

Dissemination of international humanitarian law

Summary of work in 1980

The ICRC, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute, along with a number of Red Cross National Societies, continued their efforts in 1980 to familiarize people with international humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross. As it has done before, International Review provides in this issue a summary of action carried out in this field during the past year.

Dissemination in the armed forces

Course for young military medical officers

In the framework of its action for diffusion to the military, the ICRC took part in the 9th International Advanced Course for Young Medical Officers, organized by the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy at Athens from 21 to 30 April 1980.

Medical subjects constituted the principal part of the event, but, in accordance with tradition, there was also a lecture on aspects of the Geneva Conventions and the additional Protocols of direct concern to medical officers. As on previous occasions, the lecture was given by Lieut. Col. de Mulinen, ICRC delegate to armed forces.

Seminar for Senior Officers in Military Medical Services

Following an initial seminar in French in 1979, the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy convened, from 24 September to 1 October 1980, a second seminar, this time in English, on the law of armed conflicts, for senior officers in military medical services. The seminar was held at the Henry Dunant Institute in Geneva. It was

presided over by Divisional General Käser, former director of Swiss Army Medical Services and former chief medical officer of the ICRC. The 26 participants came from Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden and Switzerland.

Courses at San Remo

The International Institute of Humanitarian Law at San Remo, Italy, as in the past, organized two international courses in 1980 on the law of war. These courses for officers, the 8th in the series in English and the 9th in Italian, were led by Lieut. Col. de Mulinen, Swiss Army Staff officer, ICRC delegate to armed forces and director of military courses for the Institute. In the light of experience in previous years and the growing interest of military authorities in the countries represented, the duration of the courses in 1980 was increased to two weeks.

A particular theme was studied each day. The course began with an introductory lecture and then continued in the form of separate seminars, each having no more than ten participants, under the leadership of staff officers who, in principle, had already taken at least one such course. During the two weeks, participants familiarized themselves with the main texts of the law of war: the Hague Conventions, the Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Protocols. These texts were not studied serially. Instead, the law of war was approached through study of a series of minor tactical events, for which the participants had to seek out the relevant legal provisions.

Dissemination among young people

The first meeting of leaders of the Junior Red Cross in Asia and the Pacific was held in *Melbourne* from 10 to 16 February. During the meeting, in which an ICRC delegate took part, one and a half days were devoted to the theme "International Humanitarian Law and the Principles of the Red Cross". In the discussions which followed, the participants reaffirmed the necessity of disseminating the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross among young people. There was also unanimous agreement that such an effort required the creation of suitable audiovisual material and the intensive training of "agents for dissemination". At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants adopted a recommendation

asking the ICRC, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute to create audiovisual material to facilitate dissemination among young people.

* * *

The 5th European Meeting of National Directors of the Junior Red Cross took place in *Budapest* from 17 to 22 March. Twenty-one European National Societies took part in the meeting, in which the ICRC and the League were represented. Two subjects were discussed: the work of the Red Cross among university students and the methods and means for international co-operation among the youth sections of the National Societies. With regard to the first theme, the participants stressed the importance of recruiting members of the Junior Red Cross among students and they noted that members of the Junior Red Cross are the best agents for dissemination in universities.

* * *

The regional delegation of the ICRC was invited to participate in the National Youth Leaders' Seminar organized by the Kenya Red Cross Society at *Nairobi* from 7 to 12 April. The delegates availed themselves of this opportunity to discuss the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions and to provide information about the Central Tracing Agency. Some sixty leaders of the Junior Red Cross in Kenya, among whom there were many teachers, took part in the seminar.

* * *

In *Austria* very close ties exist between schools and the Junior Red Cross. Following a series of experimental seminars beginning in 1971, the Austrian Junior Red Cross has developed a system of teaching about the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions as part of the teaching of history in secondary schools.

In order to make this system more widely known, the Junior Red Cross organized a seminar on this subject from 12 to 14 May. The 50 participants were history teachers from schools for the training of teachers or from secondary schools in all parts of Austria. It will be their responsibility to instruct their colleagues who are responsible for the same teaching in other schools.

The programme of the seminar included talks on such matters as international humanitarian law and a variety of practical demonstrations, including the audiovisual presentation of lessons given in schools.

The ICRC delegate, who had taken part earlier in most of the experimental seminars, gave a talk on the role and activity of the ICRC.

* * *

The first Afro-Brazilian training course for leaders of the Junior Red Cross took place in *Brazil* from 9 to 14 June. About 15 delegates from Angola, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tomé and Príncipe took part. During the course, the ICRC delegate spoke about the ICRC and its activities and presented the fundamental elements and principles of international humanitarian law. He also gave a showing of the film "Pax", accompanied by its teaching guide, that has recently been issued by the Documentation and Dissemination Division of the ICRC and the Youth Bureau of the League.

Dissemination among National Societies

*International Review*¹ has already referred to congresses organized by the *Belgian* Red Cross. We mention them again here only to say that the participants emphasized the need of creating within the National Society a service devoted specifically to the dissemination of international humanitarian law and a programme for dissemination.

* * *

A delegate from the ICRC Documentation and Dissemination Division carried out a mission in *Lisbon* from 9 to 13 April at the invitation of the Portuguese Red Cross. He gave several talks, illustrated by films, to a large number of members of the Portuguese Red Cross, students and representatives of various ministries. He also gave two lectures at the institute for advanced military studies, one to the army and the other to the air force.

* * *

A regional seminar on the dissemination of international humanitarian law took place at *Montevideo* from 30 May to 7 June, under the auspices of the Uruguayan Red Cross. The National Societies invited were those of the countries belonging to sub-region II as defined by the Inter-American Conference at Rio de Janeiro in June 1979. Representatives of the National Societies of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay took part. The ICRC was also represented. Representatives of the armies, navies and air forces were present at all sessions.

¹ Issue of May-June 1980.

Dissemination in medical circles

About 60 delegates, designated by ten European National Societies: Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, and representatives of the three Red Cross institutions in Geneva, the ICRC, League and the Henry Dunant Institute, attended a seminar in *Warsaw* from 10 to 15 November on international humanitarian law for Red Cross medical and paramedical personnel.

The seminar, organized jointly by the ICRC and the Polish Red Cross, was presided over by Dr. J. de Rougemont, member of the ICRC, and Prof. Bierzanek, of the Polish Red Cross. It was attended by doctors, nurses, social workers and jurists, all of whom had some knowledge of the Red Cross but had not studied international humanitarian law.

The subjects presented and discussed were based upon two major themes: international humanitarian law and its dissemination in medical circles (among military medical officers, in schools of medicine, nursing, etc.) and the medical actions of the Red Cross (as defined in theory in the Conventions and Protocols and as they are actually carried out in ICRC delegations, League delegations, National Societies, etc.).

The discussions which followed each paper presented gave abundant evidence that the meeting had created an awareness among the participants of the need to promote knowledge of the principles of the Red Cross and of international humanitarian law in medical circles.

The seminar also established a number of principles to guide medical personnel:

Essential principles

- The principle of *humanity* requires that man shall be treated humanely under all circumstances. It constitutes the basis for all Red Cross action as it does for all medical action.
- The principle of *impartiality* requires that the necessary care be given to all persons, regardless of the side to which they belong. Only reasons of medical urgency determine priorities in the order of care.
- The principle of *neutrality* forbids medical personnel protected by the sign of the red cross or red crescent from taking part in hostilities. Caring for an enemy who is wounded or sick shall never be considered as interference in the conflict.

Operational principles

- Emergency medical actions imply appropriate techniques, adapted to local conditions, so as to avoid leaving the population dependent upon an excessively sophisticated medical practice when the emergency is over.
- Emergency medical actions for refugees must not give privileges to these victims in comparison to the native population.
- Emergency medical actions must in principle respect the cultural identities of those benefiting from the care.
- Doctors are required to care for all the wounded, both civilian and military. The doctor is responsible only for the care he gives and has no authority to determine the status or assignment of the patient after he has been cured.

Participation of Henry Dunant Institute

The Henry Dunant Institute played an active role in dissemination activities during 1980.

It organized three introductory courses on the international activities of the Red Cross for Red Cross personnel and volunteers. The first of these, in French, held in Geneva from 28 May to 4 June, was attended by 34 participants from 25 National Societies; the second, in Spanish, took place in Madrid, from 25 November to 3 December, in co-operation with the Spanish Red Cross and was attended by 32 participants from 19 National Societies and 16 participants from provincial committees of the Spanish Red Cross; the third took place in Geneva, from 10 to 13 November, at the request of the Swiss Red Cross and was attended by 18 participants from the national and cantonal personnel of the Society.

The Institute organized or helped to organize various seminars on the Red Cross and international humanitarian law for persons not belonging to the Red Cross. One of these took place in Geneva from 16 to 22 June at the request of the Norwegian Red Cross for the benefit of journalists and members of the Norwegian Red Cross. Another, also in Geneva, took place from 24 September to 1 October for English-speaking army medical officers, on the initiative of the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy. The third seminar, from 27 November to 5 December, at Yaounde, Cameroon, in co-

operation with the Cameroon Institute for International Relations, was attended by 83 participants, including government officials, military leaders, teachers, students, etc., from 26 African countries.

The Institute also participated in a number of meetings organized by the League, the ICRC, various National Societies or several specialized organizations.

University Seminar at Florence

In this summary of 1980 activities for the dissemination of international humanitarian law special attention must be given to the University Seminar at Florence organized along new and interesting lines.

From 26 to 29 November, the faculties of law of the Universities of Florence and Rome and the Florentine section of the Italian Red Cross organized an introductory seminar on international humanitarian law for teachers of international law and political science in Italian universities.

About forty young teachers, both men and women, from all parts of Italy—Florence, Rome, Milan, Bologna, Pisa, Catania, Bari, Turin, Perugia, etc.—worked for several days under the guidance of a distinguished group of Italian specialists in international humanitarian law. With the exceptions of General Pietro Verri and Judge Ugo Genesio, all the lecturers—Professors Barile, Condorelli, Badiali, Ferrari-Bravo, Ronzitti and Migliazza—had been members at one time or another of the Italian delegation to the Diplomatic Conference at Geneva from 1974 to 1977.

The outstanding membership of this group of lecturers was a guarantee of the high standard of the discussions. The participants acquired knowledge of the content of international humanitarian law, along with the difficulties, usually political, encountered in its enactment and implementation. For many of the participants, this seminar was their first contact with this particular branch of international law. The introduction to that branch aroused general interest and several of those taking part undertook, in one form or another, to develop the teaching of international humanitarian law in their faculties.

It is hoped that the plan and structure of the seminar "Florence 1980" will be repeated in the years to come, not only in other Italian cities but also in other countries, because the delay in this field of dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law since World War II is still too great.

Joint working group

Mindful of Resolution No. VII of the Twenty-third International Red Cross Conference (Bucharest, 1977), the Executive Council of the League of Red Cross Societies, at its second session (October 1978), instructed the League Secretary General to establish, in consultation with the ICRC, a joint working group of experts to help and advise the Red Cross institutions in implementing the Programme of Action for the dissemination of international humanitarian law and of the principles and ideals of the Red Cross.

The working group on dissemination was accordingly constituted, its members consisting of experts from the Spanish Red Cross (Professor F. Murillo), the Finnish Red Cross (Mr. K. Warras), the Libyan Arab Red Crescent (Mr. A. Buhedma), the Malaysian Red Crescent (Mr. V. T. Nathan) and the Czechoslovak Red Cross (Professor G. Mencer), and representatives of the League, ICRC and Henry Dunant Institute.

At its first session on 26 April 1979, the working group elected Mr. K. Warras and Professor Mencer chairman and vice-chairman respectively, and adopted a system of annual rotation for the chairmanship and vice-chairmanship.

The members of the working group were invited, in the course of their meetings, to express their views on the various plans enumerated in the Programme of Action, to be executed by one or other of the three institutions, ICRC, League and Henry Dunant Institute, with the co-operation, in certain cases, of members of National Societies.

The joint working group will submit a report on its work to the Twenty-fourth International Red Cross Conference at Manila in November 1981.

Programme of dissemination for 1982-1985

In 1978 the ICRC and the League adopted and sent to all National Societies a Red Cross Action Programme for the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross (1978-1981). It has since been considered appropriate to establish a second programme on the same subject for the period from 1982 to 1985. This programme, on the decision of the joint ICRC-League expert group on dissemination, was sent to all National Societies on 23 November with a circular letter asking them to convey their comments and suggestions to the ICRC and the League.

116 + " Programme of Action of the Red Cross
with respect to dissemination of international
and of the Principles and Ideals of the Red Cross,
1978-1981." Geneva, March 1979