

Missions by the President

● To Colombia and Peru

The President of the ICRC, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, visited Colombia and Peru from 30 May to 7 June 1989. A number of humanitarian issues were discussed with the Heads of State and the principal Ministers of both countries.

In **Colombia**, Mr. Sommaruga, accompanied by the President of the Colombian Red Cross, was received by the President of the Republic and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs; he also met the Commander-in-Chief of the Colombian armed forces. During the meetings, Mr. Sommaruga thanked the Colombian Government for having authorized the ICRC to visit security detainees for the past 20 years in prisons under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. He also encouraged the Colombian authorities to ratify the Additional Protocols and stated that the ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross stood ready to expand programmes to improve knowledge of the basic rules of international humanitarian law, in particular among members of the armed forces and the police.

Mr. Sommaruga also informed the President of the Republic about ongoing preparations for the Twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to be held in 1991 in Cartagena.

While in Bogota, Mr. Sommaruga met with the Human Rights Commission of the Andean Parliament. The members of the Commission reaffirmed their support for the ICRC's humanitarian work and for the dissemination of knowledge of humanitarian law among parliamentarians and in political circles in Andean Pact countries.

Mr. Sommaruga's visit to Colombia provided an opportunity to strengthen the longstanding ties between the National Society and the ICRC: Mr. Sommaruga received from Dr. Rueda Montana, President of the National Society, the *Orden del Mérito*, the Society's highest

award. The Colombian Red Cross is well known for its commitment to the dissemination and application of the Fundamental Principles.

The President of the ICRC was in **Peru** from 1 to 7 June. His visit was enhanced by Peru's announcement of its ratification of the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

In the course of the talks which took place with the President of the Republic, the President of the Council of Ministers and several Ministers, the Peruvian Government decided to authorize ICRC delegates to resume their visits in prisons under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, in all regions in which a state of emergency had been proclaimed. These visits had been suspended at the end of 1988. Mr. Sommaruga was therefore able to visit the ICRC's sub-delegation in Ayacucho, one of the regions affected by the decision.

Mr. Sommaruga also negotiated an agreement giving full legal recognition, with privileges and immunities, to the ICRC delegation, which began working in Peru in 1984. The agreement was signed by the President of the ICRC and the Peruvian Minister of Justice acting as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

As was the case in Colombia, the President of the ICRC met with representatives of the Peruvian Red Cross to discuss their activities and a number of humanitarian issues, especially co-operation within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

● **To the Federal Republic of Germany**

The President of the ICRC visited **Schleswig-Holstein**, in northern Germany, from 10 to 12 June. He did so at the invitation of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Schleswig-Holstein section of which this year organized the *Schleswig-Holstein Tag*.

Mr. Sommaruga gave the keynote speech of the *Tag*, an event organized each year in Neumunster by one of the *Land's* social welfare institutions, to an audience of about 700 people, including civilian and military authorities. He spoke in particular of the 125th anniversary of the Schleswig-Holstein War and the first field mission of two delegates from the ICRC and the Geneva Red Cross, Dr. Louis Appia and Captain van de Velde. During that mission, the armband with a red cross on a white ground was used for the first time in the history of armed conflicts. A ceremony organized by the Danish Red Cross and the local Red Cross in Kiel will be held on 22 August in Duppeler-Schanzen, in Jutland, to commemorate this event.

Besides participating in the *Schleswig-Holstein Tag* on 11 June, Mr. Sommaruga gave a speech on 12 June in Kiel at the invitation of the local Red Cross. He spoke to about one hundred people about the mandate and the activities of the ICRC.

● To Israel

The President of the ICRC made an official three-day visit to **Israel** from 22 to 24 June. He had meetings with the State President, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Ministers of Defence and of Justice, with several senior government officials and with officers of the Israeli Defence Forces.

The mission—which took place at the invitation of the Israeli Government—had many purposes, one of them being to examine humanitarian issues as concerned the territories occupied by Israel on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

The President spoke of the ICRC view of the situation as concerned the rules of international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war. In this respect, Mr. Sommaruga regretted the refusal of Israel to accept the principle of the formal applicability of the Fourth Convention in the territories. He nevertheless took note of the repeated intention of the members of the Government to implement and respect *de facto* all the provisions of the Fourth Convention.

In the same context, he expressed firm disagreement with the destruction of houses and the expulsion of residents from the territories, used as means of repression. He also mentioned the serious consequences of an intensive use of firearms.

The President took note of the undertaking of army officers to protect the wounded, ambulances and medical services. He also offered to step up the ICRC's direct contribution to the functioning of medical services and hospitals in the territories, an offer which was accepted by the Israeli Ministers concerned.

The President was also given confirmation that Israeli civilians should not interfere in the maintenance of law and order.

The problems of security detainees who are residents of the occupied territories were also mentioned, especially the treatment of detainees under interrogation, ICRC access to certain new places of detention and the application of basic rights such as family visits for prisoners. Encouraging replies were received on all these fundamental matters.

Another topic of discussion were the problems faced by the local population in the zone controlled by the Israeli Defence Forces in southern Lebanon. Mr. Sommaruga also met the families of Israeli soldiers missing in action. He confirmed that the ICRC would continue its efforts to discover what had happened to the soldiers.

Mr. Sommaruga also met and spoke in person with several people in the occupied territories who are active in Red Crescent sections, in the medical and legal fields, in education and social work.

At the invitation of the Magen David Adom, Mr. Sommaruga visited the National Society and had an in-depth exchange of views with its President and some of its leaders.

The President started his mission with a visit to the Yad Vashem Memorial, where he lay a wreath on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

● To Italy (Castiglione)

The exhibition entitled "The ICRC 125 years later", held at the International Museum of the Red Cross in **Castiglione Delle Stiviere** to mark the 125th anniversary of the Movement, was opened by the ICRC President on 25 June 1989 in the presence of the *Commissario Straordinario* of the Italian Red Cross, Mr. Giannico, the Museum's President, Mrs. Fanfani, the regional authorities and the general public.

All the speakers praised the exhibition, which was conceived by the Audiovisual Communication Division and coordinated by the Public Relations Service of the ICRC. In addition, a ceremony to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the battle of Solferino was held on 24 June in Solferino.
