

ALBANIA

In December 1990, contacts were re-established for the first time in 43 years with the National Society and government officials in Albania. The ICRC then decided to launch a programme of material assistance for the Albanian Red Cross.

BULGARIA

Following the visit of an ICRC delegation in November, the ICRC launched a programme contributing to the development of the operational capacity of the Bulgarian Red Cross and set up several projects to promote international humanitarian law.

ROMANIA

On 22 December 1989, after the outbreak of events in Bucharest, ICRC delegates quickly arrived on the spot to provide protection for hundreds of civilians and medical care for the wounded. By 28 December, 34 ICRC delegates and 28 expatriates from National Societies were posted in Romania, working in close cooperation with volunteers from the Romanian Red Cross. On the same date, around 4,500 tonnes of relief goods had arrived or were on their way. During the emergency period, which lasted until the end of the year, the ICRC made repeated radio broadcasts in an attempt to ensure respect for the Red Cross emblem. In the midst of the fighting the emblem had been frequently disregarded. Once the initial emergency phase was over, there was an urgent need for various forms of ICRC humanitarian assistance, particularly in the areas of protection and medical assistance.

The alarming situation of abandoned children, handicapped people and the elderly became evident after ICRC delegates carried out thorough surveys in various parts of the country. The purpose of the surveys was to identify groups most in need of urgent assistance, and to determine what kind of assistance the Red Cross could provide.

At a working meeting convened by the ICRC in Bucharest on 20-21 January 1990, representatives of the ICRC, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and various National Societies defined the outlines of a rehabilitation programme. The task of coordinating assistance activities was handed over to the League, while the ICRC concentrated on its traditional activities, as determined by its mandate, as well as on implementing a special programme for surgical units.

Visits to people detained in connection with the events

Between January and April 1990, ICRC delegates had access to persons detained in connection with the events of December 1989, including prisoners already sentenced. In all, 143 people were visited in 18 places of detention during the above-mentioned period. Visits came to a halt on April 17, however, as ICRC standard criteria for such visits were not respected.

Immediately after a renewed surge of violence in Bucharest from June 13 to 15, the ICRC made continuous attempts to gain access to persons subsequently detained. Its efforts were finally rewarded on 25 June, when visits started to 62 detainees in two places of detention.

Between January and September 1990, ICRC delegates visited detainees in 27 places, including 9 penitentiaries, 14 remand centres, 1 military garrison and 3 hospitals. In all, 376 detainees were seen.

Tracing Agency

As soon as the violence broke out in December 1989, communications in the country became extremely difficult. By opening a tracing office, the ICRC enabled separated families to exchange news. Communication links were re-established fairly soon, which meant that the number of tracing requests did not rise as the year progressed.

Programme of surgical activities

A Programme for Surgical Units was set up in February 1990 by the ICRC, with technical support from National Society specialists. The aim was to supply all hospitals carrying out surgical activities in Romania with standardized units of basic medical supplies, the composition of the units having been decided upon after ICRC evaluations in hospitals all over the country. The number of units to be made available to each province was directly proportional to the number of hospital beds, one unit being allocated for every 1,000 beds. In order to meet the needs of all 41 districts, including Bucharest, 302 units costing 50,000 Swiss francs each were necessary. Units were paid for by National Societies, the EEC¹ and the ICRC.

Dissemination

As part of the programme to increase awareness of the principles of international humanitarian law and the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, an ICRC dissemination delegate was posted to Romania in March 1990. In cooperation with the Romanian Red Cross Society (RRCS) and the League, the programme was elaborated to support development plans for the National Society. Information meetings for current and future members of the RRCS

¹ European Economic Community.

were held throughout the country and training courses for RRCS officials at national and district level were organized in the second half of the year.

Over the year contacts were established with the armed forces and a seminar was held in April at the central military hospital in Bucharest, in which 170 officers and doctors participated. A number of Red Cross publications were printed in Romanian and distributed on a large scale in 1990, mostly among military personnel.

The ICRC also established regular contacts with the media and academic circles, holding regular dissemination conferences throughout the year and producing several press articles and TV programmes. From March 1990 an ICRC dissemination delegate was posted in Tirgu Mures, following the ethnic clashes witnessed there the same month.

Personnel

At the beginning of 1990 there were 34 ICRC delegates and 28 National Society expatriates posted in Romania. During the course of the year, as ICRC involvement decreased, the team was gradually cut back, leaving two ICRC expatriates at the end of 1990.

UNITED KINGDOM

In June the ICRC carried out a follow-up visit to 1,634 prisoners in four detention centres: Magilligan, Maghaberry, Belfast and Maze.

USSR

The ICRC travelled to the Soviet Union on several occasions, in particular to Moscow, Vilnius, Minsk, Kiev, Tashkent and Boukhara. The aim of the visits was, on the one hand, to develop contacts with