

The Geneva Convention of 6 July 1906 is now a Historic Document

In 1966, we mentioned in these pages¹ that, following the accession of the Republic of Korea to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the original Convention of 1864 was no more than a venerable museum piece.

To-day, with the accession of Costa Rica to the 1949 version, the “ Geneva Convention of 6 July 1906 for the amelioration of the condition of the wounded and sick in armies in the field ” is no longer binding on any State². Thus, in its turn, it becomes a thing of the past, a glorious trophy like its predecessor.

We should not forget that although the 1864 Conference had to its credit the distinction of breaking new ground in international law, it was the 1906 Diplomatic Conference which set the Geneva Conventions on the road to development and at the same time gave them a more substantial form. At the same time as it confirmed established principles, it undertook that recasting of the Conventions which had been made necessary by the ordeal by fire³.

Whilst the 1864 Convention contained only ten articles, that of 1906 had thirty-three and the content was laid out in chapters by order of their importance. The “ neutrality ” of ambulances and

¹ See *International Review*, October 1966, p. 547.

² It was on 15 October 1969 that the Republic of Costa Rica acceded to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. This formality becoming effective after a period of six months, it was on 15 April 1970 that the Geneva Convention of 6 July 1906 ceased to be valid anywhere in the world.

³ *Platte*.—Some of the participants at the Diplomatic Conference.

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medical personnel was no longer mentioned; that unsuitable term was replaced by the idea of "respect and protection". It was also expressly stated that the wounded and sick would be respected. This was only implied in the 1864 Convention. Provision was made for the burial of the dead and the transmission of identifying information. The protection to which medical personnel were entitled became permanent and was no longer applicable only whilst they were carrying out their functions. The assistance of voluntary aid societies was expressly recognized. On the other hand, the prerogatives of inhabitants who took care of the wounded were put into proper perspective.

During the First World War, the Convention was fairly fully applied except for the repatriation of medical personnel, the belligerents having agreed to waive this requirement of the Convention and to retain in their camps a large proportion of medical personnel to take care of fellow prisoners.

In 1929 the Convention was not recast as in 1906 but was amended.

Thus from the outset, based not on theory alone, but on actual reality, one Geneva Convention led to another, setting up, by degrees, new landmarks of triumph for humanity.

J. P.

CONFERENCE FOR THE REVISION OF THE GENEVA CONVENTION

11 June - 6 July 1906



Photo Bolssonas, Genève

A view of the Diplomatic Conference (*right, standing*: Gustave Moynier, President of the ICRC and Honorary President of the Conference; *on his left*: Edouard Odier, Swiss delegate and Chairman of the Conference, and Louis Renault, French delegate and Drafting Committee rapporteur).