

it is worthwhile, for it may increase the awareness of the grave problems our children are going to inherit. In the final analysis, the question to which the Commission may have to seek an answer is this: In the contemporary economic, social and political environment, is it possible for human beings to be more humane?"

Round Table on "Population Movements"

The International Institute of Humanitarian Law, in San Remo, organized a round table on "Population Movements", which was held in Florence (Italy), from 14 to 18 June 1983.

Over 130 people gathered in Florence, all specialists of various backgrounds: ministers and high-ranking officials from several States, representatives from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, experts and in particular university professors. They came from all parts of the world. The Red Cross was also well represented, in particular by members of the Italian Red Cross, the League and the ICRC.

Population movements are currently of considerable concern to the international community. Attention of course is focused on movements, above all involuntary or forced displacements, that present problems. The Institute and in particular its President, Professor Patrnoic, wanted to see these problems examined as a whole, giving equal attention to movements in time of peace—for example, migrant workers—and in time of tension or conflict—refugees and displaced persons—and wished each question to be studied from the point of view both of the individual and of the States.

The President summarized the lively and constructive debates in a series of "Final Remarks", the main points of which are as follows:

— Voluntary migratory movements in conditions of peace and security are beneficial to humanity.

— In involuntary migrations, people move to survive, and especially to flee the effects of war, internal disorder or natural disasters, to escape famine or underdevelopment, out of fear of persecution or other violations of human rights.

The legality and legitimacy of mass expulsions were again questioned, in view of the fact that in certain situations the mass expulsion of specific categories of persons is prohibited. This is true in particular in the event of armed conflicts, by virtue of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Protocols.

However, the clearest point to emerge from the debates was the recognition of the direct link between movements of people and economic and social development, underdevelopment being the principal cause of directly or indirectly involuntary movements of people.

In this context, the following practical recommendations were made:

1. No new organization seems to be called for, and the proliferation of international legal instruments should be avoided. Above all, existing working possibilities must be re-inforced and applied.

2. Non-governmental organizations play a dynamic and indispensable role, especially in the dissemination of knowledge of international standards for the protection of the individual. This role must be upheld and encouraged.

3. In many cases it would be more appropriate to find humane solutions in a regional rather than a universal context. Regional preventive measures will often be more readily understood and more effective.

4. Finally, it was suggested that a humanitarian committee be established to better co-ordinate, in the event of major and complex disasters, the international interventions of the various organizations involved.

In so far as the Red Cross is concerned, one conclusion can be immediately drawn: both to alleviate the basic problems brought about by the involuntary movements of people, and to stimulate international response, that is to say the assistance those people are in need of, all the components of the Red Cross can and must contribute according to their competence and their means.

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