

Clarification by the ICRC

The work of the ICRC in Nazi concentration camps. — The ICRC has been approached from different quarters following recent publications which purported to reveal the total number of deaths which occurred in Nazi concentration camps and stated systematically that the figures were based on statistics attributed to the ICRC.

The ICRC states categorically that it has never published information of this kind. Its chief purpose is to help the victims of armed conflicts, not to play the role of a commission of inquiry or a statistical office.

The ICRC made many attempts to help people interned in Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War. Regrettably, such people were not protected by international law at that time, and ICRC delegates were able to go into only a few concentration camps and then not until the last days of the war. Their efforts are described in a report published under the title "The Work of the ICRC for Civilian Detainees in German Concentration Camps from 1939 to 1945". This report is available in French, German and English. Only the information contained in it may be attributed to the ICRC.

Forged ICRC documents in Thailand. — Forged travel papers purporting to be issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross have been circulating for some time in Thailand, where they are sold to refugees from Indo-China trying to emigrate to Europe.

These documents bear ICRC stamps and the forged signature of the ICRC representative in Bangkok. They also have false visas for France.

Two groups of refugees have fallen victim to the forgers, and were stranded in Cairo and Orly airports, waiting for a country to be found that will give them a home. Some of these people have paid up to 700 dollars to obtain the false travel papers.

The ICRC condemns this trade, and points out once more that it is not part of Red Cross responsibilities to transfer refugees from one country to another. In certain situations, however, when a country has

been found to receive them, the ICRC may give refugees help in moving from the country of refuge to the country where they will finally settle by supplying travel documents. These are not transport tickets, but identity documents, valid solely for the duration of the journey. They are, of course, provided free of charge.

Accession to the Geneva Conventions

In a declaration dated 25 August 1975 which reached the Swiss Government on 15 October 1975, the Government of the State of Qatar informed the Swiss Federal Council of its accession to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. This accession takes effect on 15 April 1976 and brings the number of States parties to the Conventions to 140.

A new publication

Under the title *ICRC Bulletin*, the International Committee of the Red Cross is putting out, as from February of this year, a publication which will come out on the first Monday of each month. It is to take the place of *ICRC in Action*, the last number of which was issued in January, with the difference, however, that its contents will not be restricted to an account of the ICRC's humanitarian activities nor will they be of an official nature.

The *ICRC Bulletin* is mainly directed to the Red Cross world and the mass media, and its primary aim is to keep the door open for extensive exchanges of views. It is edited in four languages—English, French, German and Spanish—by the services of the ICRC Press and Information Division.

The contents include articles on Red Cross action in Angola, Lebanon, the Western Sahara, Indochina and Chile and on the objectives of the second session of the Conference of Government Experts on weapons.