

Visits of ICRC President to National Societies

In Australia and New Zealand

After the International Red Cross Conference in Manila, the President of the ICRC, at the long-standing invitation of the Australian and New Zealand Red Cross Societies, was in Australia from 15 to 20 November and in New Zealand from 20 to 24 November. He was accompanied by Mr. A. Modoux, head of the Press and Information Division, and Mr. M. Martin, of the National Societies Division.

In Australia the President of the ICRC was received by the Governor-General and had talks in Canberra with representatives of the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs and of the Australian Bureau of Assistance and Development. In addition, he visited the Victoria and New South Wales divisions of the Australian Red Cross. He addressed the annual general meeting of the NSW division on the ICRC and its activities.

In New Zealand the delegation was received by the Governor-General and the mayors of Wellington and Auckland. The President conferred with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and several senior officials of that ministry. During a visit to the Red Cross he took part in a national seminar in Wellington on the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law. He also visited the Auckland section of the National Society.

In both countries the President was interviewed by the press, radio and television.

Canada and the United States

The President of the ICRC, Mr. Alexandre Hay, accompanied by Mr. J.-P. Hocké, Director for Operational Activities, and Mr. M. Veuthey, delegate for international organizations, visited the Canadian Red Cross from 4 to 9 March 1982. On 5 March, he was greeted at the Cana-

dian Red Cross headquarters in Toronto; on the following days he visited the Red Cross office and the blood bank in Ottawa, and later the National Society office at Montreal. During the same period, the President of the ICRC had an interview with the Prime Minister and was welcomed by the Canadian House of Commons.

Conversation, both at the Red Cross and with senior government officials, covered current events, in particular the work of the ICRC in present conflicts, the dissemination of international humanitarian law and of the Principles of the Red Cross, and the ratification of the Geneva Protocols of 8 June 1977.

The ICRC President then visited the United States to take part in a seminar on international humanitarian law organized, with the support of the ICRC, by the American National Red Cross and the Washington College of Law of the American University. The seminar was held to commemorate the centenary of the accession of the United States to the 1864 Geneva Convention. At the opening ceremony, held at the State Department on 11 March, speeches were made by Mr. Walter Stoessel of the State Department, the President of the ICRC, Mr. Alexandre Hay, and by Mr. J. Holland, Chairman of the American Red Cross.

Mr. Hay was accompanied by Mr. D. Schindler, a member of the International Committee, Mr. J. Moreillon, director of General Affairs, and Mr. H. P. Gasser, chief of the ICRC Legal Division, all three of whom spoke at the seminar, and also by Mr. F. Schmidt, delegate general for Europe and North America, and Mr. M. Veuthey, delegate for international organizations.

About a hundred persons, university professors, government and military lawyers, and advanced law students, took part in the seminar, consisting in lectures and debates on selected questions concerning humanitarian law and its relationship to human rights. The success of this seminar and the interest shown by participants satisfied the American National Red Cross and the Washington College of Law that they should hold a second seminar in 1983.

As well as attending the seminar, the President of the ICRC naturally visited the headquarters of the American National Red Cross where he met its President, Mr. G. Eley, and senior officials. He also had numerous meetings with representatives of the United States Government.

In New York, the President of the ICRC was welcomed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, and various other high-ranking officers of the United Nations Secretariat and of UNICEF.

France

On 2 March, the President of the ICRC visited the French Red Cross and the Ministry for External Affairs in Paris. He first met Mr. J.-M. Soutou, President of the National Red Cross Society and later called on Mr. Cheysson, the French Foreign Minister. Senior government officers who were present at the meeting with Mr. Cheysson included Mrs. Questiaux, Minister for National Solidarity, and Mr. Gutman, General Secretary to the Ministry for External Affairs.

Discussions centred on certain problems involving, more particularly, the ICRC's work in various parts of the world. ICRC action in its struggle against torture was also discussed.

All the speakers showed great interest in the ICRC's different activities and said they would be prepared to support it. Mr. Cheysson expressed the wish of establishing regular contact with officers of the ICRC Operations Department and promised financial aid, in particular for the organization of seminars on the dissemination of humanitarian law.

Saudi Arabia

The President of the ICRC, accompanied by Mr. J.-P. Hocké, ICRC director for Operational Activities, and Mr. S. Nessi, head of the Financing Division, visited Saudi Arabia from 27 to 31 March. He had talks with the President of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent, Dr. Abdul Azziz Mudarris, and the Minister for Health, Dr. Hussein Abdul Razzak el Jazairi, and later, with Prince Saud el Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs. It was not possible for the ICRC President to meet King Khaled or Crown Prince Fahd.

Poland

The President of the ICRC was in Poland on mission from 21 to 25 June, at the invitation of the Polish Red Cross. He was accompanied by Mr. F. Schmidt, ICRC delegate general for Europe, and by Miss M. Mercier of the ICRC Information Division.

In Warsaw, Mr. Hay had a series of talks with officers of the Polish Red Cross on joint activities being now carried out in the country. The ICRC President then visited the towns of Lodz and Plock; the region around Plock had suffered severe flooding in January, necessitating at the time the launching of a special appeal for assistance. Visits were made to the local branches of the Polish Red Cross and to the municipal authorities in these places, and also to the Lodz handi-

capped children's home. Mr. Hay visited, too, the Bialoleka prison near Warsaw where internees are held. He was authorized to go into all the sections of the prisons where there were internees.

The most important talks took place with government representatives: General Jaruzelski, the Prime Minister, Mr. Czyrek, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Szlachowski, Minister for Health, and with various other senior officials. The conversations centred on the two aspects of ICRC activity in Poland: protection of persons under detention and assistance to the many categories of persons in need. The ICRC President also raised the question of Poland's ratification of the June 1977 Protocols.

The ICRC President had furthermore, an interview with a representative of the Polish Church, Monsignor Miziolek, the bishop designated by the Primate of Poland to deal with the internee problem.

Finally, the President held several working sessions with the ICRC delegation in Warsaw to consider the various aspects of its work and seek how it would develop in the coming months.

Ireland

Mr. Alexandre Hay, accompanied by Mr. Y. Sandoz, head of the Principles and Law Department, visited Dublin on 1 and 2 July, in response to an invitation from the President of the Parliamentary Assembly (or Consultative Assembly) of the Council of Europe.

The object of his mission was to give an account of the Protocols to the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly which was to adopt a report on this subject, as well as a recommendation, for presentation to the Committee of Ministers, advocating accession to, and dissemination of the Protocols.

Mr. Hay spoke on the Protocols and spent about an hour answering questions by the parliamentarians, mainly on the ICRC's current operations. Both Mr. Hay's speech and his replies to questions were given an excellent reception. The report and the recommendation were adopted unanimously.

A courtesy visit was paid to the Irish Red Cross, where Mr. Hay met its Chairman Mrs. Carrie Acheson, and Mr. Barry O'Hagan, Secretary General. In the course of a cordial meeting, current affairs, in particular ICRC activities in Lebanon and in other countries throughout the world, and problems concerning other topics of common interest were discussed. A gift of 10,000 Irish pounds was handed to the President of the ICRC for its activities in Lebanon.