

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.

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## 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

Secretary-General to pay special attention, in his work on "the respect of human rights in time of armed conflict", to the protection of women and children and to take appropriate measures to make known their plight in armed conflicts and the international regulations which exist for their protection.

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### THE ICRC AND SWISS NEUTRALITY

*Mr. Max Petitpierre, a member of the ICRC and a former president of the Swiss Confederation, recently delivered a lecture on the foreign policy of Switzerland. The extract which we give below will certainly be of interest to our readers, as it refers to the ICRC and to the neutrality of the country where it has its headquarters.*

... Finally, there exists a field where Switzerland has special responsibilities towards international society, that of humanitarian law. Switzerland, thanks to Henry Dunant, introduced to the world the concept of the Red Cross and, at the same time, the first principles of humanitarian law that were applied in cases of armed conflicts. This law has developed substantially so as to include gradually all war victims as well as victims of civil wars and even of internal political struggles. While, at first, it had been conceived with the object of protecting combatants, today it seeks to protect civilians. Switzerland has here a specific task to carry out. It was this country which had convened, and had presided, a world-wide diplomatic conference at Geneva in 1949, at which the four Geneva Conventions now in force were hammered out. Further conferences are planned in order to complete and improve what is already in existence. The ICRC has been entrusted with their preparation.

Swiss neutrality is the fundamental condition on which rests the activity of that unique institution, the International Committee of the Red Cross, which, through its field of action extending throughout the whole world, is international, and which is Swiss by its composition, since Swiss citizens alone may become members.