

Indo-China

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IV. — BURMA

Although there was an improvement towards the end of 1949 in the situation described in the last Report (p. 90), there were still, at the beginning of 1950, some 500,000 refugees in Burma, 170,000 of them living in camps. Their condition was precarious, and the Government had the greatest difficulty in settling them.

Dr. R. Marti went to Rangoon in July, to visit the camps again. He also saw groups of Karens living in assigned residence, and was satisfied that their treatment was in accordance with the principles of the Conventions.

The Committee sent four tons of medical supplies to the Burmese Red Cross in October; the gift was used in equipping four dispensaries for the refugees.

M. F. Siordet, on mission in the Far East, called at Rangoon in December, and discussed with the Red Cross and the authorities how the Committee could help in procuring relief.

V. — INDO-CHINA

Mention was made in the previous Report (p. 88) of unsuccessful attempts to make contact with President Ho Chi Min's Government, with a view to application of the Geneva Conventions. No progress was made in this respect during 1950.

Dr. R. Marti, while at Rangoon in July, and M. F. Siordet, on mission to Bangkok in December, discussed with representatives of the Vietmin Government in these two places the sending of a Delegate, and the distribution of relief in territory under that Government's control. Stress was laid on the humanitarian object, and the Committee's neutral and absolutely impartial attitude. The replies were cordial, and favourably disposed to application of the Geneva Conventions, but did not lead to any practical result. Difficulty of communication with the Republican Government and contacts already existing between the French and Vietmin Red Cross organization were quoted as justifying an extreme reserve.

In May, however, M. Aeschliman, Delegate in South-East Asia, succeeded in having the radio station broadcast messages, twice a week, from French civil internees and prisoners of war. These messages were then sent on to the addressees by the responsible authorities.

In November, after unremitting effort, the French Red Cross obtained a first list of prisoners, and of NCOs and privates who had been wounded and released ; it also secured certain facilities for sending prisoners news of their next of kin. The French Press ¹ mentioned in this connection that, after the engagements at Tatkhé, the French Red Cross had been able to collect 250 wounded and to hand over twenty tons of food, clothing, and medical supplies for French prisoners. On its side, the French forces released groups of prisoners. The decisions, both French and Vietmin, were without specific reference to the Geneva Conventions.

As far as the Delegates personally were concerned, M. Aeschliman several times visited French prisoner camps, and obtained certain improvements in conditions.

At the request of the French High Commissioner in Indo-China, he also visited 27,000 Chinese nationalists, almost all military, who had crossed the frontier and been interned.

VI. — INDONESIA

The disturbances which had subsided after the creation, by agreement, of the United States of Indonesia, broke out afresh in the Southern Moluccas.²

In April, 1950, the Island of Amboina proclaimed its independence and announced the constitution of an autonomous Republic of the Southern Moluccas. The Indonesian Government at Djakarta thereupon blockaded these islands.

As there was risk of open hostilities, the Committee, on May 20, invited both parties to undertake to apply the essential

¹ *Le Monde*, March 22, 1951, reporting the declaration to the *Conseil de la République* of M. Letourneau, Minister for Relations with the Associated States.

² See *Report* for 1949, p. 89.