

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Asian Sub-Continent

Tracing bureau

Since the ICRC started its action in the Asian sub-continent, the various tracing bureaux have transmitted more than 12,650,000 messages between Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

In July, Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees in India exchanged a total of 887,400 letters with relatives in Pakistan. Further, almost 100,000 family messages between civilians in Pakistan and Bangladesh went through India.

Repatriation operations

On 20 July 1973, the repatriation of 200 Pakistani civilian internees (mostly women and children) took place under the auspices of Swiss diplomatic representatives, in the presence of ICRC delegates. The operation was carried out at the Indo-Pakistani frontier post of Wagah. The ICRC delegates also repatriated a Pakistani prisoner of war and a Pakistani civilian internee whom the Indian authorities had released for compassionate reasons. In the opposite direction, the ICRC arranged for the transfer of four Bengali members of the Pakistani army and their wives, plus three Bengali civilians and twenty-two children, who were subsequently to be taken to Bangladesh.

During this operation, ICRC delegates in Pakistan transmitted to delegates in India 47,280 parcels for Pakistani prisoners of war in that country.

On 22 August, a further repatriation operation was carried out under the auspices of the ICRC at Wagah. Forty-four Bengali servicemen with members of their families and four Bengali civilians crossed from Pakistan into India and will eventually go to Bangladesh, while, in the opposite direction, two Pakistanis, one of them a civilian internee and the other a prisoner of war, returned to Pakistan.

The ICRC delegates in Pakistan took this opportunity to hand over to their colleagues in India 20,400 parcels to be distributed to Pakistani prisoners of war in India.

Bangladesh

Relief for prisoners of war.—During the first half of 1973, the ICRC distributed relief supplies worth 6,000 Swiss francs to the seventy-five Pakistani prisoners of war held in the Dacca central prison.

This relief consisted mainly of blankets, food (tea, sugar and powdered milk), cigarettes and newspapers. In addition, the prisoners regularly received individual parcels containing toilet items, clothing and food supplies. The ICRC delegation provided the prison with medicaments for the prisoners.

Visits to Pakistani internees.—At the end of July, ICRC delegates visited Dogra and Kilo Camps, where they saw 1,907 and 464 Pakistani civilians, respectively.

Non-local communities.—The ICRC delegates continued their regular visits to non-local communities in Bangladesh during July and August, to supervise the smooth distribution of relief provided by the Pakistan Government and Red Cross, and the security, employment and health conditions.

During its nineteen months of activity following the December 1971 conflict, the ICRC has established and administered in the communities twenty-four dispensaries, equipped with clinics, maternity wards, and vaccination and anti-scabies centres. The ICRC has now turned the dispensaries over to the Bangladesh Red Cross, which will itself supervise medical activities in non-local camps.

India

Visits to prisoners of war.—In July, ICRC delegates in India continued their visits to Pakistani prisoners of war. They went to twenty-two camps in the Ganges basin and saw altogether some 40,500 prisoners of war with whom they were, as usual, able to talk without witnesses.

In eight camps, the ICRC distributed relief supplies—mainly food, spectacles, books, writing paper, musical instruments and sports equipment—worth 4,200 Swiss francs.

Relief for civilian internees.—During the month of July 1973, ICRC delegates in India carried out relief distributions in camps holding Pakistani civilian internees.

This aid was essentially in the form of a fresh fruit daily for 4,000 children (at a monthly cost of 7,800 Swiss francs) and sums of money from Pakistan for adults. In July, more than 60,000 Swiss francs were remitted to nearly 8,000 persons.

Pakistan

Visits to Bengalis.—ICRC delegates in Pakistan have in the past few weeks made several rounds of visits to the various categories of Bengalis detained in that country. They visited the “repatriation centres” at Kharian, Mandi Bahauddin, Lyallpur, Karsaz, Malir, Drigh Road and Masroor, where they saw about 15,000 civilians and more than 1,300 members of the Pakistan army, all of Bengali origin. In August, the delegates went to the Haripur, Abottabad, Peshawar, Hyderabad and Mirpur Khas prisons, where they visited about a hundred Bengalis. Two “expatriation centres” were also visited in August—the Warsak centre and the North Karachi Labourers’ Housing Society centre, where some 400 former Bengali officials are living with their families.

Brunei

The ICRC regional delegate for Asia visited the Sultanate of Brunei for the first time in August. In contacts with leaders of the local Red Cross (a branch of the British Red Cross) and with

the British High Commissioner, he explained the role and activities of the ICRC.

Indonesia

The ICRC regional delegate for Asia was in Indonesia from 23 to 28 July. In Djarkarta and subsequently at Bogor and Bandung, he had a number of talks with leading members of the National Society and its regional committees.

In Djakarta, the ICRC regional delegate met representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Laos

On 3 July, the ICRC delegate in Laos visited 22 and 179 prisoners of war in Chinaimo and Samkhé prisons respectively, at Vientiane, as well as 10 civilians. The ICRC delegate was not authorized to speak with prisoners in private, in contrast with his previous visits.

Malaysia

The ICRC regional delegate for Asia visited in August 1973 various regions of Malaysia. First, on the Malaysian mainland, he had talks with Red Cross and government authorities, after which he visited the Jerjak, Batu Gajah and Taiping "moral rehabilitation centres", where he saw altogether about 400 detainees.

From 10 to 12 August, the delegate was made welcome by the authorities and the local Red Cross of Sarawak. He visited a number of Red Cross installations and also the Kuching preventive detention centre with its 865 detainees.

The regional delegate concluded his trip with a stay in Sabah; here too he met members of the local section of the Malaysian Red Cross.

Republic of Vietnam

Since the beginning of this year, the ICRC delegation in the Republic of Vietnam has extended the medico-social activities

which its doctor-delegates have been carrying out in a number of Saigon orphanages for several years. Their efforts have been brought to bear on three main sectors: an improvement has been brought about in preventive measures, by vaccination campaigns mainly against poliomyelitis, diphtheria and tuberculosis, the regular dispensing of vitamins, systematic disinfestation and higher standards of hygiene; provision has been made for the psychological development of children by measures intended to ameliorate their surroundings (walls painted in gay colours, new beds, decorations, purchase of toys, broadcast of Vietnamese music, etc.); improvements have been made in the quality and quantity of orphanage personnel.

Middle East

Visits to prisoners of war

ICRC delegates in the Arab Republic of Egypt and Israel continued their visits to prisoners of war and, as customary, talked with them in private.

In Israel, the 56 Egyptian prisoners of war were visited on 2 and 15 August; in the *Arab Republic of Egypt*, the ICRC delegate saw the ten Israeli prisoners of war on 3 and 13 August.

Family reuniting

A family reuniting operation across the Suez Canal under ICRC auspices, on 9 August, enabled 173 persons to join their relatives in the Arab Republic of Egypt and 116 to go to the occupied territories of Gaza and the Sinai.

Student travel

As mentioned in an earlier issue, the ICRC, this year as in previous years, organized travel facilities for Arab university students returning to Gaza for their holidays. From the University of Cairo, 2,524 students crossed the Suez Canal under ICRC auspices between 16 July and 8 August 1973, while at Ahmadiye, on the Golan cease-fire line, the ICRC organized the passage, on 22 August, of

138 students returning to Damascus University after a few weeks holidays in Gaza, together with one new student.

Repatriation

On 10 August, the ICRC delegates in Israel arranged the repatriation through the frontier post of Roshanikra of three Lebanese shepherds who had been captured four days previously.

Colombia

One of the ICRC regional delegates for Latin America went to the penitentiary settlement on the island of Gorgona and to the Ibagué prison. He saw more than 1,700 detainees in the two institutions. The ICRC regional delegate also obtained permission to visit the Tolemaida prison, run by the military authorities, where he saw almost ninety detainees.

Everywhere the delegate was able to talk with detainees of his choice without any witnesses. Relief supplies were distributed in two prisons.

Mexico

The ICRC regional delegate for Central America has been in Mexico for the last few weeks. He met the heads of the Departments of Defence and Education, with whom he discussed ICRC activities and the dissemination of Red Cross principles among the armed forces and youth. For the latter, 10,000 copies of the school textbook "The Red Cross and My Country" are to be printed locally for distribution in Mexican schools.

The delegate was also received by Red Cross leaders, and visited the Monterrey, Chilpancingo and Acapulco branches and the place of detention in each of those towns.

Guatemala

The ICRC regional delegate for Central America and the Caribbean was in Guatemala from 19 July to 6 August. He was welcomed by leaders of the National Red Cross Society and visited its premises and establishments. The ICRC delegate conversed with the

Ministers of the Interior, Health and Defence and with the Vice-Ministers for Education and Telecommunications. He also met the Director of the Polytechnical College, who showed keen interest in the dissemination of international humanitarian law and expressed himself in favour of the introduction of a course on the Geneva Conventions in the curriculum.

The regional delegate visited six places of detention in Guatemala, Salama, Escuintla and Frejanas. Altogether, he saw more than 2,800 detainees, some of whom were being held for offences or reasons of a political nature, and distributed medicaments in three prisons.

Nicaragua

The ICRC regional delegate had talks in Managua with the Vice-Minister for Defence and with National Red Cross leaders. He also visited seven places of detention, containing about 650 detainees.

Gabon

The ICRC regional delegate for West and Central Africa was in Gabon from 3 to 11 August. At Libreville, he met the Acting President of the Gabonese Republic, the Minister of State for Internal Affairs, the Ministers of Health and Social Affairs and several other members of the Government. The ICRC delegate had talks with the Minister of Education about the school textbook, "The Red Cross and My Country", copies of which will soon be distributed to schools in Libreville, Franceville and Port Gentil.

Zaire

The ICRC regional delegate for West and Central Africa, on 3 August, visited two Portuguese servicemen held prisoner by the GRAE (Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile) in Zaire. The delegate spoke in private with the prisoners, who gave him letters to be forwarded to their families.