

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1991)

Rubrik: Europe

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EUROPE

2 delegations:

Albania
Romania

1 mission:

Yugoslavia

2 regional delegations: (based in Geneva)

Staff*
ICRC expatriates: 17
National Societies: 7
Local employees: 10

Total expenditure:
26,315,900 Swiss francs

* Average numbers calculated
on an annual basis

Since the turmoil that erupted in Romania in late 1989, prompting the ICRC's first large-scale operation in the region in recent years, Central and Eastern Europe has been the scene of political upheavals that have upset the balance of power throughout the world. The rapid transition from a one-party system and a planned economy to political pluralism and the free market has given rise to growing social disorder and increasing nationalist and ethnic fervour, sometimes leading to open conflict.

The upheavals in the region have placed the ICRC before new challenges in unstable, potentially explosive situations. Its traditional work to protect and assist the victims has been extended to include taking part in mediation efforts aimed at easing tension. In addition to its role as a neutral intermediary, the institution has the equally urgent task of ensuring that the rudiments of international humanitarian law and the activities and principles of the Movement are understood. This dissemination work is essential because of the prolonged isolation of the region's peoples, on account mainly of the ideology of their former governments.

Under its mandate to serve as a neutral and impartial intermediary in the humanitarian cause, in 1991 the ICRC took prompt action in many different situations. In practical terms, this meant that the number of staff involved in operational activities in Europe rose from two to 50 by the end of the year. In Yugoslavia, where delegates had been visiting places of detention in the six republics, the ICRC had to shift the focus of its work practically overnight when armed conflict broke out, paralysing the country's economy and social services and forcing hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee their homes.

During the same period delegates were sent to Albania, where political liberalization was accompanied by economic crisis. Detainees were visited for the first time, and an assistance programme was set up to help the

National Society meet the basic needs of thousands of Albanians who had tried to leave the country. Finally, missions were carried out in connection with events in the former Soviet Union: delegates went to the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Baltic countries and a number of republics in the Caucasus region.

A new dialogue had to be established with the National Societies of the countries concerned. In some cases relations were established with local Red Cross organizations transformed by the events into emerging independent National Societies (see also Cooperation within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement). These contacts revealed that efforts to promote knowledge of the Movement's fundamental principles and international humanitarian law were a matter of urgency, particularly among the various republics' armed forces (see also Dissemination).

ALBANIA

In December 1990, after 44 years of totalitarian government, Albania embarked on a period of unprecedented political, economic and social change. The democratization process was accompanied by economic and social dislocation which in 1991 gave rise to widespread unrest and caused over 22,000 people to flee the country, mainly to Italy.

The ICRC had managed to resume contact with the Albanian Red Cross in December 1990, and throughout the following year provided support to help the Society build up its operational capacity. When disturbances broke out in the wake of elections, the ICRC also gave medical assistance to hospitals and launched a campaign to make the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement better known, explaining its activities and goals in the country.

After sending several *ad hoc* missions to Albania, the ICRC established a permanent post in Tirana on 14 March.

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Visits to places of detention

The ICRC's Delegate General for Europe travelled to Tirana in June and had talks with a number of officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Public Order. Following this mission, the ICRC offered its services to visit detainees. This offer was accepted on 25 June by Mr. Bajram Yzeiri, Minister of Public Order.

Between 4 and 29 July over a thousand penal law detainees were visited in five prisons, a prison hospital and a police station. ICRC delegates and doctors interviewed 485 of them without witnesses. Prison reform and modernization do not fall within the ICRC's purview but the visits enabled the delegates to assess the situation and provide aid where needed. They were also able to visit a village inhabited by people sent into internal exile by the previous government. Despite recent authorization to return to their places of origin, the inhabitants had remained, having no other means of subsistence. The ICRC suggested that a programme to reintegrate both these people and other recently released detainees be set up by the National Society, with ICRC support.

Tracing Agency

Following the exodus of over 22,000 people from Albania, the Albanian Red Cross received thousands of tracing requests from families throughout the country. Over 5,000 of these concerned children who had been separated from their parents. At the same time, requests arising from events dating back many decades were arriving at the Society's headquarters from around the world.

Albanian Red Cross staff were trained to process the requests by technical specialists from the Central Tracing Agency.



Medical assistance

A survey carried out by a delegate from the ICRC's Medical Division in early April revealed considerable needs in the medical sphere, going well beyond the scope of the ICRC's mandate. The institution suggested that cooperation projects be set up with the help of foreign governments but meanwhile provided *ad hoc* assistance (surgical kits and basic medicines worth about 20,000 Swiss francs) to hospitals and dispensaries in Tirana, Durres, Elbasan, Korce and Shkoder. Further medical relief, also worth 20,000 Swiss francs, was handed over to the Albanian Red Cross.

Dissemination

Following the first round of parliamentary elections, disturbances broke out in Shkoder.

ICRC and National Society staff transporting emergency relief supplies in a minibus marked with the Red Cross emblem were attacked by demonstrators. This incident demonstrated the need to act without delay to spread knowledge of the Movement's principles and the basic rules of international humanitarian law. A large-scale programme was set up by the National Society, with ICRC support, aimed principally at the armed forces, the police, the media and schools.

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

With the political changes that eventually led to the break-up of the Soviet Union, the ICRC increased its contacts throughout 1991 with both the authorities of the new Commonwealth of Independent States and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies that had been members of the Soviet Alliance. Discussions centred on the social and economic problems faced by the member States of the Commonwealth and the need to reorganize the National Societies and increase their capacity to help a population rendered vulnerable by the momentous events affecting their daily lives.

The ICRC also approached the authorities of the Russian Federation to work out the terms of an agreement to open a delegation in Moscow.

Other missions

There were many other missions to the region throughout the year. Their purpose was twofold: first, to explain to the authorities and to the Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies the scope of the ICRC's mandate and activities, in particular in cases where a neutral intermediary is required to prepare the way for humanitarian action and in the sphere of dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law; and secondly to build up cooperation with the National Societies, for example by setting up training schemes for

their staff. The Delegate General for Europe and a number of other ICRC staff members, including legal and tracing specialists, went several times to Moscow, Ukraine, Belarus (formerly the Byelorussian SSR) and Uzbekistan, mainly to organize seminars on the Movement and international humanitarian law.

THE CAUCASUS

Needs surveyed

An ICRC delegate and a doctor went to Georgia in December to assess the situation following an influx of displaced people fleeing disturbances in South Ossetia. The same month, two other delegates went to the Russian Federation and visited the autonomous republics of North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkar and Chechen-Ingush to assess needs arising from the tension in the northern Caucasus region.

BALTIC STATES

At the request of the Lithuanian Red Cross following the events of January in Vilnius, the ICRC offered its services as a neutral intermediary to the Soviet authorities and proposed to give assistance, through the Alliance, to the Lithuanian Society. Lithuania later gained independence and a joint mission of representatives from the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies went to Vilnius from 15 to 24 September to examine the validity of the recognition granted to the Lithuanian Red Cross by the ICRC on 28 August 1923. A similar mission was carried out in Latvia, where the Red Cross Society was recognized by the ICRC on 10 January 1923. In both cases, the continuing validity of the Societies' recognition was confirmed (see *Cooperation within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*).

ROMANIA

The ICRC has had a delegation in Bucharest since 1989. In 1991 its activities in Romania focused on promoting knowledge of international humanitarian law and cooperating with the Red Cross of Romania in order to increase its operational capacity.

Most of the people arrested during the events of December 1989 were released in early 1991. In December 1991 delegates visited some 40 people still held in six places of detention, including a prison hospital, and interviewed them without witnesses. In addition, about 50 former detainees without resources were each given a small sum of money on their release to help them resettle in society.

The Tracing Agency organized 24 family reunions and 5 repatriations, dealt with 135 requests and forwarded 119 family messages, mainly from people concerned about relatives in the Gulf region during the hostilities between Iraq and the coalition forces, in Liberia and in Somalia.

YUGOSLAVIA

The second half of 1991 was marked by armed clashes, first in Slovenia and later in Croatia. The ICRC, which already had delegates in the country visiting places of detention, went into action in cooperation with the Red Cross of Yugoslavia to assist the victims of the fighting, in particular tens of thousands of displaced people. While several European governments were striving to find a diplomatic settlement to the conflict, the ICRC offered the belligerents its services as a neutral intermediary to discuss matters of humanitarian concern. Thanks to meetings held under ICRC auspices in Geneva, Yugoslavia and Hungary, progress was made in favour of the wounded, prisoners and families split up by the events.

At the end of the year the institution had 60 delegates in Yugoslavia, based in Belgrade (Serbia), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb, Osijek, Knin, Rijeka, Split and Dubrovnik

(Croatia), Banja Luka and Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Skopje (Macedonia) and Herceg Novi (Montenegro).

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In the first half of 1991, before the outbreak of the armed conflict, the ICRC carried out a number of missions both to visit persons detained in connection with the events in Kosovo and to hold discussions with the authorities and with the Red Cross of Yugoslavia (including its branches in the various republics) on the action that would have to be taken to provide humanitarian assistance should the situation deteriorate.

During one of those missions in May, delegates delivered a message from ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga to the President of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia voicing the ICRC's concern about mounting tension, expressing its support for the National Society and reiterating its willingness to act as a neutral intermediary in promoting dialogue between the parties and helping all victims.

Fighting broke out in Croatia and in Slovenia after the two Republics declared their independence on 25 June. The European Community and the CSCE¹ offered to act as mediators and sent representatives to Yugoslavia. They attempted to arrange a cease-fire involving the suspension of the declarations of independence and the return to barracks of the armed forces on all sides. However, although several cease-fires were declared and diplomatic negotiations took place under the auspices of the European Community, the fighting continued.

As soon as the conflict broke out, the ICRC sent extra staff to join its delegates already on the spot and called on all parties to respect, receive and protect civilians, persons *hors de combat* and the wounded. It obtained access

¹ Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, bringing together European countries, Canada and the United States.

at once to people captured by all the parties (see *Activities for prisoners* below). By 2 July there were already 13 delegates based in Belgrade, Ljubljana and other localities where they worked closely with the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross in the various republics to bring emergency assistance to the victims of the fighting.

On 16 July, the ICRC sent an appeal to all the parties to the conflict reminding them that the Red Cross emblem must be respected and that protection must be guaranteed for the wounded and those who care for them.

The ICRC's Delegate General for Europe returned to Belgrade on 17 July for a two-day visit during which he had talks with representatives from the Federal Secretariats for Internal Affairs, Defence, Foreign Affairs and Justice. The Federal authorities expressed the hope that the ICRC would increase its presence and expand its activities in the country.

Despite continued peace-making efforts through diplomatic channels, fighting intensified in early August, particularly in Croatia. Some 90,000 people were displaced throughout the country and several thousand others fled over the borders, mainly to Austria and Hungary.

The ICRC's Director of Operations and the Delegate General for Europe were in Yugoslavia from 1 to 5 September to meet Mr. Stipe Mesić, the Federal President, Mr. Milan Kučan, the Slovenian President, Mr. Franjo Tuđman, the Croatian President and Mr. Budimir Kosutić, the Serbian Prime Minister. They also met representatives of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross in the various republics. The main purpose of the mission was to ensure that the highest political authorities were aware of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

During this period, fighting and cease-fire announcements alternated in rapid succession. The peace efforts of the European Community had little effect. In late September, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 713 which placed an embargo on arms deliveries to Yugoslavia, called for the

immediate cessation of hostilities and proposed mediation by the UN Secretary-General.

On 24 September ICRC teams arrived in Osijek, Slavonia, and in Split on the Dalmatian coast. Their presence meant that the institution was now active in most of the areas of conflict throughout the country.

By then the number of people displaced by the fighting had reached 300,000.

Security incident

On 27 September, an ICRC convoy was on its way from Zagreb to Pakrac to evacuate 270 patients from a hospital there. The parties to the conflict had been duly notified and had given their authorization, and the vehicles were clearly marked with the emblem. Nevertheless, the convoy was attacked by armed men near Lipik and a nurse was wounded. The ICRC made a public protest and called on all the belligerents to respect the protective Red Cross emblem and guarantee security for the institution's humanitarian mission.

Public appeal

With fighting escalating in Slavonia and Krajina (Croatia), in early October the ICRC issued an appeal in behalf of the civilian population, calling on the military and civilian authorities of all the parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. It enjoined them in particular:

- not to direct any attacks against the civilian population;
- not to damage or destroy objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population;
- to respect and ensure respect for the Red Cross emblem so as to guarantee the safety of those engaged in humanitarian activities;
- to allow Red Cross staff and medical personnel freedom of movement;

- to ensure that combat units were aware of humanitarian rules governing the conduct of hostilities.

In addition, the ICRC called on all political and military forces to formally express their support for impartial humanitarian activities under the Red Cross emblem and in favour of all victims.

Action as a neutral intermediary

In November the conflict was raging in Croatia, particularly around Vukovar, and on the Adriatic coast where the historic city of Dubrovnik was under blockade. The ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary between the belligerents in an effort to ensure that civilians were protected and that the wounded and sick, children and the elderly could be evacuated.

Prompted by the constant and rapid deterioration of the situation, the ICRC took a fresh humanitarian initiative on 12 November, in accordance with its mandate, urging the parties to the conflict to designate representatives at the highest level for a meeting under ICRC auspices in Geneva. The purpose of the meeting was to work out speedy, practical and viable solutions to the grave humanitarian problems affecting the country.

As a result of this appeal, on 26 and 27 November plenipotentiary representatives of Yugoslavia's Federal Executive Council, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Serbia and the Yugoslav Federal Army met in Geneva. The participants expressly confirmed the declaration of respect for international humanitarian law made by the Presidents of the six republics at the Hague conference on Yugoslavia held under European Community auspices on 5 November.

They also said that they were willing to separate humanitarian matters from political issues and declared that they would implement the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I of 1977 that provide protection for the wounded and sick, civilians and prisoners and govern the conduct of hostilities.



In addition they acknowledged the importance of setting up protected zones under ICRC supervision and of allowing humanitarian aid consignments free passage, and adopted the following recommendations:

- to set up a joint commission to trace missing persons;
- to establish a procedure for transmitting allegations of violations of international humanitarian law;
- to do more to spread knowledge of the rules of international humanitarian law among all combatants and to promote respect for the Red Cross emblem.

The first meeting of the Joint Commission for tracing missing persons and identifying mortal remains was held on 16 December in Pécs, Hungary. Apart from the ICRC, the participants were representatives of the Yugoslav Federal Government, the Republics of Croatia and Serbia, the Yugoslav Federal Army, the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross organizations in Serbia and Croatia.

Tracing procedures and practical arrangements for the exchange of information were worked out with a view to determining, as quickly as possible, the whereabouts or fate of the thousands of people who had disappeared or died. The Joint Commission decided to hold monthly meetings thereafter.

The plenipotentiary representatives, for their part, met again in Geneva on 20 December. Their talks centred on protection of the civilian population, the release of prisoners, the setting up of protected zones, and the progress in the work of the Joint Commission for tracing missing persons.

On 27 December the plenipotentiary representatives met once again under ICRC auspices, in Pécs this time. They agreed to place the hospital in Osijek and its immediate surroundings under Red Cross protection, as provided for in Article 23 of the First Geneva Convention and Articles 14 and 15 of the Fourth Convention.

In addition, representatives of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross organizations in the six republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) met on 15 November in Geneva. They reaffirmed the need to give absolute priority to assisting the victims of the conflict in accordance with the rules of international humanitarian law.

Activities for prisoners

In June and July, just before the conflict broke out, delegates visited 64 persons held in connection with the situation in Kosovo in 14 places of detention around the country. Fifty-eight of them had already been seen in 1990.

Between June and December, 5,717 prisoners were visited in accordance with standard ICRC procedures in 47 places of detention in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Vojvodina. Most of the prisoners were visited on several occasions and over 2,000 were released under ICRC auspices during this period.

Assistance for civilians

After a survey of needs in July, the ICRC expanded its assistance activities, sending additional delegates to Osijek and Knin and setting up a large-scale medical and food aid programme in conjunction with the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross organizations in the various republics affected by the situation. Family parcels and other emergency relief (blankets, kitchen sets, etc.) were distributed to people displaced or stranded by the fighting.

On 21 November, a ship chartered by the ICRC, the *Rodos II*, arrived in the port of Dubrovnik with eight delegates, medical supplies and 7,000 blankets on board. A second ship, the *Dimaratos*, arrived in Dubrovnik on 24 November with 265 tonnes of basic relief supplies, including 160 tonnes of food and 40,000 litres of milk.

The two ICRC ships then plied along the coast between Rijeka and Herceg Novi, transporting over 900 tonnes of relief by the end of the year and enabling delegates to come to the aid of the inhabitants of islands and many coastal and inland villages cut off by the conflict. For example, the *Rodos II* went to the island of Mljet, off Dubrovnik, on 28 November to evacuate civilians requiring medical treatment and collect family messages. On 12 December prisoners who had been released in Split, Croatia, and Zelenika, Montenegro, travelled on the *Rodos II* under ICRC auspices.

By the end of 1991, some 3,000 tonnes of relief supplies (including 142,500 family parcels and almost 300,000 blankets) had been distributed to about 600,000 displaced people registered by the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross organizations in the various republics. Similar assistance was provided to people living in the combat zones whose homes had been damaged in the fighting.

Medical assistance

Yugoslavia's medical care system was quickly paralysed by the conflict, particu-

larly in the combat zones, or simply overwhelmed by civilians on the move. Following a special appeal sent on 22 August to National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC launched a programme to support medical facilities in the country. The aid provided, worth 1,650,000 Swiss francs, included standard medical sets (equipment for transfusions and minor surgery, anaesthetics, emergency medicines and medication for chronic diseases). These were handed over to the Yugoslav Red Cross and the Red Cross organizations in the affected republics for immediate delivery to hospitals, especially those in combat zones. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Vojvodina, mobile ICRC teams distributed medical supplies as necessary. In addition, stocks of medical supplies were built up in the ICRC's missions in Belgrade, Osijek, Dubrovnik, Split, Rijeka, and Zagreb to meet new needs as they arose.

The ICRC spent some 30,000 Swiss francs organizing an emergency public health programme for the city of Dubrovnik. As soon as the ICRC team, which included a sanitary engineer, arrived there in November, it began work on improving sanitation and ensuring a supply of drinking water. Inflatable tanks, pumps and disinfection products delivered by the *Rodos II* were immediately put into service.

A first-aid post was set up in a Franciscan monastery in the old city. Both the monastery and the city's main hospital were declared protected zones under ICRC control and the parties to the conflict were duly notified. Using Dubrovnik as a base, delegates carried out missions across the lines, mainly to keep in touch with delegates based in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Tracing Agency

The ICRC set up two centres (in Belgrade and Zagreb) and worked closely with the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross in the various republics to increase the capacity of their tracing services and help them deal with one of the main problems arising from the conflict: the plight of families split up by the fighting. In the second half of the year, 25,000 family messages were exchanged between members of separated families and between prisoners visited by the ICRC and their families.

The problem of tracing people reported missing at once became a priority for the ICRC. The establishment of the Joint Commission for tracing missing persons and identifying mortal remains was a significant step forward in this respect, and the ICRC sent additional staff and data-processing equipment to the field to increase the efficiency of tracing services. By the end of the year, 5,400 tracing requests had been received and over 2,500 people located.

Dissemination

From the earliest days of the conflict there were serious incidents of non-compliance with international humanitarian law: the Red Cross emblem was not respected and civilians were the victims of indiscriminate attacks.

A large-scale dissemination programme therefore appeared essential to ensure that both combatants and the civilian population were familiar with and understood the Movement's principles and the rules of international humanitarian law, and thus to increase the chances of humanitarian work being carried out safely.

DISSEMINATION IN EUROPE

Since 1989, the dissemination efforts of the National Societies of Central and Eastern Europe have enjoyed the support of the ICRC. The Societies concerned have

reorganized and given their activities a new direction, the better to cope with the upheaval in society as a whole and the serious financial difficulties they face.

In this difficult situation, these National Societies have set themselves to forge a new identity and create a new image in the eyes of their members and the general public, especially young people. The National Societies of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, concerned at their country's ignorance of international humanitarian law and the Movement's Principles and ideals, have concluded cooperation agreements with the ICRC enabling them to bring out publications in their own languages in aid of their nationwide work for dissemination among Red Cross members, the authorities and the general public.

Production of publications

In order to meet the most pressing needs, the Societies opted to publish simple documents for use with all target groups. For example, the comic book *The Story of an Idea* was translated into 12 languages (Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Croat, Slovene, Serbian, Serbo-Croat and Armenian), for a total of about 400,000 copies in all. The Polish Red Cross published 20,000 copies each of *Portrait of a Movement*, the *Basic Rules of International Humanitarian Law for First Aiders* and the *Summary of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols*, and 10,000 copies of the *Guide for National Societies to activities in the event of conflict*. Some of these titles also appeared in Romania and in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. The ICRC delegation in Bucharest cooperated with the Romanian Red Cross to produce numerous documents on international humanitarian law and the Red Cross. For the seventieth anniversary of its founding, and for the first time, the Bulgarian Red Cross Youth published, with ICRC support, a brochure on its history and aims which also sets out the Movement's Fundamental Principles.

Training

The ICRC also supported the National Societies' training programmes. The first

European regional training seminar for disseminators took place in Prague from 25 November to 2 December 1991. It was attended by the dissemination officers of nine Central European and Balkan National Societies. ICRC delegates also helped to run national seminars of this kind in Poland and in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic.

In another first, the ICRC and the Uzbek Red Crescent held a four-day regional dissemination seminar in Tashkent (CIS). The seminar was attended by representatives of the Societies and governments (the Ministries of Defence, Education, Health, the Interior and Information) of the four Central Asian republics (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and of Kazakhstan.

The ICRC and the Polish Red Cross held their ninth annual summer course on humanitarian law in Warsaw. The course lasted a fortnight and was attended by law students from 22 European and North American countries.

Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic received a travelling exhibition on the Geneva Conventions entitled "Respect for humanity in war". Local organization and management were arranged with the cooperation of the National Society and the political and military authorities. The illustrated pamphlet on the exhibition, which outlines the history of humanitarian law and of the Movement, was translated into the languages of the countries concerned and widely circulated. In Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria the armed forces organized guided tours of the exhibition.

Seminars for the armed forces

The armed forces of Eastern Europe now face drastic restructuring and have had to reorient their military thinking. They have shown great interest in international humanitarian law and are keen to make it a part of military instruction throughout their respective countries. The ICRC therefore held the first seminars on the law of war for senior armed forces officers in Sofia, Bucharest and

Budapest. The ICRC delegation in Bucharest cooperated with the Romanian armed forces in this area to good effect.

The Czechoslovak Ministry of Defence translated and published Colonel F. de Mulinens's *Handbook on the Law of War for Armed Forces*, an ICRC publication.

In December, with the cooperation of the Greek armed forces, the ICRC organized the first international humanitarian law seminar to be held in Athens for the armed forces.

Dissemination efforts among the combatants in Yugoslavia

In Yugoslavia lack of knowledge about the most elementary rules of humanitarian law, especially as regards respect for the emblem of the Red Cross, presented delegates with ex-

tremely serious problems. The ICRC's activities were therefore accompanied by a major dissemination campaign directed primarily at the combatants. The ICRC asked the media to broadcast on radio and television, and to publish in the press, messages calling for respect for the emblem and compliance with the rules of humanitarian law. It was supported in this by the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Red Cross organizations in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, and as a result a considerable volume of literature in several languages was produced and circulated in the combat zones. These Societies were also of invaluable assistance in adapting the Red Cross message to the susceptibilities of all the communities living on Yugoslav territory, so that it should be properly understood and accepted.

RELIEF SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED BY THE ICRC IN 1991 EUROPE

Country (in French alphabetical order)	Medical assistance	Relief		Total Sw. fr.
	Value in Sw. fr.	Value in Sw. fr.	(Tonnes)	
Albania	44,257			44,257
Romania	35,885	3,437	0.7	39,322
Yugoslavia	1,689,640	8,698,183	2,973.4	10,387,823
TOTAL	1,769,782	8,701,620	2,974,1	10,471,402

INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

The International Tracing Service (ITS), which has been based in Arolsen, Germany, since 1946, has the task of centralizing information on victims of Nazi persecution in order to enable them or their rightful claimants to obtain compensation. This mandate has lost none of its importance or relevance in the years since the Second World War: almost half a century later, the ITS is still being asked by victims for certificates attesting to their detention, forced labour or emigration following the conflict, or for information that might elucidate the fate of relatives who disappeared. Excerpts of documents bearing the ICRC stamp are universally recognized by authorities responsible for granting pensions and by compensation funds, without any need for notarization.

The ITS has invested a great deal of effort in acquiring new documents in recent years and has thus been able to reply to an ever-growing number of inquiries. In 1991, the service's archives were swelled by 513 linear metres of documents from the Federal Republic of Germany and a number of other countries.

The flood of requests from the eastern part of Germany prompted the ITS to open an office in East Berlin in January 1991. This office assumed responsibility for part of the work of the Red Cross tracing service in the

former German Democratic Republic (the rest was taken over by the German Red Cross in Munich). The office's five local employees processed the enquiries they received, including those from abroad, in such a way that the details they contained could be fed directly into the main ITS computer system in Arolsen. In addition, the Berlin office approached the many archive services of the Federal Republic's five new states with requests for personal records that had previously been inaccessible.

Thanks to the acquisition of new documents and the increase in its staff, the number of cases dealt with by the ITS rose significantly in 1991 as compared with the previous year. Its work in 1991 can be summarized as follows:

- 154,774 enquiries were received from 37 countries, concerning 126,224 people (as against 126,054 enquiries concerning 112,551 people in 1990);
- 899,373 data checks were carried out in 29 different sets of ITS documents, pursuant to the above-mentioned enquiries (as against 616,787 in 1990);
- 181,270 replies were sent on the basis of the information available (as against 147,587 in 1990);
- 165,593 requests remained unprocessed at the end of the year and had to be carried over into 1992.