

CHINESE RED CROSS ACTIVITIES

— Services To Captured Indian Soldiers —



The Red Cross Society of China

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Red Cross Services
to
Captured Indian Soldiers

During India's massive attack on the Tibet and Sinkiang regions of China all along the Sino-Indian border in 1962, many of its officers and men were captured by the Chinese frontier guards. The Red Cross Society of China was immediately called upon to render various services to the captured Indian military personnel and was entrusted by the Chinese frontier guards with the task of assisting in their release and repatriation.

**The Release and Repatriation of
Sick and Wounded Captured Indian Soldiers Came First**

716 sick and wounded captured Indian soldiers were released and repatriated immediately after the Chinese frontier guards had ceased fire and withdrawn on their own initiative in December 1962. At the request of the Chinese frontier guards in Tibet, China, the Chinese Red Cross sent four teams, headed by Wei Kuang-chung, Wang Lei, Wei Chao-ting and Cheng Yin-shan respectively, to Bomdila, Mechukha, Dirang Dzong, Walong and Jang village in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border to hand over seven groups of sick and wounded captured Indian soldiers to the representatives of the Indian Red Cross. In a spirit of humanitarianism and friendship with the In-

dian people, Chinese Red Cross doctors, nurses and other members did a good job in serving these sick and wounded captured Indians. Chinese soldiers, doctors and nurses rescued many sick and wounded Indian soldiers from the battlefields, from the snow-bound mountains, forests and ravines. A wounded Indian soldier, named Nandkishore Singh, was found lying among several corpses, with a very weak pulse. A Chinese doctor gave him first aid on the spot, and he was then carried to a medical post, where after careful treatment he got a fresh lease of life. Second Lieutenant Onkar Nath Duby was wounded in a battle. Some Chinese frontier guards quickly removed him from the field of action to a place of safety, where he was immediately operated upon. Four bullets were extracted from his chest, and his life was saved. Thanks to the efforts made by Chinese doctors, some 20 critically sick and wounded Indians were brought out of danger. Warm padded coats were given to those who suffered from frost-bite. 90% of the sick and wounded Indians took a turn for the better owing to the timely medical treatment given and good care taken by the Chinese medical staff. Before leaving for home, these men presented garlands to Chinese doctors and Chinese Red Cross personnel to express their gratitude. Many shed tears at departure while thanking the Chinese people for saving their lives.

Sending Lists of Captured Indian Military Personnel

To strengthen the friendship between the peoples of China and India and to remove the worries and anxieties of the families of the captured Indian soldiers, the Chinese Red Cross sent to the Indian Red Cross in batches lists of names of all the captured Indian military personnel be-

tween December 16, 1962 and February 10, 1963, with their health conditions indicated. A list of captured Indian soldiers who had died was also sent to the Indian Red Cross.

Delivery of Parcels and Mails

The Chinese Red Cross helped the captured Indian soldiers keep correspondence with their relatives. During their custody, the Indian military personnel sent out mails free of charge to their relatives in India and seven other countries including Nepal and Pakistan. The facilities were provided them by the Chinese Red Cross and the authorities of the custody centers for captured Indian soldiers. They sent out 12,513 letters and 151 cables and received 5,750 letters and 51 cables from their relatives. These men were beside themselves with joy whenever they got a letter or cable. They jumped, hugged each other and kissed the letter. Some of them said, "You Chinese people not only treat us captured personnel well, but also think of our families."

At the request of the Indian Red Cross, the Chinese Red Cross distributed 3,995 Indian Red Cross parcels to the captured Indian military personnel. Because of poor road conditions, tremendous difficulties had to be overcome with the help of the Chinese authorities concerned.

Visiting Custody Centers for Captured Indian Military Personnel

When the Chinese Red Cross teams visited the custody centers for captured Indian military personnel in Tibet and Sinkiang, they went round to the living quarters, kitchens

and clinics of the captured Indians and were warmly welcomed by them. Chinese Red Cross representatives found that their living quarters were bright and tidy, and there were grounds for outdoor games such as basket-ball and volley-ball. The Chinese Red Cross representatives learned that in spite of the difficult conditions in the border area, captured Indian soldiers still got meat, egg powder, sugar, vegetables, sweet tea, fried cakes, fried potatoes, etc. The captured Indian soldiers who cooked said, "We have a great variety of food and we cook in our traditional Indian way. We all like it very much."

Chinese Red Cross representatives inquired about the religious activities of these Indians and were told that they were free to engage in religious activities and arranged their own time for prayers. On the occasion of major religious festivals, the custody center authorities provided them with lamp oil, candles, etc for holding religious ceremonies and celebrating the festivals, at their request. From October 28, 1962 till the end of March 1963, the captured Indian soldiers celebrated six important religious or national traditional festivals at the custody centers.

There was a clinic for each custody center. At a center in Tibet, where 1,732 captured Indian soldiers were in custody, there were 37 medical workers including 15 doctors. An Indian army surgeon from Punjab was helping the Chinese doctors at the clinic. He told one of the Chinese Red Cross representatives, "The medical conditions here are excellent. There is an adequate protection of the health of us captured personnel."

Chinese Red Cross representatives learned that the captured Indian soldiers often carried on recreation activities at the custody centers. They had ball games and played chess and cards, read books and newspapers and saw movies to pass their time.

Many captured Indians told the Chinese Red Cross representatives that the custody centers were filled with a humanitarian spirit and fraternal feelings. The captured Indians handed many letters to the representatives and asked them to convey their sincere thanks to the Chinese people. One of the letters says, "We shall always remember the days we've spent here until our hearts stop beating." Another letter says, "No words can express our gratitude. God bless you Chinese people, and may you prosper."

The Release and Repatriation of Captured Indian Officers of Field Grade and Above

In order to satisfy the desire of some of the captured Indian officers of field grade and above to visit other parts of China and also in consideration of the transportation facilities and weather conditions in Tibet and Sinkiang regions, the Chinese authorities concerned decided to release and repatriate them via Kunming so that better care for their health and prompt reunion with their families in India could be realized. The Chinese Red Cross was at the same time entrusted with making arrangements for their visit to some cities on the way, before they were sent home.

27 Indian officers of field grade and above left their custody centers at the end of March. They arrived in Kunming after having toured Shanghai, Peking and other places. Mr. Liu Peng-fei and Mr. Yi Cheng-hsin of the Chinese Red Cross handed these captured Indian officers over to Dr. H.S. Ahluwalia, representative of the Indian Red Cross, on May 4 at Kunming.

These Indian officers thanked the Chinese for their kind treatment and concern. They had learned from their

own experience that the Chinese people harboured no hostility towards India, and they were deeply impressed by it.

Completing the Release and Repatriation of All Captured Indian Soldiers

From April 10 to May 25, the teams sent out by this Society assisted the Chinese frontier guards in the release and repatriation of the captured Indian soldiers in batches at Batitung, Bang Pass, the Spanggur Lake and a place on the western bank of the Hsilu Chu River.

The Chinese Red Cross set up reception posts along the roads which the captured Indian soldiers were passing, with provision of food and lodging so as to make their journey as comfortable as possible and to ensure their safe arrival at the places for the hand-over. The Chinese staff worked day and night to clear away the snow and repair the muddy roads so that the trucks carrying the captured Indian military personnel might pass through without hindrance. The medical staff of the Chinese Red Cross and the custody centers in particular did their utmost to take care of the men on their way to the places for the hand-over. They rode in the trucks with the sick and wounded in order to look after them. When the road was not motorable, the Chinese medical workers picked up their medical kits and helped the sick and wounded Indians to walk onward. When some captured Indian soldiers found it hard to walk because of their inadaptability to the climate in the high mountains, Chinese medical workers carried these Indians on their backs to continue the journey. A captured Indian officer said, "It's a lofty act of humanitarianism for a Chinese doctor to carry a sick captured Indian on his back and walk for quite a distance."

During the repatriation, the Chinese Red Cross representatives saw many moving scenes of captured Indian soldiers warmly embracing the Chinese personnel at departure with tears in their eyes, muttering "Hindi Chini Bhai-Bhai" (The Indian and Chinese peoples are brothers). These moving scenes were proofs of Sino-Indian friendship. Just as some captured Indians aptly put it, "China releases its captured personnel before negotiations are held between China and India. This again shows the Chinese Government's sincere desire for peace. It sets a good example in history."

From Dec. 5, 1962 to May 25, 1963, the teams sent out by the Chinese Red Cross successfully helped the Chinese frontier guards in the release and repatriation of all the 3,942 captured Indian soldiers and in handing over to the Indian Red Cross the corpses or ashes of 26 captured Indian soldiers who had died.