

“The Red Cross and My Country” in five Asian countries

In order to make better known throughout the world the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross, the ICRC has published a school textbook, “The Red Cross and My Country”, and its complement the “Teacher’s Manual”. These are for distribution in schools in Africa and in Asia ¹. In addition, for the armed forces, it has published the “Soldier’s Manual”. The first two of these three books educate schoolchildren, by means of short illustrated texts, in the fundamental humanitarian principles, whilst the “Soldier’s Manual” concentrates on the essential provisions of the Geneva Conventions.

“The Red Cross and My Country” and the “Teacher’s Manual” have been issued in French and in English. Twenty-three African States have received 240,000 copies of the two versions.

However, for Asia, due to the multiplicity of vernacular languages and traditions, the texts and illustrations had to be adapted to enable each schoolchild to read “The Red Cross and My Country” in his own language and to see illustrations of scenes familiar to him.

In 1969, the International Committee therefore sent drafts of “The Red Cross and My Country” and of the “Teacher’s Manual”, together with a questionnaire and copies of the “Soldier’s Manual”, to the various governments and National Red Cross Societies of the Far East.

In each country a joint commission was formed, with representatives of the Ministries of Education and members of the Red Cross. They studied the drafts and decided on the main changes to be made.

¹ See *International Review*, March and Dec. 1969.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

This effective participation by the authorities and National Societies in each State greatly facilitated the ICRC's work.

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From 15 January to 30 March 1970, an International Committee representative, Mr. Jean-Marc Laverrière, was in five Asian countries in order to negotiate final details concerning the editing and the number of copies required in the primary schools of those countries, and also to study practical and financial arrangements for the printing.

Mr. Laverrière contacted the governments and National Red Cross Societies of Indonesia¹; Singapore, Malaysia² (including Sabah and Sarawak), Laos and Thailand³. These five countries have expressed the wish to receive from the ICRC a total of 410,000 copies which would be printed in six languages in Singapore.

Indonesia is planning to distribute 100,000 copies in Bahasa Indonesia; Singapore 80,000 copies in English; Malaysia 80,000 copies in Malay, 20,000 in Chinese and 30,000 in English. Laos requires 50,000 copies in Lao, and Thailand 50,000 copies in Thai. In addition, 30,000 copies of the "Teacher's Manual" will be distributed in Indonesia, 15,000 in Singapore, 30,000 in Malaysia and 5,000 in Laos. All editions will be available for use in schools by January 1971.

A second voyage to be undertaken by Mr. Laverrière will be to promote the work of the ICRC in eight other countries of Asia.

Government and National Red Cross Society co-operation in the ICRC work in connection with "The Red Cross and My Country" and the "Teacher's Manual" demonstrates the interest aroused by the project and the desire to extend the dissemination of humanitarian principles among youth.

^{1, 2, 3} *Plate.*