

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Africa***Delegate general's mission*

After taking part in recent visits to places of detention in South Africa and Rhodesia,¹ Mr. F. Schmidt, ICRC delegate general for Africa, visited Tanzania, Benin, Togo and Angola in May and June.

In *Tanzania*, where he was accompanied by Mr. Bédert, regional delegate for East Africa, Mr. Schmidt was received by the President of the National Red Cross, Mr. Sarakikya, and its Vice-President, Mr. Rupia. He also had talks with the Tanzanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, a high official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Executive Secretary of the Liberation Committee of the OAU and with various representatives in Dar-es-Salaam of liberation movements in southern Africa. These talks dealt with ICRC activities in Africa and humanitarian problems resulting from conflicts in southern Africa.

In his visits to Benin and Togo, the delegate general was accompanied by Mr. D. Dufour and Mr. M. Schroeder, regional delegates for West Africa.

In *Benin*, Mr. Schmidt was received by the Head of State, Lieutenant Colonel Mathieu Kérékou, in the presence of Mme Ahouanmenou, President of the Red Cross of Benin. He also met the Minister of Health and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, with their principal aides. These talks dealt in particular with the organization in Benin of a national seminar for army and police officials and Red Cross leaders, on the diffusion of international humanitarian law and Red Cross principles.

In *Togo*, the delegate general had talks with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior on ICRC activities in Africa. He visited the headquarters of the Togolese Red Cross Society, in Lomé, where he was welcomed by the President, Mme Adjoa Miredor, and also a National Red Cross first aid centre at Atti-Atovou. Mr. Schmidt took the opportu-

¹ See the two preceding issues of *International Review*.

nity of his visit to express the thanks of the ICRC to the authorities and to the Togolese Red Cross for the facilities granted to its regional delegation for West Africa, whose headquarters are in Lomé.

In *Angola*, the delegate general had discussions with authorities, in particular the Minister of Health and the Director General of the Ministry of Information, on pending problems concerning prisoners. He also discussed with them the procedures for termination of the ICRC's assistance action and studied the question of continuing certain ICRC activities, jointly with the Angolan Red Cross Society now being organized, especially those of the Central Tracing Agency.

Latin America

Colombia

From 7 to 23 June, Mr. E. Leemann and Mr. L. Isler carried out a mission in Colombia. The mission had two objectives: to visit places of detention in Bogota and in two northern provinces and to present to the Colombian authorities Mr. Isler, who is replacing Mr. Leemann as regional delegate for the Andean countries. The ICRC delegates met the leaders of the National Society, in particular its President, Professor Dr. Jorge E. Cavalier, the Vice-Minister of Justice, the Director General and the Technical Director of the Prisons Service—the latter in connection with ICRC activities in places of detention and the programme of assistance to detainees. They also met several representatives of the armed forces and the Defence Ministry, in connection with the diffusion of the Geneva Conventions among the armed forces, and professors at the University of Santo Tomas, to discuss the teaching of international humanitarian law.

During their talks at the Ministry of Justice, the delegates obtained renewed permission to visit the places of detention which are under the authority of the ministry. They visited two such places in Bogota, the "Carcel nacional modelo" and "La Picota", after which they visited prisons in Bucaramanga, San Gil, Socorro, Barrancabermeja and Tunja, with a total of about 8,450 detainees, of whom some 60 were held for reasons or offences of a political nature.

Chile

In June, the ICRC delegation in Santiago visited 22 places of detention with a total of 720 detainees. They distributed to them relief supplies

worth \$5,600. In addition, they provided 22 parcels of medicaments, weighing a total of 460 kg.

The ICRC continued its assistance to the families of detainees, providing them with foodstuffs, clothing, medicaments, blankets and toilet articles valued at \$20,000. Recipients were 1,300 families in the provinces and 483 in Santiago.

Uruguay

With reference to the information published in our June number, the International Committee issued on 16 July the following press release:

“Several Uruguayan news media in June mentioned the visits which two ICRC delegates made in April to several places of detention in Uruguay. They attributed to the ICRC statements which it has never made, such as “the prisons in Uruguay are models”.

The ICRC wishes it to be clearly understood that its delegates were permitted to visit four places of detention and a hospital under military control during their mission in Uruguay. Moreover, contrary to established practice, the delegates were not allowed to interview detainees of their choice without witnesses. This departure from the normal standard was a concession which the ICRC made, with a view to facilitating the resumption of its visits to places of detention in Uruguay, after their interruption in 1974.

In view of the restriction on the number of places visited and the conditions under which the visits were carried out, the ICRC was unable to make an objective and complete assessment of conditions in places of detention in Uruguay; a fact which the ICRC drew to the attention of the authorities.

The ICRC adds that it never issues any comment on the material or psychological conditions observed by its delegates during visits to places of detention.”

Middle East

Lebanon

Intensification of ICRC action

In recent weeks, the fighting in Lebanon became even more extensive and intensive. The ICRC received urgent appeals from the parties to the conflict, calling for aid to the wounded and sick, to civilian populations

directly affected by the events, and to prisoners. To respond to these appeals, the ICRC had to take new measures, reinforcing its organization and setting up an airlift between Larnaca, in Cyprus, and the Beirut airport.

Airlift between Larnaca and Beirut

In our last issue, we reported the chartering by the ICRC on 21 June of a DC-8 and a DC-6 which took off for Larnaca with 42 tons of relief for the victims in Lebanon. This shipment included medicaments, of which 11.7 tons were donated by the Emirate of Qatar, medical equipment and powdered milk. Some of this was sent from Larnaca by sea to Jounieh and the rest by the DC-6, which made four trips between Larnaca and Beirut. The fourth flight carried 8.5 tons of relief material collected by mayors in territories occupied by Israel.

By the end of June, the ICRC had distributed in Lebanon about 313 tons of relief, worth 4.4 million Swiss francs.

After the closing of Beirut airport to civilian traffic, the ICRC obtained special landing rights and resumed its flights between Larnaca and Beirut at the beginning of July. On 6 July, the DC-6 left Switzerland with 10 tons of relief, including 5 tons of medicaments and 5 tons of powdered milk. Between 7 and 12 July, this plane, which will remain at the disposal of the ICRC, made seven trips to Beirut, carrying 74 tons of relief, consisting of medical material and foodstuffs from the ICRC, various governments and National Societies, the UNHCR and other international organizations. On 6 July, it also landed at Tel Aviv where it took on 11 tons of powdered milk donated by the populations of territories occupied by Israel.

During the same period, three shipments of medical material—much of it donated by the Federal Republic of Germany—went by sea from Limassol to Jounieh. On 9 and 12 July, two airplanes chartered by the ICRC in Switzerland carried 53 tons of relief to Cyprus.

As of mid-July, the ICRC had a stock in Cyprus of 340 tons of foodstuffs, provided by the UNHCR, and some 15 tons of medicaments, purchased by the ICRC. In addition, in co-operation with National Societies, the ICRC was preparing to make further shipments to Cyprus and Lebanon.

Medical activities

Dr. Spirgi, sent to Lebanon by the ICRC, made an assessment of medical needs at Beirut from 15 June to 8 July. In addition to his study

of the needs, Dr. Spirgi arranged with medical authorities in each zone of Beirut a "pooling" system among hospitals for medicaments, medical material and beds.

The ICRC field hospital, integrated into the hospital system of western Beirut, continued to work at full capacity. In terms of the frequency of operations, it corresponded to the functioning of a 150-bed surgical service. Statistics for the week of 3 to 9 July listed 678 patients treated, 309 hospital nights and 101 surgical operations.

Following Dr. Spirgi's return, a meeting was held at the ICRC with representatives of the Nordic National Societies. This was attended by Dr. Stang, of Norway, who had been in charge of the field hospital for the past two months and who was concluding his mission. It was agreed at this meeting that the Nordic Societies would continue to supply the necessary medical personnel for the hospital and, if necessary, would defray the expenses entailed.

Effort to evacuate the wounded at Beirut

At the request of the parties concerned, the ICRC had arranged, for 5 July, an operation involving 83 persons, including 33 Lebanese Red Cross first aid workers. Their mission was to attempt to evacuate the wounded from the Tel al-Zaatar camp in Beirut. The convoy, consisting of 26 vehicles, was unfortunately compelled to return without being able to reach the camp—due to failure to respect the truce which had been arranged, despite the assurance of a cease-fire given by all parties.

Central Tracing Agency

During June, in response to appeals from families, the Beirut delegation undertook 1,570 inquiries. It was able to supply 675 replies, while the other 895 cases remained pending, mostly because of the many breaks in telephone lines.

The Central Tracing Agency in Geneva made 234 inquiries and obtained 57 replies. It also transmitted 112 family messages.

Prisoners

After visits on 14 and 16 June to five prisoners belonging to the Syrian army and to 41 members of the Saiqa, held by the Arab Army of Lebanon, the delegates gained access to 45 Syrian prisoners in the

hands of the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine (OLP). The ICRC was informed that these prisoners were subsequently liberated.

The ICRC continued its interventions with other parties in an effort to visit prisoners in their hands.

Personnel

As of mid-July, the ICRC personnel engaged in the action in Lebanon consisted of the following: Beirut, 19 persons, including eleven medical personnel in the field hospital; Jounieh, 6 persons; Tripoli, 4 persons including a doctor and a nurse; Larnaca, 3 persons.
