IN MEMORY OF PHYSICIAN GENERAL VONCKEN

In June this year Physician General Jules Voncken died. He it was who, in 1921, founded and became Secretary General of the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy whose connection with the ICRC is well known, as is the importance of General Voncken's contribution to, inter alia, the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions.

A ceremony in his memory took place on 10 October at the ICMMP headquarters in Liege. A number of speakers conveyed tributes from the WHO, the World Medical Association, the Commission médico-juridique de Monaco, the University of Liege, and other institutions. Dr. R. Käser, Chief Medical Officer of the ICRC spoke of General Voncken's services to medicine, international law and the cause of peace.

"His life-work was centered on the ICMMP, of which he was the moving spirit. In 1937 he was one of the experts invited by the ICRC to take part in the Commissions to deliberate on the revision of the Geneva Conventions of 1929... After 1949, General Voncken took a very active part in the development of humanitarian law. The ICRC, the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy, and the World Medical Association had together set up a working group for the study of questions of 'medical law'. This group met several times and did much constructive work."

The working group had tackled the question of defining the rules of medical ethics in time of war. "Those rules should be made widely known by the organizations concerned and by their members in peacetime, and should be restated immediately a war or similar situation occurs." Dr. Käser went on to mention another useful activity to which
General Voncken had devoted himself. "At the seminars for young army doctors, General Voncken, together with his old friend Brigadier Hans Meuli, dedicated himself to the advancement of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions. He was convinced that it was the mission of military doctors to make known, disseminate and put into practice the Geneva Conventions, and that the protection conferred by the Conventions on medical personnel contributed a great deal to alleviating the heavy burden of military doctors in wartime."

After expressing the ICRC's everlasting gratitude to General Voncken for all the good work he did so well and so wholeheartedly, Dr. Käser concluded: "He never spared any effort, if it was a question of advancing the cause and of spreading respect and knowledge of international humanitarian law throughout the world, and among military doctors in the first place."