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Visits to places of detention : The ICRC delegates were assured by the government authorities that they would, as hitherto, be afforded all manner of facilities for visiting places of detention.

Contacts : There were numerous contacts with the authorities. They related, *inter alia*, to the introduction of delegates to the government authorities, the installation of the regional delegation, the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions particularly within the armed forces and schools, and the teaching of international humanitarian law in universities.

Donation to National Society : In December, the ICRC sent the Venezuelan Red Cross 250 kg of baby food and one ton of powdered milk.

Asia

During 1971, the situation on the Indian sub-continent deteriorated, leading to the December conflict between India and Pakistan.

The ICRC maintained its permanent delegations in the Republic of Vietnam, the Khmer Republic and Laos. Towards the end of the year, it set up further delegations in Islamabad, New Delhi, Calcutta and Dacca.

One of the main missions made from Geneva was that of the President, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, and the Presidential Attaché, Mr. Michel Barde, to the People's Republic of China from 14 to 25 September¹.

In July, Mr. Victor H. Umbricht, Member of the ICRC, and Mr. Jean Ott, the Delegate-General for Asia and Oceania, went to Pakistan, the Republic of Vietnam and India to contact the Governments and National Societies. Mr. Ott had already been to these three countries and to Thailand in late April/May.

In October, Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan visited ICRC headquarters where they were received by the President and several members of the Committee.

¹ See p. 90 of this Report.

The permanent state of war in S.E. Asia and the incalculable suffering resulting therefrom induced the ICRC to launch a general appeal, on 25 May, asking all National Red Cross Societies to help all victims of the conflict regardless of political or ideological leanings. About a dozen Societies responded, contributing a total of 587,000 Swiss francs.

CAMBODIA

Khmer Republic

The ICRC continued the activities that it first undertook following the events of 18 March 1970 and the ensuing hostilities. It did its utmost to help prisoners of war and sick and wounded civilians in accordance with the Geneva Conventions, through a permanent delegation in Phnom-Penh, consisting of a head-of-delegation and a doctor-delegate.

APPLICATION OF THE CONVENTIONS

Use of the emblem : The ICRC approached the Khmer Red Cross and Government, drawing their attention to the limits to the use of the Red Cross emblem. A letter dated 8 November from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the ICRC delegation in Phnom-Penh that adequate instructions had been given to the Khmer national armed forces.

Prisoners of war : After a preliminary visit to a number of detainees in the Prey Sâr Prison near Phnom-Penh, which unfortunately was not followed up, the ICRC steadily pursued its approaches to the Government of the Khmer Republic with a view to the granting of prisoner-of-war status to combatants captured by the armed forces of the Khmer Republic. Up to the end of the year, all its efforts came up against the uncompromising attitude of the Government, which regarded the detainees as criminals guilty of aggression as there had been no declaration of war.

The ICRC further asked the Phnom-Penh Government to let it have a list of military personnel captured by the Khmer armed forces and of civilians and military personnel reported missing and pre-

sumed to be in the hands of enemy forces. By the end of the year, the ICRC had still not received any such list.

AID TO THE POPULATION

Wounded and sick : In January, the Khmer Red Cross asked the ICRC for plasma and plasma substitute for the hospitals of the capital. The ICRC passed this request on to National Societies, two of which, the Australian and Swiss, sent supplies which reached Phnom-Penh early in February.

In April, the ICRC itself sent 20,000 units of insulin to the Phnom-Penh hospital services and in August, November and December it sent by sea and air three batches of medicaments and dressings, worth about 100,000 Swiss francs.

Displaced persons : The ICRC continued helping the displaced persons in the capital, estimated at some hundreds of thousands. However, as most of them had been taken in by relatives or friends, there remained in the reception centres only 5,000 to 8,000, for whom the ICRC concentrated its efforts.

The ICRC delegates made several rounds of the thirty-odd reception centres for displaced persons in the capital. They were generally accompanied by representatives of the Khmer Red Cross who helped in the distribution of supplies. From the proceeds of the joint ICRC—League appeal of 8 June 1970¹ 36,000 francs were given to the Khmer Red Cross to pay the cost of transporting supplies from the port of Kompong Som to Phnom-Penh. Furthermore, in November the ICRC sent the Khmer Red Cross seven tons of powdered milk, a gift from the Swiss Government.

ICRC delegates also looked into the health and sanitary conditions of the reception centres. They suggested improvements to the city health authority and to the local office of the World Health Organization with which they co-operated.

The ICRC doctor-delegate also worked in the Khmer Red Cross infirmary and day nursery clinic. Starting in June, he set out with a mobile medical team to visit and hold surgery in each of the reception centres. He saw an average of 200 patients a week in this way. The

¹ See Annual Report, 1970, p. 28.

ICRC delegates also went several times on fact-finding missions to Kompong Thom, Kompong Speu, Kompong Cham and Takeo where there were displaced persons.

Vietnamese residents : ICRC delegates continued keeping an eye on the welfare of Vietnamese nationals who had been herded into camps. They paid several visits to the Cao Dai camp in Phnom-Penh which held 500 Vietnamese nationals and where the doctor-delegate held surgery. They went also to Battambang province to look into the conditions in which some 4,000 Vietnamese nationals were living in three camps.

Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia (GRUNC)

The ICRC has developed the relations established with GRUNC in 1970, and has made contact with GRUNC representatives in Paris and Peking.

Missing persons : The ICRC has once again approached GRUNC for news of a number of persons reported missing since the beginning of hostilities in Cambodia (e.g. reporters, priests, missionaries, drivers, guides, Khmer interpreters) and presumed to be in GRUNC hands. It submitted a list of all civilians reported missing and a list of American military personnel thought to have been taken by the United National Front of Kampuchea (FUNK). The ICRC would also have liked to have lists of Khmer and South Vietnamese soldiers in FUNK hands, but the Phnom-Penh and Saigon Governments had still not submitted any such lists at the end of the year.

Medical aid : In 1970, the ICRC allocated 100,000 Swiss francs for the despatch of medicaments for the victims of hostilities in areas under GRUNC control. These medicaments were sent in four consignments between January and March 1971.

Ceylon

Detainees held after the events of 5 April : An ICRC delegate was sent to Colombo on 25 April. Upon his arrival, he made contact with the National Society and Government authorities who afforded him every facility for visiting the hospitals where the wounded were being tended, and the places of detention. On 29 April, he went to four hos-

pitals in Colombo—the Main Hospital, the Police Hospital, the Military Hospital and the Prison Hospital—and to the Central Prison. During the days which followed, he went to the provinces and visited the hospitals at Warakapola, Kegalle, the Kandy Prison hospital, the Anuradhapura Prison hospital, the Matara Prison and the Galle, Deniyaya, Hambantota and Tissamahrama hospitals.

During this first series of visits, made with the close collaboration of the National Society, the ICRC delegate saw about 1,800 persons detained in connection with the events of 5 April. He then asked the ICRC to send supplies, consisting mainly of medicaments, medical equipment and cloth for the making of clothing for the detainees.

In view of the needs reported by its delegate, the ICRC made 40,000 francs available to enable the delegate and the Ceylon Red Cross to make some immediate local purchases. On 18 June, it appealed to some twenty National Societies for help for the detainees. Five Societies responded with gifts totalling 15,000 Swiss francs.

Meanwhile, the ICRC delegate continued visiting places of detention. On 17 May, he saw 5,300 detainees in the two university camps of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara near Colombo, before they were transferred to “rehabilitation” camps. On 7 June, he visited the first “rehabilitation” camp opened at Anuradhapura with 500 detainees. He gave them sweaters and outdoor games.

He left Ceylon on 8 June to return for a second mission from 17 to 29 September. By then there were about 15,000 detainees in the “rehabilitation” camps. He went to Senapura Camp and distributed clothing and sports gear to over 600 detainees.

As usual, reports on the visits were sent to the detaining authorities. The President of the Ceylon Red Cross has since visited several “rehabilitation” camps and distributed supplies from the ICRC.

Hong Kong

Prison visits : In February, the ICRC honorary delegate in Hong Kong visited the Stanley and Tai Lam prisons where he saw 71 persons sentenced to detention for their part in the 1967 riots. Shortly afterwards, 24 of them were released.

As usual, the ICRC submitted reports on the visits to the detaining authorities.

Indonesia

Political detainees : In January and February 1971, an ICRC team comprising Dr. Roland Marti, chief medical officer of the ICRC, and a delegate continued the work started in 1970 in Indonesia by visiting political detainees. They were afforded every facility for a visit to Buru where, from 29 January to 1 February they visited 3 of the 13 units of detainees on the island. In all they saw 2,500 detainees, many of whom they interviewed in private.

From 22 to 25 February the team visited also the prisons at Denpasar in Bali, and Jogjakarta and Semarang in central Java, where they saw a total of over 1,300 political detainees.

As usual, the ICRC submitted reports on these visits to the detaining authorities.

In November, the ICRC sent the Indonesian Red Cross a consignment of medicaments and equipment for analyses to be used in the places of detention that the ICRC had visited.

Japan

Repatriation of Koreans : In August 1959, the Japanese Red Cross and the Red Cross of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had signed an agreement, in Calcutta, on the repatriation of Koreans residing in Japan and wishing to go to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The last repatriation operation took place in December 1967, at which time some 17,000 Koreans, who had been properly registered for repatriation before the expiry of the agreement, were still in Japan.

On 5 February 1971, in Moscow the two National Societies concerned signed a new agreement according to which repatriation operations would recommence for a six-month period from May of that year. The Japanese Red Cross asked the ICRC to send a delegate to supervise the embarkation, at the Japanese port of Niigata, of those Korean nationals who wished to go to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and who had registered within the time limit set by the Calcutta agreement. In other words, they were completing the operation started in 1959. The ICRC sent Miss Elsa Casal who had been the delegate present at the repatriation operations between 1959 and 1967.

Between May and October, six repatriation operations took 1,081 persons to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, bringing the total number of Koreans to have left Japan under the auspices of the ICRC since 1959 to 89,692. The ICRC had ensured that all these people had freely chosen to be repatriated.

Repatriation operations were continuing, as the year drew to an end, with the agreement of the Red Crosses and Governments of the two parties.

Laos

In 1971, the ICRC Delegate in Vientiane continued helping prisoners of war, political detainees and displaced persons. When necessary, and particularly when visiting places of detention, he was seconded by a doctor-delegate.

Prisoners of war : The ICRC delegates went to Samkhé Prison at Vientiane in January and August to see 120 prisoners of war. In February they went to the Sayaboury centre for converts which held 80 persons. In March they went to Luang-Prabang prison to see a single prisoner of war.

Political detainees : On 30 June, the ICRC delegates went to Chinaimo military camp at Vientiane where they saw some fifty political detainees.

As usual, reports on these visits were submitted to the detaining authorities by the ICRC.

Assistance for displaced persons : As the hostilities in Laos had produced several new waves of displaced persons, the ICRC continued to help them. Persons leaving combat zones usually spend a few weeks or months in transit villages before being resettled on land provided by the Laotian Government. ICRC assistance mainly takes the form of medicaments, food, blankets, mosquito nets, clothes, occasionally axes, machetes and other utensils.

In early March, the ICRC delegates went to Paksane in Borikhane Province (central Laos) to distribute supplies to nearly 1,500 displaced persons. They also left a large stock of supplies with the Paksane authorities for distribution to any new arrivals in the area before the end of the dry season.

In May, the ICRC delegates distributed supplies to 5,000 displaced persons in Luang Prabang Province (North Laos).

In June, they went to Paksé (South Laos) where they distributed supplies to 1,000 displaced persons, including some Vietnamese refugees. On the way back they distributed supplies to 5,000 displaced persons at Savannahket and Seno (Central Laos).

In early July, they made similar distributions at Thekek (Central Laos) on the arrival of 1,000 displaced persons. All these distributions were made with the close collaboration of the Lao Red Cross. Apart from the help given to displaced persons, the ICRC gave the Lao Red Cross about 2,000 Swiss francs towards relief for the victims of the floods which ravaged the country during the monsoons in August.

Neo Lao Haksat : The ICRC continued and developed its contacts with the Neo Lao Haksat in Paris and Vientiane and it repeated its offer of medical assistance to help those living in the areas controlled by that movement. As the Pathet Lao authorities viewed the offer with favour, the ICRC delegation in Vientiane gave the Pathet representative there three surgical kits in June. In July, a consignment of medications was flown to Vientiane from Geneva and the ICRC delegation on the spot ensured its safe delivery. A second consignment went in November.

Malaysia

Political detainees : On 26 and 27 March, Dr. Roland Marti, ICRC Chief Medical Officer, and a delegate, visited the " rehabilitation " centres at Batu Gajah in the State of Perak and on the Isle of Jerjak in the State of Penang. They saw 190 political detainees in the former and 861 in the latter camp and they were able to interview them without witnesses.

As usual, the ICRC submitted reports on these visits to the detaining authorities.

VIETNAM

Republic of Vietnam

The ICRC maintained its delegation—consisting of a Head of Delegation, three delegates and three doctor-delegates—in Saigon throughout 1971. Most of their time was spent visiting places of detention.

Visits to places of detention : The ICRC delegates visited the following places of detention :

- the screening centres where the Vietnamese captured by the armed forces of the Republic of the allied Powers are assembled ;
- the prisoner-of-war camps to which Vietnamese granted PoW status according to the Third Geneva Convention are sent (military or like personnel) ;
- the correctional institutions holding detainees transferred from the screening centres and to whom PoW status has not been accorded (civilians) ;
- interrogation centres ;
- the military hospitals where PoWs and persons detained as a result of events are being treated.

ICRC delegates paid over ninety visits in all to some sixty places of detention where about 40,000 prisoners of war and 22,000 other detainees were interned. The ICRC sent the Detaining Power reports on all such visits.

Prisoners of war : ICRC delegates paid three or four visits to all prisoner-of-war camps, military hospitals, screening centres and so forth in 1971.

The ICRC Delegate-General for Asia and Oceania passed through Saigon in May and took the opportunity of impressing on the South Vietnamese authorities the need for ICRC delegates to be allowed to visit places of detention, and prisoner-of-war camps in particular, without there being any time limit set on such visits, thereby complying with Article 126 of the Third Geneva Convention. This request was met and some of the delegates spent as long as six days visiting a single place of internment.

In general, the ICRC devoted the bulk of its efforts to increasing food rations, improving medical care, separating ordinary prisoners of war from the " converts ". The ICRC also took steps to have certain camps improved. In the case of the Phu-Quoc camp (28,000 prisoners of war), it drew the attention of the South Vietnamese Government to the dangers of too great a concentration of prisoners of war and suggested splitting the camp.

Steps were taken on these matters by both the ICRC delegation in Saigon and the headquarters in Geneva, and they were taken up again by Mr. Umbricht, a member of the ICRC, and Mr. Ott, the Delegate-General, during their missions to Saigon.

ICRC delegates noted several improvements made in the conditions in prisoner-of-war camps as a result of these steps. The South Vietnamese authorities had increased rations for wounded prisoners of war, increased the medical staff, made certain re-arrangements and distributed a number of basic commodities. Lastly, the Government of the Republic informed the ICRC in a letter dated 28 December 1971 that it had decided to split the Phu-Quoc prisoner-of-war camp into three " areas of responsibility " which they called " intersectors " .

Civilian detainees : The ICRC continued trying to obtain, for visits to national prisons, correctional institutions and interrogation centres, conditions identical to those applying to visits to places of detention reserved for prisoners of war ; that is, with little or no advance notice and with permission to interview the detainees without witnesses. It should be pointed out that on 11 November 1970, the Government of the Republic answered the ICRC to the effect that, under current circumstances, it could not grant permission for interviews with civilian detainees without witness.

This was one of the problems that Mr. Umbricht discussed on his visit to Saigon in August. The Prime Minister of the Republic told him, on that occasion, that he would have the problem studied by his legal advisers and would let the ICRC have a reply.

The ICRC continued visiting certain correctional institutions in 1971 despite the curbs on its activities.

ICRC delegates distributed various supplies, comprising toilet articles, medicaments and educational material during their visits both to prisoner-of-war camps and to places of civilian detention.

Release of disabled prisoners of war : The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vietnam sent the ICRC a letter dated 24 December 1970 informing it that the Government had decided to release another contingent of disabled prisoners of war. In compliance with their wishes they were to be moved to the north of the 17th parallel on the day of their release, 24 January 1971. The South Vietnamese authorities asked the ICRC to help carry out this operation by approach-

ing the North Vietnamese authorities to obtain their co-operation, that is to ask them to agree to a handover point and arrange for the reception of the prisoners.

On 13 January, the Republic of Vietnam Permanent Mission in Geneva provided the ICRC with all relevant information as to the date, time, place (Bên-Hai River) and arrangements for the operation. The ICRC, which had agreed to co-operate on the express condition that absolute security was guaranteed for the crossing, cabled the above information to the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The thirty-seven disabled prisoners of war concerned were, in fact, transferred on 24 January but, at the last moment, the ICRC delegates found themselves obliged to withdraw. The first two phases of the operation—private interviews with the prisoners of war to ensure that they really wanted to go north of the 17th parallel, and their conveyance by air from Saigon to Chuang Tri—had gone as planned. However, as they were about to set off from Chuang Tri for the River Bên-Hai, the delegates discovered that the vehicles carrying the disabled prisoners, and which flew the red cross flag, were armed, and so they refrained from participating in this last phase. The ICRC drew the attention of the Republic authorities to the fact that an armed military vehicle could under no circumstances bear the red cross emblem, even when used for humanitarian purposes.

Four months later, on 13 May, the Democratic Republic announced in a broadcast by Radio Hanoi that it would accept any “ sick and wounded patriots being illegally detained in the South ” that the Saigon authorities might like to release. One of the conditions that Hanoi set for this release was that the wounded would have to be taken to the limit of its territorial waters in civilian ships flying the red cross flag ; the Government of the Democratic Republic would send unarmed ships to meet them. The Government of the Republic then decided to release 660 disabled prisoners of war. It set the date for the operation at 4 June and asked the ICRC to help.

By the time this operation was to take place, only a small number of prisoners had expressed any wish to be released in the Democratic Republic. They were duly taken to the limit of territorial waters on 4 June, as planned, only to learn that as there were so few prisoners the Government of the Democratic Republic had decided not to send

its own boats to keep the rendez-vous. The disabled prisoners of war therefore had to remain in South Vietnam where they were subsequently visited by ICRC delegates at Da Nang camp.

Socio-medical aid : Apart from visiting places of detention, ICRC doctor-delegates went several times a week to three institutions for orphans and abandoned children in Saigon to hold surgery and, where necessary, distribute medicaments.

In March and April, the ICRC sent about 14,000 Swiss francs worth of medicaments to Saigon.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN)

During 1971, the ICRC developed its contacts with the representatives of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN), mainly in Paris and Vientiane.

The problems resulting from the Vietnam conflict were discussed at various meetings and the DRVN confirmed its position concerning prisoners in its hands as stated in the Annual Report for 1970 (p. 40).

Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam

The ICRC likewise kept in touch with the representatives of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam in Paris, throughout 1971.

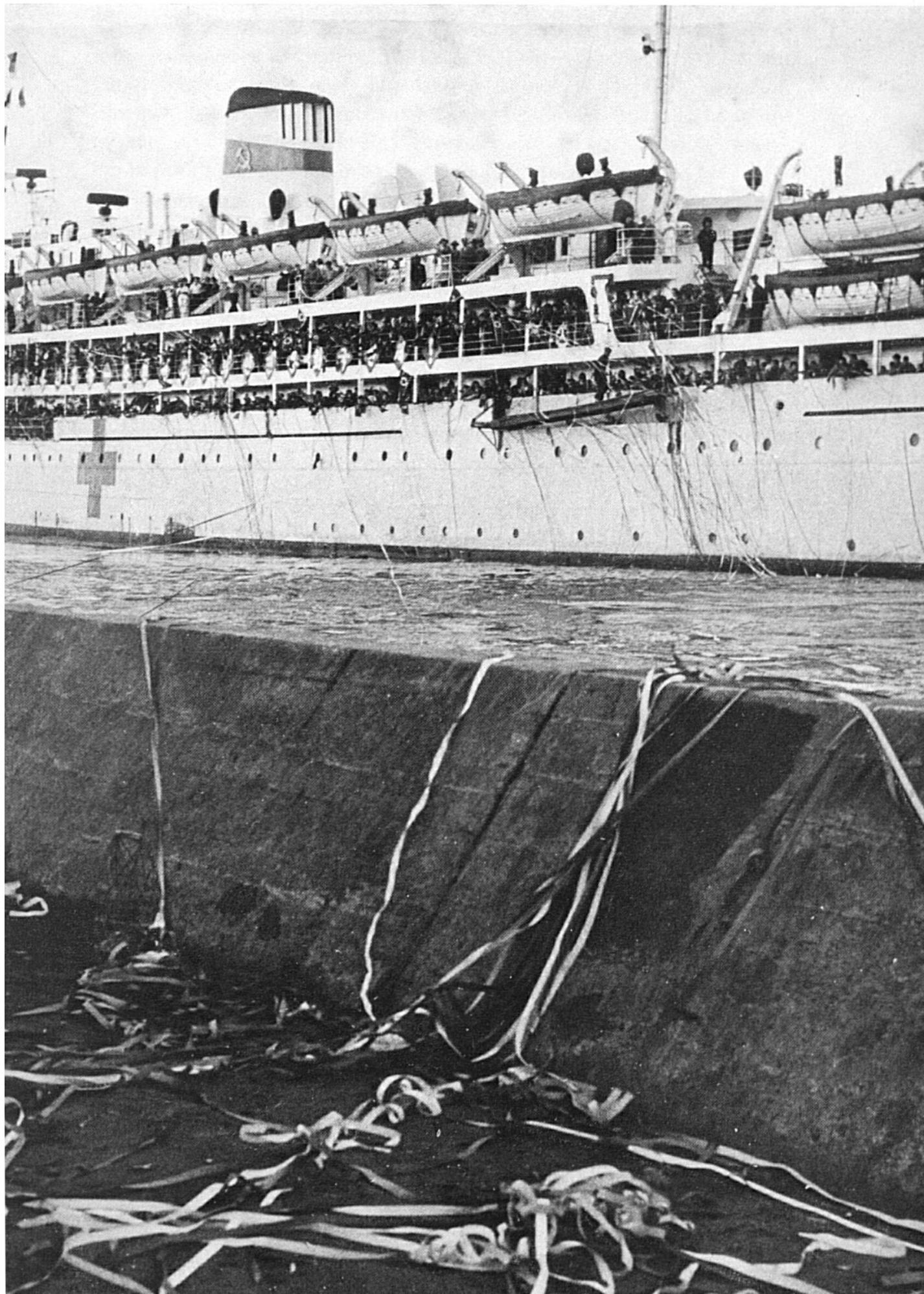
CONFLICT ON THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

Since March 1971, the ICRC has been closely following the development of the situation on the Indian sub-continent while constantly working with the Indian and Pakistani Governments and Red Cross Societies to bring humanitarian relief to the victims of the events in the areas affected.

GENERAL MEASURES TAKEN BY THE ICRC

Before the conflict : The gravity of events in East Pakistan moved the ICRC to avail itself of its right to take initiative. At the end of March, it sent a mission to Karachi and Islamabad to contact the Pakistani Red Cross and the Government. At the same time, in accor-

Niigata (Japan) : repatriation of Koreans. ICRC Records



Distribution of relief supplies in a Laotian village. ICRC Records



dance with Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions, it offered its services to General Yahia Khan, then President of the Republic of Pakistan, informing him of the arrival of the ICRC mission. However, the Pakistani authorities considered this mission to be unnecessary as the situation in East Pakistan was, in their opinion, returning to normal and so the mission came back to Geneva.

Nevertheless, on 30 April, the ICRC sent a message to the Pakistani Permanent Mission in Geneva reiterating its offer of services to the Pakistani Government and expressing the hope that the Government would enable the ICRC to fulfil its humanitarian mission.

Furthermore, the ICRC asked Mr. Ott, ICRC Delegate-General for Asia and Oceania, who at that time was in S.E. Asia, to stop off in Pakistan on his way home. On 11 May, he held talks with the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs whom he informed of the conditions applying to ICRC intervention. On 2 July, the Central Tracing Agency wrote to the Eastern Branch of the Pakistan Red Cross and to the Indian Red Cross offering its services for the organization of a tracing service.

Then, in July, Mr. Umbricht, a member of the ICRC, made two trips to West Pakistan. On the first occasion he met nearly all the Secretaries of State to whom he explained the sort of services that the ICRC could render, both in India and in Pakistan, particularly in connection with the tracing of missing persons, reuniting families and visiting detainees. On his second visit to Islamabad he was received by General Yahia Khan who gave his approval to the establishment by the ICRC and the Eastern Branch of the Pakistan Red Cross of a tracing service in Dacca and to the transmission of family messages between India and Pakistan.

Consequently two ICRC delegates—one being a specialist from the Agency—set out from Geneva, via Islamabad, for Dacca in mid-August and the tracing service was officially opened under ICRC auspices in September. In early November, the ICRC sent Mr. Paul Reynard to Dacca as head-of-delegation in order to have on the spot a delegate experienced in ICRC wartime activities should a conflict break out. Before going to Dacca, Mr. Reynard stopped over in Islamabad where he repeated the offers that the ICRC had made to the Pakistani Government with a view to more extensive activities than those which were then being carried out in East Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the ICRC was doing all in its power to help the thousands of Bengalis who had fled East Pakistan to seek refuge in India. We have already mentioned the offer made on 2 July by the Central Tracing Agency to the Indian Red Cross regarding the organization of a tracing service. Later that month, Mr. Umbricht and Mr. Ott called on the Government authorities and the leaders of the National Society in New Delhi. Mr. Umbricht was received by Mr. V. V. Giri, President of the Federation.

The ICRC organized consignments of relief supplies and between August and October it shipped to Calcutta 100 tons of powdered milk, a gift from the Swiss Government, and 50,000 tons of cereals, a gift from the European Economic Community, for distribution among Bengali refugees. In early October, the ICRC sent a representative, Mr. Roger Du Pasquier, to New Delhi to supervise the reception of these food supplies consigned to the Indian Red Cross.

On 2 December, Mr. Du Pasquier was joined by a second delegate. On the same day, the Indian Government gave the ICRC its approval to the setting up of a tracing service in New Delhi in co-operation with the National Society.

On the eve of the conflict, therefore, the ICRC already had two delegates in Dacca and two in New Delhi. Moreover, in August, it had made contact with the representatives of Bangladesh in London, New Delhi, Calcutta and New York. On 8 November, Mr. Ott met Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, the then representative of Bangladesh in London, who informed him of the formation of a " Bangladesh Red Cross " and of the desire to collaborate with the ICRC. On 13 November, the Bangladesh authorities and " Red Cross " assured the ICRC of their desire to comply with the principles of the Geneva Conventions.

At ICRC Headquarters, a joint group comprising representatives of the ICRC and of the League of Red Cross Societies had been set up to cope with any emergency medical action on the Indian sub-continent that might require the participation of National Societies.

During the conflict : As soon as hostilities between Pakistan, on the one hand, and India and Bangladesh, on the other, broke out on 3 December, the ICRC took the following general measures. On 4 December, it sent both the Indian and the Pakistan Governments a note concerning the four 1949 Geneva Conventions binding on those States. Those Conventions provide for the protection and humane

treatment of the wounded and sick, of prisoners of war and of civilians, and for respect for hospitals, ambulances and medical establishments and personnel. The contents of that note were also communicated to the representatives of Bangladesh and to the United Nations Secretary-General in New York who, in an address to the United Nations General Assembly on 7 December, said, *inter alia* : " I feel it is my duty as Secretary-General to speak up on behalf of those who are likely, through no fault of their own, to become the innocent victims of the crisis... In this connection, I am maintaining close contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross which, in its traditional humanitarian role, will endeavour to implement as fully as possible the terms of those Conventions . . . I appeal to all parties to the conflict to respect those provisions . . . As a practical matter, I have instructed my representative in Dacca to examine urgently, in full co-operation with the International Red Cross, what practical measures can be taken to this end . . . ". On 15 December, the ICRC, seeing how military operations were evolving, once again reminded the parties to the conflict of their obligations under the Conventions. The parties gave their assurances that the Geneva Conventions would be applied under all circumstances.

Meanwhile, in Dacca, agreement was reached between Mr. Reynard, Head of the ICRC delegation, and the Pakistani authorities whereby the Holy Family Hospital and the Intercontinental Hotel were declared neutral zones under ICRC control as from 9 December. The Holy Family Hospital, run by the local Red Cross and the League, had 180 beds. The Intercontinental Hotel was occupied by several hundred people including a number of foreigners and United Nations officials awaiting evacuation. As a cease-fire was declared on 16 December, the neutral zones ceased to be neutral on 19 December and persons taking refuge in the Intercontinental Hotel were transferred, under ICRC supervision, to Indian Army quarters in Dacca.

The ICRC sent teams of delegates to Islamabad, New Delhi, Calcutta and Dacca in order to be able to discharge its duties, namely : caring for the wounded and sick, transmitting lists of prisoners of war, visiting prisoner-of-war camps, tracing missing persons, exchanging family messages and caring for the welfare of certain sectors of the civilian community. By the end of the year there was almost a score of ICRC delegates in the field.

In view of the possible proportions that its work might attain, the ICRC appointed Mr. Enrico Bignami as Commissioner in charge of its activities on the Indian sub-continent.

Prisoners of war : One of the first things that the ICRC delegates in Islamabad, New Delhi and Dacca did was to obtain, from the appropriate authorities, lists of prisoners of war, and permission to visit prisoners and transmit their family mail.

Indian prisoners of war : As early as 10 September, ICRC delegates had visited five Indian soldiers captured by the Pakistani armed forces and interned in East Pakistan.

Visits to Indian prisoners of war captured during the conflict and interned in West Pakistan, began early in January 1972.

Pakistani prisoners of war : On 28 December, ICRC delegates in New Delhi went to the Milderey military hospital where they met four wounded Pakistani prisoners of war. They paid their first visit to a camp for Pakistani prisoners of war in India on 31 December.

However, at that time, most of the Pakistani prisoners of war, about 90,000, were still in Bangladesh. The delegates started visiting camps there on 1 January 1972. Those camps also held thousands of West Pakistani civilians awaiting transfer to India.

AID FOR THE WOUNDED, SICK AND CIVILIANS

Even before hostilities broke out, the ICRC had set up a joint action group together with the League and had made contact with a number of National Red Cross Societies in case emergency medical help was needed on the Indian sub-continent.

On 17 December, a plane, made available to the ICRC by the Swiss Government, left Geneva for Calcutta with ICRC delegates and doctor-delegates, a Swiss Red Cross surgical team and medicaments. On 20 December, in response to an appeal by the ICRC, five surgical teams provided by the Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland arrived in Calcutta and awaited authority from the appropriate authorities to go to Dacca. The ICRC delegates were able to land in Dacca on 25 December and the surgical teams during the days that followed. They were spread throughout Bangladesh where they tried to help both civilian and military victims of the events.