

# Near and Middle East

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# I. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL TASKS

## 1. NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

### Yemen

Throughout 1964, the ICRC has continued a humanitarian mission in the Yemen which from the human and financial point of view has demanded a considerable effort of it. Our two previous annual reports showed how this mission started and developed. During the past year it has been extended still further, enabling an increased number of victims of the events, prisoners and internees, wounded and sick, to benefit from its assistance.

In fact the hostilities between the Arab Yemen Republic with its Egyptian allies and the Royalist forces of the Imam el Badr continued to cause much suffering to combatants and the civilian population. In its humanitarian action the ICRC has had continuously to face enormous difficulties imposed by the climate, the wildness of the country, the almost total absence of communications and the destitution of the inhabitants. In accomplishing this adventurous task it at least had the satisfaction of seeing day after day that its presence, apart from being necessary and welcome, exactly coincided with the original mission of the Red Cross as Henry Dunant had foreseen it.

**Assistance to prisoners.**—The ICRC's effort bore chiefly on assisting prisoners and giving medical relief to the wounded and sick. Delegates in their action were able to avail themselves of the essential rules of the Geneva Conventions which both sides had previously undertaken to respect.<sup>1</sup> This enabled them to intervene

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<sup>1</sup> See Annual Report 1963, pp. 15-16.

energetically on behalf of prisoners held on both sides and to bring them aid without which there is no doubt many of whom would have succumbed.

Visits to Egyptians and Republicans in the hands of the Royalists involved long and often arduous expeditions in mountainous regions devoid of communications. Their humanitarian effect was considerable, since, for these captives cut off from the outer world, they represented a guarantee of survival, as well as giving them the possibility of sending news to their families.

To this was generally added material aid much appreciated by men lacking all things, particularly food and medical relief. Moreover, a doctor was very often included in the delegations visiting prisoners, which enabled these to benefit from effective treatment.

Mention, for example, can be made of the expedition, undertaken in the spring of 1964 by Mr. André Rochat, head of the ICRC mission in the Yemen, accompanied by a few delegates, of whom one was a doctor, to the Royalist area of the Naham tribe, to the East of Sanaa. The party left the field hospital of Uqhd, near the Saudi frontier, taking 500 kgs of baggage, in lorries, on camel or donkey and even on foot.

On their way, they had on many occasions to cross the sinuous fighting lines, which caused certain altercations. However, generally speaking, they were well received by the military commanders of both sides. They finally reached the mountain range held by the Naham tribe and its chief. Warning of the delegates' arrival in this area cut off from the other Royalist sectors had previously been given by radio.

The headquarters were installed in a cave at an altitude of over 9000 ft. The Egyptian prisoners, numbering 29, were held in another cave, with the exception of an officer of senior rank, who was held in a neighbouring fort. Most of these were in chains, and were in great need, which moreover also applied to their guards. After much discussion, Mr. Rochat succeeded in having the shackles removed from the prisoners, in obtaining increased rations and permission for them to receive relief each month.

The delegation's doctor, who worked unsparingly in treating the war wounded and the local population, pointed out that one

of the Egyptian prisoners was seriously ill and should be transported as soon as possible to hospital. The chief of the tribe agreed to his going, on condition that a Royalist of rank held by the Republicans was released in exchange and brought to him within a fortnight.

The head of the mission accepted this hazardous exchange, the result of which would evidently influence the fate of the other prisoners. The expedition, taking the sick man with it, returned down the mountain, recrossed the firing lines and reached Sanaa, where the ICRC delegates obtained the release of the notable asked for by Prince Ibn el-Mohsen. A week later, the released Royalist prisoner, accompanied by two delegates, had returned to the headquarters of the Naham tribe. This journey enabled further relief to be given to the Egyptian prisoners. Other similar individual exchanges of war wounded and sick were subsequently made. The delegates also made use of these visits to ensure the transmission of news between the prisoners and their relatives. They were thus able to allay the anxiety of many families who had until then been without news.

This correspondence, whose exchange had been organized by the Central Tracing Agency, at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, gave much comfort to the prisoners' families. Proof of this can be seen in the following extracts from letters sent by them :

“ . . . We have thanked Allah that you are still alive and that we have heard from you . . . ”

“ . . . It was as if we were starting a new life when we received your letter, as we had been without any news of you for ten months. . . . Our life was full of joy and happiness and in hopes of your return when your letter arrived. How pleased and relieved we were to learn that you were in good health . . . ”

The ICRC also obtained the release and arranged for the repatriation of fifteen Egyptian military interned in Saudi Arabia, after having been captured by Yemeni Royalist forces. Entirely reclothed by the ICRC and accompanied by one of its delegates, these men returned to Cairo on January 14, 1964 by commercial airline.

At the same time, the ICRC intervened on several occasions on behalf of Royalist prisoners and internees detained by the Republican authorities and their Egyptian allies. In this connection Mr. Rochat, head of the delegation, had official talks in Sanaa at

the beginning of the year, as a result of which he obtained official assurances that he could visit the Royalist detainees and distribute relief to them.

In February, the ICRC delegate in Sanaa, visited some thirty of these detainees in one of the prisons of the Republican capital, amongst whom there were six members of the Imam's family. He gave them some relief supplies and thanks to his knowledge of Arabic, was able to talk with them without witnesses.

Such visits were repeated on a number of occasions during the course of the year under review. At the end of December, two other delegates visited ten leading Royalist personalities interned in Taiz. He handed over relief and mail to them.

We would also mention that in March 1964 the authorities of the United Arab Republic agreed to release and send to Saudi Arabia twenty-four women and children, members of the Yemeni Royal family, interned in Egypt. The ICRC had previously visited them whilst under surveillance in their residence in Cairo.

**The field hospital at Uqhd.**—The ICRC carried out its main medical activity for the wounded and sick at the Uqhd field hospital near the Saudi frontier, and its beginnings were described in its previous annual Report.<sup>1</sup> Throughout 1964, personnel supplied by the Swiss Red Cross, doctors, male nurses, nurses and their technical assistants had to deal with a flow of patients which has scarcely diminished, even when military operations slowed down.

The estimated capacity of the hospital was for 50 beds, but the number of hospitalized persons generally fluctuated between 75 and 80, which sometimes obliged the staff to sleep on the ground. At certain times numbers exceeded a hundred, but these averaged about 70 towards the end of the year.

In addition, the hospital saw an uninterrupted succession of more lightly wounded and sick, who had often come from great distances for consultations. It was also the base for the medical mobile teams which visited areas closest to the fighting.

This activity, undertaken by the ICRC with the support of many governments and National Societies and above all of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Annual Report 1963, pp. 21-24.

Swiss Red Cross, kept its urgent character. In many parts of the country there was in fact no other possibility for the wounded and sick to receive medical treatment than under the red cross emblem.

The central element of the Uqhd hospital remained the "Clinobox", a prefabricated unit containing an air-conditioned operating theatre and other installations essential for surgery. By the end of 1964, nearly 800 operations had been performed.

The number of patients hospitalized for varying periods exceeded 900. In addition 9,200 persons came for consultations at the polyclinic.

Such activity obviously incurred considerable expense. By the end of 1964, the equipping and developing of the field hospital had cost 2,404,750 Swiss francs. Donations received by the ICRC as contributions to its expenses then amounted to 970,375 francs, thus leaving 1,434,375 francs entirely chargeable to the ICRC.

The members of the different teams who accepted to come and work in this lost corner of the Arabian desert generally gave proof of remarkable self-sacrifice and devotion. Five teams each consisting of some thirty persons (doctors, male nurses, nurses, laboratory assistants, technicians, drivers, etc.) succeeded each other at Uqhd until December 1964. The strength of the hospital was then 32, of whom 29 were Swiss (6 doctors) and 3 British (one doctor and two medical students).

The task of the doctors and their assistants, already heavy during the winter months, became particularly arduous in the hot season. During the day, temperatures then often exceeded 40° Centigrade in the hospital tents.

This excessive heat resulted in a great increase in water consumption in the hospital, which rose from 3,500 to 9,000 litres a day. Since the supply had to be transported daily some 25 miles distant from a well, whose capacity was limited, water had to be fairly strictly rationed.

The equipment used in this part of Arabia rapidly deteriorated as a result of the climate, sandstorms and the state of the tracks. Most of this equipment therefore had to be replaced during the course of the year, in particular the water-trucks. The delegation thus had to acquire three cross-country trucks with four-wheeled drive.

The departure of the United Nations observation mission, whose mandate officially terminated on September 4, raised other difficulties for the ICRC delegation which had benefited from its support for air and wireless liaison. The Uqhd hospital, which had been installed in the zone neutralized by UNO's presence, no longer enjoyed this guarantee. It was at least able to acquire, on extremely advantageous conditions, some of the equipment belonging to the United Nations' mission, notably tents which enabled the field hospital to make much needed replacements.

However, even after UNO's departure, the field hospital remained in daily wireless contact with Geneva, thanks to the short-wave transmitting and receiving station with which the ICRC has been equipped since 1963. This system of communication, comprising a local transportable station established at Uqhd, has made it possible not only to exchange messages in Morse, but also conversations by direct broadcast. It has shown itself to be of the greatest usefulness in conducting a mission of this nature.

On the whole, experience has shown that the Uqhd field hospital was, as far as this was possible, adapted to the circumstances. Its geographical position enabled it to remain sheltered from military operations, whilst admitting wounded from the fighting areas to the east and north-east of Sanaa. That is what Mr. Samuel A. Gonard, then Vice-President of the ICRC, observed when he visited the Yemen at the beginning of the year and inspected the field hospital, whose equipment and functioning seemed to him to correspond fully with the requirements brought about by the conflict.

**The mobile medical teams.**—The Uqhd hospital served as a base of operations for the medical teams carrying out their activity in the interior of the Yemen, near the fighting areas. It was sometimes a question of relatively short tours during which doctors and male nurses gave treatment to all wounded and sick they met on their way.

At other times, the teams made prolonged stays in fighting areas. Thus the team, consisting of a doctor and a male nurse placed at the disposal of the ICRC by the British Red Cross, remained nearly five months in the north-western region of the

Yemen. It was relieved in April by a team of two doctors of the French Red Cross, which continued their activity until near the end of summer, then by a Swiss team during the following months. Furthermore, the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic sent out a team consisting of a doctor and a male nurse which worked in various areas.

The number of persons examined and cared for by the mobile medical teams in the interior of the Yemen amounted to about 4,500. In adding this figure to that of persons cared for at Uqhd a total is reached of 14,600 patients given treatment by the ICRC in the Yemen from November 1963 to the end of 1964. This represents an overall number of more than 45,000 consultations during that period.

**Relief distributions on the Republican side.**—At Sanaa, capital of the Arab Republic of the Yemen, where it had previously distributed considerable quantities of medicaments, the ICRC undertook, throughout 1964, a food relief action which mainly benefited children, victims of the events. Each morning, except during the Ramadan fast, delegates distributed sweetened and vitaminized milk to more than 700 war orphans in Sanaa. In the evenings those who benefited were some 200 young interneers.

Powdered milk, used for these distributions, was provided from surplus stocks of the Swiss Confederation. To these were added rations of cheese, vitamin tablets and tonics.

However, as it was not possible to find sufficient cups and glasses locally, the delegates had recourse to collecting empty preserve tins throughout Sanaa which they disinfected and made ready for use.

The delegates also distributed cheese to needy patients undergoing treatment in the hospital establishments at Sanaa. Women received distributions of soap.

During his mission to the Yemen at the beginning of 1964, Mr. S. A. Gonard, then Vice-President, was present at some of these distributions in the capital of the Republic.

Relief thus distributed in 1964 consisted of : 9 tons of powdered milk, 4 tons of cheese, 4 tons of soap, vitamins and tonics, as well

as crutches and wooden legs for the disabled. Their total value amounted to 83,000 Swiss francs.

**Action on behalf of the disabled.**—In close co-operation with the Red Crescent of the United Arab Republic, the ICRC brought its aid to Yemeni war wounded who had been amputated. From March onwards, small groups of disabled, generally escorted by an ICRC delegate, went to the Red Crescent Hospital in Cairo where they were given treatment before being fitted with appliances at the Rehabilitation Centre of Aguzah, near the Egyptian capital.

The ICRC made a financial contribution in each case. The UAR authorities undertook the transporting by air of the disabled between Cairo and Sanaa at their expense.

By the end of 1964, the total number of disabled fitted with appliances was 24, of whom 21 had one leg, 1 both legs and 2 one arm amputated.

In addition, as aid chiefly for civilian amputated cases, the ICRC had 30 pairs of crutches and 12 pairs of wooden legs despatched to its Sanaa delegation. This relief which the delegates began to hand over to the beneficiaries was accompanied by the necessary equipment for adapting on the spot.

The ICRC would never have been able to accomplish all these tasks without the aid of several governments, especially that of the Swiss Confederation, of National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, voluntary organizations and private individuals. Their contributions in cash, equipment and personnel considerably facilitated the work undertaken by the ICRC in the Yemen.

During 1964, head doctors succeeding each other at the Uqhd field hospital were Drs. Ulrick Middendorp, Johan de Puoz, Reinhold Wepf, Edwin Hofmann and Enrico Bonifazi.

## **Cyprus**

In its previous Annual Report<sup>1</sup>, the ICRC noted that, as a result of the troubles which had broken out in Cyprus in December

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<sup>1</sup> p. 25.

1963, it had offered its humanitarian services to the Nicosia authorities and sent a delegate to the spot, who arrived on the island on January 1, 1964. This was to be the start of an activity which, owing to the persistence and ramifications of the conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, was extended throughout 1964.

The ICRC delegate, Mr. Jacques Ruff, at once set to work, in co-operation with the local Red Cross, that is to say the British Red Cross, and the Cyprus authorities. He first attempted to obtain the application from all of the essential principles of the Geneva Conventions and of the Red Cross.

However, as the situation continued to deteriorate and raised an increasing number of humanitarian problems, the ICRC decided to send three other delegates to the island. These were Mr. Albert de Cocatrix, Mr. Jean-Pierre Schoenholzer and Mr. Pierre Vibert, charged in particular with organizing a tracing office to identify and locate missing persons, with visiting persons detained on either side and with the setting up, in liaison with the local British Red Cross branch and various other voluntary organizations, of a relief action to the civilian population, victim of the events.

This activity had only just begun when the ICRC delegation suffered a serious loss with the sudden death of one of its members, Mr. Schoenholzer.

**Aid to detainees and the tracing of missing persons.**—In spite of this sad event, the delegation continued its task and soon achieved some positive results. Before the end of January, it obtained the release of 30 detainees. It had also visited 27 other persons under detention in various places of arrest and prisons on the island.

However, this activity which was based on article 3 of the Geneva Conventions relative to conflicts not of an international character, came up against increasing difficulties. The complete separation of the two Cypriot communities, together with the extreme tension existing, gave rise to a considerable number of tragic situations amongst the population and added to the obstacles facing the Red Cross work of reparation.

The delegates, however, succeeded in overcoming a good number of these difficulties, by sheer dint of perseverance. The chief

of these was the tracing of missing persons. Inquiries undertaken for this purpose necessitated the making of innumerable contacts with the local authorities and the representatives of the two communities, as well as a veritable hunt in villages where the inhabitants had been displaced.

In May, the ICRC made an urgent appeal to the parties concerned and especially to Archbishop Makarios, President of the Republic of Cyprus. In this appeal it drew attention above all to the serious humanitarian problem raised by the repeated taking of hostages, as well as the reprisals inflicted on certain elements of the civilian population. It insisted on the necessity of intervening with those responsible in order to obtain a cessation of all acts contrary to the Geneva Conventions and in particular to their article 3.

Archbishop Makarios replied that the Government of the Republic entirely disapproved both of the taking of hostages and of reprisals. He assured the ICRC that he would take all the requisite measures to prevent the occurrence of such incidents.

The government's positive attitude enabled further releases and visits to detainees to be made.

This activity resulted in the release of 124 persons, namely 100 Turkish and 24 Greek Cypriots, not counting numerous visits made to prisons and places of arrest. Furthermore, the ICRC succeeded in elucidating the fate of more than 300 Turkish Cypriots, reported missing by their families.

**Aid to displaced persons and the unemployed.**—At the same time, the ICRC gave its support to the local branch of the British Red Cross, in liaison with other voluntary organizations, on behalf of the homeless and displaced, chiefly of Turkish origin.

In fact, the longer the conflict was prolonged, the more serious became the problem of supply for the Turkish community. Approximately 25,000 persons had to leave their villages and the events had also given rise to 20,000 unemployed amongst the Turkish Cypriots, especially those who used to work in State industries or offices situated in Greek areas.

It was chiefly due to the relief sent by the Turkish Red Crescent that these 50,000 people were able to subsist. The ICRC supervised

the unloading of these cargoes to ensure that they contained no material likely to be of service for military purposes. The delegates then controlled their distribution. From June 10, the UNO mission in Cyprus also gave its support to this activity.

During the summer, however, the Greek Cypriot authorities imposed increasingly severe restrictions on these imports, fearing that they might strengthen the military potential of the Turkish community. The destitution of the refugees and unemployed was thereby considerably increased. The ICRC then appealed to the Red Cross world with a view to obtaining material support for its action.

In October, as the situation continued to be critical, the International Committee renewed its appeal to the National Societies. It pointed out that imports of relief in kind continued to come up against various difficulties and that under these circumstances "only cash contributions would enable certain, rapid and effective aid to be given to the victims of the events". In response to this appeal, the National Societies once more demonstrated their generosity and solidarity.

During the course of 1964, the ICRC thus distributed relief in Cyprus provided by contributions in cash and in kind made by twenty-one National Societies and several governments, representing a total value of about 320,000 Swiss francs. To this should be added 400 tents offered by the Governments of Great Britain and the United States for displaced persons. Their distribution was undertaken by the ICRC in co-operation with the U.N. Mission to Cyprus.

**Medical aid.**—During the summer, in response to an appeal by the representatives of the Turkish community, the ICRC decided to call upon two Swiss doctors, Dr. Paul Rüggli and Dr. Michel Jéquier, to strengthen its delegation.

In fact, the rigorous segregation between the two communities had resulted in isolating certain areas and depriving the inhabitants of all medical care. The two doctors then traversed different parts of the island and, whilst responding to various urgent appeals, examined with both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot authorities ways and means of remedying the situation. From the government

they obtained the following assurances : free circulation for Turkish doctors supplied with a protective Red Cross pass, unrestricted transport for the sick from one zone to another under the ICRC's guarantee, and the recognition of the legality of Turkish hospitals.

**Special cases.**—In general, the members of the delegation noted that the emblem of the ICRC was highly regarded and its neutrality respected by both sides. The Geneva representatives were therefore constantly asked to intervene to protect civilians who felt themselves to be threatened.

The delegates thus had to undertake a considerable amount of transporting, especially of prisoners' families. In fact, according to the regulations the detainees had the right to receive visits from their relatives ; but these did not dare to venture on territory occupied by the adverse party in which the prison was. Only one way remained to visit a detainee and that was to travel in an ICRC delegate's vehicle. Such visits occurred regularly. In addition, delegates transported a certain number of persons who for humanitarian reasons had to go to hospital, to the airfield or to the port. It never happened that passengers travelling in vehicles bearing the ICRC emblem were in any way molested.

After Mr. de Cocatrix's departure, the heads of the ICRC mission were successively Mr. Max Stalder, Mr. Pierre Boissier and Mr. Stalder once more.

## 2. AFRICA

### Algeria and Morocco

Following on the frontier dispute which had broken out in the autumn of 1963 between Morocco and Algeria, the ICRC had visited more than 300 Algerian military captured by Moroccan forces during the fighting<sup>1</sup>. At the beginning of 1964, a delegate, Mr. Jacques de Heller, visited some fifty Moroccan prisoners in the hands of the Algerian military authorities. The ICRC saw almost all the prisoners of war captured on both sides during the course of

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<sup>1</sup> See Annual Report 1963, p. 12.