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I. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ICRC

Various relief actions and missions

The International Committee of the Red Cross is ready to take immediate action on the outbreak of an armed conflict in any part of the world.

Its intervention, of a strictly humanitarian nature, can have no effect upon the legal status of the parties to the conflict since it is the characteristic of the ICRC, a neutral institution, to be entirely independent in its work of any racial, political or religious considerations.

When the ICRC offers its services in times of stress it merely affirms the requirements of humanity. In this spirit, for nearly a century and on innumerable battle-fields, the representatives of the ICRC have never ceased to follow Henry Dunant's example and in their efforts to alleviate suffering they have echoed the cry of the people of Solferino : " We are all brothers ".

* * *

In 1957 the ICRC was engaged in various relief actions throughout the world.

As customary, this work was financed by funds collected by the ICRC from the Swiss people, or by gifts entrusted to the International Committee by National Red Cross Societies and Governments.

The ICRC did not merely distribute relief supplies. It also performed the various duties on which its " traditional mission "

is based : visits to persons under detention ¹, assistance to military personnel and civilians, legal protection, exchange of news through the Central Prisoners of War Agency, etc.

AMERICA

In America, the ICRC carried out little fresh activity in 1957. It maintained excellent relations with the Governments and National Societies, either directly ² or through its resident delegates ³

In addition, the International Committee continued its endeavours to secure the ratification and dissemination of the Geneva Conventions and to publicize the basic principles and the activity of the Red Cross in the international field.

The ICRC also had useful discussions with the presidents and secretaries-general of several National Red Cross Societies who visited Geneva. During these meetings, consideration was given to legal, financial or technical questions which are of common interest.

The ICRC did its utmost to ease the task of the National Red Cross Societies and to assist their efforts, particularly in the case of internal disturbances.

Lastly, the Latin American countries were kept informed of the ICRC activities by means of radio broadcasts in Spanish by the International Committee ⁴.

ASIA

KOREA

At the New Delhi Conference, the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea gave the ICRC a number of replies in response to enquiries which had been transmitted to it by the

¹ Visits to political detainees are described in a separate chapter (see p. 24).

² Mission to the United States by Mr. W. Michel and Mr. W. Meyer.

³ Mr. J. de Chambrier, delegate for Latin America (Argentina), Mr. E. Haegler, delegate in Brazil, Mr. G. Roethlisberger, delegate in Colombia.

⁴ See p. 2.