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surgical teams provided by National Red Cross Societies¹ continued their work in several provincial towns (dispensaries, malaria control campaign).

Early in 1974, before the Government of National Union took office, an ICRC delegate visited the President of the Lao Patriotic Front (LPF) at Sam Neua. Continuing contacts between the ICRC delegation and LPF representatives made it possible to send consignments of medicaments, medical equipment and instruments to the Lao Patriotic Front.²

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Following the incidents on the Paracel Islands, 48 seamen (five of whom were wounded) belonging to the Vietnamese Republic's Armed Forces were captured by a force of the People's Republic of China. With the ICRC acting as intermediary, these prisoners were repatriated in two operations, on 31 January and 18 February 1974, via Hong Kong.

Asian Sub-Continent

The year 1974 was marked by continued activity under the New Delhi Agreement of 28 August 1973³ concluded by the Governments of Pakistan and India (with the concurrence of and endorsed by the Government of Bangladesh). Those Governments had requested the assistance of the Swiss Confederation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the ICRC in operations for the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war and certain civilian populations. The three countries reached a further agreement in New Delhi on 8 April 1974 on points which had been left in suspense on 28 August 1973.

Following the December 1971 war, the ICRC maintained delegations at Islamabad, New Delhi and Dacca for its activities on behalf of Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees in India, and of civilian minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

¹ From the following countries: Japan, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

² See Table of Relief, on p. 61 of this report.

³ See Annual Report 1973, page 19.

INDIA

Prisoners of war

Visits: The ICRC continued to visit camps until the last Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees had been repatriated. Each visit was covered by a report which the ICRC sent to the Detaining Power and to the prisoner's or detainee's own government.

Repatriations: The last prisoner convoy crossed the Indo-Pakistan frontier at Wagah on 30 April 1974. Repatriation operations, which had started on 28 September 1973, enabled 89,981 Pakistani civilian internees and prisoners of war to return home. ICRC delegates escorted the repatriating trains (a total of 105) carrying prisoners from their place of detention to the Indo-Pakistan frontier, on average at the rate of one train every other day. The Indian authorities handed the prisoners over to the Pakistan authorities under the auspices of the ICRC. At the frontier, the prisoners were received by representatives of the Pakistani army, public authorities and the Red Crescent Society. The operations were carried out without any serious incident other than the accidental death of three prisoners in transit. Each convoy operation was covered by a report which the ICRC sent to the prisoners' own government and to the Detaining Power.

Pre-war detainees

These were Pakistan nationals held in Indian civil prisons who had been arrested before the 1971 conflict, mainly for common law offences.

The Swiss Confederation, as the Protecting Power appointed by the Parties to the conflict, arranged for the detainees to be visited and for their repatriation. ICRC delegates sometimes helped in these tasks.

Post-war entrants

These were persons who had crossed the Indian border illegally after hostilities had ceased and who were held in Indian prisons.

The ICRC was authorized to visit them and to make arrangements for their repatriation. The ICRC registered 460 post-war entrants, sixty-two of whom the Pakistan Government allowed to return to their own country. The other cases were still in suspense at the end of 1974.

PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

Repatriation of Bengali civilians

The ICRC delegation in Pakistan continued its action on behalf of Bengali minorities. Visits to repatriation centres, visits to Bengali civilian detainees, and assistance to Bengali communities were carried on until 1 July 1974, by which date most of the Bengalis who wished to go home had been repatriated under the joint action of UNHCR (which organized an air-lift between Pakistan and Bangladesh) and the ICRC (which dealt with registrations and repatriation arrangements).

Thus 118,070 Bengalis went back to their own country. At the end of the repatriation operations, the ICRC closed down its Karachi and Lahore sub-delegations. By the end of December 1974, only one ICRC delegate remained at Islamabad, assisted by local employees.

The Bangladesh Government and Red Cross Society received Bengalis arriving from Pakistan. On several occasions the ICRC delegation at Dacca also intervened on their behalf.

Repatriation of non-locals to Pakistan

During 1974 the ICRC also continued its relief activities on behalf of non-local minorities in Bangladesh, but its work in medical dispensaries, schools and workshops was gradually taken over by organizations such as CONCERN and the "Mennonite Central Committee".

Non-locals who wished to go to Pakistan and who met the requirements of the Governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh continued to be registered during the first quarter of 1974. The Central Tracing Agency's bureaux at Dacca and the sub-delegations at Khulna, Chittagong, Ishurdi and Saidpur registered about 535,000

persons. There was some duplication, however, and it is therefore difficult to assess the exact figure.

The ICRC delegation at Dacca sent registration forms to the Islamabad delegation, which forwarded them to the Pakistan authorities in order that they might issue entry visas. The ICRC delegation at Dacca informed applicants of the Pakistan Government's individual replies conveyed by the ICRC delegation at Islamabad.

The ICRC provided *ad hoc* identity papers for non-locals who had been authorized to travel, and repatriation cards were made out. Repatriation operations, which started in 1973 in accordance with the New Delhi Agreement of 28 August, continued until 1 July 1974.

By that time, 108,727 non-locals had been transferred from Bangladesh to Pakistan. They were received by the Pakistan Government and Red Crescent Society. The ICRC delegation at Islamabad, however, intervened several times to solve some minor problems and to forward to the Dacca delegation messages from non-locals to the Bangladesh authorities or to the families they had left behind.

With the interruption of the UNHCR air-lift, a number of persons who had received permission to go to Pakistan had been unable to leave by the end of 1974. The Pakistan authorities were being approached with a view to reaching agreement on their transfer at some future date.

As at 31 December 1974, the ICRC delegation at Dacca was composed of a head of delegation, a Tracing Agency delegate, a radio operator and an administrator, assisted by local employees.

Appeals: A large number of non-locals in Bangladesh received a negative reply from the Pakistan Government to their applications for repatriation conveyed by the ICRC.

Under the Tripartite Agreement of 9 April 1974, the Governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan had decided that non-locals who had initially received a negative reply, and who came under one of the first three categories defined in the framework of the New Delhi Agreement of 28 August 1973, might submit an appeal for revision of their case. The ICRC registered appeals in Bangladesh and transmitted them to Pakistan. By 31 December 1974, the ICRC delegation at Islamabad had conveyed to the Pakistan authorities 10,000 cases involving some 60,000 persons. By the end of 1974, the

ICRC had received replies concerning 1,052 cases, representing about 6,300 persons.

Southern Africa

The ICRC continued its visits to persons detained in southern Africa for offences or on grounds of a political nature throughout 1974.

In addition, as it was considered necessary that the ICRC should be established there on a permanent basis, a regional delegate for southern Africa was appointed. The new delegate took up his post in September, on the understanding that missions to support his action would set out from Geneva, with special emphasis on prison visits. As a general rule, a medical delegate accompanied the visiting delegates on each round of visits.

It should be borne in mind that the categories of persons which the ICRC is authorized to visit vary with each country. In *Rhodesia*, ICRC delegates may only visit, in principle, persons detained administratively who are in custody without judgement, but not prisoners submitted to interrogation, undergoing trial or sentenced. In November 1974, however, for the first time, the ICRC was authorized to visit prisons in Salisbury and Khami where sentenced prisoners of all categories were held. In *South Africa*, the ICRC may visit sentenced political prisoners only, to the exclusion of others. In the *Portuguese territories*, prior to the events of 25 April 1974 in Portugal, the ICRC could visit all those who at the time of the visit came under the General Directorate of Security, whatever their legal status; after 25 April, the ICRC delegates had access to those persons, whatever their category, who were detained for offences or on grounds of a political nature.

Once they had been authorized to visit prisoners, ICRC delegates could, in all the above cases, talk to them at leisure without witnesses.

In these countries, as elsewhere, not only did the ICRC make suggestions to the competent authorities regarding specific improvements in the detention conditions observed, but it also en-