

The *International Review of the Red Cross* at the service of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The last few years have been a momentous period in the life of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. One milestone was the adoption of its new Statutes by the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross (Geneva, October 1986). Furthermore, the increasingly universal nature of the Movement and the desire to present a united front in the face of the changes and upheavals taking place in the modern world, and the "solidarity of image" which exists between the various components of the Movement and which was stressed in Resolution No. 8 of the Council of Delegates (Rio de Janeiro, November 1987), have all had an appreciable influence on the Movement's information policy—and hence that of the ICRC.

For some years now the ICRC has been endeavouring in its information and dissemination activities, and particularly in its publications, to give a more comprehensive picture of the work and concerns of all the components of the Movement.

The International Review of the Red Cross must naturally reflect those endeavours. At its meeting on 16 and 17 March 1988 the ICRC Assembly therefore reaffirmed and specified the nature and objectives of the Review as follows:

The International Review of the Red Cross is the official publication of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Published since 1869, it was originally entitled "Bulletin international des Sociétés de secours aux militaires blessés", and later "Bulletin international des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge".

The International Review of the Red Cross is a forum for reflection and comment and serves as a reference work on the mission and guiding principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is also a specialized journal in

the field of international humanitarian law and other aspects of humanitarian endeavour.

As a chronicle of the international activities of the Movement and a record of events, the International Review of the Red Cross is a constant source of information and maintains a link between the components of the Movement.

The ICRC Assembly's intention in adopting this definition was to stress that the Review is at the service of all the components of the Movement and is a faithful record of its guiding principles and activities vis-à-vis the outside world.

The ICRC is aware of the position the Review has long held within the International Red Cross and of the keen interest of its readers, whether or not they belong to the Red Cross and the Red Crescent world.

In keeping with the historical importance of the International Review of the Red Cross and the connotations of its title, the ICRC, which bears the overall responsibility for its publication, wishes it to continue its development whilst maintaining a tradition for quality, true to the principles and ideals of the International Red Cross.

But service to the Movement, symbolized on the new cover of the Review by the red cross and red crescent emblem, lies now more than ever in voicing its members' concerns, opening its pages more widely to present-day humanitarian issues, covering a greater variety of subjects and encouraging the submission of articles by people from all over the world.

How are these principles of permanence and receptiveness expressed in the contents of the Review?

— *As a forum for reflection and comment, the International Review of the Red Cross publishes articles of a legal, historical and sociological nature and texts setting out the Movement's mission, its humanitarian activities and the guidelines and principles which govern its work. It also studies how the terms of reference, structure and activities of its components are evolving, in the light of new needs and pursuant to the decisions of their governing bodies, while at the time endeavouring to analyse the problems with which the institutions are faced.*

Unique in character, the Review is a publication specializing in international humanitarian law; it contributes towards its development and its dissemination. It is thus the Movement's leading periodical.

— **As the official publication of the ICRC since 1869**, the Review keeps its readers regularly informed about the institution's activities both at headquarters and at its delegations throughout the world. For the information of the National Societies themselves, government circles, international bodies and the numerous humanitarian organizations with which the ICRC works, it publishes the institution's official circulars, such as those announcing the official recognition of National Societies.

— **As a chronicle of the international activities of the Movement**, the Review recounts and comments on the discussions and resolutions of the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent; it reports on the most important activities of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their federation, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: statutory meetings, international and regional seminars, admission of National Societies, etc. As regularly as possible it also publishes details on programmes of National Societies which, on account of their imaginativeness and range of activities, might serve as an example for other National Societies. In this way the Review keeps up a continuous flow of information and maintains a link between the components of the Movement.

— **Open to world events and to the activities of worldwide and regional humanitarian institutions**, the Review comments on present-day problems and their humanitarian implications. It reports on notable events in the life of governmental and non-governmental international humanitarian organizations and publishes documents which come from sources other than those of the Movement but which are of direct concern for it.

— **As a research and reference work**, the Review regularly publishes book reviews, lists of works of a humanitarian nature, bibliographical notes and details on publications by the ICRC, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute. By so doing, the Review promotes research and helps make humanitarian law and the activities of the Movement better known.

Another innovation illustrating the Review's policy of receptiveness and dissemination is that beginning with the May-June 1988 issue, the ICRC decided to publish an edition of the Review in Arabic.

It did so in reply to a wish expressed by the General Secretariat of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies and by other Arabic-speaking

circles. Moreover, the reaction to our enquiries prior to starting up this edition, and particularly to the special issue in Arabic which came out in October 1987, has been most encouraging.

The Arabic edition of the Review is intended to make a periodical at the service of the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, with an international readership, readily accessible in their own language not only to the respective National Societies but also to academic institutions, government circles and the Arabic-language press. It will also make it easier to spread knowledge of the message and activities of the Movement in Arabic-speaking circles, particularly those which do not use any other language. Its purpose is also to encourage institutions and Arabic-speaking individuals to express their thoughts on the role and life of the Movement by submitting articles for the Review, to continue the efforts made at the ICRC in recent years to produce written and audio-visual dissemination material in Arabic, and, finally, to strengthen the link between the ICRC and the Arab National Societies.

In principle, this new edition in Arabic will be identical to the other editions in English, French and Spanish and will appear every two months.

The ICRC hopes that these innovations and our efforts today will meet with a favourable response, in the form of new subscriptions to the Review and articles written for it by leading members of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the many governmental, university, military and medical circles for which the Review is intended.

The ICRC wants the International Review of the Red Cross to become an ever wider platform for expressing authoritative opinions on the major humanitarian problems besetting today's world. Its pages are therefore open to all kinds of articles, provided that they are inspired by the Red Cross and Red Crescent principles and uphold basic human rights at a time when these are all too often held in disregard.

Cornelio Sommaruga
President of the ICRC
