

## IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

The cooperation of National Societies with the Government and other organisations also held interest to the participants and this subject was presented through a panel composed of representatives from the WHO, World Alliance of YMCA, CARE, Catholic Relief Services and Church World Service. The information provided concerning the programme of these organisations was instructive and the desire expressed by all that there should be closer cooperation with the National Societies in the task of helping disaster victims was well received.

The Seminar ended on Monday the 9th May with the adoption of report and recommendations.

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## NORTH AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EAST NATIONAL SOCIETY SEMINAR

The first regional seminar for North African and Middle East National Societies was held in Rabat, from May 23 to 28, 1966. This important event was organized jointly by the League of Red Cross Societies and the Moroccan Red Crescent.<sup>1</sup>

Twelve National Societies of the Middle East and North Africa took part in this meeting, namely : Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, the Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. In addition, four European Red Cross Societies (France, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland) were invited by the Moroccan Red Crescent to send observers. There were also observers present from seven intergovernmental or voluntary societies, notably the WHO and UNICEF.

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<sup>1</sup> *Plate* : A working session.

The opening ceremony took place at the Mohamed Theatre in the presence of H.R.H. Princess Lalla Malika, President of the Moroccan Red Crescent, and also of members of the Central Committee, the Government and the Diplomatic Corps. In a message which was read out by Mr. M'Hamed Zeghrari, Deputy Prime Minister, H.M. King Hassan II stressed the need to awaken the conscience of the nations to a common responsibility and also to create new bonds of confidence and comprehension. He paid tribute to this "chivalrous order of compassionate hearts" of National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies.

Dr. Hadj Ahmed Elaydouni delivered an address of welcome in which he said: "... The first seminar for North African and Middle East National Societies constitutes in the opinion of the Moroccan Red Crescent, a decisive stage in the fulfilment of its five year plan and it opens to sister Societies which have honoured it by accepting our invitation, a door on the threshold of an era of co-operation which we hope will prove fruitful and beneficial for National Societies as a whole."

Mr. Henrik Beer, Secretary-General of the League, then took the floor. After expressing the League's gratitude to the King of Morocco and the President of the Moroccan Red Crescent, he stated that the organization of the seminar was part of a development programme set afoot by the League.... "To enable National Societies to disseminate in their countries basic knowledge in these fields of activity and to cope with the tasks of primary importance incumbent on them, co-ordination is essential. Perhaps there is no single method suitable for all regions, but an exchange of information, views and experience might elucidate valuable basic principles for co-ordination and collective action when disaster strikes. From co-operation along these lines might emerge policies for the organization of first-aid work, home nursing, health education, and participation of youth in the life and perpetuance of the National Society.

"In addition, this type of international forum at regional level can help to solve special problems by appropriate means, such as the co-ordination of relief services on the occasion of the pilgrimage to Mecca...."

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Finally, Mr. Pierre Gaillard, on behalf of the ICRC, thanked those acting as host to the seminar. He then briefly outlined the ICRC's rôle in the world. " What I would like to stress is that none of the International Committee's various actions could be achieved without the active aid of National Societies. Their assistance is absolutely indispensable, hence the necessity to be ready beforehand for all eventualities. It is only by dint of these preparations that we, National Societies, League and ICRC, will achieve both efficiency and rapidity. "

The agenda included several items submitted by most of the Societies taking part in the work of the seminar. We give below a list of these items, each of which after discussion, gave rise to a recommendation :

- Structure and organization of a National Society (Morocco).*
- Pre-disaster relief planning (Syria).*
- Regional and international assistance in the event of disaster (Syria).*
- Orientation of the Red Crescent emblem (Tunisia).*
- Medico-social action during the pilgrimage to Mecca (Jordan).*
- First-aid (Iraq).*
- Health education (Turkey).*
- Junior Red Cross (Algeria).*
- News in the service of National Societies (Lebanon).*
- News dissemination in Arabic (Lebanon).*

The League, for its part, presented the following two subjects :

- Financing of a National Society.*
- Future prospects.*

As is well known, the red crescent emblem is oriented in different ways from one country to another, some countries having the opening of the crescent to the left (Turkey, Tunisia), and others to the right. As this question is one of principle, and undoubtedly not without importance—the determining factor being still the emblem's rôle as a protective sign—we think it will be of interest to give below the text of recommendation VII.

The first seminar of National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies of North Africa and the Middle East,

having heard expositions by the Tunisian and Turkish Red Crescent Societies, based on legal, historic and sentimental considerations and stressing the need for unity in the orientation of the crescent,

having also heard the various points of view advanced by a number of delegations on this point,

emphasizes the importance of this problem, both for populations accustomed in each country to seeing the red crescent sign oriented in a specific direction and for the governments which are the custodians of the protective emblem by virtue of the Geneva Conventions, considers that this subject necessitates more thorough study by the parties concerned, the ICRC and the governments,

suggests the question be submitted to one of the League's executive organs with the object of achieving uniformity of orientation of the red crescent in accordance with the wish expressed by Societies taking part in this seminar,

directs the League Secretariat and the ICRC to submit a working document on this subject to the next meeting of the League Executive Committee

The ICRC representative presented two papers, one on *The Rôle of the ICRC and National Societies during conflicts*, the other on *Relief to the Victims of Armed Conflicts*.

Following these expositions, the meeting unanimously adopted two recommendations with a view to stricter application of the Geneva Conventions in the event of conflict and inviting National Societies to give their support to ICRC interventions. Recommendation No. III, which enlarges on decisions reached at the recent Vienna Conference, makes a pressing appeal to the ICRC to continue working for the extension of Red Cross humanitarian assistance to the victims of conflicts which are not of an international character, and it also recommends governments of States parties to the Geneva Conventions, as well as National Societies, to give their support, in their own countries, to the efforts being made to achieve that objective. The same resolution recalls "the need for all National Societies to safeguard, by every means available to them, the humanitarian principles of which they are the custodians and to see that they are applied in the event not only of international war but also of civil war or internal disorder, and wherever men suffer as a result of international or national politics".

Recommendation No. IV concerned in particular material relief for victims of international conflicts and it concluded by inviting

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National Societies to "undertake any action required by circumstances and to support the relief activities undertaken by the ICRC".

In his report on the Junior Red Cross, the Vice-President of the Algerian Red Crescent included a paragraph thanking the ICRC for its rôle during the Algerian conflict and the League for taking over that rôle after the conflict. He stated in particular "for Algeria, the International Red Cross, during the long years of struggle for liberation and for thousands of us who spent years in prison, was synonymous with hope. It extended a generous hand, providing thousands of tons of various goods which undoubtedly saved thousands of our people. For many of us, it was the living symbol of universal friendship, and our generation will certainly not forget it."

In his closing address, the League Secretary-General summed up as follows the problems dealt with and the results achieved at Rabat :

To conclude an event such as this first seminar, we must naturally draw up a report. This is no easy thing and only a provisional account can be formulated. First, delegates have adopted a series of recommendations and resolutions covering all fields of Red Crescent activity. Some of these can be put into immediate effect.

We were particularly interested in the expositions by the delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross concerning the rôle of National Societies in the event of conflicts and the assistance that they endeavour to provide for the victims. We have assured the ICRC of our support for its great work, so often a thankless task.

We have dealt with questions of National Society structure and finance, stressing particularly the need for good organization based on the real capital of our movement, namely voluntary workers. We have underlined the independent character of the Red Crescent and the Red Cross while stressing the need for co-operation with government authorities for planning and carrying out our work.

We have discussed subjects of special interest to Red Crescent Societies, such as the orientation of the red crescent emblem and the health problems set by the pilgrimage to Mecca<sup>1</sup>. In this

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<sup>1</sup> This is a problem which is of interest to all the Moslem world. Pilgrims go to the Mecca in increasingly large numbers and meet difficulties in the course of their journey particularly when they travel overland. The gathering

respect the work and preparation by the Government and Red Crescent of Saudi Arabia have been noted with the greatest satisfaction.

We have reached important decisions on the use of Arabic in the League's publications and in our general news programme. With regard to relief in the event of disaster, a tribute has been paid once again to the work of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun. This work is recognized throughout the world by international bodies, particularly by the United Nations.

These decisions, of genuine interest for the future, concluded this seminar. Like that of Singapore, described in the preceding article, it shows the need for ever-more constant co-ordination and mutual consultation among National Societies at the regional level.

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### AT THE HENRY DUNANT INSTITUTE

With Prof. A. von Albertini presiding, the council of the Henry Dunant Institute met for the second time on July 8, 1966, at the headquarters of the Swiss Red Cross in Berne.

The Institute will be informing National Societies of its future plans and the many various activities it has in mind. A start has already been made in practice.

In addition to its own teaching work, the Institute is also to become a study and research centre. For this it will begin to set up a large bibliographical index which will enable anyone to obtain rapid and complete information on all Red Cross spheres of activity. This is a long-term project and, unique of its kind, it will certainly render most useful service. It will be of help to National Societies in many of their problems. Research workers, becoming more and more numerous, who interest themselves in the Red Cross, will now find in Geneva easily accessible documentation which they are lacking.

After this good start, it will be interesting to see how the Institute develops in the near future.

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of pilgrims in large numbers gives rise to medical and health problems which National Societies can contribute to solving. For this reason recommendation No. VIII urges that a study be undertaken on "responsibilities which National Red Crescent Societies could assume in order the better to satisfy pilgrims' collective health and humanitarian needs".