

PART D

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Consular assistance

The Department continued to protect the interests of Canadians abroad who called for assistance when in distress or detention, when subject to discrimination, denial of justice or violation of fundamental human rights or when exposed to risks in situations of civil strife or natural disaster.

Although there was a decline in the number of Canadians travelling abroad in 1981, the total number of consular services provided by our posts continued to grow. Some 645,000 consular services were provided by 105 Canadian diplomatic and consular posts, and 15 consulates staffed by honorary consuls. This was an increase over the preceding year's figure of some 40,000 services. However, the number of cases of distress which called for special care and help, some 4,000, remained at the same level as last year's.

Posts assisted 1,900 Canadians who experienced financial difficulty outside Canada owing to theft or loss of funds, breakdown of travel arrangements, unforeseen medical or other expenses, or other unusual circumstances. In a number of instances posts and headquarters were involved in the arrangements for the transfer of private funds. In some cases, these Canadians received recoverable subsistence advances until personal funds were received. In an additional 357 cases, where particular hardship was involved, recoverable public financial outlays were made for their return to Canada. There were 610 Canadians detained in foreign jails in 1981, some of whom were released in the course of the year, but many began, or were continuing, to serve out their sentences. Consular officers helped Canadian detainees abroad by ensuring access to legal counsel, seeing that the process of justice did not discriminate against them, acting as intermediaries between them and their families, relatives and friends, and assisting in whatever other way was possible and appropriate in individual circumstances. Canadians reported by our posts to have required hospitalization abroad numbered 447, and deaths totalled 422; in such cases, Canadian consular officials were often involved in making arrangements requested by families or friends.

While consular services delivered abroad consist of a variety of tasks as noted above, the most frequent are: providing information and advice on local conditions; issuing passports; processing applications for proof of Canadian citizenship and for related citizenship services; providing legal and notarial services; and facilitating contacts between Canadians and local authorities.

In Ottawa, the Bureau of Consular Services continued to plan, coordinate and support the consular program abroad. The Bureau was also