

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Africa

Mission of Director of Operations

From 19 May to 10 June 1978, Mr. Jean-Pierre Hocké, Director of ICRC's Operations Department, visited several African countries, including Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Ethiopia. The purpose of his mission was to study and define, with the ICRC delegations on the spot, the nature and scope of the forthcoming protection and assistance programmes to be carried out by the ICRC. In all the places he visited, Mr. Hocké also met the customary interlocutors, the authorities and National Societies, with whom the ICRC is in contact.

Southern Africa

Rhodesia/Zimbabwe

After the murder of three of its collaborators in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe on 19 May, the ICRC took steps to ensure the safety of its delegates there. In particular, it issued instructions that they should not travel by road in areas close to the combat zones. The delegates' activities were therefore somewhat curtailed. But at the beginning of July, the delegates were authorized by the ICRC, at their own requests, to move about by road in certain limited regions.

Notwithstanding those restrictions, protection and assistance tasks continued to be performed. In May, 199 political detainees were visited in the prisons of Chikurubi and Wha Wha, and relief goods worth 130,000 Swiss francs were distributed to various "protected villages", missions and other localities.

From the beginning of 1978 to the end of May, 87 "protected villages" and eleven missions received material aid from the ICRC.

Botswana

In May and June, ICRC delegates made two rounds of visits to the refugee camps at Francistown, Selebi Pikwe and Dukwe, where nearly 11,500 persons are living. The inadequate sanitary conditions and overpopulation in those camps have made it necessary to institute an anti-measles vaccination campaign, performed by a New Zealand medical team working with the ICRC.

Assessment of medical needs

Dr. Rémi Russbach, head of the ICRC's Medical Division, went at the beginning of July to Botswana, where he visited, together with the regional delegate, Mr. F. Steinemann, the camps at Francistown, Selebi Pikwe and Dukwe. The reception camp at Dukwe, which was set up two months ago, held 3,800 refugees from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, the majority of whom were women and children.

The two delegates carried out a similar mission to SWAPO and ZANU camps in Zambia.

In the last week of July, Dr. Russbach went to Mogadishu and passed under review the question of ICRC medical aid to the victims of the Ogaden conflict.

East Africa**Ogaden conflict**

In *Somalia*, as part of its activities in aid of victims of the conflict in Ogaden, the ICRC despatched, at the end of April 1978, Dr. Richard Beauverd, a specialist in maxillofacial surgery, on a two-month mission. During May and June, Dr. Beauverd carried out 26 operations on 22 patients. In view of the number of war-wounded still needing treatment for facial injuries, Dr. Beauverd's contract has been extended for a further four months.

In addition, two physiotherapists and a male nurse who has specialized in caring for paraplegics are working for the rehabilitation of war disabled in Mogadishu Hospital. The physiotherapists have been placed at the disposal of the ICRC by the Danish and Norwegian Red Cross Societies.

The ICRC has also continued its aid to the victims of the conflict. Relief goods (foodstuffs, medicaments, tents, blankets and so forth) worth 1.5 million Swiss francs have been despatched in the last ten months.

In *Ethiopia*, Mr. Eddi Leeman, ICRC regional delegate for East Africa, went in May to the Sidamo and Awassa regions to establish contacts with the Ethiopian Red Cross and authorities and assess the needs of the displaced persons. Following his mission, large consignments of relief goods were sent by the ICRC to the provinces of Sidamo, Bale and Harrarghe.

In the last ten months, the relief consignments to Ethiopia, consisting mainly of foodstuffs, medicaments, medical supplies and soap, have totalled a value of 1.3 million Swiss francs.

Eritrean conflict

In co-operation with the Ethiopian Red Cross and various Ethiopian government bodies, the ICRC despatched to Asmara and Mekele two consignments of foodstuffs, blankets, tents and medicaments, each weighing twenty tons, for the victims of the conflict in Eritrea.

From January to May 1978, the total aid provided by the ICRC in connection with this conflict amounted to 950 kgs of medicaments and 450 tons of food, to a value of 1.4 million Swiss francs.

West and Central Africa

Zaire

The ICRC's emergency relief activities in aid of the population of Kolwezi, who suffered great hardship at the time of the Shaba incidents, were expanded in June. Forty-one tons of relief (blankets, medicaments, foodstuffs) were sent by the ICRC by air, while its delegates on the spot made locally large purchases (including 180 tons of essential foodstuffs, sent by rail from Zambia) for immediate distribution.

In July, 353 tons of essential foodstuffs (flour, dried beans, powdered milk, sugar) and 5,000 blankets were distributed to the inhabitants of Kolwezi.

Medical assistance consisted in the despatch of medicaments to the hospitals at Kolwezi, Mutchatcha, Dilolo, Kasembe and Nseke and to eighteen dispensaries, the majority of which were set up again with ICRC help.

The strength of the ICRC team has been increased and it is now composed of four delegates, including a doctor and a radio operator. Furthermore, Mr. Nicolas Vecsey, assistant director of the ICRC Central Tracing Agency, carried out a ten-day mission in Zaire with the purpose

of inspecting the work of the various tracing bureaux, opened in the area with the co-operation of the Red Cross of Zaire, which have started to follow up enquiries for missing persons. Mr. Vecsey was accompanied by Mr. Jean-Jacques Kurz, head of the ICRC audio-visual service, who made a photographic report on ICRC action in the Shaba Province.

At the end of June, Mr. Steinemann, regional delegate, returned to his base in Lusaka. Mr. Jean Courvoisier was appointed head of the ICRC delegation in Zaire. He is at present pursuing with the authorities the examination of various questions, in particular, those connected with protection.

Chad

The ICRC's action for the prisoners of war in the hands of the Chad National Liberation Front (FROLINAT) was continued in May and June, in the face of considerable logistic problems which made the delegates' work extremely difficult.

In May, the camps in the regions of Kirdimi, Yebbi Bou, Bardai and Faya were visited and supplied with several weeks' food. Again in June, the ICRC delegates distributed thirty tons of food. From 7 to 18 July they visited, in the northern region of Chad, six camps holding 447 prisoners in the hands of the Frolinat and distributed to them over twenty tons of food (meat, flour, millet, rice, sugar, oil and tomatoes). Depending on whether those camps were more or less easily accessible, the amount of food delivered constituted one or two months' rations.

Exchanges of messages between the prisoners and their families through the Tracing Agency were continued. In May 1250, and in June 1400, messages were exchanged.

Mauritania

International Review had previously briefly recorded that an ICRC delegate and a doctor had visited 205 Polisario Front combatants who had been captured while bearing arms. The visits took place, from 15 to 18 May 1978, in the places of detention, and the customary ICRC procedure was followed. The delegates spoke with detainees of their choice without witness.

On 5 June, the ICRC issued a press release summarizing the various aspects of its action of protection in connection with the Western Sahara conflict.

Latin America

Argentina

In May and June, eleven places of detention in Argentina were visited by ICRC delegates, who saw altogether over 800 detainees. Several requests put forward by the ICRC, mainly for the release of prisoners on grounds of health, were granted.

In the field of relief, 6.8 tons of food worth 6,000 dollars were distributed to detainees' families in May, while the cost of relief in prisons amounted to nearly 800 dollars.

At the beginning of July, the ICRC sent an appeal to the National Societies and governments of a score of countries, for funds to cover the cost of its work of assistance and protection in Argentina.

Chile

In May, ICRC delegates visited thirteen, and in June thirty-four, places of detention. They saw altogether about fifty detainees.

Aid to the families of detainees and of former detainees was continued. In May and June, the ICRC distributed various relief items (supplementary food, medicaments, etc.) worth 36,000 dollars to some 800 families (about 3,000 persons), in Santiago and in the rest of the country. During the same period, ICRC assistance in the prisons amounted to 2,144 dollars in addition to 900 kg of medicaments.

Paraguay

From 19 to 24 June, three ICRC delegates carried out a mission in Paraguay, where they visited eight places of detention and saw about forty political detainees, with whom they spoke without witness.

From 16 to 19 July, they visited five places of detention and saw 34 detainees.

Nicaragua

The ICRC regional delegate for Central America and the Caribbean, Mr. R. Chevalley, visited in July five places of detention in Nicaragua's capital and saw about a hundred detainees. Two of those places had been previously visited in April 1978.

Asia

Thailand

Visits to political detainees. — From 23 May to 29 June, the ICRC regional delegate for South East Asia visited nine places of detention, under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, the Police Department and the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), holding 562 detainees, of Thai and other nationalities. The ICRC delegates spoke without witness with detainees of their choice and distributed, in the prisons visited by them, 1,300 dollars' worth of relief items.

In addition, an EEC gift of 100 tons of powdered milk was handed over for distribution in the places of detention throughout Thailand.

Visits to refugees. — In June, ICRC delegates visited eighteen police posts and two transit camps and saw altogether 1,491 persons held on charges of having entered the country illegally. In the course of those visits, the ICRC delegates distributed supplementary relief articles, mainly medicaments, cleaning and washing materials and toilet items.

In July, the delegates visited ten police posts and two transit camps in the eastern part of Thailand, containing altogether 1,104 persons held on charges of illegal entry into Thailand.

Indonesia

The third stage of the ICRC's programme of visits in Indonesia, begun at the end of May, ended on 2 July.

ICRC delegates and doctors, accompanied by a Swiss interpreter, visited a total of eleven places of detention holding 687 detainees in Sulawesi (Celebes) and Kalimantan (Borneo). In addition, they saw thirty persons who had been released in 1977.

They also went for the second time to seven places of detention on the Island of Java, which had previously been visited by the ICRC at the beginning of 1978, and saw about a thousand detainees already seen before.

Viet Nam

After the recent visit of an ICRC delegation to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, a shipment of some 500 tons of relief goods was despatched to Hanoi at the beginning of July. It consisted of 262 tons of canned meat and 4.2 tons of medicaments, worth altogether 1,3 million Swiss

francs, and 235 tons of powdered milk (worth 825,000 Swiss francs), donated by the EEC.

Arrangements have been made for further shipments to be despatched over the next few weeks. They will consist of 525 tons of powdered milk and 1,570 tons of rice (total value: 3.2 million Swiss francs), also a gift from the EEC.

The whole of these relief goods will be distributed to persons who were displaced from their homes as a result of the incidents on the border between Viet Nam and Democratic Kampuchea. Distributions will be effected on the spot by the Red Cross of Viet Nam.

Future of joint operation. — On 21 June 1978, at a meeting of the co-ordination bureau set up several years ago to manage joint League and ICRC operations in Indo-China, it was decided that, in view of the fact that the emergency phase had long since ended, it was time for the ICRC and the League to resume, each in its own field, their traditional tasks in Indo-China. Consequently, the joint operation was terminated as from 1 July 1978, but the two institutions will pursue their activities in close co-operation. For practical reasons, the Indo-China Bureau (INDSEC) will continue its activity for a limited period.

Burma

The ICRC regional delegate in the Asian subcontinent, Mr. Dominique Borel, was in Burma from 3 to 8 July. In talks with leaders of the National Red Cross Society, he referred to various humanitarian problems, in particular the situation in Arakan Province. He also visited the local branches of the Burmese Red Cross at Pagan, Mandalay and Sagaing.

Afghanistan

Mr. D. Borel, ICRC regional delegate, went to Kabul at the end of June and again in the middle of July. Besides meeting Afghan Red Crescent officials, Mr. Borel was also received by high authorities of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, in particular by the Head of State, H. E. Noor Mohammad Taraki, President of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister, by the Minister of the Interior and by the Vice-Minister of Education.

The authorities showed keen interest in the ICRC's humanitarian activities and in the dissemination of knowledge of the Red Cross Principles and expressed their willingness to introduce the textbook

“The Red Crescent and My Country” in all Afghan schools. The ICRC delegate was granted authorization to visit some of the members of the former royal family who were held in detention.

Mr. Borel also went, with the League representative, Mr. K. Adler, to a number of provinces hit by floods.

Europe

Norway

On 12 and 13 June, Mr. Alexandre Hay, ICRC President, and Mr. Melchior Borsinger, delegate general for Europe and North America, paid a visit to Norway. They were first received in audience by H. M. King Olav, after which they had meetings with the authorities and senior officials of the Norwegian Red Cross. At these talks, Mr. Hay took the opportunity to give detailed accounts of ICRC activities at all levels: operational, legal, administrative and financial. The National Society expressed its readiness to give the ICRC still more active support, by providing it with medical teams for emergency operations and contributing larger financial and material aid. It announced a further contribution of 250,000 kroner (about 87,000 Swiss francs) for the ICRC action at present being carried out in Chad.

Missions to East European countries

From 25 May to 1 June 1978, Mr. Philippe Grand d’Hauteville, ICRC delegate, went on a mission to Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary. In a further mission lasting from 3 to 9 July, he visited Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and Poland. In each of those countries, Mr. Grand d’Hauteville met National Society leaders, with whom he discussed various questions, in particular, ICRC activities throughout the world and its efforts to spread knowledge of the Geneva Conventions.

All the persons who spoke with Mr. Grand d’Hauteville underlined the very constructive aspect of such visits and expressed the hope to see their relations with the ICRC still further developed. They said, in particular, that their National Societies were studying ways and means of co-operating in the future more closely with the ICRC, for instance by making available medical teams, as far as their means allowed them, to be sent to theatres of operations where ICRC aid was called for.

Middle East

Lebanon

While tension had eased somewhat in May in the south of Lebanon, allowing a large number of persons to return to their homes, violent combats had flared up in June in the north, and in July in Beirut. The ICRC resumed its emergency action in Beirut and in the north, but continued its activities in the south at an easier pace.

In the south, the delegates first observed the return of people to their homes, in particular helping them to cross certain areas, and then went round the villages to enquire into the needs of those inhabitants who had come back. The ICRC's reports were sent to the Government to enable it to establish an assistance programme, but where the delegates found there was an urgent need for aid they organized immediate distributions. Between the beginning of April and the middle of May, twenty-two villages were in this way supplied with various relief goods (food, clothing, blankets, etc.) weighing altogether about ten tons.

Furthermore, aid continued to be provided to dispensaries throughout the south of Lebanon. At the request of Ministry of Health officials, the ICRC contributed to the reactivation of the hospitals at Marjayoun and Tibnine by donating 60,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of material and medicaments for both establishments.

In June, in the north of Lebanon, a large number of casualties, both dead and wounded, were caused by combats in two villages. ICRC delegates went there in mid-June to assess needs, and medical material and medicaments were sent to St. John's Hospital in Zghorta.

Continuing tension in this area and in districts to the east of Beirut led the ICRC to increase its personnel in this sector, too, at the end of June.

Violent fighting did in fact take place in July in those districts and the ICRC had to send emergency supplies to the dispensaries and hospitals there. Medical supplies to a value of more than 50,000 Swiss francs were despatched by the ICRC to about a dozen hospital establishments in East Beirut. This was carried out with considerable risk to the delegates whose vehicles were hit by projectiles, despite the fact that they were marked by the Red Cross sign.

In a press release dated 7 July, the ICRC protested firmly against the use inside a densely populated town of weapons causing extensive loss of life among the civilian population. It appealed to the parties involved to observe humanitarian principles of the most elementary kind and to allow the Red Cross to perform its tasks unhampered.

During periods of calm, the ICRC delegation attempted, in certain quarters, to go to the aid of inhabitants who were in a particularly helpless situation. On 12 July, 54 foreign workers, who had been blocked in a house close to the harbour from the time the combats had begun and were without means of subsistence, were evacuated by ICRC delegates. On 19 July, 32 persons in a similar situation in the Quarantaine district were also evacuated.

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On 4 July, ICRC delegates spoke without witness with the Israeli prisoner captured by the PFLP on 5 April in south Lebanon.

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In April and May, the ICRC received, in reply to its appeal of 22 March, gifts in kind amounting altogether to 202 tons of miscellaneous relief supplies (baby milk, blankets, tents, detergents, etc.) worth 886,000 Swiss francs, and gifts of 3.2 million Swiss francs in cash. ICRC purchases amounted to 70 tons (740,000 Swiss francs).

Most of the goods received or purchased were handed over to the bodies participating in the action to bring aid to displaced persons.

Israel and occupied territories

The operations arranged every year under ICRC auspices to enable students registered at Cairo University to visit their families in the occupied territories of Sinai and Gaza during the summer holidays, commenced in June at the rate of two crossings a week. At the end of August, students will commence travelling in the opposite direction to Cairo for the new school year.

The first crossing from Cairo to Sinai-Gaza took place on 22 June and on 17 July the eighth batch of students had gone through. About 500 students crossed over every time. In addition, 194 visitors who had gone to Cairo returned to the occupied territories with the students. On 1 June, the ICRC also transferred the body of a student, who had died in an accident in Cairo.

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Three operations, also under ICRC auspices, took place in the United Nations buffer zone in Kuneitra in occupied Golan. Sixteen persons coming from the Syrian Arab Republic went to the occupied territory to rejoin their relatives, and twenty-two students (14 from Golan and 8 from Gaza) registered at Damascus University, returned to their homes for the summer holidays.

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The ICRC also repatriated two Lebanese sailors, released by the Israeli authorities.

Jordan

Under ICRC auspices, a person who had infiltrated into Jordan and had been released by the Jordanian authorities was transferred on 1 June to Israel and the occupied territories across the Allenby Bridge over the river Jordan.
