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In 1983, ICRC activities in Central America were marked by an increased commitment to helping the victims of the Salvadoran conflict. In Nicaragua, the ICRC delegation continued with its protection work; as from October, it also carried out an assistance programme for the civilians displaced because of clashes in the regions bordering Honduras and Costa Rica.

ICRC activities in the other Central American countries were carried out by the San José (Costa Rica) regional delegation which opened in May 1982. Because of the continuing tension along the frontier between Honduras and Nicaragua, the San José regional delegation mainly worked in Honduras, in particular taking part in the setting up of a support and development programme for the Honduran Red Cross.

In the Caribbean, the intervention of a multinational force on the island of Grenada, on 25 October, called for ICRC action in accordance with its mandate under the Geneva Convention, and in particular the provisions concerning the protection of wounded, sick or captured combatants.

In South America, the ICRC has continued to work through its two regional delegations: one, with its headquarters at Bogotá, covers the Andean countries (Colombia, Peru, Venezuela), Guyana, Suriname, and the Lesser Antilles; the other, situated at Buenos Aires, covers the countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil). These delegations have been particularly active as regards protection and assistance for security detainees. In 1983, regular series of visits were carried out to places of detention in the following countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname and Uruguay.

Lastly, the ICRC intensified its efforts to disseminate international humanitarian law and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross among the armed forces, universities and National Societies.

El Salvador

In accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions covering such conflicts (Article 3 common to the Conventions, and Additional Protocol II relating to non-international armed conflicts), the ICRC has for the fourth consecutive year continued its protection and assistance activities for victims of the internal conflict which is tearing the country apart. The ICRC remains gravely concerned by the disappearance and assassination of several thousand

civilians, victims of political violence. The ICRC has again and again strongly censured such practices, which violate the most fundamental principles of humanitarian law.

In addition to the regular contacts maintained with the competent authorities by the head of the San Salvador delegation, various missions have been made from Geneva. During his visit to Central America, ICRC President Hay, accompanied by Mr. Hocké, Director for Operational Activities, and Mr. Pasquier, delegate-general for Latin America and the Caribbean, visited El Salvador at the end of June. The representatives of the ICRC were received by Dr. Alvaro Magaña, President of the Republic, General Vides Casanova, Minister of Defence, and Dr. Fidel Chavez Mena, Minister of Foreign Affairs, with whom they primarily discussed problems relating to detainees, the protection of civilians and access to conflict zones. Discussions with the National Society leaders were mainly concerned with the ongoing joint assistance programmes for civilians displaced because of the fighting.

Besides this mission, the ICRC delegate-general made three other visits to El Salvador in 1983, principally to have talks with the authorities on questions pertaining to the delegation's protection activities. During his visit in November, the delegate-general again brought up, among other things, the question of access to the northern regions of the Morazan and La Unión provinces. These regions were closed to ICRC delegates for most of the second half of 1983.

A single appeal for funds was launched by the ICRC at the beginning of the year to cover the whole of its protection and assistance actions in El Salvador in 1983. This appeal was for a sum of 21,800,000 Swiss francs.

Protection

In 1983, ICRC delegates continued their protection activities on behalf of persons detained because of events. They made 1,700 visits to 300 detention centres both in the capital and elsewhere in the country; a total of 1,253 new detainees were seen for the first time and registered. The detention centres visited were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence (National Police, National Guard, Hacienda Police, Armed Forces) and the Ministry of Justice (Prison Service). The delegates' findings were brought to the attention of the authorities at regular intervals by numerous memoranda and by quarterly summary reports. These questions were also raised in several meetings with the President of the Republic and the Minister of Defence. In these representations, the ICRC made constant appeal to the responsibility of the

authorities, emphasizing that, to be fully effective, ICRC visits and recommendations should be followed up by concrete measures and that the competence to decide on such measures lay solely with the government as a party both to the Geneva Conventions and to the two additional Protocols.

A new procedure, accepted by the authorities in 1982, for the systematic notification to delegates of the identity of detained persons, such notification to be made at the time of the latter's arrest, started to be applied in a more satisfactory way during 1983. The ICRC was thus able to visit and register detainees in a more systematic way, especially during the initial phase of their detention.

In addition, some 450 security detainees were freed from the Mariona and Ilopango prisons under an amnesty declared by the government at the end of April. The delegates made arrangements to facilitate the departure of some ten of them who wanted to leave the country.

Lastly, the ICRC continued its protection action on behalf of soldiers of the Salvadoran army captured by the "Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front" (FMLN). Since it is FMLN policy to release almost all soldiers taken prisoner shortly after their capture, 89 soldiers were handed over by the Front to ICRC delegates, who undertook to convey them back to their barracks under the protection of the Red Cross emblem. It should also be noted that many prisoners were released by the FMLN without ICRC intervention.

The delegates were not, however, allowed access to some ten officers of the Salvadoran army who remained the prisoners of the FMLN. This subject was discussed several times with representatives of the Front.

Tracing Agency

The Tracing Agency office at the San Salvador delegation was supported in its work by the San Miguel and Santa Ana offices, situated, respectively, in the east and the west of the country. Three delegates, assisted by local staff, were there to receive people coming daily to ask for news of their relatives or friends, missing or under detention. On average, 260 tracing requests were handled each month. As in the past, the work of the Tracing Agency office was closely coordinated with the visits made by delegates to places of detention. It thus kept up-to-date with the systematic registration of all the detainees visited by the ICRC, and also arranged for the exchange of family messages between prisoners and their relatives. Lastly, it arranged for the transmission of family news between soldiers held captive by the FMLN and their families.

Assistance

Faced with the increasing number of civilians displaced because of the military situation, the ICRC made every effort to intensify the medical and food assistance programme being carried out jointly with the Salvadoran Red Cross. A total of

4,417 tonnes of relief supplies (mainly foodstuffs, but also clothing, blankets and other basic necessities) were regularly distributed to beneficiaries, mostly rural families forced to leave their villages because of the danger and rehoused in provinces in the centre and east of the country (Cabanas, Chalatenango, Cuscatlan, San Vicente, Usulután, San Miguel, La Unión and Morazan). Because of military operations, and also the opposition shown in some regions by army officers and by the FMLN, the delegates were unable to enter certain conflict zones. They were thus obliged to reduce very substantially the scope of their assistance activities in the eastern regions of the country (mainly in Morazan and, to a lesser extent, in La Unión).

During 1983 an average of 43,000 displaced persons received monthly food aid from the ICRC. The goal set by the ICRC in January 1983 of regularly assisting 100,000 displaced persons was thus not accomplished, due to the difficulties mentioned above.

In addition to these distributions, specific emergency relief operations (foodstuffs and medical aid) were undertaken in certain localities where the displaced population had suffered from the fighting (for example, in January in Berlin, a town situated in the Usulután province, or in Tenancingo, in the Cuscatlan province, at the end of September).

These distributions were organized and supervised by five ICRC delegates and were carried out thanks to the efficient and steadfast co-operation of some fifty National Society volunteers and relief workers.

The volume of ICRC medical activities increased considerably during 1983, in spite of the difficulties that delegates had in obtaining regular access to certain villages in the east of the country.

Throughout the year, two ICRC medical teams based, respectively, at San Salvador and at San Miguel (in all, two expatriate doctors and seven expatriate nurses, plus six Salvadoran doctors and six Salvadoran relief workers), provided care for the displaced population of some 25 villages situated in the conflict zones. About 75,000 people were given medical consultations. In addition, two Salvadoran dentists provided dental care for the same people. A Salvadoran public health specialist accompanied each of the ICRC teams in the field to develop public hygiene and preventive medicine programmes among the displaced populations.

An evaluation of the nutritional status of the population was an integral part of the medical consultations; these showed the need to establish a special feeding programme for young children. Because of the deterioration in the food and medical situation noted in August in most of the villages located in the central and eastern provinces, two additional public health workers were recruited locally to reinforce the health education campaign undertaken by the ICRC and the Salvadoran Red Cross.

Apart from their work of co-ordinating the medical teams in the field, ICRC medical delegates and nurses also assisted with the protection activities by taking part in visits to places of detention. Medical material and medicines were supplied to dispensaries administered by the Ministry of Justice.

In addition, civilian hospitals and dispensaries in San Salvador and San Miguel received assistance in the form of medical material worth a total of 40,000 Swiss francs.

The total value of medicines and medical material distributed in 1983 to the civilian population and to detainees amounted to 559,680 Swiss francs.

Lastly, the ICRC continued to finance the running costs of the Salvadoran Red Cross blood collection centre during 1983.

Support for Salvadoran Red Cross

In view of the very substantial increase in the work of the Salvadoran Red Cross, the ICRC continued giving it financial support. For its ambulance service which operates round-the-clock, its dispensaries and the traditional activities of its first-aid and other voluntary workers, the ICRC remitted it each month 109,200 francs. The Salvadoran Red Cross, it should also be mentioned, co-operates actively in assistance programmes for displaced persons.

Dissemination

The ICRC continued its efforts, jointly with the National Red Cross of El Salvador, to spread knowledge and understanding of the humanitarian work of the Red Cross, and thereby also create conditions favourable for its activities. Regular contacts were maintained with the military authorities in the field to improve the deteriorating safety conditions in certain provinces. In addition, conferences were organized throughout the year in army barracks to make known the principles of the Red Cross, and the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law protecting civilians and wounded or captured combatants. Similar dissemination efforts were also carried out, where possible, among FMLN fighters.

Lastly, the dissemination campaign launched in 1981 using Salvadoran mass media and directed at the general public (commercials on several radio stations, articles in newspapers, etc.) was continued in 1983.

Nicaragua

Besides its protection and assistance activities on behalf of detainees and their families, the ICRC delegation at Managua, composed of nine delegates (including a doctor and two nurses) and working in close collaboration with the National Red Cross, established an emergency food and medical assistance programme in 1983 to aid the civilian population displaced because of the clashes between governmental forces and so-called "counter-revolutionary" organizations.

The Managua delegation also continued its efforts on behalf of the displaced Miskitos.

During his visit to Central America, the ICRC President, accompanied by the Director for Operational Activities and

the delegate-general, was received at Managua, on 27 June, by Commander Thomas Borge Martinez, Minister of the Interior, Dr. Nora Astorga, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Cordoba Rivas, member of the Junta, as well as by senior members of the National Red Cross. Talks mainly centred round the current situation in the detention centres of the National Penitentiary Service (SPN). During his visit to Managua, the ICRC President also visited the two main prisons in the capital.

In addition to this mission, the delegate-general twice visited Nicaragua, first in May to prepare for the President's mission, then in November to have talks with the Minister and Deputy Minister of the Interior on problems relative to protection activities, and with the Minister of Health and INSBI (Ministry of Social Affairs) officials on ICRC activities for displaced persons.

Protection

The approximately 3,700 detainees visited in Nicaragua by ICRC delegates may be divided into two main categories:

- members of the former National Guard taken prisoner at the fall of the Somoza régime and civilians who had collaborated with the previous government;
- persons detained after the installation of the revolutionary government and accused of counter-revolutionary activities or of activities prejudicial to State security.

Between January and the end of August 1983, seven delegates (including a doctor and two ICRC nurses) made fifteen visits to nine places of detention under the authority of the National Penitentiary Service (SPN): two prisons in Managua (Tipitapa and Zona Franca sections where over 80% of the detainees are held), four in the provinces (Chinandega, Granada, Juigalpa and Matagalpa), three penal farms (one at Esteli, and two others near the capital), and a military hospital where detainees are occasionally hospitalized. A total of 3,671 prisoners were detained in the above-mentioned places of detention.

As from 26 August, however, the ICRC found itself impelled to suspend its protection activities, in view of the authorities' desire to introduce a new visiting procedure under conditions considered too restrictive by the ICRC. Following approaches to the Minister and Deputy Minister of the Interior, an agreement on the procedure for ICRC visits was concluded in November, setting out satisfactory conditions for both sides. On the basis of this agreement, which in particular allowed delegates to visit the cells where the detainees were housed, to interview without witness detainees of their choice and to repeat their visits at regular intervals, ICRC protection activities in the SPN places of detention were resumed.

Tracing Agency

In 1983, the Tracing Agency office in Managua continued to register the detainees visited and to maintain contact between

the detainees and their families: a total of 2,100 family messages were transmitted during the course of the year.

Following the steps taken by the ICRC in 1982 with a view to establishing a transmission service for family news between the Miskitos in Nicaragua and their relatives who had taken refuge in Honduras, the Tracing Agency office had, by the end of 1983, transmitted some 700 family messages between the refugees and their families who had remained in Nicaragua.

Assistance

ASSISTANCE TO DETAINEES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

— The ICRC continued its assistance programme for detainees and for the needy families of prisoners. Individual monthly packages and various other relief items (clothing, mattresses, toilet articles, leisure equipment, etc.) were provided to the detainees. Medical aid (medicines and medical material) was handed over to the prison dispensaries. Some detainees were also provided with dental care and spectacles.

Apart from the food aid received by 1,200 needy families of detainees, the ICRC paid the travelling expenses of 280 families to places of detention, thus enabling them to visit their relatives detained there.

Lastly, the ICRC financed three charter flights that were arranged to allow Miskito families living on the Atlantic coast to visit their relatives under detention in one of the SPN prisons in Managua. On 1 December, the government declared an amnesty for the Miskitos under which 307 prisoners were released.

The value of the assistance provided to the detainees and their families amounted to around 718,000 Swiss francs.

ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED CIVILIANS. — In September, the ICRC, in close co-operation with the Nicaraguan Red Cross, began to set up an emergency aid programme for the civilian population displaced because of the clashes between government forces and armed counter-revolutionary organizations in the Honduran and Costa Rican border regions. On the basis of an assessment made by ICRC delegates and staff of the National Society in the affected areas, the ICRC, on 20 October, launched an appeal to governments and National Red Cross Societies for 500,000 francs for a dual purpose:

- to provide monthly food and medical aid to some 3,000 displaced persons;
- to build up an emergency stock of foodstuffs and medical material sufficient for one month's assistance for 10,000 additional displaced persons, in case of a sudden deterioration in the situation.

This joint ICRC-National Society programme was closely coordinated with the activities of the Ministries of Health and of Social Affairs. Between its actual inception in September and the end of 1983, emergency aid was distributed to 4,685 displaced persons in the Chinandega, Somotillo, Somoto, Ocotal and Jalapa regions (near the Honduran frontier). Relief supplies were also sent to the north of the Zelaya

province. From September to December, an ICRC medical team was permanently based in the Somoto region to care for displaced populations in the region and to supervise the distributions.

At the end of December, material and medical relief worth 135,300 Swiss francs had been distributed.

The continuing hostilities in the border regions at the end of the year called for the emergency programme to be maintained in 1984.

San José regional delegation

Costa Rica

In May 1982, the ICRC opened a regional delegation at San José, Costa Rica, to strengthen its ties with Central American National Societies and governments in the countries where the ICRC had no permanent delegation (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize and Panama).

Apart from the logistic support provided by this delegation to the delegations in Nicaragua and El Salvador (for example, the purchase of medicines, food and vehicles), the two delegates based at San José each had their own respective tasks in 1983; one to take action in the field of protection, and the other to establish programmes for the dissemination of international humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross (seminars, conferences, etc.) in Costa Rica and the neighbouring countries.

During the past year, collaboration by the regional delegation in the programmes of the Costa Rica Red Cross has therefore essentially been concerned with the development of its dissemination activities.

At the beginning of July, the ICRC President headed the delegation representing the International Committee at the Twelfth Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross, at San José (see p. 87). During this mission, Mr. Hay had talks with the President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Honduras

Because of the extreme tension prevailing in the border regions between Honduras and Nicaragua, the ICRC sent one of its two delegates based at San José (Costa Rica) to Tegucigalpa in May 1983 to study the extent to which the Honduran Red Cross would be able to cope with humanitarian needs in the event of armed clashes.

This delegate also had the task of opening a Tracing Agency office at Tegucigalpa to undertake the exchange of family messages between Nicaraguan refugees who had settled in Honduras and their families who had stayed in Nicaragua.

Visit by the ICRC President and the delegate-general

During his tour of Central America, the ICRC President, accompanied by the Director for Operational Activities and the delegate-general, visited Tegucigalpa from 29 to 30 June. President Hay had talks with the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and with the heads of the National Society.

The delegate-general had already been to Honduras at the beginning of June, mainly to prepare for President Hay's visit, and he went again at the end of November to take stock, with the delegate on the spot and with the National Society, of the progress made in establishing support programmes for the Red Cross there.

Tracing Agency

Following steps taken by the ICRC in 1982 with a view to establishing a service for the transmission of family news between the Miskitos in Nicaragua and their relatives who had taken refuge in Honduras, the Honduran government confirmed, in February 1983, that it agreed with the ICRC proposals.

This activity developed rather slowly, because the Miskitos initially showed a certain psychological reserve towards the project. It was only at the end of the year, between September and December, that several hundred family messages were transmitted to Nicaragua by the Tracing Agency office in Tegucigalpa.

Programme of support for the National Society

On the basis of the assessment made by its delegate, the ICRC, in collaboration with Honduran Red Cross, drew up a plan with the priority objectives of strengthening the operational capacity of five branches of the National Society situated in the regions bordering Nicaragua. This support programme consisted in the purchase of seven cross-country vehicles, four mobile first-aid units, medical and surgical material, clothing, blankets, miscellaneous articles and the equipment to set up a radio network, and in building up stocks of foodstuffs (total value 405,300 Swiss francs). By the end of 1983, this task was practically completed. This support programme was carried out with the financial support of the Red Cross Societies of the Scandinavian countries and of the Canadian Red Cross.

Dissemination

A programme similar to that carried out in El Salvador was undertaken, as from September, for the National Society. It is planned to extend this campaign for the dissemination of knowledge of the principles of the Red Cross and the fundamental rules of humanitarian law to the Honduran armed forces, in 1944.

Guatemala

Following contacts made in 1982 by the regional delegate based in Costa Rica, the delegate-general, accompanied by the regional delegate, visited Guatemala City from 6 to 8 June. He was received on that occasion by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Pursuant to their talks, the ICRC sent a note to the government confirming its offer of services with regard to protection and dissemination. This memorandum, which in particular specified the institution's role and the procedures governing ICRC action, was transmitted to the Guatemalan authorities in August. Further discussions subsequently took place in Geneva on 16 September, when the President of the ICRC was visited by the Guatemalan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. On 6 October, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the ICRC President, in a note, that the government of Guatemala could not consent to the ICRC's request.

Panama

The regional delegate based at Costa Rica visited Panama at the end of August to take part in the sixth meeting of Red Cross relief workers held by the National Society and to discuss with this Society ways and means of developing its dissemination activities.

Bogotá regional delegation

Colombia

The ICRC regional delegation for the Andean countries, Guyana, Suriname and the Caribbean has its headquarters at Bogotá.

The delegates carried out a series of visits between 11 July and 14 September to places of detention administered by the Ministry of Justice. During this new series of visits, the delegates went to 14 places of detention, situated in six provinces of the country. They spoke with 52 security detainees.

Grenada

On 26 October, the day after the intervention by a multinational armed force on the Caribbean island of Grenada, the ICRC offered its services to all parties concerned to undertake the humanitarian tasks set out in the Geneva Conventions.

This offer of services was accepted, and the ICRC regional delegate based at Bogota went to Grenada on 28 October, where he began visits to a group of Grenadian and Cuban prisoners held by the multinational force. The ICRC also chartered an aircraft to evacuate sick or wounded Cuban nationals from Grenada. The aircraft set off from Geneva with an ICRC team of eleven people on board, headed by the delegate-general for Latin America and the Caribbean and including a doctor and a nurse. It arrived at Barbados on 31 October. The ICRC delegates reached Grenada the same day, where they started to visit and register all the Cuban prisoners, so as to be able to inform the Cuban authorities accordingly. At the same time, they visited and registered Grenadian nationals taken prisoner by the multinational force.

On 2 November, the first repatriation operation took place under the auspices of the ICRC: 57 sick or wounded Cuban prisoners and 10 Cuban medical personnel were first transferred from Grenada to Barbados, and then flown from Barbados to Havana on board the aircraft chartered by the ICRC. Five delegates, including the delegate-general, a doctor and a nurse, took part in this operation. At its close, the delegate-general remained in Havana to co-ordinate subsequent activities with the Cuban authorities and the Cuban Red Cross. On this occasion, he had several interviews with President Fidel Castro, and one with the Cuban Foreign Minister. These conversations were particularly concerned with the repatriation of all prisoners and of the mortal remains of 24 Cubans killed during the military operations.

The repatriation of the other Cuban prisoners detained in Grenada was also carried out under ICRC auspices: the prisoners were first flown to Barbados on board American aircraft and then handed over to Cuban representatives through the intermediary of the ICRC, before being transferred to Havana in Cuban aircraft. Between 4 and 8 November, 600 persons were repatriated in this way, in six flights. The mortal remains of the 24 Cubans were repatriated on 11 November.

The ICRC also took care of arrangements for the two severely wounded Cubans, transferred by the American authorities to Porto Rico where they were hospitalized. They were visited by an ICRC medical delegate and were repatriated on 16 November, in collaboration with the Cuban Red Cross.

After completing the evacuation of the Cuban wounded and prisoners, five ICRC delegates, including one doctor, remained in Grenada to continue their protection and assistance activities on behalf of the Grenadian nationals who had been taken prisoner. On 24 November, the ICRC delegates consequently visited the Richmond Hill prison, where they saw 51 detainees, including three women. In addition, an ICRC doctor visited five wounded in the prison section of the Saint George Hospital.

The delegates attached to the regional delegation at Bogota returned to their posts in Colombia at the end of November; it is planned that they will visit Grenada from there at regular intervals to follow up any humanitarian questions which remain to be settled.

Peru

Between 18 April and 26 May, a team of four delegates, including a doctor, visited 20 places of detention administered by the Ministry of Justice and situated throughout Peru. They met a total of 689 security prisoners, mostly being held under a decree issued in March 1981. Relief supplies (blankets, food, medicines, toiletries and leisure articles) were handed over during these visits.

A further series of visits, planned for November, had to be postponed until early 1984 because of the events in Grenada, which altered the regional delegation's schedule.

From 13 to 17 December, the ICRC deputy delegate-general for Latin America and the Caribbean, accompanied by the regional delegate, visited Lima to have talks, in particular with the President of Peru, Mr. Fernando Belaunde Terry, the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. F. Schwab Lopez Aldona, and the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Luis Percovich Roca. The main objective of these talks was to present the highest authorities with a review of the visits that had been carried out, and to propose the opening of an ICRC office at Lima. Following these talks, the Minister of the Interior authorized delegates to have access as well to the provisional places of detention administered by the "Policia de Investigación del Peru" (PIP), which is under the authority of his Ministry. The proposal for opening a permanent office at Lima was also favourably received.

Suriname

In 1983, the regional delegate went to Suriname three times, from 4 to 14 February, from 18 to 26 June, and lastly from 8 to 12 October. These missions had two objectives: first, to have talks with the authorities, to present them with the reports on the preceding visits and to meet National Society representatives, and secondly, to visit security detainees. In February, ICRC delegates visited 17 prisoners, including four whom they had already seen on their previous mission at the end of 1982; in June, seven of these prisoners were seen again (ten having been freed in the meantime); and in October, they saw three prisoners (four of the detainees that they had seen in June having been released since the previous visit).

Venezuela

In addition to two brief missions by the regional delegate, who visited Venezuela in February and in June to meet representatives of the government and of the National Society, Dr. Gallino, a member of the ICRC Executive Board, accompanied by Mr. Corthésy, deputy delegate-general, took part as observers in the regular session of the Inter-American Regional Committee (CORI) which was held at Caracas from 9 to 11 December.

Guyana

The regional delegate went on a brief mission to Guyana from 5 to 8 October, during which he had talks with the authorities and the National Society. Among the topics discussed was the question of dissemination, in particular among the armed forces.

Buenos Aires regional delegation

Argentina

In 1983, the Buenos Aires regional delegation continued its protection activities on behalf of persons detained for security reasons. The delegation also dealt with several problems arising in the aftermath of the South Atlantic conflict.

At the beginning of May, the delegate-general for Latin America went on mission to Buenos Aires, where he met the National Society leaders and had talks with several members of the government, including the Deputy Minister of the Interior, General Carlos Cerda. The main topic discussed with the Deputy Minister of the Interior was the problem of missing persons. The intention of the Argentine military government to declare a very broad amnesty, before the elections in October 1983, for detainees imprisoned on grounds of offences against State security and in particular for administrative detainees, was confirmed by the Argentine authorities to the delegate-general during his visit. Various topics relating to the South Atlantic conflict were also discussed during this mission.

On 25 April, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Juan Ramon Aguirre Lanari, was received at ICRC headquarters by the President, Mr. Hay, and the question, in particular, of Argentine family visits to the Falkland Islands was discussed.

Protection

The releasing of prisoners, which was begun by the Argentine military authorities in 1982, was continued throughout 1983. On 1 January, 557 security detainees, who had been regularly visited by the ICRC, were still being held in the two main prisons of the capital and in a detention centre situated in southern Patagonia (Rawson). In October, the governmental authorities lifted all the PEN sanctions (PEN was an administrative measure which placed all detainees "a disposición del Poder Ejecutivo nacional" i.e. at the disposal of the national executive authorities). Thus, the ICRC recorded only 122 security detainees still imprisoned at the end of 1983.

From 16 to 22 February, the delegates, including a doctor, made a complete visit to 102 detainees at the Villa Devoto prison. Later in the year, from 15 September to 7 October, the ICRC team made a series of visits to the Devoto, Rawson and

Ezeiza prisons where they saw a total of 351 detainees (including 55 women). The delegates also had access to a psychiatric hospital, where they visited one detainee.

On 23 December 1983, the detainees in the Rawson prison were transferred to prisons near their homes to facilitate contacts with their families. During talks, at the end of December, with the new Minister of the Interior, Dr. A. Troccoli, (the elections of 31 October having resulted in the reinstatement of a civilian government), the head of the delegation received confirmation that the delegates would be given every facility to continue their visits to convicted detainees still imprisoned.

Concerning the problem of missing persons, the Minister of the Interior asked the ICRC delegation to take up contact with the "National Commission on Missing Persons", set up by the newly elected civilian government. The ICRC gave this Commission copies of its files on missing persons, relating to a total of 2,307 cases that had been brought successively by the delegation to the attention of the Argentine authorities between 1977 and 1981. It should be noted that these 2,307 files represent only cases of which the ICRC had been informed by the missing persons' next of kin. Since between 1977 and 1981 only a limited number of families had ventured to inform the ICRC, the latter's files on missing persons can in no way be considered exhaustive.

Assistance

The detainees visited continued to receive ICRC assistance during 1983. The delegation also continued to finance the travel costs for certain families who lived particularly far away from the place of detention of their relative. As a result of the substantial decrease in the number of detainees visited by the ICRC in 1983, the total value of assistance provided fell to 33,370 Swiss francs.

Tracing Agency

The Tracing Agency office of the regional delegation for the Southern Cone continued to help in the delegation's work, in particular by processing the data collected by delegates during their visits to places of detention. The Tracing Agency office also continued to maintain its usual contacts with the families of detainees.

Chile

The regional delegation continued its protection work in Chile on behalf of persons arrested for offences against the law on the internal security of the State (No. 12927) and the law on arms control (No. 17798).

Two series of visits were carried out by the delegates in March and July 1983, respectively, as well as an *ad hoc* visit in May.

Prior to the March visit, the regional delegate had talks with the Chilean authorities, in particular with the new Minister of Justice, Dr. Jaime del Valle, whom he informed of the main conclusions drawn from the complete series of visits carried out in November 1982. Then, from 11 to 17 March, the delegates visited seven places of detention, mainly in Santiago and Concepcion, where they visited 97 detainees.

Because of the numerous arrests made during the anti-governmental demonstrations in May, a delegate went to Santiago from 16 to 24 May in order to evaluate the situation and to visit the persons recently arrested. This delegate made visits to the two principal preventive detention centres in the capital, where he spoke to 150 newly arrested persons.

During the series of visits made between 11 July and 1 August, the delegates observed that virtually all these persons had been released. In the course of this mission, the delegates visited 169 detainees (including 58 for the first time) held in 25 places of detention in the central region and as far south as Puerto Montt.

Finally, from 27 to 30 September, the regional delegate returned to Chile to hand over to the authorities a summary report on the series of visits made in July. On this occasion, the regional delegate also made a special visit to two detainees in the Victoria prison.

As in the past years, medical aid was supplied to the detainees and 80 needy families of prisoners were given food assistance. Lastly, the ICRC helped relegated persons by arranging for a visit by a member of their family, or by facilitating the return journey of such persons at the end of their term of punishment.

Paraguay

Two series of visits to detainees were made in this country in 1983.

On 31 May, a delegate went from Buenos Aires to Asuncion, where he took up contact with the authorities, in particular with the Minister of the Interior; they authorized him to start a visit to the security detainees right away. Between 31 May and 8 June, this delegate thus had access, according to the customary ICRC procedure, to two places of detention administered by the Ministry of Justice (the "Casa del buen pastor" and the "Penitenciaría de Tacumba") and to three places under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior (the "Departamento de Investigaciones", the "Departamento de Asuntos técnicos" and the "Guardia de seguridad de Tacumba"). Visits were paid on this occasion to a total of 55 detainees, including six administrative detainees.

The regional delegate, accompanied by an ICRC medical delegate, visited Paraguay from 15 to 22 August, where he was received by the authorities, notably by the Minister of the Interior and by the Chief of Police of Asuncion, and handed over to them a summary report on the visits previously carried

out. Visits were then again made to 49 detainees, this time in the presence of the ICRC doctor, and the medical situation was studied in the four principal places of detention.

Finally, in the middle of December, the regional delegate and an ICRC doctor returned to Asuncion to pay an emergency visit to a security detainee who had gone on a prolonged hunger strike. The object of their visit was also to repeat a request for the release of this detainee on humanitarian grounds, and to make the same request regarding another security detainee. In spite of these representations, these two detainees were still imprisoned at the end of December.

Uruguay

In 1983, the ICRC was able to resume its protection activities in Uruguay.

A series of visits to security detainees took place from 4 April to 2 June. The ICRC team, composed of six delegates, including two doctors, first went to the Libertad (EMR 1) prison, where they remained until 10 May visiting all the prisoners and inspecting all the prison installations. The delegates then visited the Punta de Rieles (EMR 2) prison for women, as well as six other places of detention. By the end of this series of visits, which was completed on 2 June, the delegates had visited 879 security detainees and had had interviews without witnesses with each one of them. There were, however, nine detainees whom the delegates did not visit, because they were not authorized to interview them without witnesses in accordance with the customary procedure for ICRC visits. These detainees, whose detention was acknowledged by the authorities, were imprisoned in army barracks.

While these visits were taking place, the delegate-general went to Montevideo, from 4 to 9 May, where he had several talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as with Rear-Admiral Laborde, chief of the Joint General Staff.

The reports on this series of visits were handed over by the regional delegate to Rear-Admiral Laborde on 9 September. A second series of visits took place between 21 November and 16 December. This time, the delegates saw 824 security prisoners in nine places of detention, including 669 at the Libertad prison and 110 women at the Punta de Rieles prison. The decrease in the total number of detainees visited, compared with the number registered in April-June, tallied with the number of prisoners released between the two series of visits.

As on previous visits, the delegates were again not authorized, during this second series of visits, to have interviews without witnesses with the nine detainees imprisoned in army barracks. This restriction continued to be of concern for the ICRC.

**ASSISTANCE PROVIDED OR
FORWARDED BY THE ICRC IN 1983 ***

LATIN AMERICA

Country	Beneficiaries	Relief		Medical Assistance	Total Sw. fr.
		Tonnage	Value in Sw. fr.	Value in Sw. fr.	
Argentina	Detainees and their families	—	33,370	—	33,370
Chile	Detainees and their families, civilians through the National Society	110.0	414,300	—	414,300
Colombia	Detainees	—	470	—	470
El Salvador	Displaced civilians, detainees and their families, sick persons	4,651.4	8,877,040	559,680	9,436,720
Nicaragua	Displaced civilians, detainees and their families, sick persons, National Society	432.3	787,450	144,900	932,350
Paraguay	Civilians through the National Society	10.0	95,400	—	95,400
Peru	Detainees, civilians through the National Society	41.6	146,040	—	146,040
Uruguay	Civilians, National Society	140.0	692,700	—	692,700
TOTAL		5,385.3	11,046,770	704,580	11,751,350

* Includes food aid from the EEC and the Swiss Confederation, aid to National Societies, aid provided in specially financed actions, and aid financed by funds for relief operations.