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When conflict broke out in Kosovo, thousands of civilians took to the hills and forests to escape the fighting. Such makeshift shelters provide little protection from the harsh winters. The ICRC provided displaced people with blankets, warm clothes and stoves. By the end of the year, some 200,000 people had fled their homes.

ICRC/U. Meissner

Western and Central Europe and the Balkans

ICRC delegations:

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

ICRC regional delegation:

Budapest

Staff

ICRC expatriates: ¹	74
National Societies: ¹	21
Local employees: ²	592

Total expenditure	Sfr
	67,069,750

Expenditure breakdown

Protection/tracing:	16,580,372
Relief:	26,896,720
Health activities:	10,440,283
Cooperation with National Societies:	1,882,217
Promotion/dissemination:	4,001,095
Operational support:	3,725,559
Overheads:	3,543,504



ICRC / AR 12.98

WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE BALKANS

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1998.

Tension mounted again in the Balkans in 1998. Three years after the signing of the Dayton peace accord,³ hostilities in Kosovo, Serbia's southern province, threatened to embroil neighbouring Albania and Macedonia. From February onwards, the ethnic divide between Serbs and the numerically superior Kosovar Albanians brought the region to the brink of disaster. Clashes between the Serb armed forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army took a heavy toll in civilian lives and caused thousands to flee their homes.

During 11 months of violence, the international community struggled to find a diplomatic solution to the political quagmire in Kosovo. In an attempt to make reason prevail over nationalism, foreign ministers of the major Western powers and Russia urged Serbian and ethnic Albanian leaders to come to the bargaining table, while international monitors of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe reported on cease-fire violations and tried to stop isolated clashes from escalating into wider hostilities. In October, high-level negotiations led to a temporary lull in the fighting in Kosovo.

As in previous years, the Balkans remained the theatre of one of the ICRC's largest operations. In Albania and in neighbouring Montenegro, the major relief organizations provided humanitarian assistance for refugees flooding in from Kosovo and for displaced people. The ICRC, for its part, coordinated closely with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and with the Albanian and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies to distribute basic necessities and provide the refugees with medical care.

The ICRC adjusted its operational approach in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the course of the year. In order to deal with ever-increasing numbers of casualties, by September it had shifted emergency operations into high gear. The organization repeatedly reminded the parties of their obligation to spare the population. Delegates did their utmost to establish the whereabouts of Serbs allegedly abducted by the Kosovo Liberation Army and kept up their visits to persons detained by the Serbian authorities.

Bosnia-Herzegovina inched its way towards economic self-sufficiency and recovery from the wounds of war. Unemployment remained high in both entities, but aid from foreign donors paved the way for reconstruction of the country's basic infrastructure. While the international community concentrated its efforts on long-term rehabilitation projects, the ICRC's activities in the entities focused primarily on the lasting consequences of the conflict. Together with National Red Cross Societies, the ICRC continued to provide a safety net for the most vulnerable groups in the society and support for key social and medical structures.

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

The issue of missing persons remained a major obstacle to reconciliation efforts. The ICRC urged the international community to continue to help with exhumations and identification procedures and it encouraged local authorities to commit themselves more fully to the process. The ICRC itself took a comprehensive approach to the problems confronting the families of the missing by assisting them with legal and administrative formalities and, in conjunction with National Societies, arranging for psychological counselling in selected communities.

One sign of change in the Balkans was the full integration of Eastern Slavonia into Croatia. An international peace-keeping force stayed on in the region during the transition period, while the ICRC continued to monitor the situation both in Eastern Slavonia and in the former United Nations Sectors. As in the past, it concentrated on the protection of extremely vulnerable members of the civilian population, such as elderly Serbs living alone in outlying pockets of Eastern Slavonia.

cooperation with the
European Union and other
organizations

anti-personnel mines

International Criminal Court

Western Europe

Throughout the year ICRC representatives took part in various meetings and seminars aimed at strengthening international humanitarian law, alerting public opinion to the appalling damage caused by landmines and enlisting support for humanitarian operations, so as to be able to reach all those suffering from the effects of armed conflict and violence.

In June, the ICRC convened the second Humanitarian Forum in Wolfsberg, Switzerland. The main humanitarian agencies were represented, as were the major donor countries and the European Commission. Debate focused on the interdependence of humanitarian and political action, and how this functions in practice. In his concluding remarks, the ICRC President declared that greater attention should be paid to dissemination of the ethical values enshrined in human rights and international humanitarian law and to the need to develop and apply professional standards for humanitarian assistance.

anti-personnel mines

In September, the ICRC took part in a conference in Dublin, Ireland, to discuss the "Landmine Monitor" project set up to monitor the implementation of the Ottawa treaty.⁴ The ICRC was asked to contribute information to the project, to be run by a network of non-governmental organizations and researchers who will compile mine-related information.

In February, the President of the ICRC was received by the French President and Prime Minister in Paris. The French authorities reiterated their support for the ICRC's work, and the ICRC President commended France's contribution to the process aimed at securing a total ban on anti-personnel mines. During a return visit to ICRC headquarters in Geneva in March, the French Prime Minister announced France's intention to ratify Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions. By mid-year France had ratified the Ottawa treaty and had taken measures to destroy its entire stock of anti-personnel landmines.

International Criminal Court

In June the ICRC President made an official visit to Rome where he attended the Diplomatic Conference on the establishment of an International Criminal Court.⁵ During the opening plenary, the President stated that the establishment of an effective International Criminal Court was of particular importance to the ICRC as it would give greater weight to Article 1 common to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions whereby States undertake both to respect the provisions of the Conventions and to ensure respect for them.

⁴ See pp. 319-321.

⁵ See pp. 312-313.

During an official visit in February to the United Kingdom, which at the time held the Presidency of the European Union, the ICRC President welcomed the British government's decision to ratify the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.⁶ The ICRC President visited Vienna in May, prior to Austria's takeover of the EU presidency. In June, Mr Sommaruga was invited to address the European Union Political Committee in Brussels. He thanked the EU for its political and financial support and stressed the importance of closer cooperation between the EU and the ICRC. Also in June, an international conference was organized jointly by the European Community Humanitarian Office and the ICRC in Lisbon. The aim of the conference was to identify and discuss security issues in emergency situations.

As in the past, the ICRC pursued its efforts to establish closer links with political entities such as the OSCE.* This type of interaction should lead to greater complementarity in certain areas of common interest. In June, the President was invited to address the Permanent Council of the OSCE in Vienna, where he reiterated that many OSCE concerns were shared by the ICRC.

In April the ICRC took part in a meeting on post-conflict reconstruction organized by the World Bank in Paris. Among other topics, the meeting dealt with the link between politics and the prevention of conflicts, humanitarian aid and reconstruction and development. The ICRC shared its operational experiences concerning societies in transition, and expressed its willingness to foster its ties with the World Bank.

cooperation with the European Union and other organizations



Kosovar refugees in Albania
working with the
Society

⁶ See p. 324.

* OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

ALBANIA

The period under review was an eventful one for this southern Balkan republic. In February, the outbreak of violence in neighbouring Kosovo led to an influx of refugees into the Tropoje area in northern Albania. The country's structural economic problems worsened and violent crime was rife during much of the year. Despite the unsettled political outlook, in 1998 Albanians voted for a change in the Constitution and the newly appointed Prime Minister met the leader of the opposition to discuss both domestic problems and the repercussions of the turmoil in Kosovo.

The arrival of refugees from Kosovo prompted the major relief organizations to put into effect their contingency plans for humanitarian assistance, giving priority to medical care and food aid. With the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Albanian Red Cross in the northern Bajram Curri and Tropoje districts distrib-



Kosovar refugees in Albania

uted food and other emergency supplies to the newly arrived refugees, who were mostly women and children.

The ICRC, for its part, carried out emergency medical evacuations, provided Albania's medical facilities with direct support and helped restore family links. In June, a comprehensive assessment of medical needs was carried out by an ICRC doctor in the northern districts of Kukes, Krume and Tropoje. On his recommendation, medical kits (dressings, paediatric sets, injection and surgical material) were dispatched to the Tropoje district. When a spate of hostilities in Kosovo in mid-September brought a fresh wave of refugees, the ICRC responded by delivering surgical material for treatment of the war-wounded to refugee reception centres and to the university hospital in Tirana.

In 1998, some 26,000 people crossed the border from Kosovo into Albania. ICRC surveys showed that Albanian medical facilities did not have the means to cope with the situation on their own. The ICRC therefore launched an appeal for

funds to cover the immediate needs of medical facilities in areas with a heavy concentration of refugees, so as to ensure adequate treatment for the sick and wounded. The funds received were also used to provide basic training in war surgery for civilian and military surgeons in the country's main hospitals.

In addition to the problems stemming from the influx of refugees from Kosovo, in August Albania had to cope with civil unrest when thousands took to the streets in protest at the arrest of six officials from the Democratic Party. Two weeks later, the assassination of a Democratic Party leader and member of parliament triggered further disturbances in Tirana. The situation remained tense, since many weapons looted from depots during an earlier upheaval remained in circulation despite efforts by the Albanian government to recover them. These weapons posed a constant threat to the population, and civilians were often victims of incidents involving firearms and unexploded ordnance.

Throughout the year, the ICRC continued to coordinate closely with other relief organizations such as UNHCR and with the OSCE, as well as with the Albanian authorities, to keep humanitarian issues high on the agenda. Staff from the Ministry of Defence attended seminars on the law of armed conflict and on humanitarian principles. The ICRC also held discussions with the Ministries of Defence and of the Interior and with three military academies on the implementation of humanitarian law by the armed and security forces.

Within the police force, difficulty in recruiting professionals and a high staff turnover meant that knowledge of humanitarian law and its underlying principles was somewhat limited. To help remedy this, in May the ICRC held a three-day seminar in Tirana for 20 senior police officers of the Special Rapid Intervention Forces, which came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Order. Following a request by the Ministry for further assistance in this field, more seminars were scheduled.

Continued cooperation with the Albanian Red Cross in the area of dissemination remained a priority for the ICRC. A series of six television programmes focusing on the dangers associated with landmines and with the mishandling of weapons was produced in conjunction with the National Society. The entire series was aimed at schoolchildren and young people in general, who were encouraged to find conciliatory solutions to problems and to become involved in the community and the local Red Cross.

In April, 80 volunteers attended five seminars at the Red Cross Youth branches in Durres, Fier, Gjirokaster, Korçe and Shkoder. The aim of the seminars was to give the participants basic information on the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and on international humanitarian law so that they, in turn, could promote the principles of both in their own schools.

The ICRC, together with the Albanian Red Cross, set up a radio message service to enable refugees from Kosovo to contact family members from whom they

domestic woes

seminars for the police forces

working with the National Society

visits to detainees

had become separated because of the crisis in their country. This service allowed many families to inform their relatives of their whereabouts in Albania, and the names of missing persons were also broadcast. The traditional Red Cross message service continued to be available to refugee families. Following the arrival of several thousand refugees in September, the ICRC extended the message service to Shkoder.

From May onwards the ICRC, in accordance with its standard procedures, continued to visit prisons and police stations in Elbasan, Korce, Librazhd, Lushnje and Pogradec and to distribute basic hygiene items to detainees. The Tirana delegation received the necessary authorization and visited all those arrested in connection with the unrest of mid-September.

ALBANIA

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



– assessed the conditions of detention and treatment of 12 detainees held in prisons and police stations and provided small-scale material assistance for inmates;



– broadcast the names of some 3,300 refugees from Kosovo on the radio to inform relatives who had stayed behind of their whereabouts and state of health;



– distributed 133 medical kits to the main hospitals in northern Albania and to the Central Military Hospital in Tirana;



– organized seminars on international humanitarian law for Red Cross Youth branches, so that volunteers could then provide instruction to some 8,000 secondary school pupils aged between 10 and 14 years;



– gave 23 presentations on humanitarian principles, the Red Cross and mine awareness for 591 members of the armed and police forces, and for local authorities.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

In 1998 there were perceptible, albeit modest steps towards peace and reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Three years after the signing in Dayton of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, some degree of stability had returned to this war-ravaged region. The rattle of gunfire no longer threatened peace-keeping efforts in the country's two entities – the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. The mandate of the 30,000 strong NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) was extended indefinitely, a factor that contributed in no small measure to improved security and a brighter economic outlook. In both entities, economic indicators gave rise to cautious optimism, the first tentative efforts at reforms in the health, education and social sectors were initiated, and a nascent private sector emerged.

With the help of international donors, the two entities continued the dual transition from war to peace, and from a centrally planned to an open-market economy. Through the Priority Reconstruction Programme US\$ 5.1 billion was earmarked for reconstruction in both entities. Funds from this programme were disbursed for housing projects, for improvements in electricity and water supplies and for the installation of communication networks.

In January Republika Srpska elected a new government, made up of moderates. The incoming leadership stressed their willingness to cooperate with the international community, their commitment to the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, and the need to restore trade links between Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

While international donors have tended to focus on long-term reconstruction projects, the ICRC has emphasized that immediate humanitarian and social needs cannot be neglected. Working with National Red Cross Societies and in



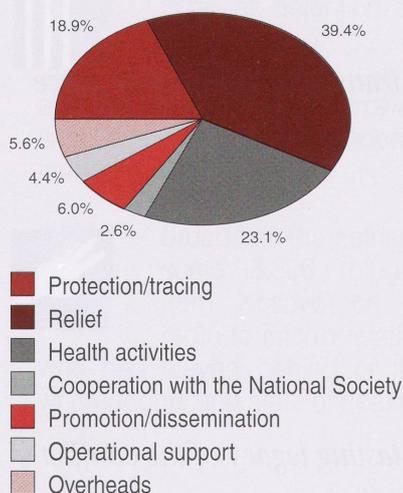
 ICRC delegation
  ICRC sub-delegation/office
 — Inter-Entity Boundary Line

transition from war to peace

lasting legacy of the conflict

*missing persons***BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

Total expenditure in 1998:
Sfr 36,913,462



partnership with their Federation, the ICRC's primary concern in Bosnia-Herzegovina was to address the lasting consequences of the conflict – the issue of missing persons, the threat posed by landmines, and the need to support key social and medical structures. The country's social welfare system, which provided adequate services before the war, underwent a major overhaul and was still largely dependent on external funding. The ICRC, with several National Societies, helped establish a safety net for the most needy groups in the society by providing support for health services and distributing food and other basic necessities.

The cornerstone of the ICRC's activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1998 was again the search for persons who were still unaccounted for. The issue of missing persons remained a major obstacle to reconciliation efforts, as uncertainty about the whereabouts of family members cast a shadow over intercommunity relations. Anxious families needed to know the truth so that they could come to terms with the pain of bereavement. The ICRC therefore continued to support efforts made in that area by the authorities and by international organizations.

Officials in both entities were encouraged to release all available information on persons whose fate was unknown and the ICRC continued to coordinate meetings of the Working Group on Missing Persons, a body set up in 1996 which included families of the missing, the local Red Cross, party officials and members of the international community. Throughout the year the ICRC adopted a comprehensive approach towards the families of the missing, helping them with legal and administrative formalities. It also supported projects for the burial of unidentified exhumed remains in temporary sites, and continued to urge the international community to contribute further to the exhumation and identification process.

A significant breakthrough in the search for missing persons came with the joint exhumation process, whereby each of the former warring factions was able to exhume its dead on territory controlled by the other entity. Under the coordination of the OHR,* exhumations resumed during the first week of March. Throughout the rest of the year the three communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina were able to analyse and autopsy mortal remains exhumed from sites outside their own entities. On a number of occasions, upon their request, the ICRC arranged for relatives of missing persons to travel to exhumation sites where they assisted in the location of burial grounds and the identification of remains.

Working in tandem with the local Red Cross, the ICRC helped provide answers to tracing requests from anxious families. Since the tracing process began in Bosnia-Herzegovina, almost two thousand families have received information on the fate of missing relatives as a result of the ICRC's tracing activities in the field, the efforts of the Working Group and exhumations performed by the authorities.

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

Some 18,500 families remain without news of their loved ones and ICRC staff have painstakingly delved through all possible sources of information, including the databases of the ICTY* in The Hague, in an effort to relieve their uncertainty. The ICRC continued a project begun the year before in The Hague when the organization financed costs for a staff of 32 people to sift through some 60,000 pages of reports gathered by Tribunal investigators.

The protection of vulnerable individuals among the civilian population, such as members of ethnic minorities, remained on the ICRC agenda in 1998. Although the number of detainees of concern to the ICRC decreased, visits to monitor conditions of detention continued and contacts were maintained with the authorities. The ICRC continued to coordinate with other organizations involved in the protection of civilians and detainees, particularly the IPTF.* Following reports from families of missing persons, visits were made to alleged places of detention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. No hidden detainees were found in any of the places visited, which included penitentiaries and one mine. The ICRC also helped a number of families to visit relatives detained in the other entity.

Throughout 1998 the ICRC continued to cooperate with the local Red Cross in meeting the most urgent humanitarian needs. In a bid to restore food security, early in the year it assisted in the implementation of the second phase of a winter relief programme, begun in 1997, under which food parcels, clothing and fuel were distributed to vulnerable families in both urban and rural areas. The beneficiaries were identified by local Red Cross branches and included elderly people living alone, single-parent families, and other groups without a source of income. The programme had an important secondary effect in that the ICRC took out contracts for the production or supply of goods with companies throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, thus supporting the local economy and promoting self-reliance.

Farming families in the Banja Luka and Doboj districts received winter wheat seed and fertilizer, and a seed programme was also carried out in the spring. Seed distribution began at the end of February in the southern regions of Trebinje and Mostar, and continued throughout March and April in the colder mountainous areas. As a result of ongoing efforts to improve seed multiplication techniques, most items were procured locally.

With the support of the Austrian and German Red Cross, the local Red Cross branches in the regions of Banja Luka, Doboj and Sarajevo ran a community kitchen programme throughout the year. The American Red Cross supplied local Red Cross branches in the areas of Bijeljina, Tuzla and Zenica with meals for the elderly.

visits to detainees continue

humanitarian needs

* ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

* IPTF: United Nations International Police Task Force

health care

A chronic shortage of funds continued to beset the health care system in both the Federation and Republika Srpska. Some progress was made, however, when the Ministries of Health in both entities prepared and accepted a basic health care package. The ICRC again acted as an intermediary between the authorities, international organizations and health and social institutions, and urged them to provide greater support for medical facilities. While reforms were being carried out in the medical sector, particularly in the field of primary health care, ICRC assistance was still necessary to meet immediate needs. The ICRC therefore maintained its support to hospitals and provided basic surgical supplies on a monthly basis.

The ICRC broadened its efforts to help the Ministries of Health in the set up of a primary health care system. After identifying domains where it could assist, it began negotiations with the Federation's Ministry of Health concerning the nursing component of the project, and indicated locations for the implementation of health schemes that would involve participation by local communities. Three regions were selected for involving community members in local health issues by initiating and supporting "community development for health" measures. The ICRC worked with the local Red Cross to implement this part of the primary health care project, thereby promoting self-reliance in health matters. To enable health-care professionals and decision-makers to upgrade their skills in the area of primary health care, the ICRC assisted selected training projects for doctors and paid for local doctors to attend courses on the subject in London and Dublin.

The ICRC cooperated with partner National Societies to assist social welfare institutions particularly in Republika Srpska. National Societies carried out repairs on the premises of some of these institutions. Emphasis then shifted to staff training.

Many thousands of people, particularly the families of the missing, were still suffering from the psychological effects of the war, and several National Societies organized counselling sessions in communities in the Tuzla region. Other people were having to cope with physical disabilities and during the year National Societies helped to ease their plight by providing individuals with medical treatment or by improving their living conditions. The National Societies of Austria, Belgium, Italy, Norway, Spain and Switzerland all had ongoing programmes in these fields.

In 1998 the ICRC substantially reduced its water and sanitation programme throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. As planned, it rehabilitated water pumping stations in four municipalities in the eastern part of Republika Srpska, a project that will eventually bring piped water to some 35,000 people. Under ICRC supervision, the inter-entity Jahorina pipeline was also rehabilitated, thus improving the water supply situation for up to ten per cent of Sarajevo's population. An agreement on the operation of the pipeline was signed in July by the municipalities of Pale and Sarajevo. This agreement, essential for the continued functioning of the

psychological and physical effects of the war

water and sanitation

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- visited 41 persons in 15 places of detention who were being held in connection with the conflict or who were considered to be in need of continued protection;
- financed visits to detainees held by the ICTY in The Hague for relatives who did not have the means to pay their own way;



- collected 394 and submitted 236 tracing requests to the Working Group on Missing Persons and was able to provide answers in 10 cases;
- published a fourth edition of a catalogue containing 19,934 names of missing persons and distributed 8,700 copies to all members of the Red Cross network involved in the tracing process;
- provided information on the fate of 752 missing persons, with 608 of the answers supplied by the former warring parties during the Working Group sessions and a further 144 obtained as a result of the ICRC's own tracing activity;
- collected 1,080 and distributed 884 Red Cross messages;
- reunited 4 individuals with their families;



- during the 1997/98 winter, provided a total of 60,000 families with food, hygiene parcels, winter clothing and blankets, stoves and fuel;

- in the spring, restored food security to 4,700 families by providing them with 1,920 tonnes of seed, together with 2,738 tonnes of fertilizer and tools;
- provided emergency food parcels for 10,000 needy people;
- facilitated bilateral projects carried out by the Austrian and German Red Cross Societies to provide hot meals for a total of 4,650 people per day;



- regularly provided 27 hospitals throughout the country with surgical supplies and essential drugs for chronic diseases;
- supplied 23 blood transfusion services with tests, serum and blood bags, and provided medical kits and needles on a monthly basis;
- facilitated bilateral programmes run by the Norwegian, Swiss and Italian Red Cross Societies in psychiatric hospitals, homes for the elderly and institutions for the mentally and physically disabled;



- rehabilitated a reservoir in Pale so that 1 million litres of water could be stored for the town's 25,000 inhabitants;
- facilitated a bilateral water quality control programme, carried out by the Swedish Red Cross;
- completed the cleaning of 3 wells in Bratunac, which resulted in a 75 per cent increase in the

amount of water available to the population of 18,300;



- assisted the tracing services of the Federation Red Cross and the Red Cross of Republika Srpska by paying for furniture, equipment and salaries;
- helped the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to organize a first-aid competition in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina;
- organized summer camps with the local Red Cross in Bosnia-Herzegovina for 3,513 children in different towns, with financial aid from the Norwegian Red Cross and the International Federation;



- gave 67 presentations on the law of armed conflict, the Red Cross and humanitarian principles for 2,766 members of the armed forces of both entities, NATO, SFOR, local authorities and Red Cross volunteers;
- held 14 training workshops for 334 teachers as part of a programme to promote Red Cross values.



- gave presentations on mine awareness for some 168,555 people;

*cooperation with National
Societies*

water supply system, was reached on the initiative of the ICRC and represented an important step towards better cooperation between the two municipalities.

The ICRC continued to coordinate closely with the International Federation and participating National Societies throughout the year, and established a closer partnership with the local Red Cross, thereby ensuring a coordinated approach by the Movement to needs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Under the auspices of the Inter-Entity Red Cross Contact Group, Red Cross officials from Republika Srpska and from the Federation began discussions on the formation and recognition of a single National Society for the entire country.

CROATIA

The year began with the reintegration of Eastern Slavonia into the Republic of Croatia. On 15 January, UNTAES* ended its two-year mission and officially relinquished control over the last portion of formerly Serb-held territory in Croatia. Worries about the consequences of the transfer prompted an exodus of local Serbs to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and other European countries. The Croatian authorities, for their part, anticipated an influx of some 80,000 people into Eastern Slavonia, but the actual number of returnees was fewer than predicted. Returning Croats and the local Serb community remained at odds over contentious issues such as the restitution of property. During the transitional period, a support group of 180 police observers and representatives of international and intergovernmental organizations stayed on until late September, after which the task of monitoring was handled by the OSCE.

Throughout the year, the thorny issue of displaced and refugee Serbs considerably hampered efforts to achieve national reconciliation. Some progress was made, however, when at the end of June the Croatian authorities adopted a Plan for the Return and Accommodation of Displaced Persons, Refugees and Exiled Persons. The international community welcomed this move, but made it clear that only successful implementation of the plan would enhance Croatia's chances of being accepted as a member of European institutions.

The gradual improvement of relations between Croatia and its neighbours also contributed to the recovery process. Negotiations resumed between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia on the issue of cross-border traffic, and the two countries signed an agreement on the use of the Croatian port of Ploce, whereby Bosnia-Herzegovina gained access to the Adriatic. Croatia was granted transit



⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation/office ▭ Eastern Slavonia, Baranja & Western Sirmium

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

rights through the Bosnian town of Neum. Zagreb also maintained contact with Republika Srpska, in particular on the question of the return of displaced persons and refugees, and submitted a proposal to the government in Belgrade in an attempt to finally resolve their dispute over the Prevlaka peninsula.

During 1998, the ICRC considerably scaled down its programmes for civilians in the former conflict zones, because of the gradual decline in the population's need for assistance. ICRC field offices in Knin, Vojnic and Beli Manastir ceased operations at the end of the year. The decision to reduce ICRC activities was based on the limitations of the organization's mandate, which relates more specifically to victims of conflict. While the ICRC felt that protection and assistance programmes in Croatia might be more appropriately covered by other governmental and non-governmental organizations, it nevertheless decided to maintain its activities on behalf of families of the missing. It also kept up its support for the Croatian Red Cross mine-awareness programme and the National Society's efforts to propagate Red Cross values, and continued to promote humanitarian law in military, academic and government circles.

protection of civilians

As in the past, the ICRC monitored the situation both in Eastern Slavonia and in the former UN Sectors, concentrating on the protection of the civilian population, particularly members of ethnic minorities. The return to the former Sectors North and South of destitute refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia caused some apprehension, since their arrival heightened the tension between the different communities. In Eastern Slavonia, the ICRC informed the local authorities of its concern about the security of vulnerable groups. ICRC delegates documented evidence of ethnically motivated attacks, mostly on returning Serbs and Croats who had recently resettled in the region.

The ICRC continued to assist returnees and vulnerable individuals, providing them with ad hoc support. In Eastern Slavonia, the ICRC food programme was gradually pared down over the year as the Croatian authorities assumed greater responsibilities, notably in the social welfare sector. From May onwards the relief effort in Eastern Slavonia was administered by the Federation and by the Croatian Red Cross.

visits to detainees

Delegates continued to visit places of detention, where they saw mainly persons detained in connection with the Croatian conflict or held for security-related offences. The ICRC made another small contribution towards normal relations with its programme, begun the year before, under which families from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia could visit detainees held in Croatia. A reciprocal arrangement allowed Croatian families to visit their relatives detained in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Another key concern remained the number of persons still unaccounted for after the 1991 conflict in Croatia and the 1995 military operations in the former UN Sectors. A thaw in relations between Croatia and the Federal Republic of

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- conducted 64 visits to 14 different places of detention, where a total of 75 persons were detained in connection with the conflict or for security-related offences;
- supervised the release of 3 detainees, 2 of whom were transferred to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under ICRC auspices;
- enabled 248 relatives to visit 139 detainees held in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;



- collected 766 and distributed 845 Red Cross messages on behalf of vulnerable individuals living in remote areas in Eastern Slavonia and the former Sectors, and reunited 27 people, including former detainees, with their families in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;



- carried out regular visits to remote villages in the former Sectors North and South to check on the living conditions and safety of the civilian population in general and several thousand elderly Serbs in particular; if any of them had been subjected to harassment, made representations on their behalf to the authorities;



- distributed 826 tonnes of food and other relief supplies to 15,000 vulnerable individuals in Eastern Slavonia and the former Sectors;
- implemented a spring seed programme for returnees in Eastern Slavonia, providing them with 28,370 vegetable seed kits;
- provided snacks and hot meals daily to 6,600 pupils at schools and kindergartens in Eastern Slavonia, through a project delegated to the German Red Cross;



- organized a seminar for 20 staff of the tracing services of Croatian Red Cross branches in Eastern Slavonia;
- held a 6-day workshop in Topusko, under the joint ICRC/Croatian Red Cross Youth Programme. The aim of the workshop, which brought together 20 Red Cross secretaries and youth leaders from all over Croatia, was to introduce dissemination techniques and new methods to be employed in future activities;



- gave 14 presentations on the law of armed conflict, the Red Cross and humanitarian principles for 236 members of the Croatian armed forces;



- gave 1,295 presentations on mine-awareness for 25,851 people;
- trained 23 new instructors to implement mine-awareness programmes.

Yugoslavia led to some progress in this area. The ICRC attended two sessions of the Croatian and Yugoslav government commissions for missing persons as an observer.

maintaining family links

In 1998 the ICRC kept up its programme to restore and maintain contact between family members separated by the conflict. The family reunification programme covered vulnerable individuals who, owing to their age, health or difficult living conditions, needed the assistance of relatives. Under the auspices of UNHCR, a number of vulnerable people who had remained in Croatia were able to rejoin relatives in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ICRC's role in this programme was to exchange Red Cross messages between vulnerable persons in Croatia and their relatives abroad.

mine awareness

Landmines and other unexploded ordnance remained a deadly threat in the former front-line areas. Together with the Croatian Red Cross, the ICRC conducted mine-awareness workshops and trained new instructors for mine-infested areas not previously covered. Representatives of the National Society, in conjunction with the ICRC, presented a mine-awareness programme to CROMAC, the government body responsible for all mine-related activities in Croatia.

*cooperation with the Croatian
Red Cross*

The ICRC once again cooperated closely with the National Society. Together with the tracing departments of Croatian Red Cross branches in Eastern Slavonia, the ICRC organized a seminar for staff members and volunteers.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (Serbia, Montenegro)

Violence erupted in yet another corner of the Balkans in 1998. Clashes between Serbian security forces and ethnic Albanians claimed hundreds of lives and prompted large-scale population movements, mostly within Kosovo proper but also to Montenegro, Yugoslavia's smaller republic, and Albania. Throughout the year, the six-nation Contact Group* prodded the Yugoslav President and ethnic Albanian leaders towards the negotiating table in an effort to resolve a crisis that brought NATO forces to the brink of military confrontation with Yugoslavia. Intense efforts on the part of the international community to broker a political settlement to the dispute resulted in an agreement reached on 13 October 1998. The United States special envoy to the region and the Yugoslav President, agreed that a 2,000-strong Verification Mission would be deployed in Kosovo under the aegis of the OSCE. Following this agreement, responsibility for the security of civilians rested firmly with the Serbian authorities, while the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), for its part, committed itself to respecting the cease-fire. By December, however, the situation had taken a turn for the worse, with violence against civilians escalating considerably.

As tension mounted in Kosovo, the ICRC sub-delegation there saw a change in the tenor of its activities. In accordance with the Seville Agreement⁷ the ICRC assumed the role of lead agency in directing and coordinating the international relief operation of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. By August 1998, the entire range of ICRC emergency operations was being



⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation/office ⊕ ICRC office

ICRC / AR 12.98

hostilities in Kosovo

⁷ See pp. 350-351.

* Contact Group: France, Germany, Italy, Russia, United Kingdom, United States.

implemented, and throughout the year the organization continued to expand the presence it had maintained in Kosovo since 1991. The number of delegates was increased in Pristina and in Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro. Relief teams travelled to places where the displaced were huddled in makeshift shelters, medical teams ferried the wounded to hospitals and a group of local surgeons was transported to remote areas to perform surgery on the spot. Tragedy struck when an ICRC vehicle with a medical team on board drove over a mine near Pristina. One local surgeon was killed and three other members of the group were injured. Delegates carried out field trips on an almost daily basis in order to gain as much information as possible about conditions in the towns and villages affected by the fighting. ICRC teams took these opportunities to strengthen their contacts with representatives of both sides, and provided them with information on the role and activities of the ICRC and the Federation in Kosovo.

protection and tracing services

The escalation of hostilities prompted the ICRC to increase its protection and tracing services for civilians, who were the main victims of the violence. Throughout the year, the organization maintained a dialogue with the Yugoslav authorities and representatives of the ethnic Albanian community with a view to finding the most appropriate humanitarian response to the crisis. It placed particular emphasis on ensuring the physical safety of ethnic Albanians and Serbs who were not or were no longer taking part in armed confrontation, particularly unarmed civilians and the wounded, and did everything in its power to establish the whereabouts of Serbs reportedly abducted by members of the UCK and of Albanians who had been arrested.

Following the October agreement between the OSCE and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, significant numbers of displaced people were able to return to their villages. However, the tense security situation meant that both ethnic Albanian and Serb communities lived in fear of harassment, abduction or arrest. Through its daily field trips throughout Kosovo, the ICRC kept a close watch on the situation and reported incidents that affected the security of the civilian population to the relevant authorities.

visits to detainees

As in the past, delegates continued their visits to persons detained on both sides. From October onwards, a new round of visits to detainees held by the Serbian authorities in connection with the hostilities was begun, the ICRC having received authorization to visit detention centres in Kosovo and elsewhere in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For the first time, the authorities agreed to a system of notification and subsequently informed the ICRC of the presence of a number of detainees. Delegates continued to work on a written agreement with the authorities to obtain full notification of and access to all those detained for State security reasons. The ICRC submitted a draft of the agreement to the government in October.

Although ICRC activities for most of the year focused primarily on emergency relief operations in Kosovo, the search for persons missing since the conflict between Croatia and Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained a top priority. Delegates visited a village and a mine in Serbia without giving the authorities advance notice, in order to follow up allegations of "hidden" Bosnian and Croatian detainees. However, no evidence was found to corroborate these allegations.

Between March and the end of the year, over 200,000 people were displaced by the fighting. The UCK made a failed attempt in July to capture the town of Orahovac. By that time it had rapidly expanded both its manpower and the areas under its control and claimed to hold sway over 30-40 per cent of the territory of Kosovo. The Serbian security forces repulsed the attack Orahovac and then carried out a massive operation across western and central Kosovo. By late August, the security forces had regained control over virtually the whole of Kosovo, including the Drenica region. These operations prompted large-scale population movements, and in early December several hit-and-run attacks on civilians in urban centres and the build-up of government troops gave rise to fears of renewed hostilities. Tensions finally escalated into full-scale clashes between the UCK and the security forces in late December, notably in the Podujevo area.

To respond to the needs of the displaced, the ICRC increased its logistic capacity and organized emergency stocks of food and other items in the region. Emergency relief supplies were distributed to groups of displaced people in Kosovo as they tried to find temporary shelter in the countryside or in villages affected by the fighting. In Podgorica, the ICRC strengthened its links with the Montenegrin branch of the Yugoslav Red Cross, to help it deal with the waves of people arriving in Montenegro. Several thousand people poured in from Kosovo every week, stretching the capacity of the local authorities, and in particular the Montenegro Red Cross, to the limit. By mid-August the number of internally displaced persons from Kosovo who were registered in Montenegro had swollen considerably, and their situation in terms of accommodation, hygiene and medical needs was giving cause for serious concern.

The ICRC also provided the Serbian branch of the Yugoslav Red Cross with humanitarian aid to respond to the requirements of the displaced population. In addition, the Federation continued its assistance programme for thousands of needy people in both the Serb and the ethnic Albanian communities.

One of the most pressing challenges for the ICRC was to provide the displaced with emergency assistance at the onset of the region's harsh winter. Basic items such as warm clothing, blankets and stoves were distributed to help them survive the winter months. The ICRC also increased its logistic support to the Montenegro Red Cross, renting warehouses in Ulcinj, Rozaje and Berane to facilitate operations in the northern region during the winter when road conditions were at their worst.

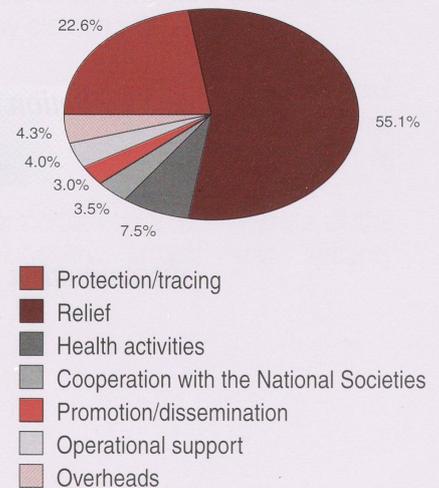
missing persons

aid for thousands of displaced people

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Total expenditure in 1998:

Sfr 18,328,414



From October onwards the ICRC focused its relief distributions in Kosovo on displaced persons and families who were returning to isolated communities and who were cut off from general distribution sites either by security constraints or because of their remoteness. Under this programme, which complemented the relief activities coordinated by UNHCR, the ICRC pinpointed areas where the displaced were in urgent need of rapid assistance and provided additional food for various distribution centres throughout Kosovo. The need for assistance was tremendous, on account of the rigorous winter conditions, the destruction of property, and the impossibility of an autumn harvest. In December, in addition to bringing in relief supplies and winter items, the ICRC assessed the potential for initiating rehabilitation projects.

medical facilities

Throughout the summer, medical activities were centered on the supply of surgical material to health structures and treatment of the wounded. After the cease-fire agreement came into force in October, emphasis shifted to facilitating access to health care for the population, particularly in villages. The pre-crisis health system in the villages had disintegrated as many facilities had been totally destroyed, medical staff had left and no supplies had been received for many months. In larger towns and cities, hospitals and the main health centres continued to function, albeit with reduced resources. However, the prevailing insecurity prevented people living in the villages from travelling to the towns.

The need for medical and surgical material increased with the growing number of casualties from the shelling and fighting. Assistance was given to medical facilities throughout Kosovo, from State hospitals to improvised first-aid posts. The Norwegian Red Cross donated surgical dressing materials and volunteer surgeons from Pristina were transported to first-aid posts whenever new casualties were signalled and the security situation permitted. In Montenegro, the ICRC supplied health centres with essential drugs to help them cope with the growing demand.

The ICRC responded to the emergency needs of rural and urban communities in Kosovo in terms of water supply and sanitation and continued to monitor the situation and seek appropriate solutions. Both displaced people and residents benefited from ICRC spring protection and latrine construction programmes in schools and dispensaries in selected villages. In Suha Reka, the ICRC repaired chlorination equipment and supplied spare parts to local water boards.

Following meetings in Vienna, Warsaw and Pristina, the ICRC began to play a role in the training of incoming members of the Kosovo Verification Mission. From November onwards, the ICRC gave presentations and talks on its mandate, its protection and detention activities and its work in Kosovo.

Spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law was also high on the ICRC agenda. A seminar on humanitarian law was held for senior officers of the Yugoslav Army in Belgrade. Among the topics discussed during the seminar was the incorporation of humanitarian law into the training of the Yugoslav armed

water and sanitation

dissemination

forces. The ICRC dissemination team in Belgrade was invited to give presentations to the teaching staff of military schools and academies on the organization's mandate and its activities during armed conflicts. Basic courses in the law of armed conflict for students and cadets were organized by the Yugoslav Army, while the ICRC provided teaching materials and publications.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF YUGOSLAVIA

IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- visited 540 detainees held for security reasons by the Yugoslav authorities in 19 places of detention;
- tried to establish the whereabouts of 139 persons reportedly held by the UCK;



- reunited 8 people with their families in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;
- collected 300 and distributed 239 Red Cross messages;



- distributed 2,322 tonnes of food and non-food items to internally displaced people in Kosovo;

- handed over 1,113 tonnes of food and non-food items to the Yugoslav Red Cross for distribution to internally displaced people throughout the country;



- provided 36 health facilities in Kosovo with medical and surgical supplies;
- provided 3 health facilities in Montenegro with medical supplies;



- met emergency needs in Kosovo by providing technical and material assistance to improve local sanitation infrastructure, water and public health services and conducted spring protection

- and latrine construction programmes in schools and dispensaries in Pagarusha, Gorica, Ponorc and Lapchevo villages;
- gave approximately 15,000 people access to safe drinking water by cleaning 60 wells;



- gave 7 presentations on the laws of armed conflict, the Red Cross and humanitarian principles to 216 members of the Yugoslav armed and security forces.

TURKEY

The ICRC had talks with the Turkish authorities on several occasions in 1998. Both sides gave their assessment of the situation in the country and discussed the humanitarian implications of Turkey's military operations in northern Iraq. The ICRC once again emphasized its willingness to contribute to Turkey's own efforts to tackle outstanding humanitarian issues and outlined its traditional activities which could yield real benefits. Throughout the year, the ICRC endeavoured to maintain a constructive dialogue with the Turkish authorities and to reach agreement on some of its proposals.

In February and again in May the Delegate-General and the regional delegate for Western and Central Europe and the Balkans travelled to Ankara for talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They also met the President and Director General of the Turkish Red Crescent Society. Discussions focused on enhancing the ICRC's cooperation with the National Society, particularly in the fields of dissemination and tracing. Finally, the ICRC continued to offer its services to promote knowledge of humanitarian law among the Turkish armed forces.

BUDAPEST

Regional delegation

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

Throughout the year, the regional delegation closely followed developments in Kosovo, to anticipate their repercussions on the humanitarian situation in other Balkan States. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, relations remained strained between Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, who comprise roughly a third of the population. Spring brought a spate of violence in Kosovo and from March onwards a number of Albanians crossed the border into Macedonia to seek refuge with friends and relations in the country. The status of this group was hard to define, since the authorities classified them as "ordinary visitors" rather than "real refugees", making it difficult for humanitarian organizations to verify their exact number.

In view of the deterioration of the situation in Kosovo, as of 1 June the ICRC mission in Skopje, which had been functioning as a sub-delegation attached to the Budapest regional delegation, became fully operational and began reporting directly to Geneva. To prepare for the possibility of an influx of refugees from Kosovo, the ICRC cooperated closely with the Macedonian Red Cross and the Federation. The Macedonian Red Cross and the Federation built up contingency stocks, while the ICRC and the National Society prepared to respond to tracing, protection and emergency medical needs.

The Budapest regional delegation saw considerable political and social changes in the other countries it covered during the year. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia started negotiations for membership of the European Union and, in the case of the first three, NATO. The move from centrally planned to market economies, while doubtless bringing benefits to the region, also gave rise to an amalgam of political, social and economic problems. During this complex transition period the ICRC kept up its support for dissemination, tracing, communication and promotional activities in all the countries covered by the delegation.

In the Czech Republic, the regional delegate outlined the new ICRC structure in the region to officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, and emphasized the need to develop dialogue on humanitarian issues. In May a course in the law of armed conflict was conducted at a military academy in Budapest. This was the first dissemination activity to be carried out for the Hungarian Home Defence Force since 1991; it took place just over one month after an agreement on cooperation in this sphere was signed by the ICRC President and the

delegation in Skopje

economic transition

workshops on humanitarian law

*anti-personnel mines
conference*

Hungarian Minister of Defence. A series of workshops on the law of armed conflict continued throughout the year, with the aim of increasing knowledge of humanitarian law within key officer training institutions. The Slovenian Red Cross organized its third international youth camp in July, bringing together participants from other European National Societies. The primary goals of the camp were to promote tolerance, especially in the former Yugoslavia, and to enhance knowledge of the Red Cross as a humanitarian organization.

At the end of March the ICRC helped organize a regional conference on anti-personnel landmines in Budapest. During the conference, which was attended by defence and foreign affairs officials from 19 Central and East European States as well as representatives of National Red Cross Societies, the issue of anti-personnel mines in the region was discussed in the light of the Convention adopted in Ottawa in December 1997. The conference was the first important gathering of its kind organized in the region since the treaty was signed and was held in parallel with a meeting of non-governmental organizations, convened by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

The regional delegation organized a visit to the Slovenian capital Ljubljana by the ICRC President on the occasion of Slovenia's presidency of the UN Security Council during the month of August, and to mark the fifth anniversary on 25 August of recognition of the Slovenian Red Cross as a new National Society. The visit included individual meetings with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Meetings were also held with the Secretaries of State for Health and Defence.

The ICRC President visited Bucharest from 29 to 31 August at the invitation of the Romanian President. The President met, among others, the Romanian President, the Chairman of the Senate, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Chief of Staff of the Romanian Army, the President of the Alliance for Romania party and the former Minister for Foreign Affairs.

An agreement on the dissemination of international humanitarian law among Romanian armed forces was signed in Bucharest on 31 August by the Chief of Staff of the Romanian Army, on behalf of the Minister of Defence, and the ICRC President.

Eastern Europe

ICRC regional delegations

1997

Moscow

The Caucasus

ICRC delegations

Armenia 1997

Central Asia

ICRC delegations

Tajikistan

ICRC regional delegation

Tashkent

Staff

ICRC expatriates

National Societies

Local employees

Total expenditure

Expenditure breakdown

Programme activities

Administration

Other



Source: ICRC

1. Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

2. Under ICRC contract, as at December 1998.

AND CENTRAL ASIA