

DISSEMINATION OF THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

The January 1960 issue of the *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge* included an article by Mr. Heins Knackstedt, adviser to the Ministry of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany, in which he gave a general picture of the efforts made up to the end of 1959 to disseminate the Geneva Conventions in the Federal Republic. He described the military and civilian programmes of instruction on these Conventions.

In military circles, for instance, even before Bonn acceded to the Conventions, the "Bundeswehr" soon introduced comprehensive courses for officers and other ranks, in conformity with paragraph 33 of the "Soldatengesetz" (military law) which stipulates that every soldier shall be given instruction in international law and the rights and duties deriving therefrom. Mr. Knackstedt's article reviewed the methods and programmes introduced in the army of Federal Germany to that purpose.

We have now summarized for our readers a further study on the same subject by Mr. Krüger-Sprengel, also a member of the Ministry of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany.

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Instruction in international law in the Bundeswehr schools, given by professors of law, takes the form of systematic courses dealing with questions relevant to the Geneva Conventions. Army officer cadets, before being promoted to the rank of second-lieutenant, must complete such a twenty-hour course. Proficiency in these Conventions is of capital importance for admission to a career as an army officer. At the Hamburg military college, officers aspiring to Staff posts attend an additional thirty-hour course on questions of international law. Apart from the military college and the training schools for officers and other ranks, the Coblenz

school for moral and civic training is worthy of special mention. Its syllabus is designed for officers from all branches of the armed forces with any rank from Captain to Brigadier, provided they are in positions of command, whether of small or large units. Courses range from one to three months, with two hours a week of instruction in international law devoted almost entirely to the principles of the Geneva Conventions. The programme deliberately refrains from inculcating specialized knowledge. It concentrates on cultivating in commanding officers the ability to eliminate any personal reservations displayed by the men under their orders. Officers of the Bundeswehr, as instructors, should be able convincingly to overcome any reluctance to take courses in international law. In this connection there arise such problems as the application of the Geneva Conventions in modern warfare, the attitudes of other States—particularly the attitude of an enemy—and past experience of applying the Conventions. Instruction in the schools is supplemented at large company headquarters by courses and conferences given by legal advisers who, in addition, help the commanders of small and large units in dealing with questions of international law, and they supervise the systematic instruction to the troops.

It is an officer's responsibility to teach the troops. He should convey his knowledge to the other ranks in clear and convincing language. Instruction in the field is often better for this purpose than purely theoretical teaching. However, in order to ensure that recruits acquire at least a minimum knowledge, basic training includes two hours of instruction on the Geneva Conventions, while specialized training includes seven further hours. Members of the Medical Service are given five-hour courses on the Geneva Conventions for the amelioration of the condition of the wounded and sick, and on the legal position of medical personnel taken prisoner by an enemy. Practical examples and memory-aids are used by the NCO's to ensure a high and uniform level of instruction. The good results obtained in spite of the heavy burden of work falling on unit and section commanders may in a large part be attributed to this teaching material and to other documents drawn up by the Ministry of Defence in keeping with modern teaching techniques, and related to "The International Law of War"; four of these

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publications are exclusively devoted to the Geneva Conventions. These deal with :

- the general rules of humanitarian law ;
- the law relative to the wounded, the sick and the shipwrecked;
- the law relating to prisoners of war ;
- protection of the civilian population in time of war.

Twenty thousand copies of these were published in 1959, and another edition was produced in 1961 in order to make up a standing reserve. In addition, a handbook on the Conventions relating to the international law of war is issued to all officers down to the rank of platoon commander, and the " Bundeswehr " distributes to all military authorities a copy of the Convention relating to the treatment of prisoners of war, and of the Convention for the protection of civilians.

There is also a handbook on the status of military chaplains and another on the protection of articles of cultural value.

Another publication is devoted primarily to teaching methods and it contains a very full selection of questions and answers on concrete cases ; 41 of these, devoted to the four Geneva Conventions are systematically presented.

Illustrated manuals are also proving very useful for the methodical instruction of troops, and the pictures can be projected on to a screen by means of colour-slides during courses.

One illustrated booklet entitled " The Law of War - Wrongs and Rights " and an accompanying series of colour-slides are devoted entirely to the Geneva Conventions. On the " Wrongs " slides, the audience can see the mistakes and then recognizes on the " Rights " the conduct sanctioned by international law.

Films are the best means of communicating to the troops. In the forefront of such films is the one produced in 1960-61 by the " Bundeswehr " in close co-operation with the Red Cross Society of the Federal Republic of Germany and the International Red Cross, " In Geiste der Genfer Abkommen ". It demonstrates clearly by means of a series of examples in the field covered by the Geneva Conventions that these agreements, far from being based on ideas out of touch with reality, make no demands which would be con-

sidered abnormal by any soldier honest with himself. This film was awarded the *Flamme d'Or* at the first International Red Cross Film Festival in Cannes. A French version has also been produced and work is now going on with English synchronisation. Other films shown include "D'Homme à Homme" and "Red Cross on a White Field".

The army newspaper (for officers and NCO's) gives encouragement to training in the Geneva Conventions through competitions. Some six hundred to one thousand entries to these competitions are received regularly. Prizes of up to 100 DM are offered and competitions are also open to civilians.

Each year essay competitions on international law are open to officers and NCO's, as part of a programme of science competitions and with prizes of up to DM 500. In 1965, there were no less than 110 entries on the theme "War and Humanity".

The object of training in international law in the "Bundeswehr" is to inculcate in the soldier the humanitarian principles and the will to recognize in an enemy a man with feelings and who suffers like himself.

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