

External activities

May – June 1985

Africa

Missions by the delegate-general

In May and June Mr. Jean-Marc Bornet, ICCR delegate-general for Africa, conducted a series of missions taking him first to Mozambique and then to Zimbabwe, the Republic of South Africa and Angola.

From 13 to 20 May the delegate-general visited *Mozambique*. He was received in Maputo by the President of the Republic, Mr. Samoa Machel, and had discussions in particular with Dr. Fernando Vaz, the Deputy Minister of Health.

From 20 to 24 May, in Harare (*Zimbabwe*), Mr. Bornet discussed with the Minister for the Interior the question of protection for people detained for security reasons.

The delegate-general then went to the *Republic of South Africa*. In Pretoria, he took stock with the ICRC delegates in South Africa and in Namibia/South West Africa of the ICRC's role and activities in this region, particularly as regards the current internal disturbances and tensions in this part of the African continent.

In *Angola* from 5 to 12 June, Mr. Bornet together with the delegation reassessed the ICRC's aid programmes for the post-harvest period, i.e. from September onwards. The delegate-general also met senior members of the "Angola Red Cross" and reviewed with them the various aspects of the ICRC's co-operation with this Society.

Angola

ICRC relief work on behalf of displaced persons on the high plateaux in the provinces of Huambo, Benguela and Bié (a region

known as the "Planalto") continued during May and June, when 1,154.9 tonnes and 831.2 tonnes of food respectively were distributed to some 100,000 people. In June, on account of improvements in the nutritional state of the people affected, thanks to the harvest season and the aid provided by the ICRC, distributions of relief supplies were temporarily reduced, with priority being given to preparing programmes for the next difficult period expected to begin in September.

Because of insecurity, the roads and railways linking up the operational areas in the Planalto were impassable and the ICRC continued to airfreight all relief supplies, brought by sea to Angola, from the coast to the provinces in the interior of the country. During the first half of the year 21 ships unloaded 13,158 tonnes of food and 132 tonnes of other relief supplies, equipment and vehicles, in the ports of Luanda, Lobito and Namibie: three wide-bodied aircraft maintained an airlift to transport 7,432 tonnes of food to the towns of Huambo, Kuito and Benguela: from there, carrying out 6,514 flights, six light aircraft supplied the various distribution points in the townships.

In the medical sphere, ICRC teams regularly conducted surveys to assess the food situation of people being assisted. Since 1 January 1985, between 5,000 and 12,000 undernourished children received food and care in the 22 special feeding centres: also, relief supplies in the form of blankets, clothing and soap were given to relatives accompanying them, the number of people varying between 73,000 and 95,000 per month. With the exception of two centres in the provincial capitals of Huambo and Bié, by the end of June most of these centres had been temporarily closed for the reasons given above.

In addition, during the first six months of the year ICRC medical teams gave about 10,000 consultations in the townships in the operational areas and some 80,000 patients were examined by Angolan medical staff. Moreover, the ICRC supplied medicaments and medical items to hospitals and dispensaries where it could monitor their use. Finally, it evacuated 612 war wounded and seriously ill people to hospitals in the provinces and accompanied 817 patients home when their treatment was finished.

Republic of South Africa

ICRC delegates based in Pretoria carried out a certain number of missions throughout the country during which contacts were

made with local authorities at all levels. On the basis of the results of these missions the ICRC decided to increase its personnel in the main regions of South Africa, including the homelands; the delegates' main task will be to provide maximum protection for victims of the current situation in that country, in co-operation with the local authorities and branches of the National Red Cross Society.

The delegation in Pretoria also continued its aid programmes for detainees and their needy families. During the first half of the year assistance (food parcels, travelling expenses for people visiting their relatives in detention) worth a total of 211,700 Swiss francs was provided.

Ethiopia

During May and June there was a marked increase in assistance provided in the course of the joint relief operation by the ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross for people affected by the drought and the conflict situation in Ethiopia.

In May the ICRC distributed monthly food rations to 653,116 people at 45 distribution points in Ertrea, Tigre, Gondar, North Wollo and Hararge. This represented a total of 8,993 tonnes, i.e. some 2,200 tonnes more than in April. In addition 557 tonnes of seed were given to 41,029 families.

In June the number of beneficiaries of ICRC aid increased further, with 10,877 tonnes of food being distributed to 719,489 people; furthermore, 691 tonnes of seed were supplied to 31,019 families.

The increase in the number of people assisted reflects the continuing disastrous food shortage and the increasing needs in the famine-stricken areas, particularly in North Wollo, Eastern Gondar and Tigre. In the latter province the airlifting of relief supplies became absolutely necessary, since road convoys could not reach Mekele, Axum and Adwa because of the inadequacy of transport facilities and the prevalent insecurity. The quantities of food supplies necessary (for immediate distribution and to build up stocks) were flown in by four or five wide-bodied aircraft from Addis Ababa and Asmara. In addition, townships with landing strips were supplied by a fleet of five light aircraft.

As regards medical work, ICRC teams continued to conduct rounds of surveys to monitor the hygiene and food situation of the people affected. Health centres, clinics and dispensaries were pro-

vided with medicaments and medical equipment. This aid came to 399,646 Swiss francs for the first half of the year. In addition, ICRC medical teams endeavoured to combat a diarrhoea epidemic which broke out in Maychew and spread to Axum, Adwa, Areza and Barentu; by the end of June, the epidemic was under control and the number of cases rapidly decreased.

Uganda

During the first half of the year the delegates based in Kampala visited 40 places of detention (police stations and prisons) and saw 8,732 detainees, 1,676 of whom within the competence of the ICRC. Relief supplies were distributed during these visits.

In addition, the ICRC continued to assist displaced people housed in the transit camps in Busunju, Kibizi and Nakazi. Similarly, food was supplied for displaced people in Kampala and clothing distributed to refugees arriving in the camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In all, 560 tonnes of relief supplies (food, clothing) were provided in this way between January and the end of June.

Zaire

During May and June ICRC delegates continued visiting places of detention both in Kinshasa and in the provinces (Mbuji Mayi, Kalemie). They saw a total of 128 detainees and gave them various relief items.

Latin America

El Salvador

In May, ICRC delegates registered 133 new detainees during 200 visits to places of detention under the jurisdiction either of the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Defence; in June, they saw 106 new detainees during 156 visits. On three separate occasions in June, through the intermediary of the ICRC, the FMLN released groups of soldiers it had captured—a total of 26 military personnel and two civilians—and the delegates accompanied them to their place of residence.

Food aid to the civilian population affected by the fighting increased in May to almost 1,105 tonnes for 124,000 people; in

June, 1,026 tonnes of relief supplies were distributed to 117,700 beneficiaries.

ICRC and Salvadorean Red Cross medical teams, based in San Salvador and San Miguel, gave 13,871 consultations (including 2,213 dental examinations) in visits to the field. In addition, they carried out a dozen nutritional surveys in the villages being assisted. Medicaments and medical equipment were distributed to hospitals, health centres and schools in accordance with their needs or were handed over to mobile clinics.

Furthermore, the ICRC Chief Medical Officer from the ICRC and the deputy delegate-general for Latin America were in San Salvador from 17 to 20 June to reassess all the ICRC's material and medical aid activities.

For the dissemination of knowledge of the essential rules of humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross, ICRC delegates gave 24 lectures and explanatory talks to some 3,500 people (officers, privates, members of the police, volunteer workers from the Salvadorean Red Cross).

Nicaragua

In May ICRC delegates visited Bluefields prison where 104 detainees were being held and, in June, the Zona Franca prison where 559 people were being held for security reasons; they interviewed 324 of them without witnesses.

All in all, during the first half of the year 16 visits were carried out to 14 places of detention, i.e. the two prisons in Managua (Tipitapa and Zona Franca), six prisons in the provinces (Chinandega, Matagalpa, Esteli, Juigalpa, Granada and Bluefields), five prison farms in the outskirts of the capital and the Lenin Fonseca hospital. During these visits ICRC delegates had access to 2,083 people being detained for security reasons, of whom 296 were seen for the first time and registered.

During the same period, the assistance (worth 543,000 Swiss francs) supplied to the detainees in the form of monthly food rations came to 152 tonnes. In addition, food worth 181,000 Swiss francs was given to detainees' families in need. Medicaments and medical equipment (cost: 49,600 Swiss francs) were also distributed to prison infirmaries according to needs.

Between 1 January and 30 June, the ICRC Tracing Agency office in Managua registered 737 tracing requests for missing persons; in addition, it exchanged more than 4,000 family messages

between the detainees and their families, and on behalf of displaced people or refugees.

In co-operation with the Nicaraguan Red Cross, the ICRC continued its assistance programme for displaced persons (most of whom were Miskito Indians living in areas along the Atlantic coast); food, blankets, cooking utensils and basic medicaments were transported by ship from Puerto Cabezas (Zelaya Norte province) and Bluefields (Zelaya Sur province) and distributed in co-ordination with the Nicaraguan Institute for Social Welfare (INSS-BI). For the first six months of the year, this operation involved 246 tonnes of relief supplies (worth 397,000 Swiss francs) and brought aid to 7,600 beneficiaries. In addition, the ICRC provided the National Society branches with relief supplies for distribution to displaced persons in various regions (5,000 beneficiaries).

Asia-Pacific

Mission by the delegate-general

Mr. Jean de Courten, ICRC delegate-general for Asia and the Pacific, was in Taiwan from 27 to 29 June and met the Deputy Ministers of the Interior and of the Overseas China Department, the Director of Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the president of the Red Cross and the president of the Free relief Association. Various humanitarian problems of mutual interest were discussed.

Pakistan

The ICRC delegation in Pakistan continued its medical aid programmes as part of its work on behalf of Afghan wounded victims of the fighting in their country.

Throughout the first half of 1985 the ICRC hospitals in Peshawar and Quetta were very busy. The surgical hospital in Peshawar was working at almost maximum capacity: it admitted 908 patients and performed 820 surgical operations as well as providing care for 5,276 out-patients.

A fourth mobile medical team was established towards the end of June at Khar in the Bajaur region. The four mobile medical teams based in Parachinar, Miram Shah, Wana and Khar and composed of staff from the Pakistan Red Crescent, cared for 448 wounded and evacuated 315 of them to the hospital in Peshawar.

The paraplegic centre too, was working to almost full capacity during the first six months of the year and admitted 87 patients, whilst the orthopaedic centre manufactured 224 prostheses. The blood-collecting centre continued to supply the needs of the hospital in Peshawar.

The ICRC surgical hospital in Quetta showed an 85 to 90 per cent occupancy rate. Between 1 January and 30 June it admitted 393 people and provided care for 2,269 out-patients. The two mobile medical teams, based in Chaman and Badini, cared for 266 wounded and evacuated 169 of them to the hospital in Quetta.

Five four-week first-aid training courses were organized in Peshawar during the first half of the year; 82 participants passed their examinations; 65 first-aid workers were also trained in Quetta. Between January and June, 2,278 Afghans followed 108 "short courses" (two days) in Peshawar. In Quetta 326 people took part in 34 courses. In Chaman, where this programme started in March, seven courses, with 61 participants, took place.

The first-aid equipment distributed to first-aid workers trained during the first half of the year came to 284,000 Swiss Francs.

Kampuchea

In May ICRC delegates carried out two surveys in the provinces of Kompong Speu and Kampot. In June they went to the provinces of Kompong Cham, Kompong Chhnang, Kandal and again to Kompong Speu. During each of these trips medicaments and medical equipment were provided, according to needs; they were also supplied to three hospitals and to the blood bank in Phnom Penh. Between 1 January and 30 June the total value of ICRC medical aid to Kampuchea came to 111,000 Swiss francs.

In addition, during the first half of the year, the ICRC dispatched 37 tonnes of medicaments, medical equipment and various relief supplies, either by air from Bangkok to Phnom Penh, via Ho Chi Minh City, or by sea from Singapore.

Moreover, 10,000 first-aid kits, with a card explaining to the combatants the main humanitarian rules, were given to the local Red Cross to distribute in the provinces affected by the fighting.

Khmer-Thai frontier

As part of their activities along the Khmer-Thai frontier the ICRC medical staff continued to care for war casualties and emerg-

ency cases in its hospitals in Khao-I-Dang and Kab Cherg. Between 1 January and 30 June the number of people admitted to the Khao-I-Dang hospital came to 1,542 (including 945 war casualties), an increase of 28 per cent against the same period in 1984. After an influx of wounded during the month of March to the Kab Cherg hospital, requiring extra surgeons to be sent, work there decreased and the ICRC provisionally suspended its surgical activities keeping open only one first-aid post run by a nurse. Since 22 June patients being treated and newly arrived serious casualties have been transferred directly to the Khao-I-Dang hospital. During the first half of the year the number of patients treated in Khab Cherg came to 520, including 255 war casualties.

During the first six months of the year 27 medical co-ordinators, doctors, surgeons and anaesthetists and 23 nurses were seconded to the ICRC for this work by 11 National Red Cross Societies (Canada, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway).

The ICRC blood bank in Khao-I-Dang continued to supply the needs of the surgical hospitals and of voluntary agencies working on the spot, thanks to regular consignments from the Red Cross Societies of Australia and Japan (respectively, 2,607 units of blood for a total of 172,100 Swiss francs and 594 units equivalent to 35,640 Swiss francs during the first six months of the year).

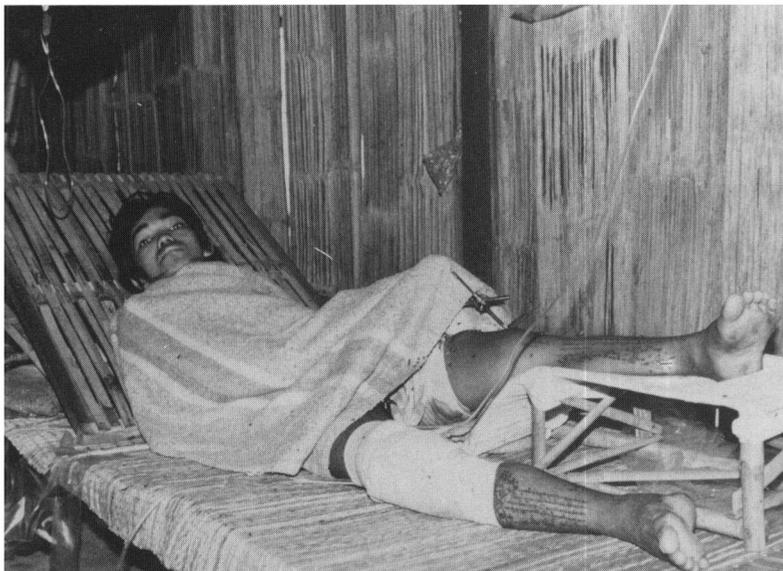
In emergency phases the New Zealand Red Cross also sent consignments (329 units to a value of 21,700 Swiss francs).

In addition, ICRC delegates continued to visit Vietnamese detainees in Aranyaprathet prison; mail and tracing request forms were distributed to them. Between January and June 192 detainees were registered.

Mainly because of the frequent movement of the refugee camp population the work of the ICRC Tracing Agency considerably increased. During the first half of the year 15,536 family messages were forwarded for Khmer refugees and 4,028 messages for Vietnamese refugees and their families. Moreover, the Agency handled 406 tracing requests concerning Vietnamese refugees and 6,187 relating to Khmer nationals; it also carried out 2,305 transfers.

The relief supplies distributed by ICRC delegates in the refugee camps and Aranyaprathet prison (bedding, cooking utensils, clothing, hygiene requisites) came to a total of 328,250 Swiss francs in the first six months of the year.

SOME ASPECTS OF ICRC MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

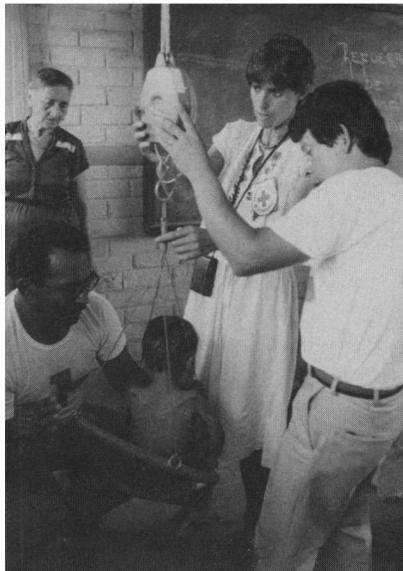


Khmer-Thai border: medical care for war wounded



**Angola: Bomba Alta prostheses workshop and orthopaedic centre
for the re-education of amputees**

In El Salvador:
Joint action by the ICRC and the Salvadoran Red Cross



Medical consultation for children



Health education

Middle East

Lebanon

The fighting which broke out on 19 May in and around the Palestinian camps of Sabra, Chatila and Bourj Brajneh (southern suburbs of Beirut) and the tense situation prevailing in the area of Jezzine (a township on the heights to the east of Sidon) were causes of considerable concern for the ICRC delegation in Lebanon during the months of May and June.

From 20 May onwards, ICRC delegates and relief workers from the Lebanese Red Cross tried to get into the camps to evacuate the wounded; nevertheless, despite an urgent appeal to all the parties for a cease-fire and for them to respect the Red Cross emblem, for security reasons it was particularly difficult to get access to the camps. At the height of the battle the ICRC and the Lebanese relief workers could enter the camp only seven times and evacuated 188 wounded. Ten ICRC delegates—including four members of the medical staff—, some forty relief workers from the Lebanese Red Cross and about twenty vehicles were kept on stand-by throughout the fighting, which ended on 18 June. After the cease-fire which came into force on that date, four more evacuations were carried out. All in all, 300 people were evacuated, 250 of whom were seriously wounded. Medical equipment worth 200,000 Swiss francs was distributed to dispensaries and hospitals in the camps, and to places both in West Beirut and the suburbs where the wounded were being tended.

During the first six months of 1985 the ICRC distributed 1,503 standard medical kits (value: 557,000 Swiss francs) mainly to hospitals and dispensaries in Beirut, the suburbs and southern Lebanon; 300 dressing material sets, 50 pediatric sets, 40 suture material sets, 20 minor surgery sets, 60 stretchers, 500 units of blood and 250 units of plasma were supplied by the Red Cross Societies of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, often at very short notice owing to the emergency situation on the spot. In addition, between January and June the ICRC supplied medicaments and medical equipment worth 495,000 Swiss francs to various branches of the Lebanese Red Cross throughout the country.

Moreover, increasingly hazardous conditions in certain parts of southern Lebanon induced 15,000 people to move to Jezzine and Marjayoun and several thousand others to east Beirut; at the same

time many families had to leave their homes to take refuge in West Beirut because of the clashes along the "green line" dividing the capital. ICRC delegates regularly carried out rounds to assess the needs of the displaced people and provide them with assistance. In May, relief supplies distributed to 51,400 people in Marjayoun, Jezzine and east and west Beirut came to 211 tonnes (value: 596,000 Swiss francs). All in all, during the first half of the year, the ICRC provided 607 tonnes of relief supplies (i.e. 61,850 blankets, 21,349 family parcels, 2,517 cooking utensils and various other relief items) to a total of approximately 1,640,000 Swiss francs. In addition to these distributions, the ICRC sent the Lebanese Red Cross 147 tonnes of relief supplies worth 421,400 Swiss francs.

As regards protection, the ICRC regularly visited the prisoners transferred—in violation of Articles 49 and 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention—at the beginning of April from Ansar camp (southern Lebanon) to Atlit camp (Israel). Bearing in mind the number of people released in the meantime, there were still 735 people detained in Atlit at the end of June. A total of four complete visits to Atlit were carried out during the first six months of the year, plus five other visits to register new detainees.

Furthermore, ICRC delegates continued to visit Israeli detention centres in Nabatiyeh, Tyre and Mar Elias: during 31 visits between January and 10 June, the date when the Israeli army officially withdrew from southern Lebanon, they registered 22 new detainees.

The ICRC tracing offices throughout Lebanon have enabled thousands of people to re-establish contact with dispersed members of their families; during the first half of 1984 these offices dealt with 28 requests for news, organized two repatriations, 368 transfers and two family reunifications and exchanged 93,476 family messages.

Exchange of prisoners

On 20 May, 1,150 Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners held by Israel and three Israeli soldiers held by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine/General Command (PFLP/GC) were released simultaneously under the auspices of the ICRC.

Austrian diplomats negotiated the terms for this exchange. Both parties requested the ICRC to meet all the prisoners about to be released, in order to ask their opinion of the various destinations offered them, and entrusted the organization and supervision of the operation to the ICRC. In this way 605 Palestinian prisoners returned home to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and other Arab

localities in Israel, while 151 Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners were released at Kuneitra to return to Lebanon via Syria. Simultaneously, 394 other prisoners and the three Israeli prisoners were released at Geneva airport and flew on to their respective destinations. The part of this release operation which took place in Geneva was made possible thanks to the co-operation of the Swiss and Geneva authorities.

ICRC activities following the hijacking of an aircraft

On 14 June an airplane belonging to the American airline company TWA, was hijacked after take-off for Rome from Athens airport. After it had landed, first at Beirut and then in Algiers, on 14 and 15 June, the Algerian and American authorities, with the hijackers' consent, requested the ICRC to intervene. A team of six people from the ICRC (including the delegate-general for the Middle East and one doctor) left Geneva for Algiers, where the delegates were able to board the aircraft and interview the passengers and the hijackers, and obtained the release of three hostages.

The ICRC did not take part in the negotiations themselves, since the conditions for its intervention, i.e. being the only intermediary between the parties involved, were not fulfilled. However, after the aircraft had left Algiers for Beirut, it stated its willingness to facilitate and expedite the release of the hostages once agreement had been reached between the parties. Thus, during the night of 25 to 26 June an ICRC delegate and a doctor visited in the Lebanese capital the 37 passengers and crew members being held hostage. They interviewed them without witnesses and registered them. The registration cards were sent to the American Red Cross to be forwarded to the hostage's families. Finally, on 30 June, with the agreement of all the parties, the ICRC organized the transfer of 39 passengers (one of whom had meanwhile been released at the request of the ICRC) and crew members from Beirut to Damascus on board 12 ICRC vehicles. In the Syrian capital, the released hostages were handed over to the Syrian authorities and American representatives on the spot, and were then repatriated.

Conflict between Iran and Iraq

The ICRC continued to follow with concern the dramatic development, in particular the indiscriminate bombardment of civilian targets, in the war, now in its fifth year, between Iran and Iraq. On 28 May Mr. Alexandre Hay, President of the ICRC,

publicly denounced the bombardment of civilians as one of the very gravest violations of international humanitarian law and solemnly called on the belligerent parties to put an end to this practice.

In *Iraq* ICRC delegates continued regularly to visit Iranian prisoner-of-war camps and distributed some relief supplies in the form of recreational items. Since the hostilities started, the ICRC has registered 10,193 Iranian prisoners of war in Iraq.

In addition, ICRC delegates visited eight camps in May in the region where displaced people of Khuzistan origin (Arabic-speaking Iranians) were being housed. During these visits they distributed forms for family messages and collected them when filled out, for forwarding to relatives in Iran.

At the beginning of the year, a mixed medical commission, composed of one Iraqi doctor and two ICRC doctors, submitted to the Iraqi authorities the cases of more than one hundred sick or wounded Iranian prisoners of war eligible for repatriation. On 2 May, 119 cases had been accepted and Iraq requested the ICRC to organize their repatriation in various stages together with that of 55 Iranian prisoners of war captured in January and 18 other prisoners whose release had been announced by the Iraqi authorities back in March. The first group of 30 prisoners of war were released by Iraq on 27 May; accompanied by four ICRC delegates and doctors, they were flown from Baghdad to Ankara and thence, accompanied by two ICRC delegates, on board another aircraft to Tehran. During this operation, the Turkish authorities and the Turkish Red Crescent provided the medical facilities at Ankara airport for the transfer of the prisoners.

The ICRC Tracing Agency continued to forward family messages between prisoners of war of the two belligerent parties and their families. A total of 841,735 messages were transmitted during the first half of 1985.

In *Iran* the ICRC continued its activities in connection with exchanging family messages between prisoners of war and their relatives, and maintained the dialogue with the Iranian authorities to obtain permission to resume visits, suspended in October 1984, to prisoner-of-war camps. At that time the number of Iraqi prisoners of war registered in Iran was 45,541.
