

## THE “SOLDIER’S MANUAL”

It is common knowledge that the ICRC, in order to make the humanitarian Red Cross principles known throughout the world, has produced a school textbook entitled *The Red Cross and My Country*, followed by a *Teacher’s Manual*.<sup>1</sup> It has already been issued in fifteen languages. More than a million copies have been printed and it has been distributed in schools in fifty-five countries.

Subsequently, it appeared necessary to publish also a handbook for officers and other ranks of the armed forces. It was entitled the *Soldier’s Manual*. Its inspiration was the same as that underlying the school textbook. However, while the latter is designed to inculcate in schoolchildren, by means of short illustrated texts, the principles of the Red Cross and of humanitarian law, the *Soldier’s Manual* summarizes the rules of the Geneva Conventions which should be applied in all circumstances when armed conflict breaks out.

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The first edition in 1969, of which only 5,000 copies were printed<sup>2</sup>, was designed first and foremost to arouse interest and to find out how governments to which the ICRC sent it reacted. Reception having been very favourable, especially from the ministries responsible for the armed forces, and in order to meet the wishes of various officials (35 countries conveyed to the ICRC their approval of the pilot edition), the second, pocket book edition, has just been printed, containing 24 pages of clear and concise text and designs with explanatory comments. It can be easily adapted to the needs of the countries and armies in which it has been introduced.

But wherefore a *Soldier’s Manual*?

The 400 articles of the 1949 Geneva Conventions are known only to specialists, and strangers to international humanitarian

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<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alia*, *International Review*, March 1971.

<sup>2</sup> After a mission by Mr. Jean-Marc Laverrière to more than a score of countries in Africa, and after being requested by Chiefs of Staff and officials responsible for defence in a number of countries.

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law like soldiers, cannot easily assimilate them. The ICRC has, therefore, in addition to a *Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*, which is for the public and armed forces but not illustrated, drawn up and had printed the *Manual* which, as already said, contains a summary of the essentials of the four Geneva Conventions, and in which an attempt has been made to make clear those aspects of humanitarian law which are deemed to be the most important.

In June 1971, 150,000 copies (in French 33,000, in English 33,000, in Spanish 33,000, and in Arabic 50,000)<sup>1</sup> came off the press. The Ministries of Defence and of Foreign Affairs of all countries which are parties to the Geneva Conventions, and all recognized National Societies, have received three copies, accompanied in some cases by a questionnaire. When these are all returned, the ICRC will know the opinions and requirements of the governments and will be able to decide on future run-offs.

The price of the *Manual* is Sw. Fr. 0.50 a copy. With a view to encouraging its dissemination and use by the armed forces, the ICRC is prepared to give a number of copies free of charge to authorities which are interested. In addition, the ICRC recommends the translation into local languages, at the discretion of Ministries of Defence. Some countries have already advised the ICRC that they intend to have the *Manual* published at their own expense.

We would add that the 23 illustrations in the *Soldier's Manual*, like those in *The Red Cross and My Country*, are by Mrs. Agnes Molnar, and that this publication, of which we have just described the success, ends with the following significant words:

**"SOLDIER DON'T FORGET !**

*Protect enemy wounded, sick and prisoners as you yourself would wish to be protected.*

*You too might one day be wounded, sick, unarmed or taken prisoner."*

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<sup>1</sup> *Plate.*