

# Communication

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Throughout the Gulf war and the weeks that followed, the ICRC was overwhelmed with media queries from the four corners of the globe. While remaining true to its obligation to exercise discretion regarding certain information in its possession, the institution took the opportunity provided by this surge in interest to make itself more accessible to the general public, in keeping with its new policy of improving its media image while consolidating its credibility with the governments concerned by its operations.

As a first step in the process to set up a network of contacts with journalists in the field, the ICRC assigned full-time press attachés to its delegations in Cairo, Nairobi, Harare and Pretoria. It put particular effort into expanding its relations with the electronic media.

## Seminars for journalists

Throughout the year, those in charge of communication at the ICRC took part in discussions, seminars and conferences aimed at bridging the gap of mutual ignorance between the worlds of media reporting and humanitarian endeavour. The major events were a seminar on *Famine and War* (Annecy, France, 21-23 March), *Africa Media Week* (Kampala, Uganda, 25-31 May), the *International seminar on news coverage at the time of war* (Amman, Jordan, 28-30 September) and the *International journalists' round table on human rights and the United Nations* (New York, United States, 14-16 October).

## Written press

The Press Division launched a weekly newsletter, *Media 7*, on ICRC operations throughout the world. It is aimed primarily at media professionals.

*Media 7* is the latest addition to the institution's periodical publications, which include the monthly *Bulletin* and *Red Cross/Red*

*Crescent*, a magazine put out three times a year by the ICRC and the Federation.

About one hundred press releases were sent out in connection with events as they occurred.

## Information for National Societies

In addition to its relations with the press, the ICRC maintained regular contact with the information services of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The latter received over 150 faxes and telexes containing communiqués and other texts of current interest. They were also sent some 20 information kits (almost twice as many as in 1990, mainly because of the Gulf war) containing articles, photos and slides on a range of ICRC operations, including the Gulf, the Horn of Africa, and Afghanistan/Pakistan.

Information work was carried out in conjunction with the National Societies of Canada, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, which provided staff for information missions to Iran, Iraq and Yugoslavia.

## Documentaries and other audiovisual productions

The ICRC produced a particularly large number of videos in 1991.

The 28-minute video *The Face of Latin America* presents the activities of both the ICRC and five Latin American National Societies. *The ICRC in Peru* shows the institution's work in that country and highlights the puppet theatre, an original and effective means of teaching young people about the Red Cross and its ideals.

For the first time since 1980, conditions in the field were such that the ICRC was able to film its activities in Cambodia. The resulting video is entitled *Cambodia: Beyond the Emergency*.

*A Refugee Camp* was filmed in Jordan. It provides a very technical view of how refugee

camps are set up and is aimed at an audience specializing in emergency relief work, including sanitation problems.

Like its predecessors, *Retrospective 1990* surveys ICRC activities around the world.

In addition, short films (2-5 minutes) were made on current operations in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait (Gulf war), Cambodia, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, southern Sudan and Yugoslavia. They were offered for broadcast to television networks and used for fund-raising purposes in donor countries.

The ICRC prepared spots for Yugoslav television in an effort to ensure respect for the Red Cross emblem.

Finally, photographic reports were put together on activities in Angola, Cambodia, Iraq, Liberia, Somalia and southern Sudan.

### **RCBS radio programmes**

With the outbreak of the Gulf war the Red Cross Broadcasting Service (RCBS) doubled its main programme output. Special programmes on the Gulf were produced in mid-February and mid-March in English, French, German and Spanish, in addition to the normal end-of-month broadcasts in six languages. This was the first time RCBS took advantage of an international arrangement which allows the ICRC to increase its airtime during a major international armed conflict.

After the Gulf war, RCBS programmes continued to concentrate on ICRC activities in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, followed later in 1991 by Yugoslavia and Somalia. Other countries of particular interest were Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Cambodia.

The news and interviews produced by RCBS for its 11 programmes a month were broadcast free of charge by the Swiss PTT and Swiss Radio International. About 50 radio stations worldwide, as well as 55 National Societies and over 40 ICRC delegations received the main programmes on cassette or tape.

Two coproductions were organized during 1991, both for 8 May. Radio France Inter-

national sent a journalist to cover the ICRC in Cambodia and Swiss Radio International's Arabic service reported on ICRC operations in the Gulf war.

### **Publishing and documentation**

In an accurate reflection of ICRC areas of concern, the Publishing and Documentation Service focused its output on refugees and displaced civilians, protection for child combatants, new anti-personnel weapons, repressions of violations of international humanitarian law applicable in non-international armed conflicts, protection of the natural environment and the Gulf war. Most of these publications were printed in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and many of them appeared in German, Italian and Portuguese as well.

The expansion of ICRC activities in Eastern Europe was accompanied by a series of booklets in Russian, Bulgarian, Polish, Czech, Serbo-Croat, Hungarian and other local languages.

The institution placed special emphasis on Arabic, translating and publishing some 20 books and articles dealing mainly with ICRC activities throughout the world and international humanitarian law.

Publication purchases and distribution lists were computerized in 1991. This was done to modernize and rationalize services for ICRC delegations, National Societies, universities and the general public. Around 2,000 titles in a variety of languages were put on computer file to accelerate the processing of orders. In the latter half of the year over 850 orders were filled, representing about 5,500 requests for any number of a variety of publications (individual requests for information or documents are not included in these figures).

In the period under review, the ICRC once again took part in the Geneva Press and Book Fair, where it presented its publications to a large number of visitors particularly interested in the institution's activities in Kuwait and Iraq.

At the invitation of the Slovenian Red Cross, the ICRC presented its publications in December at the Ljubljana book fair.

The ICRC public library continued to update its specialized collection on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international humanitarian law and related subjects such as public international law, weapons issues, detention and political affairs in crisis regions.

### *International Review of the Red Cross*

As in previous years, the *International Review of the Red Cross* — the official ICRC publication serving the entire Movement — published six issues containing a great many articles relating to international humanitarian law and the policies guiding ICRC operations to assist the victims of armed conflict.

Two special issues were published, one on the implementation of international humanitarian law at both national and international level and repression of breaches thereof, the other on preserving health and providing medical treatment in large-scale disasters. The latter dealt in particular with the use of famine as a means of warfare, ICRC medical activities for amputees and the wounded, prisoners and other detainees, and training of medical staff. There were also articles on international medical assistance in relief operations and community health care in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

Finally, the Review reported on the Movement's promotional activities in connection, among other things, with the World Campaign for the Protection of Victims of War.

### **Public relations**

The travelling exhibition *Humanity in the midst of war* went to five eastern European countries: Bulgaria (Sofia), the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (Prague and Bratislava), Hungary (Budapest), Poland (Warsaw) and Ukraine (Kiev and Minsk). In most cases, it was set up in connection with a seminar or conference.

As part of the celebrations to mark the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation, the ICRC organized a promotional campaign in Switzerland involving in particular a series of posters with the theme of Switzerland's humanitarian traditions. Photos of 16 delegates from different parts of the country were displayed on posters in over 1,300 cities and towns. The campaign enjoyed the support of the Swiss Bank Corporation and the *Société Générale d’Affichage*.

### **Public Support Group**

In accordance with Resolution IV of the 1989 Council of Delegates, the ICRC and the Federation set up the Public Support Group that same year to coordinate and enliven communication within the Movement and to increase the capacity of National Society information services.

The Group's members — communication specialists from the ICRC, the Federation, eight National Societies and the International Promotion Bureau — met twice in 1991: in Geneva in March, and in Sofia, Bulgaria, in May. The second meeting was scheduled in connection with the 3rd International Communications Workshop, held to coincide with the 14th International Festival of Red Cross and Health Films, sponsored by the Bulgarian Red Cross, the ICRC and the Federation. It was attended by communication specialists from about 20 National Societies.

The Group's work focused on the following: verifying implementation of the different phases of the Movement's information policy and drawing up a report by the ICRC and the Federation to the Council of Delegates in Budapest (November 1991); publishing the *Communicator's Guide* to be used throughout the Movement to facilitate the work of the National Societies; helping to organize a regional training seminar in Kenya for information officers from English-speaking National Societies in East Africa with a view to introducing the *Communicator's Guide* as a practical working tool; selecting themes for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.