

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

The International NGO Conference on Disarmament, held in Geneva from 25 to 29 September 1972, assembled more than three hundred delegates representing about a hundred organizations. Mr. G. Malinverni, an ICRC jurist, attended the Conference as an observer and represented both the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies. The organizers considered it essential to mobilize an as yet ill-informed world opinion against the arms race.

At the first stage of its proceedings, the Conference subdivided into six groups which recorded the results of their work in a brief report embodying the arguments against the arms race and a number of practical proposals designed to facilitate disarmament.

At the second stage of its proceedings, having by then subdivided into five groups, the Conference considered the means of presenting those arguments to the public in order to rouse opinion in favour of disarmament. Five methods or techniques were considered, namely: (1) a campaign within social institutions; (2) education; (3) publicity; (4) radio, television and cinema, and (5) the press.

The main conclusions reached by the Conference were the following.

The development, preparation and production of new weapons have harmful effects on the environment, particularly because they increase radioactivity and destroy natural resources. Further, the arms race is carried out at the cost of social expenditure on health and education, and to the detriment of everyone's standard of life. In no way does it constitute a stimulus for national economy. On the contrary, it represents a major obstacle to the development of the Third World countries by simultaneously using up resources, creating a climate of mistrust and favouring oppression. Again, in scientific research, which is dangerous to the people and sterile owing to the secrecy surrounding it, the arms race directly impedes industrial and social progress.

The Conference then turned to the political problems posed by disarmament. It saw a gleam of hope in the agreements reached in past years, so long as those agreements were effectively implemented, which was not always the case. After pointing out that the experts had solved the scientific and practical problems of general disarmament by means of effective international control, the Conference stressed that the States' lack of political will was the sole obstacle to the conclusion of a treaty. It also pointed out that the partial agreements concluded in recent years had to a considerable extent reduced nuclear testing in the atmosphere and had established the dynamics of negotiations conducive to the gradual development of a climate which could lead to the conclusion of other agreements. The complexity of the world and the variety of political and economic conditions seemed to be important obstacles to disarmament. The basic demand should consist in establishing among the States the required political will for attaining a disarmed world, and public opinion should be clearly informed.

The ICRC, which has always been concerned about the problem of peace and its preservation in the world, took part in this important conference with the utmost interest.

MEDICAL AVIATION

Medical aviation is forging ahead, whether in its use of rescue helicopters in cases of distress, in the aeromedical transport of the wounded, in the special equipment installed in medical aircraft or in other technical innovations no less important to the protection of human life. This was the general impression of the 320 delegates, from fifteen countries, who attended the international symposium on the role of helicopters and aeroplanes in search and rescue, held at Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany. The ICRC was represented by Mr. P. Eberlin, Technical Adviser.

After a number of statements, followed by discussions and some civilian and military films, there were recommendations on the con-