

# Latin America

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ICRC activities and also of the mission undertaken by the ICRC President in Indonesia in November 1978, see pp. 43 and 45.

The regional delegate also took an active part in the preparation and activities of the first Asian Seminar on the Dissemination of Knowledge of International Humanitarian Law which took place in Kuala Lumpur, *Malaysia*, from 14 to 24 November (see p. 58).

He was in *Papua New Guinea* from 26 October to 3 November. This was the first ICRC mission to that country since its independence in September 1975. Its main aim was to make the role and activities of the ICRC known to the authorities and to the National Society, and to gain information about the activities of the latter. The regional delegate had various meetings with the leaders of the Papua New Guinea Red Cross and with the Minister of the Interior, the Secretary for Defence and with high officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health and Education. The main topics under discussion were the 1949 Geneva Conventions, to which Papua New Guinea had acceded in 1976, the two 1977 Protocols, and the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law among the armed forces and in schools.

#### Philippines

The ICRC continued to support the relief action of the Philippine Red Cross for persons displaced by the fighting in Mindanao in the south of the country. In 1978 it shipped 1,581 tons of rice and 600 tons of powdered milk given by the EEC, and valued at 3,569,600 Swiss francs.

In September, during his visits to places of detention in Mindanao, the regional delegate went to three milk distribution centres run by the National Society and to a resettlement centre for displaced persons.

### Asian Sub-continent and neighbouring countries

#### Restructuring of ICRC organization

In the first half of 1978—more than six years after the 1971 conflict in the Asian Sub-Continent—the ICRC began closing down its offices in Dacca (Bangladesh) and Rawalpindi (Pakistan), and drastically reducing its regional delegation in New Delhi (India).

The ICRC took into consideration the fact that diplomatic relations had been set up between Pakistan and Bangladesh since 1976 and that, consequently, its role of neutral intermediary was no longer required, even though the repatriation operations for non-Bengalis were resumed after having been suspended in 1974. When it closed its offices the ICRC handed over to the relevant authorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh the Central Tracing Agency files on:—

1. 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 1974, and
2. people whose request for transfer had initially been rejected, but who had successfully appealed to the Pakistan authorities.

The ICRC nevertheless retained a liaison office in New Delhi, periodically visited by the regional delegate based on Geneva.

Its main task was to provide travel documents to various people without identity papers (Pakistanis who had obtained authorization both to go to Pakistan and to leave India, stateless refugees accepted by various countries).

During the second half of 1978, the Governments of Bangladesh and of Pakistan informed the ICRC of their intention to resume repatriation operations for non-Bengalis and requested the ICRC to provide technical assistance, together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in the preparation and organization of transfers from Bangladesh to Pakistan. The ICRC replied favourably to this request.

#### Activities of the regional delegate

The ICRC regional delegate for the Asian Sub-Continent and neighbouring countries went on several occasions to *India*, *Pakistan* and *Bangladesh* to work out the technical details of the ICRC withdrawal from the region.

At the beginning of July he undertook missions in *Afghanistan*, following the revolution in April 1978. In Kabul he was received by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, and visited the Pulicharki prison where he saw 90 persons, including women and children, all related to the royal family. He also conferred with the Vice-Minister of Education who showed lively interest in the distribution of the booklet "The Red Crescent and My Country" in Afghan schools.

The regional delegate took part in visits to "political detainees" in *Indonesia* (see p. 45) and went to *Burma*, *Sri Lanka* and *Nepal*, to maintain contact with the National Societies and the authorities of these countries.

### LATIN AMERICA

In 1978, the activities of the ICRC in Latin America were centred around two main concerns, i.e. "political detainees" (see p. 42), and victims of the fighting in Nicaragua (see below).

In order to carry out these activities successfully, the ICRC was obliged to re-organize its staff to a certain extent.

At the beginning of February 1978, the regional ICRC delegation for the *Andean countries* (with its headquarters in Caracas) was drastically reduced and the regional delegate transferred to Geneva.

The ICRC regional delegation for *Central America and the Caribbean* (with its headquarters in Guatemala) was kept up. However, during the first six months of the year, the regional delegate was assigned to the Argentina operation.

From the end of August 1978, when the ICRC action began in Nicaragua and the adjoining countries, the regional delegate was based in Nicaragua (see below).

Finally, the ICRC regional delegation for the *countries of the "Southern Cone"* (with its headquarters in Buenos Aires) underwent several changes: with the growth in ICRC activity in the "Southern Cone", a second regional delegate was appointed and the permanent ICRC delegation in Chile, set up in 1973, was replaced by a liaison office directly responsible to the regional delegation in Buenos Aires (see p. 43).

## **Nicaragua**

In Nicaragua—covered by the regional delegation for Central America and the Caribbean (see above)—several steps were taken on behalf of “political detainees” during the first quarter. After these initiatives had succeeded, the regional delegate and a medical delegate of the ICRC made two series of visits to places of detention, one at the end of April and the other at the beginning of July, when they made eight visits to six places of detention containing about 90 “political detainees”.

The situation, already tense, deteriorated seriously when, on 22 August, the Sandinist National Liberation Front (SNLF) beleaguered the national palace, the seat of parliament in Managua. This event marked in fact the beginning of the open armed crisis between the government and its opponents, grouped in a broad opposition front.

### **INITIAL MEASURES TAKEN BY THE ICRC**

#### **Dispatch of delegates, appeal for funds**

To try to cope with the situation, the ICRC immediately sent the regional delegate to the area. He arrived in Managua on 31 August and was joined on 9 September by a medical delegate of the ICRC. Together with the Nicaraguan Red Cross, they made an initial assessment of the situation, and on 1 September an appeal was sent to a number of National Societies for funds to support the ICRC in its emergency action for the victims of the fighting. The same appeal was made on 15 September to a dozen governments. The sum asked for, 756,000 Swiss francs, was to be used to finance the urgent phase of the International Red Cross action.

#### **Emergency relief action**

On 12 September the ICRC regional delegate met General Anastasio Somoza Debayle and asked for his support in obtaining for the National Society and the International Red Cross all necessary facilities and guarantees to enable them to carry out their tasks.

In view of the hostilities the ICRC, in agreement with the National Society and the League, took responsibility for coordinating the emergency relief operation consisting mainly in organizing convoys to remove the wounded and to transport relief supplies; distributing foodstuffs, tents, blankets and so on to the civilian population of towns and areas affected by the fighting and isolated by the general strike; and providing necessary medicaments and medical equipment to hospital and medical teams. This action was successful due to local organization and especially Nicaraguan Red Cross volunteers who did remarkable work in difficult and dangerous conditions.

#### **Protection**

Concomitantly with the setting up of the relief operation, the ICRC asked for authorization to visit any civilian or soldier arrested in connection with the events. The request was made in a telegram from the ICRC President to the President of Nicaragua on 11 September. Following General Somoza's agreement, these visits began on 26 September and continued until the end of the year (see statistics on p. 40).

### **Death of two Nicaraguan Red Cross relief workers**

On 14 September, two Nicaraguan Red Cross volunteer relief workers were killed in the course of their humanitarian mission. Their vehicle, part of a National Society convoy on which the Red Cross emblem was clearly visible, was attacked between Leon and Managua.

Deeply shocked, the League and the ICRC appealed urgently to all parties on 15 September, to ensure total respect for the emblem and mission of the Red Cross.

The ICRC also appealed directly to General Somoza, asking him to repeat his instructions regarding respect for the emblem.

### **CONSOLIDATION OF THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

From mid-September relative calm prevailed, apart from various skirmishes in different parts of the country.

This allowed the ICRC to re-assess its assistance programme, which had by then gone beyond the emergency phase. For that purpose, the delegate general for Latin America went to Managua on 18 September. Consultations with ICRC delegates and with leaders of the National Society showed clearly the necessity to continue helping the civilian population.

In order to do this successfully, the ICRC strengthened its organization by sending two more delegates, and launched a second appeal on 25 September for 2,200,000 Swiss francs to cover costs up to the end of 1978.

Despite the gradual dying down of the fighting, the need for food continued to grow considerably.

In fact, at the end of September, some 25,000 people were found to have fled their homes during the fighting. On the basis of a Nicaraguan Red Cross census of people in need, the ICRC and the National Society were faced with the task of organizing the transport of relief from the capital to the different towns in the country and of arranging distribution in the form of family rations.

From 23 to 29 October, Mr. Naville, a member and former President of the ICRC, accompanied by a representative of the League, undertook a mission to Nicaragua, during which he took stock of the Red Cross action with government officials and leaders of the National Society. The mission made it possible to define the various tasks of each institution so as to organize the provision of the aid required until the end of the year.

The Director of the Relief Division of the ICRC was in Nicaragua from 12 to 19 November in order to carry out the programme.

The ICRC continued to provide medicines and necessary medical equipment to both civilian and military hospitals which the medical delegate visited periodically.

#### **Action for persons who had taken refuge in embassies**

At the beginning of October 1978 several hundred people wishing to leave Nicaragua took refuge in several embassies in Managua. In most cases the needs of these people could be catered for by embassy staff, but in the Venezuelan and Mexican embassies in particular the number of refugees continued to grow in October and November, reaching as many as 200 people in each.

Although the laws of extraterritoriality guaranteed the refugees' safety, the ICRC agreed to bring them material and medical help, at the request of the two embassies. On the other hand, it made it perfectly clear that it would not intervene to help them leave the country, since the necessary contacts had to be made bilaterally between the parties concerned.

The medical delegate made eight weekly visits to these two embassies to distribute various kinds of relief (see statistics below), and to provide medical assistance, in co-operation with a doctor from the National Society.

In addition, the ICRC doctor twice visited the Panamanian embassy.

### THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

The fighting in Nicaragua caused thousands of people to flee to Honduras and, to a lesser extent, Costa Rica.

Faced with this situation, an extraordinary meeting of Presidents of the Central American National Societies was held in Tegucigalpa (Honduras) on 24 September, to co-ordinate relief for the refugees. Representatives of the League were present, as were the ICRC delegate general for Latin America and the regional delegate for Central America and the Caribbean. Working sessions were also held, both in Geneva and on the spot, to define the responsibilities and activities of the ICRC, the League and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) on behalf of those refugees.

It was unanimously agreed that overall responsibility for the action fell on the HCR, in close collaboration with the National Societies concerned. The League and ICRC took responsibility for assistance, the ICRC also taking on protection tasks.

#### Honduras

On 24 September more than 8,000 refugees had been registered in camps organized by the National Society, and about 100 members of SNLF interned at Choluteca, near the border with Nicaragua.

*ASSISTANCE.*—In accordance with the 24 September agreement, the ICRC undertook to provide part of the urgent assistance to the refugees (see figures below). The amount and kind of assistance was decided upon on the basis of the findings of ICRC representatives during a visit in September 1978 to the two main refugee camps, and also on the basis of a list, drawn up by the National Society, of the relief supplies required.

*PROTECTION.*—At the same time as giving assistance, the ICRC three times visited the members of the SNLF held at Choluteca.

#### Costa Rica

Three ICRC delegates, one of them a doctor, carried out a survey in Costa Rica on 17 and 18 October when they visited three refugee camps in which there were about 350 people. They also had meetings with the Vice-President of the Republic, responsible for co-ordinating relief to refugees, estimated at the time to number about 500 persons. Since the National Society, supported by other voluntary organizations, was

already in control of the situation, the ICRC did not set up any special action. It nevertheless provided 10 tents given by the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany.

A second mission at the beginning of November, by an ICRC delegate and a representative of the League, confirmed that needs were being met; in fact more than half the refugees had returned to Nicaragua.

#### Staff strength

In order to carry out its mission of protection and assistance on behalf of the victims of the conflict, the ICRC was obliged to set up an ad hoc form of organization. Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica were covered by the regional delegation for Central America and the Caribbean.

At the beginning of the action, only the regional delegate and the medical delegate were performing ICRC tasks. Because of the volume of the work two more delegates were sent out at the beginning of October, one responsible for assistance, the other for visits to persons detained in connection with the events. They were reinforced on 20 November by the regional delegate for the "South Cone" countries. The staff included also four locally recruited employees.

The ICRC team based in Managua also undertook missions in the two adjacent countries.

### STATISTICS

#### Protection

##### Nicaragua

From the end of September, the ICRC delegates made 29 visits to 19 places of detention in which 591 persons were detained in connection with the events. In addition, the medical delegate went many times to hospitals to visit the wounded detainees.

##### Honduras

The ICRC delegate, on three occasions, visited Choluteca, a town on the border with Nicaragua, where about 100 members of the SNLF were confined.

#### Assistance

The total value of ICRC food and medical aid during 1978 was 866,000 Swiss francs (not including aid in the form of food sent by the EEC and Switzerland. See Table, page 49). This sum was divided as follows:

##### Nicaragua

For displaced families	Sw. fr.
— foodstuffs (53,523 food rations distributed)	485,000
— medicaments	173,000
For those in asylum in embassies	
— food, medicines, various relief supplies	7,500

##### Honduras

For refugees and internees	
— cash gifts to the National Society	108,000
— 50 tents	77,000

<i>Costa Rica</i>	Sw. fr.
For refugees	
— 10 tents	15,500

#### Results of appeals for funds

The ICRC action in Nicaragua would not have been possible without the material support provided by governments and National Societies. The list of cash donors (total 1,823,224 Swiss francs for 1978) is given on pages 78 and 79.

Besides this, the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Swiss Government, the EEC, USAID and Swiss private industries contributed to this action with gifts in kind.

## EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

In 1978, the ICRC pursued its mission in favour of certain victims of the 1974 conflict in *Cyprus*. It also visited "political detainees" in *Portugal* (see Table on page 43).

Besides this, several missions were undertaken in various countries in Europe and in North America, to strengthen the ICRC's ties with the National Societies and governments of States where the ICRC does not intervene, but which participate directly—by providing personnel—or indirectly—by giving financial or material assistance—in its operations in various parts of the world. This personal contact enables the ICRC to give more information to those interested, about its activities and even about the problems it faces, particularly in matters of financing and the application of international humanitarian law, and to exchange ideas on subjects of common interest, such as the ratification of the Protocols additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross, etc. The ICRC also participated in several seminars or meetings organized by the National Societies of this area.

The President of the ICRC, in this connection, visited *Bulgaria* (for the centenary of the Bulgarian Red Cross), *Canada*, the *United States*, *Norway*, the *Netherlands*, the *Soviet Union*, *Yugoslavia*, and the Swiss Red Cross. On many of these visits he was accompanied by the delegate-general for Europe and North America, or the regional delegate for Central and Eastern Europe.

Moreover, the delegate-general went to the *Federal Republic of Germany*, *Greece*, the *United Kingdom* and *Turkey* and the regional delegate visited the *German Democratic Republic*, *Hungary*, *Poland*, *Romania* (on two occasions), *Czechoslovakia*, and *Yugoslavia* (twice, and in particular to participate in the training seminars organized by the Yugoslav Red Cross for the staff of National Societies of developing countries).

Furthermore, since 1955, the *International Tracing Service* (ITS), at Arolsen, in the Federal Republic of Germany, has been under the direction and management of the ICRC.

### Cyprus

Three new missions, of about a fortnight each, took place in Cyprus in April, September and December 1978. They were

all carried out by the delegate responsible for questions concerning Cyprus at ICRC headquarters, who was accompanied, on the first mission, by the former ICRC delegate for the northern sector of the island, and on the second, by the delegate-general.

Each time, the representatives of the ICRC visited some 2,000 Greek Cypriots remaining in the northern sector of the island, under Turkish Cypriot control, and some 200 Turkish Cypriots remaining in the southern sector of the island after the 1974 exodus. The aim of these visits was to ascertain the situation of these people in humanitarian terms and to make any necessary approaches to the responsible authorities. The representatives of the ICRC held talks with the Cyprus Government and also with the Turkish Cypriot authorities in Nicosia. They also got in touch with the special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Cyprus.

Mention must also be made that the ICRC continued to give its financial support to the Cypriot Red Cross, a developing society, to help it in its work regarding family messages (the sole means, for persons living in the northern sector of the island, to correspond with their relatives in the southern sector).

## Federal Republic of Germany

### INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

The main task of the International Tracing Service (ITS) at Arolsen, in the Federal Republic of Germany, is to gather, classify, store and use all documents relating to Germans and non-Germans who were held in the Nazi labour and concentration camps, and to non-Germans displaced because of the Second World War. The ITS, in particular, issues certificates to the victims of Nazi persecution who wish to prove their right to a pension or compensation. This certificate either confirms that they were in a concentration camp (for Germans and non-Germans), that they worked as foreign labourers during the war (for non-Germans), or that they were in a refugee camp after the war (for non-Germans). It also issues medical certificates and death certificates.

The certificates issued by the ITS to victims of Nazi persecution or to members of their families are all based on documents contained in the ITS archives gathered over the years.

It is becoming increasingly difficult each year to make use of the archives. More than thirty years after the war, the task of identifying a person whose application contains vague and inadequate information is a long and exacting one. The magnitude of this problem is better understood when it is known that today the archives of the ITS contain accurate information on more than ten million persons persecuted under the National Socialist regime.

### The activities of the ITS in 1978

**COLLECTING DOCUMENTS.**—The ITS has received new documents from Poland, through the National Museum, regarding victims of the concentration camps of Stutthof and Auschwitz. Moreover, documents concerning various concentration camps, which could prove useful to the ITS, were selected from the archives of the Polish Red Cross to be filmed. Documents concerning the former State secret police at