

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1992)  
  
**Rubrik:** Europe and Central Asia

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

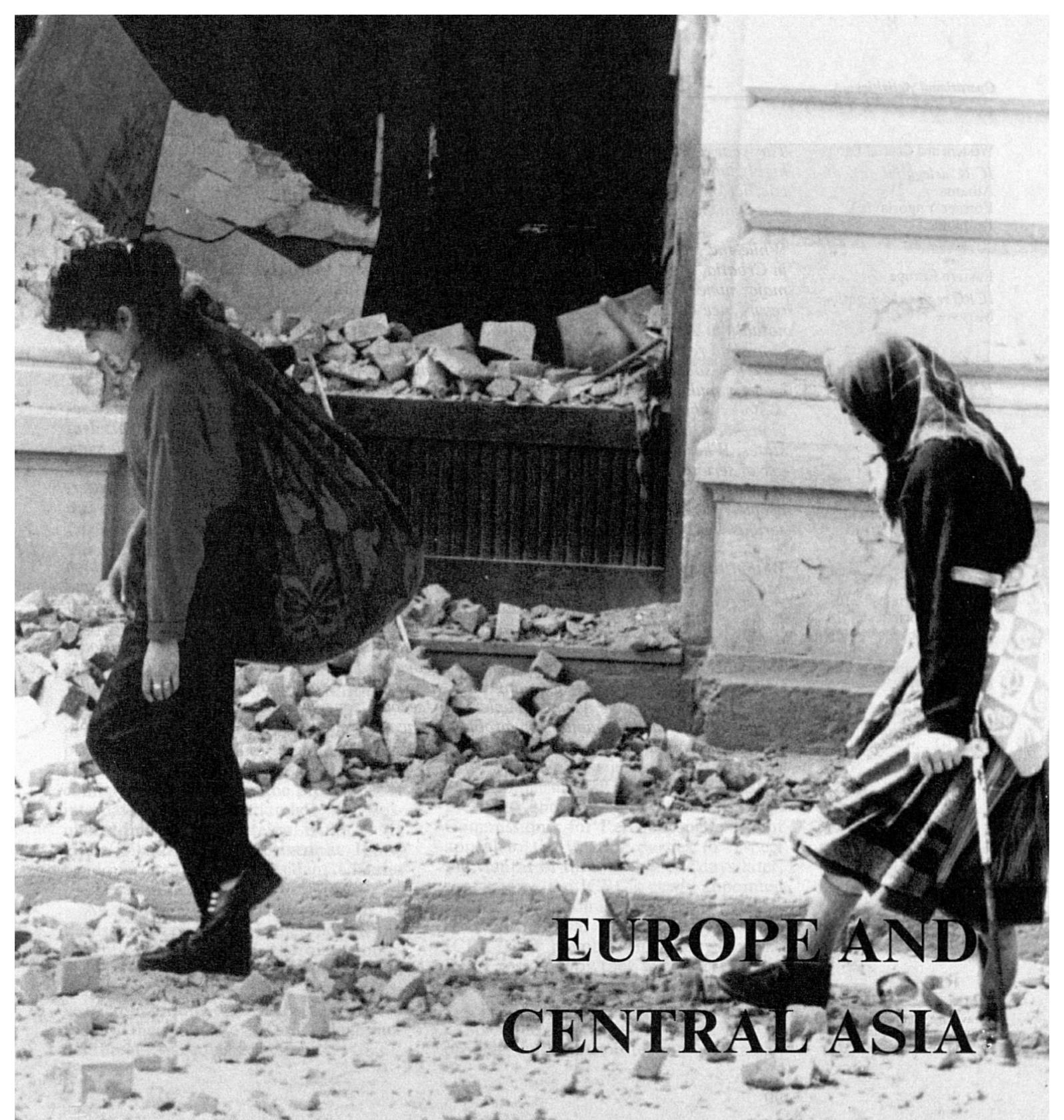
L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 12.12.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**



**EUROPE AND  
CENTRAL ASIA**

Western and Central Europe

ICRC delegations:

Albania  
Former Yugoslavia  
Romania

*The year 1991 had already brought what the western world rather smugly considered as highly unlikely: a full-scale war in Europe. In its turn, 1992 was tragically marked by a new conflict of even greater brutality in which international humanitarian law was repeatedly and knowingly violated, causing untold suffering among the many victims.*

Eastern Europe

ICRC regional delegation:

Moscow

*While the international community's attention was understandably focused on the conflict in Croatia, which was closely followed by the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, other major upheavals were taking place further east. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, the resurgence of ethnic identities throughout the former Soviet republics led to confrontation, notably in Armenia and Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan and in autonomous regions and republics within the Russian Federation. Other destabilizing factors included the profound social and economic changes following the breakdown of the old system and resulting in popular discontent and social tension, the absence of democratic traditions and the complex ethnic patterns of distinct minorities with strong claims of their own in many regions. For the first time the ICRC was able to conduct missions to the newly independent states. Where tension degenerated into armed clashes, the institution was faced with a number of serious problems. Lack of knowledge of international humanitarian law led to abuses such as indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population and hostage-taking. The latter, deeply rooted in the traditions of warfare throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia, is a serious violation of international humanitarian law.*

Caucasus

ICRC delegations:

Armenia  
Azerbaijan  
Georgia

Central Asia

ICRC regional delegation:

Tashkent

*Within the ICRC the growing demands made upon the "Europe" operational zone, which had always included the former Soviet Union, led to a separation into the "Western and Central Europe" zone and the "Eastern Europe and Central Asia" zone, at the end of October. The first continued to deal with the pressing needs of the civilian population and detainees in the former Yugoslavia. It also pursued its efforts to disseminate international humanitarian law, particularly in Central Europe, and became involved in various seminars and programmes aimed at spreading awareness of Red Cross and Red Crescent principles and Movement among young people. The second zone was created to face the fresh challenge of the humanitarian problems encountered in the former Soviet Union, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia.*

Staff

ICRC expatriates\*: 101

National Societies\*: 18

Local employees\*\*: 336

Total expenditure

CHF 119,612,735

---

\* average numbers calculated on an annual basis

\*\* as at December 1992

## FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

### WAR IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

The referendum on independence held on 29 February and 1 March marked a turning point in the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and it proved to be a tragic one. Fighting broke out in the streets of Sarajevo as soon as the results were known and within two months had spread like wildfire to many areas of the republic. Soon the situation could only be described as an all-out war between the three parties: the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Croats and the government forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Diplomatic efforts met with no success.

By April the ICRC was active in many areas, including Sarajevo, Bosanski Brod, Tuzla, Zvornik, Travnik, Zenica, Kupres, Mostar, Trebinje, Foca and Visegrad, striving to distribute emergency medical and food supplies and to visit detainees.

The violence of the fighting, aimed at civilian and military targets alike, compounded by numerous serious security incidents, regular and wilful misuse of the Red Cross emblem and other difficulties encountered by delegates in the field hampered the ICRC's efforts to reach displaced people and other conflict victims. On 10 April the ICRC appealed to all combatants to abide by the provisions of international humanitarian law. The Bosnian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Haris Silajdzic, was received at ICRC headquarters by Vice-President Claudio Caratsch on the same day.

As the fighting spread, hundreds of thousands of civilians left their homes and sought refuge in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro or areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina they hoped would be safer. Later in the year large groups of civilians were forced to leave their home towns and villages under threat from adverse factions.



⊕ ICRC Headquarters    ⊕ ICRC delegation

The ICRC found it increasingly difficult to operate satisfactorily in the capital and in other areas. On 12 May the ICRC President and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees made a joint appeal to the warring parties to respect the victims of the conflict. Six days later, on 18 May, the ICRC's newly appointed head of delegation in Sarajevo, Mr Frédéric Maurice, was killed and two other ICRC staff members injured when the Red Cross convoy they were travelling in came under a deliberate attack in the eastern part of the Bosnian capital.

Since the ICRC was no longer able to provide sufficient protection and assis-

tance for the victims and failed to obtain adequate security guarantees from the warring parties for its staff, it temporarily withdrew from Bosnia-Herzegovina at the end of May. Meanwhile, however, it spared no effort to bring the adversaries together to discuss humanitarian issues (see below).

At the end of June delegates returned to Bosnia-Herzegovina and activities were gradually resumed. During the summer the ICRC became increasingly involved in visiting prisoners and later in supervising their release (see below).

On 13 August the ICRC once more solemnly appealed to the parties to abide by international humanitarian law, with special reference to detainees and to civilians who were being attacked and forced by harassment and threats into leaving their homes.

The ICRC Delegate General for Europe then went to Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo to meet the leaders of the three parties to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina who assured him of their wish to cooperate with the institution on all humanitarian issues.

As the year drew to a close, in spite of countless attempts to mediate and bring the leaders of the parties to the negotiating table, the fighting continued unabated. Civilians bore the brunt of the conflict: caught in crossfire, harassed, besieged, taken hostage or forcibly displaced, they took to the roads in their thousands as the front lines constantly shifted around them. Meanwhile several thousand detainees remained imprisoned in camps throughout the country.

On 31 December the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina deposited with the Swiss government a declaration of succession without reservation to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two Additional

Protocols of 1977. It moreover declared that it accepted the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission.

### **Public statements and appeals**

The ICRC was very active on the diplomatic front and participated in all the major conferences organized in an attempt to solve the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The institution publicly condemned the serious and systematic abuses committed against the civilian population in the republic, referring to summary executions, torture, rape, mass internment, deportation, harassment of minorities, hostage-taking, etc. On 29 July ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga made a strongly worded public appeal calling on all the parties to the conflict to respect civilians, in particular those who were being detained.

An ICRC delegation attended the special session of the Islamic Conference Organization held in Istanbul on 17 and 18 June, at which a resolution was adopted launching an appeal to the parties with direct reference to the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC also attended the second special session which took place in Jeddah in December.

At the end of August the ICRC President addressed the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, which was held under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and the British Prime Minister, Mr John Major. "This unacceptable situation cannot go on", Mr Sommaruga said. "The humanitarian organizations have done everything within their power to bring about more humanity in this conflict, but I can only say that it is not enough. The time has come for the international community of States to assume really and

fully its responsibilities", namely to comply with Article 1 common to the four Geneva Conventions. This requires all countries that have ratified the Conventions to ensure that international humanitarian law is respected. He also appealed directly to the warring parties to abide by international humanitarian law.

On 3 October Mr Sommaruga strongly condemned the systematic flouting of the most basic principles of international humanitarian law which spelt unspeakable suffering for civilians and detainees throughout the country. He furthermore demanded that appropriate measures be taken without delay to save the lives of countless victims of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On 4 December, just before leaving on a mission to the former Yugoslavia which was to include field visits to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, the ICRC Director of Operations addressed the Working Group on Humanitarian Issues of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY). His speech centred on the need to protect civilians in their own home towns and villages, by placing them under international supervision. Two weeks later President Sommaruga addressed the Steering Committee of the ICFY in Geneva. He too pleaded for better protection of the civilian population *in situ*, if necessary by creating specially protected areas.

On several occasions throughout the year ICRC representatives met leading mediators Lord Carrington and later Mr Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen and the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights, Mr Tadeusz Mazowiecki. On 29 December ICRC Vice-President Claudio Caratsch discussed the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the United Nations Secretary-General.

### Action as a neutral intermediary

On 22 and 23 May the ICRC convened the first conference of plenipotentiary representatives of the Bosnian government and of the republic's Muslim, Croat and Serb communities, who agreed to comply with most of the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I. They also agreed to designate liaison officers. Details of a plan of action for aiding and protecting civilians and hospitals throughout the republic were worked out during a second meeting, held from 4 to 6 June, when a new agreement was signed. It included clauses pertaining to the security requirements for implementing the said plan.

The ICRC continued to hold high-level talks with members of the Bosnian government. On 30 July ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga received Deputy Prime Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija and expressed his concern about the fact that the institution had not been able to bring the parties together to pursue discussions on humanitarian issues. During the last three months of 1992, ICRC representatives were in close and regular contact with the leaders of the three parties in Geneva and in the field to bring about the overall release of detainees (see below).

### Activities for detainees

At the beginning of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina ICRC delegates were allowed to visit people captured by all the parties, and continued to visit those captured during the war in Croatia and held in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

When the ICRC returned to Bosnia-Herzegovina at the end of June, delegates resumed their visits to places of detention and within a month had visited some 4,000 detainees, amid reports that tens of thousands of prisoners were being held in

very harsh conditions throughout the region. There were also highly disturbing reports of summary executions.

The majority of the detainees visited were in the Bosnian Serb-run camp of Manjaca, near Banja Luka. Most of them were civilians who had been taken from their homes. Unfortunately the ICRC was not allowed access to thousands of detainees held in Keraterm and Brcko camps, which were closed by the Bosnian Serb authorities before delegates were permitted to visit them. Meanwhile ICRC visiting teams could not reach places of detention under the responsibility of the other parties for security reasons.

In August the ICRC was granted access to further camps and by the beginning of September had visited about 8,560 detainees in some 30 places of detention. The visiting teams, which always included a doctor, duly reported their findings to the detaining authorities. Wherever needed delegates provided the detainees with food, clothing and medical assistance and offered tracing services to enable them to restore contacts with their families. When the cold weather set in the ICRC distributed wood stoves, blankets and more warm clothes.

On 15 September the ICRC was able to evacuate 68 injured and sick detainees held by the Bosnian Serb forces from Trnopolje and Manjaca camps. They were flown to London to receive medical attention. This was the first step in the implementation of the agreement reached by the three parties in London in August, which stipulated that all detainees should be freed unconditionally. Meanwhile, since discussions were being held in Geneva between United Nations officials and the leaders of the three parties, ICRC representatives were able to talk to them in an attempt to bring them to comply fully with the London agreement.

At the end of September the plenipotentiary representatives met again under the auspices of the ICRC. The agreement they reached on 1 October stipulated that all detainees except those held for grave breaches of international humanitarian law should be unconditionally and unilaterally freed.

That very day ICRC delegates organized the evacuation of some 1,560 detainees from Trnopolje to a transit camp in Croatia. By mid-November the ICRC had been able to supervise the release of over 1,300 people held by the three warring parties (925 by the Bosnian Serbs, 357 by the Bosnian Croats and 26 by the Bosnian government forces).

No more prisoners were released until just before Christmas, but delegates continued to visit camps and were granted access to further places of detention. The ICRC estimated, however, that several hundred detainees had still not been seen owing to the refusal of local authorities to grant delegates access to places of detention or because ICRC teams could not reach the places for security reasons. Furthermore, the ICRC received no notifications of newly captured prisoners, in spite of continuous fighting. The appalling living conditions in most of the camps prompted the ICRC to protest to the detaining authorities in the strongest terms.

Following crucial meetings with the President of the ICRC on 9 December, the leaders of the three parties to the conflict agreed to resume the release and evacuation process and between 14 and 23 December 2,534 prisoners were freed under the auspices of the ICRC. One hundred and eleven of them had been held by the Bosnian government forces, while the rest had been in Bosnian Serb hands. On 18 December the last detainees held in

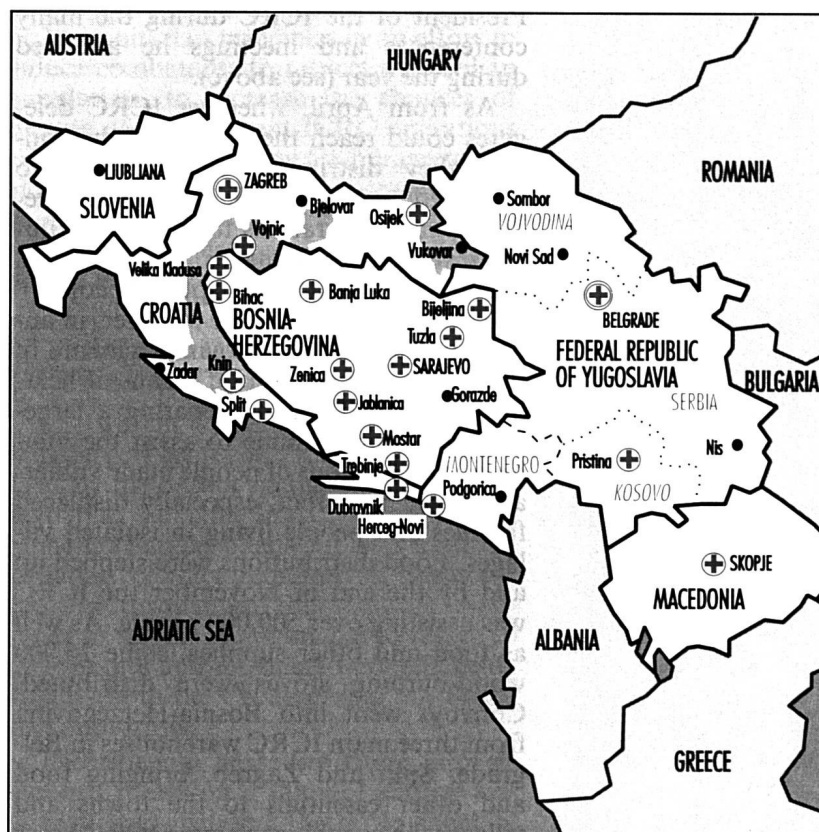
Manjaca camp were released and were transferred by the ICRC to the Karlovac transit camp in Croatia.

The transit camp in Karlovac was set up at the end of September when the Croatian authorities agreed to offer transit facilities to detainees released from prisons and camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was run jointly by UNHCR and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In 1992 over 4,800 released detainees were housed there pending their departure to countries willing to grant them temporary asylum. About 540 others, belonging to the Serb community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, were transferred to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia while 115 chose to stay in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In all, 5,540 detainees were released under ICRC supervision and some 2,500 were freed without the institution's participation. At the end of the year 2,760 people known to the ICRC remained in detention and continued to receive delegates' visits.

#### Activities for the civilian population

No sooner had the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina broken out than it became clear that the warring parties were paying scant respect to the civilian population, which was being wilfully ill-treated. Things came to such a pass that civilians actually became a military target, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law. Besides conducting active hostilities to gain control of portions of the country, the parties harassed minority groups as they fell under their control until they fled the area. Later it was seen that property belonging to these people was being systematically burned or razed to the ground, thus precluding all hope of return for the ousted families. All the



⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation / office / mission ■ United Nations Protected Areas (as at end of 1992)

parties engaged in these practices, but the Muslim population suffered most. Serious and repeated violations of the law of war were committed throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the front lines, in besieged towns and villages where civilians were trapped or held hostage for months, and also behind the front lines, where systematic harassment was common practice.

ICRC delegates in the field repeatedly appealed to the parties and local authorities and did all they could to alleviate the population's suffering. Their efforts were supported by constant diplomatic contacts made at all levels, especially by the

President of the ICRC during the many conferences and meetings he attended during the year (see above).

As from April, wherever ICRC delegates could reach the victims of the conflict they distributed food parcels to displaced and vulnerable families and delivered monthly rations to various institutions such as orphanages, hospitals and community shelters for displaced people.

Towards the end of the summer, in anticipation of the severe winter climate in the region and the lack of means of heating, the ICRC began preparing a large-scale relief programme to assist the hundreds of thousands of people made vulnerable by the conflict, especially displaced families and people living in isolated villages. Food distributions were stepped up and by the end of November the ICRC was assisting over 500,000 people. As well as food and other supplies, some 25,000 wood-burning stoves were distributed. Convoys went into Bosnia-Herzegovina from three main ICRC warehouses in Belgrade, Split and Zagreb, bringing food and other essentials to the towns and villages they could reach from ICRC bases in Bihac, Banja Luka, Mostar, Zenica, Tuzla, Bijeljina and Trebinje, in spite of the harsh winter weather which often made roads virtually impassable. Administrative difficulties also hampered the operations and forced convoys to make wide detours to avoid crossing the lines.

In all, 12,616 tonnes of relief were distributed in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, including family parcels, blankets, warm clothes and plastic sheeting to cover shattered windows.

The ICRC was also requested by Bosnian Serb forces and the inhabitants themselves to evacuate several hundred Bosnian Croats and their families from the besieged town of Kotor Varos in mid-October.

The ICRC delegation in Zagreb (Croatia) played an important part in the coordination of the institution's activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Owing to the precarious security situation it was not possible to establish a central logistics and administration base within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself. The Croatian capital was also an important base for UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, with whom the ICRC remained in close contact throughout the year.

### **Tracing activities**

As thousands fled the conflict areas more and more people were separated from their relatives. Red Cross messages were widely used by displaced people who wished to restore contact with their families in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and elsewhere. By the end of the year more than 650,000 such messages\* had been handled.

Detainees visited by the ICRC also benefited from ICRC tracing services. In 1992, more than 55,000 Red Cross messages were collected by ICRC delegates in places of detention and 46,000\* were distributed to detainees.

In order to cope with the growing demand for family news, the tracing agency expanded its network within the republic through local Red Cross organizations. In Bosnia-Herzegovina alone, the ICRC reunited 800 families. ICRC expatriate staff were not able to return to Sarajevo for any length of time until December, but four ICRC local employees handled an average of 6,000 Red Cross messages a week from the beginning of the siege of the city in the early days of the conflict.

---

\* These figures cover the whole of the former Yugoslavia, separate figures not being available.

### Medical assistance

After an extensive survey of medical needs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, conducted in March, the ICRC set up a programme to supply 19 hospitals in the republic with basic medicines and surgical materials. By the end of May, when the ICRC temporarily suspended its activities, 13 hospitals had received their share in spite of growing security problems. The convoy which came under attack as it entered Sarajevo on 18 May was carrying medical supplies for the town's hospitals.

Distributions were resumed in July, and the programme was stepped up to cover 20 hospitals which were supplied via Zagreb and eight which were assisted by delegates based in Belgrade.

On several occasions ICRC delegates evacuated wounded or handicapped people from institutions close to the front line to safer areas. In May, for instance, 15 patients were transferred from a psychiatric clinic in Jakes to a hospital in Croatia.

### Water and sanitation

The ICRC initiated several water and sanitation projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina to prevent epidemics and give the population access to safe water. Chlorine and other chemicals necessary for treating drinking water were distributed, together with spare parts, water tanks and generators. Emergency measures were taken in areas where large numbers of displaced people had gathered, in camps and along the front lines where homes were cut off from the mains water supply system.

### Dissemination

Spreading knowledge of the rules of international humanitarian law was a vital part of the ICRC's work in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Delegates strove to inform the

general public and combatants of the basic humanitarian principles in an effort to induce combatants to respect the civilian population, to increase the chances of success of the different ICRC operations and to improve security for humanitarian aid workers. To this end a media campaign was conducted using local radio and television stations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the surrounding region.

### AFTERMATH OF THE WAR IN CROATIA

The war in Croatia and its aftermath were largely eclipsed in the public mind in 1992 by the battles raging in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For the ICRC, however, the humanitarian problems left over from the Croatian conflict remained a cause for concern throughout the year, as thousands of families were unable to return to their homes and prisoners were still being held by both the Croatian and the Yugoslav authorities.

The fifteenth cease-fire came into effect in Croatia on 3 January and by and large it held, pending the deployment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in April. A number of violations were, however, reported. Of particular concern to the ICRC was the repeated violation of the agreement declaring Osijek hospital a protected and neutral zone. The hospital came under fire at least six times between mid-February and the end of March.

In the field ICRC delegates continued to assess needs and bring assistance to areas on and near the front lines, where many civilians, especially elderly people, were living in isolation and facing increasing hardship. Particular attention was paid to places where minority groups were being subjected to pressure, such as Croatian territory under Serb control and

regions where people of Serb origin were in the minority. Such ethnic tensions prevailed throughout the areas under United Nations protection and caused the ICRC to intervene on several occasions at all political and administrative levels, calling on the parties to respect the civilian population. Delegates also distributed assistance to those in need and delivered medical supplies to local dispensaries and hospitals.

#### **Action as a neutral intermediary**

At the end of 1991 the ICRC chaired three meetings of plenipotentiary representatives of the parties to the conflict in Croatia with a view to addressing humanitarian problems arising from the situation. Besides confirming their intention to comply with international humanitarian law, the parties adopted a series of recommendations on matters such as the search for missing persons, the transmission of allegations of violations of international humanitarian law, the release of prisoners and the protection of specific areas.

As a result a Joint Commission for tracing missing persons and identifying mortal remains was set up and held its first meeting in December 1991 (see below).

Another outcome of these meetings was the creation of a Tripartite Commission to deal with matters relating to combatants and all other persons detained in connection with the conflict (see below).

The plenipotentiary representatives met for the fourth time in Geneva at the end of January 1992 to review topics of mutual concern, including access for ICRC delegates to disputed areas, protection of prisoners, the effectiveness of the protection extended to the Osijek and Dubrovnik hospitals under the Red Cross flag, and violations of international humanitarian law such as the arbitrary arrest of civilians. A UNHCR delegation

was present while the plight of displaced persons and priorities for their assistance were being discussed. A further meeting was held on 9 April with representatives of the Croatian armed forces and the Yugoslav Federal army, but the Republic of Serbia sent no delegation. The protected status of the hospital in Osijek was once again confirmed and the November 1991 agreement amended accordingly. In spite of this the hospital was shelled towards the end of the month and again in May. On 24 April ICRC President Sommaruga expressed his concern in a personal message addressed to the Presidents of Croatia and Serbia and to the federal government of Yugoslavia.

The fifth meeting of plenipotentiary representatives was held at ICRC headquarters in Geneva on 23 May. The agreement reached in November 1991 was once again amended; the new version made direct reference to the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I, which was applicable in its entirety. The ICRC for its part appealed for an immediate release of all remaining prisoners.

Throughout the year the ICRC continued to have talks with the highest authorities of Croatia, Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

On 8 May, for instance, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman received the head of delegation in Zagreb to discuss the release of remaining prisoners and the search for missing persons. At the end of July both the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Mr Milan Panic, and the Croatian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Mate Granic, visited ICRC headquarters where they were received by President Sommaruga. These meetings paved the way for the agreement reached on 7 August in Budapest to release all remaining prisoners of the war in Croatia (see below).

On 18 October ministerial delegations from Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia met under ICRC auspices at the institution's headquarters. Discussions centred on declaring an amnesty for combatants held under various charges, releasing all remaining prisoners, including the aforementioned, and speeding up the search for missing persons.

### Activities for detainees

As had been the case in 1991, ICRC delegates continued to visit prisoners detained in connection with the conflict. In all, some 1,100 detainees held by the Croatian authorities, 1,750 held by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and 600 held by Serb forces in the United Nations Protected Areas were visited.

The Tripartite Commission set up to deal with questions relating to prisoners held regular sessions in Zagreb and, before war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Sarajevo. In March the parties agreed to release their remaining prisoners in a three-phase operation. The first 420 detainees were freed at the end of the month and handed over to their respective authorities in Sarvas in the presence of ICRC delegates. In May 308 Croats and 135 Serbs were released under ICRC auspices.

At a meeting chaired by ICRC President Sommaruga on 7 August in Budapest an agreement was signed by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, Mr Franjo Greguric and the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr Milan Panic, on the release of all prisoners still held in connection with the conflict between the two States. Pursuant to this agreement, 1,130 prisoners were released under ICRC supervision on 14 August 1992, yet many prisoners remained in custody. Some were freed

later under *ad hoc* agreements between local military authorities, without ICRC participation. The ICRC, for its part, continued to work for the release and repatriation of all remaining prisoners throughout 1992.

The Tripartite Commission met again in September, but to no avail, and the problem of the remaining prisoners was discussed on 18 October with ministerial delegations from Croatia and Yugoslavia at ICRC headquarters (see above). At the end of the year the issue was still pending, neither party being willing to release its prisoners on a unilateral basis. Information on the prisoners' whereabouts was not forthcoming either.

### Tracing activities

Restoring contacts between family members separated by the conflict and reuniting families was one of the tracing agency's main tasks in the former Yugoslavia. ICRC delegates worked closely with the different local Red Cross organizations to handle an unprecedented number of Red Cross messages. All in all, more than 650,000 such messages were exchanged, including those pertaining to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In January the ICRC, with support from the Hungarian Red Cross, organized a meeting of officials in charge of Red Cross tracing services in Yugoslavia and the former Yugoslav republics, which took place in Pécs (Hungary). The aim of the meeting was to take stock of current activities to restore family links and exchange ideas on how to solve problems encountered by each Red Cross tracing service.

Besides carrying out traditional tracing agency activities, the ICRC organized ten meetings of the Joint Commission during the early months of 1992. On 24 January

the parties to the conflict in Croatia for the first time exchanged lists of detainees. Later in the year the ICRC kept up its pressure on the two States to exchange any information in their possession regarding missing persons and mortal remains, in the course of bilateral contacts or during *ad hoc* meetings in which the institution participated as an observer. Unfortunately, in spite of these sustained efforts, no tangible progress was made and the respective parties were unable to give families news of missing relatives. The unquestionably humanitarian nature of this issue led the ICRC to appeal to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia to take unilateral decisions at the highest level, in the hope that such measures would succeed where all others had failed.

#### Activities for the civilian population

The ICRC family parcel programme started in 1991 was designed to cover two categories of victims: the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the conflict and specific vulnerable groups such as civilians living near the front. The end of the war in Croatia did not mean the end of the ICRC's role in the country, for the hardship suffered by the civilian population did not come to an end overnight. During the first months of the year assistance for displaced people was channelled through local Red Cross branches, with ICRC supervision, while delegates themselves carried out distributions in isolated areas and villages close to the front. These distributions also gave delegates the opportunity to monitor the situation in outlying districts and offer the civilian population some measure of protection.

As from spring 1992, UNHCR gradually took over distributions to displaced people outside the conflict areas, while

the ICRC continued to assist those who remained close to the front lines. In all the ICRC distributed some 2,947 tonnes of relief supplies to victims of the war in Croatia.

#### Medical assistance

During the first three months of the year the ICRC continued to assess and respond to the needs of hospitals and other medical facilities receiving war casualties, until such time as other organizations could take over and the Croatian medical supply system could resume its distributions throughout most of the country. Hospitals close to the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) received ICRC supplies throughout the year.

#### Water and sanitation

In areas such as the UNPAs, where the water supply system was affected by the lack of chemicals and spare parts, the ICRC distributed the appropriate materials to ensure adequate production of safe drinking water.

#### Dissemination

Efforts to promote knowledge of international humanitarian law were still high on the ICRC's agenda both in Croatia and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (for the latter see *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*).

At the end of April, 26 senior officers of the Croatian Ministry of Defence, military instructors and Croatian army commanders attended a course on international humanitarian law conducted in Zagreb by ICRC delegates from Geneva headquarters. The delegate to the armed forces also held three one-day seminars in

Split, Karlovac and Osijek, attended by over 135 commanding officers, and gave a talk for 300 officers at a meeting in Zagreb.

In July the ICRC held a training course for 24 Croatian Red Cross officials involved in dissemination activities.

Delegates in Zagreb recorded Croatian versions of four television spots and five ICRC films on the basic humanitarian principles.

## **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA**

Throughout the year the ICRC delegation in Belgrade, besides implementing and coordinating a large part of the assistance programmes for Bosnia-Herzegovina, continued to visit detainees, distribute medical supplies and carry out surveys, not only in the areas bordering on Bosnia-Herzegovina but also in Kosovo. In December an ICRC office was opened in Pristina with a view to holding dissemination sessions and visiting security detainees.

### **Activities for detainees**

The ICRC began a new series of visits on 13 March to people detained in connection with the situation in Kosovo. This group of detainees had previously been visited in May and June 1991. By the end of May, 74 people had been visited in 11 places of detention in Serbia and Montenegro.

### **Medical assistance**

Throughout the year the ICRC continued to assess the needs of hospitals and other medical facilities in Yugoslavia, particularly in those receiving war casualties. The ICRC assistance programme focused on emergency needs on the one hand and on middle- to long-term needs resulting from the breakdown of the distribution

system on the other. The latter were covered by an appeal to National Red Cross Societies for help in kind.

### **Dissemination**

A course on international humanitarian law was held in Belgrade in February for 30 senior officers of federal army combat units. Delegates also gave lectures on international humanitarian law to over 1,100 officers and troops of the federal armed forces.

In March, 32 Red Cross dissemination officers from Montenegro and Serbia, including the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, attended a course on dissemination methods given by ICRC delegates.

## **MACEDONIA**

A permanent ICRC presence was established in Skopje at the end of 1991 to monitor the development of the situation in the republic from the humanitarian point of view. A dissemination campaign was launched together with the local Red Cross and regular contacts were kept up with the authorities, particularly as regards tracing activities.

Between January and November 1992, 11 people arrested in connection with the political situation in Macedonia were visited by the ICRC.

## **SLOVENIA**

An ICRC delegation was opened in Ljubljana soon after war broke out following the March 1991 declaration of independence of Slovenia and Croatia, which came into effect on 25 June of the same year. On 26 March 1992 Slovenia deposited with the Swiss government a declaration of succession, without reservations, to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two Additional Protocols of 1977.

In February ICRC delegates visited two detainees still held in connection with the 1991 conflict.

The ICRC delegate to the armed forces held a seminar in Ljubljana in May for some 50 high-ranking officers of the Slovenian armed forces and representatives of the Ministry of Defence, the Civil Defence corps and medical services. Twenty-one Slovenian Red Cross officials attended an ICRC training course in dissemination methods in July.

On 27 August the delegation was closed, but cooperation with the Red Cross of Slovenia in the field of dissemination continued throughout the year.

\*  
\* \*

## ALBANIA

A travelling exhibition on the Geneva Conventions was inaugurated in Tirana on 20 February in the presence of the Albanian President, Mr. Sali Berisha. One hundred and fifty high-ranking officers attended a series of lectures on international humanitarian law held later in the month.

The Albanian authorities had granted the ICRC access to places of detention in Albania in 1991. The first visits to security detainees held in the country took place in 1992. ICRC delegates saw eight detainees. With regard to people sent into internal exile by the previous regime, the ICRC conducted several surveys in former detention settlements and in towns and villages where the former exiles settled after their release. In September, the delegation distributed food parcels and clothes to the most destitute families. The Federation and the Albanian Red Cross set up an assistance programme for some 70,000 needy people, including many former detainees and their families.

On 12 October the ICRC delegation in Tirana was closed, but contacts were maintained with the authorities and the National Society regarding dissemination and the publication of booklets on international humanitarian law and Red Cross principles in Albanian.

## ROMANIA

The ICRC delegation set up in Bucharest at the end of 1989 remained open throughout 1992 and as from the end of November coordinated ICRC activities in neighbouring Moldova. Contacts were maintained with the authorities and with the Red Cross of Romania, especially in connection with dissemination and the setting up of a dissemination centre for international humanitarian law centre.

On 25 February ICRC delegates completed the series of visits to security detainees which had started in December 1991. In all, 31 prisoners were visited, most of them former government officials.

In March ICRC representatives met senior officials, in particular the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Constantine Enu, to discuss Romania's recognition of the International Fact-Finding Commission (Article 90 of Additional Protocol I).

\*  
\* \*

ICRC activities in the following countries were carried out by delegates based in Geneva.

## BULGARIA

In January the Bulgarian Health Minister, Mr. Nikola Vassilev, visited ICRC headquarters where he discussed matters

relating to the Bulgarian Red Cross with Vice-President Claudio Caratsch. Regular missions were carried out from Geneva headquarters to advise the National Society on its new statutes and its plans to develop its activities. An ICRC consultant also gave the Bulgarian Red Cross advice regarding resumption of the production of mineral water, which could become a significant source of income for the National Society.

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Czechoslovak Red Cross organized two seminars on its activities and on the Movement's principles and structure for some 160 mayors of both Czech and Slovak towns, in collaboration with the ICRC and the Federation.

In addition, the ICRC held talks with the authorities and the National Society to discuss future cooperation after the division of the country into two separate republics.

## HUNGARY

The ICRC maintained regular contacts with the Hungarian government and the National Society to discuss the institution's humanitarian activities in connection with the conflicts affecting countries in the region. Several meetings of the Joint Commissions set up to deal with matters relating to prisoners of war and people missing in action were held in the Hungarian town of Pécs (see *Aftermath of the war in Croatia*).

ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga travelled to Budapest in August where he had talks with Prime Minister Jozsef Antall and high-ranking officials of the

Hungarian Red Cross on the consequences in humanitarian terms of the war in the former Yugoslavia.

At the end of October the ICRC delegate to the armed forces, in cooperation with five senior military instructors, conducted a five-day seminar on international humanitarian law and teaching methods. Twenty-one senior officers from the Hungarian armed forces attended.

## POLAND

At the end of May the ICRC held the first-ever course on the law of war for some 25 senior army, air force and navy officers. A second course was given at the end of November for 30 senior officers. During the year a number of ICRC publications on international humanitarian law were translated into Polish and published in Poland in cooperation with the Polish Red Cross.

In August ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga travelled to Poland, where he was received by President Lech Walesa, Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka and a number of high-ranking government officials from the Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs. He also inaugurated the tenth Warsaw Summer Course on international humanitarian law. University students and academics from 21 countries participated in the course.

## PORTUGAL

ICRC President Sommaruga made an official visit to Portugal in February. He was received by President Mario Alberto Soares, Prime Minister Aníbal Cavaco Silva, Minister for Foreign Affairs João de Deus Pinheiro and the Secretaries of

State for Foreign Affairs and Defence. The ICRC's mission was marked by the Prime Minister's announcement that Portugal had ratified the Additional Protocols. In accordance with their provisions, the Protocols came into force for Portugal on 27 November.

Mr Sommaruga also met leading officials of the Portuguese Red Cross.

## TURKEY

Throughout the year the ICRC regularly met the Turkish authorities in order to keep them informed about the institution's activities in the region.



In March the ICRC formally appealed to the government to abide by the principles of international humanitarian law when carrying out military operations in the border area between Iraq and south-eastern Turkey. This matter was raised once again when the Delegate General for the region travelled to Ankara in November and met high-ranking officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Caucasus was also discussed.

On 20 April, the ICRC handed over to the Turkish authorities six Turkish soldiers captured by the Turkish PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) and held on Iraqi soil. Two more such prisoners were visited in June. Delegates collected Red Cross messages which were transmitted to the detainees' families in Turkey.

## UNITED KINGDOM

On 3 February the ICRC sent a team of delegates to Northern Ireland to carry out the yearly series of visits to prisoners held in connection with events in the province. The series was completed in March. In all, 1,775 persons were visited in six prisons in accordance with the ICRC's standard procedures.

\*  
\* \*

## MOSCOW Regional delegation

(Russian Federation, including all autonomous republics and regions)

Following numerous missions to the Russian capital, a headquarters agreement was signed between the ICRC and

the Russian Federation in June and the Moscow regional delegation was officially opened at the end of July.

The regional delegation worked to develop a network of contacts with government officials, Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and the Russian and international media.

In November the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia travelled to Moscow where he was received by high-ranking representatives of the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Talks centred on the various areas of the former USSR where ethnic tensions, and in several cases open confrontations, were rife.

ICRC delegates held regular meetings with representatives of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR until 26 March, when it was formally dissolved, and from then on with officials of the new Red Cross of Russia.

In June the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies carried out a joint mission to Moscow and concluded that conditions were met for the Red Cross of Russia to become part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The validity of the recognition given to the Russian Red Cross was confirmed and it became the first National Society of the former Soviet Union to be granted membership in the Movement.

Moscow-based representatives of most of the groups, parties and factions involved in conflicts in the former Soviet Union were contacted by ICRC delegates in order to ensure operational support for ICRC delegations in the conflict areas. Those seen included representatives from

Moldova, Ossetia, Abkhazia and Tajikistan. The delegation in Moscow helped delegates organize relief operations in these areas until an adequate infrastructure was set up locally.

### **Activities for the civilian population**

The ICRC carried out missions to the autonomous republic of North Ossetia following reports that several thousand people had crossed the border to flee the fighting in South Ossetia (see also *Georgia*). In March six tonnes of relief supplies were flown into Vladikavkaz, the North Ossetian capital, to assist displaced families and in July 1.8 tonnes of medical supplies and medicines were distributed to six North Ossetian hospitals receiving casualties from South Ossetia.

At the end of October trouble broke out between ethnic Ingush living in North Ossetia and the local population. Tens of thousands left their homes and sought refuge in neighbouring Chechen-Ingushetia. The ICRC carried out surveys in November and December and distributed relief supplies to families who had fled without their belongings and had settled in the remote valley of Djayrakh. There were also displaced Ingush and ethnic Ossetians within North Ossetia, mostly in and around Vladikavkaz, but local authorities were able to meet nearly all their needs. The ICRC handed out blankets and other basic necessities to the most destitute among them.

### **Dissemination**

A number of ICRC publications were translated into Russian and talks were held with government representatives, in particular the Minister of Defence in November and senior officials of the Ministry of the Interior, to prepare courses and seminars on international humanitarian

law for the armed forces and the security forces known as *Omon*. The latter were involved in peace-keeping operations in various parts of the Russian Federation, including North Ossetia and Chechen-Ingushetia. Contacts were also established with the new Red Cross Society of the Russian Federation and media representatives with a view to setting up dissemination programmes.

ICRC representatives attended several high-level conferences on human rights, such as the seminar organized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in September and the Penal Reform International seminar which took place in November.

\*  
\* \*

The delegate in charge of ICRC activities in the Baltic States, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine was based at ICRC headquarters in Geneva. In July a delegation and an office were opened in Moldova.

## BALTIC STATES

Following ICRC missions carried out in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, in 1991 the three Baltic States made declarations of continuity regarding the two 1929 Geneva Conventions. At the end of the year Latvia deposited with the Swiss government a declaration of accession to the four Geneva Conventions and the two Additional Protocols. An ICRC team visited Lithuania and Estonia in November 1992 to encourage the authorities to accede to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and

the 1977 Additional Protocols and to advise them on measures to be taken to implement these treaties.

In February a joint ICRC/Federation dissemination seminar was held for members of the Red Cross of Lithuania. Later an agreement was reached with the three National Societies on the publication of ICRC teaching materials on international humanitarian law and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in their national languages.

## MOLDOVA

At the beginning of the year tension ran high between the Moldovan government in Chisinau and the local authorities of Transdnistria. The latter's population was mainly Russian and there was a strong separatist movement seeking independence from Moldova. Fighting broke out in March along the Dniestr and flared up again in June. A peace-keeping force was deployed in July but the situation remained tense throughout the year.

ICRC delegates were in Moldova in March and held talks with the Prime Minister, Mr Valerio Muravschi, the Vice-Ministers of Justice, Health and Foreign Affairs, representatives of the Defence Ministry and Red Cross officials. They went to Tiraspol, the main town of Transdnistria, just before fighting broke out.

A second mission was carried out in April and matters such as ICRC visits to detainees held in connection with the conflict and assistance to victims on both sides of the Dniestr were discussed. Delegates were received by the leader of the breakaway region of Transdnistria, Mr Igor Smirnoff, and held talks with the

local branch of the Red Cross. Respect for the Red Cross emblem and personnel was the main topic of these discussions.

In July a delegation was opened in Chisinau and an office set up in Tiraspol. Following contacts with all the armed groups in Moldova, the ICRC's proposals to carry out dissemination activities were accepted and the first sessions were held in September.

By November the situation no longer required a permanent ICRC expatriate presence but its offices remained open, manned by local staff.

### Activities for the civilian population

Hospitals in Chisinau, Tiraspol and other towns were surveyed to assess emergency needs. In June delegates distributed surgical materials and medicines in five hospitals receiving war-wounded patients.

Delegates also handed over some 4,500 food parcels which were distributed by the Red Cross of Moldova and local Red Cross branches to the most needy victims of the fighting, mainly displaced families.

### Activities for detainees

ICRC delegates visited security detainees held by the Moldovan authorities in connection with the conflict in several places of detention in Chisinau. Red Cross messages were collected and later distributed to the detainees' families in Transdnistria. In all, 57 detainees were registered.

## UKRAINE

An ICRC team travelled to Kiev in April. It was received by representatives of the Presidency and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, Justice and So-

cial Affairs to discuss matters relating to the Red Cross of Ukraine and the country's lifting of certain reservations concerning the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Delegates also met the President of the Red Cross of Ukraine and members of his staff with a view to having it recognized as a National Society.

In July the Red Cross of Ukraine hosted a meeting to discuss possible activities for displaced people and refugees with the National Society of the Russian Federation and the Red Cross of Moldova, which was attended by an ICRC delegate.

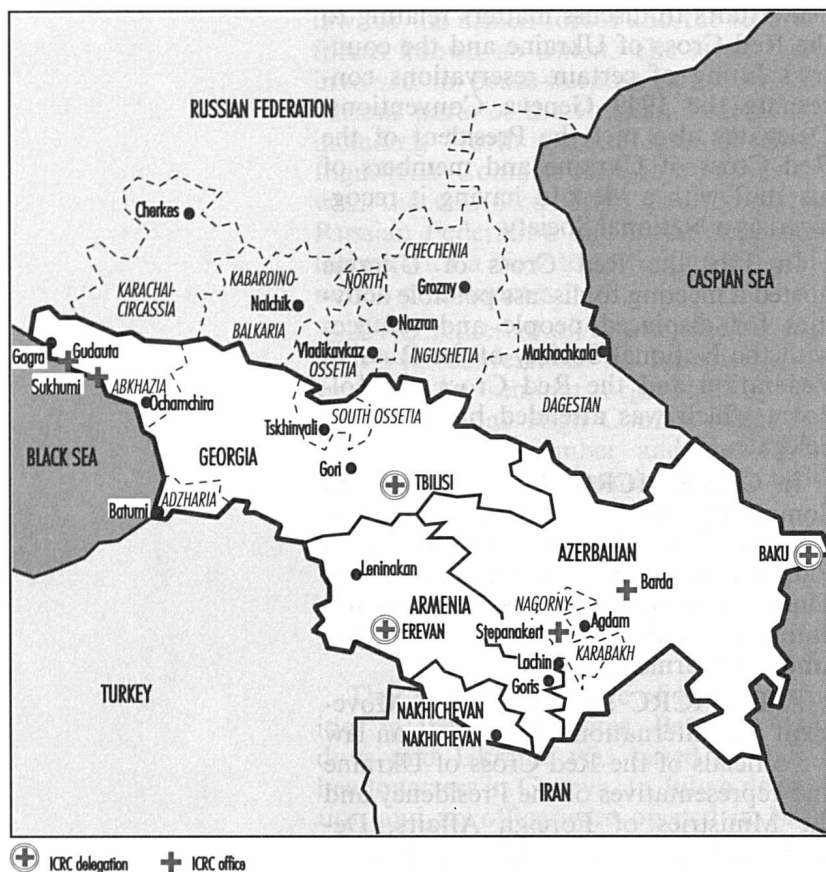
In October ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga received a high-level parliamentary delegation led by Mr Ivan Pliushch, Chairman of the Parliament. The main subject discussed was dissemination of international humanitarian law among the armed forces.

A first ICRC seminar on the Movement and international humanitarian law for officials of the Red Cross of Ukraine and representatives of the Presidency and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior and Health was held in Kiev in November.

\*  
\* \*

## ARMENIA

While Armenia was facing increasing economic difficulties partly due to the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan, which effectively cut off the country from one of its main supply routes, tension between the two States reached unprecedented heights and fighting broke out in May in the areas bordering Azerbaijan and



Nakhichevan. Sporadic clashes occurred throughout the year with indiscriminate shelling on both sides.

The ICRC's first mission to Armenia was carried out at the end of January in order to discuss the country's accession to the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols. The ICRC was received by the Chairman of the Parliament, Mr Babken Ararktsian, and the Ministers of Justice and of Social and Humanitarian Affairs, Mr M. Stepanian and Mr G. Areshian. On 4 March the ICRC opened a delegation in Erevan.

Following skirmishes in the border area, delegates distributed blankets and family

parcels to displaced families whom the local authorities were unable to help. Hospitals and dispensaries, notably in Goris and Kapan, received emergency medical supplies such as dressings and injection sets.

After the road between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, known as the Lachin corridor, was opened in May, the ICRC delegation in Erevan became the logistics base for all relief programmes covering people affected by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. As from the end of September ICRC missions into the territory were carried out by delegates based in Armenia.

The ICRC also visited four detainees held in connection with the fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan in two places of detention close to the border. Red Cross messages were collected and blankets and items of personal hygiene were handed over to the prisoners. In an effort to put an end to the widespread practice of hostage-taking, the ICRC helped organize a meeting between Armenian and Azerbaijani representatives in November (see also *Azerbaijan*).

Throughout the year the ICRC delegation in Erevan maintained regular contacts with the authorities, in particular regarding access to people detained in connection with the conflict and ways to put an end to hostage-taking. It also kept in touch with the Red Cross of Armenia. At the time of the 1988 earthquake the latter had established a network of volunteers throughout the country, and this remained active.

In addition, special information spots were broadcast on local television and radio explaining the basic principles of international humanitarian law and the ICRC's work in the region. Dissemination documents were translated into Armenian and a set of seven posters on the rules of war was printed.

## AZERBAIJAN

The territory of Nagorny-Karabakh has long been a bone of contention between the ethnic Armenians who live there and want independence and the Azerbaijani authorities. In 1992 the conflict in Nagorny-Karabakh, which had erupted in 1988, led to increasing tension between the newly independent republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Within Azerbaijan tens of thousands of people fled their homes as areas inside and around Nagorny-Karabakh were taken, lost and retaken by the Azerbaijani army or local Armenian defence forces. The fighting was particularly fierce in spring.

Clashes also occurred in the autonomous Azeri republic of Nakhichevan, causing some 30,000 people to be displaced. By July the situation had improved in spite of sporadic incidents and many of the displaced people were able to return to their homes before winter set in.

The ICRC opened a delegation in the capital, Baku, on 3 March following talks with the authorities during the first-ever ICRC mission to the country, which took place in February. Within two weeks delegates were working in and around Agdam, a small town on the main road leading from Baku to Stepanakert, the main town in Nagorny-Karabakh. They had also carried out the first ICRC mission into the territory. On 12 March, as fighting intensified, the ICRC publicly appealed to the warring parties to abide by international humanitarian law.

ICRC personnel remained in Stepanakert until the end of September. From then on, for practical reasons, missions to Nagorny-Karabakh were carried out by delegates based in Erevan (see also *Armenia*). Assistance programmes for victims

of the fighting in the area around Nagorny-Karabakh were conducted by ICRC teams working in the sub-delegation established close to the front line, in the town of Barda, which for security reasons had replaced the sub-delegation set up in Agdam in March.

At the end of the year, in spite of efforts made by various mediators, there were no signs of an end to the conflict over Nagorny-Karabakh and the suffering endured by the civilian population.

Meanwhile in Baku the delegation maintained regular contacts with the authorities and with the Red Crescent of Azerbaijan. The Delegate General travelled to Azerbaijan in April and was received by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Gasan Ghasanov, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr H. Sadikhov and the Minister of the Interior, Mr T. Aliiev. Matters such as the transport of relief supplies into Nagorny-Karabakh and access to all persons detained in connection with the conflict were discussed. This last issue, together with the country's accession to the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols, was also high on the agenda of the talks held throughout the year with the Popular Front government which came into power in May.

After fighting broke out in Nakhichevan in May, a programme to assist displaced people was set up and high-level contacts were established with the authorities, in particular the Chairman of the region's Supreme Council, Mr Gaidar Aliiev.

### Assistance for the civilian population

Traditional solidarity meant that most of the displaced people were taken in and fed by families or housed in public buildings where they received assistance from local authorities. In the area around

Nagorny-Karabakh the ICRC distributed food, blankets and other items in situations where local shelters and supplies proved insufficient to meet the needs of successive waves of displaced families. During the colder months of the year, when supplies ran low in the villages and towns housing displaced people, the ICRC increased its assistance, giving special priority to those living in precarious conditions and people rendered vulnerable by the conflict, such as inmates of social welfare institutions.

An ICRC team spent two months in Nakhichevan following the outbreak of fighting in May. Besides assisting some 10,000 particularly needy displaced victims in cooperation with the local branch of the Red Crescent, they evacuated the bodies of 17 Azeri soldiers killed in the border zone between Armenia and Nakhichevan.

In all, delegates distributed some 130 tonnes of emergency supplies in and around Nagorny-Karabakh and in Nakhichevan during 1992.

#### **Medical assistance**

Although Azerbaijan had sufficient medical staff and hospitals, the conflict and the economic situation made it difficult for the authorities to supply health facilities with medicines and surgical materials. The ICRC distributed medical supplies such as anaesthetics, analgesics, antibiotics, and surgical and general medical materials to the hospitals receiving war casualties in and around Nagorny-Karabakh and in Baku. Supplies were also delivered to hospitals in Nakhichevan.

#### **Activities for detainees**

One of the main problems from the humanitarian point of view was the taking

and bartering of hostages and mortal remains. Hostage-taking is a serious breach of international humanitarian law. The fact that the hostages were often in the hands of private individuals or families further complicated the situation.

In an attempt to solve this problem the ICRC helped organize a meeting between Armenian and Azerbaijani representatives which took place on the border on 12 November. Both parties agreed to prohibit hostage-taking by legal means; they also agreed in principle to a simultaneous release of all hostages. Nevertheless, little progress had been made by the end of the year.

Between March and December delegates visited and offered tracing services to 116 detainees held in three places of detention in Azerbaijan. Sixty detainees were visited in one place of detention in Nagorny-Karabakh. Delegates also distributed blankets and items of personal hygiene to the detainees. Meanwhile the ICRC pursued its efforts to gain access to all detainees held in connection with the conflict.

In August, the ICRC organized the transfer to Erevan of 19 elderly people of Armenian origin who had been arrested by the Azerbaijani army during confrontations.

#### **Dissemination**

The ICRC made considerable efforts during the year to spread knowledge of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and to promote respect for the red cross and red crescent emblems, especially among local Armenian fighters and the Azerbaijani forces which formed a national army only in June 1992. These combatants were largely unaware of the rules laid down by interna-

tional humanitarian law, and dissemination of its principles was all the more necessary considering the violations committed by all parties, including indiscriminate attacks on populated areas.

A number of seminars were held throughout the year for government officials, combatants and the members of the Red Crescent of Azerbaijan, and various documents on international humanitarian law and the role of the ICRC were translated into Azeri and Armenian. Special messages were broadcast on local television and radio explaining the law of war and the mandate and work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

## GEORGIA

After the *coup* in January 1992 and the fall of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a State Council took control in Georgia. Forces loyal to the ousted President continued to clash with the new authorities, however, particularly in the west of the country. In March, following the arrival of Mr Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, preparations began for parliamentary elections which took place in October. Parliament was reinstated after nine months of provisional rule and Mr Shevardnadze was confirmed as the country's new leader.

The situation in western Georgia remained tense as local militia supporting the former President continued their armed opposition to the government. On 24 June they staged a *coup* which failed, but this did not put an end to the resistance movement.

Meanwhile, armed clashes in South Ossetia between the Georgian armed forces and Ossetians wishing for independence continued during the first half of the year, causing thousands to flee to North Ossetia. A joint buffer force was deployed and, as fighting abated, refugees returned to their homes. By the end of the year, however, no political solution to the autonomous region's problems had been found.

Following talks with the new Georgian authorities, the ICRC opened a delegation in the capital, Tbilisi, on 29 February. It later set up a warehouse which served as a logistics base for relief operations not only in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan but also in Ingushetia and North Ossetia. Emergency stocks of food parcels, clothing, blankets, tents and other supplies were maintained, ready to be dispatched as needed by road. In October the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia travelled to Tbilisi where he was received by the Georgian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Aleksandr Kavsadze.

Shortly after the outbreak of fighting in the autonomous republic of Abkhazia in mid-August, the ICRC established an office in Sukhumi, in Georgian-controlled territory, and another in Gudauta, where the Abkhazians were in control. Attempts to stop the conflict by placing a buffer force placed between Gudauta and Sukhumi were short-lived and the fighting resumed in October. Abkhazian combatants first took Gagra and then advanced right up to the Russian border. About 15,000 people were displaced within Abkhazia and thousands more belonging to different ethnic groups fled to the Russian Federation or other countries. In all, some 70,000 people left their homes on account of the fighting. Local authorities

were set up in both Sukhumi and Gudauta, emphasizing the split between the two zones. Since the main railway linking Russia to Georgia and Armenia goes through Abkhazia, the delivery of fuel and other supplies was disrupted in the area. The fighting died down near the end of the year, but it was clear that the conflict was far from being resolved and violations of fundamental principles of international humanitarian law continued to occur.

#### **Activities for the civilian population**

Throughout the year ICRC delegates carried out missions in South Ossetia to assess the needs of the civilian population, particularly those living in villages and towns cut off from supplies by fighting between separatists and the Georgian armed forces. In August and September, the ICRC distributed family parcels to some 6,000 people, including South Ossetians returning from North Ossetia.

As regards the civilian population affected by the conflict in Abkhazia, ICRC delegates established contact with local committees responsible for registering and assisting the displaced so as to coordinate relief efforts, and continued to assess the situation throughout the year. Since most of the emergency needs were covered by local groups and other humanitarian organizations, the ICRC limited its assistance to victims whose needs had still not been met. Towards the end of the year there was an increase in the number of displaced people fleeing Abkhazia and in the autonomous republic itself. The institution distributed relief supplies to some 900 beneficiaries and exchanged 280 Red Cross messages between relatives separated by the conflict. Aid efforts were however hampered by the general lack of security in the area.

Approximately 26 tonnes of relief supplies were distributed in Georgia in 1992.

#### **Medical assistance**

Delegates carried out survey missions in the South Ossetian towns of Tskhinvali and Kurta in March and April and provided hospitals in both towns with medical supplies. In May and June, the ICRC again delivered supplies to hospitals receiving war casualties in Tskhinvali and near Gori.

In Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia), where hospitals were treating patients wounded in South Ossetia, ICRC delegates also distributed medical assistance.

Similar supplies were dispatched to facilities in Kutaisi, Zugdidi and Poti that had admitted casualties in early March following the uprising in the west of the country.

As soon as fighting broke out in Abkhazia, the ICRC carried out a mission to Sukhumi and handed over emergency medical supplies to the town's four hospitals. Between October and December hospitals in Tbilisi and Gudauta received similar assistance to treat the wounded from the conflict in Abkhazia. The ICRC maintained regular contact with Ministry of Health officials in Tbilisi and Abkhazia and with directors of local hospitals in case needs should arise in other areas affected by the conflict. In spite of the increasing numbers of war casualties, most hospitals were able to cope and had sufficient stocks to meet the emergency.

#### **Activities for detainees**

In January, following talks with the authorities, ICRC delegates were first given access to people held in connection with the *coup* in Georgia. Thirty-two se-

curity detainees were consequently visited in Tbilisi. During the second quarter delegates visited 43 other detainees arrested in connection with the emergency situation and held by the Ministry of the Interior.

Following the attempted *coup* mounted by forces loyal to the ousted President in June, the ICRC requested access to people who had been arrested. This was granted in principle on 30 June and visits were due to take place within a fortnight. In practice these could not be arranged before a general amnesty was pronounced in August. The authorities then informed the ICRC that those detained in connection with the failed *coup* had been released.

Delegates also visited 195 people detained by both the Abkhazians and the Georgians as a result of the conflict in Abkhazia. The ICRC established close contacts with the commissions set up by both parties to deal with matters relating to captured combatants and other prisoners. During their visits to detainees, delegates distributed and collected Red Cross messages.

### Dissemination

The delegation arranged for the translation into Georgian of a number of documents on the basic rules to be applied in time of war. This was part of an effort to make combatants and local authorities more aware of the basic principles of international humanitarian law, particularly as regards the capture of prisoners, the ban on the taking of hostages and the need to spare civilians. Use was also made of the media to explain the ICRC's mission and activities to the population. In August dissemination sessions were held for diplomats, civil servants, civil defence officials, university staff and students in Tbilisi, and for high-ranking members of the buffer forces in Tskhinvali.



### TASHKENT Regional delegation

(Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

In May the ICRC sent a team of delegates to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to meet government leaders and discuss questions relating to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. The delegates also met local Red Cross and Red Crescent representatives and took the opportunity to explain the procedure to be followed in order to gain recognition as National Societies.

In April the Republic of Turkmenistan deposited with the Swiss government a declaration of succession to the four Geneva Conventions and the two Additional Protocols. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan followed suit in May and September respectively.

In December the ICRC opened a regional delegation in Tashkent to coordinate its activities in the five central Asian republics. The regional delegation offered logistic support for relief operations in Tajikistan until a delegation was opened in Dushanbe at the beginning of 1993.

### **TAJIKISTAN**

From May 1992, when the first hostilities broke out between pro-government forces and armed factions of an Islamic-democratic alliance, Tajikistan was affected by fighting which steadily intensified as the year wore on. The main conflict zones were the southern Kurgan-Tyube *oblast* (province) and, towards the end of the year, the capital Dushanbe and surrounding areas.

Fighting was particularly fierce after President Rakhmon Nabiev stepped down in September and in December when the capital was taken by the National Front alliance.

According to official estimates, some 20,000 people were killed and by December 500,000 had left their homes to escape the fighting or to avoid persecution by the adverse party. Most of them fled from Kurgan-Tyube province to Kulyab province, to the capital and later to the Garm valley and Gorno-Badakhshan, in the mountainous east of the country. In November more than 100,000 people gathered on the southern border, and 60,000 of them crossed the icy Amu Darya river to seek refuge in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The conflict prevented basic supplies from getting through and caused great hardship, particularly in the south, around the capital and in the mountainous regions to the east.

The ICRC carried out its first survey mission in September and established a continuous presence in the country at the end of October to assist the victims of the fighting and promote respect for international humanitarian law.

Delegates maintained high-level contacts with the authorities and with the leaders of the different factions. In November and December they attended the special parliamentary sessions held in Khodjant. Members of all the different parties met on this occasion to put an end to the fighting and set up a new transitional government.

### **Activities for the civilian population**

In September the ICRC sent a delegate and a doctor to meet local authorities and representatives of the Red Crescent of Tajikistan and to carry out field missions. They visited Dushanbe, Kafarnihan and regions as far south as Kurgan-Tyube to assess the needs of displaced families and the war-wounded admitted to various hospitals. Delegates later conducted similar missions in other areas, including Kulyab province. Plans were made to distribute relief supplies to 30,000 displaced people to help tide them over the winter.

When fighting intensified at the end of October, the ICRC carried out further surveys in the areas affected by the conflict to readjust the planned relief programme in response to the most urgent needs. In and around Dushanbe, for instance, an estimated 130,000 displaced people had sought refuge. Following reports that thousands of destitute people had gathered along the Afghan border

near Khochma and Panj, delegates also visited that area. The ICRC then monitored the situation over the border inside Afghanistan, where an estimated 60,000 people had sought refuge.

According to reports, some 85,000 people fled to the Garm valley and the Badakhshan area.

While many displaced families were taken in by relatives or friends, thousands were sheltering in public buildings. With the onset of winter the need for blankets, housing materials, clothing and food became more urgent.

Following these numerous surveys, delegates started to distribute relief supplies in December to 62,500 beneficiaries. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies assisted some 30,000 displaced people in the north of the country, outside the combat zone.

#### **Medical assistance**

In many of the affected areas hospitals had not received supplies since May, and by October there was a serious need for medicines and medical equipment. ICRC surveys were conducted in Dushanbe, Kurgan-Tyube, Kulyab, Kalininabad and Dangara to assess the needs of hospitals

treating people wounded in the conflict.

ICRC medical personnel were based in Dushanbe as from November, and distribution of medical supplies began in mid-December. In the above-mentioned cities and towns the ICRC handed over sutures, disposable syringes, dressing sets, other emergency surgical and medical supplies and medicines. In addition, a three-month programme to distribute medical supplies for 20,000 people was begun in the border area in the south of the country. Emergency medical supplies were also sent to the hospital in Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan, where some of the refugees wounded in southern Tajikistan were receiving treatment.

#### **Dissemination**

Public appeals were made on television, radio and in newspapers in an effort to spread knowledge of the rules of international humanitarian law and to make combatants aware of the fact that the taking of hostages and the killing of civilians, wounded soldiers and prisoners was a serious violation of those rules. The messages also emphasized the need to respect the red cross and red crescent emblems.

**RELIEF SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED BY THE ICRC IN 1992**  
**EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

Countries	Medical (CHF)	Relief		Total (CHF)
		(CHF)	(Tonnes)	
Albania .....		367,766	77.9	367,766
Armenia .....	122,928	488,672	35.1	611,600
Azerbaijan .....	355,751	1,346,757	132.7	1,702,508
Georgia .....	34,669	60,676	25.7	95,345
Moldova .....	27,315	146,267	74.3	173,582
Russian Federation .....	58,470	89,347	20.2	147,817
Tajikistan .....	31,397	180,020	27.7	211,417
Former Yugoslavia .....	7,921,372	36,483,178	18,010.3	44,404,550
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>8,551,902</b>	<b>39,162,683</b>	<b>18,403.9</b>	<b>47,714,585</b>

## THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

The humanitarian mandate of the International Tracing Service (ITS), which was set up in London in 1943 and moved in January 1946 to Arolsen (Federal Republic of Germany), has remained unchanged since its inception. Whereas in the early days the bulk of its work concerned tracing enquiries, today over 93 per cent of the requests it receives are for certificates attesting to detention or forced labour and related documents. The certificates and documents issued by the ITS, which are recognized worldwide without any need for notarization, help the people concerned obtain pension entitlements and other benefits. Although most compensation files were closed by the late 1970s, access to hitherto untapped archives has led to a flood of new requests in recent years.

Despite several staff increases, the ITS has been unable to keep up with the mounting number of requests; in 1992 its backlog of pending files grew to 232,582 (as compared with 165,593 in 1991).

During the year under review the ITS once again dealt with a large number of cases (the figures quoted concern the period up to 30 November), as can be seen below:

- ☐ the ITS received 161,465 requests (as compared with 154,774 in 1991) from 57 countries (37 in 1991);
- ☐ thanks to improved working methods, the number of data checks made in files and sets of documents decreased to 686,023 (899,373 in 1991);

- ☐ the number of replies increased to 183,403 (181,270 in 1991).

These figures concern only requests from civilians persecuted under the Third Reich, who were not protected under the Geneva Conventions.

The ITS's three tasks in the domain of classification, namely, collecting, filing and preserving documents, also entailed more work in 1992:

- ☐ 285 organizations (as compared with 207 in 1991) provided the ITS with new personal records concerning forced labour;
- ☐ 1,318,026 reference files (956,231 in 1991) were opened on the basis of newly acquired information.

For the first time, part of the ITS's work was carried out by computer, making it possible to retrieve new information very rapidly.

An International Commission, made up of representatives of Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, acts as a supervisory body for the ITS. Under the 1955 Bonn Agreements, which were confirmed in 1990, the Federal Republic of Germany provides the ITS with the necessary funds to carry out its work.

In 1992 a total of 362 people from 18 different countries and some stateless persons worked for the ITS on a full-time or part-time basis.

