

## *EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES*

### **Africa**

#### **Appeal for funds**

At the beginning of June, the ICRC made a further appeal to governments and National Red Cross Societies for their material and financial support to continue its humanitarian activities for the victims of the conflicts in Africa. It requested, for the period from 1 July to 31 December, the sum of 35.8 million Swiss francs, equivalent to about 5 million Swiss francs per month. The ICRC warned prospective donors that, if no help was swiftly forthcoming, it would be compelled to reduce the activities of its delegations in various African countries, and that the consequences would mean considerable hardship for the people in need of ICRC aid.

The ICRC is at present active in a dozen countries, some of which are directly involved in a conflict while others are having serious humanitarian problems arising from conflicts outside. About ninety delegates, including fifteen persons despatched by a number of National Societies, are daily dispensing moral comfort and material assistance to war victims, visiting prisoners, caring for the wounded, providing food for civilian inhabitants, tracing missing persons and reuniting the members of dispersed families.

#### **Zimbabwe/Rhodesia**

In May, the ICRC delegation in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia resumed its aid programmes in various parts of the country after it had temporarily suspended them because of the insecurity during the period just before the elections. Since then, the delegation, which now has a third aircraft, in addition to the two light planes which carry delegates and medical

teams, has taken several times relief goods, mostly food, to the "protected villages" and missions. With the cold season coming on, blankets have also been distributed, mainly in Seke Camp, sheltering about 300 displaced families.

As part of their protection activities, ICRC delegates visited, from 5 to 8 June, Wha Wha and Chikurubi prisons, where they saw 234 persons detained under the Emergency Regulations.

### **Uganda-Tanzania**

In Uganda, the ICRC team, based in Kampala, continued during May and June its protection and assistance activities for the victims of the recent events in Uganda.

Between 11 and 17 June, more than 3,600 prisoners were visited in three places of detention in Kampala. Visits to places of detention in the provinces started at the beginning of July. The delegates handed over to the prisons administration some relief supplies, which included mattresses, blankets, food, medicaments and soap, to be distributed to the prisoners visited.

The ICRC continued its assistance work during those two months visiting and providing supplies to hospitals and dispensaries in various parts of the country. Medicaments and other medical equipment, to a value of 800,000 Swiss francs, were handed over in the places visited.

In Tanzania, a delegate and an ICRC doctor visited, in June, three places of detention and two hospitals, where they saw altogether 783 prisoners. Some relief articles, including food, medicaments, beds, mattresses, blankets and other items, to a value of 30,000 Swiss francs, were purchased locally for distribution to the prisoners.

### **Chad**

Since May, ICRC delegates have been helping to transport, by means of an ICRC aircraft, the families of prisoners of war and of a number of released civilian internees from the Abeche region towards the south. In May, 1,500 civilian internees, released by the armed forces in the north, were flown to N'Djamena by the ICRC. In N'Djamena, they were at first placed in four centres, under ICRC responsibility for food and medical care. By 2 July, they had all returned to their own villages in the south.

At about the same time, nearly a hundred persons—the wives and children of prisoners of war—were brought to Faya from various places

in the northern territory, but before they could be transferred to the south, disturbances broke out in June in N'Djamena and the operation had to be postponed. In all, about a thousand persons were waiting to be evacuated.

During the fighting in N'Djamena, the ICRC took a number of wounded to hospital and provided the hospitals with medical equipment and medicaments.

In the Tibesti area, ICRC delegates continued to visit and provide food for the prisoners of war held by the Frolinat.

## **Latin America**

### **Nicaragua**

The situation in Nicaragua worsened in May and June. Fighting spread to practically all the country. Emergency measures were taken by the ICRC, working in close co-operation with the National Red Cross Society, to bring aid to the victims in Managua and the rest of the country.

In May, the Red Cross sent relief to Jinotega, a small town in northern Nicaragua, organizing food and medical convoys for the civilians who were blocked by the combats in several sectors. Red Cross vehicles also evacuated a number of wounded to Managua for treatment.

On 21 May, the President of the Red Cross local branch of Jinotega, Mr. Enrique Ramon Pereira, was killed in obscure circumstances. The ICRC President sent a message of sympathy to the National Society and the deceased's family.

In June, when fighting broke out once more with renewed violence in Managua, the ICRC had to deal again with an emergency situation.

In Geneva, an appeal was sent to a number of governments and National Societies for the sum of 2.7 million Swiss francs to help the Red Cross continue its aid programme in Nicaragua, and a little later a further sum of one million francs was requested to meet transport costs.

As stocks of food and medicaments were running down rapidly, relief flights were organized with the American National Red Cross. From mid-June to mid-July, several aircraft chartered by the ICRC, including a DC-6 and a DC-8, carried 700 tons of food and medicaments from Miami to Managua. The foodstuffs were delivered to the Nicaraguan Red Cross, which set up 36 distribution points in Managua and distributed supplies to about 50,000 persons every day. At the same time, the

ICRC provided food for persons detained at the police central prison, as their families who used to bring them meals could no longer do so because of the fighting.

At the beginning of July, to cope with new developments in the situation, the ICRC reinforced its Nicaragua delegation, which now comprises fifteen persons, including two doctors and a mobile surgical team. It also set up a logistics base, with four delegates, in Costa Rica.

The Eleventh Inter-American Red Cross Conference, held in June at Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and attended by representatives of twenty-two American National Red Cross Societies, the ICRC and the League, appealed to the parties to the conflict in Nicaragua to respect the fundamental humanitarian principles and facilitate the work of the Red Cross in aid of all victims without distinction.

### **Argentina**

In June, the ICRC delegates in Argentina visited the prisons at Rawson, La Rioja and Mendoza, where they saw altogether 303 persons detained in connection with the events. They also visited the new Caseros prison in Buenos Aires, which contained 493 detainees.

## **Europe**

### **Czechoslovakia**

From 14 to 18 June, Mr. Maurice Aubert, member of the ICRC, and Mr. Philippe Grand d'Hauteville, ICRC regional delegate for Europe, attended the 8th Congress of the Czechoslovak Red Cross, held in Brno, the principal city of Moravia. Representatives of the National Societies of all the countries in eastern Europe were present at the congress. After the meeting, the participants were received in Prague, Brno and Bratislava by leading members of the Red Cross Society.

### **Poland**

Dr. J. de Rougemont, member of the ICRC, was in Poland from 4 to 6 June, having been invited by the Polish Government and the National Red Cross Society to represent the ICRC at the opening of a children's hospital in a suburb of Warsaw. A short time ago the ICRC made a

small donation towards the building of this hospital, which was founded in memory of the children who lost their lives during the Second World War.

## Asia

### Indo-Chinese refugees

The problem of the Indo-Chinese refugees who are fleeing their countries of origin by land or by sea took in May and June an extensive and tragic turn. The Red Cross, like other international organizations, expressed its deep concern.

On 15 June, a solemn appeal was made to the Community of States:

*The tragic plight suffered by hundreds of thousands of refugees, victims of the events which have been taking place in South-East Asia for many years, has been worsening for several weeks, and in the last few days has become intolerable.*

*The International Committee of the Red Cross solemnly urges the Community of States to become fully aware of the extent of the tragedy in this part of the world and asks them to take immediate and decisive steps towards seeking, at the political level, solutions to the very cause of the disaster.*

*Humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross and the High Commissioner for Refugees can do no more than treat the effects of the crisis and, even then, only to a limited extent.*

*Today, the efforts of these organisations appear absurdly inadequate in view of the extent of the tragedy; tomorrow, they may no longer even have access to the victims.*

*Only an overall emergency plan, conceived and supported by the Community of States, might stop the visibly alarming deterioration of the situation. This plan must aim:*

- *to provide food for the civilian populations who are under pressure from fighting or famine to leave their countries of origin or of residence,*
- *to initiate, in those regions of the countries of first asylum where refugees have already arrived, economic development programmes, which would benefit the local population as well as the refugees,*

- *to have the countries of final settlement provide a larger number of entry visas, so that they share more equally with the countries of first asylum the very heavy load of these hundreds of thousands of people.*

*An approach of this kind would enable each State involved in this tragic crisis, with the determined support of the Community of States, to act in full respect for the most elementary humanitarian obligations, with a view to preventing, by all possible means and at all costs, the repetition of tragedies which the world has vowed it would never let happen again.*

On 28 June, a second appeal was published jointly by the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, urging that immediate action be taken.

*The International Red Cross is today prevented from providing any kind of humanitarian relief to:*

- *more than 15,000 "boat people" who are at sea and are refused permission to land,*
- *some 80,000 Cambodians who have sought refuge in Thailand and of whom over 40,000 have been forced back and are trapped without the basic means of survival,*
- *to the hundreds of thousands of victims of the conflict in Cambodia.*

*So that it can bring immediate relief to these people the International Red Cross demands the following urgent action:*

- 1. That all governments whose ships are sailing in the region instruct their captains to respect the Brussels Convention of 1910, which concerns rescuing people in distress and putting them ashore at a port,*
- 2. That Governments in the region stop turning these refugees away from their coasts,*
- 3. That Governments in the countries of final settlement immediately pledge to take a large number of these new arrivals so as to ease the burden on countries of first asylum,*
- 4. That the authorities in Cambodia permit an immediate distribution of Red Cross relief supplies to the people forced back from Thailand, as a first step towards a massive relief programme for victims of the Cambodian conflict,*

5. *That the Thai authorities open their borders to refugees and, at the same time, allow the Red Cross to continue aiding those who are already there and to assist new arrivals.*

*The Red Cross has national and international teams and supplies ready to assist these victims throughout the region and in countries of final settlement. These measures must be taken immediately, without waiting for more wide-ranging plans to be adopted by the international community.*

### **The Central Tracing Agency**

In view of the deterioration of the situation of the refugees in South-East Asia, the ICRC Central Tracing Agency (CTA) has taken steps to speed up its work and to ensure greater co-ordination between headquarters, the field and other humanitarian organizations. It has decided to introduce a computer system for the rapid and systematic processing of information gathered in the field, and the staff in Geneva dealing with the problem of the Indo-Chinese refugees will be increased from 12 to 25. A budget of 2.7 million Swiss francs has been drawn up by the CTA for its work until June 1980.

To strengthen the co-operation already existing between the Red Cross and the HCR in the field, a co-ordination bureau is to be opened. It will provide the link between the agency offices of the National Societies and act as a clearing house for information on missing persons with a view to tracing them and reuniting them with their families.

### **Thailand**

The entry into Thailand of vast numbers of people from Cambodia between the beginning of May and the beginning of June has led to an emergency situation. Some 45,000 Cambodian civilians were massed on the border between the two countries, almost totally without supplies of any kind and in desperate need of food and medical relief.

The ICRC, in collaboration with the Thai Red Cross Society, has set up a relief programme to aid these refugees. Between 14 May and 8 June, 170 tons of food (rice, powdered milk, dried fish, etc.), one ton of soap, 200 tents, 6,000 mattresses, 23,400 sets of kitchen equipment, 8,000 articles of clothing and medical equipment have been distributed; an ICRC medical team has been working daily in the area.

Meanwhile, in Geneva, an appeal for financial help was sent to a number of governments and National Societies, and, as a result, more than 1.3 million Swiss francs, has been raised to cover the increase in ICRC activities in Thailand.

However, on 8 June, after the decision by the Thai authorities to repel all those recent refugees from Cambodia, ICRC relief work had to be suspended. Despite ICRC appeals to the Thai Government, nearly all the refugees were returned to Cambodia.

As mentioned above, at the end of June the Red Cross appealed for assistance to be taken rapidly to the refugees and all other people in need in Cambodia.

### **China-Viet Nam conflict**

In the previous issue of *International Review*, we mentioned that the prisoners of war taken captive at the beginning of the year during the conflict between the two countries were to be repatriated under the auspices of the Red Cross, in accordance with an agreement between the government of the People's Republic of China and that of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. We also referred to two repatriation operations which took place in May. Three similar operations were carried out in June.

In the five operations between 21 May and 22 June, 1,636 Vietnamese and 238 Chinese prisoners of war were repatriated under the auspices of the National Red Cross Societies of the two countries and in the presence of ICRC delegates.

### **Viet Nam-Taiwan**

A new series of repatriation flights between Viet Nam and Taiwan began under ICRC auspices: on 31 May and 14 June, two flights took 159 and then 125 Chinese who had lived until then in Viet Nam to relatives in Taiwan.

### **Bangladesh-Pakistan**

As requested by the Governments of the two countries the ICRC helped in transferring to Pakistan some 17,000 persons of Bihari origin who had lived until then in Bangladesh. Two delegates of the Central Tracing Agency left Geneva in mid-June for Dacca to carry out this task.

As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC is giving technical assistance, in particular by checking the identity of passengers on embarkation. The practical and financial arrangements are being made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) and the Governments concerned. The first ship chartered by the Bangladesh Government left Chittagong on 22 June with some 1,800 passengers. A second, chartered by the Government of Pakistan, arrived in Karachi on 15 July with 1,563 passengers.

The repatriation operations by air and sea will continue until December 1979.

### **Malaysia**

A series of visits to places of detention was carried out in Malaysia in June. The ICRC regional delegate for South-East Asia visited 755 persons held, under the Internal Security Act, in three places of detention.

## **Middle East**

### **Israel and occupied territories**

Under ICRC auspices, several transfer operations took place in May and June between Israel or the Israeli-occupied territories and the neighbouring countries.

The repatriation of a Jordanian detainee released by the Israeli authorities took place on the Allenby Bridge on 3 May; on 17 and 25 May two Israeli nationals and a young man from the West Bank who had strayed into Jordan were handed over to the Israeli authorities.

On 8 June, an administrative detainee of Lebanese nationality released by the Israeli authorities was repatriated at Ras Nakura.

On 16 May, in the Northern Sinai, a transfer operation organized under ICRC auspices in the United Nations buffer zone allowed 439 visitors and students to travel to or from Cairo.

Since then, the Northern Sinai and its capital, El Arish, have been handed back to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The first transfer operation east of El Arish took place on 13 June. Forty-four people were enabled to return to Cairo after visiting their relatives in the occupied territories, and 341 students from Gaza who had enrolled at the universities in Cairo returned to their families for the summer holidays.

**Yemen Arab Republic**

As stated in previous issues of *International Review*, the ICRC began in March emergency work in the Yemen Arab Republic for the benefit of the civilian population affected by the clashes on the border with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

A distribution programme valued at 350,000 Swiss francs, was set up after a survey of the situation by an ICRC relief specialist.

In May, this delegate, helped by volunteers of the Yemeni Red Crescent Society, made many distributions. Camping equipment and food supplies for one month were given to some 900 people who had fled their villages and who were living in caves in the Suadia and Abas regions. Some 9,500 displaced families in the Albaida and Marib regions were also given aid. The humanitarian mission of the ICRC delegate was given the full support of the Yemeni authorities.