

THE DISASTER & SOCIAL CRISIS RESEARCH NETWORK (D&SCRN) AND
THE ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

During the 4th European Sociological Association Conference held in Amsterdam, 18-21 August 1999, a group of social scientists from European and other countries decided to establish the Disaster and Social Crisis Research Network.

Members of the D&SCRN can become social scientists who are based and work in European countries or social scientists who work on European issues and projects. The work in either case must be related to the purposes and objectives of the Research Network.

D&SCRN NEWSLETTER, NO. 1, MARCH 2000.

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Editor's Note: All "signed" texts reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the D&SCRN.

The purpose of the D&SCRN is to promote the study, research and analysis of "natural," technological" and "social" disasters with a view toward contributing to the development of disaster-resilient European communities and preventing or mitigating the human, economic, social, cultural and psychological effects of disasters.

The members of the D&SCRN propose to achieve their scientific and social policy goals through (a) the organization of sessions during the biannual conferences of ESA (b) the organization of interim conferences (c) the organization of European sessions at other international social sciences conferences (d) the establishment of a webpage and (e) the publication of an electronic newsletter.

Thanks to the Geography Department of Anglia Polytechnic University, the Network's webpage (www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/d&scrn) has already been set up. The webpage contains information regarding the members of the network and their affiliations and disaster interests, the summaries of session presentations during the 4th ESA conference, and weblinks to related disaster research centers and organizations.

We are now publishing the first issue of the electronic newsletter, which will also be incorporated in the Network's webpage. The Newsletter may also be sent upon request by conventional mail route to those who have no access to the Network's webpage. The newsletter will feature articles concerning the activities of its members, activities of other relevant organizations, brief book reviews, new developments in emergency planning and response, summaries of relevant research projects, news about research funding sources and brief methodological, theoretical or empirical articles (less than two pages) on disasters and social crises. Those interested in contributing to the next newsletter which will be published in June 2000 should contact the coordinator of the Network and the editor-in-charge of the Newsletter, Nikos Petropoulos at the following e-mail address: erc@otenet.gr.

The Network is now in the process of organizing sessions for the 5th ESA conference, "Visions and Divisions: Challenges for European Sociology", which will be held in Helsinki, August 2001. We hope to send out calls for papers in the near future. For more information, readers may contact Prof. Boris Porfiriev, Institute of Systems Analysis, Russian Academy of Sciences at the following e-mail address: b_porfiriev@prin.msk.su.

Finally, we would like to inform our readers that the Board is in the process of submitting an application to the ESA Executive Committee which will convene on April 24, 2000 for formal recognition of our Network in the context of the European Sociological Association. Those who would like to promote the purposes of D&SCRN and would also like to join us should contact the Coordinator of the Network (erc@otenet.gr), should send us a brief biographical sketch regarding his/her professional and research interests in the disaster and social crisis areas.

Nikos Petropoulos
Coordinator of D&SCRN
Editor of the Newsletter

CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF D&SCRN MEMBERS

1. ANNE EYRE

As a sociologist, my specialist interest is in the social and psychological dimensions of disasters. My teaching and research activities focus on the human impacts and implications of disasters. This includes drawing on case studies to highlight contemporary social, political and legal issues relating to disaster-related policy and practice. I am a member of the International Sociological Association's Disasters Research Committee (RC39) and am the founder/convenor of the British Sociological Association's Disaster Study Group. Part of my work in the UK involves networking academics, practitioners and relatives/survivors from disasters. I am also a member of the Emergency Planning Society, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, Disaster Action and Victims' Voice.

Anne Eyre
Center for Disaster Management
University of Coventry
UK

Email: 1. a.eyre@cov.ac.uk
2. cbx093@coventry.ac.uk

2. MAUREEN FORDHAM

Dealing with difference in disaster

I am currently carrying out pilot research in Northampton, England which suffered significant flooding and two deaths in Easter 1998. This work is prior to receiving funding for the full project: Dealing with difference in disaster: examining alternative models of disaster management. This is a one-year project to develop socially inclusive disaster management guidelines; to identify vulnerabilities and develop local capacities; and ultimately to contribute to the building of disaster resilient communities. The proposal has the support of a range of disaster management professionals and local community based organizations (CBOs).

Project aims

1. To uncover the experiences, responses, vulnerabilities and capacities of a diverse cross-section of victims/survivors of the Easter 1998 floods in Northampton;
2. To evaluate the extent to which the 'official' response was geared towards dealing with the needs of different socio-cultural groups (women, ethnic minorities, disabled, children, elderly, etc.);
3. To explore the extent and nature of newly-formed (emergent) community based organizations related to the Easter 1998 floods in Northampton;

4. To investigate the extent to which the current (British) model of disaster management best serves the needs of a diverse community; and
5. To develop theory and practical recommendations for socially inclusive, participatory emergency response/planning.

The project is organised around three groups within the disaster community:

1. The individual flood victims/survivors;
2. The professional flood 'managers' within the 'official' disaster management agencies and members of 'semi-official' voluntary agencies;
3. Members of 'unofficial' community based organizations and networks formed during or after the 1998 floods.

The project will also examine the interactions between groups, so that disaster networks can be mapped and recommendations for inter-agency/CBO partnerships developed. In so doing, the research will contribute to a better understanding and operation of the disaster management system as a whole.

Qualitative research methods will be used. An Invited Workshop is an integral part of the project. Invitees will be drawn from senior levels of the Emergency Planning and wider disaster management community. It will include a) findings from the research; b) guest speakers who will stimulate a reflexive approach in individual invitees; and c) active participation in the construction of practical and feasible recommendations for socially inclusive disaster management.

Dissemination will include a website and email discussion list.

If you are working on similar research or would like to, please contact Maureen Fordham at Anglia Polytechnic University, Cambridge England: m.h.fordham@anglia.ac.uk.

The Disaster Studies Project

Just initiated (January 2000) is a new disaster research group: the Disaster Studies Project at Anglia Polytechnic University, Cambridge England. The Project has been stimulated by staff and postgraduate (and some undergraduate) student research into hazard and disaster management generally. A website has been set up (www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/dsp) which has yet to offer significant findings but will be worth revisiting periodically as various research projects progress.

I would welcome collaborative research with others in the disaster and social crisis research community. Also welcome would be news of other student work in this area with a view to exchanging findings and perhaps organizing student seminars.

For further details, visit the website or contact Maureen Fordham at: m.h.fordham@anglia.ac.uk

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Social Issues in Flood Forecasting and Warning

The first meeting was held in January 2000 of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Research, Social Issues Advisory Group administered by the Environment Agency for England and Wales. This is an important initiative in developing a long-term R&D programme to address shortcomings in the social aspects of flood forecasting and warning. The research output from this programme will assist the Environment Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food to provide an effective and timely flood warning service to the public and others to meet government policy objectives.

Group members are drawn widely from emergency planning, academia, the insurance industry and elsewhere and they are encouraged to consult widely to identify potential projects and scope for joint funding. If you are interested in hearing more of this group or wish to make suggestions for possible research topics, please contact Maureen Fordham (one of the group members) in the first instance at: m.h.fordham@anglia.ac.uk

Dr Maureen Fordham
 Geography Department, Anglia Polytechnic University, East Road, Cambridge
 CB1 1PT, UK
 Tel: 01223 363271 extension 2177
 Internet: <http://www.anglia.ac.uk/geography>
 Gender and Disaster Network: <http://www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn>

3. N. PETROPOULOS

During the last four months, N. Petropoulos has been working in the following four disaster-related areas:

1. Expanding and relocating the Emergencies Research Center. ERC –a non-profit scientific organization- has expanded from 5 to 11 board members. Its interdisciplinary composition now includes 3 Sociologists (Nikos Petropoulos, Christine Marouli, Gregory Katsas), a medical doctor (Demetrios Pyrros), one Seismologist (Taxiarchis Papadopoulos), one Human Factors Engineer (Alexander Siapkarakas), one Civil Engineer (Manos Kyriazis), one Geographer/Pedagogue (Theodore Tsounakos), one Demographer/Economist (Dionysios Balourdos) and one Political Scientist (Mariana Psylla), one School Psychologist (Panos Chinas). The ERC also recently moved to a new location (Varvogli 7, Athens 11363). E-mail: erc@otenet.gr Phone: +301 825 6266. FAX : 825 6268. In time, ERC plans to establish a website, but that will depend on the outcome on its research proposals.

2. Submission of research proposals. ERC has submitted four research proposals to the Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization (EPPO), to assess response following the Sept. 7 EQ in Athens. The projects if approved will assess (a) the response of national and international emergency services to the Sept. 7 EQ (b) the responses of

relocated and receiving school populations (c) the seismic awareness and counter-EQ ethics, practices and responses of construction factors (i.e. contractors, engineers, real estate agents, etc) and (d) the responses of households-with especial reference to the gender factor in EQ response and preparation. The evaluation of the research proposals by EPPO is anticipated to take place in the near future.

3. Submission of paper to ASA convention. Prepared a paper on "Protest and Violence in Greek Schools..." The paper focuses on collective forms of protest and Violence (e.g. school occupations, vandalism, graffiti) following the 1997 educational reforms. It has been submitted and has been accepted for presentation in Ben Aguirre's Collective Behavior Sessions which will be held during the American Sociological Association Convention in Washington on August 2000.

4. D & SCRN activities. Collaborating with Maureen Fordham in completing the Webpage and also preparing the documentation necessary for the Network's application to the ESA Executive Committee for formal recognition. The Executive Committee is scheduled to meet in Prague, on April 24, 2000

4. BORIS PORFIRIEV

Prof. Porfiriev's current activities include, among other things, the following:

1) Writing a draft of a new federal law on natural disasters (with a colleague who is a professional lawyer). The draft law should be completed soon and will be scheduled for a hearing at the State Duma by the working commission sometime in mid-April 2000.

2) Checking and evaluating grant applications from research institutions to participate in the implementation of the R&D component of the Federal Program for Reducing the Risk of Emergencies and Disasters (2000-2005). EMERCOM invited him, as an expert, to serve for its Selection Committee;

3) Writing a concise and revised version of his report on health risk management in the Samara region of Russia for one of the governmental departments; and

4) Soliciting papers for the special issue of Hazardous Materials journal to be published in late 2001. Ron Perry and Boris Porfiriev are the co-editors of this issue on social issues of emergencies and disaster policy that involve chemical and other hazards (except radiation). For information concerning a contribution, contact Prof. Boris Porfiriev: b_Porfiriev@prin.msk.su

5. ROBERT STALLINGS

Robert Stallings reports the following activities and works in progress:

-An article calling for the application of Max Weber's model of political economy in disaster resear, "Toward a Political Economy of Disasters," is undergoing revision for resubmission to the American journal SOCIOLOGICAL FORUM;

-An analysis of aviation disasters using Norbert Elias's figurational sociology has been submitted to the British journal THEORY, CULTURE & SOCIETY;

- Negotiations continue with Elsevier Science regarding a completed draft of a book SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS OF DISASTER RESEARCH; CONTEXTS, CONTINUITIES, POSSIBILITIES;

-He continues to serve as editor of the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MASS EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS, an official journal of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Disasters (RC 39)."

Robert A. Stallings
 Editor IJMED
 Professor of Policy, Planning and Development
 Department of Sociology
 University of Southern California
 University Park
 Los Angeles, California 90089-0626
 E-mail: rstallin@usc.edu

NATO "HUMANITARIAN" BOMBING DISASTER AND HUMANITARIAN AID

Humanitarian excuses for military aggression

Government leaders of 19 NATO member states proceeded on March 24 1999 with the execution of their October 1998 threats to bombard Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They justified their flagrant violation of fundamental principles of international law, the UN Charter, the NATO charter itself and the constitutions of some member states, claiming that there was urgent need to stop the "humanitarian crisis" and "ethnic cleansing" of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, southern province of the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia. The official report written in one NATO member state just two months before the bombing began, affirmed that actions of the Yugoslav security forces were "not directed against the Kosovo-Albanians as an ethnically defined group, but against the military opponent"¹, and indicate that NATO leaders consciously intervened in the armed conflict within the sovereign country on the side of armed insurgents against the central government.

Humanitarian disaster caused by "humanitarian" bombing

As it could have been only predicted, the bombardment transformed already a very difficult humanitarian situation into a humanitarian disaster. Until June 9 1999, NATO aircraft flew 26,300 sorties and dropped 23,000 tons of explosives, including forbidden cassette bombs and those "enriched" with depleted uranium with long-term destructive effects on human health and the environment.

¹ January 12, 1999 intelligence report of the Foreign Office to the administrative Court of Trier, Germany, Az: 514-516.80/32 426, <http://www.jungewelt.de/1999/04-24/011.shtml>)

Direct civilian casualties of 78 days and nights of bombing (out of around 2000 killed, one third were children and one twelfth refugees), were greater than the combined civilian and armed casualties of the conflict between the Albania-infiltrated-with-Mafia forces and the foreign secret services narco-money-connected Kosovo Liberation Army terrorist troops² and the Yugoslav government forces during the entire period preceding the bombing. Instead of few tens of thousands of internally displaced but sheltered persons estimated by OESCE observation mission in Kosovo and Metohija in the days before it withdrew to clear the way for the bombing, few hundreds of thousands of uprooted refugees poured into surrounding countries and northern Yugoslavia after the bombing began.

After arrival of KFOR in Kosovo and Metohija on 10 June 1999, ethnic Albanian refugees who did not succeed to emigrate into Western countries, returned to Kosovo and Metohija. Due to uncontrolled borders, along with the refugees illegally immigrated Albanians who never lived in Kosovo and Metohija, but availed themselves of the opportunity to loot or settle on the property of expelled local inhabitants. UN envoy Bernard Kouchner, violating the mandate of UN resolution 1244 that provided for the disarmament of KLA, transformed it into the Kosovo Defense Corps and some of their leaders who had been accused for war crimes were promoted into local administration and even judiciary officials. These measures tacitly encouraged and legalized killings (4 victims a day on average), abductions, beatings and expulsion of Serbs, Romany, Goranci, Muslims and Albanians who did not agree with KLA terrorist methods of creation of an ethnically pure Greater Albania.³

Violence, crime and insecurity in Kosovo and Metohija after arrival of KFOR and UNMIK, increased the number of refugees in FR Yugoslavia by 40%. There are 700 000 "old" refugees, driven out in 1995 from their ancestral homes in secessionist Republics Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the active support of NATO aircraft and US retired generals as instructors. These refugees are not being repatriated into Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as they should have been according to the 1995 Dayton agreement. The greatest burden of refugees' accommodation costs is still born by the families that received 90% of them in their homes. Five percent of the dwindling GNP spent yearly by the FRY government to cover the costs of humanitarian aid, health care, education and public utilities, was practically the only source of help for refugees and displaced persons in the first years of the violent dismemberment of Yugoslavia.

The total number of refugees is increased by around 250 000 "new" refugees from Kosovo and Metohija since the bombing⁴

NATO bombardment has also contributed to an increase of poverty and unemployment rates. In addition, it led to a further decrease of the per capita income below 900 US\$ per year and pushed around two million people below the poverty line. Before the bombardment there were already 800,000 unemployed workers and 600, 000 redundant workers on "forced leave" (?), attempting to get by through activity in the so called gray economy⁵. Due to the bombardment, around 500, 000 people lost their jobs because 995 establishments were destroyed or damaged in the course of the NATO campaign. Among them are 50 hospitals and ambulances, 300 schools and kindergartens, 100 major chemical and petrochemical installations 50 major metal industry and food processing plants. In Kragujevac's automobile industry Zastava alone, 32, 000 work places were directly and 40, 000 were indirectly destroyed⁶.

² (Hedges, Michael; "KLA may not be the perfect ally", <http://www.nandotimes.com/Kosovo/>)

³ "Kosovo slipping into anarchy, Reuters, July 19, 1999.

⁴ "Humanitarian Situation in Yugoslavia & Activities of the Yugoslav Red Cross", Yugoslav Survey, no. 3, November 1999.

⁵ Report on Human Development, Economic Institute, Belgrade, 1997

⁶ (NATO crimes in Yugoslavia -documentary evidence, Ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgrade, bd. I and II).

Denial, reduction and conditioning of humanitarian help

In spite of the drastically increased need for humanitarian help, some governments in NATO member countries and international humanitarian non-governmental organizations located in them, received significant part of their funds from them and performed for them intelligence gathering services in return.⁷ Some of them even campaigned against those who did help and restricted their own assistance and services to the victims of the conflict. For instance, the French-based international NGO "Medecins Sans Frontieres", the medical relief group which even won the 1999 Nobel peace prize, expelled its Greek branch just for following the MSF's charter and sending doctors to Serbia to help warring sides regardless of their ethnicity.⁸ (Reuters, October 21 1999). According to the testimony of Malcolm Fraser from Australian CARE, both United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were, and still are, under pressure, particularly from the US and Britain, to reduce the programs in Serbia.⁹

The coordinator for the humanitarian help in FR Yugoslavia John Rouch declared that total aid of these two largest humanitarian organizations amounted to 320 million Swiss francs in 1999 or 8.3 US\$ per recipient monthly.¹⁰ This is more than four times smaller than the amount spent per refugee by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the refugee camps set up for Albanians in neighboring countries after bombardment began (\$1.23 daily). Still a smaller amount, just 11 cents a day if at all, is spent in Africa¹¹. Together with the TV cameras, humanitarian help was redirected from the "old" humanitarian crisis in Eritrea and Somalia, to the newly staged one in the Balkans. Even the refugees affiliated to the ethnic group favored by the donors from NATO countries, received little in comparison to about 3.5 billion US\$ spent on ten weeks of bombardment, during which Albanian refugees were also killed.

Data on the humanitarian help in kind, contributed by international donors and distributed by the Red Cross of Yugoslavia, show the greatest decrease of help in the case of ECHO, the European Community Humanitarian Office. It reduced the help in sugar, edible oil and beans from 6 896 403 kg in 1998 to 512 880kg in the first half of 1999. Thanks mostly to the doubling of the help in kind by the World Food Program and other donors, humanitarian aid nevertheless can be expected for about 350 000 "old" refugees, 200 000 newly displaced persons and more than 300. 000 socially disadvantaged local inhabitants.

The political pressures to reduce to a minimum, or even block the humanitarian aid necessary for survival, are present in the most inhumane form in the US and EU embargo imposed even on the import of oil for heating, indispensable after the NATO bombardment destroyed or damaged one third of Serbia's power grid, two thirds of the oil refineries, as well as the central thermal plants in New Belgrade and Kragujevac. The recent program of "oil for democracy" makes aid contingent upon the recipients' political orientation. The "help" which consisted of just twelve trucks filled with oil came long after the heating season had begun and was sent through a shady private company to two municipalities where opposition parties attained the majority in the last local assembly elections. Such amount of oil can secure about three days of municipal heating in the exceptionally cold 1999/2000 winter. If it were not for the extraordinary results in the rebuilding and repairing of the infrastructure through the efficient mobilization of internal resources and for the delivery of gas from Russia, the Yugoslav people would be confronted with a situation of mass deaths—a disaster on the top of another disaster.

⁷ ("Sins of the secular missionaries", The Economist, January 29, 2000

⁸ (Reuters, October 21 1999

⁹ "Yugoslav lives are as precious as any" The Australian, 7 January 2000

¹⁰ Odgovor(Reply),(Belgrade) 13 Jan. 2000

¹¹ ("Relief Camps for Africans, Kosovars Worlds Apart", http://www.latimes.com/CNS_DAYS/990521/t000045600.html)

Sanctions as blockade of social disaster relief

For eight years now, leaders of NATO member countries are doing all in their power to prevent, through economic sanctions, the reconstruction and acceleration of the economic activity in Yugoslavia as the only viable disaster relief policy for the rooting out of poverty, the accommodation and integration of refugees. The UN representatives of NATO countries supported the introduction of a blockade of FR Yugoslavia in 1992 through a UN Security Council Resolution. Representatives of Russia and China did not veto it in the expectation of credits from IMF, even though the resolution was obviously based on the untenable implicit assumption that the FR of Yugoslavia was the only guilty party for the civil war in Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that only the Serb people did not have the right to self-determination. In the NATO-controlled media, the Serbs were demonized as "aggressors" in the regions where they lived and owned the land for centuries.¹² The sanctions also prohibited economic, scientific, technological, educational, sports and cultural co-operation with the FR of Yugoslavia. Finally, these sanctions contributed to the fall of per capita income in the country of 10.5 million inhabitants from around 3,200 US\$ in 1989 to 1,100 US\$ in 1993.

As soon as the economy started to recover in the period 1994-7, due to the elimination of hyper-inflation through original economic stabilization program and due to the suspension of sanctions after signing of the Dayton agreement in 1995, the sanctions were reintroduced in 1998. The EU and the US revoked the preferential treatment of Yugoslav goods, placed a ban on investment in Yugoslavia and on Yugoslav airways' flights to and from the FR of Yugoslavia, froze Yugoslav funds abroad and restricted payment operations. As a consequence industrial output attained in 1998 fell below the 1997-98 levels.¹³

Economic motives of bombardment and sanctions

The choice of infrastructure, communication, civilian and industrial bombardment targets, as well as the restriction and conditioning of humanitarian help after having provoked humanitarian disaster through bombardment, all point out to the conclusion that the real motives for "humanitarian" NATO intervention are not humanitarian at all. For lack of space, they can be only briefly summarized here¹⁴. Aside from the geo-strategic interest to control the important transportation and trade crossroads, there is also the interest of trans-national capital and the industrial-military complex concentrated in NATO countries to get new orders for profitable arms production. The aim is the expansion of quasi-colonial protectorates into the Balkans and further eastward, toward the oil rich Caspian region. In these new dependencies their "high representatives" under the cover of the United Nations arbitrarily change elected local leaders, censor local media and forbid non-compliant parties from participating in the elections, in order to silence all opposition to appropriation of local assets, elimination of the local production where it exists and the flooding of the local markets with the surplus production of transnational corporations' sweat shops around the globe, including the new protectorates themselves.

¹² Vera Vratusa(-Zunjic) The Intrinsic Connection Between Endogenous and Exogenous Factors of Social (dis)Integration - a Sketch of Yugoslav Case, Dialogue (Paris), nos. 22 & 23).

¹³ Economic Survey, ed. Federal Office of Development and Economic Policy, Yugoslav Survey, Belgrade, 1999)

¹⁴ (Vera Vratusa-Zunjic, "Opposite theoretical interpretations of NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia in the light of the critique of ideology", Socioloski pregled (Sociological Review) (Belgrade), no. 1-2, 1999) phone: + 38111 - 3282-141

Conclusion

The practice of denial, reduction and political conditioning of humanitarian help exemplify the negation of basic humanitarian values of civilized societies which NATO leaders claimed they were defending.

Imperialistic motives, war-disaster exacerbating policies and the blockade of economic development which is the most effective social disaster relief policy, are endangering the survival of humanity in the new millennium.

Vera Vratusa-(Zunjic)

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY, Department of Sociology

Cika Ljubina 18-20, 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

fax: + 38111 - 639-356

phone: + 38111 - 3282-141

e-mail: vratusa@dekart.f.bg.ac.yu or vratusaz@afrodita.rcub.bg.ac.yu

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE 'FUTURE OF EUROPEAN CRISIS
MANAGEMENT'**

An international conference on “The Future of European Crisis Management” was held in the Hague on 7-9 November 1999. The Conference was organized by the Crisis Research Center of the University of Leiden and the Swedish Agency for Civil Emergency Planning. Among other things, it featured two main plenary sessions, one on “A generic approach to crisis management” and the other on “The need for expertise-sharing, dialogue and transnational cooperation in Europe. Also, the participants had the opportunity to take part in one or two of the several workshops that included such interesting topics as IT-breakdown-Y2K; environmental crises; viruses, epidemics and biological contingencies; leadership in crisis management; coping with the media; refugee crises; and crises to come. During the intensive two-day conference, the participants also had a chance to visit the Netherlands Crisis Coordination Center and take part in a crisis simulation exercise, which was a necessary and beneficial practical supplement to the plenaries and the workshops. Finally, a decision was made by the organizers and the participants to set up a “European Association for Crisis Management and Research” (provisional title). For more information regarding the proceedings and affiliation with the new Association, the readers should contact Prof. U. Rosenthal, at: crc@fsw.leidenuniv.nl.

N. Petropoulos
Conference Participant
Director of E.R.C., Athens, Greece

DIRECT LINES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PEOPLE

The best way to describe what's left from my two missions in Turkey as the doctor-in-charge of the medical team from the Hellenic National Centre of Emergency Care (EKAB) was a written message to my mobile phone number a few days ago that read: “DOC, JUST FELT SMALL EARTHQUAKE IN INSTANBUL AT 22:00. NO FURTHER INFO. KAAAN”

This direct line of communication between two people that met three times within one year and became friends in the ruins of earthquake stricken cities in both their countries is the best early warning system I can think of!

When we left for our first mission to Turkey in August the team of 12 members of EKAB did not feel that we were doing something special. After all, EKAB along with the rest of

the members of the Hellenic Rescue Team -the famous EMAK of the Fire Service and the engineers of the Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization (EPPO) - had already been twice in Turkey for assisting in earthquake search and rescue operations in 1992 and 1995. What we had not realized was the magnitude of the disaster. Even during our first 24 hours in Turkey we did not realize the full extent of the disaster since we were placed in the outskirts of Istanbul where the collapsed buildings were attended by the fire department, the police and army personnel. It was after our first exploratory team came back that we were informed that there were areas where entire blocks of collapsed buildings had not been searched by anybody yet. It was then that we started asking to move to those areas. Diplomacy took some time to work things out, but next morning we were moving towards those areas. A young volunteer from AKUT – a Turkish search and rescue NGO – named Kaan was our guide. As soon as we arrived in Devizmendere we were directed to the ruins of a building where we found clear indications of life. Forteen(14) hours of efforts led to the extrication of 9 year old Guvenc, and suddenly this child became the symbol of hope! Hope for the survivors of the earthquake, hope for the relations of our two countries, hope for the people of our two countries. We thanked Kaan for his assistance, we invited him to Greece and left for home. We all thought that this was it...

Two weeks after our return to Greece, the ground in Athens started shaking. As soon as it was over we knew that it was serious... This time it was AKUT's and Kaan's turn to offer their assistance and we quickly answered back "yes". Seven days later, none was reported unaccounted for in the 31 buildings that collapsed. Eighty-one(81) persons were extricated alive and 142 dead. The foreign search and rescue teams were packing and once more we said goodbye. We all thought that this was it...

Then on the 12th of November my mobile phone received a message from Kaan: "Doc, we had another big one. We are loading the military choppers to go to the area. If you come, come to Bolu." We were there within the day. This time around the cold weather was a bigger enemy than the earthquake itself. Again, we were searching for lives under the ruins. Unfortunately only dead bodies were taken out of the ruins from the areas that we searched. The mobilization of the International Community was very big and much better organized this time. Practice makes perfect ...Kaan was again our guide, interpreter, liaison and problem solver at large. We all HOPE that this was it...

However, just in case, the best early warning system that I described above is always on. We never switch our mobiles off!

Demetrios Pyrros
Vice-President, Greek Doctors without Borders

MEETINGS & CONFERENCES ON THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF DISASTERS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following include summaries of conference programs. For more details and information, the readers should communicate with the organizing committees at the addresses given by the

organizers.

I. DISASTERS: PREVENTION AND LIQUIDATION OF CONSEQUENCES, MAY 23-25, KHARKOV, UKRAINE

The Black Sea Economical Cooperation countries region is potentially dangerous territory due to natural and anthropogenic factors. Only in 1999 there were earthquakes in Turkey and Greece which brought lots of human lives and caused material damage. Romania and Ukraine suffered a loss because of floods. There are basis to state that all kinds of natural emergency are possible in the BSEC region: earthquakes, hurricanes, landslides, fires. Also the region is saturated with techmogenic potentially dangerous objects: NPP, pipelines, potentially dangerous industries.

Strategic and tactical tasks of regional rescue services development require further cooperation of the BSEC countries in such areas as forecasting of emergency situations, risk assessment, provision of joint actions of rescue groups, medical maintenance in emergency conditions and after them.

Taking into account mentioned above matters the **Ukrmedprom** Association with the Ministry on Science of Ukraine with support of the Council of the City of Kharkov holds the applied and scientific conference and exhibition under the BSEC auspices in Kharkov (Ukraine), May 23-25, 2000, dated it for joint the USA-Ukraine rescue manoeuvres which will take place in this region.

Four tracks in the Conference:

1. The track 1. Scientific and technological maintenance of forecasting and prevention of emergency.
2. The track 2. Rescue activities.
3. The track 3. Medical aspects of emergency.
4. The track 4. Social aspects of emergency.

The Conference languages are English and Russian. Materials sent before April 1 2000 will be published.

Additional information is available by the following address:

Tel/fax: +38 0572 476557
 +38 0572 185237
 E-mail: ump@vlink.kharkov.ua

Please send your proposals and papers (format MS Word 7.0 and earlier) to the following address:

E-mail: ump@vlink.kharkov.ua
 Ukrmedprom,
 Gosprom, entrance 1
 5 Svobody Sq.,
 61022, Kharkov, Ukraine

II. REACHING WOMEN & CHILDREN IN DISASTER: A GLOBAL WORKSHOP FOR POLICY MAKERS, PRACTITIONERS AND RESEARCHERS, JUNE 4-6, 2000 IN MIAMI, FLORIDA

Mark your calendars and join us for this action-oriented conference. For more information, contact Betty Morrow at the International Hurricane Center. E-mail: morrowb@fiu.edu;

phone(305) 348-1607. Program ideas and sponsors welcomed. Check the conference website at: www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/rwcidconference.

Elaine Enarson
33174 Bergen Mountain Road
Evergreen, Colorado 80439
Tel: 303/670-1834
Fax: 303/679-0938
Email: enarson@uswest.net

III. EUROCONFERENCE ON GLOBAL CHANGE AND CATASTROPHE RISK MANAGEMENT: EARTHQUAKE RISKS IN EUROPE, LAXENBURG, AUSTRIA, 6-9 JULY 2000.

The scientific purposes of the conference are three-fold. The first is to examine how population/capital movements and other global change phenomena are increasing vulnerability to earthquakes in Europe and throughout the world.

A second purpose is to examine whether there is evidence of possible regional interdependencies of earthquake risks. The third purpose of the conference is to examine a set of risk management issues for both mitigating earthquake losses and improving the spread of the residual losses through public loss-sharing policies and private risk-transfer mechanisms.

We would like to integrate social scientists (in addition to our many economists) into the program, or perhaps add a session addressing the social issues. We would be delighted if you could send us some thoughts (or an abstract) on a possible presentation.

Since the conference is supported by the EU on a cost sharing base, we should be able to contribute to the travel costs of EU speakers by providing the hotel accommodation. The reduced registration fee for speakers includes one dinner, lunches and coffee breaks at the conference, and transportation from/to Vienna to the Conference Site.

For more details about the Euroconference, the reader should open the following webpage: <http://www.iiasa.ac.at/Reswearch/RMP/july2000/> or contact Dr. Amendola at the following addresses:

Dr.		Aniello		AMENDOLA
IIASA				
International	Institute	for	Applied	Systems
	Risk,	Modeling	Laxenburg,	and
A-2361			EC-JRC-ISIS,	Ispra
Visiting	from			
E-Mail:				amendola@iiasa.ac.at
Phone	:	+43	2236	807-209
Fax	:	+43	2236	807 - 466
IIASA		home		page: http://www.iiasa.ac.at/

