

## Chapter 5

# PROTECTION OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

### Consular assistance

Canadians sometimes encounter problems when they travel abroad. Through its consular, passport, legal and other services, the Department of External Affairs can often protect the interests of these Canadians if they ask for help when in distress or detention or when they are caught in civil disturbance or natural disaster.

There has been an increasing demand for consular services in the past few years. Standard consular assistance includes issuing passports, providing citizenship services and information as well as helping in more serious cases such as illness, death, criminal charges, child custody and financial distress.

A revised *Manual of Consular Instructions* was issued in 1982. It reflects a number of adjustments in the consular program to ensure that it maintains a high level of effectiveness and can respond adequately to changing needs and priorities.

When Canadians travel abroad the overwhelming majority go to the United States. However, although there was an overall decrease in travel abroad in 1982, nearly 1.5 million Canadians went to countries other than the U.S., a marginal increase over the previous year.

Our diplomatic posts abroad reported that more than 600 Canadians had been detained or sentenced in foreign prisons during the year. Five Canadians were repatriated from prisons in the United States, Mexico and Peru under the Transfer of Offenders Agreements.

At departmental headquarters in Ottawa, the Consular Services Branch provided the necessary backup services to posts abroad, kept in touch with families and friends of de-

tainees and carried on often lengthy attempts at the reunification of families. On an average day, the Branch receives 115 telegrams and sends 40, makes 135 telephone calls and receives three ministerial requests. The Branch also carries on an active media relations program, giving information and interviews to newspapers, radio and television.

During the year, the Branch undertook an intensive review of its plans for assisting Canadians caught in emergency situations in regions of civil or political instability. The revised plans take account of changing conditions and any other factors which might affect our capability to react effectively in an emergency.

In some areas where Canada has no career diplomatic or consular representation, Honorary Consuls provide front-line consular services to Canadians travelling or living abroad. They also help with the needs of our trade development program. During 1982, Honorary Consuls were appointed for the first time in Douala (Cameroon), Monrovia (Liberia) and Curaçao (Netherlands Antilles), bringing the total number of Honorary Consuls to 18.

Canada continued to negotiate additional agreements with other countries for the transfer of offenders so that Canadians imprisoned abroad can complete their sentences in Canada, close to family and friends and under conditions which improve their prospects for rehabilitation.

Preparations continued, in consultation with the provinces, for the resumption of negotiations on consular treaties with Hungary, Romania and other East European countries. There were also consultations with Mexican authorities towards the resolution of certain problems which some Canadian tourists have had there.