

MISSIONS BY THE PRESIDENT

In July and August 1992 ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga went on several missions as part of the intense diplomatic activity that developed with regard to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. (See also "The ICRC and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia", pp. 488-491.) In addition, he paid an official visit to Poland and spoke at the inaugural session of training courses at two institutions. On both occasions his address served to convey the ICRC's humanitarian message.

1. Lectures in Locarno and Strasbourg (6 July)

In Locarno, Mr. Sommaruga delivered a lecture on respect for international humanitarian law and on the activities of the ICRC during the Gulf war to participants in a course given by the Swiss Civic Society (*Schweizerische Staatsbürgerliche Gesellschaft*) on the subject of "Democracy and Solidarity".

In Strasbourg, at the invitation of Mrs. Denise Bindschedler-Robert, honorary member of the ICRC and President of the International Institute of Human Rights, Mr. Sommaruga gave an address entitled "The ICRC and the protection of human rights" at the opening of the Institute's 23rd teaching session. The ICRC has been taking active part for many years in these sessions and did so again from 27 to 30 July, when members of the Legal Division gave introductory courses on international humanitarian law to some 400 participants. The courses, which lasted eight hours in all, were given in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

2. Budapest (6-7 August)

On 7 August the ICRC President chaired a meeting between the Prime Minister of Croatia, Mr. Franjo Gregurić, and the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Mr. Milan Panić. The purpose of the meeting was to settle practical procedures for implementation of the agreement

in principle signed in Geneva on 29 July and concerning the overall exchange of prisoners held by both sides in the conflict between Yugoslavia and Croatia.

The agreement signed in Budapest by the two Prime Ministers subsequently led to the release on 14 August of 1,131 prisoners, held by either Croatia or Yugoslavia, on the basis of lists drawn up by the ICRC.

In addition, President Sommaruga used the meeting as an opportunity to give the parties present a firm reminder of their responsibility for ensuring respect for international law in Bosnia-Herzegovina, calling upon them to bring all their influence to bear on the belligerents.

While in Budapest, the President also had discussions with the Chairman of the Hungarian Red Cross, Dr. Laszlo Andics, about the Society's reorganization.

At government level, Mr. Sommaruga met the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Geza Jeszensky, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Jozsef Antall. He did so first in the presence of the Croatian Prime Minister and then in the presence of the Serbian Prime Minister, in order to stress the ICRC's neutral stance as regards the purpose of the Budapest meeting. After the agreement had been signed, President Sommaruga had a lengthy private discussion with the Hungarian Prime Minister which, amongst other things, was concerned with the role of the Antall family in the Hungarian Red Cross.

3. Poland (16-18 August)

At the invitation of the President of the Polish Republic, Mr. Lech Walesa, the ICRC President visited Warsaw from 16 to 18 August; he was accompanied by Mr. Dieter Pfaff, regional delegate for Central Europe, and Mr. Nicolas Borsinger, of the Cooperation-Dissemination Division.

In the course of his discussions with Mr. Walesa, Mr. Sommaruga stressed the duty of States not only to respect but also to ensure respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law, remarking that in this connection Poland could play an active role in the protection of minorities.

Mr. Walesa responded that he was most willing to support the ICRC, not only on the diplomatic level but also by setting up an association of former detainees visited by the ICRC. Mr. Mazowiecki, Mr. Geremek and he himself had received such visits in 1982.

The President met Mrs. Hanna Suchocka, the Polish Prime Minister; he told her that the ICRC would like to see Poland, and indeed all members of the Warsaw Pact, withdraw their reservations to the Geneva Conventions.

Mrs. Suchocka stated that Poland had just signed the declaration provided for in Article 90 of Protocol I and concerning the International Fact-Finding Commission. She also said that Poland was prepared to give refuge to child victims of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sommaruga met the acting head, Mr. Byczewski, together with Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, former Prime Minister of Poland and recently appointed Special Rapporteur to the UN Secretary-General for the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Discussions were centred mainly on the situation in the former Yugoslavia, especially the crisis in Bosnia and the problem of serious breaches of international humanitarian law committed by the parties to the conflict.

The President also had talks with Mrs. Sienkiewicz, Deputy Minister of Health, and Mr. Bronislaw Geremek, Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee.

The mission ended with a press conference and the inaugural address for the 10th Warsaw course on international humanitarian law.

4. London (26-28 August 1992)

The ICRC President, accompanied by Mr. Paul Grossrieder, Deputy Director of Operations, and Mr. Thierry Germond, Delegate General for Europe, participated in the Special Conference on the former Yugoslavia, co-chaired by Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary-General, and Mr. John Major, the British Prime Minister.

The ICRC had been invited as an observer with the right to address the meeting, which was attended by representatives from the twelve countries of the European Community, the permanent members of the Security Council, all the countries bordering on the former Yugoslavia, an *ad hoc* group of countries (Canada, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey), the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), together with the various States resulting from the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. (See above, "The ICRC and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia", p. 491).

During the conference Mr. Sommaruga met, amongst others, the leaders of the Croatian, Serbian and Muslim communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In his discussions with them he underscored the need for arrangements to be made to evacuate detainees with serious medical problems; he also stressed the importance of respecting the emblem, the protected status of ICRC staff and the commitments made in the agreement of 22 May 1992 (to exchange lists of persons detained by the various parties; to allow access by the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations to groups of civilians who are cut off, in danger or particularly vulnerable; to allow and facilitate, without discrimination, the passage of humanitarian relief supplies for the victims of the conflict, and to guarantee the convoys' safety).
