

Western and Central Europe and the Balkans

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ICRC/A. Feric

Pollution can cause the rapid spread of water-borne diseases among people weakened by the disruption of food supplies and medical care during a conflict. In Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina the ICRC provided spare parts, chemicals and expertise to help restore access to clean water and repair damaged sewage systems.

Western and Central Europe and the Balkans

ICRC delegations:

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Croatia, Federal Republic of
Yugoslavia

ICRC regional delegation:

Budapest

Staff

ICRC expatriates:¹ 80
National Societies:¹ 27
Local employees:² 619

Total expenditure

Sfr 71,127,223

Expenditure breakdown

	Sfr
Protection/tracing:	18,511,791
Relief:	22,431,609
Health activities:	13,427,886
Cooperation with National Societies:	4,072,401
Promotion/dissemination:	3,893,434
Operational support:	4,854,967
Overheads:	3,935,135



WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE BALKANS

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1997.

The ongoing efforts of the international community to further the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina by implementing the Dayton agreement,³ signed in late 1995, and to help not only this war-torn country but also the entire region return to normality met with varying degrees of success during the year under review.

The main military objectives – cessation of hostilities and separation of ground forces – had been reached early on in the process, making a significant contribution to stability and security in the region. In 1997 a dissuasive role continued to be played by the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR), which had taken over from the larger NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) at the end of the previous year.

The political and humanitarian aspects of the agreement proved more difficult to implement, however. While some progress could be seen in political developments at the national level, on the whole cooperation was reluctant. Persistent unwillingness on the part of the former belligerents to hand over indicted war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was a source of immense frustration to the international community and led in July to the first-ever arrest operation by SFOR.

There was also concern that overall conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons had not significantly improved. Continued obstruction in the form of inadequate security, the failure to establish a system of access to personal documents and deficiencies in the allocation of temporary housing caused large numbers of returning refugees and displaced persons to be relocated against their will in places other than their original homes.

Given the slow pace of change, the international community decided to make any future aid for reconstruction dependent on compliance with the peace agreement. The ensuing lack of investment in regions where the authorities were deemed not to have complied led to high unemployment, low productivity and a dearth of opportunities for the people to get back on their feet again.

Moreover, the imbalance in the allocation of international financial aid to the two entities making up the country (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska) meant that many people continued to depend on some form of supplementary assistance.

The ICRC therefore worked with donors, National Red Cross Societies, other humanitarian agencies and local institutions to provide a social safety net designed to meet some of the needs created by the lasting effects of the war. The organization relied on its experience in the country and the relations it had cultivated with all the players concerned to help ease the popula-

³ The full title of the treaty is the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

tion through this period of transition and to strengthen the ability of key community institutions, particularly the local Red Cross, to assist their own people.

Despite the ICRC's best efforts to ascertain the fate of missing persons through intensive tracing methods and cooperation with national and international political partners, many thousands remained unaccounted for.

The active role played by the ICRC in the international campaign for a global ban on anti-personnel landmines was rewarded in December when a total of 123 States signed a new treaty prohibiting the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of these devastating weapons. The signatories included almost all the Western and Central European nations, including Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, both severely mine-infested.

In Croatia, the year was marked by efforts to reintegrate the mainly Serb-populated region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium. Although the process went ahead fairly smoothly, the ICRC kept a close watch on the plight of vulnerable individuals. The organization's activities to protect the civilian population were enhanced by the complementarity developed between the main players, with the ICRC at the forefront as the only one with sufficient resources to monitor the situation effectively on a regular basis, not only in Eastern Slavonia but also in the former UN Sectors.

In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, tensions in Montenegro, Sandzak and especially Kosovo were a major cause for concern. Unrest increased throughout the country as a result of deteriorating economic and social conditions, leading to a surge in the number of violent incidents. While keeping an eye on these developments the ICRC continued to visit security detainees and press for further access to them.

At the beginning of the year disorder spread across Albania. The social unrest triggered by the collapse of pyramid investment schemes into which thousands of people had poured their life-savings exploded into violence in March, leading to a complete breakdown of law and order. The ICRC responded by opening a fully operational delegation in the country to assist those most in need. Action by the international community, too, was swift with the deployment of a multinational protection force that remained in the country from April until August. The overall crisis began to recede following the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-monitored general election of 29 June, in which the Socialist Party swept to victory.

Another new launch for the ICRC was the official opening of its regional delegation in Budapest, covering several countries in Central Europe and the Balkans.

Western and Central Europe

ICRC representatives carried out various missions and attended numerous conferences, meetings and seminars throughout Europe in an effort to rally support for humanitarian operations, move forward the process for a ban on landmines and promote international humanitarian law. In June the ICRC President addressed a plenary session of the Brussels Conference. The purpose of this meeting was to respond officially to the Canadian invitation to launch negotiations for a legally binding treaty to ban anti-personnel mines and to sign such an agreement in Ottawa in December 1997. Representatives of 154 countries participated and 97 States associated themselves with the ensuing Brussels Declaration which committed them to a comprehensive ban on such weapons.⁴

The ICRC President made official visits to several countries, including Germany, where he met the President of the Republic, the Chancellor and several other leading government figures in June, and Romania, where he delivered a short speech to the North Atlantic Assembly, held for the first time in a non-member country, in October. The President also travelled to London in September to address members of the British Jewish community and for meetings with senior government officials and representatives of the British Red Cross. Other presidential visits were made to Strasbourg and Vienna to hold talks with or participate in the work of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.*

The ICRC President paid an official visit to Luxembourg, which held the presidency of the European Union. In discussions with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, he focused on the relations between the ICRC and the European Union, and the ICRC's bilateral relations with Luxembourg. The ICRC President was also received by HRH the Grand Duchess Charlotte, President of the Luxembourg Red Cross.

Numerous missions were also carried out by the ICRC Vice-President, members of the Committee, Delegates General and representatives of the External Resources Department, the Legal Division and the International Organizations Division. Events specifically linked to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement included the Fifth European Regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, convened in Copenhagen in March; a one-day debate on issues relating to the work of humanitarian organizations, held by the ICRC in Paris in May; a humanitarian forum chaired by the ICRC in the Swiss town

⁴ See *Promotion and development of international humanitarian law*, pp. 295-297.

* Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

of Wolfsberg⁵ in June and attended by senior representatives of the main humanitarian organizations and donor countries, the World Bank and the European Commission; and a round table on preventive action organized by the ICRC in Copenhagen in November, with the financial assistance of the Danish government.

In its capacity as guardian and promoter of international humanitarian law, the ICRC took part in a number of events focusing on that body of law. These included the 14th Congress of the International Society for Military Law and Law of War, the theme of which was the investigation and repression of violations of the law of armed conflict, and the 15th annual course on international humanitarian law organized in Warsaw jointly by the ICRC and the Polish Red Cross.⁶ A conference on the implementation of humanitarian law was held by the British Department for International Development in October, affording the ICRC the opportunity to speak about the challenges it faces in the area of preventive action.

In October the ICRC President made an official visit to Spain, where he was received by the country's King and Queen. During his visit, the President met the Prime Minister, the President of the Spanish Parliament and several leading government figures. He also held extensive discussions with senior representatives of the Spanish Red Cross.

Spain

The following month Spain hosted the Council of Delegates. The meetings, which took place in Seville, culminated in the adoption of a new Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.⁷

On 19 July the IRA* ended 18 months of violence by announcing a new ceasefire, which was respected by all the parties concerned save two small radical paramilitary groups. Following the launch of all-party talks on 17 September, the chances of a negotiated political settlement for Northern Ireland looked better than at any other time in the previous 30 years.

United Kingdom

Between 10 and 14 November two ICRC delegates, accompanied by a doctor, carried out an interim visit to prisoners in Belfast's Maze prison. The team evaluated the conditions of detention of prisoners being held in relation to the events in Northern Ireland and later discussed its findings with the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

⁵ See *External Resources*, p. 330.

⁶ See *Promotion and development of international humanitarian law*, p. 301.

⁷ See *ICRC cooperation within the Movement*, pp. 307-309.

* IRA: Irish Republican Army

ALBANIA

Violence broke out in Albania at the end of February, following six weeks of unrest triggered by the collapse of pyramid investment schemes in which thousands of people lost their life-savings. With the breakdown of law and order, chaos quickly engulfed the south and then spread to other areas of the country. Large quantities of weapons were seized by civilians from abandoned military depots, resulting in a number of deaths and a steady stream of wounded to the country's hospitals. On 2 March the government declared a state of emergency and imposed a night-time curfew.

Two days later an ICRC delegate met a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who welcomed the organization's offer of services. The following week, the ICRC Delegate General for Western and Central Europe and the Balkans met the Deputy Minister of Defence in Tirana to present the ICRC's plans for assistance.

Meetings were also held with the Albanian President and senior representatives of the National Society. On 12 March the ICRC set up a fully operational delegation in the capital and a sub-delegation in the southern town of Gjirokaster.

Surveys carried out by the ICRC, together with the Albanian Red Cross, showed that social-welfare institutions and medical facilities were in need of urgent assistance. These establishments had previously depended on government supplies, which could no longer reach them or had already been looted. Moreover, an estimated 10 per cent of the population had become vulnerable as a result of the disruption of State and commercial supply lines. The ICRC therefore requested that aid efforts by members of the international community should focus on the reestablishment of vital State structures and restoration of law and order, rather than provision of large-scale humanitarian assistance.

These findings, coupled with the steady deterioration of conditions in the country, prompted the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to launch an integrated appeal. The assistance operation focused on six activities: provision of food and medical supplies to social-welfare



✚ ICRC delegation

✚ ICRC sub-delegation

ICRC / AR. 12.97

collapse of law and order

joint assistance programme

and health-care establishments, water-supply and sanitation activities, assistance to vulnerable groups, support for the National Society, visits to detainees and promotion of humanitarian principles and Red Cross activities.

The distribution of supplies to needy establishments began almost immediately. However, the provision of relief to individuals requiring aid in various parts of the country was delayed until 26 May, owing to the lack of security on the country's roads.

Help was at hand from the international community with the arrival on 15 April of the first troops assigned to the Italian-led multinational protection force, whose role was to facilitate the safe and prompt delivery of humanitarian assistance by helping to create a secure environment for the work of international organizations.

Between March and October joint ICRC and Albanian Red Cross teams distributed family parcels (each containing supplementary food rations and hygiene articles for a family of five for one month) to the most vulnerable groups, provided social-welfare institutions and health-care establishments with basic medical supplies and food, and furnished chemicals and equipment to the Albanian water authority. Upon completion of the joint programme in October, the ICRC handed over 185 tonnes of food to the National Society, for use during the harsh winter months.

In May the ICRC and the National Society also initiated a weapons-awareness campaign aimed at making the population, particularly young people, aware of the dangers of handling firearms and explosives.

The cooperation of the Albanian Red Cross, with its country-wide network of local branches, was vital to the efficient implementation of the relief programme. In addition to its usual tasks, the Federation endeavoured to help the National Society to meet the new demands placed on it by boosting its logistical means (trucks, telecommunications equipment) and increasing the number of its offices around the country. This was especially necessary as many warehouses and premises had been looted and burned down.

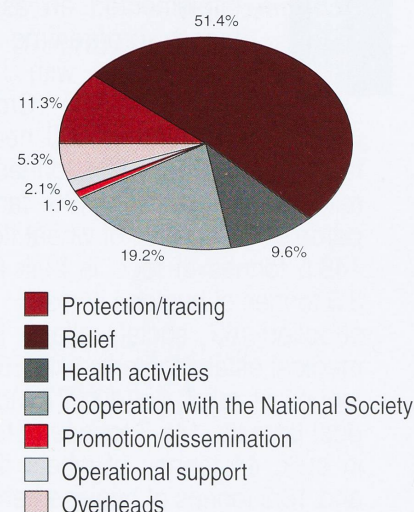
The security situation started to improve gradually after the OSCE-monitored general election of 29 June led to a resounding victory for the opposition Socialist Party. The new government immediately began efforts to restore law and order, while undertaking negotiations with international monetary institutions to obtain financial assistance for restructuring. In September the ICRC Vice-President visited Albania to discuss the organization's current and future activities and to announce the successful conclusion of both the relief programme and the integrated action with the Federation.

In October, following sustained contacts with the Attorney-General and the Ministers of Justice and of the Interior, the delegation in Tirana concluded a general agreement with the authorities allowing the ICRC to visit all detainees held

ALBANIA

Total expenditure in 1997:

Sfr 11,737,131



visits to detainees

under the jurisdiction of the two Ministries.⁸ The first series of visits began on 19 November and was conducted by a team comprising an ICRC delegate, a doctor and an interpreter.

In early November the Albanian President was received in Geneva by the ICRC President, who extended his thanks to the country's authorities for their support of the ICRC action during the crisis. For his part, the Albanian leader expressed his gratitude for the work of the ICRC and the Movement as a whole in his country.

⁸ The ICRC had previously visited detainees in Albania in 1991 and 1992.

ALBANIA

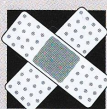
IN 1997 THE ICRC:



– following an agreement concluded with the authorities in October, assessed the conditions of detention and treatment of detainees in 3 prisons, 1 prison hospital and 22 police stations;



- implemented an assistance programme in conjunction with the Albanian Red Cross, under which some 75,000 needy families received 4,594 tonnes of relief items, i.e. 203,195 family parcels, 490 tonnes of wheat flour, 148.5 tonnes of food in bulk and 3.3 tonnes of hygiene items;
- supplied 63 social-welfare and medical establishments with 367.5 tonnes of relief, i.e. 13,077 individual parcels, 145.7 tonnes of food in bulk, 44 tonnes of wheat flour and 18.3 tonnes of hygiene items;



– distributed 50 tonnes of basic medical and surgical supplies to 63 social-welfare institutions and health-care facilities throughout the country;



– provided water boards with 74 tonnes of chlorine and 50 chlorine-testing kits, sufficient to ensure a clean and safe water supply over the hot summer months;



– worked with the permanent staff of the Albanian Red Cross' 36 branches to plan relief and medical distributions, by compiling lists of beneficiaries, selecting warehouses, organizing volunteers and assessing security risks;

– helped the National Society raise its profile by providing press releases, fact sheets and other information material in Albanian;



– ran a weapons-awareness campaign during which a 30-second radio spot and a TV advertisement were aired regularly by local and national broadcasters between May and August, distributed leaflets on the risks associated with the misuse of firearms and translated the ICRC video *Danger: Mines* into Albanian for use in presentations to school-children;

– arranged for 4 programmes on Red Cross activities and humanitarian principles to be aired on Radio Tirana.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

During the second year after the signing of the Dayton agreement Bosnia and Herzegovina was engaged in a complex process of transition, endeavouring to lay the foundations for peaceful coexistence in the aftermath of war. The international community remained a central player in this process, to which it devoted considerable energy and resources in a bid to ward off future violence and ensure lasting stability in the region. Despite this commitment and a number of tangible achievements, implementation of the main points of the agreement was slower and more painful than anticipated.

Overall, 1997 witnessed modest yet encouraging progress in the establishment or consolidation of joint political and economic institutions. At the national level, meetings were held between the country's three Presidents, and efforts to set up the Council of Ministers, the Parliament, the Central Bank and the Constitutional Court came to a successful conclusion. Undeniable though these advances were, key issues such as the search for those unaccounted for, the return of refugees and displaced persons, the removal of landmines and cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia on the arrest and prosecution of war criminals remained contentious.

Hardship and stagnation were particularly evident in the economic and social sectors. The decision by the international donor community to make further aid for reconstruction conditional upon compliance with the peace agreement, together with resistance by some parties to the adoption of basic economic legislation and accords led to a considerable imbalance in the level of assistance received by the two entities. In certain parts of the Republika Srpska, unemployment rates ran as high as 80 per cent. The fact that many displaced persons were living in areas where they were not yet active or employable (i.e. people who had spent all their lives in the countryside now residing in towns, and vice versa) only exacer-



progress at the national level

conditional aid for reconstruction

*efforts to elucidate the
fate of missing persons*

bated the problem. As a result, a significant percentage of the population continued to depend on some form of assistance.

The complexity of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the desire of the international community to make it work was reflected in the number of conferences and meetings held on every aspect of the problem and at every level. Whenever appropriate, the ICRC attended these fora, either as a participant or an observer. The Third Pledging Conference for International Help to Bosnia and Herzegovina was held in Brussels on 23 and 24 July after having been postponed several times owing to the lack of progress by the authorities in complying with the provisions of the peace agreement. At the conference, representatives from 48 nations and 30 international organizations promised their continued support for reconstruction in the country. The ICRC emphasized the fact that humanitarian assistance was still required and must not be made conditional upon any political process.

This concern was reiterated by the ICRC President at the third meeting of the PIC,* held in Bonn in December and attended by representatives of 51 countries and 21 international organizations. Just prior to the meeting, the aim of which was to review progress in the implementation of the peace agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina's three Presidents reached agreement on a common passport, a new citizenship law and the functioning of the Council of Ministers.

The fate of those unaccounted for remained one of the most important issues still to be resolved and the deep frustration felt by the families of these people at the absence of information and progress acted as a destabilizing force at the very heart of the drive to bring about reconciliation.

The authorities' reduced commitment to the tracing process and the increased politicization of the issue led to the adjournment of further sessions of the Working Group on Missing Persons. Following the last session on 30 January, the ICRC sought to develop a more constructive approach for future meetings by holding consultations with all the parties and families concerned. The conclusions drawn from these contacts were that the parties must be fully committed to the process, the ICRC should take on a more prominent role in representing the interests of the families and the families themselves should become more involved in the process.

As a result, a first meeting of associations of families of missing persons was held in Sarajevo on 29 and 30 April. Representatives of 10 associations from all over the country took part in the meeting, during which ICRC activities were presented and the needs of the families more clearly defined. A second meeting with

* PIC: Peace Implementation Council, comprising the five members of the Contact Group (United States, United Kingdom, Russia, Germany and France), the European Union and other interested States and international organizations

the associations was held in November, focusing on the issues of exhumation, identification of mortal remains and decent reburial.

The Working Group itself was reconvened in Geneva, where it held its 11th session in July. A member of the OHR* attended on behalf of the international community, which had already been represented at previous meetings, and spokesmen for the families and local Red Cross tracing services were given observer status. During the 12th session, held in November, a plan of action on the legal issues facing the families of missing persons was discussed, among other matters.

In addition, the fourth session of the ICMP* took place on 19 and 20 June. The meeting, which began in Zagreb before moving on to Vukovar and Belgrade, was attended by the ICRC President, who is a member of the Commission, and by representatives of the associations of families and of the governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The exhumation process was relaunched towards the end of the year under OHR coordination with the handing over of death certificates by the authorities of the two entities. At the local level, the ICRC provided those responsible for carrying out exhumations with basic items to facilitate their work.

exhumation process

Throughout the year the ICRC continued to collect tracing requests from families and other information pertaining to the search for missing persons. The third updated edition of a catalogue of names and other data on those unaccounted for was published in March and copies were distributed throughout the country and to the National Societies of States hosting refugees.⁹ After the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia had granted permission for its files to be consulted for relevant information on missing persons, a year-long project began in June in The Hague with the ICRC financing the cost of a staff of 32 to sift through some 60,000 pages of reports gathered by Tribunal investigators.

Also in The Hague, an ICRC team carried out three visits – in January, June and November – to persons held by the Tribunal in order to assess their physical and psychological conditions of detention. After each visit, the ICRC submitted a report on its findings to the President of the Tribunal. In addition, the organization financed visits to detainees by family members unable to pay their own travel costs.

visits to detainees

Regular visits were conducted to persons detained in Bosnia and Herzegovina in connection with the former conflict, as well as to a number of common-law detainees, who required special attention owing to their minority status. During the visits delegates assessed conditions of detention and treatment and provided

⁹ See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 174.

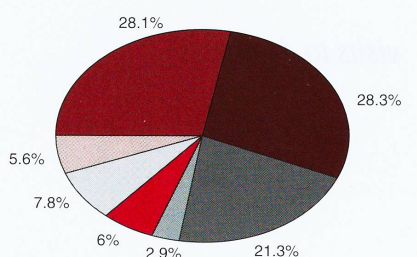
* OHR: Office of the High Representative appointed to oversee the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton agreement

* ICMP: International Commission for Missing Persons. See the ICRC's 1996 *Annual Report*, p. 176.

*protection and assistance
for civilians*

THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Total expenditure in 1997:
Sfr 57,822,500



- Protection/tracing
- Relief
- Health activities
- Cooperation with the National Societies
- Promotion/dissemination
- Operational support
- Overheads

assistance in the form of clothing and hygiene items, where necessary. Together with other organizations concerned, the ICRC endeavoured to ensure that the detainees' basic legal rights were respected.

In August two detainees, who had been on the ICRC's list of missing persons since September 1995, were located in a prison in Zenica following an unannounced visit by the IPTF.* The men, both Serbs, were immediately released and reunited with their families under ICRC auspices in Banja Luka on 20 August. The ICRC also facilitated the transfer to Banja Luka of the last nine Bosnian Serb prisoners of war released by the Croatian authorities.

Since a number of organizations, such as the IPTF, were involved in activities to protect civilians from various forms of harassment, the ICRC largely confined its work in this domain to keeping in touch with these organizations and maintaining its information network. It continued to collect and deliver Red Cross messages, in cooperation with the local Red Cross, particularly between people living on either side of the Inter-Entity Boundary Line. Family reunifications for vulnerable individuals, many of them elderly and in need of assistance to reach relatives living in another entity, were also organized under ICRC auspices.

The ICRC carried out regular assessments of its health-related and food assistance programmes in the country so as to be able to adapt its approach to the changing post-conflict situation, taking into account the reforms being planned or carried out in the medical and social sectors. The results showed that, since most reconstruction projects were geared to long-term development, continued ICRC assistance was necessary in order to meet immediate needs and keep existing structures going while reforms were taking effect.

Progress was particularly slow in the health sector owing to the failure on the part of the Ministries of Health of both entities to adopt relevant legislation, and to the fact that so few people could afford to pay for their own treatment. Medical establishments therefore remained dependent on external resources to provide basic services and the ICRC continued as the main supplier of drugs and other essential items for a wide range of facilities (hospitals, clinics, health posts and pharmacies) that were not receiving regular assistance from other sources. The organization also lent its support to homes for the elderly, psychiatric hospitals and other medical and social-welfare establishments on an ad hoc basis.

In April the ICRC carried out a survey to determine the impact of discontinuing such supplies. It found that severe shortages would have occurred in some cases, with up to 60 per cent of prescriptions unable to be filled. The organization was nevertheless able to cease distributions in parts of the Republika Srpska owing to the increasing number of humanitarian organizations operating in the entity.

* IPTF: United Nations International Police Task Force

Water-supply systems and sanitation facilities improved in 1997, enabling the ICRC to significantly scale down its programmes by the year's end. During the period under review, the emphasis gradually shifted from emergency repairs to maintenance work. While continuing to implement a "quick response" strategy for dealing with immediate problems, water and sanitation engineers provided local technicians with general advice, trained them to detect leaks and supplied them with basic equipment (spare parts, tools) and chemicals to ensure a sufficient amount of clean drinking water. Health centres, schools and other social-welfare institutions were also provided with equipment and chemicals.

water and sanitation

In addition, the ICRC supported various rehabilitation projects being carried out in the social, health and sanitation sectors by eight National Red Cross Societies.

The ICRC redefined its concept of vulnerability in the transition period, adopting a two-pronged approach aimed at assisting both individual beneficiaries and community structures providing services to those in need. In this regard, particular importance was placed on strengthening cooperation with the local Red Cross.

While developing this approach the ICRC continued to respond to the needs already identified. The second phase of its 1996/97 winter programme designed to provide food, clothing and heating materials to vulnerable individuals ended in January. The following month a spring seed programme was launched, and was eventually extended to cover four times the number of families originally planned when support pledged by other organizations failed to materialize. Community kitchens and food distribution programmes run by various National Societies under the ICRC's overall responsibility came to the aid of other needy people. The 1997/98 winter programme was carried out with the assistance of the local Red Cross and items were purchased on the spot whenever possible in order to stimulate local production.

In a further effort to boost the local Red Cross capacity to respond to needs at the community level, a number of small income-generating projects were initiated in both entities. Rehabilitation of Red Cross offices and warehouses began in April, in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Also with the International Federation, the ICRC continued to work towards the recognition of a Red Cross Society for the country as a whole. Some progress was made in October when a single Red Cross was set up in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Subsequently, the Secretaries General of the Red Cross organizations of both entities attended, as observers, the Council of Delegates held in Seville in November.¹⁰

*working with the local
Red Cross*

¹⁰ See *Western and Central Europe*, p. 181, and *ICRC cooperation within the Movement*, pp. 307-309.

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- paid regular visits to 110 detainees held in 15 places of detention;
- carried out 3 visits to detainees held in The Hague under the responsibility of ICTFY and financed 10 visits by relatives who did not have the means to pay for their own way;



- brought to a total of 19,697 the number of tracing requests gathered since the beginning of the process from families of those still unaccounted for;
- published a third edition of a catalogue containing 17,300 names of missing persons and distributed 11,000 copies to all members of the Red Cross network involved in the tracing process;
- provided information on the fate of 1,409 missing persons, with approximately two-thirds of the answers supplied by the former warring parties during the Working Group sessions and a further third obtained as a result of the organization's intensive tracing methods;
- delivered 12,131 Red Cross messages;
- reunited 39 individuals with their families;



- maintained contact with other organizations monitoring the situation of minorities and followed up alleged incidents of harassment with the authorities;



- implemented the second phase of the 1996/97 winter programme, under which 47,000 beneficiaries not assisted by other organizations received warm clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, wheat flour, food parcels and hygiene items;
- carried out the first phase of the 1997/98 winter programme to 57,000 beneficiaries, providing food to destitute families in urban areas and clothing and heating materials to vulnerable people in rural and mountainous regions;
- implemented a winter-wheat seed programme in the Banja Luka and Doboï areas for 14,195 families owning some land but lacking the means to farm it (1,278 tonnes of wheat seed and 2,129 tonnes of fertilizer were provided);
- carried out a spring seed programme supplying 180,000 families in mountainous regions with 1,373 tonnes of potato seed and 169,500 vegetable seed kits;
- provided emergency assistance for some 30,000 needy people consisting of individual parcels, wheat flour, hygiene items, kitchen sets, plastic sheeting, blankets and tools;
- facilitated bilateral projects carried out by the National Societies of Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the United States to provide assistance to the needy through

food distributions, community kitchens and school snack programmes;



- regularly provided 26 hospitals and 43 other medical facilities with surgical supplies and essential drugs for chronic diseases;
- through projects delegated to the Belgian, Japanese and Norwegian National Societies, rehabilitated hospitals in Prijedor and Brcko;
- facilitated bilateral projects carried out by the National Societies of Belgium, Italy, Norway and Spain to rehabilitate hospital buildings and ambulance services, train medical staff and provide psycho-social support;



- carried out emergency repairs and maintenance work on the water-supply systems, including pumping equipment, of 45 municipal water boards;
- provided 102 municipal/local water boards, 39 medical facilities and 43 schools with essential plumbing and electrical repair equipment, and chemicals and disinfectants for the prevention of water-borne diseases;
- completed its programme to unblock clogged sewage systems in hospitals and public buildings in both entities, using 2 sewage-treatment trucks;

- provided water from tanker trucks to the population in areas surrounding Tuzla and Trebinje where the supply had been temporarily cut off;
- gave two-day training workshops in leak detection for the staff of 12 water boards and provided equipment for the task;
- through a project delegated to the German Red Cross, rehabilitated the Jahorina water-supply line which serves areas of Sarajevo and numerous villages in the Republika Srpska;
- facilitated a bilateral project implemented by the Swedish Red Cross to improve sewage systems in Tuzla and Zivinice;



- provided financial and material support for 16 summer camps organized by the local Red Cross in 4 places (3 in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 1 in the Republika Srpska) for a total of 1,440 children from among the most vulnerable sectors of the population;
- supported local Red Cross tracing, relief and dissemination activities by providing training and office supplies;
- in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, carried out major repairs to Red Cross offices and warehouses in both entities;

- set up a number of community-based projects in conjunction with the local Red Cross to provide assistance to vulnerable people while simultaneously creating employment and stimulating the local economy;



- with the support of the Norwegian Red Cross trained 192 volunteer teachers in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 132 in the Republika Srpska as part of a programme to promote fundamental humanitarian values;



- completed a mine-awareness curriculum for primary schools in cooperation with the Ministries of Education in both entities and held introductory seminars on the subject for teachers and school directors;
- launched a data-gathering programme on the impact of mines, which is being implemented by 11 ICRC mine-awareness officers, 2 ICRC field officers and 118 Red Cross volunteers trained as mine-awareness instructors;
- held 7 training workshops in mine awareness for 170 Red Cross volunteers;
- organized a nationwide drawing and essay competition for schoolchildren on the theme of mine awareness, attracting over 1,000

entries (the best were displayed in Ottawa at the conference held to sign an international treaty banning the use of anti-personnel mines).

mine awareness

The ICRC's mine-awareness efforts gained momentum throughout the country in 1997, with more and more local Red Cross volunteers being trained as instructors. Information about the dangers of landmines was spread by ICRC mine-awareness officers, with the help of local Red Cross volunteers, through media campaigns, school activities and community presentations.

In order to improve coordination and identify vulnerable groups, a data-gathering programme was set up as a tool for understanding the impact of mines on communities. The programme, which became a model of its kind, comprised two activities: general research on the human, social and economic effects of mines, and a study on mine accidents. Its findings were also used to help define the ICRC's approach to the landmine problem in other parts of the world.

Another lasting consequence of the hostilities, namely pervasive feelings of mistrust and lack of understanding, was addressed by the ICRC through a programme to promote fundamental humanitarian values. The programme focused on training teachers to motivate young people to join the Red Cross and become involved in community-based activities. Teacher-training workshops emphasized team spirit and awareness of Red Cross principles, such as respect for fellow human beings, regardless of ethnic origin.

Significant progress was made in spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law among the armed forces. Contacts with the military were strengthened and the number of courses held on the law of armed conflict was increased. In addition, a training agreement for all divisions was concluded with the Commander-in-Chief of the Bosnian Serb Army.

CROATIA

The process of returning the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium to Croatian control, which went ahead in accordance with the provisions of the letter of intent addressed by the Croatian government to the United Nations Security Council in January, was a major focus of both national and international attention. Following nationwide local elections in April, joint political and administrative structures for the region were set up by the Croatian authorities together with the elected representatives of the Serb minority. The process took place under the supervision of UNTAES,* whose mandate was extended by two six-month terms to 15 January 1998, the completion date for reintegration.

The normalization of relations between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia proceeded throughout the year, leading in September to the signing of six agreements on issues such as cross-border traffic, social welfare and a more flexible border regime between Eastern Slavonia and Yugoslavia.

Despite achievements at the political level, security conditions remained precarious for many people, particularly in Eastern Slavonia and the former UN Sectors. Although the mass exodus feared by some in the wake of the reintegration of Eastern Slavonia did not occur, housing shortages and the issue of displaced persons continued to give cause for concern. In February the ICRC submitted to the Croatian authorities a report on the situation of the population remaining in the former Sectors North and South. In response to a number of violent incidents in May, involving Croatian refugees returning to the former Sectors and local Serb residents, the ICRC provided assistance to the victims and made representations to the authorities to draw their attention to the situation. Throughout the year, six ICRC mobile teams based in the towns of Knin and



*reintegration of
Eastern Slavonia*

* UNTAES: United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium

*assistance to
vulnerable people*

Vojnic carried out daily visits to remote villages scattered across the region so as to assess the living conditions of elderly and isolated individuals.

Together with a number of National Societies, the ICRC assisted vulnerable people in Eastern Slavonia and the former Sectors by distributing food and other items, implementing a spring seed programme and running community kitchens. Emergency repairs to water-supply systems, rehabilitation projects and the provi-

CROATIA

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- monitored the living conditions and treatment of some 115 persons held in 19 places of detention in connection with the conflict or for security-related offences;
- oversaw the release of 60 detainees previously held by the Croatian authorities, including 18 Bosnian Serb prisoners of war, and helped 12 detainees to return to their areas of origin;
- facilitated visits by 65 relatives to 34 detainees held in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;



- collected a total of 896 tracing requests from the families of those who went missing as a result of the 1995 military operations in the former UN Sectors, submitted them to the relevant authorities and maintained contact with the latter, and provided answers to 66 cases;

- under the joint ICRC/UNHCR family reunification programme enabled 83 persons to leave the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Eastern Slavonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to join their relatives who had remained in Croatia;
- reunited 17 families separated by the former front lines;
- delivered 6,446 Red Cross messages;



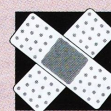
- carried out regular visits to some 600 villages scattered throughout the former UN Sectors North, South and West to check on the living conditions and well-being of the civilian population in general and some 10,000 elderly Serbs in particular, making representations on their behalf to the authorities, when necessary;



- distributed food and other essential items on a monthly basis to some 30,000 displaced

persons and refugees in Eastern Slavonia and the former UN Sectors;

- implemented a spring seed programme for 20,000 beneficiaries in Eastern Slavonia, providing them with 20,000 vegetable seed kits, 100 tonnes of potato seed and 100 tonnes of fertilizer;
- facilitated bilateral projects carried out by the German Red Cross to provide snacks to 7,854 children in 55 schools in Tenja and Tordinci, and to supply daily hot meals through community kitchens;
- supported ICRC assistance programmes for vulnerable people in Bosnia and Herzegovina via the relief logistics centre in Zagreb;



- through a project delegated to the Belgian Red Cross, supplied essential drugs for chronic diseases and surgical supplies to 6 health-care facilities in Eastern Slavonia;

sion of chemicals and equipment to municipal water boards ensured that basic standards of hygiene and sanitation were being met. Essential drugs and surgical supplies continued to be furnished to medical facilities in Eastern Slavonia until the Croatian Ministry of Health was able to take over responsibility for the region again.

- assisted the hospital in Vukovar by delivering daily hot meals to some 200 patients between June and September, when the health authority was able to take over;



- carried out emergency repairs to water-supply systems and throughout Eastern Slavonia and provided all 7 municipal water boards and 10 small villages with enough spare parts, tools and chemicals to enable them to ensure a continuous supply of drinking water;
- delivered an average of 20,000 litres of water a day to areas experiencing a temporary cut in their supply;
- completed a project to rehabilitate the sewage system at the Beli Manastir school complex in Eastern Slavonia, attended by 1,200 schoolchildren;



- organized 12 youth leadership workshops attended by 30 secondary school pupils and teachers;

- produced 4 editions (10,000 copies) of the ICRC/Croatian Red Cross newsletter, describing the activities of various youth organizations in Croatia;
- provided financial and logistical support to the Croatian Red Cross for 2 international summer camps attended by 160 young people from all over Croatia and the rest of Europe;
- continued to support first-aid teams in the Eastern Slavonia and Srem/Baranja regions, and provided 8 local Red Cross branches with radio equipment to improve their emergency preparedness;



- held a course in the law of armed conflict in February for some 20 army officers, followed by a course in October for 18 military instructors from all 3 branches of the armed forces (army, navy and air force);



- conducted 2,688 seminars on mine awareness for 13,000 adults and 46,000 children in various towns in Eastern Slavonia and other mine-contaminated areas;
- launched a new media campaign in February and held 5 press conferences to spread the message about the danger of mines;
- trained 85 local Red Cross volunteers as mine-awareness instructors and produced a video documentary on mine awareness to be used by them in their work;
- helped train 4 instructors from the UN Mine Action Centre to implement an awareness programme in centres for displaced persons and refugees;
- distributed mine-awareness information in the form of calendars, brochures and notebooks to the public and to its main contacts via instructors and local Red Cross branches.

restoring family links

Throughout the year the ICRC continued to monitor the conditions of detention and treatment of persons being held in connection with the conflict or for security-related offences. Those released were helped to return home by the ICRC, which oversaw transfer operations and organized transport. In April the organization set up a programme of family visits to detainees, under which people living in Eastern Slavonia were able to visit relatives held in Croatia. In addition, visits by family members living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to detainees in Croatia, and vice versa, took place for the first time.

For many people, the most painful legacy of the war was continuing uncertainty about the fate of relatives who had gone missing. The search for those unaccounted for since the 1991 conflict in Croatia and the 1995 military operations in the former UN Sectors remained a cause for deep concern. In 1997 the ICRC attended, as an observer, five sessions of the Croatian and Yugoslav governmental commissions for missing persons.

Under a joint ICRC/UNHCR family reunification programme, the ICRC helped elderly and other vulnerable people to get back together with relatives who had fled to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia following the military operations in the former Sectors. The ICRC also ran its own programme, reuniting individuals with their families in Croatia. In Eastern Slavonia the ICRC kept a watch on the changes brought about by the region's reintegration, maintaining contacts with the local population, the authorities and UNTAES.

mine awareness

To combat the ever-present threat posed by landmines in former front-line areas, the ICRC worked with the Croatian Red Cross to implement a community-based programme under which Red Cross volunteers received training in how to increase mine awareness in their own communities. In addition to organizing hundreds of seminars and presentations, in February the ICRC launched a media campaign on the issue of mines.

As part of the ICRC/Croatian Red Cross youth programme, a series of leadership training workshops took place for secondary-school teachers and students, and for the first time in Croatia, two international Red Cross summer camps were organized. The aim of the camps was to promote Red Cross principles and awareness of humanitarian issues through the exchange of ideas and discussion of relevant topics.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (Serbia, Montenegro)

The year under review was marked by growing political and economic instability in all regions, with occasional outbursts of violence giving serious cause for concern. The Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic, was voted in as Federal President in July but elections for both his successor in Serbia and a new leader in Montenegro were the subject of some controversy. The economic outlook remained grim and the population manifested its discontent by staging protests in Belgrade and Kosovo.

The ICRC focused its attention on Kosovo as demonstrations by the Albanian community over the state of the economy and the failure by the Serbian authorities to implement an agreement on the education system reached in September 1996 became increasingly violent. In January Serbian police carried out a series of arrests of Kosovo Albanians suspected of having committed acts to undermine State security. Following repeated contacts with and written representations to the Ministry of Justice in Belgrade, the ICRC was given access at the end of February to those arrested. However, a second round of visits was suspended owing to the authorities' refusal to allow the ICRC to speak in private with detainees not yet sentenced. Despite numerous contacts with the authorities and a meeting on the issue between the Serbian President and the ICRC President in Belgrade in June this remained the case until December, when a written representation to the Ministry of Justice resulted in permission being granted to the ICRC to visit the detainees whose sentences had been confirmed.

In the meantime, delegates kept up regular visits to other security detainees already sentenced. In addition, the ICRC reunited detainees released by the Croatian authorities with their families in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.



ICRC delegation



ICRC sub-delegation/office

ICRC / AR 12.97

Kosovo

IN 1997 THE ICRC:



- visited some 117 detainees held for reasons of State security in 14 places of detention;
- carried out one round of visits to 37 persons of Albanian origin held in 5 places of detention in Kosovo;
- reunited 12 detainees released by the Croatian authorities with their families in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;



- collected a total of 896 tracing requests from the families of those unaccounted for since the 1995 military operations in the former UN Sectors, submitted them to and maintained contact with the relevant authorities, and provided answers to 66 cases;
- reunited 41 people with their families in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;

- under a joint ICRC/UNHCR family reunification programme, helped 83 persons living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Eastern Slavonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina return to their relatives who had remained in Croatia;
- handled 2,501 Red Cross messages;



- helped the Yugoslav Red Cross open 5 dissemination centres by training volunteer staff and providing books and equipment;
- launched a 12-month project on the protection of and respect for the red cross emblem, instructing Yugoslav Red Cross volunteers in its proper use;
- assisted the Yugoslav Red Cross in organizing summer camps for

6,000 children, many of them orphaned refugees;



- held courses in humanitarian law for officers of the First Army in April, the Yugoslav navy in June and the Third Army in September;



- trained 37 mine-awareness instructors from 6 Red Cross branches and developed a small-scale mine-awareness programme for people working the land near the country's western borders.

The search for those unaccounted for since the 1991 conflict in Croatia and the 1995 military operations in the former UN Sectors remained a priority for the ICRC, which took part as an observer in five meetings of the Yugoslav and Croatian governmental commissions for missing persons. Relations between the two countries on a number of other issues continued to improve.¹¹

Under a joint ICRC/UNHCR family reunification programme, the ICRC helped people who had fled to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the military operations in the former Sectors to resume contact with and, in some cases, return to their relatives still in Croatia. The organization also maintained its own programme, reuniting mainly elderly people and other vulnerable individuals with their families in the Federal Republic.

The ICRC held various seminars and training workshops in humanitarian law for the Yugoslav armed forces. Working relations were formally established with SFOR headquarters and command posts. Together with the Yugoslav Red Cross, the ICRC trained an initial pool of mine-awareness instructors from Red Cross branches located in border areas. The ICRC also helped the National Society to open dissemination centres in five of the country's main cities.

¹¹ See *Croatia*, pp. 193-196.

TURKEY

As in previous years, the ICRC endeavoured to further discussions with the Turkish authorities on a number of humanitarian issues. At the end of March the Delegate General for Western and Central Europe and the Balkans travelled to Ankara, where he held talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the year, several meetings were also held with Turkey's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva. In each case, however, the Turkish authorities were unwilling to enter into substantial dialogue on whether or not Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions applied to the situation in the south-eastern part of the country. Consequently, the ICRC was unable to discuss potential activities for detainees or civilians affected by the situation in these areas.

On two occasions – in May/June and again in September/October – the Turkish army launched a major military operation in northern Iraq. The ICRC appealed to the Turkish military authorities and to all the parties involved to observe the basic rules of international humanitarian law, requesting immediate access to the area so as to be able to fulfil its mandate under the Geneva Conventions. The Turkish authorities turned down its request, arguing that the Fourth Geneva Convention did not apply.

Pursuant to the agreement concluded in 1996 with the Turkish military authorities, the ICRC was invited to hold a series of courses in the law of armed conflict. In March 60 army and navy officers attended three basic courses, while a training seminar was held for 43 military instructors. In addition, a special course in humanitarian law and human rights was given to 18 senior police officers.

BUDAPEST

Regional delegation

(Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia)

The ICRC's opening of a regional delegation to cover central and south-eastern Europe coincided with the move by many countries in this part of the world to switch to a market economy and become members of supranational institutions, such as NATO and the European Union. Some of these countries saw their efforts rewarded and others faced disappointment. Throughout the year the

new delegation strove to gain an understanding of how the rapid political and economic developments were affecting the more vulnerable sectors of society.

With the breakdown of law and order in Albania the fledgling delegation was confronted with an immediate crisis. It responded by coordinating the setting-up of a fully operational delegation.¹²

At the end of March the ICRC President attended the official opening of the regional delegation and met the Hungarian President and Prime Minister, both of whom expressed their willingness to support the delegation in all its activities.

Throughout the year the delegation worked to build up a broad network of government, media and National Society contacts with the aim of promoting knowledge of international humanitarian law and its incorporation into national legislation. Missions were carried out to the National Societies of all eight countries covered by the delegation, mainly to assess their needs and capabilities and to discuss potential areas of cooperation. During the visit to Bulgaria, which took place in January, meetings were held with the National Society to discuss the order of priority for responding to the needs created by the economic and political turmoil affecting the country.

In October, while visiting the Romanian capital Bucharest for the North Atlantic Assembly, the ICRC President and the regional delegate held a series of meetings with representatives of the government and of the Red Cross of Romania.

In order to develop and structure cooperation programmes with the tracing services of the region's National Societies, an assessment of the current tracing activities and potential needs of the Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak Red Cross Societies was carried out at the end of September.

Substantial progress was achieved in the drive to spread knowledge of humanitarian law among the region's armed forces. Existing training programmes continued to be implemented in Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, while activities were resumed in Poland and Romania after a break of almost six years. The first-ever course in the law of armed conflict to be held in Slovenia brought together 24 armed forces officers in October. The delegation also investigated the possibility of extending such activities to the police and security forces of Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and discussed plans for active cooperation with the armed forces of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

*promoting international
humanitarian law*

¹² See *Albania*, pp. 182-184.