

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***Africa****Madagascar and the Comoros**

In its March 1977 issue, *International Review* described the emergency relief action carried out by the ICRC in Madagascar and the Comoros to help Comorian citizens who had been resident in Madagascar and who wished to get back or had just gone back to their homeland. At the end of January, ICRC aid in Madagascar was no longer needed, but in the Comoros, the medical delegate and nurse dispatched by the ICRC continued providing assistance during the whole of February.

Their task was not an easy one, as the repatriates were accommodated on arrival in many different homes on three of the islands—Grande Comore, Anjouan and Moheli—before being reunited with relatives. The ICRC medical delegate had first to supervise, with a Comorian doctor, the medical and other arrangements for receiving the repatriates, in particular as regards vaccination, and then to carry out in the various medical establishments on each of the three islands a full survey of the medical and health conditions. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate needs and make plans for future action. The ICRC also provided some supplementary foodstuffs (whole milk powder, enriched milk for babies, and various foods rich in proteins and polyvitamins).

On 1 March the operations were taken over by the League of Red Cross Societies, which had sent a delegate to the Comoros the previous month, and the ICRC doctor and nurse left on 2 March.

The ICRC's mission to the Comoros was an opportunity for making the Red Cross better known and for convincing both the Government and the public of the need for a Red Cross Society in the archipelago (though it should be noted that a Red Cross branch which existed in Anjouan before independence is still active). League and ICRC representatives will seek to promote the formation of a National Red Cross

Society in the Comoros and will propose to the Government that it accede to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

On 3 March, Mr. Yves Le Bret, plenipotentiary and roving ambassador of the Comoros for Western Europe, visited ICRC headquarters in Geneva and thanked the ICRC for its work, which he said had been highly appreciated.

## **Southern Africa**

### **Delegate General's Mission**

From 25 March to 26 April, Mr. F. Schmidt, ICRC delegate general for Africa, carried out a mission in Africa, including Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

In South Africa, Mr. Schmidt took part in a further series of visits to sentenced political detainees, starting on 29 March and carried out by three delegates and one medical delegate. They saw 373 prisoners in four places of detention.

In Salisbury, Mr. Schmidt was to meet the Minister for Justice to discuss ICRC visits to political detainees and to request authorization to visit all persons detained because of the conflict (at present only persons detained under the Emergency Regulations are visited by the ICRC).

### **Opening of a Permanent Delegation in South Africa**

In view of developments in southern Africa, the ICRC, at the end of 1976, proposed to the authorities of the Republic of South Africa that a permanent delegation of the ICRC be set up in Pretoria.

The South African Government having notified its agreement in mid-March, the ICRC immediately made the necessary arrangements for the opening of its delegation. It will be led by Mr. N. de Rougemont, who was until now stationed in Salisbury (Rhodesia) as regional delegate for southern Africa. He will be assisted by Mr. D. Dufour, formerly regional delegate for West Africa.

## **Rhodesia/Zimbabwe**

Mr. F. Perez has been appointed head of the ICRC delegation in Salisbury and is assisted by Mr. C. Béglé.

## **Botswana**

Mr. H. Schmid de Grüneck, ICRC regional delegate, was in Botswana in March and contacted the authorities there. He visited a camp in Francistown, to assess the needs of the refugees, including children, living there. Following this visit, the ICRC has allocated to the "Botswana Red Cross" the sum of 30,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of medical supplies for the refugees.

## **Latin America**

### **Argentina**

ICRC delegates and doctors continued their visits in February and March to places of detention in Argentina. Since mid-January of this year, the ICRC has been authorized to visit places of detention in the capital and in the provinces to examine the living conditions, health and treatment of detainees. Consignments of medicines were delivered to two places of detention following visits by the delegates.

The ICRC delegation at Buenos Aires is now composed of eight persons: Mr. R. Jenny, regional delegate, two delegates, two medical delegates, an Agency specialist, an administrator, who also deals with relief matters, and a secretary.

### **Chile**

Visits to places of detention, and assistance to detainees and their families, have continued in Chile. In February, ICRC delegates visited, in different parts of the country, ten places of detention with a total of 69 detainees, distributing relief material worth \$3,500. In March, they visited twenty places of detention with 115 detainees. Relief valued at more than \$2,000 and eight consignments of medicines and other items, such as spectacles, toilet articles and sports material, were delivered to the places visited.

Assistance to the families of detainees also continued. In February, 445 families in Santiago and 870 in the provinces received relief valued at \$27,000 and in March 400 families in the capital and 870 elsewhere in the country were given ICRC assistance worth \$17,400.

**Bolivia**

From 7 to 12 March, Mr. L. Isler, regional delegate for the Andean countries, visited La Paz. In co-operation with the Bolivian authorities and Red Cross, he worked out a programme for distribution of 200 tons of powdered milk from the EEC to schools and children's homes in various towns.

**Paraguay/Uruguay**

In mid-March, Mr. B. Glauser, regional delegate for the southern part of South America, and Mr. R. Jenny, his successor in that post, visited Paraguay and Uruguay, for the purpose of introducing Mr. Jenny to the authorities and National Societies of the two countries.

**Asia****Thailand**

Since the beginning of the year, the ICRC delegation at Bangkok has undertaken a general study of living conditions in camps for Indo-Chinese refugees in Thailand. The delegates first visited camps in the province of Chantaburi, in the south, and then camps in the province of Nongkhai, in the northeastern part of the country. In the latter region, they also visited four police stations where 174 refugees were under detention.

Mr. S. Nessi, ICRC delegate general for Asia, during a visit to Bangkok in mid-March, examined the initial conclusions of the study.

Mr. Nessi also met leaders of the Thai Red Cross Society and representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior.

**Indonesia**

*Visit to political detainees.* — An ICRC mission consisting of four delegates, two of them doctors, was in Indonesia from 25 January to 18 February to visit seven places of detention selected by the Indonesia authorities. The centres visited were Salemba, Nirbaya, Ambarawa, Plantungan, Koblen, Sukamulia and Tandikat.

In accordance with custom, the ICRC communicated the observations of its delegates only to the Indonesia Government. In submitting its report, the ICRC drew the attention of the authorities to the fact that

its delegates' findings could not be regarded as an indication of the real conditions of detention in Indonesia for two reasons: the limited number of places visited and the difficulties encountered during the visits.

The ICRC will continue its visits to places of detention in Indonesia on the condition that these difficulties are overcome.

## **Iran**

*First visit to places of detention.*—Two delegates and one doctor delegate of the ICRC started the first series of visits to places of detention in Teheran on 18 April, following an agreement between the Iranian authorities and the ICRC President Mr. A. Hay reached on 6 March in Teheran.

## **Middle East**

### **Lebanon**

Since the end of February, the situation in southern Lebanon has remained very tense. Fighting involving several parties has produced a major exodus northward of civilians fleeing from the fighting zones. It is estimated that some 20,000 displaced persons have fled to Beirut and to Tripoli.

To assist civilians remaining in the south, the ICRC detached two delegates from its delegation in Beirut and sent them to Tyr, where they will be closer to the areas where humanitarian assistance is needed.

During the same period, under somewhat hazardous conditions, the ICRC organized relief convoys to bring assistance to isolated communities. By this means, during March, 120 tons of food, medicine and other products were delivered to the Marjayoun "pocket" and to Bent Jbeil in the extreme south of the country.

Elsewhere, where the situation was calm, the ICRC no longer distributed relief materials directly but turned them over to the Lebanese Government Office for Social Development which has an extensive infrastructure reaching even remote regions.

To deliver relief supplies to Lebanon, the ICRC has on charter a 500-ton ship, the M.S. "Kalliopi" shuttling between Cyprus and the Lebanese ports of Beirut, Jounieh and Tripoli. From 17 February to the end of March, more than 1,900 tons of food, clothing, blankets,

medicines and kitchen equipment were delivered. In addition, ambulances sent by the Qatar Government were brought to Lebanon by the "Kal-liopi" and turned over to the "Palestinian Red Crescent" on 25 March.

*Prisoners.* — The ICRC continued to contact various parties to the conflict on the matter of captured or missing persons. In southern Lebanon, two prisoners held by Lebanese forces at Kleya were visited by ICRC delegates prior to their release on 25 March.

*Medical assistance.* — The programme for supplying prostheses to war cripples has begun. A Swiss Red Cross team and a team provided by the Netherlands Government have been at work since the beginning of March. Amputees located and registered through a countrywide press campaign are being cared for at the American University Hospital and by the "Palestinian Red Crescent" at Beirut and at centres in Beit Chebab, near Jounieh, and Tripoli, in the north. Technicians have begun to take measurements and make moulds for more than 100 amputees. Specialists in the fitting of eye prostheses have supplied 260 persons who have lost an eye. Among these patients are many children.

As planned, the ICRC emergency hospital which had been on a stand-by status up to the end of February has been closed and its staff disbanded.

The ICRC has continued to provide medicines to dispensaries in regions not covered by government services, in particular in the Akkar, Bekaa and southern Lebanon. A report has been drawn up by the ICRC, based on a general study of the situation in dispensaries, for submission to the Government, with a view to reorganizing the system of distribution of medical relief.

From 15 February to 3 March, Dr. R. Russbach, chief of the ICRC Medical Division, visited Lebanon to review current needs and future ICRC medical activities.

*Tracing Agency.* — Mr. N. Vecsey, deputy director of the ICRC Central Tracing Agency in Geneva, was in Lebanon from 20 February to 2 March to examine the situation in three Agency bureaux at Beirut, Jounieh and Tripoli.

*Information.* — A memorandum on ICRC activities in Lebanon was sent in March to all Governments, all National Societies and all donors and organizations, such as the EEC, WHO and UNICEF, which contribute to the efforts of the ICRC to help victims in Lebanon.

### Israel and occupied territories

Following a hunger strike by Arab civilian detainees in the Ashkelon prison in Israel, from 24 February to the middle of March, ICRC delegates made two special visits, in order to hear what the strikers wished to say and to examine with the prison authorities the humanitarian measures required.

Since 1968 the Israeli authorities have allowed ICRC delegates to visit detained persons from the occupied territories and Arab countries, except those still under interrogation. Delegates have observed the improving detention conditions. However, some problems which the delegates have consistently brought up have not yet been solved. One of these problems is overcrowding. Others relate to medical attention and cultural and family matters.

*Red Cross courses for the Prisons Department.* — A “Red Cross course” was given by ICRC delegates in February to some thirty soldiers on an NCO training course at the Israeli Prisons Department training centre at Kfar Saba. These Red Cross courses are given regularly at the request of the authorities, their aim being to improve the prison staff’s knowledge of the ICRC and its work and the humanitarian problems caused by detention.

*Medical mission in the occupied territories.* — On 14 March ICRC medical delegate Dr. F. Altherr began a survey of hospital and medical services for the population of territories occupied by Israel. The previous survey of this kind was in the summer of 1975.

*Travel between Egypt and Gaza and Sinai.* — Two “transfer operations” took place on 23 and 30 March at El Khirba in the UN buffer zone in the Sinai, enabling 541 people to go to Cairo, and 409 other people (visitors, students, pilgrims back from Mecca) to go in the opposite direction to the occupied territories of Gaza and Sinai.

*Food convoy.* — Mid-March, under ICRC auspices, 24 tons of foodstuffs from the Arab Republic of Egypt crossed the UN buffer zone at Abu Rodeis for relief to civilians in the Sinai peninsula.

In addition, ICRC delegates have been to several places in the Sinai to inquire into the inhabitants’ living conditions.

*Reuniting of families.* — At Kuneitra, on 21 March, three people from the Syrian Arab Republic, escorted by the ICRC, were able to join relatives in the occupied Golan territory.

*Repatriation.* — Seven Lebanese who had been in detention in Israel were repatriated by the ICRC via Roshanikra (Ras Nakura) on 25 March.

### **Jordan**

On 1 March the head of the ICRC delegation in Amman visited two Israeli nationals who had entered Jordan. The two men were released on 20 March and their repatriation over the Allenby Bridge was witnessed by an ICRC delegate. At the same time a Jordanian national detained by the Israeli authorities was permitted to return to Jordan.

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