

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

The Indo-Pakistani conflict

The ICRC, which has been represented on the Indian sub-continent since August 1971, on the outbreak of hostilities sent the Governments of India and Pakistan a message which was based on the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, by which both States are bound. On 11 December the Governments of both countries replied to the message, agreeing to the discharge by the ICRC of its humanitarian mission. The Bangladesh authorities conveyed their intention of respecting the provisions of the Geneva Conventions even though they were not signatories thereto. In view of the way in which military operations were developing, the ICRC, on 15 December, reminded all parties to the conflict of their obligations under the Geneva Conventions.

Meanwhile, at ICRC Headquarters in Geneva, preparations were being made for humanitarian action to help the victims of the conflict on both sides of the front.

At the same time, delegates in Dacca took necessary measures, with the agreement of local authorities, to ensure, so far as they were able, the protection of the victims of the conflict until such time as the ICRC was able to take more far-reaching action. The "Holy Family Hospital", the Intercontinental Hotel and "Notre Dame College" were declared "neutralized zones" and placed under the supervision of the ICRC. A communication to that effect was sent to all parties to the conflict.

The "Holy Family Hospital", run by the local Red Cross which, since 11 October 1971, has been assisted by a team from the League of Red Cross Societies, has 180 beds. The Intercontinental Hotel and the "Notre Dame College" each housed several hundred persons, including some United Nations officials awaiting evacuation, and officials of the Pakistani civil authorities in Dacca.

It is appropriate to mention that according to Article 15 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons, the creation of "neutralized zones" "is intended to shelter from the effects of war the following persons, without distinction: firstly, the wounded and sick combatants or non-combatants and, secondly, civilian persons who take no part in hostilities, and who, while they reside in the zones, perform no work of a military character". However, the authorities concerned may, at any time, give notice terminating the existence of a safety zone. Thereupon, persons residing in the zone continue to benefit from the general guarantees granted to victims of conflicts and civilian persons by the Geneva Conventions.

On 23 December 1971, Red Cross personnel on the Indian sub-continent were as follows: the ICRC had four delegates in New Delhi, two in Islamabad and two in Dacca, and there were 14 League delegates who had been on mission for several months under the cyclone victims resettlement programme. There were also eight ICRC delegates standing by in Calcutta to relieve those who had been on duty in Dacca for several weeks and to reinforce the ICRC field staff on the spot, as well as five medical teams from the Swiss and the Nordic Red Cross Societies, making a total of 42 persons. The field staff had the use of a DC 6 provided by the Swiss Government.

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By the end of December, ICRC delegates and the members of several Red Cross Society medical teams had reached Dacca, where visits to prisoners of war had begun. In West Pakistan the ICRC delegates were then in possession of lists of prisoners of war whom they had started visiting. The Central Tracing Agency was represented in New Delhi, Dacca and Islamabad.

Khmer Republic

The ICRC medical delegate in the Khmer Republic, together with members of the Khmer Red Cross, visited several refugee centres in Phnom-Penh and elsewhere during the first fortnight of November. More than 200 patients were medically examined by the ICRC doctor and the National Society's mobile team, which visit various refugee camps in the capital each week.

Visits were paid to refugees in the Prei Phdan, Ang Snuol, Bek Chan and Battambang regions, and relief supplies (food, blankets, cloth) were distributed to nearly 1500 families.

Republic of Vietnam

ICRC delegates and doctors in the Republic of Vietnam visited the Vietnamese armed forces prisoner-of-war camp and military hospital in Pleiku on 1 and 3 December. Interviews without witnesses took place on both occasions. Previously, they had again held surgery at the Phu-My Orphanage and the Saigon Centre for Waifs and Strays, on 11 November 1971, and provided medicaments to treat those who were sick. On 13 November, they visited the Long Thanh Orphanage.

Japan

The vessel used for repatriating Koreans from Japan left Niigata on 22 October 1971, for the sixth trip, with 254 people aboard, bound for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

This was the final sailing in the second repatriation programme which, since May 1971, has conveyed 1,081 persons back to Korea.

Middle East

After more than four years of activity in the Middle East, the ICRC decided to send three of its members to pay courtesy visits to the Governments involved in events in that part of the world and to review a number of matters of concern to it. Mr. Max Petitpierre went to the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr. Frédéric Siordet to Jordan,

Syria and the Lebanon, and Mr. Victor Umbricht to Israel. This threefold mission was carried out from 5 to 17 December 1971.

In the *Arab Republic of Egypt*, Mr. Petitpierre was received by the Prime Minister, Mr. M. Fawzi, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. M. Ghaleb, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Mr. A. K. Hassouna, and the President of the Egyptian Red Crescent, Dr. A. Sallam.

Jordan.—Mr. Siordet was granted audience by H. M. King Hussein and he met the Prime Minister, Mr. A. Lozi, the Minister of the Court, Mr. A. Toukan, the Minister for Reconstruction and Development, Dr. S. Ammr, the Minister of Health, Dr. M. Bechin, the Minister of the Interior, Mr. I. Habashne, the President of the Parliament, Mr. K. Oreikat, the Assistant Chief of General Staff, General S. Zeid, and the President of the Jordan Red Crescent, Dr. A. Abu-Gura.

Mr. Siordet then went to *Syria*, where he met the Minister of the Interior, Mr. A. Zaza, the Minister of Health, Dr. M. Saada, the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. A. El Khani, and the President of the Syrian Red Crescent, Dr. A. C. Chatti.

Lastly, in the *Lebanon*, Mr. Siordet was received by the President of the Republic, Mr. S. Frangié, the President of the Council, Mr. S. Salam, the Minister for National Education, Mr. N. Haidar, the Commander-in-Chief of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General S. Ghanem, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. K. Abouhamad, and the Minister of Health, Mr. E. Bitar. Mr. Siordet also spoke with the President of the Lebanese Red Cross, Mrs. A. F. Issa-el-Koury, and the Assistant Commissaire-General of UNWRA, Mr. Callow.

Meanwhile, Mr. Umbricht, who had gone to *Israel*, was received by the Head of State, Mr. Z. Shazar, and he met the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Y. Allon, the Minister of Defence, General M. Dayan, the Chief of Police, Mr. S. Hillel, the Administrative Co-ordinator for the Occupied Territories, General S. Gazit, the Army Chief-of-Staff, General S. Lahat, the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. G. Raphael, and the leaders of the Magen David Adom.

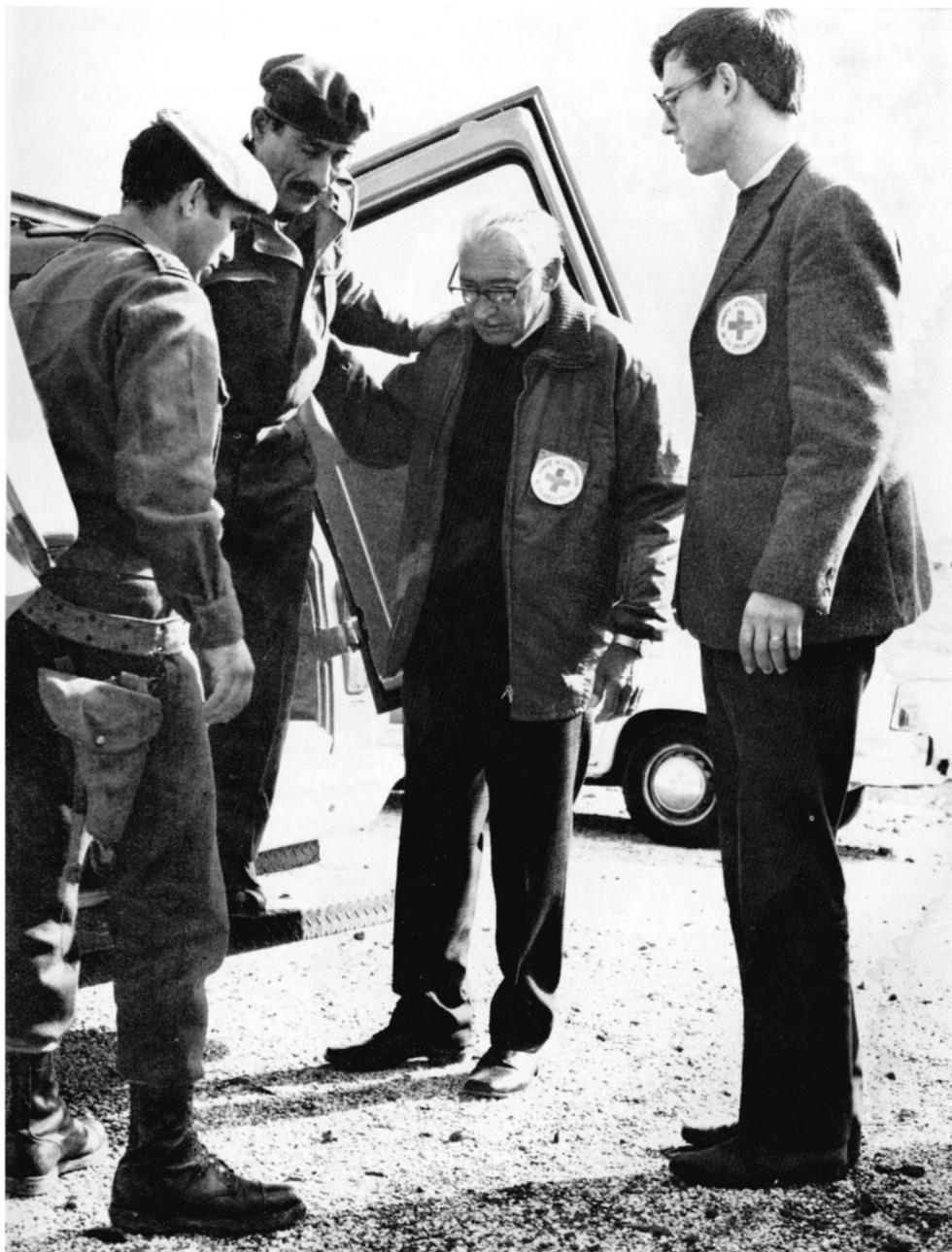


Photo Dick-ICRC

Repatriation of an injured Syrian prisoner of war : he has been accompanied to the cease-fire line by the ICRC delegate in Israel (*right*) and he is being welcomed by the ICRC delegate in Syria (*centre*).



BAHRAIN :

The anti-cholera
campaign being
carried out by the
Red Crescent.



PANAMA :

Members of the Junior
Red Cross taking part in
a " Survival exercise "
in the jungle.

Release and repatriation of Prisoners of War.—Several prisoner-of-war repatriation operations took place under the auspices of the ICRC during the first half of December.

Firstly, on 9 December, one Syrian prisoner of war, wounded and captured in May 1970, after having received the necessary medical attention, was freed by the Israeli authorities and repatriated. This operation took place at Ahmadia on the cease-fire line, where the ICRC delegate in Israel had accompanied the prisoner who was then met by the ICRC in Syria.¹

Two repatriation operations took place simultaneously on 15 December. An injured Israeli soldier, taken prisoner of war by the Egyptian forces in June 1970, was repatriated after having spent 18 months under treatment in a Cairo hospital. Four Egyptian prisoners of war and 6 military auxiliaries, who were granted prisoner-of-war status, were taken back to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

These prisoners of war had been regularly visited by ICRC delegates throughout their captivity.

Suez Canal Crossings.—On 17 November 1971, a transfer operation took place under ICRC auspices at El Qantara on the Suez Canal. Several doctors were among the 14 persons thereby enabled to return from the Arab Republic of Egypt to the occupied territory of Gaza-Sinai while a nurse was able to cross to the west bank of the Suez Canal.

Bahrain

In November, Mr. P. Gaillard, ICRC Assistant-Director, went to Bahrain, in his capacity as representative of the ICRC and of the League, to examine, with the authorities there and the Red Crescent Society, the conditions which had to be met for Bahrain to accede to the Geneva Conventions and for the recognition of the new National Society.

The Red Crescent Society of Bahrain started operating two years ago and has already attained very heartening levels of activity and development¹, but there are still a certain number of

¹ *Plate.*

formalities to be fulfilled for recognition by the ICRC and admission into the League of Red Cross Societies.

In the course of his journey, Mr. Gaillard also stopped some time in Beirut, Kuwait and Cairo in order to get in touch with the National Societies in each of those places. There were two questions that needed to be studied with them and with the appropriate educational authorities: one was that of the introduction and use, in the primary schools of the countries concerned, of the school textbook prepared by the ICRC, and the other the expansion of the teaching of international humanitarian law in universities, in accordance with a resolution on that subject adopted at the recently held Mexico Conference. The suggestions of the ICRC were favourably greeted.

Africa

Visits to places of detention

In South Africa, the ICRC delegate in November 1971 visited detainees sentenced for political reasons, held in various places of detention.

In the Cape Verde Islands, the ICRC delegate went with the chief medical officer of the ICRC to a place of detention where he visited Angolan detainees. The ICRC doctor, on this occasion, examined some of the prisoners.

In both areas, delegates spoke to prisoners without witnesses. The reports drawn up by the ICRC are sent to the detaining powers concerned.

A previous series of visits to the Cape Verde Islands was carried out in February 1969, and to South Africa in November 1970.

Burundi and Rwanda. Early in December 1971, the ICRC delegate in East Africa visited persons who were being detained for political reasons or offences. He spoke with the prisoners of his choice without witnesses, and his report is submitted to the detaining authorities by the ICRC.

The ICRC last visited these two countries in May 1971.

Bolivia

The ICRC delegate and doctor continued their mission to Bolivia, which started last August, by once again visiting various places of detention in the capital and the rest of the country. Relief supplies, some of which had been sent from Geneva and some of which were purchased on the spot, were distributed to prisoners during these visits. Following normal practice, ICRC reports are being submitted to the detaining authorities.

Colombia

The ICRC regional delegate for South America was in Colombia from 2 to 23 December 1971. He gave two talks, one at the " Universidad Externado de Colombia " and the other to the General Staff of the Armed Forces. He also met the Ministers of National Education, Justice and Defence and contacted the National Red Cross Society both at its headquarters in Bogotá and in various departmental and local committees throughout the country.

During his stay, the ICRC delegate visited about a dozen places of detention where he checked on the use made of the medicaments sent by the ICRC for the benefit of the detainees.

Ecuador

The ICRC regional delegate for South America was from 7 to 26 November 1971 in Ecuador, where he got in touch with National Society leaders and Junior Red Cross officials. During visits to different places of detention in Ecuador, he was able to confirm that medicaments sent by the ICRC for the detainees had been utilized. Lectures on the Red Cross and international humanitarian law were delivered at the Universities of Quito and Cuenca and to general staff officers of the Ecuadorean armed forces. The regional delegate also had talks with government authorities, in particular the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Education and Health.

Northern Ireland

As arranged with the Government of Northern Ireland, the International Committee of the Red Cross has just made a further round of visits to the different places of detention in Ulster. The Red Cross team of two delegates, one of whom is a doctor, visited Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast, on 14 December, Long Kesh Internment camp, near Lisburn, on 15 December, and the transit centre on board the depot ship "Maidstone" in Belfast harbour on 16 December. In all those establishments, the delegates were able freely to carry out their task and to converse privately with the internees and detainees of their own choosing. As usual, the ICRC reports on these visits are being sent direct to the Government of Northern Ireland.

A further visit by delegates of the ICRC has been arranged for the month of April 1972.
