice it had followed since the outset of the conflict, of sending to the Central Prisoners of War Agency nominal lists of North Korean and Chinese military personnel captured, deceased in captivity, reclassified as civilian internees or repatriated on account of wounds or sickness.

All the information was communicated, as and when received, to the North Korean authorities and, for the Chinese volunteers, to the Chinese Red Cross Society. However, the Agency received no information from the North Korean authorities concerning prisoners of war in their hands. Further, the authorities did not acknowledge receipt of lists or information sent to them by the Agency.

The Central Agency again opened a number of enquiries on missing military personnel, with the North Korean authorities or the Chinese Red Cross Society, and dealt with the transmission of messages. Unfortunately all communications remained unanswered.

In conclusion, mention may be made of the Central Agency's " Korean " card-index, set up on the outbreak of hostilities, to which information has continued to be added. In order to give an idea of the work involved for keeping the card-index up to date, it may be said that at the end of the year it contained 563,066 cards (filed by numbers and in alphabetical order) and 175,104 capture cards, by which the prisoners give particulars of their identity, the date of capture, their address and that of their family.