

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1970)

**Rubrik:** Latin America

#### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

#### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

#### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 27.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## **Rhodesia**

The ICRC Delegate-General for Africa went to Salisbury in August, September and November, to discuss the question of political detainees in Rhodesia. He obtained authorization to visit twice a year persons detained under the emergency regulations. The authorities refused, however, to allow the ICRC to visit sentenced detainees.

## **Portuguese territories in Africa**

The ICRC Delegate-General for Africa went to Lisbon in March and in October. During his first trip, when he was accompanied by Mr. Melchior Borsinger, ICRC Delegate-General for Europe and North America, he visited the National Society and was received by the Portuguese authorities, with whom he discussed the question of political detainees in the Portuguese territories of Africa. In October, he obtained authorization to visit the places of detention in Angola.

## **Angola**

Mr. Hoffmann went to Luanda to introduce to the Portuguese authorities the delegate and doctor-delegate who, from 1 to 17 November, visited two prisons, a military hospital and a "rehabilitation camp", where they saw nearly 1,340 political detainees. Reports on the visits were sent by the ICRC to the detaining authorities.

## **Latin America**

Continuing the action which began in 1969, four further missions, each of several months' duration, took place in Latin America in 1970; two by the ICRC Delegate-General for that part of the world, Mr. Serge Nessi, and two by Mr. Eddi Leemann, delegate. They went to the following eighteen countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. In each country, the ICRC delegates contacted the government authorities and the National Red Cross Societies. In eleven, namely, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador,

Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Venezuela, they were admitted to places of detention. They visited some 70 prisons and saw more than 500 political detainees.

In the course of the year, the ICRC also sent relief supplies in the form of medicines, first-aid kits, vehicles and foodstuffs, to several Latin American countries. The value of these consignments amounted to almost 120,000 francs.

In co-operation with the League of Red Cross Societies, the ICRC sent a medical team to the Amazon region of Brazil. It was there from 15 May to 15 August to enquire into the living conditions and health of the Indian population. The team covered more than 12,500 miles and visited a score of tribes in thirty villages.

### **Bolivia**

The ICRC Delegate-General for Latin America was in Bolivia from 26 January to 5 February 1970. He had discussions with the Government authorities, including the President of the Republic, General Ovando. He also visited the headquarters of the Bolivian Red Cross Society in La Paz and the Santa Cruz and Camiri sections.

*Political detainees* : Mr. Nessi obtained permission from the Commander-in-Chief of the Bolivian Army and from the Ministry of the Interior to visit both the military and the civilian places of detention. He went to the prison for women and to the San Pedro prison in La Paz as well as to the Fourth Commando division prison at Camiri. He saw some thirty political detainees in all.

As customary, reports on these visits were sent to the relevant authorities. The ICRC also sent to La Paz in July medical supplies for use in the places of detention.

*Relief supplies* : In order to help the Bolivian Red Cross which since 1968 had been passing through a difficult period <sup>1</sup>, the ICRC sent it during the first half of 1970 medical supplies, dressing material and tents. In August, it also provided the Society with a mobile clinic and a Land-Rover.

---

<sup>1</sup> See 1969 Annual Report, p. 21.

## Brazil

*Medical mission to the Brazilian Amazon region* : It was towards the autumn of 1969 that, at the request of a number of National Red Cross Societies and other organizations, the ICRC began to take an interest in the plight of the Indians in the Brazilian Amazon area. After examining the question from a purely humanitarian point of view, it directed its Delegate-General for Latin America, who was then in that part of the world, to contact the Brazilian Government in order to make an on-the-spot study of scope for Red Cross action.

In December 1969 and January 1970, Mr. Nessi had talks on the subject with :

- the Brazilian Red Cross ;
- the Brazilian Minister for the Interior, the Under-Secretary of State for International Technical Co-operation, and the Administrative Secretary-General ;
- the Fundação Nacional dos Índios (FUNAI).

Everybody to whom an approach was made on the matter was immediately in favour of ICRC action in co-operation with the relevant Brazilian authorities. Encouraged, the ICRC, in co-operation with the League of Red Cross Societies, drew up a plan of action which it submitted to the National Societies of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, who forthwith signified their interest in the project and their readiness to contribute financially.

At the beginning of May 1970, preparations for the departure of the medical mission to the Brazilian Amazon were completed. The team of three doctors (one German, one Dutch, and one Swedish), as well as Mr. Nessi and a Swiss ethnologist who was responsible for certain technical matters and for deciding the itinerary, was to enquire into the living and health conditions of the indigenous populations in various regions.

The mission left Geneva on 10 May with more than a ton of equipment. It was joined at Rio de Janeiro by a doctor from the Brazilian Red Cross. After last-minute talks with the authorities, it took off for Santa Isabel do Morro (Ilha do Bananal) on 16 May. From that day until 7 August it travelled some 12,500 miles taking in :

Ilha do Bananal (about 350 miles north of Brasilia), the Parque Nacional do Xingú, Cuiabá (Mato Grosso), Vilhena (on the border





between the Mato Grosso and Rondonia), Porto Velho (Rondonia), Guajará-Mirim (then back to Porto Velho), Manaus, Tabatinga (and back to Manaus), Boa Vista, Parque Nacional do Tumucumaque, Belem, Maraba, Santa Isabel.

From these various places the team covered much ground in expeditions lasting several days, by plane, canoe, or on foot. Having full freedom of movement, the Red Cross doctors made contact with more than twenty tribes in some thirty villages and representative of more than a third of the 50,000—70,000 Indian inhabitants of the Brazilian Amazon region. From all these tribes the doctors took blood samples for laboratory analysis. In each village, they examined many people and administered more than 600 kilos of medical supplies, particularly at Bananal, Upper Xingú, Cuiabá and Guajará-Mirim.

The mission returned to Europe on 14 August 1970, after stopping a few days at Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro to take leave of the Brazilian Red Cross and authorities. A report on the mission's findings and suggestions was sent to the Brazilian Government at the beginning of December 1970.

## Colombia

From 20 September to 11 October 1970, Mr. Leemann was in Colombia for discussions with the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence delegate to the Red Cross, and the Vice-Minister of Education, on the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions. He also met the Minister of Justice and the Director-General of Prisons, whom he raised the question of political detainees.

He visited the Colombian Red Cross blood bank, school of life-saving, nursing school and other premises, in Bogotá, and he also went to the Antioquia Department Committee in Medellín.

*Political detainees* : As in 1969, the Minister of Justice granted the ICRC delegate a general authorization to visit all places of detention. Mr. Leemann visited fifteen : four in Bogotá and others at La Dorada, Neiva, Ibagué, Chaparral, Armenia, Garzón, Calarca, Medellín, Gaupi, Cali and Gorgona. In all he saw 160 political detainees.

He noted that the nine prisons visited in May and June 1969 had received part of the medical supplies sent by the ICRC in November 1969. As usual, reports on the visits were sent to the relevant authorities by the ICRC.

### **Costa Rica**

In Costa Rica, where he stayed from 24 to 29 April 1970, Mr. Leemann had talks on the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions with the Ministers of Education and Defence. He also discussed the question of political detainees with the Ministry of the Interior.

Mr. Leemann visited the San José headquarters of the Costa Rican Red Cross Society which is very active in first aid, medical and food assistance programmes, blood donation and youth services. He also went to the branch committees at Desamparados and Aljuela.

*Political detainees* : Mr. Leemann obtained authorization to visit all places of detention. He went to four at San José, Desamparados, Heredia and San Antonio de Ojo de Agua, where he saw a few political detainees.

At the San José central penitentiary, he also saw more than fifty persons who had been arrested during the demonstrations which had been organized by students on 24 April. It should be mentioned that on that occasion the Costa Rican Red Cross first aiders, led by the Society's President in person, evacuated a score of Members of Parliament who were besieged in the Parliament building. In addition, some sixty casualties were taken to first-aid posts by the National Society's ambulances.

In June, the ICRC sent medical supplies to San José for the benefit of the detainees in the four places of detention visited by its delegate. As customary, reports on his visits were sent to the relevant authorities.

### **Dominican Republic**

The ICRC Delegate-General for Latin America was in the Dominican Republic from 15 to 23 November 1970. He met the Minister of Defence and other officials with whom he discussed the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions.

Mr. Nessi was also received by the Dominican Red Cross at its central headquarters in Santo Domingo and he visited the provincial committees at Santiago, San Francisco de Macoris, San Cristóbal and La Vega.

## **Ecuador**

In Ecuador, where he stayed from 12 to 24 October 1970, Mr. Leemann had discussions on the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions with the Under-Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and for Education as well as with the head of the armed forces. He was also received by the Minister of the Interior, who authorized him to visit all places of detention in the country.

He was received at the Ecuador Red Cross headquarters in Quito and he visited the local committees at Guayaquil, Riobamba, Ambato, Latacunga and Cuenca. He took advantage of his visit to inform the National Society leaders of the ICRC's activities in Latin America and of the mission which the Red Cross can and should carry out during domestic armed conflicts.

*Political detainees* : Mr. Leemann went to nine places of detention : four in Quito, two in Guayaquil and the others in Riobamba, Ambato and Cuenca. He saw in all some thirty political detainees. As customary, the ICRC sent reports on his visits to the relevant authorities.

*Donation of a mobile clinic* : The ICRC sent this vehicle to Quito in November 1970, as a gift to the Ecuadorian Red Cross.

## **Guatemala**

Mr. Leemann was in Guatemala from 4 to 19 March. He met the Minister of National Defence and the Vice-Minister of Education for talks on the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions. He also obtained an interview with the Minister of the Interior, who authorized him to visit places of detention.

The ICRC delegate was received at the Guatemala Red Cross headquarters, in Guatemala City, where he delivered an address and showed a film on the Red Cross to the Society's members.

*Political detainees* : Mr. Leemann went to seven places of detention : the first, second and fourth Police Corps, the prison for women

in Santa Teresa and the prisons of Salama, Quetzaltenango and Pavón. He saw some sixty political detainees.

Furthermore, on 3 April, the Government of the German Federal Republic (GFR) requested the ICRC to intervene in favour of the Ambassador of the German Federal Republic to Guatemala, who had been kidnapped on 31 March. The following day, Mr. Leemann, who was then in Central America, was already in Guatemala City. However, all appeals made to the kidnappers over the radio and through the press that the life of the Ambassador be spared and offering ICRC mediation unfortunately remained without avail; on 5 April, the German diplomat was found murdered.

Later, the ICRC delegate carried out a further series of visits to the Police Corps, the Santa Teresa Women's Prison and the prison of Pavón.

It should be pointed out that in the affair of the kidnapping of the German Ambassador the ICRC delegate worked in close collaboration with the Guatemalan Red Cross.

*Despatch of relief supplies* : In March, the ICRC despatched to the Guatemalan Red Cross 15 first-aid kits for its first-aid corps.

## **Guyana**

The Delegate-General of the ICRC for Latin America went to Guyana from 16 to 19 December 1970. This was an opportunity for him to have preliminary conversations with governmental authorities there. Mr. Nessi was received by the President of the Republic, Mr. Arthur Chung, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of the Interior, the Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defence Force and by the leader of the opposition. Mr. Nessi detailed to these distinguished officials the latest information on ICRC activities, the development of international humanitarian law and the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions.

The Delegate-General of the ICRC visited the headquarters of the Guyana Red Cross in Georgetown and was most impressed by its organization. He spoke to the Council of the National Society on the organization of the International Red Cross, on the work of the ICRC and on the role of National Societies.

## **Haiti**

From 13 to 15 November 1970, the Delegate-General of the ICRC made a brief visit to Haiti, in order to keep in touch with the Haiti Red Cross, which is going through a heartening phase of expansion. In addition to existing activities—medico-social assistance, first aid, pre-disaster organization, etc.—two new ventures were started in 1970: free courses in mother and baby care and a blood transfusion centre.

In March 1970, the ICRC despatched 2 tons of powdered milk to the Haiti Red Cross, for distribution to needy families in Port-au-Prince.

## **Honduras**

Mr. Leemann stayed in Honduras from 15 to 21 February 1970. He had talks with the Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education and with the Chief of the Armed Forces on the subject of the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions. He also met the Minister for Foreign Affairs and obtained the authorization of the Minister of the Interior to visit two places of detention.

Moreover, the ICRC delegate attended a meeting of the Honduran Red Cross Central Committee at Tegucigalpa and met several times the President of the Society for talks.

*Visits to places of detention* : Mr. Leemann visited two places of detention : the Tegucigalpa penitentiary and the prevention centre of the police investigation department (DIN). But he did not find there any prisoners detained for political reasons.

*Despatch of relief* : In August, the ICRC donated a Land-Rover to the Honduran Red Cross. It also sent 15 first-aid kits as a contribution to the creation of a team of first-aiders.

## **Jamaica**

The ICRC Delegate-General for Latin America effected a brief mission to Jamaica from 10 to 13 November 1970. He visited there National Red Cross Society headquarters in Kingston, and the Society's local branch at Montego Bay. Mr. Nessi also met the Chief of Staff of the Jamaican Armed Forces and had talks with him on the subject of the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions.

## Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, where he stayed from 30 March to 11 April, Mr. Leemann met the Ministers of Education and of Defence on the subject of the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions, and the Vice-Minister of the Interior about political detainees.

He was also received at the headquarters of the Nicaraguan Red Cross Society in Managua, and visited its branches at Granada and Leon.

In addition, the Ninth Inter-American Red Cross Conference was held in Managua from 1 to 5 December 1970. The Conference was attended by Mr. Marcel A. Naville, President of the ICRC, Mr. Nessi, ICRC Delegate-General for Latin America, and Mr. Basset, Assistant Director.

*Political detainees* : Mr. Leemann was allowed to visit 7 places of detention, 3 of which were in Granada, 2 in Leon, one in Managua and one in Tipitapa. He saw in all more than 30 political detainees. As customary, the ICRC sent reports on the visits to the authorities concerned.

In June, the ICRC sent medicaments to Managua for these places of detention.

## Panama

From 30 April to 6 May, Mr. Leemann was in Panama, where he had talks with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Education and Public Health.

He was also received at the headquarters of the Panamanian Red Cross. He visited, too, the Provincial Committee of Chiriqui at David and the first-aid units on the beaches of Vera Cruz, San Carlos, Farallon and Rio Mar.

In December, the President of the ICRC, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, accompanied by the Delegate-General for Latin America, paid an official visit to Panama.<sup>1</sup>

*Political detainees* : Mr. Leemann went on 5 May to the "Carcel Modelo" of Panama, where he saw about 30 political detainees. As customary, the report on the visit was sent to the authorities concerned.

---

<sup>1</sup> See page 110 of this Report.

*Despatch of relief* : Following a request from the Government of Panama, the ICRC sent in July medicaments and vaccines to the Panamanian Red Cross, so that the latter could participate in the vaccination campaign undertaken by the Ministry of Public Health to aid the Guaymés Indians of Chiriquí and Bocas del Toro. It also dispatched 12 first-aid kits to the National Society.

### **Paraguay**

After leaving Brazil at the end of 1969, and on his way to Bolivia, the Delegate-General of the ICRC for Latin America stopped a second time<sup>1</sup> in Paraguay, to have further talks with government authorities and members of the National Society. On this occasion, Mr. Nesi, accompanied by the Secretary-General of the Paraguayan Red Cross, was also received in audience by the President of the Republic, General Alfredo Stroessner, with whom they spoke about ICRC activities.

### **Peru**

Mr. Leemann went to Peru from 21 November to 8 December 1970. He had talks with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of War and with a high official of the Ministry of Education, on the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions, and with the General Director of Penal Establishments on the question of political detainees.

With regard to relations with the Peruvian Red Cross, the ICRC delegate spoke on the work of the ICRC to members of the Central Committee in Lima. He also visited the Society's branches at Cuzco, Ayacucho and Huancayo. A large part of the National Society's activities was directed to various assistance projects in the areas struck by the earthquake of 21 May 1970.

*Political detainees* : Mr. Leemann obtained a general authorization to visit all places of detention in Peru. He went to 7 such places—Lurigancho, Lima, Cuzco, Chorillos, Fronton, Ayacucho and Huancayo—where about forty political detainees were held and talked with them in private.

In January 1970, the ICRC despatched a second consignment of medicaments for these places of detention.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Annual Report, 1969, pp. 25-26.

## **El Salvador**

In 1970, Mr. Leemann paid two visits to El Salvador, once from 22 February to 3 March, and the second time from 20 to 28 March. He had meetings, in particular, with the Minister of Defence and of Education, and with the Chief of Police.

He was also received at the headquarters of the El Salvador Red Cross, a Society that is making great strides forward. Among its many activities, the following may be mentioned: first-aid posts have been set up on highways at dangerous crossroads, lifesaving teams are on duty on beaches, Red Cross programmes are included in school television, etc.

*Visits to places of detention* : The ICRC delegate obtained the authorization to visit all places of detention in El Salvador. He went to eight such places, 3 of them at San Salvador, and the others at Sonsonate, Nahuizalco, Izalco, Santa Tecla and Ilopango. He saw about a dozen political detainees.

## **Trinidad and Tobago**

The Delegate-General of the ICRC stayed from 11 to 16 December 1970 in Trinidad and Tobago, where preliminary talks were initiated with government authorities. He was received by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Security and the Minister of Public Services, and spoke to them on the work of the ICRC and the development of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Nessi also visited the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society's main premises and principal centres at Port of Spain, and its southern branch at San Fernando.

## **Venezuela**

Mr. Leemann was in Venezuela from 6 to 19 September and was received by the Ministers of Defence, Justice, Interior and Education, with whom he had talks on various questions concerning political detainees and the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions.

He also visited the headquarters of the Venezuelan Red Cross, in Caracas, where he spoke on ICRC activities before the Executive Committee, and the local branches at Los Teques, Cumana and Valencia.

The President of the ICRC, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, accompanied by the ICRC Delegate-General, went to Venezuela on an official visit from 27 to 29 November.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Nessi visited Venezuela a second time on 9 and 10 December 1970, when he and the President of the National Society were received in audience by the President of the Republic, Dr. Rafael Caldera.

*Political detainees* : Mr. Leemann was granted authorization to visit all places of detention in Venezuela. He visited seven such places : 2 in Caracas, and the others at San Juan de los Morros, Valencia and Los Teques, as well as the counter-guerrilla base at Cocoyar in the State of Monagas. The ICRC delegates met, in all, over 120 political detainees, held at the disposal of the civilian and military judicial authorities.

When he went the second time to Caracas, in December, Mr. Nessi visited again two places of detention, where several political detainees were held.

*Despatch of relief* : The ICRC despatched to the Venezuelan Red Cross eight first-aid kits.

## Asia

Faced with the spread of the conflict in South-East Asia, the ICRC took, in 1970, the following general measures :

On 22 May, it sent all the countries involved in the hostilities in South-East Asia a circular letter concerning the application of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. In reply, the Governments of Australia, Cambodia, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Thailand, the U.S.A. and the Republic of Vietnam all undertook to respect the Conventions, as they had done up to then.

From 10 May to 15 June, a special mission, composed of Dr. Roland Marti and Dr. Jean-Maurice Rubli, medical advisers to the ICRC, and of Mr. André Beaud, head of the Relief Service, studied in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, the Republic of Vietnam, Hong Kong and Singapore

---

<sup>1</sup> See page 110 of this Report.