

the insanity that continues to destroy everything around him.

In the tented camp of Stobrec, hosting 1,000 refugees close to the ancient seaside resort of Split, a 9-year-old girl sits with *Tihomila Becker*, the lady psychologist whom she considers as one of her friends:

I saw my house being burned. I felt terrible and had goose pimples all over my body. Then we ran away in the forest and walked from one village to another. I was terrible hungry. After 2 months, we reached a town where we saw people making *halva* [a sweet of Arabian origin made from honey] – but they did not offer us any.

Many children want revenge

Up in the mountains of Bosnia, the policy of 'ethnic cleansing' continues to uproot fresh loads of Muslim families who have gathered in the school grounds of the small town of Travnik. They are waiting for the buses which will take them to refugee camps hours away from the front line. Sitting on their hurriedly packed belongings, the grandmother and the mother of two small children weep uncontrollably.

Despite the intense summer heat, the little boy and his sister are wearing light blue fluffy duffle coats with two jumpers underneath. A neighbour explains that the little boy saw soldiers cut people's throats, including his father's throat. The boy is frozen with fear and, on hearing the woman's words, tears stream down his face.

Children who have experienced and witnessed, first hand, such terror – the slaughter, the shooting, their fathers beaten and humiliated and no longer able to protect and provide for them, their mothers abused and often raped – will probably want revenge when old enough.

When children go back to school,

reading and writing may have to take a back seat to allow teachers and children to work together on a *Story of my Life*, trying to rebuild the threads of shattered lives, talking about the war, the events that took place, drawing, writing essays, poems, and even songs about this traumatic period of their lives, using group activities and the creative process to start the healing

Mothers and children often war targets

Knowledge about war trauma is relatively new and training for psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, teachers, and health workers needs also to be provided as soon as possible, as well as raising public awareness about the psycho-social problems of war-traumatized families so that every child and every family which needs help in surmounting their trauma can have access to psychosocial support and counselling services without delay.

According to Professor Raundalen, each war, seen from the perspective of children, is different. The war in ex-Yugoslavia has two very disturbing features:

First, it is the closeness of the war and the fact that, in many homes, the soldiers lived upstairs while the families lived in the cellars of their houses, sometimes for months. The families were constantly threatened; they were beating their fathers and raping their mothers, and often they were shooting in the kitchens and in the bathrooms upstairs. That closeness has never been seen before, at least not in contemporary wars.

Second, this war is extraordinarily cruel, because the mothers and the children are often targeted – those who

are defending the cities with their bodies; we witness weapons against defenceless bodies and weapons against children. That goes for cities like Bihac, Goradze, and Sarajevo.

Nobody can be unhurt by this terrible war in our Europe.

It is also our war.

* Journalist and photographer, associated with UNICEF for many years.

200,000 Yugoslav children have received UNICEF aid

UNICEF has distributed food and clothing to some 200,000 child victims of the Yugoslav civil war. During a so-called *Week of Silence*, UNICEF in the autumn of 1992 made a massive effort to help the children of the war.

Before the start of the operation, UNICEF calculated that almost one million children were in need of aid, but that it would only be able to help about 150,000 with food and clothing.

Fighting continued in the war-torn republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the aid operation, even though UNICEF had requested the warring parties to stop shooting for the sake of the children.

At the same time, UNICEF had to return supplies to Belgrade in Serbia because the Muslim authorities in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia, refused to accept Serbian goods for the city's children.

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Distinguished order for IRCT's president

The IRCT President, Professor *Ole Espersen*, MP (Denmark), has been awarded the prestigious Chilean Bernardo O'Higgins Order for his long and much respected work for victims of Human Rights violations in Chile. He has visited Chile 14 times since 1973, and Professor Espersen could almost be referred to as a globetrotter for the good cause of Human Rights.

As a civil servant in the Danish Ministry of Justice, he was also a member of the expert committee of legal affairs of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 1965 to 1970, and was thereby engaged in the important work of protecting Human Rights within the European Convention of Human Rights of 1950.

He was the legal representative of the

Danish Government in its case, together with some other countries, against Greece at the European Human Rights Court in Strasbourg, which established gross violations of Human Rights by the Greek junta.

He taught law, including international law, for about 20 years at Copenhagen University, was appointed professor, and became involved in a var-

iety of public activities, as lawyers in all countries tend to become. He entered the Danish Parliament in 1973, representing the Social Democrats, and served as Minister of Justice from 1981 to 1982.

Amnesty International and medical doctors in several countries played their part in all this – Professor Espersen thus participated in the important work that paved the way for the establishment of the RCT in Copenhagen. Action was required, not only to condemn the violators of Human Rights, the torturers, the evil of our day, but also to help the victims. Ole Espersen still keeps contact with some of the friends he made in Greece at that time.

Since then, along with his political work in Denmark, he has been dealing with a long list of humanitarian matters and has visited political prisoners or their relatives in several countries in order to promote their release or alleviate their burden. All this he does in one of his many capacities – as parliamen-



Chile's ambassador to Denmark, Mario Valenzuela Esq., with the IRCT President, Professor Ole Espersen.

tarian, as member of the Parliamentary Assembly of or expert appointed by the Council of Europe, as member of the board of the Danish section of the Helsinki Federation, etc.

Now he also has the job of examining candidates for membership of the Council of Europe. Latvia and Rumania have not yet passed the test – they have to develop their democracy further before being accepted. Russia is next in line.

Professor Espersen has visited Turkey many times. He has participated there in the opening of centres for the treatment of torture victims, has argued with ministers and parliamentarians in Ankara and elsewhere, and has visited prisoners. "Turkey is one of the most depressing countries, because torture has not been dropped despite the introduction of democracy. No other country has stuck so stubbornly to this evil habit of the past", he observes.

H. D.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UN fund in need of money

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Torture Victims urgently needs additional resources

In 1993 the United Nations *Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture* has to limit its recommendations for grants by the Secretary-General to less than half of the amounts requested in approximately 60 applications for assistance to torture victims.

The Voluntary Fund provides practical help to relieve the suffering of the tens of thousands of victims by obtaining for them medical or psychological support, opportunities for social or economic reintegration, and legal or financial assistance. But more and more torture victims are asking for professional help. In 1991/1992 the Fund supported some 100 projects all over the world to assist them in coping with the consequences of torture and cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment or punishment.

Thousands of others are still in need of medical, psychological, social, or financial help. During the eleventh session in 1992, the Board assessed the operation of the projects subsidized by the Fund and heard 13 persons responsible for 36 projects, and examined 25

new projects submitted to the Fund for support. The Board recommended to the Secretary-General the funding of, or continued support for, some 70 projects either currently in progress or planned for 1992 and 1993, involving expenditure of approximately \$1.6 million.

Since its creation in 1981, the Fund has collaborated with nearly 100 organizations on approximately 160 projects in about 40 countries. These projects fall essentially into the following fields: psychotherapy; medical care; social rehabilitation; and training of professionals and volunteers (doctors, psychologists, physiotherapists, paramedical personnel, social workers, etc.) for the specialized treatment of torture victims. In addition to helping torture victims directly, the Fund has also been able to assist the relatives of victims with their psychological, economic, and social problems, and has contributed to the development and application of suitable forms of treatment.

The Fund is administered by the Secretary-General, assisted by a Board of

Trustees, composed of a Chairman and four members who have wide experience in the field of human rights and serve in their individual capacity. The current members of the Board of Trustees are: *Elizabeth Odio-Benito* (Costa Rica), *Ribot Hatano* (Japan), *Ivan Tosevski* (Yugoslavia), *Amos Wako* (Kenya), and *Jaap Walkate* (The Netherlands), Chairman.

Since its establishment, the Fund has received contributions from several individuals and non-government organizations as well as from the governments of the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Eire, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Holy See, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, San Marino, Senegal, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, United Kingdom, and United States.

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