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2. LATIN AMERICA

Having decided towards the end of 1968 to intensify its action in Latin America, the ICRC sent several missions to that part of the world in 1969.

Miss Marjorie Duvillard, member of the ICRC and also of the International Council of Nurses, carried out a series of visits to the Red Cross Societies of Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela and Salvador. She had discussions with the leaders of those National Societies on problems concerning the organization and the development of Red Cross activities, particularly in the fields of nursing, medical personnel training and first aid.

The Delegate-General of the ICRC for Latin America, Mr. Serge Nessi, went to the following eight countries between 27 March and 5 July 1969: Haïti, Guatemala, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Barbados and Honduras. On 6 November he left for a second voyage which took him to Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil.

The results of those missions were quite substantial, particularly in the following three fields:

1. Visits to places of detention

In seven countries (Bolivia, Guatemala, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and Mexico) the ICRC representatives obtained authorization to visit 27 places of detention in which more than 500 persons were held for political or ideological reasons or offences. As customary, reports on these visits were drawn up and conveyed by the ICRC to the detaining authorities.

2. Relations with National Societies

In each country visited, the ICRC representatives devoted considerable time to meetings with the leaders and local sections of the National Red Cross Society.

3. Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions

The ICRC representatives performed useful work, obtaining in several countries agreement to the introduction of brief courses on the Geneva Conventions for the armed forces.

During his second mission, Mr. Nessi also went to Washington for a few days where he discussed this question with the Organization of American States (OAS) and with the Inter-American Defence Board.

The ICRC intervened in the conflict which broke out between Honduras and Salvador in July 1969. It sent two delegates to ensure the application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and, in co-operation with the National Societies involved, assistance to both military and civilian victims.

Bolivia

Bolivian Red Cross.—Miss Duvillard visited the Bolivian Red Cross from 4 to 12 April 1969. With the new President, Dr. Celso Rossell Santa Cruz, she discussed the dispute which arose in 1968 between the National Society and the State. The Bolivian Red Cross had appealed to the Supreme Court against the decree of 24 January 1968 according to which the Red Cross should transfer its kindergartens, its homes and rehabilitation centres to the Ministry of Health, whilst a new system of distributing the product of the national lottery deprived the Society of its main source of income.

Miss Duvillard visited the three main institutions which, until 28 April 1968, belonged to the Bolivian Red Cross, and the two services still run by the Society at La Paz, namely the “Hogar Ernest”, with its classrooms, and the dispensary which gives medical and dental treatment.

Political Detainees¹.—Following her negotiations with the Bolivian military authorities, Miss Duvillard was authorized to visit six detainees imprisoned at Camiri. She was able to talk with them in private. A report was drawn up on this visit and forwarded to the Bolivian authorities.

¹ For the sake of brevity, the expression “political detainee” in this report covers not only persons sentenced or detained for their political ideas but also for offences with political or ideological motives.

Haiti

Haitian Red Cross.—The ICRC Delegate-General for Latin America, Mr. Nessi, visited the Haitian Red Cross from 31 March to 13 April 1969. Under its new President, Dr. Laroche, this Society managed not only to climb out of the rut in which it had been for two years, but also to earn the confidence and esteem of all sections of the population. It developed particularly in rural areas where it set up seven regional committees and a score of local committees.

In order to assist the Haitian Red Cross in its anti-tetanus and anti-tuberculosis campaigns, the ICRC sent it anti-tetanus and BCG vaccines.

Political Detainees.—Mr. Nessi took advantage of his stay in Port-au-Prince to discuss with the governmental authorities and explain to them the ICRC's assistance to political detainees. He was not however able to obtain authorization to visit detainees in Haiti as he had done in the other countries.

It should be mentioned that in 1967 Mr. Nessi received authorization from the President of the Republic to visit two places of detention, one in Port-au-Prince and the other at Cap-Haïtien.

Guatemala

Guatemalan Red Cross.—When Mr. Nessi visited the Guatemalan Red Cross from 19 April to 2 May it was in the process of re-organization.

In order to acquaint himself with the activities of the National Society in the interior of the country, the ICRC delegate visited three departmental sections. This gave him the opportunity to discuss with the leaders of these delegations the means of increasing the population's interest in the work of the Red Cross and to diversify the activities of local branches.

Political Detainees.—During an audience granted him by the Minister of the Interior, the ICRC representative requested and obtained authorization to visit all places of detention in the country.

He then went to five prisons at Quezaltenango, Salama and Pavon and to several police commissariats in the city of Guatemala where some fifty political detainees were held.

At the authorities' request, the ICRC sent the Pavon prison a sphygmomanometer.

Panama

The ICRC Delegate-General was in Panama from 2 to 10 May.

Panamanian Red Cross.—All the activities of the Panamanian Red Cross are of a social nature, but the new President, Mr. Henry-Ford, has drawn up a national development programme aiming to establish, inter alia, an ambulance service and a first aid service.

Political Detainees.—On 7 May, Mr. Nessi visited the Carcel Modelo de Panama where there were some hundred political detainees with whom he talked in private.

Colombia

Colombian Red Cross.—Mr. Nessi was in Colombia from 10 to 23 May 1969. After attending a meeting of the Colombian Red Cross Executive Committee in Bogota he visited the National Blood Bank and the National Society's latest venture, the "Centro de Socorro Familiar Adriano Pardomo" at Ciudad Kennedy.

Political Detainees.—Having been authorized by the Ministry of Justice to visit the country's places of detention, the ICRC delegate went to 9 prisons, 4 in Bogota and others at Ibagué, Armenia, Cartago, Neiva and Chapparal where he saw more than 200 political detainees.

At the Minister of Justice's request, the ICRC delegate told him of his impressions during the visits. At the same time he requested and obtained general authorization for all future ICRC missions in Colombia to carry out visits of this nature.

Peru

Peruvian Red Cross.—In Peru from 26 May to 12 June, the ICRC Delegate-General visited thoroughly all the services of the National Society.

At the request of the Society's President he gave a press conference in which he spoke about the Red Cross organization and the ICRC's activities in the world. He also addressed senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on "The Red Cross, the Geneva Conventions and Human Rights" and the officers of the Military Academy on "The ICRC and Humanitarian Law".

Political Detainees.—The Minister of the Interior having given his agreement, the ICRC representative went to six places of detention in Lima, Huancayo, Fronton Island and Cuzco; he saw some fifty political detainees.

In November, the ICRC sent by air to Lima a consignment of medicaments for detention centres in Peru. Similar consignments, containing antibiotics, vitamins and medical equipment, were despatched to Colombia, Guatemala and Panama for the benefit of detainees in those countries.

Venezuela

In Venezuela, thanks to the support he received from the President of the Venezuelan Red Cross in his contacts with the authorities, the ICRC delegate visited not only political detainees on remand but also those who had been placed under the jurisdiction of the Military Courts. He went to three places of detention, two at Caracas and one at Los Teques where there were some hundred political detainees. As in the other countries he had previously visited, he was able to talk in private with prisoners of his own choosing.

Whilst in Caracas Mr. Nessi had an interview with the President of the Republic, Mr. Rafael Caldera, who displayed considerable interest in ICRC activities.

Barbados

From 22 to 28 June the ICRC representative visited the Red Cross which was in the process of being formed, in Barbados. At that moment it was a branch of the British Red Cross. He discussed with the leaders of the Society, the various aspects of the scope for its development and for the diversification of its activities. He also broached the same subject with the Minister of Health, emphasizing the importance of co-operation between the Government and the National Society. He also stressed the necessity for the Society's being able to rely on official assistance regularly each year.

Mexico

Mr. Nessi was in Mexico from 20 to 29 November to attend the IVth Meeting of Presidents and technical personnel of Red Cross Societies of the United States of America, Mexico, Central America and Panama. One of the resolutions adopted by the meeting concerned political detainees; it recommended National Societies to support the future efforts and initiative undertaken by the ICRC in that field.

Whilst in Mexico City, the ICRC representative obtained authorization to visit the prison for women and the Santa Marta Acatitla prison where he saw some dozen political detainees.

Uruguay

At the invitation of the Uruguayan Red Cross, the ICRC Delegate-General was in Montevideo from 2 to 12 December in order to take part in the IIIrd Regional Conference of Red Cross Societies in the Southern States of South America.

Paraguay

Mr. Nessi arrived at Asunción on 8 December for a visit to the Paraguayan Red Cross. He attended a meeting of the Central Committee and, with the Society's President, Dr. Miguel Angel

Maffiodo, had discussions concerned essentially with problems having a bearing on the re-organization of the Paraguayan Red Cross and the diversification of its activities. Particularly worthy of mention is the Society's excellent work in the fields of obstetrics and pediatry.

Whilst in Paraguay, Mr. Nessi met the Minister of Defence with whom he discussed the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions among members of the Armed Forces; with the Minister of the Interior, he discussed conditions for political detainees.

On 17 December the ICRC delegate left Paraguay for Brazil. He thereafter went to Bolivia.

The Honduras-Salvador Conflict

I. ORIGIN OF THE CONFLICT

In June 1969, trouble broke out in Honduras and El Salvador following two matches between the national football teams of these two countries, one at Tegucigalpa, the other at San Salvador.

On 24 June, the Salvadorian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. F. J. Guerrero, advised the ICRC of a message he had sent to the Chairman of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington. The message drew attention to the expulsion from Honduras of Salvadorian citizens and to violations of human rights in that country.

At that time, Mr. Serge Nessi, ICRC Delegate-General for Latin America, was on mission in Bridgetown in Barbados. The ICRC urged him to proceed to Honduras in order to examine the situation with the officials of the National Red Cross Society.

On the day before his arrival in Honduras, where he stayed from 29 June to 2 July, a seven point agreement had already been reached by the National Red Cross Societies of Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. It provided, *inter alia*, for the setting up at Tegucigalpa of a tracing and information service for all Salvadorians resident in Honduras. A similar office was set up in San Salvador.

However, many Salvadorians resident in Honduras continued to arrive at the frontier town of El Amatillo on the trans-American highway, where they were given shelter by the Salvador Red Cross. On 14 July the armed forces of El Salvador penetrated the territory of Honduras.

On 16 July, the ICRC asked both National Societies to send it details of the situation, of the number of military and civilian victims and of any prisoners of war taken. Two days later it decided to send out two delegates, Mr. Nessi and Mr. Leemann.

On their arrival in Honduras the situation was that, since 15 July, the front had been stabilised and a cease-fire agreement, sponsored by the Organization of American States (OAS), had been reached. It became effective on 22 July. It was only on 3 August that all Salvadorian troops were withdrawn from the territory of Honduras.

II. ASSISTANCE TO THE VICTIMS OF THE CONFLICT

The ICRC delegates' efforts were mainly for the benefit of three categories of victims:

- prisoners of war ;
- interned Salvadorian and Honduran civilians ;
- Honduran civilian detainees in El Salvador, captured by the Salvadorian armed forces in the occupied territory.

Prisoners of war.—In both Honduras and in El Salvador the ICRC delegates immediately obtained lists of prisoners of war and authorization to visit them and talk with them.

The Salvadorian prisoners, of whom there were 28, were first interned at Las Casitas near Tegucigalpa; they were later transferred to the penitentiary in Tegucigalpa.

The Honduran prisoners, of whom there were 58, were all interned at the San Vicente penitentiary.

Regular visits to the prisoners of war on both sides began on 24 July when comforts such as straw mats, blankets, underclothes, medicaments, reading matter, toilet requisites, cigarettes and so

forth were provided. At the same time the ICRC delegates began negotiations with the governments and army staffs of Honduras and El Salvador to arrange the release and repatriation of the prisoners of war.

After a number of direct contacts and letters, and thanks to concomitant negotiations conducted by the OAS, the exchange of prisoners of war took place on 12 August at the frontier post of El Amatillo, in the presence of the two ICRC representatives and the Presidents of the Red Cross Societies of Honduras and El Salvador. Each National Society looked after its own nationals and conveyed them to their respective capitals.

It was exactly twenty years, day for day, since the signing of the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war, article 118 of which stipulates that prisoners of war shall be repatriated without delay after hostilities.

Salvadorian and Honduran Civilian Detainees.—Immediately the conflict broke out many Salvadorians were interned in improvised camps. On 21 July there were some 5,000 of them interned, and by 23 August the figure was estimated at over 10,000.

In order to assess the situation and the needs of these persons, ICRC delegates, from 21 to 25 July, visited the following internment camps:

- in the Cortés department: the Agas camp (2,500 internees), at San Pedro Sula, and the Castillo de San Fernando de Omoa (220);
- in the Atlantida department: the Tela penitentiary (890);
- in the Yoro department: the El Progreso camp (750);
- in the Francisco Morazan department: the national stadium at Tegucigalpa (450);
- in the Valle department: the penitentiary at Nacaome (95).

Co-operating with the ICRC delegates, the Honduran Red Cross proceeded to distribute, in the camps where the need was greatest, tents (as protection against the torrential rain at that time of the year), plastic plates and kitchen utensils, water purifiers to prevent epidemics, and various medicaments.

On 23 July the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies launched a joint appeal to twelve National Societies on the American continent for the benefit of interned Salvadorians.

Two days later the ICRC sent the Honduran Red Cross 25 cartons of blood plasma, 1 carton of antibiotics, vaccines, surgical kits and dressing material.

Several governments, National Societies and other charitable institutions, as well as the League of Red Cross Societies, also sent supplies to the Honduran Red Cross.

On 30 August, the Honduran authorities informed the OAS of their agreement to release all internees from the camps. By mid-September the camps were all empty.

Honduran Civilian Detainees in Salvador.—During their advance into Honduran territory the Salvadorian armed forces captured 478 Honduran nationals, including 71 women and 86 children.

The women, children and some elderly people were temporarily interned in a camp supervised by the Salvador Red Cross at Cafetalon, at Santa Tecla (133) and at the National Society's own Headquarters in San-Miguel (62). Ten Honduran women, arrested in El Salvador, were taken to the prison for women at Ilopango.

The other detainees, all men, were held in the following prisons: the Cojutepeque penal centre (133); the Santa Ana penitentiary (50); the Zacateloluca penal centre (25); the Sonsonate penal centre (25); the national Police headquarters (31); the headquarters of the Guardia Nacional (3).

In addition, three detainees were interned at the Rinaldi college and three others at the Don Bosco college at San Salvador.

All detainees were visited regularly by the ICRC delegates who brought them medicaments, food, clothing and cigarettes.

Following an agreement between the Salvadorian authorities and the ICRC delegates, pursuant to articles 49, 77 and 133 of the IVth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in time of war, the Honduran civilian detainees were released and repatriated in stages, beginning on 16 August. The last of them reached Honduras on 6 October when the ICRC's action in Honduras and El Salvador ceased.

A word must be said about the work of the National Societies of Guatemala and Nicaragua. During the conflict they gave shelter to 5,000 and 2,000 Honduran refugees respectively.

The Guatemala Red Cross also assisted some 1,300 Salvadorians resident in the northern part of Honduras who sought refuge in Guatemala.

3. ASIA

From 12 March to 11 April 1969, Mr. Gallopin, member and Director General of the ICRC, was in Asia where he visited Japan, Cambodia and Indonesia. In these three countries he had discussions with several notable persons, as mentioned in the section of this report dealing with international relations.

Cambodia

Delegation.—In 1969 the ICRC maintained its general delegation for Asia at Phnom-Penh, headed by Mr. André Durand. During the latter's absence in Switzerland from 1 July to 17 October, his place was taken by Mr. Michel Testuz, delegate.

Prisoners.—In May Mr. André Durand intervened with the Khmer authorities in favour of two South Korean servicemen detained in Cambodia. The Cambodian government having decided to release these two men, Mr. Testuz visited them shortly before their release, on 16 June.

The ICRC delegate also received the authorization to deliver parcels and family messages to four Vietnamese detainees in the Phnom-Penh central prison. One of them was released in November on Cambodian Independence Day.

The ICRC delegation handed over to Mr. Khiou Bonthonn, Secretary-General of the Cambodian Red Cross, correspondence and parcels for four Thai nationals detained in the Phnom-Penh central prison.