

The ICRC in Latin America

A mission by the Delegate-General

The ICRC Delegate-General for Latin America, Mr. Serge Nessi, spent some two months in that part of the world for contacts with governmental authorities and National Red Cross Society leaders, and also to open officially the new ICRC regional delegation in Caracas.

From 25 June to 2 July, Mr. Nessi was in Rio de Janeiro, where he met the new Interventor of the Brazilian Red Cross, Marshal Salvador Uchoa Cavalcanti, and Mr. Tom Sloper, in charge of the National Society's foreign relations. In Brasilia he had talks with the President of the Fundação Nacional dos Índios (FUNAI), General Bandeira de Mello, concerning the resumption of medical work by the Red Cross in the Amazon.¹

Mr. Nessi then went to Argentina, where he stayed until 19 July. In Buenos Aires he met the Ministers of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Education and Health, as well as the Director-General of Political Affairs in the Ministry of Defence, and the Vice-Ministers of the Interior and of Justice. Their talks centered on the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions among the armed forces and in schools.

On that occasion, Mr. Nessi obtained authorization to visit places of detention. As a consequence thereof, from 14 to 16 July, he went to four prisons, where he saw a total of about a hundred persons detained for political reasons. The Delegate-General was also received by the President of the Argentine Red Cross, Dr. Martone, and by members of the Central Committee. He visited the National Society's premises in the capital and the Society's branches at Lomas de Zamora, Dominico and Caseros in the province of Buenos Aires.

¹ See, particularly, *International Review*, June 1971.

In Chile, where he stayed from 20 to 26 July, the Delegate-General, together with the President of the Red Cross, Dr. Agustín Inostroza, was received by the President of the Republic, Dr. Salvador Allende.¹ Mr. Nessi also saw the Vice-Minister and Director of the International Organizations Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Ministers of Defence and of Health, and the head of the Cabinet in the Ministry of Education. As in Argentina, talks centered on the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions among the armed forces and in schools. He also visited the Chilean Red Cross headquarters in Santiago and some of the local branches of the Society.

In Valparaiso, he was received by the President of the departmental branch of the Red Cross and by the Governor of the province. In both towns Mr. Nessi witnessed various National Society achievements and in Santiago, on 20 July, he attended a meeting of Red Cross executives. He also visited the Society's and the League's warehouses.

Following his visit to Chile, the Delegate-General continued his mission accompanied by Mr. Jacques Moreillon, the new Regional Delegate for South America, whom he introduced to the government authorities and to National Society leaders in five countries.

In Bolivia, from 27 July to 2 August, they met members of the Government, the President of the Bolivian Red Cross, Dr. Celso Rossel, and his colleagues in the "National Directorate" of that Society. In addition, Mr. Nessi visited the Red Cross departmental committee in Oruro. It will be recalled that, whilst in La Paz, the two ICRC representatives visited three places of detention where they delivered medical supplies for detainees.

From 3 to 5 August, the Regional Delegate was in Peru, where he was introduced to the Peruvian Government authorities and to the leaders of the National Society, presided over by Dr. García Sayán. Later, the two ICRC delegates were present at a meeting of the National Society Executive Committee.

From 6 to 9 August, they were in Ecuador where, after meeting members of the Government, they had a working meeting with the

¹ *Plate.*

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

National Red Cross Executive Committee, presided over by Dr. Miguel A. Iturralde. They also visited the Society's premises at Quito and Guayaquil.

In Colombia, where they stayed from 10 to 13 August, the delegates met various ministers as well as members of the Red Cross Executive Committee, presided over by Professor Jorge E. Cavalier. In Venezuela, Mr. Nessi introduced to the authorities the two Regional Delegates, Mr. Moreillon and Mr. Eddi Leemann, the delegate for the Central America and Caribbean sector. The ICRC delegation was received by the President of the Republic, Dr. Rafael Caldera, and by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior, Health, Education and Justice.

On his return journey, Mr. Nessi stopped in Trinidad and Tobago, where he had talks with Dr. Moosai-Maharaj, the National Red Cross Society Secretary-General, and with Sir Solomon Hochoy, Governor-General of the country.

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Opening of ICRC delegation

The official opening of the ICRC delegation took place on 19 August in the presence of Mrs. María Eugenia de Alvarez, President of the Venezuelan Red Cross, of members of the Central Committee and of the National Society staff, as well as of government authorities and press representatives.

Mrs. de Alvarez spoke first on the significance of the meeting held at the headquarters of the National Society in Caracas, and expressed her gratification at the establishment of the ICRC delegation in Venezuela, thus leading to even closer links between the Venezuelan Red Cross and the International Committee. She introduced to those present the ICRC representatives, Mr. J. Moreillon and Mr. E. Leemann, and spoke of their very wide experience in various countries in the field of humanitarian aid.

Mr. Nessi then said, in reply, that it was in response to the wish expressed by the National Societies at the Ninth Inter-American Red Cross Conference that the ICRC had decided to set up a

delegation in Latin America and had most gratefully accepted the Venezuelan Red Cross offer to provide premises and equipment. Mr. Nessi tendered his thanks to the Venezuelan National Society for their kind offer, and also to the Venezuelan Government for having granted its authorization to the ICRC to install and operate a radio transmitter and receiver. He added that it was the first time in the history of the ICRC that a permanent delegation had been opened in Latin America. The International Committee's wish to maintain closer contacts with all Latin American countries on whose co-operation it had always been able to count had thus been fulfilled.

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The delegation is now settled in premises made available to it, while, in an annex, the radio station is fully operational. Thanks to the latter, a direct link can be maintained with Geneva.

The permanent delegation will make it possible to step up visits to places of detention for which authorization has already been granted in a dozen countries, and to strengthen the links with National Red Cross Societies. In addition, it will undertake the better dissemination of the humanitarian principles underlying ICRC action.
