

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Africa

Rhodesia

In November and December 1979, the ICRC delegation continued its various activities arising from the conflict in Rhodesia. In November, it distributed 269 tons of foodstuffs, 1,500 blankets, 3,000 items of clothing and 7 tons of soap to about 81,000 displaced persons. The value of the goods distributed was about 168,000 Swiss francs.

From 1 June to 1 November, the aid furnished by the ICRC in Rhodesia comprised 97 tons of powdered milk, 1,164 tons of foodstuffs, 34 tons of soap, 20,000 blankets and 21,000 items of clothing.

ICRC aid to detainees and their families amounted, in November, to about 8,000 Swiss francs. This amount included the cost of transport to carry families visiting their relatives in prison.

In December, ICRC delegates visited Wha Wha prison where they saw 87 persons detained on security grounds.

The ICRC delegation's tracing service in Salisbury opened, in November, 47 more enquiries for missing persons and obtained results in reply to twelve enquiries made earlier.

The Salisbury tracing office, in conjunction with the ICRC delegates in Lusaka and Francistown, was successful in reuniting the members of two families. In one case, the enquirer was reunited with his son, who was traced in Zambia by the Central Tracing Agency; they were brought together on 27 October, under ICRC auspices, at Plumtree in Rhodesia close to the border with Botswana. In the second case, the ICRC had been asked by a European couple in Salisbury to trace their daughter, who had disappeared; she was finally found in Botswana.

Angola/Namibia

The ICRC was requested by both the Angolan and South African Governments to make arrangements for the return to Angola of an Angolan aircraft which had made a forced landing in Namibia in July 1979 and at the same time for the return to South Africa of a South African plane which had been in Angola since April 1979.

On 16 December, the ICRC delegate in Pretoria escorted the four passengers of the Angolan aircraft as far as Kinshasa. From there they proceeded to Luanda, where they were met by the ICRC delegate in Angola, who handed them over to the authorities. On 22 December, each of the two aircraft was flown back to its own country.

In November 1979, the ICRC forwarded to Angola 17 tons of equipment and 6 tons of relief supplies for the Bomba Alta orthopedic centre in Huambo Province, where seven persons sent by the ICRC are working. They include three orthopedists, three physiotherapists and one prosthetist.

Uganda

The ICRC medical aid programme in Uganda is being phased out now that the emergency period following the armed conflict which rocked the country has ended. A sum of 100,000 Swiss francs—the last to be allocated—was set aside for the purchase of medicaments and other medical supplies for those provincial dispensaries and medical centres which had not yet been granted government assistance.

The ICRC's protection tasks continued, however. In a series of visits extending from 28 November to 14 December 1979, an ICRC delegate and a medical delegate went to eight places of detention in the east and west of Uganda. They handed over in the prisons visited by them relief supplies to a value of about 20,000 Swiss francs.

On 12 December, an office of the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) was formally opened in the ICRC delegation in Kampala. After the publication of a number of articles on the CTA's functions and tasks in the local press, about thirty persons came to the office seeking news of missing relatives.

Ethiopia

The ICRC provides aid, through the Ethiopian Red Cross, for some 32,500 displaced persons in the province of Harar. A recent survey in this area revealed that these civilians, who were victims of the fighting in past years, still needed considerable assistance, estimated at about 20 tons of foodstuffs every month.

Furthermore, at the beginning of December, the ICRC provided the Ethiopian National Society with about 29 tons of foodstuffs and two tons of powdered milk for distribution in the provinces of Mekele and Gondar.

Zaire

On 12 and 13 December 1979, ICRC delegates visited the military camp at Lokandu in Zaire, where they saw 163 detainees. The delegates spoke with detainees of their choice, without witnesses.

The ICRC has been granted authorization to visit all civilian and military places of detention, as well as gendarmerie prisons in Zaire.

Chad

In November and December 1979, the ICRC delegates arranged for the transfer of a number of prisoners of war and civilian internees from one part of the country to another. Eleven prisoners of war who had been held on Tchongolet Island in Lake Chad were released and went home to their native villages in the south, with ICRC aid. About a hundred adult civilians and just over a hundred children were also helped by the ICRC to return to their homes. They travelled on board the aircraft carrying ICRC relief supplies.

A special flight was organized on 20 November to deliver 4.6 tons of food and 1.4 tons of medicaments to Sarh. The medicaments were for the town's central hospital and for the dispensaries in the Moyen Chari area, while the food was handed over to the local branch of the Chad Red Cross which was to distribute it to displaced persons.

Altogether 49 tons of food was distributed in Chad in November.

Latin America

Nicaragua

In November and December, ICRC protection and assistance activities were continued in Nicaragua.

Mr. André Pasquier, ICRC delegate general for Latin America, went again to Nicaragua on a mission lasting from 12 to 21 November. In Managua, he met the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior and a member of the Junta, and discussed with them the prospects for ICRC humanitarian activities in Nicaragua and the difficulties which had arisen during visits to some of the places of detention. Mr. Pasquier received full assurances from his interlocutors that the ICRC's work could be pursued and that its delegates would be allowed all facilities for access to the places of detention in the country.

During the second half of December, ICRC delegates visited three places of detention in Managua and others in Esteli, Ocotal, Somoto and Puerto Cabezas. Between 18 and 24 December, 7,500 Christmas parcels were distributed by the ICRC in various prisons.

From now on, ICRC assistance will be confined to the needs in places of detention. In October, November and December 1979, it amounted to about 154,000 dollars.

The supply by the ICRC of medicaments to hospitals will soon be terminated, as from January 1980 this activity is taken over by the Ministry of Health.

ICRC aid to the families of former national guard members, who had taken refuge in the "Seminario", was also terminated, when all those families returned to their homes.

Bolivia

Following the coup d'état on November 1st in Bolivia, violent disturbances took place in many parts of the country, causing numerous dead and wounded. The Bolivian Red Cross, with the help of many first-aiders, went immediately into action to succour the casualties and asked for ICRC assistance, especially in the medical field.

Mr. François Robadey, ICRC regional delegate for the Southern Cone countries, based on Buenos Aires, flew to La Paz on 10 November, with the purpose of assessing, with the National Society, the humanitarian needs and to enquire about the victims. He took part in the operations to release several hundred civilians who had been held as hostages by peasants in various places, including Copacabana, Tiquina and, in the Andes, Sorata.

Mr. Robadey also went with Bolivian Red Cross officials to Aruro, Sucre, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz and other towns in the provinces to find out what the local Red Cross branches needed in the way of equipment. In many places, voluntary workers, who had braved considerable danger when removing the wounded and dead, had very little material of any kind and were unable to accomplish as much as they might have done. The ICRC, therefore, released the sum of 40,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of emergency supplies and medical equipment and provided the National Society with an ambulance. The League of Red Cross Societies also sent a delegate and furnished the Bolivian Red Cross with emergency wireless equipment to help it in its relief work.

The situation having gradually returned to normal, the ICRC delegate returned to Buenos Aires on 11 December.

Colombia

A series of visits to places of detention in Colombia, begun on 29 October 1979, ended on 21 December. ICRC delegates, including a doctor, went to 14 places of detention under the civilian and military authorities in Bogota and other towns. Altogether 254 persons detained on security grounds were visited.

One of the delegates, Mr. Jean-Jacques Surbeck, of the ICRC Documentation and Dissemination Division, also attended, while in Colombia, the first National Seminar on the Dissemination of Humanitarian Law organized by the Colombian Red Cross Society, and held at Melgar from 14 to 17 November.

Argentina

In December 1979, continuing their visits to places of detention, ICRC delegates in Argentina went to Rawson Prison, where they saw 270 detainees, and to a hospital where they visited a sick detainee.

The ICRC continued to provide assistance to the families of detainees. In November, it spent 16,100 dollars on aid to 986 families and also gave assistance to 86 detainees.

KHAO I DANG — A CAMP IN THAILAND

The four photographs on the following pages illustrate the installation, which took five days, of the Khao I Dang refugee camp some ten kilometres from the Khmer-Thai frontier.

1. Saturday 17 November—The ICRC and HCR representatives inspect the site chosen by the Thai authorities. Here the camp will be erected: a virgin plain, bordered in the distance by the hills from which the camp will take its name.
 2. Sunday 18 November—Three hundred and fifty local workers recruited by the ICRC arrive at the spot on which the hospital will be located. Hundreds of bamboo poles are unloaded from the lorries, to make the framework for the buildings. The work is done by hand: the workers cut the trees with axes and clear acres of land with sickles.
 3. Monday 19 November—The site is already changed beyond recognition. A huge cloud of dust is visible from afar, testifying to the hard work going on. Bulldozers have scoured out tracks. The camp's basic layout is beginning to take shape.
 4. Wednesday 21 November—Arrival of the first refugees. All pass through a medical screening centre where the sick are examined by staff of the ICRC and of National Societies before being taken for treatment to a hospital with all the basic services (gynaecology and obstetrics, nutrition, paediatrics, surgery, and so forth) and a capacity of 1,200 patients.
-

Asia

Assistance to the people of Kampuchea

The joint ICRC-UNICEF action for the benefit of the Kampuchean people continued in November and December, both in Kampuchea itself and in Thailand in the vicinity of the frontier.

Kampuchea

Several tens of thousands of tons of relief goods were sent to Kampuchea by the ICRC and UNICEF in co-operation with the World Food Programme (WFP) during the last two months of the year. Two aircraft on loan from the Australian and French Governments, and a third financed by the Netherlands Red Cross, provided daily shuttle services from Bangkok and Singapore to Phnom Penh. In December alone 116 flights brought in 2,300 tons of relief supplies to Phnom Penh, while 15,000 tons of food was unloaded at the port of Kompong Som.

In December also, the ICRC and UNICEF delegates took part in relief distributions in the provinces around the Tonlé Sap lake. From the 14th to the 21st they accompanied a convoy of 23 lorries on a 900 km trek to the provinces of Kompong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang and Siem Réap to distribute some 200 tons of food and medicaments. Impassable roads and collapsed bridges compelled the convoy to keep to the arterial highways.

This tour enabled the ICRC and UNICEF delegates to see how the inhabitants of these provinces were faring. It appeared that while the population was not actually starving it was undernourished, the most serious cases being in hospitals and orphanages.

The delegates felt strongly that a considerable effort must be made to step up distributions, for very little of the international relief has actually been distributed. The logistic infrastructure, with more than 150 lorries provided under the joint relief action and another 300 or so provided by the USSR, should be sufficient to distribute large quantities of relief.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Hocké, Director of ICRC Operations, went to Phnom Penh in mid-December, when he conferred on the distribution problem with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Health, and with

the senior officials of the Red Cross. A day in Takéo province, south-east of the capital, enabled Mr. Hocké to get an idea of the situation.

Thailand

In Thailand, despite the unstable and dangerous situation, the ICRC and UNICEF, in liaison with the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, continued co-ordinating humanitarian aid along the border.

Dispensaries have been set up in each refugee camp, with essential medical services (surgery, obstetrics, general medicine, etc.). For the treatment of wounded persons surgical centres displaying the red cross emblem have been set up outside the Samet and Mak Mun camps and several field hospitals are serving the region.

By the end of the year the medical personnel working under ICRC responsibility for Kampuchean refugees in Thailand numbered 840 persons; 400 from voluntary agencies and 440 from the International Red Cross. The National Red Cross Societies of 17 countries had medical teams in Thailand: Australia (6 teams), Belgium (1), Canada (16), Denmark (6), Finland (3), France (11), Federal Republic of Germany (13), Iceland (1), Ireland (3), Netherlands (3), New Zealand (7), Norway (2), Sweden (3), Switzerland (7), the United Kingdom (1), the United States (13), and Thailand (78 persons).

Indonesia

The action undertaken by the Indonesian Red Cross and the ICRC for 60,000 people in East Timor was carried on in November and December. Some 150 Indonesian Red Cross voluntary workers with a doctor and a relief specialist from the ICRC are taking part in the programme.

By the end of December 4,150 tons of food, medicaments, blankets and so forth to a value of 4.5 million Swiss francs had been delivered by boat and plane to Dili. Relief goods are stored in warehouses in that town and at Laga and Beaçó (logistic bases accessible by sea) ready for transport by air (or land when possible) to the village where they are taken over by the voluntary workers of the National Society. From October to December about 600 tons of food was distributed. The

assistance programme also includes medical aid to improve the general state of health and avoid epidemics among the assisted population.

The Agency's first family reuniting operation took place in December. The delegate of the Central Tracing Agency in Indonesia escorted to Lisbon one person from East Timor who rejoined his family in Portugal after having been separated from it for several years.

People's Republic of China

On 23 November 1979 a joint delegation of the League of Red Cross Societies and the ICRC left Geneva for the People's Republic of China to visit the camps, set up in 1978, for Indochina refugees (some 260,000 people), and to examine the scope for international assistance.

As a result the League and the ICRC launched an appeal in the middle of December to National Societies with a view to helping the Chinese Red Cross in its relief operations for the refugees. The National Society requires, essentially, hospital equipment to a value of 1,251,600 Swiss francs, and 2,921,00 Swiss francs in cash for the local purchase of relief supplies such as clothing, blankets, fishing gear, educational material, etc.

The two international institutions earnestly wish to give support to the Red Cross of the People's Republic of China. The country has undertaken to welcome 260,000 refugees from South-East Asia, 10,000 of whom are still in Indo-China.

The Chinese Government's operations for relief and resettlement include the construction of ten hospitals. These are now being built. Six of them will be equipped with assistance from the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and four will be equipped by the Chinese Red Cross with financial support from the International Red Cross.

The Chinese Red Cross is also studying proposals made by the ICRC Central Tracing Agency relating to the search for missing persons and the transmission of refugee mail.

Bangladesh/Pakistan

On 20 November the "Hizbul Bahr" left Chittagong for Pakistan with 1,541 passengers—245 families. This is the last sailing of Bihari families from Bangladesh to Pakistan. The ICRC gave technical assistance in these operations which began last June.

Viet Nam/Taiwan

Two repatriation operations to Taiwan took place on 22 and 29 November 1979, under the auspices of the ICRC delegation in Viet Nam: 307 persons of Chinese origin having until then lived in Viet Nam were thus able to join relatives in Taiwan.

Middle East**Israel and the occupied territories**

On several occasions in November and December the ICRC delegates in the Near East arranged the transfer of people between Israel and the occupied territories and neighbouring Arab countries.

Across the Allenby Bridge five Jordanians—two of them former detainees released by the Israeli authorities—went to Jordan and three civilians who had strayed into Jordan returned to Israel. In addition, the mortal remains of a person who died in Jordan were delivered to the Israeli authorities.

Two similar operations at Ras Nakura permitted a Palestinian released from detention in Israel to go to Lebanon and the repatriation of a corpse to Israel.

A family reuniting operation took place at Kuneitra, enabling a young woman from the Syrian Arab Republic to join her husband in the occupied territory of Golan.

Arab Republic of Egypt

At the request of the Egyptian authorities the ICRC delegates went in December to southern Sinai to assess the situation and humanitarian needs following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces. Accompanied by two Egyptian officials, the delegates had discussions with senior civil servants of the Ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture before proceeding to southern Sinai on 15 December. They stayed in the region until the 19th, visiting dispensaries and schools in the course of their survey mission.

For several years the ICRC has already channelled aid—mainly food—donated by the Swiss Confederation, the EEC and other donors to the people of Sinai, following survey missions carried out by its delegates based in Israel and the occupied territories.

The December 1979 mission in Sinai will enable the ICRC to urge donors to continue their assistance or start new development aid projects for the benefit of the population.

