

International Red Cross Meetings

STANDING COMMISSION

The Standing Commission of the International Red Cross met in ordinary session in Geneva on 23 October 1975. In addition to the Chairman, Sir Geoffrey Newman-Morris (Australia), it included Mr George Aitken (Canada), Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh (United Kingdom), the two ICRC representatives, Mr Eric Martin, ICRC President, and Mr Roger Gallopin, President of the ICRC Executive Board, and the two League representatives, Mr José Barroso, Chairman of the League Board of Governors, and Mr Henrik Beer, League Secretary General. The Vice-Chairman of the Standing Commission, Mrs Farid Issa-el-Khoury (Lebanon) was unable to leave Beirut, while Mrs Nadejda Troyan (USSR), who was indisposed, was represented at the meeting by Mr Zakharov.

The Technical Adviser, Mr T. W. Sloper, was present, as was General Burca, President of the Romanian Red Cross Society, chosen to act as host, in Bucarest, to the next International Conference of the Red Cross.

The Commission first dealt with the organization of this twenty-third International Conference, and there was an extensive exchange of views on the subject, followed by discussion of the results of the World Conference of the Red Cross on Peace and the subsequent action to be taken.

The Commission heard a brief commentary on the report concerning the re-appraisal of the role of the Red Cross and the continuing studies on the subject. Finally the debate turned to current activities, after short reports by Mr Beer and Mr Gallopin.

THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

As is the custom on the occasion of the meeting of the League Board of Governors, a meeting of the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross was held in Geneva on 24 and 25 October 1975. This Council is formed by the component bodies of the International Red Cross, namely the International Committee, the League and the National Societies.

Sir Geoffrey Newman-Morris, Chairman of the Standing Commission, opened the meeting, after which, according to tradition, the Council elected as chairman the President of the ICRC, Mr Eric Martin, and as vice-chairman General Burca, President of the Romanian Red Cross.

The first item on the agenda dealt with *the development of humanitarian law*. Mr J. Pictet, ICRC Vice-President, summarized the results of the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, or rather of its second session, a third session having already been arranged for 1976. Mr K. J. Warras, Secretary General of the Finnish Red Cross, drew attention to the articles in the Protocols which were of particular interest to the National Societies. The President of the Swiss Red Cross, Mr Hans Haug, suggested that, in view of the complexity of the articles of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and of the draft Protocols, a declaration should be composed, summing up in a few simple phrases the spirit of these texts. The ICRC is to study this proposal and report back to the next meeting of the Council of Delegates.

Mr Pictet, speaking this time as the new Director of the Henry Dunant Institute, presented a report on the institute, now celebrating ten years of activity. During the discussion that followed, the representative of the Red Lion and Sun Society of Iran announced that his Society was making a donation of 10,000 Swiss francs to the Institute and its work, the importance of which was emphasized by several delegates. The following resolution, passed unanimously, also indicates how much the Institute is appreciated:

RESOLUTION NO. 1

Development of the Henry Dunant Institute's activities

The Council of Delegates,

Having taken cognizance of *the report on the activities of the Henry Dunant Institute during the first ten years of its existence*,

Acknowledges *the considerable work it has so far accomplished with slender resources*,

Requests the Institute to pursue its tasks of research, teaching and publications in the various sectors of the Red Cross and make the results of its work as widely as possible accessible,

Recommends National Societies to co-operate to that end with the Institute and to provide it with relevant documentation, to the extent they can afford, with the material means that will enable it to expand its action.

Then came a report on the World Conference of the Red Cross on Peace, held in Belgrade last June and described in an article in the *International Review* in August.

The Council of Delegates adopted a resolution the text of which is given below:

RESOLUTION NO. 2

Action to be taken on the World Red Cross Conference on Peace

The Council of Delegates,

Considering that the World Red Cross Conference on Peace, organised in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in June 1975, on the basis of resolution No. 37 of the XXXIInd session of the Board of Governors, represents an important demonstration of the unity of the world Red Cross family in favour of peace, the development of co-operation, friendship and understanding among peoples,

Recalling that this World Conference

- assembled 220 delegates from 81 National Red Cross Societies throughout the world including seven still in process of formation, as well as delegates from the League of Red Cross Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Henry Dunant Institute,*
- examined the rôle of the Red Cross for the promotion of peace from all the aspects concerning the Red Cross,*
- adopted the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace, as guidelines and with all the views expressed and recorded in the League's report on the Conference,*

Having noted the League's report on the World Red Cross Conference on Peace,

1. expresses its recognition of Red Cross work accomplished with regard to peace for many years, and of its contribution to the general

efforts undertaken in the world for the strengthening of the foundations of peace,

2. considers that National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, the League of Red Cross Societies and the ICRC should take their inspiration as guidelines for their work from the Programme of Action as adopted at the Conference, that they should keep it in mind in all their activities and that they should strive for its creative implementation,

3. recommends

(a) that National Societies should submit the Programme of Action to be examined by their leading bodies with a view to the adoption of concrete measures for its implementation,

(b) that the ICRC and the League, each in its own respective sphere, should co-operate to put into action the tasks which the Programme of Action invites them to undertake,

4. requests that the item "Implementation of the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace" be included in the agenda of the next ordinary session of the Council of Delegates and that, prior to that session, a working group be set up by the League in consultation with the ICRC to consider the comments expressed and the annexes proposed and required to report for the consideration of the session any proposals they may evolve to resolve or otherwise provide for meeting such comments and annexes, this being without prejudice to the recommendations in paragraph 3.

The Council then listened to a statement by Mr Warras on the reappraisal of the role of the Red Cross. Two main ideas emerged from the subsequent discussion:

(a) It is now desirable to send to the National Societies, as soon as possible, a questionnaire on the proposals contained in the final report entitled "An Agenda for Red Cross", the author of which is the director of the Study, Mr D. D. Tansley;

(b) study groups will have to be formed within the ICRC and the League and, in the same way, groups within National Societies could carry on similar work. We give here the resolution adopted on the subject:

RESOLUTION NO. 3

**Report of the Joint Committee for the Study on the Re-appraisal
of the Role of the Red Cross**

The Council of Delegates,

Having received the report of the Joint Committee for the Re-appraisal of the Role of the Red Cross, convinced that these documents present material of essential importance for the development of the Red Cross movement and for humanitarian attitudes and activities in general,

Expresses its deep gratitude to the Study Director, Mr Donald Tansley, and his assistants for a remarkable work, and to the Joint Committee for its successful management, to those National Societies who have contributed to the basically important Profile Study and to the institutions, foundations and National Red Cross Societies who made the study possible through financial support.

Being aware of the need to make the best use of the recommendations of the Study without loss of time, whilst still respecting the complexity of many subjects raised in the report,

Invites all National Societies to use the final report and background papers in an intensive discussion within their Societies, visualizing early implementation of appropriate parts of the report,

Requests the ICRC and the League to enter into a thorough examination of how the recommendations of the report could improve the functions of the International Red Cross movement,

Suggests in this context that they search out opinions within all National Societies through a questionnaire, which should be sent to them within one month and answered within a delay of 6 months,

Expects the ICRC and the League to ensure that the results of the consultation with the National Societies will be duly processed and necessary further steps be taken,

Asks that the results of the work of the two Geneva institutions including their searching of the National Societies' opinions be presented in the form of practical plans or suggestions at the next meeting of the appropriate decision-making bodies of the International Red Cross (Executive Committee in 1976 or extra session of the Board of Governors and the Council of Delegates the same year; Board of Governors, Standing Commission and International Conference of the Red Cross in 1977), thereby considering the possibility to divide the substance into some parts possible to implement immediately and others needing more consideration and planning.

A Red Cross action plan to combat racial prejudice was the subject of papers by the League and the ICRC. We give below the exposition by Mr Moreillon who, as Director of the Department of Principles and Law, spoke on behalf of the International Committee.

“The representative of the League has told us how small the response of National Societies was to the joint effort of the League and the ICRC to put into effect the Plan of Action against racism and race discrimination.

While expressing our thanks to those National Societies which did reply to the ICRC, we shall not at this juncture try to analyze the reasons for the small number of responses. We must recognize, however, that the Plan of Action has not yet been put into effect to the extent that it could and should be, insofar as it involves a dialogue between National Societies on the one hand, and the League and ICRC on the other. It will be up to the members of this Assembly to decide whether they wish to reactivate the matter and confer real substance upon it, or let it die out.

The question remains of the role of the ICRC itself in relation to the Plan of Action. The authors of the plan were wise to bear in mind the specific function of the ICRC as a neutral intermediary, a function which must at all costs be preserved. As they understood and as they stated, if the ICRC aspires to carry out benevolent and protective activities in situations of racial tension, it should do so within the framework of its traditional work on behalf of prisoners of war, civilian internees and, most of all, political detainees.

It is a common occurrence, indeed, for enemies to be detained where racial conflict or racial hatred goes unchecked, and this is one of the most pernicious evils which confront our delegates in the prisons they visit. The prison system is generally a reflection of the whole socio-political framework in which it is set. Sometimes it constitutes a caricature of that larger system, and accordingly we find in prisons, enlarged and aggravated, the defects of both the established society and of those who fight against it. When racial conflict envenoms society we often find it magnified behind the prison gates, especially in the relations between guards and prisoners if they belong to different ethnic groups.

The task of the ICRC delegate is extremely difficult in such situations, for it is not so much the regulations as ingrained attitudes which must be improved. The evil is often so deeply rooted, so inveterate, so embittered by propaganda, education, fanaticism or fear, that an outsider can do nothing whatever to change it. Sometimes however the voice of reason

does make itself heard, and one can convince the guards that it is not a sign of weakness if they cease to treat the prisoners with contempt, and convince the prisoners that it is not a sign of servility for them to be polite. There have been occasions, therefore, when an ICRC delegate's visit to a prison or camp has made it possible to open up a dialogue between guards and prisoners—a dialogue which continued after he had left.

During long talks with prisoners, in the absence of witnesses, alone in a prison cell or with a group in the courtyard, our delegates have managed by patience and understanding to enter into the minds and hearts of the captives. As they do so, they penetrate step by step into the intricate and terrible world of racial hatred—a world in which an insult is worse than the lash of a whip, because the pain goes deeper. They listen and make detailed notes of the recital of attitudes, of contemptuous glances, of the turning of backs, and of the contumelious spitting which constitute the background of the pernicious—and to the casual onlooker often elusive—evil. Sometimes of course the situations are much worse: the prisoner fears for his life; he has seen his own family massacred and is terrified at the thought that he will suffer the same fate. The prisoner is then no long merely the butt of subtle signs of contempt; he is a victim of profound terror in need of protection and assistance.

The ICRC delegate must react appropriately to every situation he encounters. Although he may sometimes hope to open up a dialogue which crosses the barriers of colour or race, he is aware that human nature cannot be changed in a single day. To achieve this is a long process, and the delegate must often leave to the prisoners the task of changing, indeed of educating, their guards, however paradoxical this undertaking may seem to be. This extraordinary event has indeed occurred; racism has sometimes been conquered within its own walls, in the depths of the prisons which it has built, when prisoners and guards alike, in the very performance of their respective roles, have forgotten what divides them and come to see in one another what unites them—their common humanity.

Under all circumstances, the delegate must intervene vigorously and convincingly with the responsible authorities to put an end to every manifestation of racism and racial discrimination he encounters in places of detention. First of all he must speak out to the officer in charge of the camp or prison, reminding him that he is responsible for the attitudes of his guards, that these guards must not only abstain from physical attacks upon the prisoners but must at all times respect prisoners as human beings, whoever they are and wherever they come from. He must

also make representations to the director of the prisons department and even to the relevant Minister or Head of State. That is, he must act at every level in the chain of command, to protect the human dignity of the enemy. To give greater force to these interventions, they must be confirmed in writing in the reports sent by the International Committee to the governments concerned, in which the ICRC conveys its delegates' findings and repeats their proposals for improvements. In addition, the delegates talk with the prisoners, to reassure them that they need not fear the guards, or to persuade them that they too must look at the guards as human beings, and not as representatives of the enemy's system or race. The prisoners may thus come to see that their tormentors have often been conditioned since birth to despise, hate and fear them; to see that they should respond to this contempt, hate and fear with dignity; not with arrogance or fear of their own.

It is this twofold message which the ICRC seeks to bring to prisons throughout the world—a message which is inspired by hope, without which there is only death. This is the very heart and soul of the ICRC's Action Programme against racism and racial discrimination.”

The ICRC's report on its current activities was presented by Mr. Hocké, Director of Operations.

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During one of the meetings of the Council of Delegates the Henry Dunant Medal was presented to four well-known personalities in the Red Cross world. *International Review* has pleasure in taking this opportunity of congratulating Lady Limerick, former chairman of the Standing Committee of the International Red Cross; Mrs L. Domanska, former president and now vice-president of the Polish Red Cross; Mr V. Ferrer Segura, Mexican Red Cross first-aider; and Mr G. A. Miterev, former president of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR. The Henry Dunant Medal was awarded posthumously to Mr Pierre Boissier, who had been director of the Henry Dunant Institute until his untimely death in 1974.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Representatives of 96 National Societies took part in the thirty-third session of the League Board of Governors in Geneva from 28 October to 1 November 1975, under the chairmanship of Mr José Barroso.

The Board first confirmed admission to the League of two new National Societies, that of the Central African Republic and that of The Gambia, bringing membership of the League to 122. The Board then examined the report of the ICRC-League joint committee for the re-appraisal of the role of the Red Cross. As has already been mentioned, a resolution on that subject had been adopted by the Council of Delegates: the Board of Governors endorsed it.

The question of the revision of the League's Constitution was discussed, but it was decided that the draft of the revised articles would be submitted to an extraordinary session of the Board of Governors, to be held towards the end of 1976. The Board will meet in ordinary session at Bucharest in 1977, when the XXIIIrd International Conference is due to take place.

After the Council of Delegates had adopted a resolution on the action programme of the Red Cross as a factor of peace drafted at the Belgrade World Conference last summer, the Board of Governors examined this question further and adopted a resolution expressing the wish, inter alia, for the creation of a body to supervise the application of the action programme and to propose to the appropriate organs of the League and of National Societies measures for the execution of the tasks set out in the programme.

With regard to Red Cross action in the struggle against racial discrimination, the Board of Governors invited National Societies to furnish within a period of six months proof of any discrimination found to exist in the South African Red Cross. If the Board's Chairman and Vice-Chairmen subsequently found that such charges were founded on fact, a commission of three persons designated by the Board would visit the South African National Society.

Various reports approved by the Board included the League Secretary General's report on the League's work, the reports by the advisory committees on relief, nursing, and development programme, and the report on the work undertaken by the Red Cross on questions relating to the environment.

A number of resolutions were adopted by the Board of Governors. Those which deal more particularly with the tasks common to both League and ICRC are given below.

RESOLUTION No. 8

**Report of the Joint Committee for the reappraisal of the role
of the Red Cross**

The Board of Governors,

Having received the Report from the Joint Committee for the Reappraisal of the Role of the Red Cross and the Final Report of the Study Director, Mr Donald D. Tansley,

Endorses Resolution No. 3 of the Council of Delegates, 25 October 1975, which was unanimously approved by that body.

RESOLUTION No. 9

Revision of the League Statutory Texts

The Board of Governors,

Recalling Resolution No. 15/73 of the Board of Governors that the League statutory texts should be completely revised.

Recalling in this connection that the League Chairman had, after consulting the Vice-Chairmen, set up a Revision Commission to prepare specific proposals for revision of the statutory texts for submission to the 33rd Session of the Board of Governors,

Having acquainted itself with the draft texts of the Constitution and Regulations prepared by the Constitution Revision Commission,

Congratulates the Commission and its President, Mr. Alcantara, on the excellent work which they have performed.

Noting, however, that the Constitution Revision Commission, not having received the final report on the Study for the Reappraisal of the Role of the Red Cross before the establishment of the second draft of the Statutes, had not had an opportunity to give detailed consideration to the fundamental questions regarding the League's object and functions,

Being moreover of the opinion that the very limited time assigned for dealing with these subjects at its current session does not allow it to take a decision on a complete revision of the statutory texts,

Considering, therefore, that it is essential that National Societies should have more time at their disposal to study the draft statutory texts, which are of great importance to the League,

- 1. Invites National Societies to send to the League Secretariat by 15th March 1976 at the latest, their comments and suggestions on*

the draft statutory texts, and the related fundamental questions of a statutory character presented in the report on the Study for the Reappraisal of the role of the Red Cross.

2. *Decides to extend the Constitution Revision Commission's mandate so as to enable it to draw up a definite draft of the Constitution and Regulations on the basis of National Societies' comments and in the light of the conclusions and recommendations of the report on the Study for the Reappraisal of the role of the Red Cross.*
3. *Decides that the definite draft of the statutory texts should be submitted to the Board of Governors at an Extraordinary session of that body to be held in the last four months of 1976 so that the Board may have available the necessary time for a detailed and thorough examination of the League's statutory texts and may deliver its definite opinion on their revision.*

RESOLUTION No. 20

Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace

The Board of Governors,

Considering that the first World Red Cross Conference on Peace, organised in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in June 1975 in conformity with Resolution No. 37 of the XXXIInd Session of the Board of Governors, represents an historical event within the Red Cross movement and an important manifestation of the unity of the World Red Cross family in the promotion of peace, development, cooperation, friendship and understanding among peoples,

Having in view that this World Conference :

- *has assembled 220 delegates from 81 National Societies from all the regions of the world including seven still in process of formation, as well as delegates from the League of Red Cross Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Henry Dunant Institute,*
- *has examined the role of the Red Cross in the promotion of peace from all aspects of interest to the Red Cross, and has adopted the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace, as guidelines, as well as the points of view expressed thereon and figuring in the League report on the World Red Cross Conference on Peace,*

Considering that the motto of the Red Cross " Per humanitatem ad pacem " may find full expression in the implementation of the " Programme of Action " in Red Cross activities,

Having noted the report of the League on the World Red Cross Conference on Peace,

Referring to Resolution No. 2 adopted by the Council of Delegates on 24 October 1975,

Welcoming the organisation of the World Red Cross Conference on Peace and appreciating the positive results of Red Cross work in the domain of Peace for many years, and the contribution to general efforts in the world aimed at strengthening the foundations of peace,

Having noted and welcoming at the same time the measures and preparations already undertaken by several Red Cross organisations in view of the practical implementation of certain parts of that Programme,

1. Considers that all National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies and the League of Red Cross Societies, should be inspired in their work by adopting the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace as a guideline, that they should always have in mind this Programme in all their activities,

2. Recommends

a. that National Societies, in accordance with their own conditions and possibilities, adapt their plans for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace,

b. that the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the League forms a body, the task of which shall be to follow the implementation of the Programme of Action and to propose to the appropriate organs of the League and to National Societies measures for the realisation of the tasks deriving from that Programme,

c. that the National Societies and the League of Red Cross Societies present their reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace to the next ordinary session of the Board of Governors.

3. Congratulates the Organising Committee and the Red Cross of Yugoslavia in particular, and expresses its gratitude to the organisers for the success obtained by the Conference.

RESOLUTION NO. 25

The Red Cross and International Women's Year

The Board of Governors,

Recalling that 1975 is International Women's Year and that throughout this year special attention must be devoted to worldwide study of the

promotion of the situation of women, in the context of development and peace,

Endorses fully the noble objectives of International Women's Year,

Expresses the wish that the documents adopted by the World Conference on International Women's Year at Mexico City in June 1975 be studied by the competent bodies of the League.
