

Indo-China

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Indo-China

The course of events in this part of Asia during 1974 led to some changes being made in the structure set up by the Red Cross in 1972. Mr. Stroh, who was Director of the Indo-China Operational Group (IOG), resumed his post as Secretary-General of the Swedish Red Cross as from 1 April 1974. His functions were taken over jointly by the Director of the League's Relief Operations Bureau and the Director of Operations at the ICRC. From that date, the IOG in Geneva has functioned as a bureau for co-ordinating Red Cross assistance operations.

In the field, taking into account the changing situation, the ICRC and League gradually resumed their own special fields of activity. In the Khmer Republic, International Red Cross Assistance (IRCA) continued its work as in the past.

The continuing assistance programmes have not been modified by this internal reorganization and redistribution of tasks.¹ Contacts have been maintained between the ICRC and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam.

With regard to fund-raising, the ICRC and League have continued their joint approaches to donors.

VIETNAM

Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

The ICRC maintained contact with both the Red Cross and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the ICRC delegate-general for Asia visited Hanoi twice in 1974.

In the DRVN, IOG continued its prefabricated housing project for the civilian victims of the bombings.²

Government of the Republic of Vietnam

Prisoners of war: The ICRC delegation in Saigon continued its work on behalf of captured persons granted prisoner-of-war status by the RVN.

¹ See table of relief supplies on p. 61 of this Report.

² See table of relief supplies on p. 60 of this Report.

These individuals were captured after the signature of the Paris Agreement of January 1973. About 700 prisoners were visited at Can Tho in April 1974, and over 1,000 in October 1974, by ICRC delegates.

Civilian detainees: The ICRC did not carry out any visits to this category of detainees in 1974, in conformity with the decision it took in 1972 to suspend such visits.

The ICRC would have been willing to resume its visits for the benefit of persons detained because of the events, but only on condition that its delegates were allowed to visit the places of detention freely and to talk with any of the detainees held in those places without witnesses.

Medico-social work: The ICRC's medico-social work was continued in 1974 on behalf of some 2,000 orphaned, handicapped and disabled children. The ICRC sent qualified medical personnel, supplied medicaments and assigned approximately 76,500 francs to this action.

The work of the IRCA was also pursued in the form of aid to the victims of the hostilities, in particular to displaced persons. Since the middle of 1974 the IRCA had no delegation of its own in the Republic of Vietnam. Within the limits of the resources available, assistance has nevertheless continued to be given to the programmes of the Red Cross of the Republic of Vietnam.¹

Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam

During 1974 the ICRC maintained contact with the PRG, thus demonstrating its desire to bring assistance to all the victims of the conflict wherever they might be and on a basis of equality.

IOG pursued the despatch in instalments of the equipment for a 250-bed hospital.¹

CAMBODIA

Khmer Republic

In the last quarter of 1974 a first visit was carried out by ICRC delegates to a number of prisoners granted prisoner-of-war status

¹ See table of relief supplies on p. 61 of this Report.

by the Khmer authorities. At the end of the year, talks were in progress for continuing and increasing the scope of these visits.

IRCA continued its action in the Khmer Republic on behalf of displaced persons and casualties.¹ Distributions of relief supplies were made in co-operation with the Khmer Red Cross. Medical and surgical teams attached to IRCA by several National Red Cross Societies² were active in hospitals at Phnom Penh and other towns.

Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia

Several messages were sent by the ICRC to the Mission in France of the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia (GRUNC), communicating the names of the delegates and medical personnel forming part of its teams and the places where they were working.

GRUNC had stated its willingness to receive aid from the ICRC. At the end of 1974, the manner in which that aid was to be provided had still to be determined in relation to the changing situation in the country.

Notwithstanding the problems connected with the forwarding of relief items, a small quantity of medical supplies (from IOG) was handed over to GRUNC in the field.

KINGDOM OF LAOS

The prisoners of war in the hands of the two parties active in the Kingdom of Laos were exchanged in September and October 1974. Previously, in July, the ICRC delegation had visited some 170 prisoners of war held at Vientiane and had provided them with relief items.

Acting on behalf of IRCA, the ICRC delegation also distributed, in co-operation with the Lao Red Cross, relief supplies to displaced persons.³ It was closely involved in that National Society's project to resettle displaced persons in the village of Ban Kok Van. Medico-

¹ See Table of Relief, on p. 61 of this report.

² Those of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

³ See Table of Relief, on p. 61 of this report.

surgical teams provided by National Red Cross Societies¹ continued their work in several provincial towns (dispensaries, malaria control campaign).

Early in 1974, before the Government of National Union took office, an ICRC delegate visited the President of the Lao Patriotic Front (LPF) at Sam Neua. Continuing contacts between the ICRC delegation and LPF representatives made it possible to send consignments of medicaments, medical equipment and instruments to the Lao Patriotic Front.²

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Following the incidents on the Paracel Islands, 48 seamen (five of whom were wounded) belonging to the Vietnamese Republic's Armed Forces were captured by a force of the People's Republic of China. With the ICRC acting as intermediary, these prisoners were repatriated in two operations, on 31 January and 18 February 1974, via Hong Kong.

Asian Sub-Continent

The year 1974 was marked by continued activity under the New Delhi Agreement of 28 August 1973³ concluded by the Governments of Pakistan and India (with the concurrence of and endorsed by the Government of Bangladesh). Those Governments had requested the assistance of the Swiss Confederation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the ICRC in operations for the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war and certain civilian populations. The three countries reached a further agreement in New Delhi on 8 April 1974 on points which had been left in suspense on 28 August 1973.

Following the December 1971 war, the ICRC maintained delegations at Islamabad, New Delhi and Dacca for its activities on behalf of Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees in India, and of civilian minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

¹ From the following countries: Japan, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

² See Table of Relief, on p. 61 of this report.

³ See Annual Report 1973, page 19.