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I. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

Relief actions

The practical activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (numerous and varied as in previous years) were once more extended to the five continents in 1958. In some cases these activities were immense and even spectacular; others were on a more limited scale. For greater clarity they have been grouped by geographical areas in this report and not according to their degree of importance. It will nevertheless be possible to distinguish the most important relief actions of the past years in North Africa, Lebanon and Cuba. We shall endeavour to show that in undertaking these activities, whether great or small, the sole object of the ICRC was to save lives and to alleviate suffering; it sought in fact to serve the humanitarian ideal which is its justification.

AFRICA

North Africa

For some years past a relatively important part of the annual reports of the ICRC have been concerned with events in North Africa. In 1958 the Committee was again frequently called upon to take action in this area where its delegates had to deal with numerous and often delicate tasks, especially in Algeria and also in Tunisia and Morocco, where a great number of Algerian refugees required assistance.

Assistance to detained persons in French hands. — From the outbreak of the present conflict the ICRC was able to undertake its humanitarian

activities in Algeria. By virtue of Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, the International Committee is entitled to offer its services "in the case of an armed conflict not of an international character" and its delegates carried out a number of missions, mainly for the purpose of visiting places of detention and internment.

From February 1955 to December 1958 six missions were sent. Reference was made in the Annual Report for 1957 to the fifth mission which began in November 1957 and came to an end in February 1958. During this period the International Committee's delegates (Mr. P. Gaillard and Dr. L. Gaillard) visited 115 places of detention ("screening and transit centres"), assembly centres and hospitals where prisoners wounded in the fighting were receiving treatment. During these visits the delegates distributed relief supplies and comforts valued at 2,500,000 French francs to the detained persons.

A sixth and similar mission was undertaken in December 1958. On this occasion the delegates (Mr. P. Gaillard and Mr. R. Vust) visited two prisons in Algiers (Alger-Barberousse and Maison-Carrée), two assembly centres (Douera and Tefeschoun), four screening centres (Benis-Messous, Camp-du-Maréchal, Bordj Menaiel and Rio-Salado) and eight military internment centres (Tigzirt, Boghar, Ksar-Thir, Bône, Tiaret, Lamoricière, Hammam-Bou-Hadjar and Point Zéro near Mostaganem), altogether 16 places of detention. Several distributions of relief supplies were made during the visits.

These were the delegates' first visits to these internment camps, instituted subsequently to the fifth mission of the ICRC, in which combatants captured while bearing arms will be detained in future. During visits to two of these centres (Ksar-Thir and Bône) the delegates were present when 10 Algerians detained in this connection were released on December 15 and 16.

The delegates were accorded, as during their previous mission, all facilities necessary for carrying out their humanitarian tasks. Thus, according to the rule governing visits to prisoners, they were able to speak without witnesses with detained persons of their choice.

In cases where improvements in internment conditions appeared to be necessary the delegates made a direct approach to the camp or prison authorities. Further, and as customary after each of these missions, they made a detailed report which was sent by the International Com-

mittee to the detaining authorities, i.e. the French Government. The various suggestions contained in the reports have continued to be discussed by the ICRC with the authorities in Paris.

In connection with assistance to detained persons in French hands, reference may be made to representations submitted in behalf of doctors under prosecution or serving sentences following the Algerian conflict, as well as the visit of delegates (Mr. W. Michel and Mr. J.-P. Maunoir) on December 16, 1958, to the Vadenay Centre for Algerians (Seine et Marne) where a number of persons arrested in the metropolitan area are under detention.

Since the outbreak of the Algerian conflict 289 visits to camps and prisons have been made by the representatives of the ICRC.

Assistance to prisoners in the hands of the ALN. — The first contacts of the ICRC with the representatives of the “ Front de libération nationale ” (FLN) were made in 1956. Since then numerous approaches have been made, mainly through Cairo, Morocco and Tunisia, for the purpose of giving assistance to French prisoners held by the ALN (Armée de libération nationale). These efforts first came to a successful issue in 1958.

Early in the year a delegate, Mr. J. de Preux, was authorised to visit from Tunis four French prisoners captured in the Sakiet Sidi Youssef area and to distribute a few comforts. Later he was able to obtain a list of ten French combatants captured a short time previously.

The Central Prisoners of War Agency has since then received 159 letters and 10 messages on tape-recordings from French prisoners which have been forwarded to their families. The Agency also made 322 enquiries through the “ Algerian Red Crescent ” concerning French military personnel and civilians missing in Algeria, some of which were successful.

The ICRC had the satisfaction of assisting towards the release of prisoners in this category, the first of whom were the four captured at Sakiet, who were handed over on October 20 in Tunis to the delegates, Mr. J. de Preux and Mr. P. Gaillard, at the headquarters of the Tunisian Red Crescent.

A second group of prisoners of the ALN was released on December 4 at Rabat. These 8 military prisoners were handed over in Rabat by

the representatives of the " Algerian Red Crescent " to Mr. P. Gaillard and Mr. C. Vautier, delegates of the ICRC. The ceremony took place in the presence of Princess Lalla Aïcha, Honorary President of the Moroccan Red Crescent.

As part of its action in behalf of French prisoners, it will be remembered that following the announcement of the ALN of the execution of 3 military prisoners in May 1958, the ICRC made most urgent representations to the FLN and the French Government to ensure respect for the lives of military prisoners held by either of the parties. It is satisfactory to note that with the exception of one or two isolated cases, these representations have apparently been taken into account.

The International Committee's assistance was also required for non-French prisoners held by the ALN. Following a request received from the " Service français de rapatriement de l'ALN ", in spring 1958, the ICRC sent a delegate (Mr. J.-P. Maunoir) to Morocco to discuss the matter of legionaries, in most cases of Hungarian origin, held by the ALN. At their request, 16 were repatriated to Hungary. 3 others were authorised to emigrate to Switzerland and the Netherlands; 13 are still in Morocco and await a final decision on their case.

Assistance to Algerian refugees. — In 1957 a great number of Algerians, mostly women, children and aged persons, fled from the fighting area and sought refuge in Tunisia and Morocco. As in most cases these refugees were absolutely destitute, the ICRC took steps to assist them in spring 1957. The matter was submitted to the XIXth International Conference of the Red Cross, held in New Delhi from October 28 to November 7, 1957 and a resolution was passed followed by a joint appeal of the ICRC and the League in behalf of Algerian refugees. The favourable response received to this appeal from National Societies and other bodies such as the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, made it possible to give still greater aid to these refugees.

a) Tunisia

During the winter (1957-1958) the International Committee distributed to Algerian refugees in Tunisia the relief supplies made available

through the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. These gifts (valued at 390,000 Swiss francs) consisted mainly of clothing and foodstuffs. This action was undertaken by the ICRC in active co-operation with the Tunisian authorities and the Tunisian Red Crescent and in conjunction with the League of Red Cross Societies. From March 15, 1958, the work was taken over by the Tunisian Red Crescent which, in co-operation with the League, has dealt with the distribution of relief supplies to Algerian refugees in Tunisia.

b) Morocco

Since 1956 many refugees have fled from the fighting area in West Algeria and have entered Moroccan territory; early in 1957 their number was already estimated at some 40,000.

The ICRC lost no time in distributing relief supplies purchased with its own funds to these refugees. Later it collected gifts from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and various private organisations, which enabled it to extend its relief action.

The work was continued in 1958; foodstuffs were made available through two missions, the first early in the year and the second in November and December. The ICRC sent six missions altogether in 1957 and 1958, which distributed relief supplies to refugees in this area for a value of 930,000 Swiss francs. The mission sent in December 1958 marked the close of the International Committee's relief action in behalf of Algerian refugees in Morocco. The work has since been continued by the Moroccan Red Crescent (officially recognised on August 7, 1958), in co-operation with the League of Red Cross Societies. The League also acted as a distributing agent for gifts received following the appeal launched by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. In mid-December, a delegate of the ICRC (Mr. M. Martin), accompanied a cargo of relief supplies for Algerian refugees in Morocco, shipped by the Greek vessel "Evangelia". These supplies, valued at 2,000,000 Swiss francs, were a gift of the Red Crescent of the United Arab Republic; the distribution was dealt with by the Moroccan Red Crescent.

In regard to the Algerian conflict mention may be made of the International Committee's aid to Algerian war-disabled in Morocco, mainly

consisting of gifts of artificial limbs and orthopaedic equipment valued at 20,000 Swiss francs.

Representations concerning missing Spanish nationals. — Other representations were made by the International Committee in Morocco during 1958 (which did not, unfortunately, lead to any positive result) in behalf of Spanish civilians and military personnel reported missing since the events in the Ifni and Spanish Sahara areas towards the end of 1957. The International Committee's delegate in Morocco, Mr. C. Vautier, has made repeated efforts to trace these missing persons presumed to be in the hands of the " Armée de libération marocaine ". In April 1958 he made further enquiries in Goulimine, South of Agadir, which were unsuccessful. ¹

The Cameroons

The ICRC received several requests in summer and autumn 1958 (in particular from the " Union des populations du Cameroun ", an organisation with headquarters in Cairo), for a mission to be sent to the region to visit political detainees and internees. Approaches were made by the ICRC to the French authorities, who did not consider it appropriate, however, for any action to be taken in the matter.

NEAR EAST

Lebanon

The serious upheaval which shook Lebanon in 1958 led the ICRC to undertake one of its most important missions of the year. It was directed by Mr. D. de Traz, General-Delegate of the International Committee in the Near East.

Mr. de Traz, whose usual residence is in Beirut, was already well acquainted with this country where the ICRC had made numerous con-

¹ In spring 1959, following the requests made by the ICRC, 40 Spanish civilians and military personnel were released, unconditionally, by the Moroccan authorities; reference to this matter will be made in the next annual report.