

ICRC appeal for a humanitarian mobilization

The traditional annual press conference given by the President of the ICRC took place on 10 January 1985 at the headquarters of the Committee. It provided not only an opportunity to make the usual assessment of events in the year 1984 but, in particular, was the moment chosen by the ICRC to launch an "Appeal for a Humanitarian Mobilization".

This appeal was widely disseminated; it was sent to all the Permanent Missions in Geneva and New York, to all the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to the League, to the media and to bodies such as the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues. A more detailed memorandum was sometimes enclosed with the Appeal, entitled "Respect for and Development of International Humanitarian Law—Support for the Activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross—From Manila (1981) to Geneva (1986)—Interim Assessment and Future Prospects". The Appeal itself is a summary of this memorandum and sets out the main points contained therein.

On 14 January the Appeal and the Memorandum were delivered and commented on by the President of the ICRC in Amman to members of the Standing Commission, an extraordinary session of which had been convened by Dr. Ahmed Abu Gura, president of the Jordan Red Crescent Society.

Furthermore, these documents were distributed to participants at the seminars on humanitarian law which had been organized for diplomats by the University of New York, in January 1985, and by the American University, Washington D.C., in June 1985.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations also received a copy of these two documents.

The ICRC Appeal was published in the International Review of January-February 1985; the detailed text of the Memorandum reads as follows:

RESPECT AND DEVELOPMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

**Support for the activities
of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

*From Manila (1981) to Geneva (1986)
interim assessment and prospects*

FOREWORD

The present document is intended for everyone interested in international humanitarian law and respect for it: members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, States party to the Geneva Conventions, media giving coverage to ICRC activities and to the law on which these activities are founded, and all people who, in specialized circles or in the general public, share the ICRC's humanitarian concerns.

This document is divided into two parts. The first part is essentially a retrospect of selected factors and considerations known since the Twenty-fourth International Red Cross Conference held in Manila in 1981. It lists the main elements of the humanitarian policy evolved by the ICRC in recent years. The second part is a survey of prospects: it gives the reader an insight into some of the ICRC's thoughts on the future and on how it is preparing for it.

The document as a whole is meant to engender discussion and goodwill in support of humanitarian action which, to be universal, is dependent upon the efforts of each and every individual.

**PART I:
INTRODUCTION AND RETROSPECT**

1. Manila: Twenty-fourth International Red Cross Conference

1. In 1981, the Twenty-fourth International Red Cross Conference at Manila adopted by consensus a Resolution (No. VI) sometimes referred to as the "Manila Appeal"¹ on which the following

¹ See *International Review of the Red Cross*, November-December 1981, p. 322-323.

commentary was published in the January-February 1982 issue of the *International Review of the Red Cross* (p. 25):

“Operational resolution of a general nature

Resolution VI relating to “Respect for international humanitarian law and for humanitarian principles and support for the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross” is extremely important for the ICRC.

Like the preceding resolutions, this resolution is based on the *Report on the Activities* of the ICRC and shares the Committee’s concern about the failure to respect the provisions of the Geneva Conventions or humanitarian principles; it notes and regrets the limits imposed upon the activities of the ICRC not only in situations covered by international humanitarian law, but also in internal disturbances and tensions in which Article 6 of the *Statutes of the International Red Cross* authorizes it to offer its services; finally, and most important, it makes a solemn appeal that the rules of international humanitarian law and the universally recognized humanitarian principles be safeguarded at all times and in all circumstances and that the International Committee of the Red Cross be granted all the facilities necessary to discharge the humanitarian mandate confided to it by the international community.

In adopting this resolution the International Conference echoed the fears expressed by the President of the ICRC concerning the politicization of the humanitarian domain and the increase of indiscriminate violence.

May this appeal be heard by all those to whom it is addressed, and may they then act accordingly.”

2. In addition to this general appeal, the Manila Conference adopted two resolutions (III and IV) concerned with certain specific situations in which, although the Geneva Conventions were applicable, humanitarian law was not or was only partially implemented and in which ICRC activities were completely or almost paralysed. The commentary on Resolutions III and IV is published in the January-February 1982 issue of the *International Review of the Red Cross* (p. 23-25).

3. These various resolutions were in keeping with the policy adopted by the International Committee prior to the Manila Conference and outlined by Mr. Alexandre Hay in his opening address to the 1981 International Conference (see the January-February

1982 issue of the *International Review of the Red Cross*, p. 12-16).

That policy reflected the ICRC's growing concern in the face of increasingly frequent violations of humanitarian law and humanitarian principles and its firm resolve to curb this disastrous trend. Obviously, to implement this policy, a whole series of measures was required; among them, all those adopted in the course of the International Red Cross Conference were particularly important, yet to become fully effective they required additional measures—public or confidential, bilateral or multilateral, regional or universal, specific or general—to pave the way for them and gain support.

2. After Manila

1. In May 1983, an important step had to be taken in the face of repeated or even systematic breaches of the Geneva Conventions in the armed conflict between Iran and Iraq. Those breaches were becoming so grave that the ICRC had no choice but to make an appeal to the community of States asking them to take steps—in discharge of the obligation they assumed under the Conventions of 1949—to ensure respect for humanitarian law in this war (in 1984, the ICRC had to make two further appeals asking for greater respect of the Geneva Conventions in the same conflict).

2. In November 1983, in a speech he gave in New York to the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, the President of the ICRC made a preliminary assessment of the follow-up to the measures announced by the International Committee in Manila (see *International Review of the Red Cross*, January-February 1984, p. 3-10).

In his address, Mr. Alexandre Hay said that “confronted with the present crises, governments are tempted to think only in the short term, to reject everything that does not fit in with immediate interests, and to relegate humanitarian considerations to a place behind what they consider to be the imperatives of politics and security. This refusal to implement humanitarian law defies the whole international community (the States, the legal system, the organizations) and inflicts intolerable suffering on the victims of conflicts.”

After calling to mind the resolutions adopted by the Manila Conference, the President went on to say: “Two years after Manila, these refusals still stand except in the case of Ogaden, and the list,

regrettably, is not complete. It would be remiss of me not to remind you of the ICRC appeal last May to the whole international community as well as to Iraq and Iran concerning our activities in those two warring countries. Nor should I omit our repeated approaches to Israel to secure its recognition of the applicability of the Fourth Convention to the occupied territories and to ensure respect of the Conventions in all areas.”

3. Further on in his speech, Mr. Hay also stated that “on a general level, the ICRC has for several months been in touch with several governments and independent specialists on the matter of monitoring the application of humanitarian law and its underlying principles. In 1984, the ICRC will step up these expert consultations and will pursue them further in 1985 and 1986. The aim should be to foster awareness of this problem, having in mind the Twenty-fifth International Red Cross Conference in Geneva in 1986.”

He also outlined the objectives to be reached in 1986 and afterwards: “The purpose of these discussions should be to agree with these specialists and politicians on ways of:

- a) improving knowledge of and respect for humanitarian law, not only in military circles, but also and above all among politicians in positions of authority;
- b) drawing the attention of parties to conflicts, and all the States bound by the Geneva Conventions, to the existence in the Conventions and Protocols of procedures for their application (including the institution of Protecting Powers) and encouraging them to make use of such procedures to implement humanitarian law.”

To achieve this objective, the ICRC, through its President, was simultaneously asking a question, defining the problem and suggesting possible solutions:

“The main questions I would like to put to you today are these: how should one go about stimulating this awareness of humanitarian values among political leaders? How should one foster the humanitarian spirit in politics? How can one demonstrate that in every political situation there are humanitarian aspects which one ignores at one’s peril?

We, who are every day confronted with the victims’ plight, would be grateful should you be able, with your command of political affairs, to conceive of ways and means to promote the acceptance and application of humanitarian law and its principles

among political leaders and to bring awareness to public opinion.

With your experience and standing, you have access to the highest political leaders and you can urge:

- a) the speedy ratification of the Additional Protocols, which are a basic supplement to humanitarian law in its main areas such as the protection of civilians against hostilities;
- b) a better knowledge of the existing instruments of humanitarian law;
- c) the faithful application of these instruments in all circumstances, and full co-operation with existing humanitarian organizations;
- d) a better use of the institutions and procedures provided for in existing statutory law: collective responsibility of the States party to the Conventions, Protecting Power, Fact-Finding Commission.

We should not forget that there are also questions of mediation between parties to conflicts, between States or within States, nor should we forget limited but especially acute problems, such as that of missing or stateless persons.

The ideal would obviously be to reach the stage where humanitarian principles would be such a matter of course that there would be no need for humanitarian institutions or law. But we are still a long way from achieving this.”

4. Obviously, the ICRC does not—and never did—contemplate reaching these objectives on its own: the experts it consults more and more frequently are indispensable to the success of the undertaking: whether they are members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, of diplomatic missions in Geneva or elsewhere, of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, or whether they are chosen in a personal capacity or on a regional or national basis, all these men and women are absolutely indispensable for the success of one of the most challenging and delicate humanitarian undertakings of our times.

In particular, inasmuch as the International Red Cross Conference is the natural and most suitable forum for several of these issues, the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross—which draws up the agenda of the International Conference—will play a vital role in ensuring that these issues are discussed there with all due care and consideration, in the spirit of our movement and in accordance with its Fundamental Principles.

3. Development of international humanitarian law

Although respect for existing humanitarian law is of paramount importance, one should not forget that the development of humanitarian law must continue, within the limits of what is possible, in the years ahead.

To avoid including lengthy quotations on this subject in the present document, we kindly ask our readers to refer to an article in *International Review of the Red Cross*¹, in which an ICRC expert analyses the position as at September 1983.

It will be necessary, in due course, to establish some guidelines for situations, other than armed conflicts, not covered by humanitarian law. The ICRC is presently consulting experts from various countries on this subject.

4. Respect and development of humanitarian law: summary

In an attempt to take stock—as concisely as possible—of all the developments mentioned above, the ICRC tried to recapitulate all the various elements in an article which was published in the March-April 1984 issue of the *International Review of the Red Cross* (p. 91-96).

We shall reproduce here only the central issue and the objectives it entails.

“Faced with increasing indiscriminate violence, repeated violations of fundamental humanitarian principles and of international humanitarian law—and even the manipulation of that law for political purposes—the ICRC considers it necessary to increase its efforts to promote respect for, and the development of, international humanitarian law.

In concrete terms, this means that the ICRC will:

- 1) Seek appropriate means to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law in times of armed conflict (international or non-international).
- 2) Encourage States to ratify the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.
- 3) Study the further development of certain aspects of international humanitarian law.

¹ Some Reflections on the Future of International Humanitarian Law, by H. P. Gasser. *International Review of the Red Cross*, January-February 1984, p. 18-25.

- 4) Try to define humanitarian principles applicable in situations not covered by international humanitarian law (internal disturbances or tensions).

The ICRC has set 1986 as its target-date for working out proposals to this effect. These will be submitted for discussion and adoption at the Twenty-fifth International Red Cross Conference meeting that year in Geneva, and, through the Conference, to the international community.”

PART II: A GLANCE AT THE PAST AND THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE

1. Introduction

1. The elements set forth above are the outcome of an internal study carried out by the ICRC in recent years. The study takes into account not only the changing world in which the ICRC must carry out its tasks, but also the means it will require in the foreseeable future to implement a long-term humanitarian policy.

This second part is meant to give the reader an insight into some of the ICRC's thoughts and consequent decisions.

2. As a starting point for its deliberations on its future, the ICRC took the mandate with which it has been traditionally entrusted, and which has been confirmed subsequently by the States party to the Geneva Conventions and by the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

As summarized in Article VI of the *Statutes of the International Red Cross*, the ICRC is an independent, humanitarian institution (its independence is guaranteed in its Statutes by the fact that its members are all of a single nationality—Swiss—and are co-opted), whose standing mandate can be briefly described as follows:

- the ICRC must endeavour to ensure the protection of and assistance to the military and civilian victims of international wars, civil wars and internal strife, and of their direct results;
- the Geneva Conventions entrust the ICRC with specific tasks concerning respect for their provisions, and with regard to violations;

- the ICRC has a primary responsibility regarding the development and dissemination of international humanitarian law;
- the ICRC has the right to take humanitarian initiatives in its capacity as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary;
- the ICRC must formally recognize new National Societies fulfilling the conditions fixed by the International Conference of the Red Cross;
- the ICRC has to maintain respect for the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent;
- the ICRC has to maintain—within the limits of its competence—close contact with the National Societies, the League, governments, and any other authorities that may be concerned with its humanitarian activities.

Furthermore, the ICRC may be entrusted with other mandates by the International Conference of the Red Cross.

2. The framework of the action

1. International and non-international conflicts: a deteriorating situation with no end in sight

If one starts by glancing at the past, one finds out that in 1974, the ICRC had on its staff 357 employees and delegates (of whom 257 were on the ordinary budget, as opposed to the extraordinary budget which finances primarily the ICRC's extensive temporary operations). At the beginning of 1983, this figure had risen to 850 persons (of whom 454 were on the ordinary budget), not counting 993 locally recruited employees. In 1974, there were 16 delegations abroad; ten years later there were 36 (plus 16 sub-delegations), and the ICRC was active intermittently in half a dozen other countries.

This growth in the ICRC's involvement in the theatres of operations reflects above all the greater number of conflicts, which tend to last longer and are often fiercer than those which occurred in the 1960's. A detailed analysis of the situation—by country and by continent—does not suggest that the number of conflicts and situations of tension will diminish.

In many countries, internal tensions are liable to develop into internal disturbances, which in turn become civil wars, sometimes with international involvement. Furthermore, there is, unfortunately, no firm likelihood of peaceful settlements to the numerous armed conflicts at present taking place.

The humanitarian problems linked to the occupation of territories and the holding of prisoners of war are likely to persist.

In the present state of affairs, no serious hope may be entertained of peaceful solutions to these conflicts, and there are indications that other confrontations may develop between different countries and ideologies.

At the same time, irrespective of internal and international political conflicts, the marked growth of the population in a large part of the world is very likely to create increasing tensions, if only because of the drop in the standard of living which it will cause.

Finally, detention on political grounds and ill-treatment in connection with such detention are likely to persist and even, in many countries, to increase.

This tendency appears to correspond to a fairly general decline in respect for the rule of law, internally and internationally. A wider divergence has been noted between the authorities' declarations of intent and their actions and there has been a lessening regard for commitments simultaneous (if not consecutive) to their increase. At the national level, the power structures—all too often harassed by an unsteady economic situation or by ethnic, ideological or other tensions—become more rigid or on the contrary break up in chaos; both situations lead to arbitrary action and violence against defenceless victims.

2. A general mobilization

The ICRC's analysis of the future, in which its mandate will require it to take action, indicates that States should do all in their power to prevent these dismal forecasts from coming true; but at the same time—and in the more restricted field of humanitarian action—everyone must feel within his conscience the urgent, pressing need for a great upsurge of humanity and solidarity, an impulse that has become indispensable in view of the present and potential insanity of human violence.

But the International Committee does not for a moment imagine that in this struggle it can emerge victorious all alone: it must mobilize governments and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement to join the combat for the universal respect of defenceless human beings.

This mobilization will demand sustained efforts, in a great variety of ways, on the part of the entire institution, and in particular its senior staff, during the years ahead.

The immense humanitarian needs of the future call for a substantial effort to be made. The States, first of all, must take advantage of every "humanitarian respite" given to them by the Red Cross to build up peace during the short period of grace; at the same time, they must ensure full respect for their humanitarian undertakings in those conflicts which they were unable or did not know how to avoid, and they must ratify the instruments of humanitarian law to which they have not yet acceded. Next, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement must throw into the struggle for the respect of man's dignity all the moral force of its universality and principles.

3. A global, long-term investment

This should not involve only a short-term effort in respect of current conflict situations. It implies necessarily a long-term investment:

- in the knowledge of the law of war by members of the armed forces already in peace-time (in any case, this is consistent with the undertaking of States party to the Geneva Conventions);
- in the acceptance by governments of the ICRC's humanitarian activity *before* it has to be put into practice;
- in the understanding of the need for neutrality in an intermediary who must do humanitarian work on both sides in conflicts;
- and in the development of a strong Red Cross family, united around its ideals and principles.

Failure to make such an investment in good time could result in a very high price in human and financial terms, all because of the lack of preparation and foresight in the humanitarian sphere.

3. Direct action

1. Preparing the ground in advance for better action in an emergency

The ICRC must be prepared to carry out more frequent visits to "prisoners of war" whose status is in doubt or is in dispute. There are more and more instances of armed conflicts which are considered international or internal, depending on the political attitudes of the parties involved. Such disputes regarding the legal definition of the conflict should not prevent the ICRC from acting in favour of the victims, regardless of their status.

In addition, ICRC protection will probably be given to a greater extent to persons considered as “political detainees”, not only because the number of countries in the throes of internal disturbances or tensions is likely to increase throughout the world, but also because the number of governments accepting ICRC visits to places of detention will probably continue to rise.

In any case, that is the aim the ICRC should set for itself when deciding on the setting up of regional delegations which might be needed to spread knowledge about the ICRC, its goals and its methods, *before* the event; that is when, as has been demonstrated, those with whom it deals are in a more favourable frame of mind to listen calmly and, therefore, to be more receptive.

Experience has shown that, in a period of emergency action, the first instinctive reaction to an institution’s request for more humane treatment of captive enemies is a guarded one, especially with regard to the “enemies within”.

That is why, as early as 1970, regional delegations were set up, with the purpose of presenting the ICRC’s action where no emergency situation existed, i.e. in a more receptive context. In the years ahead, this policy ought to be pursued, if possible on a still larger scale.

2. Wherever protection is necessary assistance cannot be dissociated from it

Protection and assistance operations will probably be carried out in many countries where grave internal disturbances or even civil wars—often liable to become internationalized—are unfortunately likely to break out.

In these situations, as in all places where protection is necessary, assistance is inseparable from it. The authorities must be able to discuss with one and the same person, matters of assistance to, or protection of conflict victims. For a more detailed analysis of this subject, see the speech “Humanitarian Action: Protection and Assistance” by the ICRC’s Director for Operational Activities to the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, New York, November 1983, in *International Review of the Red Cross*, January-February 1984, p. 11-17.

Humanitarian action arises out of the victims’ needs, which may not be dissociated, nor the subject of bargaining.

Even when direct protection is not possible (because of the authorities’ refusal to allow the ICRC access to the places of detention, or because there are no prisoners), assistance itself con-

stitutes a kind of protection, because it often ensures survival, or because the mere presence of ICRC teams may render the mistreatment of potential victims more unlikely.

Accordingly, the level of professionalism achieved by the ICRC in its relief operations must become more widespread, and the infrastructure at headquarters and in the field, must be correspondingly improved.

But such operations on a large scale—generally carried out *simultaneously* over the past ten years, whereas they used to succeed each other—will imply a more stable personnel than in the past, and contracts will have to be for longer periods if it is desired to improve the level of field delegates' qualifications. The same considerations apply to the Central Tracing Agency, whose activities are an essential part of the process of individual protection, both at headquarters and in the field.

At the same time, attention must be given to allowing more personnel (medical and other) from participating National Societies to take part in the activities, since they would then share the heavy burden of this necessary growth to a still larger extent than they have so far.

4. Indirect action

1. Making humanitarian law better known and contributing to the development of the National Societies

Steps should be taken to do more and still better, at all events, in two key areas where certain efforts have been made in the past 10 years:

- dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law and Red Cross principles;
- development of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a task which is first and foremost that of the League, and to which the latter applies itself with determination, while the ICRC can contribute to its success in several spheres.

The ICRC must increase the number of delegates whose task is to aid and encourage governments to fulfil their *obligation* to instruct their armed forces in the law of war and to teach their countries' inhabitants the principles of humanitarian law.

Since the combatants' knowledge of humanitarian obligations is the first condition for their discharge every possible measure should be taken to disseminate knowledge of the rules in systematic

fashion, giving priority to the regions where conflicts are actually taking place or where an outbreak of violence is highly probable. Conflicts in recent times have shown how *urgent* it is to make *much more substantial* efforts in this field.

The ICRC must similarly help the National Societies to support their government in this regard and must help them with their own dissemination programmes.

In this undertaking, the ICRC must be able to rely on strong National Societies. In this respect, the League's efforts to develop the National Societies is the kingpin in the consolidation of a Red Cross and Red Crescent movement adapted to the requirements of our time. The ICRC will have to assist, within the limited field of its competence, by a contribution which, however modest, must be effective and adapted to the situation.

5. The mainstays of humanitarian action

With the increasing number, variety and duration of conflicts, with the inhumane treatment arising from the hardening of ideological, or even religious and racial attitudes, and with the declining respect for treaties and law in general, only concerted action by all the forces of universal humanism, involving the mobilization of States and peoples, might raise in any decisive manner the level of respect for humanitarian rules in conflicts—short of abolishing war altogether. As has already been stated, this massive task cannot be assumed by the ICRC alone, which must be able to count on the support of governments, National Societies, the League and public opinion to ensure greater respect for humanitarian law and principles.

1. Governments

Over 150 States are party to the Geneva Conventions and, by virtue of those Conventions, are under the obligation not only to respect the rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts (whether internal or international), but also to *ensure their respect* by others.

The rules dictated by humanity, set out in the Conventions, are so elementary that violations should leave no State indifferent. Any government which, while not itself involved in a conflict, is, in fact, in a position to exert influence in the right direction on a government guilty of breaches of the laws of war, but refrains from doing so, must share the responsibility for the breaches.

Moreover, by failing to react while able to do so, such a government fosters the process which could lead to its becoming the next victim of similar breaches rather than a passive accomplice.

It is first this message which the ICRC must convey to the governments, in order that they discharge their responsibilities and give it the material and political means to conduct a genuine humanitarian strategy, in conformity with the mandate they have entrusted to it in the Geneva Conventions.

2. The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

For more than a decade it has been obvious that even though ICRC action is directed primarily towards governments, it cannot conceivably be carried through without the support of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. This fact is patent first in the countries where the ICRC must act; but it is equally so in those countries which can provide men, material and financial resources for ICRC operations.

Undoubtedly, there are some tasks, in the area where the action is taking place, which the ICRC because of its specific character is best capable of performing, but they should be done with the National Society's support and with clear delineation of the duties, each party shouldering those tasks best suited to it. Furthermore, to a greater degree than in the past, the ICRC should think in terms of the time when it might leave the country where it has been working; already during the emergency phase the ICRC and the League (which is responsible for the development of the National Societies) must therefore consider the long-term development of the National Society.

As regards the already "participating" National Societies (that is to say, those contributing money or personnel to an action), the ICRC intends to propose a more important role to them, particularly in the medical and paramedical fields (for instance, the rehabilitation of the war-disabled) and in the field of relief. This would respond to their humanitarian aspirations and would also enable them, by taking part in the international activities of the Red Cross, to arouse among their nationals feelings of motivation and support towards other actions conducted by the Society in its own country. The ICRC will expect all the more of them, since their provision of personnel will help to relieve its own burden of commitments.

3. Public opinion

The day-to-day relationship between the ICRC and the public is inevitably ambiguous: its humanitarian action demands, in the interest of the victims, a great measure of discretion, even though, as was mentioned earlier, the ICRC reserves the right to appeal to world conscience when its delegates observe serious and repeated breaches of humanitarian law, and when the representations which it makes confidentially have had no effect.

The ICRC generally maintains discretion because it cannot take the risk of losing contact with the victims to whom it alone can bring assistance and protection.

The fact is that the victims' interest, which is the essential generator of ICRC action, also determines the limits of its information policy. In addition, this policy varies according to circumstances:

- in international armed conflicts, while the ICRC, in its capacity as the guardian of the Geneva Conventions, is given a mandate by the international community, to whom it is accountable for its actions and the difficulties it may encounter, the States in the conflict, for their part, have an *obligation* to permit it to act;
- in non-international armed conflicts, only part of humanitarian law is applicable, but the parties to the conflict are under *no obligation* to let the ICRC act;
- in internal disturbances and tensions, ICRC action depends entirely on the will of the country involved; in such cases, clearly, the ICRC can only say what it has done, not what it has seen. The only «sanction» open to it when confronted with grave violations of humanitarian rules is to pull out of the country concerned, thus leaving all the detainees without protection. Such a policy requires a very special effort with regard to general information, so that its action, its limits and difficulties might be better understood.

From this viewpoint—and especially if extensive action is envisaged—it is necessary that the ICRC should procure for itself the means to conduct its information policy in accordance with the magnitude of its humanitarian action, which is far from being the case at present.

Progress—if outright victory is not attained—in the struggle for the humanitarian cause requires the support of the media and, through them, of public opinion, as much as that of governments and National Societies of the Red Cross and of the Red Crescent.