

“ The Red Cross and My Country ”

A widely distributed school textbook

The International Review has already on several occasions given information about the school textbook, nearly a million copies of which have now been published by the ICRC. The article below contains a statement on the different editions at the end of August 1971.

On the shelf, the eleven small books are carefully lined up. All are of the same format; all have the same picture, or nearly the same, for a closer look shows that the costume of the little boy with almond eyes differs from book to book and that the title changes into progressively more complicated signs, ending up with Chinese ideograms.

These eleven Asia editions¹ of *The Red Cross and My Country* and the editions for Africa, Latin America and the Middle East represent quite a venture. At the start, the idea was to make the Red Cross known to the youth of developing countries. How was this to be done? By radio? By television? By films? It was soon realized that the simplest medium was the written word, and the most extensive channel for distribution, the school.

A team at ICRC headquarters started the general planning and the drafting of the texts. These, brief and simple, had to be the means of inculcating into school children between the ages of 8 and 14 years the basic humanitarian principles. The illustrations were assigned to an artist whose descriptive style made them clear to everyone.

¹ *Plate.*

In Africa

Two pilot editions, one in English and one in French, were prepared for Africa. The ICRC delegated to that continent Mr. Laurent Marti and later Mr. Jean-Marc Laverrière to obtain the agreement and suggestions of interested African government departments. Twenty-five English-speaking and French-speaking States agreed to introduce the textbook and the accompanying "Teacher's Manual" into their primary schools. This first edition, of which 240,000 copies were printed, met with pronounced success, and a second edition for Africa is now being planned, for although the books are school property, there are clearly too few in circulation. The ICRC is considering having a further 500,000 printed.

In Asia

While English and French are "official" in Africa, with many local languages in current use, the situation is rather different in Asia where vernacular languages are spoken and written. For that reason it was necessary to adapt not only the illustrations but also the text of the school book for the Far East.

This adaptation was carried out with the valuable help of governments and National Societies. In each country, representatives of the Ministry of Education and the Red Cross formed a joint commission to study the drafts and make the changes necessary for their own country's edition of *The Red Cross and My Country*.

Yet further problems arose: where was a printing shop with the typographic characters of the various Asian languages to be found? How could the proofs be checked? How could publishing and especially transport costs be reduced? The solution was found in Singapore, where a government undertaking was able to handle the printing in eleven languages of 600,000 school textbooks and 70,000 copies of the "Teacher's Manual". It was also able to handle their despatch to ten countries.

In the Arab countries

The next step was to introduce the school textbook into the Arab countries. The Lebanese Red Cross artist adapted the illustra-

tions appropriately and the text was translated in Beirut. Two versions were printed in that town, one with the red cross and the other with the red crescent. The school textbook and the "Teacher's Manual", of which respectively 100,000 and 10,000 copies were printed, are now being distributed in 17 Middle East and Maghreb countries.

In Latin America

Efforts are also being made in Latin America. Some 3,000 copies of a pilot edition have been translated into Spanish and sent to all governments and National Societies in that area. Several countries have made known their desire to print the school textbook and "Teacher's Manual" at their own expense. Ten governments wish to receive the booklet. However, demand already exceeds six million copies! Having only relatively modest means, the ICRC encourages the publication of *The Red Cross and My Country* locally, hoping that, for its part, it will be able to have half a million copies printed and distributed free, as was done on the other continents.

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In some countries, National Societies have decided to adopt the textbook at their own cost. The Australian Red Cross, for example, has issued an edition for Papua and New Guinea.

The school textbook circulation throughout the world today amounts to nearly one million. Its illustrations, whether of an African straw hut, a Nepalese dwelling, a Bedouin tent or a house in the Cordillera of the Andes, impresses the Red Cross principles on the minds of thousands of children.

It is a paradox that there is no similar instruction in European schools. Nevertheless, a European edition is now being planned which is expected to take the form of a strip cartoon. Contact has already been made on this subject with experts.

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Dissemination of the school textbook throughout the world

Africa

No. of copies printed : 240,000 ¹

Languages : English and French

Circulation in 25 countries, namely: Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (People's Republic), Congo (Democratic Republic), Dahomey, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Upper Volta, Zambia.

Latin America

No. of copies printed : At present, 3,000 ¹

Language : Spanish

Circulation in 10 countries, namely: Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Venezuela.

Asia

No. of copies printed : 600,000 ¹

Languages : English, Chinese, Bahasa Indonesia, Burmese, Korean, Khmer, Laotian, Malay, Nepalese, Sinhala and Thai.

Circulation in 9 countries, i.e.: Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia, Korea (Republic), Laos, Malaysia (English, Chinese, and Malay), Nepal, Philippines (English) and Thailand.

¹ This figure does not include the " Teacher's Manual ".

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Middle East and Maghreb

No. of copies printed : 100,000 ¹

Language : Arabic

Circulation planned in 17 countries, namely: Abu Dhabi, Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Republic, Yemen Arab Republic, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

¹ This figure does not include the "Teacher's Manual".