

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE INDO-PAKISTAN CONFLICT VICTIMS

### **Prisoners of war**

It will be recalled that the ICRC delegates in India—Mr. R. Du Pasquier, head of the delegation, and Dr. R. Marti, ICRC head physician—visited wounded Pakistani prisoners of war in December 1971, and that they subsequently visited other wounded prisoners.<sup>1</sup> The ICRC delegates started visiting the prisoners of war held in Indian camps—and, as we mentioned in last month's issue, there are a great many of them—early in February. They are now carrying on the job by visiting other camps. More than 30,000 Pakistani prisoners were visited by the delegates while still in the Dacca area.

In Pakistan, the ICRC delegates are visiting Indians interned in four camps, as well as the wounded who are receiving treatment in seven hospitals.

### **Repatriation of seriously wounded prisoners of war**

On 25 February, the first operation for the repatriation of seriously wounded prisoners of war taken during the December 1971 conflict took place between India and Pakistan. At Rawalpindi, 17 Indian prisoners of war embarked for India on an airplane of the International Committee of the Red Cross while, in New Delhi, 27 Pakistani prisoners of war were assembled before being taken

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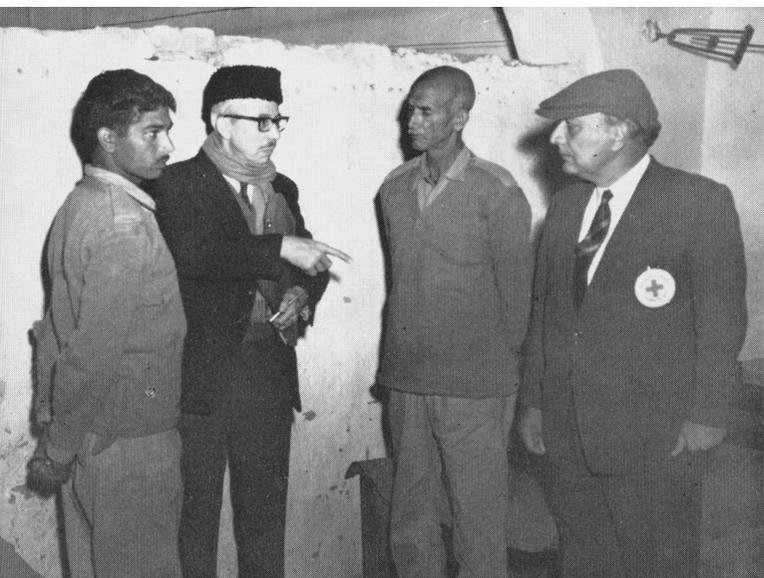
<sup>1</sup> *Plate.*



... in a hospital, by Dr. R. Marti, Chief Medical Officer of the ICRC.

### Visits to Pakistani prisoners of war in India ...

... in a camp, by Mr. R. Du Pasquier, head of the ICRC delegation, in February (**Right**, Col. Bhatia, Deputy Secretary-General of the Indian Red Cross).



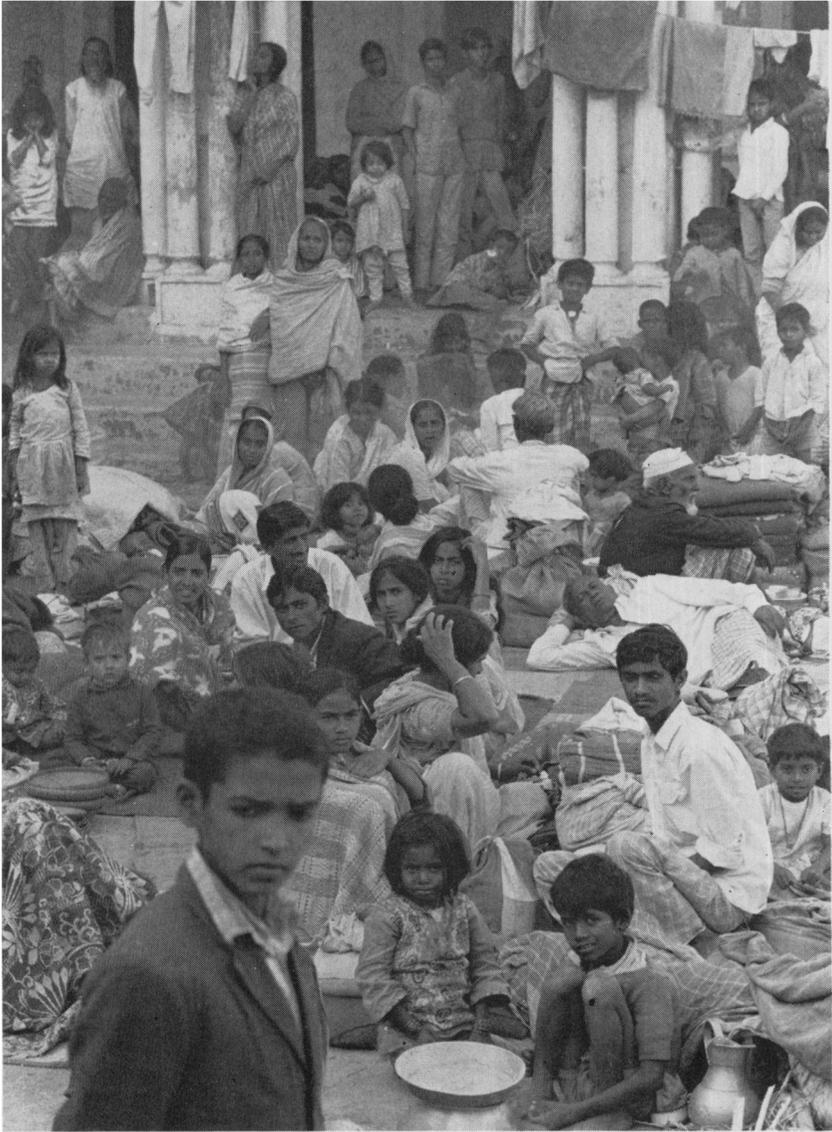


Photo J. J. Kurz/ICRC  
In Bangladesh, some of the people to whom the Red Cross...

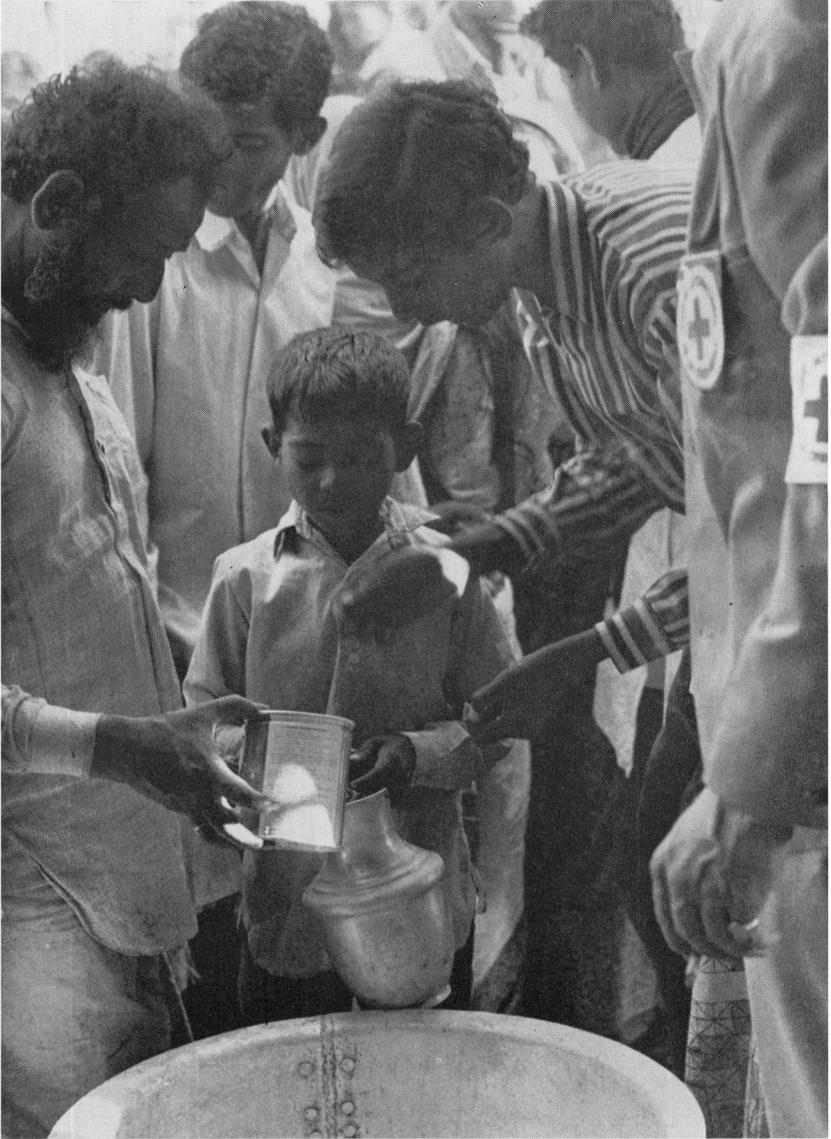


Photo J. J. Kurz/ICRC

... provides assistance: distribution of milk in a camp near Dacca.



**BEIRUT :** Mr. F. Siordet, Member of the ICRC, presenting to Mrs. Issa-el-Khoury (centre) the school textbook " The Red Cross and My Country ".

**AMMAN :** The ICRC delegate presenting to the Vice-Minister of Education in Jordan the school textbook "The Red Crescent and My Country". (from left to right, Mr. Schmidt, ICRC delegate, Dr. Abu-Goura, President of the Jordan Red Crescent, Mr. Hekmat El-Saket, Vice-Minister of Education, and Mr. Said-Eddine El-Khayat.)



back to Pakistan in another ICRC plane. The men were accompanied by ICRC doctor-delegates.

Similar operations have been planned for the coming weeks and the authorities of both countries have declared their willingness to repatriate all seriously wounded prisoners of war.

### **Messages sent by prisoners of war**

The activities of the Tracing Agency also continue unabated. The beginning of direct family mail between Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, on 24 January 1972, was marked by the air-mail despatch of 50,000 family messages. Previously the ICRC Central Tracing Agency in Geneva relayed from its offices nearly 100,000 such messages.

This action, which provides a link between the prisoners and their relatives, is designed to ensure that war victims remain in touch with their families by correspondence. In India, too, the ICRC delegation has carried out its activities, as illustrated by the following example:

Letters written by Pakistani prisoners of war to their relatives are centralized in the Ministry of Defence in New Delhi, where the bags containing those letters are handed over to the ICRC delegation. They are placed in other bags which bear the abbreviation ICRC and a red cross, and each of which contains about 10,000 messages, after which the ICRC delegation has them forwarded to the addressees in Pakistan, via Calcutta. It is continuing to forward the correspondence by this route until such time as it is able to send it by a more direct route: from New Delhi to Pakistan by road. This method was used on 22 February, when an exchange of mail and despatch of parcels to prisoners of war took place at the Wagah frontier post. The operation was carried out by the Red Cross Societies of the two countries concerned, under the auspices of the ICRC.

Messages from Indian prisoners of war held in Pakistan are sent to the ICRC delegation in India, and the delegation sends them on to the Ministry of Defence in New Delhi, from where they are forwarded to the addressees.

## Repatriation of civilians

Between 5 and 7 February, the ICRC repatriated some 200 Afghan nationals who were in Bangladesh during the hostilities. These people were taken by the Indian Armed Forces to Calcutta, from where they flew to Kabul in one of the ICRC's two DC-6 aircraft. The plane made four such flights between Calcutta and Kabul.

## Civilian relief

The surgical teams in Bangladesh have been concentrated in Dacca (Holy Family Hospital and Dacca Medical College), at Mirzapur and at Chuadanga, where their main concern is the treatment of war-wounded.

The needs among certain sections of the population, particularly among the minorities, have prompted the ICRC to institute a three-month medico-social programme in Bangladesh. The programme, which was approved by the authorities, began on 5 February and its aim is to satisfy the most urgent needs in medical and food relief for about 2 million people. Daily distributions of 500,000 rations of 1,700 calories provide food for a great number of people, thanks to the flexibility of the system. (A single ration, for example, is sufficient for two children or for a family which only requires an addition to its own supply.)

Concomitant with this food relief programme, six mobile medico-social teams in various parts of the country provide out-patient treatment and food for the undernourished. They were made available by the Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, France, Japan, Norway and Sweden.

The ICRC relief work for needy civilians has developed considerably over the past few weeks. At present, more than 5,000 tons of foodstuffs have been distributed to the Bengali population and some 300 tons to minority groups. Blankets, clothing and medicines have also been distributed where needed.

One of the major problems in this operation is the forwarding of goods. To deal with it the ICRC has a large fleet of vehicles which it uses as follows: the two DC-6 aircraft (made available by the Swiss Government deliver about 100 tons of relief goods daily to

various places to supply the relief teams. The teams themselves have about 30 lorries, a score of Land-Rovers and five motor-boats for deliveries to the villages. There are also three helicopters which are used mainly by the medical personnel.

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With the approaching monsoon season and the accompanying risk of cyclones, the League of Red Cross Societies has resumed its cyclone warning system. Two delegates will be entrusted with the training of some 16,000 inhabitants of the coastal regions who will be responsible for warning and assisting the population.

### **Situation at the end of February**

By the end of February, 160 persons were working on the Indian sub-continent under the Red Cross flag:

*ICRC personnel*: 42 delegates and doctor-delegates: New Delhi (9), Calcutta (1), Islamabad (4), Dacca (24), Bogra (2) and Jessore (2).

*Technical Personnel* (League and National Societies): Australia (2 persons), Austria (1), Canada (2), Denmark (1), Finland (2), Federal Republic of Germany (1), Great Britain (1), Japan (1), Malaysia (2), Philippines (1), Sweden (8) and Switzerland (4).

*Medical Teams (sent by National Societies)*: 92 persons divided into 17 teams: Belgium (1 team), Finland (2), Great Britain (1), Japan (1), Sweden (2), Canada (1), France (1), Spain (1), New Zealand (1), Denmark (2), Federal Republic of Germany (2) and Norway (2).