

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1995)

**Rubrik:** Western and Central Europe and the Balkans

### **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:** 15.03.2026

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



ICRC/F. Grünwald

Self-sufficiency helps to restore the dignity lost in the horrors of war. If people are given the chance to work towards the future by growing their own food instead of relying solely on food rations, they may find the strength to pull through. In 1995 the ICRC distributed 8,145 tonnes of seed worldwide, over a quarter of which went to the former Yugoslavia.

**Western and Central Europe and the Balkans**

**ICRC delegations:**

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

**Staff**

ICRC expatriates<sup>1</sup> : 157

National Societies<sup>1</sup> : 100

Local employees<sup>2</sup> : 767

**Total expenditure**

Sfr 117,687,211

**Expenditure breakdown**      **Sfr**

Protection/tracing:      23,052,086

Relief:      43,852,691

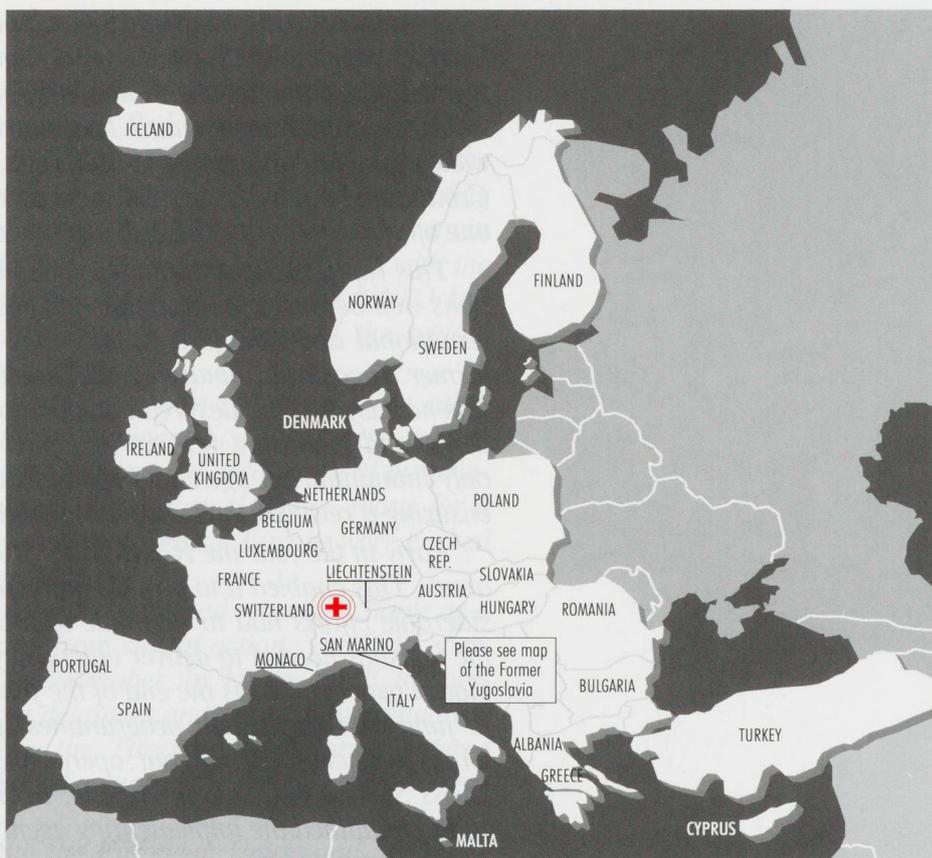
Medical assistance:      36,635,076

Cooperation with National Societies:      951,705

Dissemination:      2,464,542

Operational support:      5,004,815

Overheads:      5,726,296



 ICRC Headquarters

ICRC / AR 12.95

# WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE BALKANS

<sup>1</sup> Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

<sup>2</sup> Under ICRC contract, as at December 1995.

*The world's attention in 1995 was once again drawn to Europe and the horrific happenings in the former Yugoslavia. The brief calm that had descended over the region at the beginning of the year soon shattered and violence erupted once again. The attacks on Sarajevo, the expulsions in the wake of the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa, the storming of the former Sectors in Croatia and offensives in western and central Bosnia, all contributed to create one of the worst crises the Balkans had ever known.*

*This rapid succession of crises meant that the ICRC had to step up operations well beyond what had thus far been envisaged. With many national, international and non-governmental aid organizations already working in the former Yugoslavia, obtaining additional support from the donor community was no easy task. Widespread recognition of the ICRC's impartiality, independence and neutrality, however, coupled with the fact that at times it was the only humanitarian agency to remain in certain areas, played a large part in ensuring it received the support so sorely needed for its operations.*

*Early in the year the ICRC set up stocks of emergency relief supplies in key areas. This enabled it to provide immediate aid to those in need. Even so, considerable efforts had to be made to mobilize further resources and establish the logistics needed to deliver emergency supplies to nearly half a million displaced people towards the end of the year. National Societies were approached to fund and implement programmes under ICRC auspices, and local Red Cross branches carried out operational programmes with input from Red Cross Societies outside the region. In Bosnian Serb-held areas of Bosnia the ICRC remained the implementing agency.*

*One of the ICRC's overriding priorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to obtain the protection of civilians and detainees. This proved a major challenge in the face of "ethnic cleansing" policies that became more entrenched as the year wore on. The number of people evicted from their homes or fleeing ever-worsening security conditions rendered the task even more difficult for those distributing relief and medical supplies, Red Cross tracing staff and water and sanitation teams. The "ethnic cleansing" process became an "ethnic engineering" policy by the second half of the year when mass population movements were triggered by decisions reached at the negotiating table rather than under the threat or even the use of violence. The ICRC frequently had to remind the warring parties to spare civilians and their property and to allow humanitarian aid to reach the victims; it also had to adapt its approach to protecting vulnerable groups in situ.*

*Under the terms of the Peace Agreement signed in Paris in December, the ICRC was entrusted with the task of monitoring the rapid and orderly release of all detainees held in connection with the conflict once hostilities were over and shedding light on the fate of the missing, including the largest single group*

of 8,000 men from Srebrenica. As another harsh winter set in, it also began planning immediate emergency relief for a population wearied and impoverished by four years of conflict. A memorandum of understanding, signed by the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in March and defining their respective spheres of activity, united the Movement in its approach to the humanitarian aspects of the peace-building process. A plan for the rehabilitation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was set up in consultation with the World Bank and others. By the end of the year, with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) handover to the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR), and troops in place, the future of the region, though still uncertain, looked more promising.

Meanwhile, the situation in other parts of Europe remained fairly calm. The ICRC maintained close links with the National Societies of the region, with particular emphasis on promoting knowledge and acceptance of the principles of humanitarian law, especially among the armed forces. Plans for a new regional delegation to cover the countries of Central Europe were backed by a series of missions to find a suitable location.

In Western Europe, the situation in Northern Ireland remained stable as a result of the parties' agreement to refrain from violent action. The ICRC carried out a round of prison visits there in November. In Turkey the ICRC persisted in its efforts to gain access to both detainees and the civilian population in the south-east of the country. When the Turkish armed forces entered northern Iraq in April, the ICRC conducted a survey, the results of which were presented to the Turkish authorities.

Close ties were also maintained with the European Union and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO). As a result of a series of representations made to the various governments by the ICRC in conjunction with the European Parliament, resolutions were adopted calling for a ban on the use of anti-personnel mines and blinding laser weapons.

Throughout Western and Central Europe and the Balkans, and particularly in the light of the tragic events in the former Yugoslavia, the ICRC laid special emphasis during the year on dissemination and information programmes, while pursuing its customary activities for detainees and civilians affected by hostilities.

## Western Europe

The ICRC maintained close contact with the governments and National Red Cross Societies of Western Europe throughout the year, promoting cooperation and greater awareness of the humanitarian principles and mobilizing resources for war victims in other parts of the world. The institution's President, Vice-Presidents and Directors, members of the Committee (the ICRC's governing body) and the delegates concerned with the region carried out frequent missions to foster dialogue with the various States and their National Societies and strengthen cooperation with them. ICRC representatives gave numerous talks and seminars aimed at spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law and the ICRC's activities worldwide, for academic, political, military and religious circles, diplomats, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the media and communications sector. Throughout the year, there were numerous meetings between the ICRC President and other representatives of the institution, National Societies and government officials in preparation for the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. This was jointly organized by the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and was the key event of the year with its theme of humanitarian challenges facing the Movement on the eve of the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup>

The ICRC President carried out missions to various countries to increase awareness of the problems facing the institution and promote knowledge of its mandate and work. Official visits took him to Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Holy See, Italy, Germany, Liechtenstein, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> While in Austria to attend the Review Conference of the 1980 United Nations Weapons Convention,<sup>3</sup> he met the President of the Republic and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. During his visit to Rome the ICRC President had talks with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Health and other government officials. At the Vatican, he participated in the closing round-table discussion of the 10th International Conference organized by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers. The President also travelled to Portugal, where he had meetings with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs and other government representatives. In

<sup>1</sup> See *ICRC action within the Movement*, pp. 292-298.

<sup>2</sup> See also p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> See *The law and legal considerations*, pp. 268-270.

Germany he met the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and in Norway he held talks with high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ICRC remained in close contact with the Swiss Federal authorities in Bern. In November the members of the institution's Executive Board went there for their annual discussions with the Federal authorities, in particular the President of the Confederation, the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Head of the Federal Military Department and a number of other high-ranking officials.

The 13th annual summer course on international humanitarian law, organized by the ICRC Legal Division and the Polish Red Cross, was held in English in Warsaw, Poland, from 1 to 11 August. The same course, this time in French and organized in conjunction with the French Red Cross, was held in Lyon, France, from 11 to 21 September.

During all his missions, the ICRC President held talks with senior National Society staff, in which he emphasized the importance of cooperation within the Movement, while stressing the need to clarify the distinct roles to be played by its individual components. In the United Kingdom he attended the ceremony marking the 125th anniversary of the British Red Cross, and in Portugal he participated in the 130th anniversary celebrations of the Portuguese Red Cross.

Throughout the year the President, Vice-Presidents, Committee members and other ICRC representatives received Heads of State, Ministers and other senior government officials from a number of Western European countries at ICRC headquarters. Close contacts were also maintained with the Permanent Missions based in Geneva.

## EUROPEAN UNION

The ICRC and ECHO\* have now established close working relations, not only in Brussels but also in the field where ECHO is setting up more and more local offices. In addition to substantial support from ECHO during the year under review, the ICRC continued to receive food aid from the European Commission through the Directorate General for Development.

In 1995 the ICRC President carried out several missions to countries forming part of the European Union. On 23 May he addressed the European Parliament at a symposium held on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. In October he went to Madrid for his traditional visit to the capital of the State holding the presidency of the European Union, where he was received by the country's highest authorities. On 20 and 21 November he

\* ECHO: European Community Humanitarian Office

was in Brussels for a meeting with the new President of the Commission. During his visit he also had talks with senior officials of Common Foreign and Security Policy at the European Council and Commission, as well as the Director of ECHO.

On 14 December the ICRC President attended the humanitarian summit in Madrid which brought together representatives of the current two largest donors (the European Union and the United States), major humanitarian agencies of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations from both Europe and North Europe. The summit closed with a declaration signed by the participants and calling on States not only to provide even stronger support for humanitarian action, but also to take more effective steps to prevent crises in the humanitarian sphere.

The ICRC maintained its fruitful cooperation with the European Parliament, in particular with the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Development, as well as with the European forum for the active prevention of conflicts, set up in Strasbourg in 1994 by various Parliament members. A number of representations made to the relevant bodies contributed to Parliament's decision to adopt resolutions calling for a total ban on anti-personnel mines and blinding laser weapons.

The ICRC also regularly took part in the work of the Red Cross/European Union liaison office, which represents the interests of the National Societies of the 15 Member States and the Federation in Brussels.

## SPAIN

During his mission to Spain in October (see also above), the ICRC President held talks with the Prime Minister and reiterated the ICRC's availability to resume its visits to detainees, which had been carried out since 1972 but were suspended in 1986.

## UNITED KINGDOM

In Northern Ireland the cease-fire held throughout 1995, although political talks did not make any notable progress.

From 30 October to 14 November, ICRC delegates visited detainees held in connection with the events in Northern Ireland in the province's five prisons. The ICRC has regularly conducted visits, in accordance with its standard procedures, to these prisons since 1972. The last complete series of visits took place in 1992, with an interim visit to the Belfast and Maze prisons in 1994.

## The Former Yugoslavia

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA

The year began on a note of cautious optimism following the signing of a four-month cease-fire agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 31 December 1994. An atmosphere of relative restraint seemed to settle over most of Bosnia and Herzegovina although fighting in the Bihac enclave, which flared up in mid-October 1994, spilled over into the new year. In many areas access to people in need remained extremely difficult and, with a severe winter looming, the situation of civilians, displaced people and refugees was desperate. UN-controlled 'blue roads' into Sarajevo for convoys bringing humanitarian assistance were opened up, and the ICRC took advantage of the lull in the hostilities to plan for emergency stocks to be set up in strategic locations, to deploy additional staff in certain areas and to take measures to provide extra protection for their offices.

Pursuant to Article 8 of the 31 December cease-fire agreement, the warring parties held regular meetings in the presence of ICRC delegates at Sarajevo airport to discuss possibilities for the exchange of detainees. The Central Commission for Prisoners and Persons Unaccounted for, established under ICRC auspices in implementation of the agreement, yielded few tangible results during the course of the year as political considerations far outweighed humanitarian concerns. As a result delegates continued to be denied access to several places of detention, very few detainees were released, and scant information about persons unaccounted for was forthcoming.

The situation in Croatia eased temporarily when, as a result of intensive negotiations, the United Nations' mandate and the deadline for the UNPROFOR\* withdrawal from all four UNPAs,\* originally scheduled for

\* UNPROFOR: United Nations Protection Force

\* UNPAs: United Nations Protected Areas later known as Sectors North, South, West and East (from end March)



ICRC/AR 12/95



#### IN 1995 THE ICRC:

- visited over 5,300 detainees throughout the former Yugoslavia: some 2,500 in Bosnia and Herzegovina in approximately 80 places of detention and some 2,600 in Croatia in approximately 50 places of detention;
- visited some 200 detainees in 13 places of detention in the Republic of Serbia;
- handled over 3,805,600 Red Cross messages;
- regularly provided 236 health facilities with emergency surgical supplies and essential medicines for chronic diseases;
- distributed relief supplies to over 350,000 people directly affected by the fighting;
- held 27 dissemination sessions for 1,456 members of the armed forces and 39 sessions for 621 members of local Red Cross organizations;
- held tracing seminars for over 500 tracing officers;
- reunited over 620 people with their families.

31 March, was extended. The UN Security Council passed a resolution establishing UNCRO\*, and the new mandate, up to end November consisted of a three-step plan incorporating the implementation of the March 1994 cease-fire accord between Croatian and local Serb authorities, the setting up of an economic agreement and control of the international borders. However, despite the presence of UN contingents, tension mounted along the dividing lines and new strategic alliances were formed in the Sectors — the Serbs in the Sectors forming an alliance with the Bosnian Serbs, while the Croatian army and the Bosnian government army set up joint military headquarters under the command of the Croatian Chief of Staff.

In March the situation took a rapid turn for the worse. Renewed hostilities broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, effectively bringing the cease-fire to an ignominious end well before the projected April deadline, and the airlift into Sarajevo had to be halted pending an improvement in security conditions. The expulsion of minority groups from Bijeljina resumed in early April after more than four months' respite and people were forced to cross the front line between Bijeljina and Tuzla on foot. ICRC delegates based in Tuzla provided medical and other assistance as they arrived, and the ICRC delegation in Pale made representations to the Bosnian Serb authorities urging them to put an end to this practice.

Meanwhile, the cease-fire agreement signed in March 1994 between Croatian and local Serb authorities in all four UNPAs was shattered when hostilities broke out at the beginning of May. Originally portrayed as a limited police operation, the Croatian *Operation Flash* was in fact a military confrontation between the Croatian authorities and the authorities of the self-proclaimed "Republic of Serbian Krajina". As a result, western Slavonia came under Croatian control and some 12,000 Serb refugees fled to northern Bosnia and, from there, to Sectors North and East. Serb forces from Knin retaliated by launching two cluster missile attacks against the Croatian capital.

Tension surged in May between Bosnian government forces and Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo. Murderous hostilities raged in the Bihac area, the eastern Bosnian pockets of Gorazde and Srebrenica, along the Posavina corridor, near Mount Ozren and Doboj (east of Tuzla), in Trnovo and the Kalinovik area, south of Sarajevo, and in Grahovo, north of Livno. The target of continued sporadic shelling, the Bosnian government-held town of Tuzla received one particularly serious attack which resulted in heavy casualties, with dozens of civilians being killed or wounded. In violation of the 20-km exclusion zone established by the United Nations in February 1994, Sarajevo came under

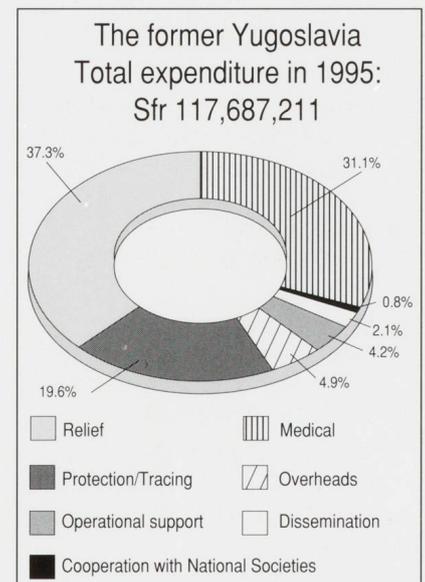
\* UNCRO: United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia

heavy fire. The city was entirely cut off and unable to receive vital supplies, including gas, water and electricity. A United Nations ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs went unacknowledged and, on 26 and 27 May, NATO\* forces carried out retaliatory airstrikes against Bosnian Serb ammunition stocks in the Pale area. The Bosnian Serbs reacted by capturing hundreds of United Nations military observers and UNPROFOR personnel stationed in their territory.

In mid-June, in view of the deteriorating situation and its serious repercussions on the ongoing negotiations and the humanitarian outlook, the ICRC President urged all parties involved to agree on a minimum of humanitarian consensus and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, to exercise restraint in their treatment of civilians and captured combatants and to guarantee the inhabitants of the besieged city of Sarajevo at least minimum conditions of survival: clean water, food and medicines. At the same time the ICRC contacted the parties to remind them of its mandate, to reiterate its readiness to act as a neutral intermediary and to re-emphasize their obligations under the Geneva Conventions towards detainees. In late June the ICRC was able to bring some medical and surgical supplies into Sarajevo for medical facilities treating the war-wounded on both sides. This emergency operation was short-lived, however, as despite the authorities' permission and ICRC vehicles clearly marked with the red cross emblem, delegates were fired on while driving through no-man's land, and cross-line activities had to be suspended until security conditions improved.

The second half of the year saw a radical change in the military and political outlook, and consequently in the humanitarian situation in the former Yugoslavia. The first in a new series of crises was the fall of the Bosnian government-held, UN "safe areas" of Srebrenica and Zepa to Bosnian Serb forces in July. Mass expulsions of the populations from these areas ensued, while thousands of men of combat age, both soldiers and civilians, were separated from their families and arrested. Most of them still remained unaccounted for by year's end.

When bilateral talks in Geneva failed to defuse the continuing build-up of tension in Croatia over the status of Sectors North and South, the Croatian armed forces launched *Operation Storm* in early August. The takeover of the two Sectors by the Croatians provoked a massive outpouring of more than 170,000 Serbs across Bosnian Serb-held territories in Bosnia. As many as 30,000 remained in Banja Luka, while the rest made their way along the Posavina corridor towards the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The two-and-a-half year siege of the Bosnian government-held enclave of Bihac was lifted as a



\* NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

result of this military operation and regular access to the city was restored. Most of the inhabitants of Velika Kladusa (30,000 people) in the former Bihac enclave, many of them loyal to the dissident Bosnian Muslim leader, Fikret Abdic, subsequently also fled the area when the Bosnian government 5th Army Corps took Velika Kladusa. They made their way across the border to Kupljensko, where they were halted by Croatian authorities.

Despite serious security hazards, the ICRC was the only humanitarian organization to remain present throughout the Croatian offensive in Sectors North and South. In early August the ICRC President visited the former Yugoslavia to obtain assurances from the authorities in Belgrade, Pale, Sarajevo and Zagreb that the ICRC would be allowed to assist and endeavour to ensure the protection of all conflict victims in the region, in accordance with its mandate.

The shelling of a Sarajevo marketplace on 28 August triggered the move from peace-keeping to peace-making operations. A joint British/French rapid reaction force was deployed on Mount Igman and NATO airstrikes against Bosnian Serb military and strategic communications posts, arms depots, weapons factories and other military installations around Sarajevo were launched on 30 August. A period of relative calm ensued. Although the city remained without electricity, gas or water, the re-opening of the UN-controlled "blue roads" into the city meant that commercial lorries bringing food, fuel and other goods had access to Sarajevo. Relief was also flown in by UN planes for the first time since April. In September, the ICRC was the first international organization to make a survey of the Bosnian Serb-controlled parts and suburbs of Sarajevo and to bring in urgently needed supplies of blankets, plastic sheeting and candles, as well as medicines and surgical material, since that area had become inaccessible following the NATO airstrikes.

Elsewhere in central and western Bosnia the Croatian, Bosnian Croat and Bosnian government forces were making considerable territorial gains, and by the end of September the results of these hostilities were seriously aggravating the humanitarian situation. The ICRC office and delegations in Banja Luka, Pale and Sarajevo were under enormous pressure to provide relief, medical, water and sanitation services, as well as protection for civilians and to maintain contact between separated relatives through Red Cross messages. The ICRC's policy of maintaining decentralized emergency stocks throughout the region proved extremely useful in ensuring a rapid supply of medicines, food, blankets, tents, plastic sheeting, hygiene items and water and sanitation equipment during periods of major crisis.

During and following these military operations, the international community, led by the United States, resumed political negotiations with a view to settling the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Talks were held in Geneva and New York during the month of September with representatives from Bosnia

and Herzegovina and Croatia and the Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic, leading the Serb delegation representing the Bosnian Serbs.

On 5 October a cease-fire agreement was signed by the parties to the conflict but did not take effect until 12 October, when the Bosnian government's condition that gas and electricity be restored in Sarajevo was met. Hostilities did not abate, however, nor did the cease-fire have any immediate effect on the expulsion and harassment of civilians. The parties actively continued with hostilities in western Bosnia and to the south-east of Sarajevo towards Trnovo, Gorazde and on and around Mount Ozren (west of Tuzla) and ethnic minorities continued to be forced out. Fearing for their safety, large numbers of Serbs also fled certain areas. Although the cease-fire was generally respected as of 16 October, the human tide of Serb displaced and Muslim and Croat expelled continued to swell.

Under pressure from the United States, and in the presence of mediators from Europe, Russia and the US, the leaders of all the parties to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia met for talks in Dayton, Ohio, on 1 November. The ICRC worked hard during this negotiation process, holding meetings behind the scenes to ensure that humanitarian issues, such as the plight of displaced populations, the treatment of ethnic minorities, the unconditional release of detainees and information on people unaccounted for, were recognized and given all due attention. The institution's position on population movements is very much in line with that of UNHCR, which is responsible for refugees in host countries. The return of people to their home areas must be voluntary, and must not be used to consolidate military conquests; conversely, voluntary return should be facilitated regardless of military gains. The return process should be well organized and properly phased while taking account of the returnees' basic requirements, and in particular the security of the areas.

The agreement reached in Dayton on 21 November by the Presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia was signed in Paris on 14 December. Prior to this the ICRC President, accompanied by the Delegate General for Western and Central Europe, attended the Conference on the implementation of the peace agreement, held in London in early December. There he presented the ICRC's humanitarian agenda for the peace process, highlighting the following crucial points: the release of detainees; clarification of the fate of persons unaccounted for, especially those from Srebrenica; respect for the safety and dignity of vulnerable groups, minorities and returnees; and support for vulnerable groups and public health structures.

In the former Yugoslavia, large-scale population movements continued to inflate the already considerable humanitarian requirements facing the ICRC. The priority was to provide immediate aid to help uprooted and newly resettled populations through the winter. A reconstruction plan for Bosnia and

Herzegovina, laid down at a meeting in Brussels on 18 and 19 December, was scheduled to begin in early 1996.

### *Srebrenica*

One of the most sensitive and distressing events of the entire conflict in the former Yugoslavia is that of the missing people from Srebrenica. When the UN “safe areas” of Srebrenica and Zepa were taken by Bosnian Serb forces in July, the Muslim populations were rounded up and expelled. In Srebrenica some 3,000 men were separated from their families and arrested. Outside the enclaves, notably in Tuzla, ICRC delegates were besieged with queries about missing family members. Barred from the area, which was declared a “war zone”, the ICRC made repeated written representations to and had meetings with the highest Bosnian Serb civilian and military authorities. It requested immediate authorization for its delegates to visit all detainees, whether civilians or captured combatants, as had been agreed by the parties at the outset of hostilities. The ICRC was given permission to evacuate some 25 wounded and sick from the enclave to Tuzla. However, by mid-July delegates had still not been allowed access to detainees, and the ICRC President contacted not only the Bosnian Serb authorities on this matter but also the authorities of the Republic of Serbia and the Bosnian government. At the London Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina on 21 July, reference was also made to the need for the ICRC to gain immediate access to detainees from Srebrenica and for the parties to commit themselves to cooperating in the humanitarian effort and to honour their obligations under humanitarian law.

Throughout, the ICRC’s top priority was to locate and register these detainees and inform their next of kin of their situation. Towards the end of July, when prison visits were authorized, the ICRC found only very few detainees from Srebrenica. Also on the institution’s priority list were the almost 5,000 men who were not reported arrested, but had left the Srebrenica enclave prior to its seizure and were making their way to Bosnian government-held territory. The total absence of any reliable information about the thousands of men missing gave rise to grave concern. While various reports and numerous eyewitness accounts indicated that all these men were dead, ICRC delegates from time to time came across Srebrenica men being held in Bosnian Serb prisons. The families lived in hope of receiving information which was not forthcoming. The ICRC could only persist in its approaches to the authorities to be given specific information so that it could inform the families.

A visit by the ICRC President to the area and further contacts with the authorities as concern grew over the whereabouts and fate of the some 3,000 arrested by the Bosnian Serb authorities and the missing 5,000 who had

fled the area still did not result in full and unimpeded ICRC access to detainees and places of detention. Delegates compiled lists from interviews with the families who had arrived from Srebrenica, among others, in order to gather reliable information on people unaccounted for and possible places of detention. This information, recorded in ICRC databanks, was presented to the Bosnian government and Bosnian Serb authorities in early October. With the advent of the cease-fire and negotiations leading up to the Dayton peace agreement the ICRC hoped that the parties would provide information on the fate of people unaccounted for, and that delegates would be able to locate and visit those listed as missing. The institution worked hard to have numerous humanitarian issues incorporated into the agreement, in particular that regarding the fate of prisoners and all persons unaccounted for, and stated its willingness to facilitate the release of all detainees as well as assist the parties in tracing and exchanging information on missing persons.

Despite the institution's openness and transparent approach regarding the issue with all the parties concerned and its unremitting efforts to find answers for the suffering and bewildered families of the missing, the overwhelming numbers of people unaccounted for remained almost unchanged. Even though the ICRC was convinced by the end of the period under review that most of these people were dead, it would continue to push for clear answers and information so that the families living in anguish and anxious for news could at least know for certain what had become of their loved ones.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### Activities for the civilian population

ICRC delegates based in 30 delegations, sub-delegations and offices throughout the former Yugoslavia continued to do their utmost to ensure the protection of the civilians from harassment and the threat of expulsion. The protection of minorities in Bosnian Serb-held areas, and also, on a much smaller scale, in central Bosnia, remained the focus of ICRC action, especially in the light of a clearly discernible trend towards ethnic reconfiguration throughout the hostilities which uprooted entire populations and resettled them according to the political requirements of "ethnic purity". With the imminent prospect of a peace settlement in early October, the process of "ethnic cleansing" was even speeded up; after the peace agreement was signed, an "ethnic engineering" policy came into play where the further displacement of much of the population was brought about using administrative measures rather than violence.

The systematic use of detainees and civilians belonging to minority groups for work on the front lines continued to give the ICRC serious cause for

concern throughout the year, particularly in northern Bosnia. The institution made numerous verbal and written representations to the three authorities regarding the treatment of civilians and ethnic minorities and the conditions in which they were being held. Comprehensive written reports on the situation of minorities were submitted by the ICRC to the Bosnian Serb authorities in Pale.

Over the course of the year the ICRC supplied 6,662 tonnes of food and 4,967 tonnes of other relief to both displaced people and residents affected by the conflict. Food parcels, hygiene items, children's clothes, blankets and jerricans were distributed to the newly displaced, as were rolls of plastic sheeting and tarpaulins to repair houses damaged by shelling. Until the siege of the Bihac enclave was lifted in August the ICRC had been one of the very few international organizations permanently based in the area and bringing in regular convoys of relief and medical supplies. When military activity there increased and the food situation became critical, emergency stocks in Velika Kladusa and Bihac enabled the ICRC to respond rapidly. Enough food was delivered to keep the ICRC/local Red Cross public kitchen running, and up to 5,000 of the most vulnerable members of the community were provided with one hot meal a day. In total more than 336 tonnes of food were distributed to the public kitchen, local Red Cross organizations and hospitals, as well as 14 tonnes of other assistance. The ICRC agricultural programme was developed to help some 250,000 families throughout Bosnia and the UNPAs start producing their own food again. Over 2,580 tonnes of potato, corn and vegetable seed were delivered along with other items such as fertilizer, pesticides, basic farming tools, preserving agents and, in colder areas, plastic sheeting. This programme, with funding from ECHO and the Austrian Red Cross, has been running for two consecutive winters, monitored by an ICRC agronomist, and was completed in April. Timing was crucial so as to enable beneficiaries to follow the seasonal sowing and planting pattern.

Evictions from Bijeljina, Banja Luka and Prijedor caused massive population displacements. Where the ICRC was unable to prevent this from happening, it endeavoured to persuade authorities that all family members should be able to leave together, with their belongings and without being subjected to administrative harassment. These conditions were rarely respected and, in the case of Srebrenica, some 3,000 men of fighting age were prevented from accompanying their families and subsequently disappeared. The 35,000 people expelled from Srebrenica and Zepa headed towards Zenica and Tuzla, and the ICRC provided them with emergency food supplies, tents, blankets, hygiene items and jerricans.

In the wake of the hostilities in the former Sectors North, South and West, 30,000 Serbs who had fled the area remained in Banja Luka, where they were joined by more than 120,000 displaced people fleeing the Croatian, Bosnian

Croat and Bosnian government advance in central and western Bosnia. With stocks already in the area the ICRC was able to provide food and other assistance for some 85,000 displaced people both in public buildings and along the roads. However, ethnic minorities in the area came under threat because of this massive influx of people and found themselves turned out of their homes by the incoming refugees. The ICRC tried to ensure their safety as well as provide relief for new arrivals. ICRC delegates maintained their presence in sensitive areas and continued to make approaches to all the civilian and military authorities, urging them to respect civilians and their property and to take all necessary preventive and corrective measures to protect members of minorities and vulnerable communities. Large numbers of displaced people had to be accommodated in camps, collection centres, schools and private homes, and were given food and other supplies, water, and medical and sanitation assistance. In August an airlift was organized from Zagreb to Belgrade; it transported a total of 350 tonnes of food, 22.5 tonnes of medical supplies, 17.5 tonnes of sanitation equipment, tents, blankets and kitchen sets to be trucked from Belgrade to Bijeljina and Banja Luka. Regular road convoys started again in early September. Between mid-September and the end of the year the ICRC assisted more than 150,000 people in the Banja Luka region, and medical facilities received supplies to help them cope with the large influx of wounded.

Those expelled from Banja Luka and the surrounding areas were forced to cross the front lines to Zenica and its surroundings. The Bosnian government subsequently transferred a number of them on to Bosanski Petrovac, which had been abandoned earlier when its Serb population fled. Most of the displaced were women, children and elderly people, the men having been kept behind by the Bosnian Serbs to work on the front lines. The ICRC continued to make representations at the highest level to locate missing Bosnian Croat and Muslim men separated from their families when these were evicted. At the end of the year, the authorities finally supplied lists of those people, some of whom the ICRC managed to visit.

The situation in Sarajevo improved considerably after the signing of the cease-fire agreement on 5 October. Throughout three and a half years of hostilities the Bosnian capital had been consistently used as a pawn in the parties' bid for supremacy. The ICRC provided as much relief as security conditions would permit to both sides of Sarajevo, by both land and air, but the city was completely cut off for six months from March to October and stocks fell to distressingly low levels.

The ICRC also delivered emergency assistance, including food, blankets and hygiene items to towns and villages in the area, with the help of local Red Cross organizations. Water supplies and sanitation facilities were also set up for over

20,000 displaced Serbs who found refuge at the Omarska camp in northern Bosnia. Trucks shuttled back and forth from Belgrade to keep stocks replenished although, with Bosnian Serb troop movement along the road to Banja Luka, the convoys had difficulty getting through.

## Activities for detainees

In agreements signed in May and June 1992, the three warring parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina had undertaken to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law, and specifically those dealing with the treatment of detainees. The ICRC encountered numerous difficulties, however, in discharging its mandate, especially in the context of mass arrests and detention of civilians that formed an integral part of the "ethnic cleansing" process. It was often refused access to detainees and to places of detention for long periods of time despite repeated requests to authorities to be allowed to carry out its duties on behalf of people held by all sides.

Nevertheless, in the course of the year the ICRC visited some 2,500 detainees held in 77 places of detention under the control of the Bosnian Croat, Bosnian government and Bosnian Serb authorities, and the forces of Fikret Abdic in the Bihac area. Following the capture of some 350 United Nations military observers and UNPROFOR troops after NATO airstrikes against Bosnian Serb targets in the Pale area, the ICRC had access to some UN personnel held by the Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Serb soldiers captured by UNPROFOR. During all visits ICRC delegates checked on the detainees' physical condition and treatment and intervened on their behalf with the authorities when necessary. They also distributed material assistance and gave detainees the opportunity to send Red Cross messages to their families.

One aspect of the ICRC mandate is to facilitate the parties' unconditional release of all prisoners detained in connection with the conflict once the hostilities are ended. During the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, however, partly because of the duration of the hostilities, and also to fulfil its mandate and try to ensure that detainees' wishes were respected, the ICRC stated that it would be present at exchanges of prisoners under certain conditions. From the start of the conflict the warring parties had been quick to establish exchange commissions which drew up lists of all prisoners available for barter with the opposing forces; in many cases, civilians were arrested solely for exchange purposes and traded sometimes even for fuel or alcohol. The ICRC stipulated that it would only be present at exchanges if certain conditions for detainees were complied with, and if the institution was allowed to interview detainees in private to ensure that their choice of destination was respected by the parties.

After the cessation of active hostilities the ICRC once again emphasized the engagement undertaken by the parties, and indeed their duty as stipulated in international humanitarian law, to unconditionally release all detainees. Thus the Dayton peace accord incorporates a number of provisions in respect of detainees, including notification to the ICRC, among others, of all combatants and civilians held in relation to the conflict; full access for ICRC delegates to all places of detention at least 48 hours before detainees are released in order to interview them in private and confirm that they have freely chosen their end destinations; and the release and transfer of all detainees by 19 January 1996.

## Tracing activities

Since the outbreak of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia 17,507,000 Red Cross messages have been handled by the Red Cross tracing network, making this tracing operation the ICRC's largest since World War II.

The network is one of the cornerstones in the ICRC's tracing activities in the former Yugoslavia, especially in the light of the widespread mass population movements in this conflict. At times it provided the only means of locating and establishing contact between family members, displaced people and detainees and went a long way towards alleviating some of the stress and anxiety associated with not knowing where and how relatives were faring in a situation riven with tension and hostility. Over the course of the year 3,805,600 messages were exchanged by the network.

"*Radio Link*", a joint programme run by the ICRC and the BBC World Service, which has been on the air since July 1994, continued to broadcast names of missing people in local language programmes for those who had not succeeded in making contact with lost relatives by means of Red Cross messages. The programme was also taken up by local radio stations throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Training courses were organized throughout the former Yugoslavia for local Red Cross tracing officers, with special emphasis on a task in which they had not participated before — the collecting of tracing requests. Working in cooperation with local Red Cross branches and National Societies, the ICRC began to collect such requests from the families of people unaccounted for and to submit them to the authorities concerned. No practical results were forthcoming, however, despite the fact that under the cease-fire agreement signed in Sarajevo in December 1994 the authorities had agreed to start gathering tracing requests and exchanging information about people who had gone missing during the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the framework of the Central Commission for Prisoners and Persons Unaccounted for. One of the ICRC's main concerns was to try and ascertain the fate of those missing after the fall of

Srebrenica: some 8,000 requests were put together and, after detailed analysis, it was established that 5,000 of them dealt with people who were said to have fled the enclave before it was taken by the Bosnian Serb forces. An unknown number of these individuals then managed to reach Bosnian government-held territory; the remaining 3,000 cases related to people who, according to eyewitnesses, had been arrested by the Bosnian Serb forces in Srebrenica.

Another major activity was to reunite families split up by the conflict. Although there were difficulties in obtaining the requisite departure, transit and entry authorizations and the military situation in the region deteriorated from April on, the ICRC continued to carry out family reunifications and, under a joint programme with UNHCR and IOM\*, it pursued its efforts to enable people to rejoin relatives released from detention as from 1992 and resettled in a third country. Since the beginning of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the ICRC, in conjunction with local Red Cross branches has monitored 1,169 cases of registered unaccompanied children in order to keep track of their whereabouts, locate their parents and eventually reunite them with their next-of-kin.

From 27 to 30 March those in charge of the tracing services of the Croatian, Slovenian and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies, and the Red Cross organizations on all sides in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the then UNPAs, met under ICRC auspices at the Swiss Red Cross training centre in Nottwil, Switzerland. This provided participants with a well-timed opportunity to share their experiences and working problems.

## Medical activities

The ICRC maintained a three-pronged approach in its medical activities for victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia: the main focus of its work remained the surgical assistance programme for facilities treating the war-wounded in conflict zones; ad hoc aid, including a repair and maintenance programme, went to establishments lacking essential surgical equipment; and medical facilities in the Bihac area, Bosnian Serb-controlled parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Sectors received essential drugs for the treatment of chronic diseases.

For two years the ICRC has been maintaining emergency stocks of medicines and surgical equipment in a number of key areas in the region. This enabled it to move fast and effectively with supplies for the treatment of the wounded and refugees during the crises of July, August and September. ICRC field nurses distributed regular supplies to 287 health facilities throughout the

---

\* IOM: International Organization for Migration

former Yugoslavia, most of them located in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under another distribution programme, essential drugs for chronic diseases were delivered to 92 medical establishments in the Bosnian Serb-controlled parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From mid-January the ICRC was able to organize weekly convoys with sanitation equipment, medical supplies and essential medicines for chronic diseases to the Bihac enclave, which had been barred from humanitarian aid since the upsurge in hostilities there in October 1994. Regular assessments were carried out by an ICRC field nurse in the Bihac and Velika Kladusa hospitals, and supplies delivered when needed.

Owing to the blockade of Sarajevo, the ICRC was unable to replenish its stocks after February and, despite careful management, medical supplies dwindled fast, reaching an absolute low by the third week of June. Following laborious discussions with the parties to the conflict, in late June the ICRC was able to truck in 12.5 tonnes of medical supplies to treat war casualties. In September access to the city by road and by air became possible again, and by the end of the month there were enough stocks to cover the treatment of 3,000 war-wounded.

During the mass expulsions that followed the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa the ICRC provided additional medical supplies to health facilities in the area, as well as dressing materials and essential drugs for first-aid and triage points set up along the road from the front line to Tuzla. The ICRC also negotiated passage and transportation for 88 wounded people who had to be evacuated from hospitals in Srebrenica.

Following the Croatian army offensive and the exodus of the Serb population from former Sectors North and South to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia via the Bosnian Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia, the ICRC delivered surgical supplies and essential drugs for chronic diseases to medical establishments in Bosnia that were taking care of the war-wounded and refugees in need of first aid. Assistance was also provided along the route taken by the refugees to mobile health teams staffed by local personnel and medical staff from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

A strictly controlled ICRC medical transfer programme from Bihac to reference hospitals in Zagreb handled fewer cases after the Croatian offensive in August. However, some patients continued to be taken from both Bihac and Banja Luka to Zagreb. Transfers from Banja Luka stopped altogether from 4 August.

## Water and sanitation

ICRC water and sanitation engineers worked in 115 locations throughout the conflict region, providing equipment and expertise to help ensure an

adequate supply of safe water and acceptable sanitary conditions for the displaced population. They took emergency action in the refugee centres and camps around Tuzla and in the camps created for the displaced from Srebrenica and Zepa; they provided supplies of clean drinking water and jerricans for the tide of Serb refugees along the roads leading from former Sectors North and South; they delivered bladder tanks, jerricans, distribution ramps and water treatment chemicals to centres in the Banja Luka area and also worked on building latrines and improving sanitary conditions there.

By providing technical and material assistance to local water authorities and creating innovative projects, the ICRC, working in cooperation with participating National Societies, sought to ensure a permanent supply of safe drinking water for the whole population, including the inhabitants of war-ravaged cities, refugees and displaced people. All the necessary equipment was supplied to water boards, hospitals, local Red Cross branches, epidemiological centres, detention facilities and refugee camps. Old or damaged installations were refurbished, spare parts and pumping equipment were provided, emergency water distribution points were set up, high-capacity storage tanks for up to 5,000 litres were installed and water treatment units, water treatment chemicals and household chlorine tablets were distributed to all the major water works in Bosnia and Herzegovina and former Sectors North and South. During the course of the year, four National Societies were involved in ongoing projects in over 19 different locations (see *Joint Projects with National Societies*). Total expenditure on these projects amounted to around 70% of all National Society donations in the field of water and sanitation for 1995.

### Joint projects with National Societies

Various National Red Cross Societies continued to support the ICRC's operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UNPAs, later known as Sectors North, South and East. National Society staff members seconded to the ICRC were involved in medical and sanitation projects and relief programmes and took part in a number of other activities ranging from tracing to dissemination and information work. The National Societies of Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom participated in ICRC-delegated water and sanitation projects. These projects, carried out in cooperation with the ICRC, included the German Red Cross comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of water and sewerage networks and cathodic protection in Sarajevo, which had started in 1994. The British Red Cross engaged its resources on water projects in Mostar, Konjic, Nevesinje and Pale. The Swedish Red Cross funded and implemented projects in Tuzla, Derventa, Bihac and the Velika Kladusa area, and the Danish Red Cross carried out assessments for network rehabilitation

in Mostar. Norway and Austria made donations in cash or kind for medical, food and seed programmes.

A number of National Societies also carried out bilateral projects. These included public kitchen and school food programmes and water and sanitation projects geared towards rehabilitation. In early October, after a five-month break for security reasons, the German Red Cross relaunched the public kitchen programme run in collaboration with the ICRC, providing one hot meal a day to some 10,000 of the most socially disadvantaged in Sarajevo on both sides of the divided city. The school assistance programme, which supplied sandwiches and milk to some 46,000 children aged 7 to 14 from both sides of Sarajevo, recommenced on 18 October; it had been suspended in March when the schools were closed for security reasons. The German Red Cross ran a similar programme in Mostar. Under a Netherlands Red Cross programme gas-fired heating was provided to schools in Sarajevo thus enabling 13,000 primary schoolchildren to work in heated classrooms from the start of the winter months.

## Cooperation with local Red Cross organizations

Local Red Cross organizations played an important part in the ICRC's fieldwork, particularly in its relief distributions to displaced people, efforts to restore family ties (see *Tracing activities*) and medical work and dissemination activities. They were given support in the form of training and word-processing and office equipment. The ICRC requested the help of various National Societies to enable local Red Cross organizations to continue their own food distributions and public health activities (see *Joint Projects with National Societies*). These National Societies also provided food and donations for local Red Cross social programmes for vulnerable groups.

## Dissemination and information

As always, the ICRC made special efforts to promote greater understanding and acceptance of the basic humanitarian rules to be observed in times of armed conflict and to explain the role of the Red Cross and its activities to combatants and civilians. Interviews with the media, seminars for members of the armed forces and the militias and lectures for local Red Cross workers, high school students, medical personnel, United Nations officers, the staff of international organizations and the public at large all contributed to raising awareness of the importance of humane conduct and of the work of the ICRC, and particularly its impartiality and neutrality in providing assistance to people in need on all sides of the conflict.

The most important objectives of the ICRC's dissemination campaign in the former Yugoslavia were to achieve better recognition of the ICRC's mandate so as to facilitate its access to all conflict victims and to promote knowledge of the fundamental humanitarian principles. Training sessions for the military and the police in Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica and Tuzla were held and presentations were made to combatants in Bihac where printed dissemination material was also distributed.

The ICRC used the extensive local media network to make its operations known to a wider audience. In central Bosnia articles were published in the Bosnian army bimonthly newspaper, as well as in other journals. TV interviews, radio news items and special ICRC slots also served to broadcast the ICRC's message.

## CROATIA

In addition to coordinating ICRC activities in Croatia, the delegation in Zagreb and the sub-delegation in Split served as logistics bases and provided support for the operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as did the sub-delegation in Knin and the offices in Vojnic, Okucani, Dalj and Osijek (see *Bosnia and Herzegovina and below*).

### Activities for the civilian population

Delegates monitored the situation of Serb minorities in Croatia, particularly in the former Sectors North and South and West after these areas had fallen under the direct control of the Croatian government, and of Croatian minorities in eastern Slavonia, and took action on their behalf when necessary. National Societies and local Red Cross organizations working with the ICRC's support cooperated in launching a number of new relief programmes for those most in need, including pensioners and the disabled. Individual food parcels and hygiene kits were distributed and public kitchens were set up.

During and after the hostilities in western Slavonia, the displacement of more than 12,000 local Serbs to northern Bosnia and the remaining Sectors increased the strain on the local Muslim and Croat minorities in those areas. Delegates made frequent representations to local authorities to prevent their situation from worsening and to reduce the risk of expulsion, ill-treatment and harassment. Local ICRC offices supplied food, blankets, candles and other essential items for the displaced. When Croatian troops overran Sectors North and South, over 200,000 local Serbs fled via Bosanski Petrovac and Banja Luka towards Serbia. Water distribution and first-aid points were set up along the road and in Banja Luka (see *Bosnia and Herzegovina, Activities for the civilian population*). Some 30,000 of these people remained in Banja Luka while

another 170,000 made their way along the Posavina corridor towards the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The ICRC provided protection for the 9,000 mostly elderly Serbs remaining in former Sectors North and South. When most of the population fled these people refused to leave and took shelter in hamlets and isolated farmhouses. From August to October ICRC mobile teams patrolled the area to maintain a protective presence in the face of numerous killings and the burning and looting of houses which took place following the fall of the Sectors to the Croatian forces. They also provided food and medical supplies. The ICRC made repeated representations to the Croatian authorities to try and guarantee the safety of these people.

Towards the end of October, the ICRC carried out a census of those remaining in the former Sectors. This was made available to the Croatian Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which were running a joint medical and social welfare programme in the area, while the ICRC continued to monitor security conditions and distribute Red Cross messages. A number of frail and sick people, and those without adequate shelter for the coming winter, were taken to hospital, and the ICRC distributed food and other relief to the remaining population.

The 20,000 to 25,000 people who fled the Bosnian town of Velika Kladusa in August and were halted in their flight at Kupljensko by the Croatian forces were forced to remain there as refugees. The appalling living conditions in the camp were exacerbated by the deteriorating weather conditions. The ICRC's first priority was to draw public attention to the extreme hardship and mounting tension in the camp, and indeed it was the first international organization to be allowed access to the premises despite the blockade imposed by the Croatian forces. In the hope of finding a solution to this increasingly alarming problem, the ICRC President wrote to the Croatian President urging him to ensure that the most pressing needs were met. Towards the end of the year a permanent ICRC representative was assigned to the camp to draw attention to the plight of its occupants and thereby enhance their protection. The ICRC repeatedly called on the Croatian authorities to improve the conditions there. Because of the harrowing circumstances, several thousand people left the camp to return home to Velika Kladusa regardless of possible reprisals on the part of authorities or their former neighbours. ICRC personnel also remained in Velika Kladusa to assess the returnees' security situation.

## Activities for detainees

Between January and July, the ICRC visited Croatian detainees held by the local Serb authorities in the former Sectors North and South. In the course of

the year, regular visits were made to one place of detention in eastern Slavonia. A total of 45 detainees held by the local Serb authorities were visited by the ICRC.

During their offensive on western Slavonia in early May, the Croatian forces rounded up local Serb men and placed them in six collective centres. Teams of delegates were sent to these temporary facilities to register all detainees (some 1,400 people); this helped the ICRC to keep track of their whereabouts and to assess their treatment and conditions of detention. It gave them assistance where necessary and endeavoured to put them in touch with their families by means of Red Cross messages. Most of these detainees were released within a month, the remainder being transferred to prisons pending judicial proceedings.

Following the fall of Sectors North and South, the ICRC visited some 1,100 local Serbs detained in seven places, including Knin, by the Croatian authorities, which had proceeded to screen all men of draft age. A number of these people were subsequently released while others were transferred to permanent detention centres. Good cooperation on the part of the authorities meant that delegates were able to continue visiting both the screening centres and the permanent facilities in order to assess the detention situation in Croatia, while making regular representations to the Croatian authorities regarding the treatment and conditions of detention of prisoners visited by the ICRC. In all, approximately 2,550 detainees held by the Croatian authorities were visited in about 40 places of detention. The Croatian authorities granted an amnesty for some of the Serb detainees arrested in May and then, on 31 December, they granted another for around 450 Serb detainees arrested in August. At the end of the year about 400 local Serb prisoners were still in detention, some under the accusation of war crimes.

## Medical activities

In order to help the most vulnerable communities on all sides of the confrontation lines take care of people wounded in the fighting, the ICRC launched a pilot first-aid project, in cooperation with branches of the Croatian Red Cross and the local Red Cross in eastern Slavonia and in the Orasje pocket (see *Cooperation with the National Society and local Red Cross organizations*).

Following the takeover of Sectors North and South in August, the Croatian Ministry of Health assumed responsibility for health services in the area. A full medical survey was carried out and ICRC assistance in the form of surgical supplies and essential drugs for chronic diseases were provided to medical facilities according to needs. In Knin urgently required supplies were provided

for local doctors and UN personnel. The ICRC also delivered medical supplies and first-aid material to the newly established camp at Kupljensko and during the following week set up basic health services in cooperation with medical personnel from the World Health Organization, the United Nations, *Médecins sans Frontières* and other non-governmental organizations working among the refugees. Surgical supplies to treat the war-wounded and essential drugs for chronic diseases continued to be delivered by ICRC field nurses to medical facilities throughout the region.

## Joint projects with National Societies

Water and sanitation projects and public kitchen programmes for vulnerable groups were carried out by the British, Danish and Swedish Red Cross Societies in eastern Slavonia and Sectors North and South. At the beginning of December the National Societies of Denmark and Sweden launched bilateral relief programmes run with the ICRC for the local Serb population remaining in former Sectors North and South following the Croatian offensive there in August.

## Cooperation with the National Society and local Red Cross organizations

In March the ICRC launched a joint project with the Croatian Red Cross and local branches in the Sectors entitled *First aid along confrontation lines*. The project was designed to help communities along front lines cope with emergencies by themselves. Training and equipment was provided for teams of Red Cross volunteers, who were taught first-aid skills and followed courses about the guiding principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the rights and duties of first-aid workers in conflict situations. In order to promote the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, ICRC delegates, working together with the national Red Cross headquarters and local branches, organized numerous courses for Red Cross workers in eastern Slavonia, Sectors North and South.

Training sessions continued to be held during the year for tracing officers from local Red Cross branches to help them with the practical aspects of restoring family ties and to explain the Red Cross message network and the ICRC's mandate and activities in the field.

## Dissemination

Presentations on the law of war were held for all members of the armed forces in the region, and the ICRC distributed large quantities of dissemination

material on the humanitarian rules to Croatian army field units. ICRC humanitarian law publications dealing with the protection of civilians were handed out to the armed forces, the police and the local Red Cross.

In November an agreement establishing a new programme for the dissemination of international humanitarian law among the Croatian armed forces was signed by the Croatian Minister of Defence and the ICRC.

The last quarter of the year was devoted to preparing a campaign, in cooperation with the local Red Cross in eastern Slavonia, to encourage reconciliation and a better understanding between ethnic groups. In Zagreb, preparations were under way to set up a series of workshops for volunteers and young teachers giving courses on basic humanitarian values to schoolchildren. The ICRC made extensive use of the local media — through radio news items and interviews, TV broadcasts and articles in the press — to promote its activities and role in the region.

## FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (Serbia, Montenegro)

ICRC delegates in Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina provided substantial support for the operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while closely monitoring the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and particularly in Kosovo. They were also closely involved in dealing with the humanitarian crisis that arose from the events in western Slavonia. After the ICRC made an appeal on 16 May calling on the warring parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to reach a minimum humanitarian consensus, the ICRC President visited the President of the Republic of Serbia on 21 June to request his support in ensuring the protection of civilians and ICRC access to all victims of the conflict.

In December a ceremony was held in Cetinje to commemorate the first ICRC mission to the area 120 years ago and the founding soon after of the Red Cross Societies of Montenegro and Serbia, which together now constitute the Yugoslav Red Cross. It was attended by representatives of the Yugoslav government, the Republic of Montenegro, the Yugoslav Red Cross and the Federation, and by the ICRC head of delegation in Belgrade.

### Activities for civilians

The 170,000 refugees who crossed into Serbia in the wake of the fall of the former Sectors North and South in August were received and relocated by the Yugoslav Red Cross, the Federation and UNHCR. As they moved through Banja Luka and along the Posavina corridor, in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

towards the border, the ICRC provided food and first-aid at points set up along the roads.

From August on the ICRC conducted regular visits to over 750 men who had fled Zepa for the Federal Republic, and some 35 from Srebrenica, who were being held in refugee camps in Sljivovica and Mitrovo Polje, in order to monitor their situation and living conditions. They were given material assistance and the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families.

## Activities for detainees

In 1995 ICRC delegates visited about 200 detainees in 13 places of detention in the Republic of Serbia. Among these were some 120 new detainees, policemen of Albanian ethnic origin, arrested at the end of 1994 in connection with the situation in Kosovo.

## Medical activities

Under the surgical assistance programme covering the whole of the former Yugoslavia, the ICRC regularly distributed surgical supplies and medicines to hospitals and other facilities treating the war-wounded evacuated to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Surgical and medical assistance was given to health establishments in eastern Slavonia. The Red Cross of Serbia and the Red Cross of Montenegro continued to receive financial support to enable them to purchase drugs to treat chronic diseases among refugees. Medical equipment and medicines were transferred to the delegations in Pale, Trebinje, Bijeljina and Banja Luka for use by ICRC delegations in eastern and north-western Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Cooperation with the National Society

Training seminars for Yugoslav Red Cross dissemination staff continued throughout the year although preparations for them were slow on account of the events in Bosnia in July and in Sectors North and South in August. The ICRC helped fund and organize National Society dissemination seminars for members of the medical profession, tracing staff and local Red Cross dissemination officers.

The ICRC delegation in Belgrade carried out an investigative study of the experience gained by local Red Cross branches in cooperating and working under the aegis of international humanitarian organizations. The results of this study should be of great help to the ICRC in developing local contacts and

strategies, and in furthering collaboration between the local branches and outside aid agencies.

## Dissemination

No major progress was made on the agreement obtained in 1994 from the Federal Minister of Defence to launch a comprehensive five-year programme to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law among the Yugoslav armed forces. The ICRC therefore pursued its representations to the authorities with a view to formalizing the establishment of this programme. The institution's efforts in the dissemination field mainly focused on establishing direct lines of communication with the Yugoslav army, and at maintaining regular contacts with civilian decision-makers.

A huge media demand for information during and following the events in Sectors North and South meant that the ICRC's information services in Belgrade were giving, on average, 150 national and international interviews a week. The ICRC's activities and mandate thus received unprecedented coverage and, as media from the Federal Republic could be picked up in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this may have helped the ICRC in its efforts to reach victims of the hostilities there.

The Serbo-Croat edition of *Warrior without weapons*, the World War II memoirs of an ICRC delegate, was presented at the Belgrade international press centre, as well as the ICRC film *Working against the odds*, early in the year.

## FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The delegation in Skopje continued to promote dissemination and tracing work in the region and to develop contacts with the authorities of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and neighbouring countries. Dissemination programmes were conducted for the armed forces, National Societies, schools and universities in the region. As a result of the delegation's efforts to strengthen cooperation with the law faculty of Skopje University, the faculty agreed to start offering courses on international humanitarian law and presentations on the ICRC.

The Red Cross in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was recognized by the ICRC on 1 November and admitted to the Federation on 27 November.

## Central Europe and the Balkans

The ICRC stepped up its efforts to promote knowledge and acceptance of the principles of humanitarian law in Central Europe and the Balkans, especially among the armed forces and in particular in the light of the long-term humanitarian, political and military consequences of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The delegation in Skopje, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was particularly active in this field.

The ICRC regularly carried out missions to Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and other countries in the region to foster contacts with their governments and National Societies and to exchange views on possible cooperation adapted to the specific needs of the region.

In conjunction with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC organized a regional training course for dissemination officers from Central European Societies, which was held in Warsaw, Poland, in June. Bilateral dissemination programmes were carried out in Slovenia, Bulgaria and Poland with ICRC support, and training with National Societies and their local branches formed an important part of the institution's dissemination activities. The ICRC also contributed to the translation and printing of publications by a number of National Societies. Efforts to introduce international humanitarian law in law faculties were successfully undertaken in several universities.

A series of missions was conducted throughout Central Europe and the Balkans to gather the information needed to decide on the location of a new regional delegation. Thus far, activities concerning the region have been covered from Geneva.

The ICRC President went to Poland to take part in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp, held in Warsaw and Auschwitz on 26 and 27 January respectively.

In May the President and the Regional Delegate based in Geneva travelled to Bulgaria to attend the General Assembly of the National Society and, while there, they met the President of the Republic, the President of the Parliament and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence.

In Albania, four Albanian nationals of Greek ethnic origin detained in Tirana since June 1994 for violations of State security were visited by ICRC delegates in early January. The detainees were released by the authorities shortly afterwards. The Regional Delegate was in the country in June for meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Justice, during which he conveyed the ICRC's interest in carrying out visits to security detainees. He also attended the second General Assembly of the National Society. The

11th Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Balkan countries was held in Tirana from 25 to 27 September. Participants from the ICRC included a member of the Committee (the ICRC's governing body), the Delegate General and the Regional Delegate. During his stay the Committee member had talks with the President of the Republic.

In late June the Regional Delegate travelled to Greece where he met representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, and in October he was in Hungary to liaise again with representatives of the Federation and the National Society over the projected opening of a new ICRC regional delegation in 1996.

## TURKEY

Early in the year the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) contacted the Swiss government with a declaration of intent to respect the Geneva Conventions and the two Protocols additional to the Conventions.

In March, the Turkish army launched a major operation in northern Iraq. The ICRC appealed to the Turkish military authorities and to all parties involved to observe the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law, and made a request for immediate access to the area. The green light was given for a survey to be carried out by the ICRC in the zones in northern Iraq controlled by the Turkish army, including access to Iraqi civilians and prisoners. An ICRC team of two delegates and a doctor conducted their assessment there from 20 March to 12 May. The ICRC subsequently submitted a summary report on the humanitarian situation in northern Iraq during this period to the Turkish authorities. It also continued to monitor the situation closely and kept the Turkish authorities informed of its findings.

The Delegate General and the Regional Delegate travelled to Ankara in September to discuss this report with the representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. The talks also focused on future cooperation between the ICRC and the Turkish Red Crescent Society.

There was no progress during 1995 on the question of ICRC access to prisons in Turkey and to the civilian population affected by the situation in the south-eastern part of the country.

