

*THE ICRC, THE LEAGUE AND THE  
REPORT ON RE-APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE  
OF THE RED CROSS (VI)*

## **Co-operation between the League and the ICRC**

**Comments by the ICRC and the League**

### **Introduction**

By way of introduction to their comments on the Tansley Report proposals on co-operation between their two institutions, the ICRC and the League refer to the legal and practical basis of their existing co-operation.

They co-operate at the highest policy-making levels, the International Red Cross Conference and the Council of Delegates. The Statutes of the International Red Cross provide that it shall be *the duty of the Standing Commission between sessions of the Conference to ensure the co-ordination and harmony of the efforts of the International Committee and of the League* (Article 10/3).

Article 8 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross requires the ICRC and the League to maintain contact with one another and to co-ordinate their activities as far as possible: their representatives meet monthly to this end.

The 1969 Agreement between the ICRC and the League contains a number of provisions for co-operation in different types of situation, particularly in the field of relief. The Agreement also provides the statutory basis for the Co-ordinating Body, consisting of two representatives of each institution who are able to meet at short notice when necessary.

There is also a joint ICRC-League Committee which examines requests from National Societies for recognition by ICRC and admission to the League.

In addition to these statutory requirements for co-operation, there are frequent personal contacts between the leading officials of the ICRC and those of the League Secretariat, and informal contacts between the Chairman of the League and the President of the ICRC at least twice a year. There are, of course, close day-to-day contacts between the technical services of the League Secretariat and their counterparts in the ICRC.

The ICRC and the League give below, in condensed form, their reactions to each of the proposals made in the Tansley Report with regard to relations between them.

## **1. Recognition and admission of National Societies**

It should be borne in mind that there are historical reasons for the dual process of recognition of National Societies by the ICRC and their admission as members of the League. The procedures for admission to the League have recently been reviewed in detail by the Constitution Revision Commission, with results which are reflected in the new League Constitution.

In order to make their co-operation in this field more effective, the League and the ICRC will make some technical improvements, in particular in their methods for assessing the operational capacity of applicant Societies.

## **2. Non-observance of principles by National Societies**

The ICRC and the League recognize that there is a need to devise a procedure enabling them to help those few National Societies which are confronted by certain types of difficulty: non-observance of the fundamental principles, government take-over, misapplication of the statutes, period of inactivity, etc.

These are, of course, difficult and sensitive matters requiring tact and understanding.

In this connection, the proposals made by the Tansley Report for a *formal Review Board* (p. 97) are not perhaps the most appropriate

solution. On the other hand, the Joint Commission on National Societies' statutes has been reactivated following the Teheran Conference (Resolution VI). Its mandate includes the examination of cases where National Societies deviate from the fundamental principles or meet with constitutional difficulties.

### **3. ICRC's co-operation with the League in the development of National Societies**

The Tansley Report proposes that the ICRC, as well as the League, should be involved in the development of National Societies. This is of course a field in which the two institutions do collaborate already to a certain extent, but they agree that the ICRC should take a more active part in this task whose importance is vital for the future of the Red Cross movement. Greater participation by the ICRC can be achieved without duplication and without trespassing on the League's established sphere of activity or upon its functions as defined in its new Constitution. There is, in fact, a gap to be bridged, especially as regards dissemination of knowledge of the Conventions and the preparation of National Societies for their work in time of armed conflict or disturbances.

Both institutions are in the process of improving their planning and development assistance and similar action. They intend to exchange the basic outlines of their long-term planning, and to do so at a sufficiently early stage to allow effective co-ordination before reaching policy decisions.

In the same line of thought, the ICRC accepts the Tansley Report's suggestion that it should issue a *Practical guide for the use of National Societies*, enabling them to better disseminate knowledge of Red Cross principles and of the Conventions, and better understand the various responsibilities which members of the movement may have to face in case of conflict. A draft text is being prepared and the League will be associated with it.

### **4. Joint Regional Offices**

The Report proposes the creation by the ICRC and the League of joint regional offices, *under the International Red Cross banner* (p. 90). This proposal aims to strengthen co-operation in development work and to demonstrate the unity of the International Red Cross.

As has been stated earlier, the ICRC is determined to involve itself to a greater extent than in the past in the common effort with the League to help National Societies in their development. But in the opinion of the ICRC and of the League, progress in this direction does not depend on the creation of joint regional offices.

Two practical difficulties stand in the way of such an undertaking. In the first place, the sites where the ICRC needs resident regional delegations vary depending on its particular operational requirements (and are subject to change at short notice). The conditions which determine the locations of the League's development delegates stem from a completely different set of operational requirements. This means that in practice the two institutions' choices of sites would rarely coincide. Secondly, the ICRC feels that the particular requirements of its protection and assistance functions for victims of armed conflicts or internal disturbances would make it difficult to share offices and related facilities. The League understands this point of view, but it considers that in certain exceptional situations there could be such strong arguments in favour of a joint regional office that it would be unwise, as well as unnecessary, to rule out the possibility completely.

In any case, it is desirable—especially with regard to development—to strengthen as much as possible the collaboration which already exists in the field between the League and the ICRC. It is obviously important for the delegates of each organization to be completely informed of the activities of the delegates of the other, in order to be able to reply to questions on the subject in the course of their missions.

This means that the delegates' training must be widened to include this aspect, and that they must be briefed before their departure, not only by their own institution but also by the other. Meetings and consultations on the spot are also extremely useful and ought to be further encouraged.

For certain assignments, such as those relating to National Society recognition, preparing conferences or seminars, development aid and information, joint missions composed of delegates of the League and of the ICRC have been organized in the past and will certainly be arranged again.

## **5. One building for the League and the ICRC**

The Report's proposal that the ICRC and the League should share a building, or at least a common site (p. 123), is viewed differently by the two institutions.

The League is in favour of the proposal, considering that great advantages would flow from it: technical and economic benefits would result, and above all the unity of the International Red Cross would be demonstrated convincingly to the public.

The ICRC also sees the advantages of the proposal; it considers however that it presents important drawbacks, in view of the type of mandate which it has received from governments and because of building costs.

Both the ICRC and the League are determined, however, that their difficulty at present in reaching agreement on this point shall not stand in the way of further development of practical co-operation between them across a wide range of technical and administrative matters, as discussed below.

## **6. Other areas of collaboration**

It is desirable to continue and extend the existing co-operation on an empirical basis wherever possible.

The ICRC and the League have in mind in particular the following spheres:

### **1. Staff training**

The proposal made in the Tansley Report that ICRC and League staff should receive the same training and guidance (p. 123) is basically a sound suggestion

There is already collaboration between the institutions with regard to the training of delegates for missions; the orientation of new office staff; and the exchange of experience between supervisory grades in Geneva. This shared activity, developed with the help of the Henry Dunant Institute, has already included the organization of several joint courses for new staff members of the two institutions and of a seminar on the ICRC for some League officials, in December 1976.

### **2. Collaboration between information services**

Although the Tansley Report was fairly reserved on this subject (p. 123), the ICRC and the League feel that there is room for progress here.

First of all, with regard to general information on the Red Cross and on the basis of suggestions made by the two information services, common objectives to promote the Red Cross image in the world could be decided each year.

Valuable practical work has already been accomplished (examples: joint meetings on worldwide and regional bases of heads of information of National Societies, the League and the ICRC). Further possibilities for this sort of practical collaboration are at present being studied by both institutions.

Technical equipment for producing audio-visual material has been lent to the League by the ICRC on several occasions; further collaboration on a permanent basis is possible, the expenses incurred being shared by both organizations.

### **3. Relief operations**

The problems raised by the organization of international relief actions are the subject of a special section in the Tansley Report, with an urgent recommendation to the Geneva institutions to further their collaboration in order to provide more effective relief to the victims of conflicts and catastrophes (pp. 81 and 124-125).

Within their particular functions, the ICRC and the League are willing to examine how they can extend their practical collaboration which has been carried on in this important field on numerous occasions, particularly in aiding the civilian population in Indochina (Indochina Operational Group, IOG, later INDSEC).

### **4. Appeals for funds from the National Societies**

In order for major appeals to have more impact, whether in the event of conflict or of a natural disaster, the Tansley Report proposes that they should be addressed to the National Societies in the name of the International Red Cross, rather than separately by the League of the ICRC (p. 119).

The ICRC and the League think that this proposal goes too far, and that it is preferable for them to continue, as they have done for many years, to send joint appeals to the National Societies when circumstances allow this. But, to avoid confusion, it is important that in each case the responsibility for the operation envisaged be clearly indicated to the donors. Moreover, it is essential for the League and the ICRC to keep each other informed of their decisions and of the results of their appeals.

### **5. Joint technical study group on relief**

Taking into account the elements common to all operations involving material aid (purchasing, logistics, communications, etc.), Mr. Tansley

suggests creating a joint technical group for the League and the ICRC, to operate for either of the institutions, depending on the case. In view of the preliminary need to study and to standardize the operational methods of both bodies, the first step to be taken in this direction would be to create a joint planning body for the purpose of carrying out the preparatory work (p. 125).

Bearing in mind their recent experiences of collaboration, the League and the ICRC willingly agree with the proposal to create a *joint technical study group on relief*. This group should be composed of members of the relief services of both institutions and should have as its aim the assessment of potential common Red Cross resources (sources of supply, purchasing, storage, transportation, standardization, general documentation, etc.).

This group would naturally also be responsible for pooling the experience gained by the two institutions in their own relief operations.

On the subject of a *joint technical bureau*, the principle of which was outlined by the ICRC as long ago as 1973, we feel that it raises some problems (for example, the exact purpose of the bureau, its administrative links, where it would be located), which should be given more thorough study.

In general, the ICRC and the League consider that, to improve their collaboration in this important area, it is desirable to work empirically and gradually, developing common working methods which have proved useful during the last few years and which might eventually result in different forms of work organization.

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