

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1981)  
  
**Rubrik:** Europe and North 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:** 12.12.2025

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

---

## EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

---

In addition to continuing its activities arising from the consequences of the Second World War, and those for the benefit of some of the victims of the 1974 conflict in Cyprus, the ICRC carried out numerous missions in most countries of Europe and North America, with the aim of strengthening ties with the National Societies and with governments, particularly those which take part in its operations, either by providing personnel or by giving help in money or in kind. Representatives of the ICRC also attended seminars and other events organized by the National Societies in the countries concerned.

In pursuance of this policy, the President of the ICRC travelled to Washington, where he made contact with the new administration, and to Brussels, where he had talks with Mr Claude Cheysson, at that time Commissioner for the European Economic Community. During the celebrations organized for the centenary of the Hungarian Red Cross and at the Third Regional Conference of the European National Societies, in Budapest, President Hay represented the ICRC. In London he attended the memorial service for Lady Limerick, Vice-president of the British Red Cross and former Chairman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross, who died on April 25. He visited Castiglione, Mantua and Solferino for the inauguration of the exhibitions prepared by the Italian and Spanish Red Cross Societies.

Other missions carried out by members of the International Committee included the following:

- A delegation to Turkey, headed by Mr Marcel A. Naville, attended the conference of Balkan National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, held in Izmir. Immediately after this conference, in which he took part, Mr Frank Schmidt, delegate-general for Europe and North America, travelled to Ankara to meet members of the government and leading figures of the National Society. In his talks with the authorities, he brought up the subject of political detainees to whom the ICRC had never had access.
- In Poland, early in October, Mrs Denise Bindschedler-Robert and Mr Thomas Fleiner gave a number of lectures to law students, and at the end of December Mr Rudolf Jäckli went to Warsaw in connection with the extension of ICRC activities in the country (see below).
- In the Soviet Union in early December, Mrs Bindschedler-Robert and Mr Schmidt carried out a mission primarily concerned with the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law.

Among the many European personalities welcomed in Geneva by the President or by the Vice-President, Mr Richard Pestalozzi, were Crown Prince Harald and Princess Sonja of Norway, who visited the ICRC on June 10; the President of the Austrian Republic, Mr R. Kirchschläger, on

September 9, and the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, on September 19.

### Spain

#### **Protection**

The last visits to places of detention in Spain dated back to 1977. In March 1981, the ICRC approached the Spanish authorities to propose a new series of visits. By mid-April the Madrid government had given its consent and told the ICRC it would expect representatives by mid-May.

From 7 May to the end of June, therefore, two teams, each comprising one delegate and one medical delegate, were granted access to 559 persons imprisoned under the anti-terrorist legislation and held in 19 places of detention under the authority of the Ministry of Justice.

### Northern Ireland

#### **Protection**

Concerned by the situation in Northern Ireland, the ICRC made efforts to resume its visits to places of detention there. From 1971 to 1975, in fact, ICRC delegates had made seven series of visits to administrative detainees. In December 1975, the last of these detainees had been released, thus ending imprisonment without trial. Since then the ICRC had never had access to places of detention.

On 14 May 1981, the ICRC renewed its offer of services to the United Kingdom authorities, with the aim of visiting all persons imprisoned as a result of the events in Northern Ireland. By using its right to take the initiative in humanitarian matters, the ICRC hoped to be able to assist in reducing the tension prevailing in the province. On 27 May the British Government informed the International Committee that it did not consider it opportune to agree to the request immediately. It asked, however, to regard the offer as remaining in force, so as to revert to it as appropriate.

On 15 July the Government contacted the ICRC, accepting the offer of its services. The following day, the ICRC delegation, composed of three persons, including the delegate-general for Europe and the chief medical officer, went to Northern Ireland. Between 16 and 22 July, visits were made to 2,184 prisoners in the Maze and Crumlin Road prisons in Belfast, and in Armagh and in Magilligan.

## **Poland**

From 7 to 9 April, the delegate-general for Europe and a woman delegate were in Warsaw, mainly to make contacts, as the new delegate-general, Mr Schmidt, had not previously met representatives of the Government or the National Society.

Following the declaration of martial law on 13 December 1981, the same delegation, joined by the chief medical officer, went to Poland on 18 December, to assess the needs of the civilian population for assistance and protection and to offer the services of the ICRC to the Polish Government in these two areas. On 23 December a second medical delegate left Geneva to carry out an assessment of medical needs.

It should be pointed out that before 13 December several National Red Cross Societies had taken the initiative of sending relief to the Polish Red Cross. The various relief operations were co-ordinated by the League of Red Cross Societies. The mission undertaken in Poland by the ICRC led the two international institutions of the Red Cross to sign on 23 December an agreement setting out arrangements for International Red Cross action in Poland. Under this agreement, an ICRC delegation, including members of the League and of National Societies, was to be set up immediately in Warsaw in order to develop, in co-operation with the Polish National Society, all Red Cross activities within the country. At the same time, in Geneva, a joint ICRC-League bureau was set up to co-ordinate the operation.

Finally, on 28 December, Mr Jäckli, a member of the Committee, travelled to Poland with the League Secretary General. This joint mission arrived in Warsaw in an aircraft chartered by the ICRC and carrying 4,065 kg of medical

supplies (antibiotics, surgical gloves, hospital kits, dressings) to a value of 100,640 Swiss francs, for delivery to the Polish Red Cross and the Ministry of Health. The main purpose of the mission was to implement the ICRC-League agreement of 23 December which involved collaboration by the Polish Red Cross.

The joint League-ICRC mission discussed with the authorities and the National Society not only the co-ordination of the International Red Cross assistance operation but also questions concerning protection and the activities of the Central Tracing Agency.

The joint mission was completed on 30 December and a five-man delegation was left in Warsaw under the leadership of the delegate-general for Europe. The other ICRC members are one medical delegate and one information delegate.

## **Switzerland**

At the beginning of the year, the Attorney General of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, with the approval of the Swiss Federal Government, asked the ICRC to visit two persons (one of American and the other of Lebanese nationality) respectively detained in Champ Dollon Prison and in the cell block of Geneva's Cantonal Hospital. As an Armenian movement supporting both persons also asked the ICRC to visit them, it did so on 9 January. Three ICRC delegates, including a physician, saw the detainees in their respective places of detention and interviewed them without witness. The report drawn up after the visit was transmitted to the detaining authorities.

### **THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE AT AROLSSEN**

Created in 1943 in London by the Allied authorities and established since 1946 in Arolsen, in the Federal Republic of Germany, the International Tracing Service (ITS) has been directed and administered since 1955 by the ICRC, under an international agreement. Its work consists in gathering, classifying and storing all documents relating to victims of National Socialism, and making them accessible to governments and individuals concerned. Its principal activity is to supply certificates attesting to imprisonment, forced labour or death to persons seeking compensation or pensions.

To requests from 32 countries, the ITS sent out in 1981 68,946 replies based on its archive material. Of that number, 13,570 were certificates or reports of detention in concentration camps, 6,111 certificates of assignment to forced labour for a German employer, 2,746 certificates or reports of periods in displaced persons camps after the war, 3,969 replies relating to missing persons, 1,566 sickness certificates and 645 death certificates.

Each year the ITS publishes an annual report of its activities, from which the above figures are taken.