

PRESIDENTIAL MISSIONS

In April and May ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga carried out missions in Switzerland, Portugal and Spain.

● **Bern (2 April 1992)**

The ICRC President, on an official visit to Bern on 2 April, was received by Mr. René Felber, President of the Swiss Confederation and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kaspar Villiger, Head of the Federal Military Department, Mr. Otto Stich, Head of the Federal Finance Department, and Mr. Jakob Kellenberger, Secretary of State. Mr. Sommaruga was accompanied by the two ICRC Vice-Presidents, Mr. Pierre Keller and Mr. Claudio Caratsch, and by Mr. Yves Sandoz, Director of the Department of Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement, Mr. Michel Convers, Mr. André Pasquier and Mr. Dominique Buff.

The ICRC delegation held a working session with a delegation from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, headed by Ambassador François Nordmann, Head of the Directorate for International Organizations.

The talks between the ICRC and the Swiss authorities focused on the neutrality and independence of the ICRC with regard to the Confederation and the possibility of a headquarters agreement being concluded between them. Other matters discussed were the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the question of financing the ICRC's activities, matters connected with the International Fact-Finding Commission, and the conformity of new weapons with humanitarian law.

At the meeting Mr. Sommaruga reviewed the ICRC's current operations, particularly those in the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan and the Caucasus. Afterwards he gave a press conference for journalists accredited to the Swiss Federal Parliament.

At the end of his visit, the ICRC President had the opportunity to

talk with Federal Councillor Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, Head of the Federal Department of Public Economy.

The federal authorities confirmed their strong support for the ICRC's activities throughout the world, and stated their willingness to draft the text of a headquarters agreement between the Confederation and the ICRC which would enhance the latter's independence in law. They expressed approval of the approaches made with a view to convening the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 1993. Finally, in the financial context, it was suggested that the Confederation, whose contribution to the ICRC's consolidated budget for 1991 amounted to 84 million Swiss francs (i.e., 12.5% of the total budget), might consider making special contributions to support the institution's operational activities.

● **Lisbon (7 May 1992)**

At the invitation of the Director-General for Foreign Policy at the Portuguese Foreign Ministry, President Sommaruga attended a working lunch on 7 May together with the twelve heads of political departments of the European Community Member States, the Secretary-General for Political Cooperation and the EC Commission's Director for Intergovernmental Cooperation.

During the discussions, the ICRC President described the problems encountered by the ICRC in its work in the Caucasus, in Afghanistan, Iran, Cambodia, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola and East Timor, and above all in its operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also referred to the institution's financial situation and to the question of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The meeting provided a useful opportunity to draw these matters to the attention of the heads of political departments, who expressed their appreciation of the ICRC's activities.

Mr. Sommaruga later had talks with Ambassador Cutilheiro, appointed by the EC Presidency to coordinate negotiations concerning Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Seville, Cordoba (8-10 May 1992)

From Lisbon President Sommaruga travelled to Seville, where, as the guest of the Spanish Government, he attended the celebrations marking World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, 8 May, on the site

of the Universal Exposition (see “The Movement in Seville”, p. 299). He then went on to Cordoba, where several statutory meetings of the Movement were taking place (see “Meetings in Cordoba”, p. 304).
