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He also discussed with the leaders of the Red Cross of Viet Nam the progress of the aid programme then being carried on.

## Thailand

### Action to assist refugees<sup>1</sup>

The Bangkok delegation of the International Red Cross, numbering four delegates, pursued its activities in aid of Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese refugees in Thailand.

These refugees, who were housed in camps specially set up by the Thai authorities, continued to pour into the country throughout 1976, and by the end of the year they numbered about 80,000.

The ICRC delegates paid regular visits to the camps, their main task being to record all new arrivals. The particulars thus obtained were sent to the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva and provided the replies to a growing number of search requests (see p. 32).

When making visits, the delegates also distributed occasional emergency relief supplies to the refugees. In fact, under the agreement between the Thai authorities and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, it was the latter which was responsible for material aid to the refugees. However, the Indo-China Secretariat gave a further donation of 300,000 Swiss francs to the Thai Red Cross, to enable it to continue the programme of medical assistance begun the previous year for the refugees.

The ICRC obtained permission to visit the frontier police stations which held refugees detained for illegal entry into Thailand. Once these persons had served their sentence they were transferred to a refugee camp.

## Lao

Until May 1976, the International Red Cross delegation in Lao was headed by an ICRC delegate residing in Vientiane. Later, the delegation was placed under the authority of the head of the Hanoi delegation, who travelled regularly to Vientiane in order to maintain contact with the authorities and with the heads of the Lao Red Cross. The Indo-China Secretariat provided various relief supplies—in particular, first-aid kits, bicycles, kitchen utensils and clothing—to the National Society, to enable it to participate in the Ministry of Health aid programme.

<sup>1</sup> The Indo-China Secretariat also assisted Indo-Chinese refugees in Thailand.

## Chile

In 1976, the ICRC's delegation in Chile carried on its activities of protection and assistance, begun after the events of September 1973.

The staff consisted of six delegates, one of them a doctor, and seven local employees. The work performed was the same as in 1975, namely, visits to places of detention, aid to detainees and their families, and the services of the Central Tracing Agency.

### Visits to places of detention

The ICRC having been granted access to all official places of detention, the delegates continued to make visits to the camps of persons detained under the emergency regulations and to the country's civilian prisons. In addition, they regularly visited a place of detention administered by a state security organization where, from September onwards, visits were under normal conditions, i.e., included talks with detainees without the presence of witnesses. Another centre belonging to the same security organization was also visited once by the delegates, who did not, however, meet any of the detainees. Several visits were made to military detention centres.

In the course of the twelve months under review, the delegates made a total of 223 visits to some 70 places of detention, and met between 3,500 (beginning of 1976) and 500 (end of 1976) detainees. This figure included persons detained under the emergency regulations, indicted prisoners (*procesados*), and convicted prisoners. The considerable reduction in the number of detainees over the year was because many were released within the country after being held under orders from the Justice Ministry, some were exiled, and in November 1976 the majority of those held under the emergency regulations were also released.

As is customary, every visit was the subject of a report to the competent authorities. Regular representations were made, after the visits, in relation to the conditions of detention observed by the delegates, various problems connected with the legal situation of detainees, allegations of ill-treatment, and speeding-up of trials.

Again, as in 1975, the ICRC gave its attention to the two liberation programmes. The delegates recorded the wishes of persons affected by the programme for releasing those held under the emergency regulations on condition that they left the country.

The delegation also played an active part in the programme for the release of convicted prisoners. It maintained contact between the places of detention and the institutions responsible for organizing departures. Delegates also made approaches to the Ministry of Justice concerning its refusal of certain convicted prisoners' requests for expulsion.

## Aid to detainees and their families

The distribution of aid to detainees and their families went on in all parts of the country, thanks to gifts in kind received from diverse sources.

The following National Societies contributed:

Germany (GDR)	227 kg of drugs and 2,780 items of clothing
Australia	657 kg of drugs
Poland	1,320 woollen blankets and 900 kg of drugs
USSR	2,000 personal parcels containing clothes, blankets, toilet requisites and food (10.08 tons)

Switzerland provided food to the value of 85,000 Swiss francs, including 100 tons of wheat flour. The Canadian Government, through the National Society, donated 200 tons of white beans.

The EEC, too, gave food: 300 tons of rice, 300 tons of skimmed milk powder, and 500 tons of wheat flour, representing a total value of 1,895,000 Swiss francs. At the end of the year, part of these aid consignments, which had arrived in Chile in November 1976, were still stored in the ICRC's warehouse in Santiago, for distribution during 1977.

The distribution of relief to *detainees* was continued in all the places of detention visited—civilian prisons and detention camps. Supplies (food, clothes, toilet articles and cleaning equipment) to a value of more than 51,500 Swiss francs, were handed over by the delegates directly to the detainees.

The delegation maintained in addition an extensive aid operation for the *families of detainees*, and made distributions of basic foodstuffs. This form of assistance was extremely valuable, since the great majority of families having one or more of their members in detention were still in a difficult economic position.

In the first six months of the year, the ICRC aided nearly 1,800 families, or about 9,000 persons, in this way. The scope of the programme in the second half of the year was comparable, the number of persons helped being about 7,200 (1,425 families), the slight drop in numbers making it possible to increase a little the quantity of aid for each family. The number of distribution centres, spread throughout the country and operated by local sections of the Chilean Red Cross or by the churches, steadily declined, for organizational reasons, from 43 at the start of the year to 28 by the end of 1976.

The value of relief supplies distributed in 1976 to detainees' families totalled 980,000 Swiss francs.

Other supplies, including blankets, clothing, milk powder and drugs, to a value of some 317,000 Swiss francs, were given by the ICRC to various private organizations and institutions, among them "Caritas Chile", the Salesian Congregation, the "Vicaría de la Solidaridad", and the Chilean Red Cross.

## Tracing operations

The tracing bureau set up in Santagio by the Central Tracing Agency continued its vital work of recording information relating

to detainees, transmitting family messages, preparing travel documents, dealing with special cases and requests received from abroad, etc. It also continued to make searches for missing persons, lists of whom were regularly submitted by the delegation to the competent authorities and the National Security Organization.

An average of fifteen persons a day visited the Agency's office.

## Contacts by the delegation

As part of its activities, the delegation maintained permanent contact with the Chilean authorities and with various organizations performing humanitarian work. It worked in particularly close collaboration with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), the "Fundación de Ayuda Social de las Iglesias Cristianas" (FASIC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR), Caritas, and the Chilean Red Cross.

## President's tour

The President of the ICRC, Mr. Alexandre Hay, accompanied by the delegate general for Latin America, went to Chile in December 1976. He was received by the President of the Republic, General Augusto Pinochet, and by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of the Interior and of Justice.

The talks with these persons gave Mr. Hay the opportunity to express to the Chilean Government the ICRC's appreciation of the facilities granted to its delegates since September 1973, and to give an account of the work performed in the country by the ICRC delegation. He also outlined the objectives for the coming year and stressed his concern with regard to the humanitarian problems that still existed, particularly the disappearance of persons and the treatment of certain detainees. Two lists of missing persons, containing about one thousand names, were handed personally to General Pinochet by the President of the ICRC.

In view of the large reduction in the number of detainees as compared with the situation at the beginning of the year, the ICRC decided to modify its organization in Chile. From January 1977, protection and assistance in Chile will be in the hands of the ICRC regional delegate for southern South America, who is based on Buenos Aires. This decision in no way implies that the ICRC is withdrawing from Chile; a reduced delegation will remain in Santagio to deal with the humanitarian problems still requiring solution.

## Contributions received

Several governments and National Red Cross Societies have contributed to the ICRC's operations in Chile by gifts in kind. The year-end statement of this assistance appears on p. 60.