

In Canberra : Regional Asia-Pacific Seminar

A regional seminar on international humanitarian law was held in Canberra, federal capital of the Commonwealth of Australia, from 6 to 12 February. The seminar was designed for academics and high-level staff (civilian or military) of governments of the Asia-Pacific region. More than sixty participants from fourteen countries took part. The seminar was organized by the National University of Australia (Canberra) and the Henry Dunant Institute (Geneva), with the collaboration of the Australian Red Cross and the support of the ICRC. The ICRC sent as its delegates Mr. Rudolf Jäckli, member of the Committee, and Mr. H.-P. Gasser and Mr. J.-J. Surbeck, ICRC specialists in international humanitarian law and its dissemination. The Henry Dunant Institute was represented by its director, Mr. J. Meurant; the President of the Institute, Mr. E. de la Mata, also participated on the last day of the seminar. The regional delegate of the League was present at the various meetings.

The seminar was an important event from several points of view. It was the first time that the Australian Red Cross had hosted a meeting of representatives of neighbouring countries. For these representatives, responsible to their governments for the teaching or the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law, it was the first opportunity that they had had, since the regional seminar held in Kuala-Lumpur, in 1978, by the ICRC and the Red Crescent of Malaysia, to meet for an exchange of views on the subject. For the ICRC and the Henry Dunant Institute, the seminar made it possible to have direct contact with legal specialists coming from countries on the other side of the globe.

Under the general theme of "Protection of the human being during armed conflicts", the participants heard a series of talks on the 1977 Protocols, on limitations of methods and means of combat, on systems for the supervision and application of international humanitarian law, on the dissemination of knowledge of this humanitarian law in the general education system, etc. The last two days of the seminar were devoted to a comparison between Asiatic traditions (in Japan, Malaysia, India and China) and the demands of contemporary humanitarian law for the protection of victims of armed conflicts. Each talk was followed by a debate.

A record of this seminar will be published this year in a special edition of the *Australian Yearbook of International Law*, making it unnecessary for us to talk about the proceedings of the seminar at greater length

here, but we would underline the very high quality of the speakers, of the contributions presented and of the discussions which followed them. This seminar may be considered as a great success in the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law among university and government circles in Asia and the Pacific, and the Australian National University and the Australian Red Cross deserve thanks for their excellent contribution to this humanitarian work.

Meetings in New Zealand

The New Zealand Red Cross Society has always been very interested in the dissemination of international humanitarian law and has always been very active in this field. It had invited Mr. J.-J. Surbeck, a specialist in the dissemination of humanitarian law at the ICRC, who was going to Australia for the Asia-Pacific regional seminar, to also visit New Zealand. The Society had organized, between 2 and 5 February, in collaboration with the Victoria University of Wellington, two meetings, one in Auckland and the other in Wellington, intended for the New Zealand public and dealing with the Red Cross and international humanitarian law.

At these meetings, the members of the audience heard exposés given either by the ICRC delegate, or by the Professors K. J. Keith and R. Q. Quentin-Baxter of the Victoria University, or by representatives of the Defence Ministry and the New Zealand Red Cross. The talks were followed by lively discussions and the lecturers were asked numerous questions.

In Auckland the audience mainly consisted of active members and voluntary workers of the Red Cross, with representatives of the Civil Defence and several social and religious organizations, whereas in Wellington, the country's capital, the participants were important officials from the Defence Ministry, the Ministry for External Affairs, the Ministry for Education and from the Civil Defence, several university professors, students and jurists interested in the subjects presented.

During these two meetings, the public showed great interest and took an active part in the discussions. These events were a success, and a valuable encouragement to the organizers and lecturers.
