

Recent missions by the President of the ICRC

● Hungary

At the invitation of Dr. Janos Hantos, President of the Executive Board of the Hungarian Red Cross, the ICRC President paid an official visit to Hungary from 15 to 20 September 1988, accompanied by Mr. M. Veuthey, Delegate General for Europe and North America, and Mrs. C. Kruck, who is in charge of dissemination for Europe and North America.

The ICRC President had discussions with top-level Hungarian Government officials, the Chairman (Prime Minister), Mr. Károly Grósz, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Péter Várkonyi, on ratification by Hungary of the Additional Protocols, the ICRC's financing and several of its current humanitarian operations.

He was assured that Hungary intended to ratify the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions in the near future and that it would increase its contribution to the ICRC. In addition he was informed that due note had been taken of the ICRC's efforts to reunite Romanian refugee families now living in Hungary.

In addition, the ICRC President had several meetings with the President of the Executive Board of the Hungarian Red Cross and senior members of its staff to discuss bilateral relations between the ICRC and the National Society and the role and value of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. He also met other leading officials and volunteers from the Hungarian Red Cross and delivered a lecture in their presence.

During the visit, the ICRC President gave an account of "Co-operation between the ICRC and the National Societies" at the opening session of the meeting of presidents of 18 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which was held in Budapest from 20 to 22 September.

● Finland

During his visit to Finland from 5 to 7 October the President had several meetings with eminent politicians, including the Prime Minister, Mr. Harri Holkeri, who assured him that the Finnish Government would make the humanitarian gesture requested by the National Societies of their governments to mark the Movement's 125th anniversary on 8 May 1989.

With the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kalevi Sorsa, discussions centred on the dissemination of international humanitarian law in Finland and on the diplomatic approaches which the Government might be willing to make to promote ratification of the Additional Protocols. The President of the ICRC expressed his gratitude for the appreciable financial support accorded to the Institution by the Government of Finland.

President Sommaruga, who was accompanied by Mr. C. Kornevall, head of the ICRC's External Resources Division, also had many discussions with the leaders of the Finnish Red Cross and visited some of its local branches.

● France

At the invitation of the French Red Cross, which was celebrating its 125th anniversary, President Sommaruga went to Paris between 21 and 23 October together with Mr. M. Convers, head of the ICRC's Operational Support Department.

Mr. Sommaruga was first received by Mr. F. Mitterrand, President of the French Republic. He then had talks with government representatives, in particular Mrs. Edwige Avice, Minister-Delegate attached to the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Secretary of State for Social Integration. Their discussions were concerned with the financing of the ICRC and the question of chemical weapons. In this latter connection President Mitterrand suggested that a Conference, to which the ICRC has been invited, be organized in Paris from 5 to 10 January 1989 to elaborate a fundamental policy statement on the serious issue of chemical weapons, with reference to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, of which France is the depositary.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also given a general account of the ICRC's operational activities.

Finally, the President attended the festivities marking the 125th anniversary of the French Red Cross and distributed prizes to the winners of a first-aid competition.