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3. ASIA

Laos

The recrudescence of hostilities in the interior of Laos obliged the ICRC to open up a new phase in its activity on behalf of the victims, in particular of the wounded and sick, as well as of civilians who had fled from the danger areas.

At the beginning of March, the Laotian Red Cross made an urgent appeal to the ICRC for blood plasma for hospitals and infirmaries in the fighting zones. The ICRC immediately despatched a batch of 100 flasks of preserved blood. To this was added shortly afterwards a gift of 300 flasks offered by the Netherlands Red Cross.

Subsequently, Mr. André Durand, general delegate of the ICRC for Asia, went to Laos where he was able to assess requirements. He observed that some 23,000 persons had fled the fighting areas and were devoid of all means of existence.

Following on these observations and the request made by the Laotian Red Cross, the League of Red Cross Societies on June 8 addressed an appeal to several member Societies on behalf of the victims of the Laotian conflict. This appeal, whose object was to meet the refugees' most urgent needs for an initial period of three months, asked for the despatch of sweetened concentrated milk for children, sugar, soap, mosquito netting, material for making clothing, multivitamins, substitutes for blood plasma, anti-snake bite serum, instruments for minor surgery and various pharmaceutical products. The National Societies were also requested to make funds available, either locally or in neighbouring countries, purchases which would avoid lengthy delays in routing.

Already by July, contributions paid or announced as a result of this appeal reached a total value of 100,000 Swiss francs.¹ A little more than one-third of this sum represented contributions in kind, the rest consisting of cash donations.

Dr. Jürg Baer, doctor-delegate of the ICRC, then rejoined the general delegate, Mr. Durand, at Vientiane who shortly afterwards left for Cambodia and Australia. He was charged with organizing in

¹ A portion of these donations were distributed in 1965.

various parts of Laos the distribution of relief collected as a result of the appeal of June 8.

In the framework of aid to displaced persons, Dr. Baer handed a cheque to the Laotian Ministry of Social Welfare for 2,500 dollars as a contribution for the new village of Ban Amon ("the village of men who have escaped death"). He made a series of tours in various parts of the Kingdom, notably in the provinces of Luang Prabang, Thakhek and Paksane, during which he distributed relief supplies of food and clothing to refugees, as well as medicaments to hospitals. He undertook this activity in close co-operation with the Laotian Red Cross.

The ICRC also concerned itself in military captured during the events in Laos. It thus had printed in Vientiane cards notifying capture and message forms in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. Produced in English and Lao, these cards were chiefly intended for Americans detained by the Pathet Lao.

During the course of a mission to Khangkhay, in the "Plaine des Jarres", Mr. Durand, general delegate of the ICRC, handed these cards personally to Prince Souphanouvong, President of the Neo Lao Haksat. He also at the same time met Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit, Minister of Information.

One result of this was that the ICRC was able to transmit messages written to the family of an air force lieutenant whose aircraft had been shot down over territory held by the Pathet Lao.

Viet Nam

The ICRC attempted to intervene on behalf of the victims of the events in both South and North Viet Nam.

In Saigon, capital of the Republic of Viet Nam (South), Mr. André Durand, general delegate of the ICRC for Asia, was received in February by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior, who gave him authorization to visit persons detained on account of the events. On February 21, he made a first visit to the prison of Chi Hoa. The following day, accompanied by Dr. Pham Van Hat, President of the Vietnamese Red Cross, he

went to the Phu Loi camp where he had several talks with the detainees.

In April the general delegate continued his mission of visiting places of detention and went to the Con Son penitentiary in the island of Poulo Condore off the Mekong delta. Subsequently, Mr. Werner Muller, ICRC delegate in Saigon, took over this activity. Together with the leading members of the Vietnamese Red Cross he visited, in September and October, various places of detention where he handed relief to the prisoners.

Mention should also be made that, as a result of the devastating typhoons which caused great damage in South Viet Nam in November, the ICRC, at the request of the League of Red Cross Societies, organizer of international relief actions in cases of natural disaster, placed its delegate, Mr. Muller, at its disposal. The delegate then assisted in the reception of donations and in the purchasing of relief supplies before the arrival of a League representative to the spot.

The ICRC also concerned itself in the position of American nationals, both military and civilian, who had been captured by the forces of the "National Front of Liberation of South Viet Nam". In order to establish contact with them, he made various representations which had not produced any results by the end of the year, in spite of a little information he had been able to collect about the position of the prisoners, thanks to an account published by an Australian journalist who had been in the jungle with the insurgents. He tried nevertheless to have some relief parcels reach the prisoners, but was unable to discover whether they actually reached their destination.

As a result of the bombing of certain points on the coast of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (North), the ICRC offered its services to the North Vietnamese Red Cross, in the framework of the Geneva Conventions. That Society thanked the International Committee for its offer, but stated that it was able, for the moment, to deal with the situation itself.

The ICRC also transmitted to the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam the requests for news made by the families of the two American pilots whose aircraft had been shot down on August 5. On September 7, the wife of one of the airmen sent a

first letter, through the intermediary of the American Red Cross, which the ICRC transmitted to Hanoi. In return, the ICRC received on September 26 from the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam a long missive from one of the prisoners reassuring his family about his health and the conditions of his internment. In the following months, this correspondence continued normally through the intermediary of Geneva.

Indonesia

After the outbreak of hostilities between Indonesian infiltrators and Malaysian forces, Mr. André Durand, general delegate of the ICRC for Asia, went to Djakarta, the Indonesian capital, on November 28. He was received by the leading members of the Indonesian Red Cross, which had asked the ICRC to deal with the question of Indonesian prisoners in Malaysia. He noted that the Indonesian Red Cross had been called upon to give instruction in the Geneva Conventions to certain groups of volunteers with engagements to fight against the Federation of Malaysia.

Malaysia

After his stay in Djakarta, the general delegate went to Kuala Lumpur, capital of the Federation of Malaysia, where he was received by Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister, and by other government representatives. These meetings enabled him to observe that the government did not accept the fact that the Geneva Conventions were applicable to the armed conflict in which Indonesia was opposing it. Those with whom he spoke did, however, promise that he would be given every facility to visit Indonesian prisoners and transmit their mail. They took care to point out, however, that these persons were not considered to be prisoners of war within the meaning of the Conventions. At all events, intervention by the general delegate on behalf of two Indonesian nationals condemned to death resulted in an indefinite stay of execution.

Mr. Durand then undertook a tour of prisons in which were detained Indonesians who had been captured during the course of military operations. He proceeded for that purpose to Negeri Sembilan, Johore Bahru and Singapore, as well as to Sarawak and Sabah in North Borneo.

All the prisoners were held as a result of sentences by courts or by reason of legal provisions relating to national security. The ICRC representative, during the course of his visits which were prolonged until early 1965, collected some 200 letters for the families of the Indonesian detainees. Thanks to the intermediary of the Malaysian Red Cross, this mail was despatched via Bangkok to the Indonesian Red Cross which it transmitted for handing to the recipients.

Japan

The repatriation operations were continued throughout 1964 of Koreans resident in Japan who wished to proceed to the place of their own choosing in their country of origin. We would recall that this repatriation is effected under the auspices of the Japanese Red Cross in the presence of ICRC delegates who ensure that none leaves against his will.

In 1964, eight vessels left Niigata for Chong Jin in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On board were carried 1,822 persons, which brought the total number of Koreans repatriated since the beginning of the operations in December 1959 to 82,665. ICRC representatives present at embarkations were Mr. Michel Testuz, delegate, and Miss Elsa Casal, assistant delegate, then Mr. André Durand, general delegate for Asia.

The earthquake of June 16, which caused havoc in one part of the Japanese Archipelago, seriously damaged the port of Niigata. In consequence, the repatriation operations were interrupted for three months and could not be resumed until September 22.

4. LATIN AMERICA

Brazil

On April 14, 1964, the Chinese Red Cross in Peking requested the ICRC to concern itself in the position of nine delegates of the