

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1977)

Rubrik: Regional Delegations

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Regional Delegations

Previous chapters describe the actions undertaken by the ICRC for victims of international and non-international armed conflicts and their sequels. In most cases the duration and scale of those operations have necessitated the installation of delegations in the countries where they took place.

In addition to such large-scale actions, the ICRC has carried out a series of activities not requiring its permanent presence in the countries concerned. In such cases action was conducted by the various regional delegations in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Moreover, regional delegates in Geneva covered North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Europe and North America.

Such activities are mainly the following.

ACTIVITIES FOR “POLITICAL DETAINEES”. — The regional delegates carry out the important activity of protecting and assisting detainees, especially those deprived of their freedom for political reasons. On the basis of its own Statutes and its right of humanitarian initiative, confirmed by the Statutes of the International Red Cross, the ICRC endeavours to gain access to such detainees, considered by their governments as opponents of the State.

For instance, in 1977, the regional delegates visited 244 places of detention in twenty-two countries where there were a total of some 14,000 “political detainees”.

It should be observed that in the present Report the expression “*political detainees*” is used for simplicity and does not imply presumption by the ICRC of the status attributed by the detaining authorities to the prisoners visited.

These visits—during which the regional delegates are accompanied if need be by other delegates and by doctors—are for an exclusively humanitarian purpose, namely, to inspect detention conditions from every aspect (quarters, food, medical

attention, work, leisure, contact with the outside, treatment, discipline and so forth), if necessary to provide the detainees with relief (see table 33) and to propose to the authorities any measures for the improvement of detention conditions. The delegates first submit their findings and suggestions to the official in charge of the place of detention and then to his superiors. The findings and suggestions are then the subject of an official and confidential report which the ICRC sends only to the government concerned.

ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH CONVENTIONS. — In the discharge of activities required by Conventions—and through their regular contacts with governments and National Societies in the countries they visit, and even with liberation movements—the regional delegates take part in the work of dissemination undertaken by the ICRC with a view to promoting the fundamental principles of the Red Cross, the Geneva Conventions and the Protocols (see p. 47). For that purpose they are in contact with Ministries of Defence, Education and Health, with universities and medical circles, in order to disseminate ICRC publications intended for the armed forces, youth and medical personnel, to introduce courses, to give lectures or to assist in organizing national or regional seminars on international humanitarian law.

In this connection it should be mentioned that they are also required to participate in seminars on the Red Cross organized by National Societies or their federation, the League (see pp. 51-52).

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Whenever possible, as is generally the case, the regional delegates associate the National Societies in their activities or inform them of them. They also take an interest in the Societies’

ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF VISITS TO “POLITICAL DETAINEES”

When applying to visit places of detention, the ICRC delegates insist on :

- seeing all “political detainees”,
- talking freely and in private with detainees of their choice,
- being given a list of the detainees before the visit or facilities to compile it during the visit,
- repeating the visit as needed.

If necessary and possible they organize the transmission of family messages, and assistance to detainees and their families.

own activities which, as far as it can, the ICRC supports materially (see table on p. 33).

In the event of conflict it is this work of preparation jointly with National Societies which enables the ICRC to intervene for the benefit of victims without delay.

Africa

Taking the developing situation in Africa into account, the ICRC found itself impelled in 1977 to change its organization in terms of events.

Mainly because of the Ethiopia/Eritrea conflict (see below) and the Ogaden conflict (see p. 13), the regional delegation in Nairobi—which covers *East Africa*—had considerably to increase its activities; consequently, the ICRC had to increase the number of its delegates in that part of the world.

At the beginning of the year, the ICRC decided to suspend the activities of its regional delegation for *West Africa* (based on Lomé, Togo) because of the expansion of its operations in Southern and East Africa. A number of missions were nevertheless carried out from Geneva in view of the situation in Zaire and Chad.

The work of the regional delegation in Lusaka, Zambia (kept busy mainly by the conflicts in *southern Africa*) is described on page 18.

East Africa

ETHIOPIA. — *Conflict in Eritrea:* Because of the conflict between the Ethiopian Government and the two Eritrean liberation movements—the “Eritrean Liberation Front” (ELF) and the “Eritrean People’s Liberation Front” (EPLF)—the ICRC regional delegates carried out several missions at Addis Ababa in 1977. Their purpose was to maintain contact with the Ethiopian Red Cross and Government and to repeat the ICRC’s offers to provide protection and assistance to the victims of the events. These various attempts, the first of which had been made as early as December 1974, did not achieve their objectives in 1977 and Eritrea remained closed to the ICRC delegates.

The humanitarian branches of the two Eritrean liberation movements maintained contact with the ICRC in 1977, informing it of the suffering endured by the civilian population afflicted by the conflict, and asking it to assist with medical and other relief supplies.

With a view to better co-ordination with the Eritrean movements for the despatch of relief for victims, the ICRC sent a delegate to Khartoum, Sudan, where he stayed from the end of August to the end of November.

Thanks to support from various governments and National Societies, the ICRC sent

12.1 tons of medical supplies

807 tons of foodstuffs

7,500 parcels for Ethiopian prisoners in Eritrean hands

to the “Eritrean Red Cross and Crescent Society” (ERCCS), the humanitarian branch of the ELF, and to the “Eritrean Relief Association” (ERA) the humanitarian branch of the EPLF.

The value of these relief supplies amounted to 1,866,200 Swiss francs.

While in Khartoum, the ICRC delegate endeavoured to strengthen ICRC links with the Sudanese Government and Red Crescent.

MADAGASCAR—COMOROS. — As a consequence of the clash which occurred at the end of December 1976 in the town of Majunga between Malagasy nationals and Comorians settled in Madagascar, the Government of the Comoro Archipelago launched an international appeal to the ICRC and other institutions to help repatriate some 16,000 Comorians who wished to leave Madagascar.

In response the ICRC sent a delegation to the Comoro islands and to Majunga to assess the situation. After that mission the ICRC, in co-operation with the Malagasy Red Cross and representatives of the Comorian community of Majunga, undertook emergency action for the Comorians who were in camps at Majunga awaiting repatriation. Relief supplies, mainly food and medicaments, to a value of 46,900 Swiss francs were distributed among the Comorians.

In addition, the UNHCR financed an ICRC medical team of one doctor and a nurse who went to Moroni on the island of Grande Comore on 27 January and stayed for five weeks to provide the repatriated Comorians with medical and material assistance.

The ICRC medical team also made a complete survey of the medical situation and services of the islands with a view to a plan of action and to provide directly the first medical relief supplies.

Both in the Comoros and in Madagascar, the work undertaken by the ICRC had to meet two definite criteria: action without delay and completion within a certain time. For that reason the League of Red Cross Societies sent one of its delegates to Moroni and took over the work of the ICRC when its mandate was finished at the beginning of March 1977.

DJIBOUTI. — The ICRC regional delegate went to Djibouti on 10 February to visit nine “political detainees” and other prisoners in the Gabode prison.

After the former French territory of the Afars and the Issas had acceded to independence, he went a second time to Djibouti to make contact with the new authorities. The main purpose was to discuss the accession of the new republic to the Geneva Conventions and the founding of a National Red Crescent Society. The regional delegate met the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of the Interior and of Justice.

MISCELLANEOUS. — The regional delegate went to *Uganda* at the end of April, to *Rwanda* in the middle of May and to *Burundi* at the end of June to confer with the authorities and the National Societies. In Burundi the aim was the continuation of the assistance begun in 1967 with a view to improving detention conditions. The ICRC contributed 15,000 Swiss francs for that purpose in 1977.

West Africa

ZAIRE. — Following the disturbances which had shaken the Shaba province in south-east Zaire, the ICRC despatched a delegate to Zaire, where he stayed from 4 to 9 April to inform the authorities that the ICRC was prepared to help in solving the humanitarian problems engendered by the situation.

The ICRC delegate was in Zaire a second time from 23 April to 6 May, in order to make a formal offer of ICRC services to the Zaire Government, consistent with article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions. He also applied for authorization to go to the Shaba province accompanied by a member of the Zaire Red Cross in order to assess the needs of the victims of the conflict. Initially the authorities agreed to such a mission but finally declined the ICRC's services.

The President of the ICRC thereupon sent a cable to President Mobutu, restating that the ICRC services were available to the Zaire Government for assistance and protection of the conflict victims, and repeating the desire of the ICRC to send a representative to Shaba. No reply was received.

CHAD. — In June 1977 skirmishes occurred in the Tibesti region (northern Chad) between Chad army units and members of the National Liberation Front of Chad, the FROLINAT. In the course of the fighting the FROLINAT took the garrison town of Bardai and captured some 300 Chad soldiers and civilians.

As it wished the women, children and wounded to be removed from the fighting zone, the FROLINAT asked the ICRC to organize the evacuation operation. In response, the ICRC sent a delegate to N'Djamena at the end of July to offer the Chad authorities the services of the ICRC for the evacuation of the prisoners concerned.

As the operation could only be carried out by air, many technical problems arose, such as the length of the runway and

its altitude, the nature of the ground and the difficulty of obtaining a suitable airplane.

At the same time an ICRC delegate went to Tripoli in order to examine with the Libyan authorities concerned and with the FROLINAT representatives the possibility of reaching the Tibesti region.

All these events entailed considerable delay and necessitated a second ICRC mission to N'Djamena in December in order to make practical arrangements; the operation was finally planned for the beginning of 1978.

Latin America

At the beginning of the year the ICRC made several changes to its organization in Latin America.

The scale of humanitarian problems in Chile having declined, the ICRC delegation staff in Santiago was reduced (see p. 25 below). At the same time the Chile delegation was integrated with the regional delegation for the "Southern Cone" which had its headquarters in Buenos Aires.

The headquarters of the ICRC regional delegation for *Central America and the Caribbean* was transferred from Caracas to Guatemala.

The ICRC maintained the regional delegation for the *Andean Countries* in Caracas.

During the first few months of the year priority was given to action in the countries of the "Southern Cone", and especially in Argentina. For that reason the regional delegates for the Andean Countries and for Central America and the Caribbean were temporarily assigned to activities in Argentina.

Countries of the "Southern Cone"

The regional delegate for the countries of the "Southern Cone" carried out several missions—apart from those he undertook in *Argentina* where he was in charge of ICRC operations in that country—to *Chile*, *Paraguay* and *Uruguay*.

In November the ICRC delegate-general for Latin America went to Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and *Brazil*. His purpose was to contact the authorities and the National Societies and to examine ways and means of continuing ICRC protection and assistance in those countries.

ARGENTINA. — When in Buenos Aires in December 1976, the ICRC President had been assured by the Argentine authorities that from the beginning of 1977 the ICRC could start a programme of protection and assistance for detainees.

Staff strength: To carry out the programme, the ICRC brought up its staff strength in Buenos Aires in January 1977 to eight

persons, namely: the regional delegate for the "Southern Cone" countries, who was in charge; two teams comprising a delegate and a doctor-delegate to visit places of detention; a delegate of the Central Tracing Agency; a delegate for administrative and relief affairs; and a secretary.

When the visits were suspended (see below) the staff was reduced to four, i.e.: the regional delegate, the Agency delegate, the delegate for administrative affairs, and the secretary. The regional delegates for the countries of Central America and the Caribbean and of the Andes, who had been members of the visiting teams, returned to their respective stations.

Visits to places of detention: The first series of visits to places of detention took place from 17 January to 22 April, when the delegates had access to more than a score of places of detention in Buenos Aires and the provinces. All these places of detention were under the authority of the Federal and Provincial Penitentiary Service with one exception which came under the control of the military authorities. Seven of these places of detention, those in which there were the greatest number of detainees, were visited twice. In all there were more than 4,000 detainees in the places visited.

As customary, the ICRC drew up reports on the visits and forwarded them to the relevant Argentine authorities. In addition, the regional delegate gave the Minister of the Interior and other authorities a summary of the work carried out and, as had been agreed in December 1976, asked that the visits be continued.

As the required authorization was not forthcoming, the ICRC made numerous approaches, in Buenos Aires and in Geneva through the Argentine Permanent Mission. On 19 August the President of the ICRC wrote to the President of the Republic, General Jorge Rafael Videla and to other Argentine Government officials. After referring to the agreement of December 1976 and reviewing the visits carried out in Argentina, he asked for permission for the visits to be resumed without any time limit and in accordance with criteria which the ICRC considered essential (see box on p. 22).

Not until November, when the delegate-general went to Buenos Aires, did the ICRC receive official confirmation that it could resume its visits under the conditions it had stipulated. The delegate-general had talks on the subject with all the authorities concerned.

Visits to political detainees in Argentina resumed only on 14 December 1977.

It should be mentioned that while visits to detainees were suspended the Buenos Aires delegation continued assisting detainees' families and seeking persons reported missing.

Assistance to detainees and their families: During the first series of visits, the ICRC delegates distributed relief items in five

places of detention. This relief, to a value of about 4,700 Swiss francs consisted mainly of medical supplies.

They also started a programme of assistance to the most needy families of detainees. By the end of 1977, food valued at 6,000 Swiss francs was being distributed monthly to 200 families.

CHILE. — Staff strength and reminder of activities: After its integration with the regional delegation for the "Southern Cone" on 1 January 1977, the staff of the Chile delegation was cut to two delegates, a doctor-delegate, an administrative secretary and six locally recruited assistants. The doctor-delegate visited also places of detention in other Latin American countries.

The regional delegate went four times to Santiago for talks with the Chilean authorities and Red Cross and to review the delegation's activities.

The delegation continued its work of protection and assistance for detainees and their families in 1977, although on a reduced scale as there were fewer detainees. The Chilean delegation's operations, which began after the events of 11 September 1973, consist of visiting places of detention, assisting detainees and their families, and recording requests for news of persons reported missing.

Visits to places of detention: With access to all official places of detention, the ICRC delegates went to civilian prisons and, until it was closed in June, to the last of the camps for persons detained under the "state of siege" (the others having been closed when that category of detainee were released).

In all, the delegates made 153 visits to slightly more than sixty places of detention in which there were about 400 detainees at the beginning of the year and 250 at the end. All these detainees—except one who was detained under the "state of siege" and released and exiled on 17 June—were awaiting trial ("procesados") or had been convicted.

As usual a report on each visit was sent to the relevant authorities. Negotiations took place after each visit on the detention conditions reported and on various problems affecting the detainees.

The delegation in Chile also continued to concern itself in the programme of releases of convicted persons, maintaining contact with the places of detention and with the institutions responsible for applying decree No. 504 on the possibility for detainees to leave the country.

Assistance to detainees and their families: Throughout the country the distribution of relief supplies to detainees and the programme of assistance to their families continued, thanks to donations in cash and in kind from various sources.

The list of governments and National Societies which made cash contributions to cover the cost of the ICRC's operations in Chile is given on pages 68-69.

The German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany donated to the programme 6 tons of babyfood.

The ICRC had, also, a large part of the supplies provided by the European Economic Community and the Swiss Government in 1976 (consisting of rice, skimmed milk and wheat flour).

The ICRC delegates also made a number of purchases locally.

The overall value of food, clothing, medicaments, toilet and cleaning products and books distributed among the detainees amounted to 50,480 Swiss francs.

The cost of the programme of assistance to detainees' families was 129,000 Swiss francs. More than a thousand families benefited from this assistance which consisted mainly of basic foodstuffs and was dispensed through thirty distribution centres throughout the country operated by local sections of the Chilean Red Cross and by church organizations.

The ICRC also consigned various relief goods from its stock to such private organizations and institutions as the Chilean Red Cross, "Caritas Chile", the "Casa de Menores de Concepción" and the "Vicaria de la Solidaridad".

Agency activities: The Santiago office of the Central Tracing Agency continued recording information relating to detainees, transmitting family messages, issuing travel documents, and dealing with special cases and enquiries from abroad, and so forth. It also continued its efforts to trace missing persons whose cases were submitted to the appropriate authorities by the delegation.

We would mention in this connection that while in Chile in December 1976, the President of the ICRC had handed the President of the Republic, General Augusto Pinochet, two lists of missing persons containing about 900 names. By the end of 1977 the Chilean authorities had supplied the ICRC with information leading to the solving of 119 cases.

PARAGUAY. — After a brief mission in Asunción in mid-March, in the course of which his predecessor introduced him to the Paraguayan authorities and Red Cross, the regional delegate returned to Paraguay five times: in April to arrange a programme of visits to places of detention, in May (accompanied by a second delegate and two doctor-delegates), in June, in October (with a doctor-delegate), and in December to visit detainees and to continue discussing the subject of visits with the authorities.

In this way the ICRC was able, in 1977, to make one or more visits to ten places of detention, including the Emboscada prison ("Destacamento de Seguridad de Emboscada"), the Tacumba national penitentiary, several police stations, the "Guardia de Seguridad de Tacumba" and the "Investigaciones". These places contained in all some 200 "political detainees" to whom various relief supplies were given (see p. 33).

In May the delegates encountered difficulties in having private interviews with detainees. These were subsequently overcome.

In that connection the regional delegate was received in October by the President of the Republic, General Stroessner, to whom he handed a memorandum on ICRC activities in the places of detention and on certain problems relating to those activities. He also had talks—and again in December—with the Ministers of the Interior and of Foreign Affairs, the Chief of Police, and the Director of "Investigaciones". These discussions resulted in confirmation by the Paraguayan authorities that they accepted in principle the conditions required by the ICRC for its visits to places of detention (see box on p. 22).

During the year, the ICRC also continued, through the National Society, assisting the most needy families of detainees. Some 130 families received benefit in the form of clothing, medicaments and food—including 5 tons of powdered milk donated by the Swiss Government (see table on p. 33).

URUGUAY. — The regional delegate went several times to Montevideo on short missions: in mid-March, when he was introduced by his predecessor to the Uruguayan authorities and Red Cross, in July and again in November when he accompanied the delegate-general. Both delegates had interviews with the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the subject of the resumption of visits to places of detention, these visits having been suspended in April 1976 (see p. 26 of Annual Report for 1976). At the end of the year, however, these discussions had not resulted in the resumption of visits.

Central America and the Caribbean

Establishment of a regional delegation: The Government of Guatemala and the ICRC, on 18 January 1977, signed an agreement on the establishment, in the capital, of the ICRC regional delegation for Central America and the Caribbean.

The regional delegation was inaugurated on 2 February in premises made available free of charge by the National Society. Present on the occasion were representatives of the authorities and Red Cross of Guatemala, Mr. Victor H. Umbricht, Vice-President of the ICRC Executive Board, and the regional delegate for Central America and the Caribbean.

Apart from missions in *Guatemala*, the regional delegate carried out others during the year in *Belize*, *Honduras*, *Mexico*, *Nicaragua* (to accompany Mr. Umbricht and for other reasons—see below), *Panama* and *El Salvador*. Several of these missions were to maintain contact with the authorities and the National Societies, to survey the situation after internal disorders,

to offer ICRC services should they be required, to discuss with some National Societies the allocation of food provided by the European Economic Community and by the Swiss Government (see table on p. 32) for their assistance programmes, and to see how those programmes were proceeding.

In addition, visits were made to places of detention in three of these countries: Nicaragua, Mexico and Guatemala.

NICARAGUA. — Accompanied by the regional delegate, Mr. Umbricht carried out a mission in this country from 27 January to 2 February. He was received by the President of the Republic, General Anastasio Somoza Debayle. The ICRC representatives had talks also with the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Head of National Security on ICRC activities, mainly those for “political detainees”.

Mr. Umbricht asked the President of the Republic to authorize the ICRC to visit “political detainees”. Authorization was granted and the ICRC representatives were able to go to two places of detention.

The ICRC representatives also had several contacts with the leaders of the Nicaraguan Red Cross who informed them about the National Society’s activities. It was decided that the ICRC would contribute to the National Society’s work of assistance to detainees.

In the second fortnight of July the regional delegate returned to Managua, where he had further talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior and the Head of National Security, who renewed the authorization granted five months previously.

However, during his visits to the “Cárcel Modelo de Tipitapa” and the “Central de Policía”, accompanied by the Minister of the Interior, the regional delegate was unable to talk with detainees. This restriction prevented the ICRC from making an appraisal of detention conditions and from issuing reports on its visits.

MEXICO. — In November the regional delegate visited seven places of detention in Mexico City and the provinces, where some 150 “political detainees” were held.

GUATEMALA. — In Guatemala, where the regional delegation had its headquarters, the ICRC delegate went to seven places of detention.

Countries of the Andes

Apart from going to Argentina and Chile on temporary missions to reinforce the ICRC set-up there, the regional delegate for the countries of the Andes went to *Bolivia*, *Colombia* and *Peru*. He visited places of detention in these three countries and in *Venezuela* where the regional delegation was based.

BOLIVIA. — Three missions took place in this country, a short one in March and two others, for which the regional delegate was accompanied by a doctor-delegate, from 24 May to 1 July and from 4 to 26 November. The purpose was to maintain contact with the Bolivian authorities and Red Cross, to visit “political detainees”, to initiate a programme of assistance for the poorest of the detainees’ families, and to inquire into the progress of programmes organized by the Bolivian authorities and National Society for the distribution of the 240 tons of powdered milk donated by the European Economic Community and shipped by the ICRC to the authorities and the National Society in 1976.

In June and November two rounds of visits were made. The delegates went to six places of detention—three of them twice—in which there were 80 “political detainees” among whom they distributed medicaments and individual parcels containing toilet requisites, under-clothing, food and other things (see p. 33).

Through the Bolivian Red Cross, the programme of assistance undertaken by the ICRC provided some forty indigent families of detainees with various foodstuffs each month.

While in La Paz and during their visits to the provinces the ICRC delegates attended a number of milk distributions organized in schools by the Bolivian Red Cross. They also discussed with the authorities in La Paz and the provinces the use made of the powdered milk sent by the ICRC.

COLOMBIA. — In October, after obtaining from the Minister of Justice a general authorization to visit prisons, the regional delegate went to six places of detention in Bogotá and the provinces where a total of about forty “political detainees” were being held.

PERU. — While on a mission to Peru in August-September, the regional delegate received a general authorization from the Director General of Penitentiaries to go to places of detention. Accompanied by a doctor-delegate, he visited five in Lima and the provinces where there were about 70 “political detainees”.

VENEZUELA. — In Venezuela, the country in which the regional delegation had its headquarters, the regional delegate, in October, visited two places of detention under the authority of the Ministry of Defence and containing about sixty “political detainees”.

Asia

In 1977 the ICRC maintained its regional delegations in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), covering the countries of *South-East Asia*, and in New Delhi (India) covering the *Asian Sub-Continent and neighbouring countries*.

South-East Asia

The regional delegate and other ICRC delegates from Geneva went several times to *Indonesia*, *Thailand* and *Malaysia* to visit "political detainees" in 1977. While on a mission towards the end of the year, mainly to introduce his successor to the authorities and National Societies of these three countries, the regional delegate also contacted the authorities and Red Cross of *Singapore*.

INDONESIA. — An ICRC mission of four delegates, two of them doctors, was in Indonesia from 25 January to 18 February. It visited seven places of detention—five on the island of Java and two in Sumatra—in which there were some 2,250 "political detainees" to whom they delivered various relief goods (see p. 33).

As customary, the ICRC reported its delegates' findings during these visits solely to the Indonesian Government. At the same time it drew the attention of the authorities to some difficulties encountered and underlined that an overall picture of actual detention conditions in Indonesia necessitated further visits, and to a greater number of places.

Discussions continued between the Indonesian authorities and the ICRC on the subject of conditions in which future visits would be made, and on the drawing up of a programme. The talks were concluded on 30 November in Jakarta. Misunderstandings having been dissipated, the ICRC prepared at the end of the year a new series of visits for the beginning of 1978.

PHILIPPINES. — A series of visits to political detainees in the Philippines took place from 14 August to 21 September. The regional delegate, together with a second delegate, visited twelve places of detention in which there were in all some 200 "political detainees". In close co-operation with the Philippine Red Cross, the ICRC provided assistance in the places visited (see p. 33).

For several years the ICRC has been giving the National Society support in its relief action for the persons displaced by the fighting in Mindanao in the south of the country. In 1977 it shipped to the Philippines 1,668 tons of rice and 700 tons of powdered skimmed milk donated by the European Economic Community and 20 tons of powdered full cream milk given by the Swiss Government. The value of these shipments amounted to 4,278,000 Swiss francs.

From 1 to 30 September an ICRC delegate, a member of its Relief Division, was in Mindanao visiting the camps of displaced persons to assess their needs and to examine with the National Society various technical matters relating to the receipt and storage of supplies in Manila, and their reforwarding to distribution centres.

THAILAND. — From 11 May to 2 June the regional delegate and a doctor from the Thai Red Cross visited ten places of detention in Bangkok and the provinces. Five of these places

were "re-education centres" under the authority of the Internal Security Operations Command and five were under that of the Department of Corrections of the Ministry of the Interior. They held some 370 "political detainees".

In the course of these visits the ICRC provided relief supplies in three places of detention. Subsequently, assistance was provided through the National Society to two other centres (see p. 33).

MALAYSIA. — In Malaysia the regional delegate accompanied by a second delegate visited five places of detention from 18 July to 12 August. The number of "political detainees" in the places visited was 690.

The ICRC gave nearly 200 books to the library in the largest of the places visited.

Asian Sub-Continent and neighbouring countries

The regional delegate was frequently in contact with the authorities not only in *India* but also in *Pakistan* and *Bangladesh*, where he went for discussion of various questions arising from the 1971 conflict (see below).

He went twice to *Sri Lanka*, where he visited places of detention and also to *Burma*, *Afghanistan* and *Nepal* where he conferred with the authorities and National Societies on various questions relating to the dissemination of knowledge of the principles of the Red Cross and of the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols. In Burma he took part in a National Society training course for young first-aiders.

SEQUELS TO THE CONFLICT IN THE ASIAN SUB-CONTINENT. — The regional delegate continued to be occupied by the sequels to the 1971 conflict in the Asian Sub-Continent, namely:

- (1) appeals by people who, under the New Delhi Agreements of 8 April 1974, were entitled to apply to the Pakistan authorities for a reversal of the initial rejection of their applications to go to Pakistan;
- (2) the transfer from Bangladesh to Pakistan of people who had received the necessary authorization to go to Pakistan but had not been able to do so before the repatriation operations were suspended in July 1974, and of people whose appeals had been upheld.

The appeals procedure was continuing at the end of 1977. Of the almost 30,000 cases submitted by the ICRC to the Pakistan authorities in 1974 and 1975 there remained almost a thousand still to be dealt with.

To seek a way to overcome the problem of transport for the people accepted by Pakistan but still in Bangladesh, the ICRC approached the governments concerned. Most of these people could not afford the air fare and could not travel to Pakistan

otherwise than by air. During the year, 2,586 people did make the journey at their own expense with *ad hoc* travel documents issued by the ICRC.

To keep track of appeals and to facilitate the departure of people who could afford the fare, the ICRC maintained an office in Rawalpindi and one in Dacca. These offices, run by locally recruited employees, were regularly visited by the regional delegate.

In agreement with the Indian and Pakistan authorities, the regional delegate also repatriated to Pakistan 136 people who, having gone to India from Bangladesh after the 1971 conflict, wished to go to Pakistan.

SRI LANKA. — The regional delegate made a further series of visits to places of detention in Sri Lanka. From 26 January to 9 February he went to four prisons, in Colombo, Jaffna, Anuradhapura and Kandy, where there were about 260 "political detainees". In co-operation with the National Society, various comforts such as sports equipment, toilet requisites and books, were given to the detainees (see table on p. 33).

In September the regional delegate returned to Colombo and again visited the "New Magazine" prison.

Europe

The delegate-general for Europe and North America, and the regional delegates, kept in touch with the National Society leaders of most countries in those parts of the world, particularly during the Red Cross regional seminars which they attended, such as those in *Poland* (First Red Cross European Seminar on the diffusion of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions), in *Bulgaria* (Seventh International Festival of Red Cross and Health Films), in *Yugoslavia* (International Junior Red Cross Meeting), and in *Romania* (Twenty-third International Red Cross Conference). Various missions were carried out in *Spain* and *Portugal* (visits to places of detention), the *United Kingdom*, *Finland*, *Denmark* and *Czechoslovakia* (visits to National Societies and participation in training courses). The delegate-general accompanied the President of the ICRC to the *Federal Republic of Germany*, *Austria*, *Finland* (centenary of the Red Cross) and *Greece* (*idem*), and also on a visit to the *Swiss Red Cross*.

In general, the ICRC worked to reinforce its relations with the National Societies and governments of Eastern Europe. From 26 to 28 April it received in Geneva a large delegation of leaders of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR headed by Dr. Valeri A. Baltiyski. The delegation was welcomed by the President of the ICRC, Mr. Alexandre Hay, accompanied by members of the ICRC and senior staff. At several working sessions useful exchanges of views took place on various subjects of interest to the Red Cross movement.

SPAIN. — Accompanied by the regional delegate for the Mediterranean countries, the delegate-general went to Spain in March to settle with the relevant officials of the Ministry of Justice arrangements for a series of visits to places of detention.

In consequence, from 14 March to 5 May, the regional delegate and a doctor-delegate visited 24 places of detention where 212 people were held for reasons or offences of a political nature. In every place they visited the delegates were able

ICRC VISITS TO PERSONS DETAINED FOR POLITICAL REASONS

Countries	No. of places of detention	No. of detainees *
<i>Africa</i>		
Rhodesia/Zimbabwe	9	946
South Africa	8	434
Djibouti	1	9
<i>Latin America</i>		
Argentina	26	4,000
Chile	63	400
Paraguay	10	200
Nicaragua	2	**36
Mexico	7	150
Guatemala	7	8
Bolivia	6	80
Colombia	6	40
Peru	5	70
Venezuela	2	60
<i>Asia</i>		
Indonesia	7	2,250
Philippines	12	200
Thailand	10	370
Malaysia	5	690
Sri Lanka	4	260
<i>Europe</i>		
Spain	24	212
Portugal	1	20
<i>Middle East</i>		
Iran	19	3,500
Yemen Arab Republic	10	30
TOTAL 22 countries	244	about 14,000

* Many of these figures have been rounded off or, for countries in which several series of visits were conducted, are approximate.

** These 36 detainees were being tried by Court Martial at the time of the visit.

to interview detainees of their choice without witnesses. Since then most detainees of that category have been released.

PORTUGAL. — After Spain, the regional delegate went to Portugal to continue the programme of protection and assistance started by the ICRC in 1975 for “political detainees”. He contacted the Portuguese Red Cross and the penitentiary authorities before visiting, on 13 May, the Caxias military prison near Lisbon, the only place in which such detainees—about a score of them—were still held. The regional delegate also conferred with the Portuguese Red Cross on the assistance programme it was carrying out, with financial aid from the ICRC, for detainees’ families (see p. 33).

Middle East

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the regional delegate for North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Iran operated from Geneva.

In 1977 he was mainly concerned with ICRC activities related to the conflict in the Western Sahara (see p. 12) and those undertaken in *Iran* where, for the first time, the ICRC was permitted access to “political detainees”. He also continued his visits to places of detention in the *Yemen Arab Republic*.

The ICRC delegate-general for the Middle East went to *Kuwait* to confer with the authorities on the ICRC medical assistance programme in Lebanon.

In Geneva, the President of the ICRC met the Emir of *Bahrain*, H.H. Sheikh Issa bin Sulman al-Khalifa, with whom he reviewed ICRC activities, particularly those in the Middle East.

IRAN. — Following an agreement reached with the Iranian Government on 6 March 1977 when the ICRC President was in Teheran, the first series of visits to places of detention in Iran began on 18 April and continued until 13 May. The visiting ICRC mission, led by the regional delegate and including five other delegates—two of them doctors—went to five prisons in Teheran and fourteen in other parts of the country. In these nineteen prisons there were 3,087 “security detainees”, as they were called by the Iranian authorities.

These visits proceeded in accordance with arrangements consistent with the conditions laid down by the ICRC, i.e.:

- access to all detainees other than penal law prisoners, including those undergoing interrogation;
- unrestricted interviews in private with detainees of the delegates’ choice;
- receipt of a list of detainees in each place of detention;



- access to all buildings and appurtenances used for detention;
- repetition of visits as needed.

On 25 June the President of the ICRC, accompanied by the regional delegate, returned to Teheran in order to hand to H.I.M. the Shahinshah the reports drawn up by the delegates. It was agreed that the delegates would make further visits in the second half of the year in order to see how their recommendations had been followed and how the new arrangements made by the Iranian authorities for the benefit of the prisoners were applied.

The second series of visits took place from 3 to 24 October. The delegates returned to seventeen prisons where they saw 2,449 "security detainees", approximately five hundred of whom were recent arrivals.

YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC. — From 23 April to 15 May an ICRC delegate visited ten places of detention at Sanaa and in the provinces. There were about thirty "political prisoners" for whom, on the occasion of the visits, medicaments, clothing, blankets, mats, water tanks and other relief supplies were given to the prisons (see p. 33).

Operations support services

Relief

The tables given in this section illustrate ICRC activities in providing relief. In 1977, about fifty countries were beneficiaries, the total value of the supplies being 46.6 million Swiss francs.

The actions with special financing (see next column), undertaken by the ICRC alone (southern Africa, Chile, Comoros, Cyprus, Eritrea, Lebanon, Ogaden) or jointly with the League (Indo-China), with support from governments, National Societies and various organizations, comprised 11.6 million Swiss francs' worth of relief supplies of all kinds dispatched to the sphere of operations by the ICRC or by donors under the supervision of the ICRC.

The agreements between the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Swiss Confederation made it possible for the International Committee to provide aid in the form of food to 15 countries, to a total value of 43.1 million Swiss francs (see page 32).

Aid to "political detainees" and to those of their families in the greatest need accounted for a total sum of almost 653,000 Swiss francs (not including Chile) (see page 33).

Finally, as part of the activities of its regional delegates (see page 33), the ICRC supplied various types of assistance to about twenty National Societies, to a value of 112,680 Swiss francs.

Medical aid valued at 86,350 francs, was sent to the medical services or the humanitarian organizations of certain liberation movements.

ACTIONS WITH SPECIAL FINANCING

(relief in kind)	11.6 million Swiss francs
Southern Africa	Sw. fr. 1,273,800.—
Chile	Sw. fr. 206,700.—
Comoros	Sw. fr. 50,000.—
Cyprus	Sw. fr. 123,200.—
Eritrea	Sw. fr. 1,866,200.—
Indo-China	Sw. fr. 3,060,000.—
Lebanon *	Sw. fr. 3,281,400.—
Ogaden	Sw. fr. 1,757,100.—

* of this sum, Sw.fr. 143,800.— for Lebanese refugees in Syria

These entries do not include the aid in the form of food supplied by the EEC and the Swiss Confederation (see table, page 32).

The amounts given above represent the value of gifts in kind provided by various donors (governments, National Societies, other bodies) and the value of the relief supplies purchased by the ICRC or by the "Indo-China Bureau" by means of the cash contributions of donors.

TRANSPORTATION 1.4 million Swiss francs

The transportation of supplies, organized and financed by the ICRC (usually reimbursed later from the *ad hoc* budgets of the special actions) cost 1.42 million Swiss francs, divided up as shown below:

Means of transport	tons	Sw.fr.
1. Consignments sent by regular means of transport		
— by sea and land	907.6	326,615
— by air	43.6	216,624
2. Consignments sent by chartered transport		
— by ship	9,741	386,826
— by air freight	84.2	496,308
Total	10,776.4	1,426,373

It should be noted that the ICRC also spent more than 158,000 Swiss francs in insurance premiums for the consignments, and 11,959 Swiss francs for 33.5 tons of imported relief supplies (chiefly medicines).