

# Latin America

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# LATIN AMERICA

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The activities of the ICRC in Latin America in 1980 were primarily of a protective nature, consisting in visiting detainees in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Uruguay. Special action was taken in Colombia and El Salvador, where premises were occupied and hostages taken. In El Salvador the ICRC made active preparations for a possible deterioration of the situation.

The material and medical assistance provided by the ICRC in the course of its activities in Latin America in 1980 was valued at a total amount of 4.37 million Swiss francs (see table on page 33).

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The regional delegation for the Andean countries, Guyana and Surinam was transferred from Caracas to Bogota. The regional delegation in Buenos Aires, which covers Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, was maintained throughout the year, while the regional delegation for Central America and the Caribbean, based at Guatemala City, was again left in a state of suspended animation as in 1979, owing to the demanding commitments confronting the delegations in Managua and San Salvador.

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Mr. Victor Umbricht, a member of the ICRC, took part in the ceremonial commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Mexican Red Cross, which was held at the end of October.

The ICRC was also represented by the delegate-general for Latin America and the regional delegate for the Andean countries at the first meeting of Presidents and at the technical seminar held by the National Red Cross Societies in South America at La Paz from 2 to 4 March.

## Argentina

The ICRC continued its work in Argentina on behalf of people detained for security reasons. It likewise continued its efforts to trace persons reported missing.

On several occasions the ICRC discussed its activities and related problems with the Argentinian authorities, in particular with General Albano Harguindeguy, Minister of the Interior, Dr. Rodriguez Varela, Minister of Justice, General José Antonio Vaquero, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and Colonel Carlos H. Cerda, Legal and Technical Under-

Secretary to the Presidency of the Republic; Colonel Cerda was also received by the President of the ICRC in Geneva on 1 September.

### Protection

*ASSISTANCE TO DETAINEES.*—Throughout the year ICRC delegates, including doctors, went to Argentinian prisons to visit people suspected of subversion and detained on grounds of security. In 1980 they visited 19 places of detention holding some 2,150 detainees.

Of the four main prisons La Plata was visited three times, whilst Rawson, Villa Devoto and the new Caseros prison were each visited twice. Medical delegates also visited two hospitals where security detainees were held. Confidential reports were made of these visits.

In addition to the aforesaid visits, ICRC delegates obtained permission to make special visits to Rawson, Caseros and La Plata, where detainees had committed suicide. These events were also discussed with the officials concerned in the Ministry of the Interior.

As delegates observed several cases of mental disturbance among the detainees visited, a letter was sent to the Minister of the Interior on 23 July requesting the acceleration of legal proceedings and the release on medical grounds of 10 detainees held at the disposal of the national executive power. On 26 September the ICRC received a reply concerning six of the cases submitted: five detainees had been set at liberty or released under surveillance, whilst the sixth remained under arrest.

The ICRC tried to extend its protective activities to all persons arrested on grounds of security and detained by the military authorities. It specifically sought to gain authorized access to these people during the interrogation period, in other words before they were transferred to places of detention controlled by the federal penitentiary system. This question in particular was discussed with General José Antonio Vaquero, who was given a memorandum on the conditions of ICRC visits and a list of persons presumed in military hands. On 6 June the military authorities replied that no-one was detained by them on security grounds. The ICRC nevertheless persisted in its request for notification by the military authorities of any future arrest of persons suspected of subversion.

In April 1979 a decree had been issued introducing regulations on detention conditions for persons arrested for subversion. The ICRC subsequently approached the Argentine authorities, drawing their attention to the fact that these regulations were not uniformly applied in all prisons, and that restrictive practices occurred in some of them (see Annual

Report 1979, page 35). The Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice then revised the regulations, and a new decree was issued on 23 May 1980.

At the end of the year the ICRC suggested to the Argentine authorities that only one complete visit should from then on be made each year to each place of detention, this visit being followed by shorter inspections which would not comprise systematic visits to all detainees.

**PERSONS REPORTED MISSING.**—The ICRC continued to inquire into the whereabouts of the approximately 2,500 persons reported missing, in response to requests made by their families. In 1980, 85 new cases were recorded. The ICRC again approached the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice in an attempt to obtain details of previous and new cases, but as in 1979 no information of value was forthcoming.

In addition the ICRC approached the Argentine authorities concerning the disappearance of two Paraguayan nationals in the country, following a request by close relatives for an intervention to be made. The reply was that these two persons were not being held at the disposal of either the civilian or the military authorities.

### Assistance

Besides its efforts to offer protection, the ICRC continued to provide assistance to needy detainees and their families.

In the prisons the ICRC gave clothing, articles for leisure activities, medical supplies and medicaments; the most impecunious detainees received a small sum of money for purchases at the prison canteen. Transport tickets were given to released detainees.

As in the past, more than 900 families throughout the country received a monthly food parcel. The poorest among them were also given additional aid in the form of clothing, medicaments, etc. Family assistance was re-examined and reorganized in the latter months of the year, introducing a more rational system of decentralizing the distribution of aid. In certain regions, for instance, the ICRC arranged for Caritas to collaborate by taking over the distribution of assistance to the beneficiaries. A similar form of collaboration has also been established with several branches of the Argentine Red Cross. As a result the transport costs paid by the ICRC have been reduced.

### Tracing Agency

The Tracing Agency office in Buenos Aires has undertaken a systematic registration of detainees visited and information concerning them (possible transfers or releases). It has handled more than 350 family requests for news about missing or detained persons.

The work of the Tracing Agency office in Buenos Aires also included Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

## Bolivia

Only one week after the change of regime in Bolivia following the coup d'état of 17 July, the ICRC was ready on the spot to start its work of protection, assistance and enquiries for people arrested as a result of the events, and for their families. By mid-August a staff of five people was necessary to perform these activities. They consisted of the regional delegate for the Andean countries, a doctor, a delegate more specifically responsible for visiting the places of detention, a specialist from the Central Tracing Agency and an administrator.

### Protection

Shortly after the coup d'état in July the ICRC approached the Bolivian military authorities, offering its services to visit the persons detained due to events and presenting a memorandum on its protection activities. In early August the leaders of the "Comando Operativo Conjunto" (COC) authorized the ICRC to visit all places of detention in conformity with the institution's standard procedure, and visits began immediately. This authorization was confirmed in October by the Minister of the Interior, after the political detainees had been transferred to his jurisdiction.

The ICRC delegates had access to interrogation centres and places of detention at La Paz and in the vicinity of the capital, and to internment camps in the provinces at Puerto Cavinás, and at Puerto Rico and Cobija, in the north of the country. They also visited detainees in military and civilian hospitals. On the other hand it was not possible to visit other provincial areas, including certain places controlled by military regiments; it should be noted, however, that the majority of people arrested in the provinces were very quickly transferred to the capital.

From August to December 1980—the date when their activities in Bolivia ceased—the ICRC delegates were able to make 84 visits to 19 places of detention (including 4 hospitals) holding 664 persons arrested as a result of the events. They conducted 2,979 interviews without witnesses. Confidential reports were sent to the authorities.

During October the Bolivian authorities intimated that the detainees arrested as a result of the events in July would be freed on the spot, or placed under house arrest, or expelled from the country. The ICRC helped the first two categories to obtain authorizations to travel from La Paz to their homes. With the collaboration of the Bolivian Red Cross it provided food and accommodation for these persons during their stay in the capital after their release. The Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) took charge of the persons expelled from the country.

### Relief

In the course of visits to places of detention the ICRC provided the detainees with assistance such as food, blankets,

clothing, toiletries and leisure items, various utensils and medicaments. It financed the homeward travel costs of several released detainees. The most impoverished families of detainees also received financial assistance.

The assistance provided by the ICRC accounted for a total expenditure of 30,400 dollars, including the cost of an ambulance supplied to the National Society.

### Medical assistance

The medical delegate kept a regular check on the medical situation in the prisons, and in particular on the condition of detainees in hospital care. Several requests for the transfer of detainees to hospital were submitted to, and approved by, the Government.

### Tracing Agency

Installed towards mid-August in the Bolivian Red Cross premises, the La Paz Tracing Agency office recorded detainees visited; it immediately had to handle a big influx of family requests for news of these detainees. About 1,700 parents and relatives were received at the ICRC offices.

In order to facilitate the exchange of news between detainees and their families, the Tracing Agency arranged for the transmission of "Red Cross" messages and the delivery to the detainees of parcels and sums of money sent by their families.

Between the opening of the Agency offices and the end of November, 1,012 family messages were exchanged; 202 requests for investigations were recorded, of which 161 were brought to a successful conclusion.

The La Paz Tracing Agency's file was brought back to Geneva once the action was completed.

## Chile

In Chile the ICRC continued its efforts to protect persons detained for security reasons (persons still in detention after the release of a certain number in 1978, and persons newly arrested), and to seek persons reported missing. The regional delegate based in Buenos Aires went to Chile four times for this purpose, whilst the delegate-general for Latin America went there once towards the end of the year.

ICRC delegates had discussions on several occasions with the Chilean authorities, in particular with the senior officials in the Ministry of Justice and various humanitarian organizations.

In 1980 the ICRC visited 10 places of detention in the capital and the provinces holding some 130 detainees, who were given assistance. Observing that several detainees in the main Santiago prison had dental problems, the ICRC financed dental treatment for them by a Chilean dentist.

The ICRC was still unable to obtain any response from the Chilean Government concerning the 620 persons reported

missing by their families. The list of names had been handed to the Chilean authorities in 1978. With regard to the human bones discovered near Talagante towards the end of 1978, only in one case was the ICRC able to elicit information from the authorities.

## Colombia

In 1980 the ICRC installed its regional delegation for the Andean countries, Guyana and Surinam in Bogota. An agreement establishing its headquarters there was signed between the Colombian Government and the ICRC on 19 May.

The ICRC's activities in Colombia were of a protective nature (on behalf of the hostages held in the Dominican Embassy and persons detained on security grounds) or designed to promote knowledge of international humanitarian law (preparation of a seminar intended for the armed forces). These activities were discussed on several occasions with the Colombian authorities and in particular with Dr. Diego Uribe Vargas, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and General Luis Carlos Camacho Leyva, Minister of Defence. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was received at ICRC headquarters on 17 July.

The ICRC delegates in Colombia also kept in contact with the Colombian Red Cross.

### Protection

*HOSTAGES IN THE DOMINICAN EMBASSY.*—On 27 February members of the "Movement of 19 April" (M-19) seized and occupied the Dominican Embassy in Bogota, and held captive the 53 people assembled there, including several foreign diplomats and representatives of the Colombian Government. The Colombian Red Cross promptly made the necessary arrangements for assistance, had mattresses and toilet articles brought in immediately and kept the embassy regularly supplied with food. The Colombian Government and the embassy occupiers started negotiations. There was no cause for the ICRC to offer its services at that stage of events.

On 5 April, however, the ICRC was officially requested by the Colombian Government, through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to visit the hostages. The occupiers agreed to these visits. It was specified that the purpose of the ICRC's visit would be strictly humanitarian (to check the conditions of detention and the detainees' state of health, and give moral support to them and their families).

The first visit took place on 6 and 7 April. The ICRC delegate was given every possible facility and was able to talk to all 20 hostages (the others had meanwhile been released) without witness. The hostages filled in Red Cross messages forms which were then passed on to the respective families via the embassies concerned or the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva. The ICRC spoke freely to the M-19 representatives

about ways in which the conditions of detention should be improved, then informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs about these discussions. The Minister was also given a memorandum.

The ICRC delegate had access to the Dominican Embassy several times after this first visit to observe how the situation developed; in most cases, he was accompanied by doctors.

Lastly the ICRC intervened in the final phase of the affair, namely the liberation of the hostages, in accordance with the wishes of the Colombian Government and the people occupying the embassy. The ICRC had stipulated, however, that it would only intervene on condition that it was accepted as the sole intermediary entrusted with the supervision of the agreement reached between the Government and M-19 and its implementation, and that there would be no recourse to violence during the operation.

The 18 remaining hostages were thus released on 27 April under the auspices of the ICRC and with the collaboration of the Colombian Red Cross. Four hostages were freed immediately at Bogota airport and the others in Havana, where the M-19 members were allowed a brief stop-over. Of the hostages released in Cuba, the ones who wished to return to Bogota did so accompanied by the ICRC delegate.

*DETAINED PERSONS.*—As in the past, the ICRC was concerned for persons detained on security grounds.

After receiving in May the authorization to visit civilian prisons and the acceptance in principle of visits to military places of detention, the ICRC delegates went to see the La Pacota prison at the end of May. But the visits had to be called off almost as soon as they had begun, since the situation in El Salvador and the events in Bolivia called for the delegates' immediate presence there, their activities in Colombia having to be deferred.

## El Salvador

The ICRC sustained its efforts to protect detainees, and also conducted investigations and enquiries in close connexion with these protective activities. As a result of events it also provided increased relief and assistance for the civilian population.

5 December to finance the ICRC's activities in El Salvador between 1 July 1980 and 30 June 1981.

An agreement was signed on 12 December between the El Salvador Government and the ICRC officially establishing the headquarters of a delegation in the country.

### **Preparations for a possible deterioration of the conflict situation**

From the beginning of the year the ICRC took steps to prepare for a possible deterioration of the situation.

For medical purposes it kept in close contact with the Ministry of Health so as to be informed about the country's

hospital capacity and emergency measures envisaged by the Government. A medical delegate drew up a report on the existing resources and requirements of the various hospital institutions, both in the capital and in the provinces.

Since there was no blood bank in El Salvador, the ICRC devised a campaign together with the National Red Cross to recruit blood donors and thereby improve the supplies for the hospitals in the capital should the need arise.

A stock of 2.5 tons of medicaments and medical equipment was sent over by the Nicaragua delegation and subsequently supplemented by consignments from Geneva and by supplies bought locally. The emergency medical reserves at the end of December amounted to approximately 4 tons.

In order to ensure that a minimum quantity of food supplies (750 tons) was available in emergency, the ICRC approached a governmental agency.

The ICRC staff was augmented by four additional members in summer to step up the protection activities and continue preparations for assistance in case of increased hostilities. Further staff members were sent to El Salvador towards the end of the year, when the relief work for displaced persons was begun, bringing the number of delegates in San Salvador in December up to eleven.

It was also considered necessary to launch an information campaign to familiarize people throughout the country with the purpose and work of the ICRC and the El Salvador Red Cross (see the chapter on "Information and public relations"). During visits to places of detention the ICRC delegates gave lectures on the activities of the Red Cross and the principles of international humanitarian law to members of the armed forces and the police.

### **Protection**

*PERSONS DETAINED FOR SECURITY REASONS.*—At the end of February the governing Junta renewed the general authorization to visit all places of detention. This enabled the ICRC to continue its activities for the protection of persons detained as a result of events (the first series of visits had taken place in autumn 1979). These visits were resumed on 17 March and since the end of June, after the delegation staff was increased, were carried out at regular intervals. Both in San Salvador and in the provinces, ICRC staff visited places controlled by the Ministry of Justice, the National Guard, the Customs Police, the National Police and military barracks. Special attention was given to places of detention controlled by security forces of the police and National Guard, and such places were visited once or twice a week. The ICRC was especially concerned with detainees under interrogation. The main purpose of the ICRC's visits was in fact to see and register the detainees as fast as possible after their arrest in order to ensure some degree of protection for them.

In 1980 ICRC delegates had access to 95 places of detention (including 4 hospitals) in which there were 544 security detainees. Confidential reports were sent to the El Salvador authorities.

The ICRC also enquired into the fate of combatants who had surrendered to the authorities after the amnesty offer



made on 25 October, but as the first visits showed, no special activities were required on their behalf.

**HOSTAGES.**—As in 1979, the welfare of civilians held as hostages by opposition groups continued to cause concern for the ICRC.

On 15 January the ICRC accordingly appealed to the kidnappers of the South African Ambassador to respect the basic humanitarian principles and offered its services as a neutral intermediary. It specifically stated, however, that it would not take part in negotiations for his release, and that its intervention would be for a solely humanitarian purpose. The ICRC was unable to obtain permission to visit the South African Ambassador, despite repeated requests.

In 1980 various opposition movements occupied premises (embassies, government buildings, etc.) and took hostage the people there. The ICRC intervened in certain cases at the request of one of the parties and with the agreement of all concerned. It acted in close collaboration with the El Salvador Red Cross. A medical delegate spoke to the hostages without any witness present, examined the conditions of detention and demanded the release of certain persons for reasons of ill-health: a number were released as a result. He also maintained contact between the hostages and their families.

**CIVILIAN POPULATION.**—With the help of the El Salvador Red Cross, the ICRC took charge of several operations to remove groups of civilians caught up in the hostilities to areas of greater safety.

It also intervened on behalf of some 200 civilians who had sought shelter in July, together with members of the "Popular Leagues of 28 February", in the Costa Rica Embassy in San Salvador and were requesting political asylum. These refugees included a large number of women and children, which led the ICRC to ask the El Salvador Government to refrain from any action which might endanger the lives of the occupants should the Costa Rica Government decide to transfer its embassy elsewhere, in which case the diplomatic immunity of the occupied embassy would cease to be recognized. At the same time steps were taken to provide assistance in collaboration with the El Salvador Red Cross. A peaceful solution was ultimately found.

#### **Assistance**

ICRC delegates made regular visits to the provinces, having been notified of persons displaced as a result of hostilities. The problem became particularly acute in October in the north of the country, in the departments of Chalatenango, Cabanas, San Vicente and Morazan. With the authorities' approval an assistance programme was drawn up in close conjunction with the El Salvador Red Cross. Aid was urgently needed for 45,000 displaced persons, victims of the hostilities in areas inaccessible for any relief organization, governmental or otherwise. The joint assistance provided by the ICRC and the National Red Cross had to consist primarily of food and be confined to the emergency period (other aid in the form of

medicaments, clothing and some utensils also had to be distributed). Whereas the El Salvador Red Cross dealt with the practical implementation of the programme, the ICRC was responsible for its financing and supervision. The ICRC also arranged for the support of the WFP (World Food Programme), which placed part of its aid in El Salvador at the disposal of the ICRC.

With the ICRC's help the El Salvador Red Cross made all the necessary arrangements for the provision of assistance in San Salvador and San Miguel. The first distributions began in early December; 23 villages to the east of El Salvador in the region of Morazan were kept regularly supplied via San Miguel, whilst limited distributions were organized from San Salvador for some 3,500 displaced persons in central and northern areas of the country.

#### **Medical assistance**

The ICRC's work in this field was centred on preparations for a possible deterioration of the general situation.

Medical assistance was provided for people held as hostages by diverse opposition groups (see above).

#### **Tracing Agency**

A Tracing Agency office was opened in San Salvador in July as part of the delegation there. It took over the systematic registration of persons visited in places of detention and informed families of the arrest of their relatives. It handled more than 600 requests for enquiries about detainees or missing persons; about 145 cases were satisfactorily solved.

## **Nicaragua**

A vast programme of protection and assistance for detained persons and the civilian population had to be launched as a result of the events which culminated in July 1979 in the fall of the Somoza regime. Once the situation had calmed down, the ICRC began from September to concentrate on the welfare of detainees—former National Guard members and civilians captured at the end of hostilities (see Annual Report 1979).

In 1980 the ICRC's activities were mainly concerned with these detainees, providing protection, medical assistance, giving relief and conducting investigations.

To be able to finance its assistance programmes in Nicaragua, the ICRC launched an appeal on 13 February for 2.6 million Swiss francs. A second appeal was made on 5 December (for 4.6 million Swiss francs) to cover the deficit of its action there and finance the programme for 1981.

The ICRC's activities in Nicaragua and the problems involved were the subject of several missions by the delegate-general and discussions with the authorities, in particular Commander Tomas Borge Martinez, Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, members of the governing

Junta and Dr. Leonte Herdocia Ortega, Director for the International Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Ortega was also received by President Hay at ICRC headquarters on 30 October.

The ICRC's presence in Nicaragua became official in 1980, when an agreement was signed on 5 November between the Nicaraguan Government and the ICRC establishing an office there.

### Protection

The ICRC continued its protective activities on behalf of persons captured at the end of hostilities and also persons subsequently arrested on suspicion of counter-revolutionary activities.

Regular ICRC visits were made, in accordance with standard procedure, to the places of detention in Managua and the provinces, most of which belonged to the national penitentiary system (NPS), but with some also controlled by the national Sandinist police. The three main places of detention in Managua, where the majority of prisoners of ICRC concern were held, were visited twice a month at the beginning of the year and then once each month, namely the «Jorge Navarro» (formerly «Carcel Modelo») rehabilitation centre, the «Heroes y Martires de Nueva Guinea (formerly «Zona Franca») rehabilitation centre and the «Central de Policia». Visits to the latter ceased in August, as there were no longer any prisoners there for whom the ICRC was competent.

In provincial areas ICRC delegates went to some fifteen localities to visit places of detention; the most important ones were at Chinandega, Granada and Jinotepe. As the authorities transferred and regrouped detainees, the number of places of detention to be visited lessened steadily (about a dozen places in mid-year and five places at the end of the year).

In 1980, 131 visits were made to 32 places of detention with a total of 5,213 prisoners on 31 December. ICRC delegates also regularly visited detainees in various hospitals in the capital. Confidential reports on the ICRC's visits were sent solely to the authorities.

Throughout the year the ICRC made every effort to extend its protection to detainees in interrogation centres controlled by the State Security services: several of these detainees were visited by the ICRC following their transfer to NPS prisons, but the important thing was to give them the benefit of this protection from the moment of their arrest. The «Chipote» interrogation centre was visited twice (in February and June) in accordance with standard ICRC practice; each time, the delegates were given a list of names of the approximately 230 detainees there. The ICRC was unable, however, to obtain an authorization to repeat these visits regularly; for that matter it has never been given a general authorization for visits to places under the responsibility of the State Security services. At the end of the year the ICRC suggested to the Nicaraguan authorities that arrangements be made granting the ICRC access to detainees after two weeks of interrogation; a letter to this effect was sent by the president of the ICRC to the Minister of the Interior.

The steps taken by the Nicaraguan authorities to regroup prisoners have increased the overcrowding in the NPS prisons still further, with a resultant deterioration in the material conditions of detention. The ICRC suggested to the authorities that the current process of liberation should be extended, and should in particular be applied to persons who had only a minor part in the events. It furthermore proposed that 425 detainees should be released for age or health reasons. This problem was likewise broached in President Hay's letter to the Minister of the Interior (see above). Under a «ley de indulto» (law of pardon) enacted by the Junta, some 500 prisoners were released in December; only about forty people of those on the sick list compiled by the ICRC were included among them.

The ICRC gave its attention to the subject of the special tribunals formed in December 1979 to judge members of the National Guard under the former regime. On several occasions it reminded the authorities of the fundamental legal guarantees which should be accorded to detainees, and pointed out that the fact of having belonged to the National Guard was not a criminal offence in itself, particularly since those concerned had been given the status of «prisoners of war» by the new government from the start.

### Relief

In line with its protective activities, the ICRC carried out a large-scale assistance programme designed to improve the conditions of detention. It provided food aid in the places of detention visited, medicaments, medical equipment, toiletries, and to a lesser extent articles for leisure use, bedding and some clothing. The food aid (about 50,000 dollars a month) has been gradually decreasing since September; the distributions were made by the NPS, with subsequent verification by the ICRC.

For Christmas the ICRC delegates personally presented each detainee with a parcel: some 5,300 parcels were distributed in this way.

### Medical assistance

All through the year the ICRC maintained a programme of medical assistance in the places of detention.

The medical delegate kept the medical situation in the prisons under close observation, visited detainees in hospital for treatment and arranged for ailing detainees to be transferred to hospital; he also encouraged the training of medical assistants among the administrative staff of prisons.

The ICRC supplied medicaments which were not available on the local market, mainly to combat infectious diseases and chronic illnesses, and also provided equipment for minor surgery and laboratory apparatus.

It furthermore took special steps to arrange for dental treatment at the «Heroes y Martires de Nueva Guinea» rehabilitation centre in view of the urgent need there for such care. A dental delegate worked in this prison for one month, with the ICRC providing all the material and equipment needed (dentist's chair, medicaments, instruments, etc.). An

NPS dentist and a detainee, himself a trained dentist, took over from the ICRC dental delegate and carried on with his work, whilst the ICRC continued to place the necessary material and medicaments at their disposal.

### **Tracing Agency**

The Tracing Agency's office in Managua recorded details of all detainees visited, in order to protect them and be able to keep their families informed. It received some 450 requests for enquiries about detained or missing relatives (more than 300 of these requests were solved) and saw that almost 3,100 family messages were passed on.

## **Paraguay**

Here the ICRC continued its protective activities on behalf of persons detained on security grounds.

A series of visits, in each of which a medical delegate took part, were made in June to 7 detainees and 5 places of detention; two detainees visited in 1979 had meanwhile been released.

The ICRC likewise tackled the problem of persons reported missing and enquired about the list of 24 names which had been handed to the Paraguayan authorities in 1979. There was still no response forthcoming at the end of 1980.

The ICRC was concerned about the welfare of persons arrested after demonstrations in the Caaguazú region in March 1980, and the position of foreign nationals arrested after the assassination of the former Nicaraguan President in September.

During the ICRC's mission in June it turned out that most of the demonstrators had already been released and that the Paraguayan authorities had given this category of prisoners a "penal law" status; the ICRC delegates were nonetheless able to talk to about twelve of them in two prisons.

The ICRC did not need to take any special action with regard to the foreigners arrested in September, for they were not kept in detention for long and were either released or expelled from the country. Moreover the representatives of their own countries were able to visit them and were kept informed about them.

## **Uruguay**

On 21 December 1979 the Uruguayan Government had authorized the ICRC to take protective action on behalf of security detainees, allowing access to all places of detention in accordance with its standard practice (see Annual Report 1979, page 30).

As a result four ICRC delegates, including one doctor, made a series of visits from 31 January to 16 May. They went

to 19 military places of detention, of which the most important were La Libertad and Punta Rieles, and discussed freely without witnesses with 1,428 detainees. Eleven other detainees were seen in the presence of third parties for reasons of security. As customary, confidential reports were sent to the Uruguayan authorities.

On 8 July two delegates made a second visit to La Libertad, where they spoke without witnesses to about forty detainees of their choice.

Incidentally the ICRC issued a press release on 28 August, stressing that in accordance with its policy of discretion and in the interests of the protected persons, it never made its findings in places of detention known to the public. This statement was made in response to the publication of various declarations, wrongly attributed to the ICRC, about the conditions of detention prevailing in Uruguayan prisons.

Following this series of visits the ICRC supplied material assistance for the detainees in the form of books, a portable electrocardiograph and inhalers for detainees suffering from asthma, representing a value of 21,300 Swiss francs.

A "Uruguay" section was opened in the Central Tracing Agency's office at the regional delegation in Buenos Aires in 1980 to record information concerning the detainees visited. The Agency was thus able to reply to numerous family enquiries.

## **Other activities in Latin America**

### **Brazil**

To follow up the ICRC President's mission to Rio de Janeiro in June 1979 (see Annual Report 1979, page 30), the delegate-general for Latin America went to Brazil in early 1980. The ICRC obtained confirmation that all political detainees had been released after the amnesty declaration in August 1979, and that consequently no further protective action was necessary.

### **Cuba**

Pursuant to the ICRC President's mission to Cuba in February 1979 (see Annual Report 1979, page 30), the delegate-general for Latin America visited the country in June. He had discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health on possible protective action by the ICRC for persons detained on security grounds; no tangible results were achieved in this connexion in 1980, but the Cuban authorities have expressed their willingness to continue the dialogue. During this mission a great number of discussions took place with the leaders of the Cuban Red Cross.



**RELIEF AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED  
OR FORWARDED BY THE ICRC IN 1980\***

*LATIN AMERICA*

Country	Beneficiaries	Relief		Medical Aid	Total (Sw.fr.)
		Tonnage	Value (Sw.fr.)	Value (Sw.fr.)	
El Salvador . . . . .	Displaced civilian population, detainees, sick persons	550.0	490,000	140,000	630,000
Nicaragua . . . . .	Civilian population, detainees, sick persons	723.3	1,072,490	150,000	1,222,490
Bolivia . . . . .	National Society, detainees and their families	7.2	53,200	—	53,200
Argentina . . . . .	Detainees and their families	164.0	1,045,600	—	1,045,600
Chile . . . . .	Detainees and their families	100.0	336,900	—	336,900
Honduras . . . . .	National Society, civilian population	10.0	93,420	—	93,420
Paraguay . . . . .	National Society, civilian population	15.0	126,960	—	126,960
Uruguay . . . . .	National Society, civilian population	150.0	866,300	—	866,300
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,719.5</b>	<b>4,084,870</b>	<b>290,000</b>	<b>4,374,870</b>

\* Including food aid from the EEC and the Swiss Confederation, aid to National Societies, aid to detainees and their families, and aid provided in the course of activities with special financing.