

## The Red Cross and Victims of Armed Conflicts

*It will be recalled that in August and September 1963 on the occasion of the Red Cross Centenary, conferences and seminars took place in Switzerland. The International Review<sup>1</sup> analyzed the importance and significance of their results. Subsequently, it drew attention to the publications issued by the Centenary Commission of the Red Cross in Switzerland, as a result of these meetings, namely, the World Conference of Educators, the International Nursing Study Centre, and the International Red Cross Meeting of First Aiders.*

*The same Commission has now published a further book devoted to the work of the "Seminar on the Activity of the Red Cross on Behalf of the Victims of Armed Conflicts". We believe our readers will be interested in this publication of which we give some extracts below.<sup>2</sup> Let us first recall the significance of this seminar.*

*It would have been an omission not to have reserved a place in the general Centenary programme for the original tasks of the Red Cross, showing them in an up-to-date light in a world which has been so profoundly changed in the course of a century. It was therefore the ICRC and League activities which were portrayed, as well as those—past and present—of the National Societies themselves to bring assistance to the victims of conflict and to prepare for this mission. The presence of some thirty representatives of National Societies was therefore particularly useful.*

*Discussions, under the chairmanship of Mr. C. Pilloud, Deputy Director for General Affairs at the ICRC, were preceded by papers submitted by officials of the ICRC, the League, and the Swiss Red Cross. They dealt with some thirty subjects divided into several topics: practical peace-time preparation; activities of National Societies of countries involved in international conflict; activities in case of internal conflict; activities of National Societies of countries not involved in conflict.*

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<sup>1</sup> See *International Review*, particularly the November 1963 issue.

<sup>2</sup> This 240-page volume entitled *Seminar on the Activity of the Red Cross on behalf of the Victims of Armed Conflicts*, is available in French and English; it will shortly appear also in Spanish. It can be obtained from the ICRC, 7, avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 1, price Sw. fr. 5.—

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*Mr. R. J. Wilhelm, an Adviser in the Legal Department of the ICRC, was responsible for the executive side of the Seminar and he delivered the introductory address. After having described the general themes to be dealt with by the meeting, he raised a fundamental question which is of concern today : Can one really prepare for all the eventualities arising from armed conflicts, even for those of the most extreme character ? By way of reply, he examined the types of conflicts which may require action by a National Society in favour of victims : a) international tension ; b) relatively local conflict in which the National Society's country is not involved ; c) conflict on the territory of the National Red Cross Society's country, e.g. internal disturbances (with violence) or civil war (which can cause much bloodshed), in both of which cases the Red Cross has for many years expressed its desire to intervene to help victims in the name of humanity ; d) international conflict of a limited nature or regional, which may nevertheless involve the National Society in considerable tasks requiring the mobilization of all its resources ; e) general war, which, by its very nature, according to a large body of opinion, would undoubtedly include the use of weapons of mass destruction and would create special problems and difficulties standing in the way of normal Red Cross action.*

*Mr. Wilhelm, in the text which follows, then raised another important question.*

This example leads us naturally to questions of another order about which we must say a few words here, that is to say on the parallel between armed conflict and natural disasters, from the point of view of Red Cross activity and in particular of the preparation to be undertaken by National Societies.

Indeed we may ask: is not preparation for Red Cross activity in the event of natural disaster sufficient to suit also the event of armed conflict? Is such preparation in both cases not practically identical? There are similarities, but there are also wide differences and it is the latter which I wish to emphasize here.

It is a fact that in the handbooks issued by the Red Cross Societies, armed conflict is often placed on a footing similar to disasters and is considered as a disaster of a particularly serious character. One such handbook, worded to my mind in a striking

and effective manner, mentions "natural disasters" and "man-made disasters". If, for example, we examine the excellent first-aid *handbook* issued this year by the Belgian Red Cross, we find a list of categories of possible disasters in a country such as Belgium, and this list finishes with war, conventional or nuclear, which, the handbook points out, is far worse than all other disasters "in extent, duration, number of victims and destruction".

These distinctive qualifications of armed conflict—extent, duration, number of victims—are very much to the point, but they do not include one further essential qualification which, you might contend, goes without saying but which cannot be too strongly stressed; the disaster of armed conflict implies the concept of an enemy: enemies confronting one another with all the consequences which may result from such a situation. To make this understood thoroughly, we shall take two examples of natural disaster on the one hand, Agadir and Skopje, and the events of Hungary in 1956, on the other hand.

Both at Agadir and at Skopje, international assistance came into play on a large scale; frontiers were opened, barriers were removed, nationality was no longer a relevant question. At Skopje the American assistance, French technicians, and Soviet relief were all on the spot together, contributing to facilitating the delivery of relief in goods and personnel for the benefit of the victims.

Let us now look at the events in Hungary, a case of armed hostilities. It might be said that relief organizations of all sorts behaved at the beginning as if it were a case of natural disaster; relief supplies and teams flowed in from all quarters, somewhat *pêle-mêle*. And then, all of a sudden it must have been realized that this was an armed conflict in which there was a prevailing concept of an enemy: frontiers were closed, the movement of foreigners was halted and only the exemplary neutral body of the Red Cross, the ICRC, was able to overcome the obstacles and reach the victims in Hungary itself, for, contrary to natural disaster, the victims of armed conflict cannot be reached as one would wish: there are sometimes impassable barriers; there is the concept of an enemy with all that this implies by way of security measures, suspicion, etc.

How is a Red Cross nurse distinct from a nurse who is not of the Red Cross? No doubt by a technical training of a more thorough

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nature to be able to cope with a flow of wounded persons. But the distinction is above all this: the Red Cross nurse, thanks to her knowledge of the Red Cross principles and the Geneva Conventions, knows how to behave towards an enemy. She knows what she may and may not demand of the enemy, both for herself and for the victims under her care.

Thus armed conflict, unlike natural disaster, calls not only for personnel from the National Societies who have received specialized technical training to enable them to intervene effectively, it also requires this extra training which is not technical, but rather of a moral and normative order which derives from knowledge and practice of Red Cross principles and the Geneva Conventions.

Let us take the case of a strong and efficient National Society. In the event of flooding in its country, for example, it will be able to save a large proportion of the victims. But if it has not got the necessary minimum independence, it might well be unable to act in the event of internal conflict within its country despite all its technical efficiency.

Apart from this special technique, which is of primary importance and, in a way, of a moral character, armed conflict considered as disaster demands technical preparation by National Societies similar to that which is called for by the other aspects quoted in the Belgian handbook which distinguish this type of disaster from those which are natural, that is to say its extent, duration and the number of its victims. As well as these factors we must add the effects which are inherent in the very nature of weapons of war and also the fact—which is all too often forgotten—that the Red Cross Society must go into action at a time when a large proportion of the male population is under arms and the Society must therefore rely on other possibilities than those which are available in peace time. For all these reasons the preparation which a National Society must undergo should, even more than for cases of natural disaster, aim at adaptation to unforeseen circumstances with limited material means; in a word, improvisation.

But the difference is one of degree rather than of kind and National Societies are usually justified in embodying, to a certain extent, preparation for armed conflict in that intended for relief in the event of natural disaster.

*As an illustration of the wide variety of subjects dealt with during the Seminar, we give below, in the order in which they were dealt with, some of the topics involved and the discussions to which they gave rise.*

*Mr. J. de Preux, an Adviser in the ICRC Legal Department, underlined the far-reaching importance of disseminating knowledge on the Geneva Conventions.*

The dissemination of the Conventions is too vast a topic for me to deal with here in its entirety. In any case, the scope of this subject is restricted by the nature of this Seminar, in which we are concerned only with armed conflicts. As you know, there is in fact another aspect to the dissemination of the Conventions, which consists to some extent of promoting that spirit of peace which is implicit in the Geneva Conventions and the Red Cross ideal. And even with regard to armed conflicts this topic can be restricted yet further.

The first question which may be asked in connection with the diffusion of the Conventions concerns the numbers taking part; the results achieved in this respect are very important, since at the present time there are 96 countries formally bound by these Conventions.

Nevertheless, some Societies have still to succeed in influencing their governments, in order fully to achieve the first result, that is to say, universality. Once this has been achieved, the problem of translation arises, and this is something which is indispensable, because in order to apply the Conventions, they must first be known. In this respect, correlation amongst National Societies would be extremely useful in order to avoid duplication of effort. Indeed, a great many translations exist already. Apart from the question of translation, there are also the rules required for their implementation. The Geneva Conventions demand of the States adopting them a certain number of regulations, on the national level, of an administrative or legislative character, in order to ensure that these Conventions are implemented. It is useless to instruct members of armed forces on the punishment applicable for infringements of the Conventions and on the rights attached to possession of an identity card, if to a definite question the reply has to be: "This law does not

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exist”, “ We do not have these identity cards ”. It is therefore very important, after accession to the Conventions, that the necessary steps be taken to ensure their implementation and this indeed is a task awaiting the National Societies, that is to say the task of influencing their governments in the right direction.

If we now approach the wider implications of dissemination, questions which arise are of a twofold aspect: first, what is it that must be disseminated? Second, amongst whom is dissemination to take place? There is no single reply to the first question; dissemination may be required for the whole set of Conventions ; it may be limited to specific details. In certain cases, it is preferable to deal with particular points before giving attention to the general problem. One major point in the Geneva Conventions on which dissemination sometimes falls short, is Article 3. It may well happen that at a particular time Article 3 should take precedence over the Conventions as a whole. There are other special cases also: for example, the protection of persons in the exercise of the medical profession or in the dispensing of care to the wounded. Other provisions of a limited kind may refer to the civilian population. The choice lies with the National Societies which should draw up a scale of priorities dependent on the needs of the moment.

What will the target be in efforts to disseminate the Conventions? We must first reach the authorities. Governments are overburdened. Once they have devoted time to acceding to the Conventions, it sometimes happens that they have difficulty in finding the time to attend to the logical consequences of having done so. Through the authorities one must endeavour to reach the armed forces. In this preparatory work the National Societies should be able to make a useful contribution. Dissemination should be aimed at specialized groups, universities, medical organizations, social services and finally, to an extent which has then to be decided, the public. In this field the National Societies can rely on the backing of the ICRC and the League. These two organizations have already prepared ample material which is available to the National Societies. If this cannot always be used to the full, it can provide a basis enabling the Societies to derive some advantage therefrom and a lightening of their tasks. Finally, I would not wish to conclude without saying that I believe that this problem of the dissemination

of the Geneva Conventions is, as it were, the keystone of everything to be discussed at this Seminar. Whatever their theoretical training, the members of the armed forces are required, in the course of conflicts, to perform acts which are sometimes difficult of accomplishment. It is therefore during action, in the very heat of action, that the National Society will provide a by no means negligible example, by the manner in which it exerts itself in accordance with the Conventions, to those who are witness thereto. And I believe that all the measures which will be discussed here are those which, at the right time, will promote the dissemination of the Conventions to an appreciable extent.

One National Society stressed that it had been granted authorization in its country to disseminate the Conventions in military colleges and that courses were already being given in the medical faculties.

Another Society (from Asia) was able to claim even more extensive measures. Following up the ICRC's circular of April 1962 and the receipt of the "Course of Five Lessons", it approached the Ministries of Defence, Health and Education. Teaching of the Conventions is foreseen in the faculties of law, courses are given in the administration and police schools by the Society itself, and regular articles on the subject are published in the Red Cross periodicals. Within the movement itself, lectures are given to the Junior Sections to whom is distributed documentary material published either by the ICRC or by the National Society itself. But, what is to be done, the representative of this Society asked, when an adversary does not abide by the Conventions?

Other Societies expressed themselves on similar lines, that is that either they have arranged for the Conventions to be the subject of an important chapter in the "Soldier's Handbook" or that they have concentrated their efforts in schools, universities or even amongst the general public. One Society representative asked others their opinion as to the best manner of approaching governments. One of the participants in the Seminar mentioned the case of a country where the National Society had formed an ad hoc commission on which the Red Cross and the government were represented and of which the task was to draw up the necessary programme. To conclude, stress was laid on the necessity for National Societies to organize instructor teams qualified to undertake the indispensable tasks involved in the dissemination of the Conventions.

*The tasks confronting National Societies in the field of information and tracing as well as of transmission of civilian messages were the subject of a paper by Miss M. Katz, Head of the Italian Section of the Central Tracing Agency. An extract is given below :*

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. . . As has been proved by the experience of the Second World War, and the recurrent outbreaks of conflict and violence since 1945, many National Societies have, as it were, to work alongside the national information bureau.

Indeed, whenever a family is without news from one of its members, it can if it wishes enquire of its national information bureau, which fulfils a dual function: the registration of foreign prisoners of war and interned enemy aliens on the one hand, and of its own nationals taken by the enemy on the other. However, the family will spontaneously appeal, in most cases, to the National Society to obtain news of a missing serviceman, a POW, an interned civilian or a relative residing abroad.

In addition, the Central Agency might request a National Society to seek civilians who have ceased to give relatives residing in a belligerent country any sign of life. Moreover, where soldiers fallen in battle, deceased prisoners of war or interned civilians, are concerned, the official confirmation of death is sent by the national information bureau to the Central Agency which, in turn, transmits it to the Power concerned. However, the family will want to know more, such as details of the circumstances of death, the assistance given to the dying person and any last wishes. As this entails enquiries of a humanitarian character, it is to the National Society that the Central Agency will appeal for additional information likely to bring a measure of comfort to the bereaved family.

There is yet a further very important activity which has to be undertaken by each National Society in countries involved in conflict or disturbances: the transmission of civilian messages. As you are aware, the International Committee of the Red Cross made it its business to provide a means of communication for civilians cut off by the fighting during the First World War. In 1916 the ICRC instituted a civilian messages system. During the Second World War it adopted a form for the transmission of civilian messages, form No. 61, well known to National Societies. One side of this is for the sender's and the receiver's addresses and for a message, whilst the other side is for a reply.

The National Societies had these forms printed, on the lines of the model drawn up by the ICRC, and they delivered these to people desiring news from their families not only during war, but whenever

postal communications were broken off for any reason. One such instance is the relatively recent suspension of postal connection between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

National Societies have an important role to play in the organization of civilian message transmission. They must watch that messages contain only strictly personal news, in conformity with the regulations, to ensure admission by the censorship in the country of destination.

If the National Societies send Geneva messages not meeting these requirements, the Central Agency is obliged to expurgate and re-write them. But the Central Agency's task must be lightened. During the Second World War it handled 24 million messages, with the co-operation of the National Societies, but it also had to re-write half a million of them, either because they did not conform to the regulations or because they were confused ramblings which had to be condensed.

A message may often lead to enquiries. If the addressee cannot be reached, the National Society, for humanitarian reasons, may not merely return the message to Geneva, with a note that the person had "left—address unknown". This could mean the person had been evacuated, had been wounded during evacuation, or had even died in hospital. If it is merely a change of residence, the new address has to be traced, so that every message returned to the National Society means starting enquiries to enable it to send the Central Agency the requisite information on the addressee.

The need for rational organization of tracing work cannot be too strongly stressed, as those Societies which have had experience in this field know. A tracing application in the form of a lengthy letter, no matter how well composed, will be detrimental to the promptitude with which the authorities or the Central Agency handle the case. The National Society must therefore draw up a standard form for such applications. We have specimen forms of a simple and rational type available to National Societies which may require them.

In addition, it is important that replies sent by National Societies to the General Agency's requests for enquiries should contain adequate and precise information on the person traced, in order to avoid confusion with a namesake.

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Moreover, when a National Society in the course of its enquiries obtains information which may appear inconclusive or of no importance, it should nevertheless give the details to the Central Tracing Agency, for they might well be a valuable link in investigations which the latter has to carry on; they may be the means of enabling cross-checking to be made.

In such investigations the contribution of the National Societies can be of inestimable value thanks to their humanitarian motives and their experience.

A further task devolving on the National Societies is the registration of refugees who have to flee from their homes because of hostilities.

*Red Cross activity in internal conflicts aroused considerable interest. After a discussion of the application of Article 3 and the principles of the Geneva Conventions, attention was turned to the rôle of National Societies in such circumstances, in liaison with the ICRC.*

*Mr. H. Coursier, then an Adviser in the ICRC Legal Department, introduced the matter and we quote below part of his paper and the discussion which followed it.*

A Commission convoked in 1962 by the ICRC recalled that the tasks incumbent on National Societies included humanitarian protection in the case of internal as well as international conflicts. The National Societies thus have the obligation to prepare themselves already in time of peace for the difficult and painful mission which they will have one day perhaps to fulfil. In order to be able to face up to this heavy responsibility, National Societies should be imbued with the doctrine and the principles of the Red Cross and assume the diffusion of this doctrine and these principles in their respective countries. They should adopt a structure capable of resisting as far as possible the upheavals caused by war or civil war. In this respect, the Commission envisaged measures for decentralization or for the constitution, to meet emergencies, of ad hoc committees of people whose functions enabled them to remain outside civil conflicts.

In addition, the Commission was of the opinion that, as far as the questions which it examined were concerned, there was no

division of responsibility between the International Committee of the Red Cross and the National Societies which would allot a reserved field of action for the latter. On the other hand, it would be for the ICRC to follow the development of the National Societies and to assure itself that they are organized and function in accordance with the rules of the Red Cross. In this respect, the Commission considers the moral support and technical assistance given by the ICRC (or by the League, should the occasion arise, according to its attributions) to National Societies in countries which have recently acceded to independence, as particularly desirable.

In the Commission's view, even if during a period of internal disturbances the National Societies did effectively assure to all, the protection required by international humanitarian common and treaty law, the ICRC should nonetheless be present. Neither action by public authorities and services nor by the National Red Cross Societies in any way constitutes legal grounds for objecting to ICRC intervention, which cannot be considered as interference in the internal affairs of a State.

The first aspect of the discussion was the practical activity of National Societies in the event of internal conflict, one of the Asian Societies having pointed out that it seemed difficult for a National Society to make visits to internees after such a conflict and that this function should be assumed essentially by the ICRC.

Whilst sharing this viewpoint, a representative of one of the European National Societies suggested an important distinction. He believed that National Societies should always be in a position "to bring relief", whilst visits to detainees, followed up by a report to the detaining authorities, was a task beyond the bounds of National Societies' possibilities. In this connection, Mr. Coursier mentioned that the 1921 Conference resolution quoted in his paper did not limit National Society activity to the provision of material relief; Red Cross Societies in some cases might be able to do more than that, hence the utility of a none too restrictive clause.

One European Red Cross representative, describing practical experience in this field, stated his Society had been able to visit political detainees to deliver material relief and perform certain social services. Following complaints it had received from these prisoners concerning their treatment, it asked for government permission to visit them and to investigate detention conditions. This had worked out well and had smoothed out the difficulties.

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But, as one of the ICRC speakers stated, activity during internal conflict requires prior preparation. In this respect, the representative of one of the Asian Red Cross Societies enquired whether it would not be appropriate to include in the conditions for recognition of new Societies, qualifying provisions designed to facilitate activity in the event of internal conflict, such as decentralization, absence of political association of members, etc. In this connection, the General Secretary of one of the European Red Cross Societies stated that some of these requirements were already implied in the conditions for recognition approved by the International Conferences of the Red Cross (see Handbook, page 319). Article 6 of the Conditions for the recognition of National Red Cross Societies provides that a Society shall "be so organized as to enable it to deal effectively with the tasks incumbent on it..." and Article 7 that it shall "extend its activities to the entire country and its dependencies." The conditions for recognition also stipulate under Article 6 that the Red Cross Societies must prepare "in time of peace for war time activities". Consequently, the amendment of these conditions would, in his opinion, require the stipulation that "time of war" should be taken to mean "during armed conflict of any nature whatsoever, both international or national".

The usefulness of the decentralization provision appears also to apply to another question raised by an Asian Red Cross Society: should the President or a senior member of the Management Committee, if isolated from headquarters by events, organize a Red Cross where he is? The ICRC representative replied that it was always possible to carry out humanitarian activities wherever one might be, and that in the hypothesis envisaged, if the Red Cross Society did indeed have sections throughout the national territory, that President could act in co-ordination with the section of the region where he was. The same representative quoted at length examples of Red Cross activity during the Spanish civil war, with the setting up of a Red Cross on each side. One of the difficulties lay of course in the fact that sections cut off from headquarters could not communicate with it direct, but the ICRC was there to act as a neutral intermediary between the two Red Cross Societies and to facilitate tacit agreement between them on the pursuit of humanitarian activities.

This is what happened during the Spanish civil war, and at the London International Conference in 1938 both Red Cross Societies were represented and the simultaneous presence of the two gave rise to no difficulties.

However, even more than decentralization and other measures, the most important criterion, and one to which the representatives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent reverted on several occasions, was National Society independence.

A European and a Middle East Society gave examples of good work which they had been able to carry out during internal conflicts thanks

to their independence and the confidence which they enjoyed, both from the public at large and from political circles. From the outset of events, one of them stated, the members of the Central Committee were mobilized; day and night stand-by service was organized at the central headquarters; Society doctors, nurses and ambulances were mobilized and able to go to any part of the country held by either party to the conflict. The representative of this Society stated that the Red Cross mission "is unique and demands complete independence and confidence in the principle of absolute autonomy so that the Red Cross would always be able to give effect to the principles of fellowship which lie in every human heart and in order to be able to maintain at a high level and undefiled the great store of gratitude and confidence it has gained".

"Independence and autonomy" by no means implies the absence of connections with the government, as demonstrated by the President of one of the African Societies. His personal experience had shown that it was absolutely essential for a Society, if it were to be effective, "to live in harmony with the government" whilst making it clear that the Government should not interfere in the affairs of the Red Cross, just as the Red Cross should not interfere in the business of the government.

According to several African delegates, there was frequently in the developing countries a danger of a sometimes unconscious interference by the government into Red Cross affairs. They all underlined the fact that the Red Cross official who is also politically active is a potential danger to his Society. That danger, the temptation to join the Red Cross in order to give one's activities the trappings of humanitarianism when in fact they are purely political, may not be very obvious but it is thereby the more insidious. In the opinion of member delegates, therefore, the ICRC and the League should be in a position to demand of National Societies respect for basic principles, particularly the principle of Red Cross neutrality.

However, observance of Red Cross principles may make the National Society's position delicate vis-à-vis the Government if, for example, it undertakes humanitarian action in favour of persons considered to be enemies of the government. The representatives of the African Red Cross Societies, showing that this problem was sometimes particularly acute in new countries, raised the question of protection for Red Cross officials by the international organizations in Geneva, i.e. the ICRC and the League. Of course, as some of them underlined, such protection could only apply for officials whose role had been purely humanitarian; intervention from Geneva could never purport to cover political activities. In young National Societies who cannot yet stand on their own feet and which have sometimes to work in countries "where a person can be put out of the way for a "yea or a nay", it would often be psychologically beneficial for a Red Cross official to know that in case of need he would benefit from some degree of protection by the Geneva organizations.

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Mr. Pilloud replied at length to these preoccupations. Of course, if Red Cross officials with an easy conscience are unjustly dismissed or risk persecution for having fulfilled their functions, the ICRC and the League will always endeavour to come to their assistance as they have done in some cases. At all events, the ability of Red Cross Societies to carry out their activities under all circumstances is the main interest of these two international institutions. In addition, if a government sets at naught the activities of an impartial, independent and therefore productive Red Cross, it is certainly very difficult to take any action.

Moreover, said Mr. Pilloud, there are certain precautions which National Societies can take in time of peace, apart from those which have already been mentioned. For instance, it might be appropriate to draw up the National Society's statutes in such a way that the board of management is always composed of a majority of persons elected by members of the Society's own sections. As has been said, the appointment of the Society's president by the head of the State is a normal procedure in very many excellent Societies; such a procedure can sometimes ensure the appointment of a highly competent person. Nevertheless, the precaution to be taken for the composition of the board of management is still necessary. Naturally, continued Mr. Pilloud, there is no hard and fast rule for effective action where governments, in contempt of their National Society's importance and discarding Red Cross principles, wish to subvert them for political ends. But this is a short-term attitude which such governments might one day well regret.

In this connection, one of the Red Crescent representatives from the Middle East mentioned his own experiences during a revolution in his country, when the officials of the National Society had twice been dismissed from office. Being sceptical of the possibilities open to the ICRC and the League to intervene, he considered that the only solution lay in greater comprehension on the part of the authorities for the rôle and functions of the international Red Cross. In conclusion, a delegate of an African Red Cross Society recalled that his country, which had been the victim of aggression, received assistance from medical personnel delegated by Red Cross Societies in neutral countries and that this personnel had been prepared to make the supreme sacrifice. In his opinion, when one agreed to assume office in the Red Cross, and to do so by upholding the organization's principles, one must also be prepared to face the risks and inconvenience which such an office might entail.

*Miss S. Robertson, Assistant Director of the Relief Bureau of the League, broached another aspect of activity by National Societies in neutral countries, namely reception of refugees.*

Numerous references have already been made to refugees within a country involved in armed conflict. However, under this subject

concerning a National Society not engaged in the conflict, which falls very much within the competence of the League, three types of refugee situations may face the National Society:

- a) refugees who will return to their own country when the conflict is over—such as the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco;
- b) refugees who cannot return to their own country nor remain in the country of first asylum but must emigrate—such as the Hungarian refugees in Austria;
- c) refugees who cannot return to their own country but who can be resettled in the country of first asylum—such as the Tutsi refugees in Kivu Province of the Congo, Burundi, Tanganyika and Uganda.

The responsibility of the Red Cross is similar in each case—that of providing shelter, food and medical care until the refugees are repatriated, shifted to their final destination, or become self-supporting, though in the latter case it may be possible for the National Society to ensure the early integration of the refugees into the community by active participation in their resettlement and the provision of equipment or tools, etc. It is important that every effort be made to prevent the refugees' condition from becoming permanent, such as is the case of the Palestine refugees. The National Society will be called upon to co-operate with governmental or international agencies in connection with the repatriation, emigration or resettlement of the refugees.

From the very beginning of a relief operation for refugees, serious consideration must be given by the Red Cross in conjunction with the governmental authorities to the method in which the problem is going to be finally solved—i.e. repatriation, emigration or integration in the local community. The League has had considerable experience in these problems since the last world war and National Societies faced with such a situation should always feel free to approach the League for advice or practical assistance. League delegates experienced in this field of activity can be made available if such help is desired or warranted.

For the purposes of the relief operation it is necessary to register the refugees, but it may be possible to carry this out in conjunction with a governmental registration. Registration should be carried

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out by the Red Cross, principally for reasons of tracing, reuniting families, etc. The degree to which the Red Cross is responsible for this registration will be decided by the National Society in each particular relief operation, but you are all aware now of the importance of ensuring that a thorough registration is carried out and you have heard many helpful suggestions which will aid you in making a registration—such as cards, forms, records, etc.

The basic principles of relief postulate National Societies' co-ordinating all available sources of assistance within their country. Therefore the relief plan should utilize the facilities of other agencies willing to assist the Red Cross fulfil its obligations.

The decision as to whether the refugees will be grouped together in camps or not and, if so, whether they will be sheltered in tents or available buildings, will have to be decided in each individual case by the National Society in consultation with its Government according to the particular circumstances and facilities available...

*Mr. H. Haug, Secretary-General of the Swiss Red Cross, also dealt with the reception of refugees; those of the last world war. We give below a section relating to refugee children ; this is an example of practical work undertaken by a National Society in a particular aspect of assistance to war's victims.*

The relief action carried out on the widest scale was that involving the reception and accommodation with Swiss families of children who had suffered because of the war. As early as 1940 Switzerland received groups of children, some numerous and some less so, from France, Belgium, Yugoslavia, and later from Luxemburg, Holland, Italy and subsequently from Austria, Great Britain, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Spain and Greece.

The selection of the children was effected jointly by the National Red Cross Society in the country of origin and a representative of the Swiss Red Cross, and it was in principle based on medical criteria. The children travelled both ways in Swiss railway carriages accompanied by Swiss stewardesses. The Swiss Red Cross Children's Relief Programme set up reception centres at the frontiers and also in the building which is today the headquarters of the ICRC. The children were examined medically before continuing their voyage to their final destinations in various parts of the coun-

try. Language was no problem and very often the children even attended schools in our country. From 1948 onwards the number of children accommodated under the scheme declined but the programme did not come to an end until 1956. In all, some 180,000 children were lodged in this manner with more than 100,000 Swiss families or in homes, for periods of from 3 to 4 months. Most of them returned to their own countries newly clad from head to foot. The cost to the host families has been estimated at 60 million Swiss francs. The other expenses involved were covered by funds collected in cash (weekly pennies, sale of badges, contributions from sponsors, etc.).

The havoc created by tuberculosis in many European countries during and after the war impelled Switzerland to play its part in curing the victims of this disease, particularly as the Swiss climate lends itself to tuberculosis treatment. Sanatoria were opened in Leysin in 1944 for the benefit of student tuberculosis cases who were enabled to carry on their studies whilst undergoing treatment. When the Red Cross withdrew from this activity in 1946 students from France, Belgium, Holland and Czechoslovakia had been accommodated in these sanatoria.

Hospitalization of children prone to tuberculosis assumed more extensive proportions and was carried on from 1945 to 1948. The Swiss Red Cross established a health centre to accommodate them at Adelboden and the programme started by taking in over one thousand French children. During the four months they were in our country, not only were they housed, fed and cared for, but they were also provided with a complete set of new clothing. The Swiss Red Cross then received at Adelboden and other health resorts other groups of children coming from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Great Britain, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Germany. As a result, 4,253 children have thus completely or partly recovered their health.

In a number of countries there were so many children disabled by the war that it was not possible for them all to be operated on without delay or for them to be fitted with the artificial limbs appropriate for children. A Swiss medical mission went to Alsace in 1945 to choose the first group of 550 children (from France, Belgium, Austria and Hungary)—mostly orthopaedic cases—who

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were admitted into specialized Swiss hospitals. They returned home two or four months later fitted out with artificial limbs. The lasting success of such a programme implies regular supervision of the patients once they are back in their own country. . . .

*On the subject of international relief actions, Mr. C. Pilloud dwelt as follows upon the principles involved :*

The first of these principles is non-discrimination, that is to say relief must be given without distinction of race, language, political opinion, religion, philosophy, class or any other criteria. Similarly, in any international action, the nationality of beneficiaries should in no way influence the work on behalf of any category of the destitute or victims.

Relief has to be—or ought to be—in proportion to the extent of the needs which it is desired to alleviate. It is therefore necessary to use one's resources for the most urgent needs first. Unfortunately, as you know, it is seldom that adequate means can be mustered to eradicate or alleviate misery completely, so that some rule has to be found for the most advantageous use of the means available. When misfortune is slight, assistance need not be great, but large-scale distress calls for relief action in equal proportion. It is therefore quite normal and logical for the Red Cross to differentiate between varying degrees of emergency and needs.

One delicate point in this connection, as you know, is that whereas some events arouse the extreme generosity of the public, there are others which, whilst no less serious, do not make so much impression on the public. To what extent can the Red Cross remedy this lack of equilibrium in public generosity? The question is a difficult one. So far our organizations have not felt themselves able to equate, so to speak, the resources which are available to needs which arise; the problem remains and many instances could be quoted, such as the disasters of Fréjus and Agadir, when public generosity was immense. In countries further afield where events no less disastrous occurred, generosity has been very much less. For the moment the Red Cross has had neither the means nor the justification to redistribute the relief funds which it receives, but obviously the ideal solution would be to have available a general

fund, to which recourse could be had without taking into consideration who the beneficiaries of the funds were originally intended to be. This is a problem which we must keep in mind. Red Cross relief actions should be universal in character, that is to say should be carried out in any part of the world on behalf of mankind everywhere. Public generosity is aroused more readily for certain sections of mankind and this is a regrettable fact that we can do nothing about.

During relief actions in time of war or in the course of disturbances, experience has shown that intervention by an impartial and neutral organization is a necessity. This is why the Geneva Conventions and the statutes of the International Red Cross have cast the ICRC for this rôle. This intervention often enables relief to be removed from the sphere of politics or nationality, no matter what its origin, and also enables supplies to be distributed to persons often considered as enemies of the State.

A further principle which is at the basis of all Red Cross international relief actions is solidarity. You will recall that one of the conditions necessary for the recognition of National Societies is that they observe the spirit of solidarity which unites members of the Red Cross. This principle of solidarity finds material expression in international relief actions, and it is a source of pleasure for me to recognize the fact that the National Societies of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the Red Lion and Sun have proved on very many occasions that, although they are independent organizations, they yet feel themselves united in the face of misfortune affecting any one of them.

In time of war, assistance may assume various forms. One Society may give direct aid to another: we have known this to happen many times during conflicts. It may be that recourse has to be had to multilateral assistance involving intervention by the relevant international organization, i.e., in this case, the ICRC.

It must also be borne in mind that relief by the Red Cross should always retain its auxiliary nature and I believe that the leaders of the international organizations of the Red Cross and of the National Societies are now aware of this. The Red Cross cannot assume the full responsibility for the feeding of an entire population. That would obviously exceed its means. Nor can it be responsible for the feeding of prisoners of war. All it can do therefore is to provide

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a supplement; the assumption of full responsibility by a National Society or by one of the international organizations of the Red Cross for any category of persons can only be envisaged as an exceptional temporary measure.

A further important principle of international Red Cross action is its gratuitous nature. It is a basic principle of our movement, and on this point I believe there is no doubt in anybody's mind, that all actions, both international and national, have always been free of charge. That, of course, does not mean that the National Societies and the international organizations of the Red Cross may not accept refund of the expenses which relief action entails and indeed the international organizations have many times availed themselves of refund possibilities, in particular when they have been requested by governmental authorities to undertake some specific action.

One further point I wish to add, which is just a principle of implementation, is that all relief given in the name of the Red Cross at an international level should be subject to supervision of the use made of the relief supplies and services. I think that any National Society asking for or accepting relief from a sister Society should simultaneously accept a degree of supervision over the utilization of the relief which it receives. This principle has so far not been completely integrated into our practice, but I personally wish to see it become established and made a practical reality. The Red Cross enjoys in general the confidence both of the public and of the authorities. The relief distributions which it undertakes should be carried out in such a manner that everything goes to those for whom it was intended. Confidence is built up slowly but can be rapidly lost.

*These few extracts give an idea of the interest to be found in this book which has just come off the press. We might add that although this Seminar was convened to examine the hypothesis of armed conflicts, the task which it had set itself was quite compatible with the profound desire for peace cherished by all people and the entire Red Cross movement.*