

THE 1977 ADDITIONAL PROTOCOLS AND THE NATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption on 8 June 1977 of the Protocols additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions by the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, the Review wanted to involve National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the preparation of a special issue; the intention is to reflect as wide a variety as possible of views from National Societies throughout the world with regard to the Protocols and to show what the Societies have done to have them ratified and ensure that they are more widely known.

Hence the Review contacted several National Societies asking them to submit contributions for this issue. They were requested to give particular emphasis to the following points:

- What is the significance of the 1977 Protocols for your National Society and what is your Society's judgement on them ten years after their adoption?*
- Taking into account your country's specific situation, which provisions of the Protocols do you consider the most important?*
- What specific role does your National Society play vis-à-vis the authorities in your country, whether it has ratified the Protocols or has not yet done so, and in what way is your Society seeking to influence the media and public opinion in this respect?*

By 20 May the Review had received contributions from the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the following countries: Belgium (French-speaking branch and Dutch-speaking branch); China; Federal Republic of Germany; Japan; Jordan; Mexico; The Netherlands and Norway. The articles submitted are published in this issue. Clearly any items arriving later from other

National Societies which have been asked to contribute will appear in subsequent issues of the Review.

The articles are a rich source of information on many aspects of the subject: in several cases they analyse the legal procedures leading to ratification of, or accession to, the Protocols, from their examination by ad hoc consultative committees up to accession by the governments; in other cases an effort is made to explain the obstacles to be overcome before ratification or accession is possible. All the articles describe the approaches that the National Societies have made to their respective governments and show how closely the Societies monitor the legal procedures set in motion once the Protocols have been adopted. A few National Societies also examine the legal impact of different provisions in the Protocols on internal legislation.

The articles also bring out the significance of various provisions of the Protocols for the National Societies, against the background of the social and political climate of their respective countries. The history of the country, the effect of international agreements or indeed the pressures resulting from situations of conflict; all these are particularly decisive in this connection.

The reader will also find very interesting details and comments about dissemination programmes organized by the National Societies for various target groups.

This miscellany of articles is not the last word. The Review will examine, with the greatest interest, for publication in its forthcoming issues, other articles which National Societies might wish to submit on this subject.

The articles in this issue clearly reflect only their authors' views.