

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Africa

Rhodesia/Zimbabwe

In April, as in previous months, the ICRC delegation in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe continued its protection and relief activities to victims of the conflict. However, the atmosphere of insecurity prevalent in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe during the election period led the delegation to take strict precautionary measures until 24 April. In addition, the ICRC medical teams suspended all their journeys by air in the south of the country after the ICRC plane was hit by bullets; the damage was fortunately not serious, and no-one was injured.

Whilst this suspension was in force, the ICRC medical staff made use of their time in Salisbury by organizing a basic first aid course for the delegation's local staff.

Medical work nonetheless continued in the area around the capital, as well as in Victoria Province (where it was decided to set up a permanent clinic at the local Red Cross centre in Fort Victoria), in the Mazoe districts, at Mary Mount Mission, and finally at Harare Market and Seke camp. In March, the ICRC medical teams treated a total of 2,777 out-patients, undertook 31 major operations and 90 others involving minor surgery.

The distribution of relief supplies also continued. In March, the total value of these supplies was 227,000 Swiss francs (226 tons of foodstuffs, 400 kg. of soap, 3,460 blankets and 6,000 items of clothing), whereas in April, the Salisbury delegation alone distributed 4.2 tons of powdered milk, 5.4 tons of foodstuffs (cereals, salt, sugar, etc.), 675 kg. of soap, and 315 blankets, to a total value of 22,000 Swiss francs.

In Matabeleland, an emergency relief programme was launched for the protected village of Tshawingo, where the population had increased sharply as a result of the closure of another protected village, Tshituzabasti. Relief supplies for 2,000 people—including 500 children—were made available (6.2 tons of foodstuffs, 875 kg. of powdered milk and 250 kg. of soap).

Some weeks ago, 48 families from the Chizambabhuyo region were transferred to Seke, with a consequent rise in the camp's population. An agronomist was sent there to provide the population with basic knowledge on cultivating vegetables, and the ICRC provided seeds and fertilizer for this assistance programme. The ICRC organized a regular bus service for 70 children living in the camp to enable them to continue attending school in Harare.

With regard to protection activities, the ICRC delegates visited Wha Wha prison on 27 March, distributing relief supplies to the detainees who numbered about 225 at the time. Some 300 educational books were also handed over at Wha Wha, with a similar distribution being prepared for Khami prison.

The bus service for families visiting detained relatives is still operating. Since it launched its programme in 1973, the ICRC has organised a twice-weekly service for a total of 2,576 persons from Salisbury, Bulawayo, Fort Victoria, Umtali and Shabani.

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From 30 April to 9 May, Mr. Jakob Burckhardt, member of the ICRC, carried out a mission to southern Africa, accompanied by Mr. Frank Schmidt, delegate general for Africa, and Mr. Hans Peter Gasser, head of the Legal Division. Mr. Burckhardt first visited South Africa, where he attended the monthly meeting in Johannesburg for ICRC delegates in southern Africa and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Going on to Salisbury, Mr. Burckhardt had talks with the local Red Cross authorities and with officials of the United African National Congress. He also had the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the ICRC's fieldwork by accompanying the delegates on visits, notably to the missions at St. Anthony and Dotito.

Botswana

The ICRC continued its assistance activity in the refugee camps of Selebi Pikwe, Francistown and Dukwe, which provide shelter for some

19,000 persons. Hygiene and public health problems remain priority concerns, in view of the large number of refugees there and the possibility of the capacity of the camps being increased to 30,000. Mr. El Badri, a public health specialist seconded to the ICRC by the World Health Organization, recently toured the camps once more, to give lessons on hygiene, assess the situation and monitor the construction of sanitary facilities (latrines, drinking water pipes, drains, etc.).

The distribution of relief supplies also continued in the camps, including powdered milk, clothing, tents, medical supplies, disinfectants, sewing machines, etc. Over 2.7 tons of supplies were distributed in this way in March. Furthermore, vitamin tablets were given out to 4,000 school-age children in Dukwe camp.

Zambia

The public health specialist, Mr. El Badri, also visited Zambia, accompanied by representatives of the High Commissioner for Refugees and Unicef, to inspect the site of a new boys' camp in the Solwezi region, some 600 km. from Lusaka.

The distribution of relief supplies continued: one ton of powdered milk was given for the refugee children; building materials for the girls' camps; relief supplies for Lusaka and Solwezi hospitals, and for the refugee camps (approx. 8,000 bars of soap and 250 kg. of soap in bulk).

The ICRC handed over medical supplies worth 50,000 dollars to the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, for treating the wounded from camps that had suffered in recent raids. The hospital's stocks had been drastically reduced because of the emergency situation in February and needed to be built up again urgently. For this purpose, the ICRC provided emergency stocks in Lusaka, consisting mainly of medical supplies and blankets.

Tanzania/Uganda

As mentioned in the last issue of *International Review*, the ICRC has been present in Uganda since March, to provide assistance to the victims of the conflict with Tanzania.

As a result of the fighting that led to the fall of Kampala, some 50,000 persons abandoned their villages, and the ICRC consequently

intensified its relief activities. In this context, a five-man delegation—including a doctor and a specialist from the Central Tracing Agency—left Switzerland for the Ugandan capital on 27 April.

On their arrival, they promptly organized ICRC aid to the tune of 10 tons of medical supplies and equipment, five tons of powdered milk, 2,000 blankets and 1,000 bars of soap, all for immediate distribution. Relief supplies, purchased in Kenya, are transported in two lorries and a landrover which the ICRC bought in view of the virtual non-existence of means of transport and local communications in the country.

A local evaluation made by the ICRC doctor delegate concluded with the proposal that, in addition, medical supplies be provided to 20 high and medium capacity hospitals and some 15 dispensaries.

Besides its relief activities, the ICRC visits prisoners of war in Uganda and will soon be doing likewise in Tanzania.

Ethiopia

The ICRC continues to provide assistance to the population of the Ogaden region, by distributing considerable quantities of basic relief supplies (foodstuffs, medical supplies and blankets).

In March and April, 135 tons of foodstuffs (high protein foods, sugar, powdered milk, oil, cereals), 4 tons of soap, 4,950 blankets, 15 tents and five standard medical units for dispensaries were distributed in the Harargue, Sidamo, Bale, Gondar and Tigray areas.

Finally, the ICRC supplied 20 tons of high protein foods, as well as cooking equipment and medical units for dispensaries to the victims of fighting in Eritrea.

In the medical sphere, the ICRC specialist team has begun treating an initial contingent of amputees and paraplegics at the Debre-Zeyit centre, not far from the capital.

Zaire

Five ICRC delegates went on mission to Zaire from 21 April to 11 May. They carried out a series of visits to places of detention, where they evaluated the situation with a view to possible protection and assistance activities for the detainees. These visits involved 13 prisons throughout the country, and the ICRC delegates saw a total of 2,009 detainees, 243 of whom had been imprisoned for political reasons.

Chad

In March and April, the ICRC carried out a series of distributions in N'Djamena, because of the influx of people who had fled from their villages in the south, where fighting was going on. During these two months, the ICRC distributed some 11.5 tons of foodstuffs to the displaced persons—about a thousand in all—who had found refuge in various parts of the capital. The ICRC also dispatched relief supplies to several towns in the south of the country.

The ICRC delegates, based in the north of the country, at the same time continued their protection and assistance activities for the prisoners of war and their families in the hands of FROLINAT. They visited 445 prisoners of war and civilian detainees in some ten camps. Nearly 46 tons of foodstuffs—equivalent to 8 to 10 weeks rations—were distributed in March and April. These relief supplies were supplemented by extra distributions to the prisoners (cigarettes, soap, etc.), and by a contribution of 3,500 Swiss francs for the local purchase of meat.

The ICRC has provided medical supplies to a number of hospitals throughout the country. Under its auspices, 18 wounded persons were evacuated to hospitals in Faya (8 persons), N'Djamena (10 persons) so that they could receive appropriate treatment.

There is still a considerable flow of family correspondence between N'Djamena and northern Chad. The ICRC undertakes mail transportation and delivery in view of the total lack of alternative means of communication in the country. Almost 1,500 messages arrive every month at the ICRC office in Faya for distribution in the south.

Latin America

Nicaragua

As a result of the confrontations that occurred in April at Esteli, in the north of Nicaragua, the ICRC and the National Red Cross Society launched an emergency programme for victims of the fighting.

On 11 and 14 April, two convoys were arranged to bring supplies to several hundred persons who had taken refuge in the Red Cross headquarters in Esteli and in the Rosario College, and who were experiencing difficult material conditions. The President of the National Society, the ICRC delegate, five doctors and 33 relief workers accompanied the convoys. The distribution of foodstuffs, medical supplies and drinking

water was thus carried out, and eight severely wounded persons were evacuated by air, the very same day, for Managua, where they were hospitalized.

Furthermore, the ICRC dispatched 11,000 dollars' worth of medical supplies to local Red Cross sections in several towns throughout the country.

In April, ICRC delegates visited about 260 detainees in seven places of detention and three hospitals. Since the ICRC began working in Nicaragua in September 1978, it has visited a total of nearly 900 people detained in 24 places of detention throughout the country.

The ICRC delegates also went to three embassies, where about one hundred people had taken refuge, distributing medical supplies for their use.

Argentina

Visits to places of detention in Argentina continued in April, as did the assistance programme for needy families of detainees.

The ICRC delegates visited Coronda, Cordoba, Rio Cuarto, Resistencia and La Plata prisons, where they saw a total of 649 persons who had been detained in connection with the events.

The ICRC distributed extra food supplies to about a thousand needy families, to a total value of approximately 11,500 dollars in April.

Chile

An ICRC delegate went on mission to Chile from 16 to 26 April, where he had various talks with the authorities and with the heads of the National Red Cross Society.

During his stay in the country, he also visited five places of detention, where he saw 57 persons detained for security reasons. In the course of these visits, relief supplies from ICRC stocks were handed over.

Asia

China-Viet Nam conflict

On 19 February, the ICRC offered its services to the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Viet

Nam, shortly after the outbreak of fighting between the two countries. In view of the favourable replies received, the ICRC immediately initiated humanitarian action in favour of the victims on both sides, on the basis of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

A first mission to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam took place from 5 to 14 April 1979, when two delegates and two doctors joined the ICRC permanent delegate in Hanoi. Accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Red Cross of Viet Nam, the ICRC delegates visited two of the six provinces affected by the fighting—Lang Son and Cao Bang—where they assessed the needs of the civilian population. It was decided to implement an emergency medical assistance programme, and a three-ton consignment of medical material and supplies was dispatched to Viet Nam at the end of the month.

An ICRC team returned to the Vietnamese capital on 23 May, to visit the Chinese prisoners captured by the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

A mission to the People's Republic of China took place from 24 April to 10 May. It was led by Mr. Marcel-A. Naville, former President and member of the ICRC, and comprised Mr. Jean de Courten, delegate general for Asia and Oceania, and Mr. Dominique Borel, regional delegate. Talks were held with the authorities and the heads of the Red Cross Society of China; then the ICRC representatives visited 1,620 Vietnamese prisoners detained in six camps and a hospital in the south of the country.

Under an agreement between the Chinese and Vietnamese authorities, it was decided to begin repatriating the prisoners of war.

An initial simultaneous repatriation operation, involving 120 Vietnamese prisoners and 43 Chinese prisoners, either sick or wounded, took place on 21 May under the auspices of the Red Cross Societies of both countries and in the presence of the ICRC delegates. The exchange was carried out at the border post known as "Friendship Pass", located on the railway line linking the Chinese town of Nanning with that of Lang Son in Viet Nam.

A second operation for repatriating sick and wounded prisoners took place under similar conditions on 28 May: 118 wounded Vietnamese prisoners and 20 Chinese prisoners were repatriated.

Philippines

The Third Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Far-East countries took place in Manila from 2 to 5 April 1979. An ICRC delegation, composed of Mr. Jean de Courten, delegate general for Asia and Oceania, Mr. Nicolas Vecsey, deputy director of the ICRC

Central Tracing Agency, and Mr. Roland Duc, regional delegate for South-East Asia, attended the meeting. Among the main items on the conference agenda was the problem of the Vietnamese "boat people", and the reception, assistance and immigration difficulties that they are causing in those South-East Asian countries that are presently granting them temporary shelter.

Mr. de Courten and Mr. Vecsey read papers on international humanitarian law and the role of the Central Tracing Agency. The Agency, it will be remembered, works in close co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the National Societies of the countries involved, undertaking the exchange of correspondence between refugees and their families, the tracing of missing persons and the reunion of separated families.

Prior to attending the Manila conference, Mr. Vecsey visited Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo and Hong Kong for talks with the heads of National Red Cross Societies on the measures that the Agency could take with regard to the Vietnamese refugee problem.

Thailand

In March and April, the ICRC delegates based in Thailand visited a total of 4,388 persons who had entered the country illegally from Cambodia, and who were located in 22 places of detention in the east and north-east of Thailand. Relief supplies were distributed during these visits.

Indonesia

On 6 and 7 April, an ICRC delegate went to the island of Buru to hand over relief supplies for political detainees who had been visited in December 1978. Consignments of books and medical supplies, worth some 12,500 Swiss francs, were distributed. The medical supplies are sufficient for treating about 6,000 persons for a year.

During 1978, some twenty other places of detention in Indonesia also received relief supplies when visited by the delegates. The total amount of assistance provided by the ICRC in places of detention in Indonesia is of the order of 44,000 Swiss francs.

Middle East

Lebanon

An emergency situation has once more arisen in the south of Lebanon, as a result of military operations that took place there in April.

The ICRC delegates based in Tyre have carried out several assessments in the field and distributed medical supplies and material to various dispensaries and hospitals in the area.

The ICRC continues to monitor the situation closely, particularly the movement of populations fleeing the combat zones, so that emergency relief can be provided if necessary.

Israel and the Occupied Territories

Several transfer operations took place in April under the auspices of the ICRC between Israel and neighbouring territories.

On 2 April, a young South Lebanese woman who had received medical care in Israel was repatriated at the Ras Nakura border post.

On 3 April, on the occupied Golan Heights, a young Syrian woman was transferred to the Syrian Arab Republic where her fiancé and his family were waiting to greet her.

On 5 April, at Allenby Bridge, the Jordanian authorities handed over to the Israeli authorities a man who had crossed into Jordanian territory.

On 30 April, there was a two-way transfer of students and persons visiting relatives, who crossed the United Nations buffer zone in the north of the Sinai: 11 students and 135 visitors were transported to Cairo from the occupied territories of Gaza and the Sinai, whilst 13 students and 200 visitors travelled to the occupied territories.

Yemen Arab Republic

As previously mentioned, the ICRC launched a relief programme in the Yemen Arab Republic in March, focussing on the civilian population who had suffered from the recent fighting on the border with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. A delegate visited Sana'a

where, in conjunction with officials of the Yemeni Red Crescent, he assessed the needs and set up a distribution programme involving supplies worth 350,000 Swiss francs.

In April, this mission was extended when an ICRC relief specialist went to the south of the country. Furthermore, the ICRC supplied the Government and the Red Crescent Society with about one hundred tents, offered by the British Government, which were used to set up a camp near the capital. In addition, that same month, emergency relief supplies—mainly consisting of camp equipment—were distributed to displaced persons in the various camps where they had been resettled under the responsibility of the Red Crescent and the authorities.
