

evacuations in Canadian consular history. Throughout the operation, close liaison was maintained with the companies that employed Canadians in Iran, with the posts involved in the operations, and with the Department of National Defence. With the co-operation of the Iranian authorities, all Canadians whose lives were endangered by the course of events were safely evacuated.

Before the outbreak of hostilities in Iran, Canada had concluded a treaty with the Imperial Government of Iran that eliminated the exit-visa requirement for Canadian visitors and residents of Iran. The agreement involved an exchange of notes amending the 1961 agreement concerning visa requirements for non-immigrant travellers from both countries.

In 1978, Canada and the United States exchanged instruments of ratification bringing into force a treaty on the execution of penal sentences (transfer of parolees and prisoners). During the first transfer of Canadian and U.S. inmates, which took place on October 12 and 13, 1978, 29 Canadian prisoners in U.S. institutions who had applied for and been granted permission to return to Canada and 40 U.S. inmates of Canadian institutions returned to their homelands. Canada is continuing to discuss with other countries the possibility of negotiating similar treaties.

The Department maintained its active interest in developments pursuant to the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe and in particular sought further progress in the field of family reunification. During 1978, progress was steady and many long-standing cases were resolved. Canada made new representations to Czechoslovakia in November 1978 and undertook a stepped-up program of consultations with a number of countries throughout the year in an effort to resolve outstanding cases.

The bureau of Consular Services played a co-ordinating role in the processing of visa applications by non-immigrants from certain designated countries. The number of visas issued continued to increase, particularly those issued to trade representatives.

With the increased involvement of the Department in the protection of human rights and the escalation of the global refugee problem, the bureau appointed in 1978 a Special Adviser on Refugees, who also serves on the Refugee Status Advisory Committee. During 1978, that committee reviewed 639 claims for refugee status. In addition, the Department strongly supported the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to obtain a generous international response to the plight of refugees throughout the world, and played an active co-ordinating role in dealing with urgent problems of Indochinese refugees picked up in the South China Sea by Canadian-registered or Canadian-owned ships.