

CHINA

in a single day, producing floods up to 6 m above normal river levels. The floods did not recede until August.

In China, as in many other countries, settlements tend to be built along rivers, where they are subject to flooding. However, in China the scale of the problem is much greater than elsewhere. Three hundred and fifty million people live along the banks of the Yangtze and a further 100 million along the Yellow River. These two rivers are affected by floods nearly every year, and the severity of the floods is increasing. Because of population pressure more and more land is being developed for agriculture: forests are being cleared, swamps and other wetlands drained and flood plains developed to provide living space and farmland. These developments all increase runoff and flooding. Wuhan, at the confluence of the Han with the Yangtze shows this trend. Flooding becomes critical in Wuhan when the water level reaches 27 m. This level was reached six times in the 100 years prior to 1965. In the following 21 years to 1986 the flood exceeded 27 m on three occasions and in the last ten years (1987 to 1996) a further seven times. In the face of this increasing frequency and severity of floods the reductions in the death toll achieved are highly praiseworthy.



Road became water ways.

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