

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Africa

Southern Africa

Rhodesia/Zimbabwe

The ICRC delegation in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe continued its protection and assistance activities.

In November, work was begun near Salisbury on the building of 300 shelters for displaced persons who had fled from unsafe areas to seek refuge around the large urban centres. The Rhodesian authorities gave the land, laid drinking water mains and provided sanitation. The cost of the actual buildings will be covered by the ICRC and its delegates have undertaken to draw up the list of needy families to whom homes will be allocated. It is estimated that the project will take 18 months to complete and will cost 355,000 Swiss francs.

In the medical field, the ICRC has at present on its staff 57 African paramedical personnel, working in 27 rural dispensaries. It also runs nine dispensaries in the Tribal Trust Land, where 16,000 patients are treated monthly. Moreover, ICRC mobile medical teams, in their periodical visits to mission dispensaries and hospitals, tend 2,600 cases every month.

A new clinic was opened by the ICRC in the "protected village" of Bweke (Mt. Darwin district). It will provide medical care for the 10,000 or so local inhabitants who had been without any medical facilities after the Karanda Mission Hospital closed down. Its personnel, assisted by Red Cross voluntary helpers, have been engaged by the ICRC. An ICRC mobile medical team will visit this clinic every fortnight.

Concerning relief, in December 1978 the ICRC distributed in the villages foodstuffs, blankets and clothing to a value of 68,000 dollars. At Christmas, gift parcels were distributed to all persons arrested under the Emergency Regulations.

In January 1979, despite the extension of martial law in the east and north of the country, the ICRC was able to distribute nearly five tons of relief goods, mainly foodstuffs, in the towns and "protected villages" in Matabeleland and Manicaland.

Botswana

The ICRC team which recently went to the Bobonang border region to examine the situation of refugees from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe has decided to provide certain articles which they lacked, such as powdered milk, blankets, clothing and tents.

ICRC medical teams have set on foot a campaign to vaccinate about 8,000 persons in the Dukwe refugee camps to combat an incipient epidemic of typhoid fever.

In an attempt to improve sanitary conditions in the camps, the ICRC has started special classes in the rudiments of hygiene for young men and women.

Tanzania/Uganda

Following the clashes which took place between Tanzanian and Ugandan armed forces early last November, the ICRC dispatched a delegate to Dar es Salaam and one to Kampala.

The ICRC delegate to Dar es Salaam, Mr. Thierry Germond, had talks with the Prime Minister of Tanzania and senior government officials, as well as with National Red Cross leaders. Mr. Germond was granted authorization to go to an area in the north of the country not far from the combat zone. Accompanied by representatives of the Tanzania Red Cross, he visited the Bukoba region in particular, close to the Kagera River, where he saw, housed in three schools, about 1,500 civilians who had lost all their possessions. According to government sources, there were about 48,000 displaced persons in this region. As a first step, the ICRC decided to furnish 10,000 blankets, 10 tons of powdered milk, clothes and kitchen utensils, to a total value of about 250,000 Swiss francs. An ICRC specialist in relief matters flew to Dar es Salaam to arrange for the delivery of the relief goods on arrival in Tanzania and for forwarding them by rail and road to Mwanza. From there, arrangements will be made by the ICRC and the Tanzania Red Cross to have them distributed to people in the affected areas. At the beginning of January, 2,500 blankets had already been given to some of the 4,000 displaced persons in a camp at Kashaba.

In Uganda, the ICRC regional delegate for East Africa went to Kampala to find out what kind of aid the ICRC could provide for the victims of the events and confer with the authorities responsible for refugee aid and with Uganda Red Cross leaders. It turned out that assistance would not be necessary at this stage as the government had been able to provide accommodation for the displaced persons. But it was agreed that should the authorities find that emergency measures would have to be taken they would call upon the ICRC, through the National Society.

On 27 January, the ICRC, concerned to alleviate the sufferings of civilian and military victims, sent a note to the Governments of Tanzania and of Uganda, reminding them of their obligations under the Geneva Conventions and offering them its customary humanitarian services.

Zambia

Continuing its relief activities in the refugee camps the ICRC has launched a special sanitation programme. At the beginning of January, it distributed 23 tons of building material for the construction of latrines in various camps in Zambia.

In December 1978, a course on hygiene and public health was given by Mr. El-Badri, a Sudanese expert on hygiene, lent to the ICRC by the World Health Organization. It was attended by a group of young voluntary workers from among the refugees who subsequently will be in charge of public health matters in the camps.

In the field of relief, the ICRC handed over to the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front (Zambia's ZAPU branch) 6,900 blankets for refugees in the newly set up Zambezi camp.

East Africa

Ethiopia

In December the ICRC continued its humanitarian activities in aid of the victims of fighting in Ethiopia. Through the Ethiopian Red Cross, 53 tons of foodstuffs (flour, sugar, lentils, beans and vegetable oil) were provided by the ICRC delegation in Addis Ababa for the civilian population of Asmara.

The ICRC also sent more aid to various groups of destitute persons, victims of the Ogaden conflict. In December, 28 tons of foodstuffs and 4,000 cakes of soap were dispatched to the Sidamo area, 13 tons of foodstuffs and 3,800 blankets to Bale, and 16 tons of foodstuffs to Harrarghe.

Medicaments and medical equipment were sent to Harrarghe and Tigre, while a consignment of 2,000 blankets was delivered by the ICRC to the Ministry of Health for the "Black Lion" Hospital in Addis Ababa.

In January, the ICRC donated to the Ethiopian Red Cross six ambulances worth about 165,000 Swiss francs. This gift will help the National Society to expand its activities in the areas affected by the fighting.

Also in January, an extensive programme for amputees was inaugurated with the arrival in Addis Ababa of two physiotherapists who will work in the Debra Zeyit war-disabled rehabilitation centre. They will be joined subsequently by three more orthopedists.

Relief supplies distributed in January amounted to 1.3 tons of foodstuffs, 20 tons of medicaments and medical equipment and 1,000 bed-sheets and as many pillows.

Somalia

The first part of the aid programme for paraplegics, begun by the ICRC in May 1978 with the co-operation of orthopedists made available by the Danish and Norwegian National Societies, was brought to a close in December 1978. Some twenty patients, whose ages varied between 17 and 45 years, received treatment from the ICRC team, whose members have been replaced by local personnel trained by them. It is possible that, in the second stage of the programme, the team of foreign specialists will undertake a further medical mission in Modagishu.

Central and West Africa

Chad

In December 1978 and January 1979, the ICRC delegates in Chad continued their work of protection and assistance for prisoners and civilians, employing an aircraft chartered by the ICRC for transportation, which if effected by road would have been extremely arduous and dangerous.

Further visits to prisoners of war were made in the Tibesti region: the camps at Bardai, Zoui, Edissi, Zoumri, Fada and Faya were visited and foodstuffs distributed to the captives and their families. At N'Djamena, ICRC delegates saw 29 Frolinat prisoners in government hands and 21 political detainees.

Over fifty persons were taken by air, under ICRC auspices, from the Tibesti region to N'Djamena as a result of Frolinat's decision to release some of the families of prisoners of war and of government employees.

Thirteen other persons, in need of medical treatment, were taken by the ICRC to Faya.

Tracing Agency activities in the last few weeks included the dispatch of 2,255 family messages from Faya to N'Djamena and 2,756 messages from N'Djamena to Faya.

In the field of relief, the ICRC aircraft made six flights in December, carrying about 90 tons of supplies from N'Djamena to Faya.

Latin America

Nicaragua

From September 1978 to the end of the year, the monetary value of the ICRC's action for victims of the events amounted to about a million dollars (food supplies, medical assistance, transport, operating expenses and so on).

During the first fortnight of December, ICRC delegates visited 220 detainees in seven places of detention and about 300 persons who had sought refuge in two embassies. Relief supplies—mainly medicaments—were provided with each visit. In January the visits continued to places of detention in Managua and the provinces and also to the refugees in the two embassies.

In addition, on 22 December 1978, ICRC delegates and representatives of the National Societies concerned attended the repatriation of 15 Nicaraguan soldiers who had been arrested in Costa Rica a few days previously.

In the adjoining countries of Honduras and Costa Rica, ICRC delegates visited civilian internees and refugees. Assistance to the refugees in the camps in these countries is the responsibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in collaboration with the National Red Cross Societies. The National Society and the ICRC distributed in Nicaragua 30,000 food rations in November and 20,000 in December (half of this quantity being extra rations for Christmas). The beneficiaries received rice, beans, maize, oil, salt, sugar, sardines, coffee and fruit juice. The value of these supplies for the last two months of the year amounted to 280,000 dollars.

Argentina

During the last two months of 1978 and January 1979, the ICRC delegates in Argentina visited seven places of detention where they saw 1,289 persons arrested in connection with the events.

Chile

While in Santiago from 3-10 January, the ICRC regional delegate for the Southern Cone visited a place of detention where he saw 38 detainees for whom he provided 225 kilos of relief supplies from the ICRC stock in Santiago.

Colombia

An ICRC regional delegate went to Colombia in mid-January to visit civilian and military places of detention. By the end of the month he had visited 160 detainees in seven places of detention.

Asia

Iran

The rapid deterioration of the situation in Iran in the course of the last few weeks of 1978 led the ICRC to strengthen its delegation in Teheran by appointing three more delegates and a doctor.

In December the delegates continued visiting convicted political detainees still in detention and also persons recently arrested. They went to three prisons in Teheran where they saw 455 detainees, 156 of whom had been arrested during recent demonstrations.

In January, the delegates contacted all parties involved in the crisis with a view to working for the benefit of the victims in all circumstances. They also continued their activities for the injured and for arrested persons. They regularly visited several hospitals in Teheran.

A delegate and a doctor went to Qazvin, which had been the scene of serious violence, to meet local doctors, military officers and representatives of the opposition. They visited two hospitals in the town and observed that the medical situation was under control.

On 14 January the delegates went to Ghasr prison in Teheran where there were 131 convicted political detainees and 130 persons who had been arrested during recent demonstrations. A few days later most of the convicted detainees were released.

The ICRC Central Tracing Agency is maintaining regular contact in Teheran with families seeking news of relatives who have been arrested or reported missing.

ICRC intervention resulted in the dispatch from New York, where it had been blocked, of a consignment of 15 tons of blood transfusion

material and equipment to Teheran. The consignment, ordered by the Iranian Blood Transfusion Service to cover needs for the next four months, is of vital importance in the situation prevailing in Iran.

Cambodia

In view of the fighting which occurred in Cambodia, the ICRC, anxious to relieve the suffering of civilian and military victims, approached all parties involved at the beginning of January to remind them of the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and to offer its humanitarian services. The ICRC declared its willingness in particular to visit prisoners and to receive lists of their names.

Thailand

From 4 to 18 December 1978, an ICRC delegate visited 26 police stations, 2 detention centres, 4 refugee camps and one prison in the East and North-East of Thailand. In 14 police stations and 2 detention centres he saw 1,481 persons from neighbouring countries detained for illegal entry into Thailand. The delegate distributed relief supplies to a value of 2,740 Swiss francs.

In January the ICRC conveyed to the Government of Thailand its concern at the conflict waged in Cambodia. It offered its services to the authorities for the provision of assistance, particularly medical, to the civilian and military victims who were making their way to Thailand. It stated that it was prepared to give support to the Thai authorities and Red Cross.

The National Society has taken steps to give shelter to refugees and wounded from Cambodia in the frontier region of Aranyaprathet. It has also taken over the running of the town hospital of which it has doubled the capacity by erecting a field hospital. ICRC delegates have several times been to Aranyaprathet to keep an eye on the situation.

Malaysia

Since 1975 the Malaysian Red Crescent, in partnership with the High Commissioner for Refugees, and in co-operation with the Malaysian Government, has been distributing relief supplies in nine camps for Vietnamese refugees.

To cope with the growing tide of "boat people", whose numbers are now estimated at 50,000, the League of Red Cross Societies has seconded three technical advisers in relief and health to the Malaysian

Red Crescent. Also on the spot is the special adviser to the League Secretary-General on relief and development, Mr. P. C. Stanissis.

The ICRC is also co-operating in the Red Cross operations for the benefit of Vietnamese refugees in Malaysia. It is not providing supplies, a function which is not assigned to it in this case, but it is very active in the Tracing Agency operations.

The Deputy Director of the Central Tracing Agency, Mr. Nicolas Vecsey, has been in Kuala Lumpur since 4 January, to co-operate with the Malaysian Red Crescent in assessing the difficulties facing the Agency work in the camps for Vietnamese refugees, to work out a plan of action, and to help the Red Crescent to set up an agency office. Three officials made available by the National Societies of the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland, and a technical adviser from the Agency reached Kuala Lumpur at the end of January to participate in these activities.

A preliminary appraisal shows three areas for priority action: exchange of correspondence between refugees in Malaysia and their families outside the country; the tracing of missing persons and reuniting of separated families; and the transmission of funds and parcels between the refugees and their families abroad. It was proposed to introduce the use of 25-word Red Cross message forms giving family news only, which would allow the flow of correspondence to be set in motion. At the same time a rationalization of the system of registering refugees and, in particular, precise co-ordination among the UNHCR, the National Society, the League, and the ICRC should make it easier to trace people and reunite families.

On 12 January, the League and the ICRC launched an appeal to the international community to make it aware of the plight of the refugees. On 23 January, the League appealed again to its members to provide the logistic and financial support required to expand the Malaysian Red Crescent operations.

Asian Sub-continent

The ICRC regional delegate for the Asian Sub-continent, Mr. Dominique Borel, in Nepal, from 5-9 December, and in Pakistan from 11-17 December, conferred with the authorities and National Societies on subjects of common interest.

Indonesia

By the end of December 1978, ICRC delegates in Indonesia had completed a round of visits to places of detention in which were held

political detainees who had been arrested after the events of September 1965. The visits took place in three stages: the first was from January to April, the second from May to July and the third from the end of October to the end of December. In the third stage, in addition to the places of detention mentioned in the previous issue of *International Review*, the teams of delegates went to the islands of Java, Sumatra and Bali. Each team consisted of a delegate, a doctor and an interpreter, all of Swiss nationality.

Europe

Missions in Scandinavia

On 5 and 6 December 1978, Mr. Michel Convers, ICRC Assistant Director of Operations, took part in two meetings organized by the National Societies of Denmark and Sweden. At the Copenhagen meeting Mr. Convers outlined ICRC activities to a group of prospective delegates for International Red Cross operations. At the second meeting, in Stockholm, he spoke to officials of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of CIDA (a government body responsible for foreign aid) on the ICRC's role and activities throughout the world and in particular in Africa.

ICRC technical adviser Philip Eberlin attended the Third International Symposium on Wound Ballistics in Göteborg (Sweden) from 6-8 December 1978. About 120 experts from 16 countries took part in the Symposium. It was because the ICRC has for years been conducting research and inquiries into the effects of modern weapons that an ICRC expert was invited to the symposium. Mr. Eberlin's functions, in fact, require him to take part in many similar international meetings.

Cyprus

From 4 to 14 December 1978, Miss Lix Simonius, ICRC delegate, was in Cyprus visiting minority communities, in particular those in the northern part of the island. She met government and Red Cross officials in both parts of the island and examined with them various humanitarian issues.

Middle East

Lebanon

As soon as fighting and shelling at Beirut and its surroundings ceased in October, the ICRC resumed its humanitarian activities for the civilian population, and continued to the end of the year. In all, relief to a value of 1.9 million Swiss francs was forwarded to or bought in Lebanon for distribution to the combat victims. The supplies consisted mainly of powdered milk, baby food, blankets, clothing and medical supplies. Distribution was carried out in close co-operation with the National Red Cross Society, official State services and international and other humanitarian organizations operating in Lebanon.

The ICRC has been giving priority to the provision of food and medical supplies to villages which are beyond the reach of other relief organizations. ICRC action extends also to some ethnic or religious minorities and to many hospitals and dispensaries which it supplies with medicaments and medical materials. During the second half of 1978, for instance, the ICRC distributed in the regions of Metn, Kesruan, Jbeil and East Beirut 19.7 tons of medical supplies to dispensaries and 4.3 tons to hospitals. In addition, 51 tons of food, 15 tons of clothing and 510,000 blankets were distributed to victims of the fighting.

In January, following the shelling which occurred in Southern Lebanon, ICRC delegates went several times to the Tyre region to assess medical and other needs. Emergency surgical kits were provided for a number of dispensaries and hospitals. For the civilian population as a whole, several thousand members of which have fled to the north, ICRC assistance did not prove necessary since the government body was well coping with the situation.

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A five year old boy who had been wounded during the fighting in March 1978 and taken to a hospital in Israel was returned to his family on 13 December under the auspices of the ICRC. The transfer took place at the frontier post of Ras-Nakura.

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The Israeli prisoner of war held by the PFLP General Command was visited by the ICRC on 14 January. Family messages were exchanged.

Israel and the occupied territories

In January 1979 the ICRC delegates continued the 42nd series of visits to places of detention, begun in autumn last year. They went to 14 prisons where they saw 3,059 civilian Arab detainees who had been arrested for security reasons or for penal law offences.

ICRC delegates carry out each year two main series of visits and two interim visits to places of detention. The ICRC also finances the transport of detainees' families who live far from the prisons, so that they may visit their detained relatives. In addition, the ICRC provides winter clothing for some detainees who cannot be visited by their families. Under an agreement with the Israeli authorities, ICRC delegates are authorized to visit civilian Arabs within 14 days of their arrest, while their cases are being investigated.

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Several travel operations were organized in December and January under ICRC auspices.

At El Khirba, in the United Nations buffer zone in the north of the Sinai, in the course of two operations, 296 persons en route for Cairo to visit relatives, and 78 students crossed the zone. In the opposite direction, 154 graduates, 44 notables and 281 visitors returned to the occupied territories of Gaza and Sinai.

Across the Allenby Bridge, over the Jordan, ICRC delegates escorted five deaf and dumb children who were on their way for treatment in a specialized institute. They conducted the children back to the West Bank on 11 January. In addition, a person who had inadvertently crossed the frontier was repatriated to Jordan. In the opposite direction, a detainee and two persons who had strayed from the occupied West Bank were handed over by the Jordan authorities to the Israeli authorities.