

## EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

### Africa

ICRC regional delegates in West and Central Africa have over the past few weeks visited places of detention in four countries. Everywhere, they established contact with the government authorities and leaders of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

First of all, two delegates were in the *Islamic Republic of Mauritania* from 11 to 16 February, on an initial visit to places of detention. At Nouakchott, they saw some twenty detainees held in the Ksar prison for reasons or offences of a political nature. The delegates spoke to them without witnesses and provided them with relief supplies.

In March, two delegates in *Liberia* visited the Monrovia prison before proceeding to *The Gambia*, where they visited two prisons.

Finally they spent a few days in *Senegal*. At Ziguinchor, the delegates visited the hospital run by the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands), where they were able to see the use that was being made of recent ICRC donations of medicaments and an ambulance to a value of 40,000 Swiss francs.

### Togo

The ICRC recently installed at the office of its regional delegation for West and Central Africa, at Lomé (Togo), a radio station which established its first contact with Geneva at the end of March.

The station was set up with the agreement of the Togolese Government. It is part of the emergency world network established with National Societies and operating on special frequencies. Similar stations already operate at the Caracas headquarters of the ICRC regional delegation for Latin America and in the National Societies of about a dozen countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

## Asian sub-continent

The transfer of civilians, conducted jointly by the ICRC and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, is continuing.<sup>1</sup>

In Bangladesh, the ICRC has turned its *relief programmes*—food distribution, dispensaries, schools and the construction of shelters—over to the Government and to welfare organizations such as CONCERN, CORR and the Mennonites Central Committee.

Two of these programmes have yielded the following results: the three anti-scabies centres opened by the ICRC in 1973 for non-local communities treated 53,000 patients in one year. The plan for the construction of shelters resulted, in fourteen months, in the housing of 15,700 families (more than 93,000 persons). In addition, twenty-two schools and eleven mosques were built; 5.6 km of drain pipes were laid and 400 latrines installed. One thousand volunteers took part in the action, so that it was possible to use 98 per cent of the funds available (US\$ 193,000) for the purchase of basic materials.

Lastly, the *Central Tracing Agency* transmitted altogether 16.4 million family messages among the three countries from the beginning of the action.

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During the first quarter of 1974 the ICRC regional delegate for South-East Asia visited places of detention in Singapore and the Philippines.

In a *Singapore* prison he saw thirteen detainees held for offences or reasons of a political nature.

Accompanied by another delegate, the regional delegate visited more than 2,700 detainees in twenty-one places of detention in the *Philippines*. About six of the camps in the south were being visited for the first time. Relief supplies to a value of 5,000 Swiss francs were distributed to the detainees, in co-operation with the National Society.

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<sup>1</sup> See article on this subject in the *International Review* of April 1974.

## Middle East

### Israelo-Arab conflict

The ICRC continued its activities on behalf of prisoners of war during February and March 1974.

In the *Syrian Arab Republic*, on 1 March 1974, ICRC delegates made their first visit to sixty-five Israeli prisoners of war, two of whom were wounded. A second visit was made at the end of March.

In *Israel*, ICRC delegates continued their regular visits to about 400 Syrian, Iraqi and Moroccan prisoners of war. The ninety Egyptian prisoners of war captured after 22 November 1973 were all repatriated in January and February 1974.

### Occupied territories

When the October 1973 conflict came to an end, the ICRC resumed its work for the benefit of the Arab civilian population in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. Further, as from November 1973, its delegates were able to proceed to newly occupied Egyptian territory on the western bank of the Suez Canal. In the course of several visits the delegates discussed with the inhabitants of that region the problems with which they had to contend.

The ICRC delegates were for the first time authorized to go into newly occupied Syrian territory on the Golan Heights early in March. Three visits to that area have been made since then.

### Resumed family reuniting operations

In the territories occupied by Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt, the ICRC has resumed its action for the reuniting of dispersed families. Those operations were interrupted by the October 1973 conflict. On 20 March 1974, the first operation took place on the El Qantara road, and civilians stranded by the war were able to return home; 153 returned to Gaza and the Sinai, and fifty-eight to Cairo. A further operation took place on 27 March, when seventy-three persons left the Arab Republic of Egypt for occupied Gaza-Sinai territory, and forty-eight went the opposite way.

### **Student travel**

In March the ICRC also resumed the transfer from Gaza of Palestinian students who wanted to go to Cairo for their university studies. Two such operations enabled this passage for 392 students.

During the same month, fifty-two students left Gaza for Algeria, at the invitation of the Algerian Government. They passed through Jordan.

### **Yemen Arab Republic**

In January 1974, an ICRC delegate visited the Radah and "La Citadelle" prisons at Sana'a, and the Shabaka prison at Taiz. Altogether he saw more than 800 detainees.

### **Mission of delegate-general for Latin America**

Mr. S. Nessi, ICRC delegate-general for Latin America, has completed the mission which he started on 24 January 1974.<sup>1</sup>

In Chile, where he arrived on 10 February, the delegate-general conferred with the Minister of Defence, the Minister of the Interior and other government authorities about the ICRC's activities in Chile since September 1973, and more particularly about certain fundamental humanitarian problems still confronting the ICRC. Mr. Nessi also had talks with the Chilean Red Cross leaders, who have lent invaluable support to the ICRC action, and he drew up, with the ICRC delegation in Santiago, a programme of action for the coming months.

At the close of his mission to Chile, towards the end of February, the delegate-general spent a few days in Bolivia, where he had talks with the Minister of the Interior and the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, and then in Peru, where he met senior officials of the National Society.

### **Chile**

Continuing the programme which began in September 1973, ICRC delegates, in February and March, visited more than 5,300

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<sup>1</sup> See *International Review*, March 1974.

political detainees in 45 places of detention throughout the country. Some barracks (regimientos) and interrogation centres, however, are closed to the ICRC delegates.

In the same two months, the ICRC, continuing its material assistance, distributed 2,800 blankets, 500 mattresses, medicaments, foodstuffs and other comforts in the places of detention visited.

Towards the end of January, the ICRC delegates initiated a programme of assistance to the families of political detainees. This programme reached a hundred families in February; at present 1,900 families (about 9,000 people) are receiving benefit from it, in the form of foodstuffs, clothing, blankets and direct financial aid. In view of the extent of the needs, the ICRC has allocated 100,000 Swiss francs for the development of this programme in co-operation with the Chilean Red Cross.

The ICRC delegation in Chile at present comprises twelve delegates from Geneva (including three doctors and two Central Tracing Agency experts) and about an equal number of local employees (secretariat and technical staff).

## **Bolivia**

The ICRC regional delegate for South America was in Bolivia from 11 to 24 March, in order to appraise the situation of the Bolivian Red Cross and, for that purpose, to contact the Minister of Health and the new "Interventor", and to confer with government authorities on the continuation of the ICRC's traditional activities in Bolivia.

During the second half of March, the regional delegate visited seven places of detention where he saw more than 200 political detainees. In co-operation with the Bolivian Red Cross, he provided them with comforts, mostly in the form of blankets, mattresses and medicaments to a value of almost 5,000 Swiss francs.

The regional delegate had talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the question of the signing and ratification by Bolivia of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.