

Korea

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INDONESIA

ICRC activities in Indonesia and the Southern Moluccas in particular ¹ continued during the first months of 1951. The relief supplies sent from Geneva by air for civilian victims of the blockade and hostilities in the island of Amboina continued to be distributed under the supervision of the ICRC delegates.

Dr. Pffimlin, delegate of the ICRC, visited on several occasions the Amboinese prisoners captured by the Indonesian troops; and in June he made a stay of several weeks in the Southern Moluccas to enquire into the situation of the civilian population.

KOREA

Early in 1951 the President of the International Committee offered to make a personal visit to North Korea to discuss the various problems relative to prisoners of war and other victims of hostilities, and especially the question of safety zones, in regard to which approaches had been made on several previous occasions. This offer was renewed on January 24 and March 19. No reply was received.

The renewal of the armistice talks in Korea, which had been suspended for several weeks, raised the prospect of the repatriation of prisoners of war. On December 15, 1951 the ICRC made an approach (with a reference to previous requests) to the Commander in Chief of the Republic of Korea forces and to General Nam II, Chief of the North Korean Armistice Commission, suggesting that delegates should be sent out at once to deal with the exchange of prisoners. At the same time the ICRC requested the Chinese and Soviet Governments to grant transit visas to its delegates. No reply reached the ICRC.

On December 19 the Head of the ICRC delegation solicited an interview with General Nam II.

On several occasions, but always without success, the ICRC

¹ See ICRC Report for 1950, pages 80 to 87.

appealed for the support and comprehension of the North Korean Red Cross.

With regard to relief, in which field the ICRC also endeavoured to give its impartial assistance on both sides, it received no response to the various proposals it put forward relative both to prisoners of war and other victims of the conflict. Mention may here be made of a consignment of medicaments made up in Hong Kong in March 1951, which could not be forwarded. The ICRC requested in particular the Chinese Red Cross to take over the distribution of these supplies; but this Society did not see its way to comply with the request.

On the other hand the Hungarian Red Cross had given a favourable response to the Committee's offer to place in its hands a stock of medicaments, and there was every reason to hope for the safe arrival of this consignment, when the Hungarian Red Cross advised the ICRC that it had been sent back to Budapest. The supplies were eventually returned to Geneva.

As recorded in the previous Annual Report, the ICRC had been able from the outbreak of the conflict to set up a delegation in South Korea. Its activity in behalf of prisoners of war rapidly developed; but difficulties arose in regard to other humanitarian problems. On several occasions the ICRC approached the United Nations General Secretariat, or the Commander in Chief of the United Nations forces, to ask for more freedom of action, especially in connection with the First, Second and Third Geneva Conventions. These approaches did not however meet with the result hoped for, and the delegates had to devote their efforts almost entirely to assisting prisoners of war.

They were able nevertheless to a certain extent to look after civilians detained in South Korean prisons.

With regard to relief, from the outbreak of hostilities it was apparent that the need was great. Having been informed of the position by the delegation, the ICRC was able in turn to convey the information to National Red Cross Societies. Some of the Societies provided the ICRC with relief consignments for Korea. Within a short time however the United Nations reserved the exclusive right to engage in relief action in Korea. In view of this attitude the ICRC endeavoured to obtain the right for relief

supplies entrusted to its care to be distributed under its supervision and according to its usual methods. Not having been successful in its efforts the ICRC had to dispense with all relief action for victims other than prisoners of war.

In the distribution of relief as required to prisoners of war the ICRC encountered no difficulties.

In conclusion it may be said that on July 3 and August 6, 1951, the ICRC again called the attention of the Commanders in Chief of the forces in conflict in Korea to its desire to be allowed to accomplish, on both sides, its traditional humanitarian task in behalf of the victims of the conflict. These two appeals referred more particularly to the armistice talks which had just started.

The various communications of the ICRC to the authorities concerning the Korean conflict, as well as the replies it has received, will form the subject of a Summary which it intends to publish in the near future.
