

Seminars and Colloquium on International Humanitarian Law

● In Italy

On the initiative of the Italian Red Cross and under the auspices of the Italian Ministry of Defence, a seminar was held in Florence from 31 March to 2 April 1987 on the international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts. The seminar was organized for members of the armed forces and university circles and was attended by 32 officers and 36 law graduates and law students. Lectures were given by University professors, general officers and military judge advocates.

The following subjects were dealt with: content and development of humanitarian law; sources of humanitarian law; the definition of a combatant; mercenaries; means and methods of warfare; protection of the wounded, the sick and the shipwrecked; protection of prisoners of war; protection of the civilian population; humanitarian law and war at sea and in the air; humanitarian aspects of the most recent armed conflicts; guarantees with regard to humanitarian law; war crimes; humanitarian law in internal armed conflicts; and present-day aspects of neutrality.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was represented at this seminar by Mr. F. Steinemann, Head of the Public Relations Service, who spoke on ICRC activities in conflict areas.

The seminar concluded with a round table, which discussed the problem of adapting Italian law to make it compatible with humanitarian law, with special reference to military regulations.

● In Benin

The Red Cross of Benin, the Benin National University and the ICRC jointly organized a regional seminar on international humanitarian law, termed "SEDIH 87", in Cotonou (Benin) from 7 to 10 April 1987, on the theme: "The protection of civilian populations in time of armed conflict".

SEDIH 87 was the first seminar of its kind to be organized in West Africa; participants in the four days' proceedings included lawyers, military officers, high-ranking officials of the Ministries concerned and members of the Red Cross of Benin. Some 30 participants were Beninese while 20 others came from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The ICRC was represented by Mr. Huguelet and Mrs. Contat of the Lomé regional delegation and by Mr. Siegenthaler of the Legal Division.

The programme of SEDIH 87 dealt in the first place with the spirit of international humanitarian law, its principles and basic rules; some humanitarian rules from West African traditions regarding warfare were also examined. The participants were then acquainted by means of lectures and scenario demonstrations with the manner in which the rules of the law of Geneva and The Hague apply during an armed conflict.

The seminar was very favourably received by the participants, who recommended that seminars of this kind should be organized at regular intervals.

● In the United States of America

The 81st annual meeting of the American Society of International Law was held in Boston from 8 to 11 April 1987. The ICRC participates regularly in the work of this association of international lawyers, which is the leading one in North America and which also counts eminent international lawyers from other continents among its members. This year, the ICRC was represented at the meeting by Mr. R. Kosirnik, Head of the Legal Division, Mr. H. P. Gasser, Legal Adviser to the Directorate and Mr. J. J. Surbeck of the New York office.

A number of interesting topics were discussed, including relationships between customary law and Protocol I. The meeting was preceded on 7 April 1987 by a round table on international

humanitarian law in general, led by Professor Theodor Meron of New York University and Mr. Kosirnik.

● In China

A seminar on international humanitarian law and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross was held in Beijing from 11 to 16 May 1987. This seminar, which was the first of its kind in China, was organized jointly by the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of China; the League and the American Red Cross also participated at the invitation of the Red Cross Society of China. The ICRC was represented by Mr. J. Moreillon, Director General, Mr. P. Küng and Mr. J.-F. Olivier, regional delegates for Asia, and Mr. C. Neukomm, delegate in charge of dissemination for Asia; the League by Mr. K. Seevaratnam, officer in charge of the League's Asia and Pacific Department; and the American Red Cross by four representatives.

The opening ceremony took place in the presence of Mrs. Lei Jie-Qiong, Vice-President of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference, and Mr. Zhu Ting-Xun, Deputy Secretary General of the General Political Department of the Chinese Army. The seminar was attended by over 100 participants invited by the Red Cross Society of China. Over 30 of them came from the armed forces, in particular the Political Department of the People's Liberation Army at the central level, as well as from two frontier provinces bordering on Viet Nam. Other participants were from various government departments such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries of Justice, Security, Education and Health, and from the Universities, the press and the Red Cross Society of China.

The seminar discussed such topics as: international humanitarian law, its history, development and application; the principles of the Red Cross; the ICRC, its role and activities; ICRC dissemination work; the International Red Cross; the League; the American Red Cross and, of course, the Red Cross Society of China.

This seminar revealed the great interest taken by all the participants, and particularly members of the armed forces, in international humanitarian law and the Red Cross.

For this first experiment of its kind, the ICRC arranged for the translation into Chinese of numerous documents (some of which were printed in Beijing in 10,000 copies) and produced Chinese

versions of five ICRC films which were shown during the seminar.

● **In Geneva**

To mark the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, the Faculty of Law of the University of Geneva is organizing, from 11 to 13 June 1987, an international colloquium entitled: "The 1977 Geneva Protocols additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions: ten years later".

This colloquium will deal with the following topics: "The degree of acceptance of the 1977 Protocols ten years after their signature: ratifications, accessions, reservations and decisions not to become a party"; "The application of the Additional Protocols and their impact on general international law relating to humanitarian matters"; and "The 1977 Protocols ten years later: balance-sheet and prospects for the future".

A number of experts of world renown will submit reports to introduce each topic.

An account of the colloquium will be published in the next issue of the *Review*.

