

XIIIth DISCUSSION OF INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL LAW

The XIIIth Discussion of International Medical Law took place on 8 May 1970 at ICRC headquarters, Geneva.

As in the previous discussions, which have been convened at irregular intervals for a number of years now, these discussions were mainly devoted to the problems regarding the sick and wounded and medical personnel during armed conflicts.

A number of international organizations, both governmental and private, sent representatives.

Among those present were Mr. Vignes (World Health Organization), General Voncken (International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy), Dr. Audeoud-Naville (World Medical Association), Mrs. Bindschedler (International Law Association), Dr. Boeri and Mr. Marquet ("Commission médico-juridique de Monaco"), Dr. Ellenbogen (International Committee for the Neutrality of Medicine) and Dr. Hantchef (League of Red Cross Societies). The ICRC was represented, *inter alia*, by Dr. Meuli, member of the ICRC, and Mr. Pictet, member of the ICRC, Chairman of the Legal Commission, who also presided over the discussions.

During the meeting, the ICRC first informed the participants of the replies it had so far received to the questionnaire it had sent on 18 February 1970 to the Governments of the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions. This survey, which had been suggested by the XIIth Discussion on International Medical Law (1969), was designed to obtain background information for concrete proposals to improve the protection of civilian medical personnel, in conformity with Resolution XVI of the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross.

The ICRC also submitted to the participants a provisional list of questions concerning their organizations and which were to be taken within the framework of the development of humanitarian law as applicable to international and domestic conflicts.

Several points in the list caused lively discussions—for example, the problems of improving protection of the wounded and the sick, civilian medical personnel, civilian medical transport, certain types of civilian medical establishments and, finally, the respect of the role of the doctor. The meeting also discussed matters of terminology, an important facet of the type of protection sought.

The participants at the XIIIth Discussion showed keen interest in the work of the ICRC in this field and, in particular, in the list they had received. On many points, they gave their support to the ICRC's efforts and put forward a number of extremely useful suggestions.

DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITARIAN LAW

From 23 March to 10 April 1970, the Commission on the Status of Women held its twenty-third session at the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva. It was attended by representatives of some thirty Member States. In addition, its work was followed by many non-governmental organizations, including the League and the ICRC, and various observers.

Item 6 of its agenda was "Protection of women and children in emergency or war-time, fighting for peace, national liberation and independence". In this connection many delegations hoped for the better application of the rules of humanitarian law and, on the whole, were in favour of the drawing up of fresh international instruments.

One resolution, submitted jointly by the delegations of the Byelorussian SSR, Malaysia and Morocco, and which was adopted by 22 votes to none, with 6 abstentions, called upon States "to fulfil all the obligations incumbent on them under the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949..." In addition it requested the