

**CENTENARY OF THE BRUSSELS DECLARATION
AND THE
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON HUMANITARIAN LAW**

To commemorate the Centenary of the Brussels Declaration of 1874 concerning the Laws and Customs of War,¹ the Committee on the Protection of Human Life in Armed Conflicts, a working group of the International Society of Penal Military Law and Law of War, held an International Symposium on Humanitarian Law in Brussels from 12 to 14 December 1974, after a formal sitting in commemoration of the Centenary.

Formal Sitting

Following the opening speech by the Chairman of the Organizing Committee, three papers were read. The first, "The Declaration of Brussels of 1874" was by Mr. J. de Breucker, adviser to the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the second, "The Evolution of Humanitarian Law from Brussels 1874 to Geneva 1973", by Mr. Jean Pictet, Vice-President of the ICRC; the third, "Some Existing Problems of Humanitarian Law", by Mr. R. R. Baxter, Professor at the Harvard University Law School. Speeches were then made by Mr. R. Paucot, President of the International Society of Penal Military Law and Law of War, and Mr. H. Vanderpoorten, Belgian Minister of Justice.

* * *

¹ See *International Review*, October and November 1974.

International Symposium

The International Symposium on Humanitarian Law devoted four working sessions to a fundamental study of the theme selected by the Organizing Committee, "*The Concept of International Armed Conflict: Further Outlook*", with a view to closely examining the results of the first session of the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts (Geneva, 20 February to 29 March 1974), and promoting discussion of major problems arising from the extension of the category of international armed conflicts. These problems are to be considered at the second session of the Diplomatic Conference (Geneva, 3 February to 18 April 1975).

The first working session, presided over by Mr. P. de Visscher, Professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, following an introductory address by Mr. G. Abi-Saab, Professor at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, consisted in a general discussion of the concept of international armed conflict. The question of enlarging the category of international armed conflicts led to a discussion, particularly in the light of decisions and recommendations adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, as to the relevance of the distinction between international armed conflict and non-international armed conflict on which the law of armed conflicts was based. The question of qualifying armed conflict, bearing in mind the intensity of hostilities, was taken up, as were the effects of the asymmetric nature of some armed conflicts—owing to the differing resources of the parties to the conflict—on the degree of humanitarian protection for victims of such conflicts.

The second working session, chaired by Mr. J. de Breucker, adviser to the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with Mr. F. Kalshoven as rapporteur, studied the consequences of new prospects on the protection of human life in armed conflicts and the machinery of supervision of the provisions relating to it. Those legally regarded as combatants, the conduct of hostilities, the implementation of the system of Protecting Powers and the position of neutral States were among the subjects considered with a view to extending the category of international armed conflicts.

The third working session, presided over by Mr. B. de Schutter, Dean of the Faculty of Law of the Free University of Brussels, studied the consequences of new prospects on the provisions relating to the expression of the acceptance of humanitarian rules, their dissemination, and the repression of breaches; the subject was introduced by Mr. B.

Graefrath, Professor of International Law at the University of Berlin.

At the closing session, Mr. K. J. Partsch, Professor at the University of Bonn, presented a synoptic report on the work of the Symposium.

About a hundred experts from every part of the world attended in their personal capacities. The ICRC was represented by Mr. Jean Pictet, Vice-President; Mrs. Denise Bindschedler, a member; Mr. Claude Pilloud, Director, and Mr. Antoine Martin and Mrs. Danièle Bujard, Deputy Heads of the Legal Division.

The Symposium, which was extremely interesting and efficiently organized by the Committee on the Protection of Human Life in Armed Conflicts, provided a forum for constructive discussion and an opportunity to pinpoint the difficult questions arising out of the extension of the concept of international armed conflict.
