

# M I S C E L L A N E O U S

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## OFFICE INTERNATIONAL DE DOCUMENTATION DE MÉDECINE MILITAIRE

The twenty-seventh meeting of the "Office International de Documentation de Médecine Militaire" took place in San Marino from September 21-24, 1966. It was attended by military medical officers from some forty societies, many of them the heads of their countries' Army Medical Service.

The ICRC was represented by an observer, Mr. C. Pilloud, Deputy Director for General Affairs.

The San Marino authorities warmly welcomed this meeting which took place in the recently inaugurated Palazzo de Congressi.

Three items on the agenda were the subjects of some highly interesting papers:

1. Psychiatric and minor psychosomatic pathology.
2. Transmission of hepatitis; study of prophylactic measures.
3. Relief missions in conflicts which are not of an international character.

On this last subject, a particularly important report was submitted to the Congress by Dr. Jean-Maurice Rübli. This gave an account of the application of the Geneva Conventions in conflicts which were not international in character. He stressed that the full application of the common article 3 of the four Conventions had already appreciably alleviated suffering brought about by such conflicts. Obstacles to its application were sometimes encountered but these could, no doubt, be overcome to a considerable extent by wider dissemination of knowledge on the Conventions and by better understanding of their basic humanitarian principles.

Dr. Rübli's conclusion is worthy of note:

*Observance of article 3 of the Geneva Conventions in international conflicts, whatever form they may take, is first and foremost a problem of moral principle: parties to a conflict should desire to observe the humanitarian principles contained in the Geneva Conventions. In addition, they should also desire to co-operate with the ICRC.*

Application of this article in such conflicts is a criterion of the political maturity and civilization of the parties involved."

Medical officers in the armed forces can undoubtedly play an important role in this field by urging their governments to ensure that military rules and regulations take the Geneva Conventions into account.

In this connection, it was underlined, during the discussion, that the position of doctors, both military and civilian, in time of international conflict, should be studied thoroughly with a view to defining their status and the protection which might be granted them.

C. P.

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## FOR AFRICAN CHILDREN

*In Unicef News (1966, No. 35), Dr. Roland Marti, who had been one of the ICRC's most devoted and effective delegates during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, has written a most moving article on the tasks he has been carrying out for the past fifteen years in Africa in the service of UNICEF. We now publish some passages which will give an idea of conditions in which an international enterprise of aid to children was initiated in Africa.*

I had devoted my preceding eighteen years to the International Committee of the Red Cross, moving about the world as the major theaters of conflict shifted: from Europe to the Middle East, then