

by rapporteurs and about which views could be exchanged; one or more National Societies, for instance, could be appointed to present the chosen topics.

Less demanding meetings might permit informal contacts between delegates at less ceremonious receptions; talks would be possible on a more personal level.

From our Iranian friends we received particularly generous treatment. Some National Societies, bearing expense in mind, might hesitate to act as host to future Conferences. Could we not revert to a more simple standard?

In short, we must first thank the Iranian Red Lion and Sun for organizing, in difficult circumstances, an International Conference of the Red Cross which went off without a hitch, in an atmosphere of friendship, and which unquestionably produced worthwhile results. For the future, we must study how better to organize meetings and allocate subjects while shortening the session.

Everything should be done to maintain fully all Red Cross principles and the *raison d'être* of the International Conference of the Red Cross, now that it has become an international meeting like any other.

Eric MARTIN

President of the International Committee
of the Red Cross

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The work of the Commissions

GENERAL COMMISSION

The Commission elected Sir Geoffrey Newman-Morris (Australia) as chairman, Dr. Werner Ludwig (German Democratic Republic) and Dr. Stephen Moosai-Maharaj (Trinidad and Tobago) as vice-Chairmen, and Mr. Fok Fook Choon (Singapore) as rapporteur.

A report on action taken pursuant to resolutions of the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross was approved, as was

the ICRC report on its activities since 1969. After consideration of the latter report, a resolution was passed supporting the ICRC's attitude and affirming the necessity of applying the Geneva Conventions in all circumstances without any conditions or demands which are alien to those Convention.

The Commission discussed the work of the ICRC, particularly in Chile and in the Middle East.

One resolution adopted appealed to all parties concerned to recognize their obligations in the occupied territories of the Middle East under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Another, on the treatment of prisoners of war in the Middle East, gave rise to high words. When the Commission proposed proceeding to the next item on its agenda, the ICRC President underlined how regrettable such a decision would be, with no satisfaction to anyone. The lengthy debate which followed seemed to suggest that no agreement could be reached on the draft resolution or on the proposed amendment. Fortunately, an alternative draft was adopted unanimously. It invited all parties to the Middle East conflict to ensure the full application of the Geneva Conventions, particularly those provisions concerning the treatment of prisoners of war, the wounded, the sick, and civilian victims.

Another unanimously adopted resolution stressed the necessity of accounting for persons reported missing and killed during armed conflicts.

In his presentation of the report of the League of Red Cross Societies for the period 1969 to 1973, Secretary-General Henrik Beer stated that over the previous three years the League had, on average, launched a disaster relief appeal every fortnight. He spoke also of the Development Programme (accident prevention, blood transfusion, environment protection, social welfare, community services, youth programmes).

Mr. Olof Stroh reported on the activities of the Indo-China Operational Group (IOG), of which he is the director. He emphasized the Group's projects, pointing out that they had been planned in consultation with the National Societies and authorities of the beneficiary countries. The total cost of the programme was estimated at 110 million Swiss francs. There was a shortfall of 60 million Swiss francs, half of which was wanted immediately for emergency assistance operations.

The Commission approved the report, congratulated its authors, and decided to refer it to the plenary meeting.

Mr. Kai Warras, chairman of the joint committee for the reappraisal of the role of the Red Cross, and Mr. D. D. Tansley, director of the reappraisal, submitted a report on the progress of the study. National Societies were encouraged to make known their views on the root of the problem.

The League Secretary-General informed the commission that forty-eight National Societies had submitted reports on their activities, which were of great interest.

After presenting the report of the Standing Commission, of which she was chairman, Lady Limerick submitted a draft resolution on the revision of National Society Statutes, providing for ICRC and League intervention if changes incompatible with Red Cross principles were introduced by the National Societies. After amendment, the draft was unanimously approved.

A draft resolution laying down Red Cross disaster relief principles and rules was also adopted unanimously.

Mr. Frank N. Berkol, United Nations Co-ordinator for Disaster Relief, gave an account of the events which led to the setting up of the United Nations Office of the Co-ordinator for Disaster Relief in 1971. He then referred to the close co-operation which, from the outset, had been established between his Office and the Red Cross, and which had been maintained in the course of emergency situations, both organizations being necessary today on a world scale, and each complementing the other.

Mr. Rogers, representing the World Meteorological Organization, and Mr. Marks, representing UNICEF, both described how their organizations and the Red Cross co-operated.

Mr. Warras then reviewed the various aspects of relief operations in armed conflict.

In connection with relief aims and methods, the Norwegian Red Cross reported on the international seminar which, at Gol (Norway) in August 1972, dealt with relief to civilian population in time of armed conflict. The same Society also submitted a resolution which, after slight amendment, was approved.

Two further resolutions were adopted unanimously: one concerned the promotion of the Red Cross image through modern mass media, the other the Red Cross as a factor in world peace.

The Report on ICRC Activities was introduced by an address which was read out to the General Commission during its author's

absence, Mr. Roger Gallopin, President of the Executive Board. We give the text hereunder :

I shall confine myself to sketching briefly the broad outlines of our operations since 1969. As you will see, the same major operations have still been absorbing the bulk of ICRC efforts.

The ICRC has pursued its activities in the particularly difficult context of Indo-China, visiting those prisoners of war to whom it could gain access and bringing relief to conflict victims. Shortly before the ceasefire—and in agreement with the League—it set up an “Indo-China Operational Group”, whose special report has been submitted for your consideration. This report will also be the subject of comments by Mr. Olof Stroh, Secretary-General of the Swedish Red Cross, who was selected by the ICRC and the League to direct the Group.

The Asian sub-continent has also been the theatre of an admittedly shorter but no less dramatic conflict in terms of its human consequences. During the war—and with the agreement of all parties—the ICRC was able to create at Dacca two neutral zones as places of asylum for people who felt themselves directly threatened. In collaboration with the League and the National Societies of the countries concerned, it provided large-scale relief to the victims of the conflict, sheltering them from famine and from the rigours of the monsoon. Above all, it concerned itself with the fate of some 100,000 prisoners of war taken during the conflict; it visited them, gave them messages from their families and is now organizing their repatriation. In collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Protecting Power, it is also organizing the repatriation of Bengalis resident in Pakistan and of Pakistanis residing in Bangladesh.

The ICRC has also been active in other regions of the world. In Europe, several missions have had to be sent to Northern Ireland. In Africa, the ICRC is supplying considerable amounts of aid to populations, visiting prisoners and repatriating military and civilian personnel, in Uganda, Burundi and Southern Africa. In Latin America, our delegates are regularly visiting thousands of political detainees, while the recent events in Chile have required the sending of a large ICRC mission to visit prisoners jailed following the coup d'état, to provide the necessary aid, and particularly to ensure the observance of the universally recognized humanitarian principles.

In the Middle East, the crisis flared up again after several

years. During those years, the ICRC carried out numerous visits to prisoners of war and civilian internees, repatriated a number of them and ensured the communication of messages between them and their families. It reunited dispersed families and did its utmost to assist the civilian populations in territories under Israeli control. Since the recent developments of the Israeli-Arab conflict, it has strengthened its delegations so as to be in a position to carry out its role as a neutral intermediary with a view to ensuring the application of the Geneva Conventions. It has already done a great deal, although it is still too early to assess its achievements.

This brief survey of our activities will give you an idea of what we have been able to do, and also of what we have had to leave undone.

If victims have not been protected as effectively as they should have been, and if it has not been possible to reach some of them, it has been because of difficulties which the ICRC has not been able entirely to overcome and which have to be understood if their root causes are to be grasped. I believe that, for all of us, this is a subject for reflexion which we should tackle squarely.

These then are the conditions under which the ICRC, as a specifically neutral body appointed to act as intermediary in time of conflict, has had to undertake its duties.

Already twenty-four years have elapsed since the last diplomatic conference at which the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 were signed. Twenty-four years during which, alas, armed conflicts have steadily increased, with the appearance of ever more lethal weapons. And during this quarter of a century the very nature of the conflicts has changed in that we are confronted by more and more frequent internal conflicts where, in practice and in law, ICRC action is possible only if it is accepted by the parties concerned.

Next spring a further diplomatic conference will be held to enable all governments to study the additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions which should make it possible to strengthen and extend the protection to be given to war victims in both internal and international conflicts.

However, in addition to the texts which may be adopted—and which we hope to see adopted—there must emerge a conviction and a common willingness which alone will make the commitments undertaken a reality.

For the essential basis of humanitarian action is, of course, the implementation by all the protagonists of the letter and the spirit of the provisions of the Conventions. For the ICRC this means,

above all, immediate freedom of access for its delegates to all victims and the possibility of securing for them the protection and help which they need.

However, in fulfilling this function entrusted to it by the international community, the ICRC finds itself all too often knocking at the doors of those who won't hear, with the responsible authorities denying that the provisions of the Conventions are applicable and invoking, either implicitly or explicitly, their national laws concerning public order; this in effect produces a conflict between the political and military requirements of the State and the welfare of the human being.

Governments cannot take advantage of the sovereignty of the State to give themselves the right to interpret the Geneva Conventions in their own fashion. They may not require their adversaries to give a wide application to humanitarian law, whereas they hold to a very restricted interpretation of the responsibilities falling to them. The Geneva Conventions are not negotiable. As opposed to commercial treaties, they allow no clause of reciprocity. The humanitarian Conventions are official commitments by which States bind themselves unilaterally, each one vis-à-vis all the others, to respect in all circumstances the principles they have recognized as vital.

It is not acceptable either that, on the basis of that same sovereignty, States try to conceal conflicts within their frontiers so as to elude the obligations they have agreed, nor may they under the pretext of military requirements refuse to give humanitarian assistance to the foe *hors de combat*, wounded or held prisoner in their hands. In this case, reasons of State make the defenceless man a hostage and very often an object of political bargaining.

In the context of internal conflicts, States may not interpret the intervention of the ICRC and the assistance it offers them as interference in their internal affairs. The International Committee then appeals to them on the basis of the fundamental principle of the Red Cross, namely the principle of humanity which imposes equal assistance for both friend and foe.

Yet the ICRC does not fail to recognize the requirements imposed on the authorities by the maintenance of order and security. It raises its voice against the excesses of State sovereignty when the wounded, the prisoners and non-combatant civilians are deliberately deprived of Red Cross assistance or when they are subjected to a scarcely disguised form of the law of retaliation.

There is another kind of pressure on the ICRC which makes its position especially difficult: belligerents' efforts to make it bear responsibility to issue protests or denounce violations alleged—moreover often quite justifiably—by a party to the conflict vis-à-vis his adversary.

However the ICRC, as has already been announced very often, cannot assume the mantle of a judge and still less of a prosecutor of humanity. If it can communicate protests it cannot regard them as its own, otherwise it would lose all credit and authority to exercise its specific function of protecting all those who are in the hands of their enemies, in a spirit of complete neutrality. Active neutrality is a form of taking sides as the ICRC sets humanity against the unavoidable partiality of the belligerents. Its neutrality is a means of action in giving relief as is its sole aim.

On the basis of what has just been said it can be understood that in the extremely tense situation of a conflict a humane group and its leaders try to attract into their camp all possible forces, including the Red Cross as it also is a force.

However, those who try to make the Red Cross a war ally and not a factor of peace would divide and paralyse it. Those who wish the ICRC to relinquish its impartiality would prevent it from playing its specific role. If it abandoned its neutrality and its independence, it would no longer be in a position to ensure—in all conflicts of whatever nature—fair assistance for all the victims in the spirit of the Red Cross.

Beyond State sovereignty, there is another sovereignty, namely humanitarian sovereignty, which those who suffer are entitled to claim. It is on the basis of that sovereignty that the ICRC appeals to all States, just as it does to all Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, to all those who are at war or fight wherever they may be, so that its mission will be understood and so that it can fulfil its vocation of bringing people together, in particular at times when they are separated by conflicts.

All the legal or political obstacles which can be set against the fulfilment of this mission will only succeed in increasing mistrust, tension and hatred between peoples, whereas the work of the Red Cross is a work for peace.

May this XXIInd International Conference of the Red Cross and the forthcoming Diplomatic Conference of which I spoke earlier give us the opportunity of developing this work for peace. The objective is important: to extend the protection to be accorded

to victims, strengthen, reaffirm and ensure the application of humanitarian law. This is a noble task calling for the co-operation of all. A task which belongs to the Red Cross and one with which each of us will want to be associated.

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COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Commission elected as its chairman Mr. Jean Pictet, ICRC Vice-President, and as its vice-chairmen Mr. D. Miller (Canada), Mr. G. Herczeg (Hungary), Mr. A. Jembere (Ethiopia) and Mr. S. Ijas (Indonesia). Its rapporteur was Mr. H. Knitel (Austria).

The commission's work was particularly important; the consideration of the two draft Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, the basic documents for the Diplomatic Conference convened by the Swiss Government and which will start its meeting on 20 February 1974 with a view to finalizing the two drafts. That was why this commission was the one with the largest attendance. The work it completed did not fall short of the hopes that had been placed in it. On the main topics, understanding was soon reached and the team spirit which prevailed throughout the proceedings permitted almost unanimous adoption of its resolutions.

As is generally known, the ICRC and indeed the whole Red Cross movement has been active in this new phase of the long-term work of developing and reaffirming humanitarian law since 1968. The XXIst International Conference at Istanbul in 1969 issued a unanimous resolution requesting the ICRC to draw up rules of law with expert assistance. Numerous experts from governments and National Societies made contributions in a constructive spirit. So, too, did the United Nations; and the rules were produced.

In a lengthy resolution, the Teheran Conference stated its opinion that the draft Additional Protocols were a sound basis for discussion at the Diplomatic Conference, and urged all governments to take part in that Conference and "do all in their power by co-operation and fruitful negotiations to secure the widest and swiftest adoption of the two Additional Protocols".

In view of the limited time available, the Commission was unable to discuss thoroughly all proposals which delegations put forward. It decided to take note of them and include them in a special report which the ICRC would submit to the Diplomatic Conference.

The Commission also considered the question of the so-called "conventional" weapons likely to cause avoidable suffering or indiscriminate destruction. The same progress has not been achieved on this topic as on the draft Protocols. It has however been covered in a recent report, drawn up by the ICRC after work by a group of experts, which describes these weapons and their effects. In this connection, one Conference resolution asks the Diplomatic Conference at its session in 1974 to begin the study of the question of banning or restricting such weapons. It also invites the ICRC to call a meeting of government experts in the same year to study the question in depth.

The Commission's agenda also included the traditional item "The Implementation and Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions". Those Conventions have saved millions of lives and can save millions more provided they are known to those who must apply them. The dissemination of knowledge of the Conventions, too long neglected, has in the last few years made real progress in many countries. It is vital that the example be followed and that such teaching should become widespread, and in the first place among the armed forces and youth. A resolution of the Conference requested the ICRC to continue giving its support to the efforts of governments and National Societies in that sphere, particularly by publishing informative material adapted to the sectors to be reached, by advising National Societies on plans of action, and by organizing seminars and even a special conference.

The Commission Chairman closed the meeting by underlining that a great step forward had been taken, in the realm of law, at Teheran. "Of course," he said, "there are still many points on which opinions vary but nothing is impossible if all concerned show goodwill and take steps to meet one another. Humanitarian law is one of the few fields where men can meet whatever their convictions and speak the same language . . . Governments now shoulder a heavy responsibility to reach decisions and undertake commitments. Let them do so in the sight of the world which expects so much of them . . . Much has been said about national sovereignty but let us not forget that the supreme sovereignty is

that of the law to which States are subject as much as individuals. . . . Let us hope that Teheran is the beginning of a new dawn in the development of humanitarian law and in the better application of existing Conventions.”

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COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY SERVICES¹

The Commission on Community Services elected Mr. Fernando E. V. Sison (Philippines) as its chairman, Dame Anne Bryans (United Kingdom), Dr. Nikola Georgievski (Yugoslavia) and Mr. Bokolombe B. Bompese (Zaire) as its three vice-chairmen and Dr. Takar Cheniti (Tunisia) as its rapporteur.

After listening to two introductory presentations, the Commission split up into several groups, while a synthesis of the various discussions was made in a working group and plenary meetings. This method of work was designed to enable everyone to participate actively in the discussions and to facilitate the exchange of information gained by National Red Cross Societies from past experience.

The Commission, after having noted the Report on the action taken on the resolutions of the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross, turned its attention to the following points:

- Red Cross contribution to national plans for development and provision of Community Services: health (including blood transfusion), social welfare and youth.
- The Red Cross and environment problems.

The accounts and discussions centered on the following four subjects:

1. Assessing community needs;
2. Establishing criteria to help National Societies to select the community services they can undertake;
3. Youth participation in planning, implementing and evaluating community services;
4. Ways and means of providing National Societies with adequate finance and qualified staff.

¹ This account is based on the Commission's programme, documents, final report and resolutions.

The Commission heard a brief statement by Dr. Taba, WHO Regional Director for the Middle East, who said that WHO activities were linked to those of the Red Cross, which was the first non-governmental organization to have worked in co-operation with WHO since 1948, particularly in the context of the protection and improvement of the human environment, conflicts and disaster relief. A number of National Red Cross Societies have benefited, too, from WHO assistance provided for developing blood transfusion services and the creation of centres for the preparation of blood plasma.

The Kenya Red Cross Society presented a document on the requests for assistance made by Governments to voluntary agencies with a view to establishing community needs.

Four informal reports, illustrated with films and slides, presented by each of the working groups, showed the diversity of the problems facing the various National Societies.

(A) American National Red Cross: *collective participation in community action programmes.*

The American National Red Cross prepares guidelines for certain programmes, but allows local chapters to settle details for the formulation of programmes of activities in the fields of physical, psychological and social well-being, on the basis of their own local needs and with the participation of all sections of the community. Young people are represented in local and national committees. Descriptions of three types of programme motivating community action were given:

- (a) measures to avoid emergency situations (first aid, life-saving at sea, home assistance, etc.);
- (b) measures to prepare the population for unavoidable emergency situations (e.g., disaster preparedness, shelters, stores depots, etc.);
- (c) action during critical situations.

(B) The Colombian Red Cross presented a paper on an urban experiment it made in the *Kennedy City Family Assistance Centre in Bogotá*, in which it emphasized the efforts undertaken to solve the various problems raised by a particular social group.

(C) The Red Lion and Sun Society described its *Relief-Rehabilitation Project and Predisaster Planning* for the southern coastal

region of Iran, which is frequently exposed to floods or earthquakes. The stricken areas are difficult to reach by the existing roads. After a disaster, the population, numbering over a million inhabitants, cannot deal with problems of relief-rehabilitation. Basic training alone is not enough. In addition, the National Society, with government support, acts to provide drinking water, medical services and food, rather than financial aid, for the victims.

- D) The Australian Red Cross rouses public awareness of the *need to prevent accidents* and stresses the importance of co-operation and of the co-ordination of efforts with all other bodies in both public and private sectors, nationally and locally. Teaching young people and the public on the whole to be more conscious of accident prevention is carried out at home, during play, in industry and through road safety measures.

The Yugoslav Red Cross paper entitled *Criteria to help National Red Cross Societies to select the community services they can undertake* and the working groups made it possible to examine the four most significant subjects submitted to the plenary meetings.

The following are, very briefly summarized, the four subjects mentioned in the final report.

1. *Assessing community needs.*—The Commission stressed the need for National Societies to co-operate closely in the fields of health and social development with both governmental bodies and voluntary agencies engaged in these activities. This co-operation facilitates the establishment of priorities and the utilization to the best advantage of all too often limited resources. The complementary character of Red Cross action as compared with governmental programmes was brought out.

2. *Criteria to help National Societies to select the community services they can undertake.*—The Commission recognized that it was difficult to establish criteria which would be valid throughout the world. It was stressed that the Red Cross was expected both to provide traditional services and to set up new programmes to meet the needs of a society developing at an ever-increasing pace. National Societies were, however, well placed to carry out pioneering work in detecting certain new needs and initiating measures to meet them, preparatory to government action. It was found that needs are in

relation to the degree of evolution of a country and to the socio-economic structure of its community.

3. *Youth participation in community services.*—The Junior Red Cross representatives pleaded in favour of the importance of the integration of young people in all aspects of Red Cross work, from planning to decision-making, implementation and evaluation.

It was stressed that the education received by young people to-day fitted them to assume increasing responsibilities and facilitated their integration into the whole range of National Society programmes. It was suggested that the concept of including the 18-25-years age-group in the membership of Red Cross Youth should be reviewed, since in most countries 18-year-olds were already capable of fully assuming such responsibilities.

4. *Financial means and qualified staff.*—In very many countries, the Red Cross was making a fresh approach in the light of new needs. This made it more necessary than ever to enlist the active participation of people of all conditions and ages. The Commission stressed the need for the proper training of these volunteers and of the permanent staff of National Societies, and welcomed the training programmes already set up at the national and international levels. It was suggested that National Societies should strive to project to their public and governments a proper Red Cross image designed to win their co-operation, facilitate project financing, and secure for each National Society its proper place in national development plans.

The Commission adopted three resolutions. The first calls on Governments to involve National Societies at all levels in the planning of and participation in “country programming” and to take into account Red Cross experience when drawing up national development plans; the second deals with environmental protection and improvement and with Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies contribution in that field; and the third with blood transfusion and the principle of non-remunerated blood donation.

The work of the Commission on Community Services was a proof of the fact that National Societies, in addition to performing their customary tasks in the medico-social field, were conscious of their pioneering role which led them to co-operate with people of

all age-groups and to participate, in agreement with their government, in the development of their own country.

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RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED
BY THE
XXIInd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE RED CROSS

I

**Activities of the International Committee
of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

The XXIInd International Conference of the Red Cross,

having noted the work which the ICRC has been carrying out on behalf of the victims of conflicts which, unhappily, have continued or which have broken out since the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross,

noting, however, with concern, that this work encounters all too often insurmountable obstacles resulting in particular from a restrictive interpretation by certain belligerents of the humanitarian obligations incumbent on them under the terms of the Geneva Conventions,

recalling, in this connection, that these Conventions to provide essential protection for the human person constitute solemn commitments vis-à-vis the whole international community, and that the application of the provisions contained therein cannot therefore be subject to reciprocity or to political or military considerations,

considering it essential that Red Cross relief action, carried out by the ICRC in co-operation with National Societies and their