

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1970)

Rubrik: Information

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III. INFORMATION

Press and Information Division

Second Meeting of Heads of Information and Public Relations

The second Meeting of Heads of Information and Public Relations of National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies was held at the headquarters of the League of Red Cross Societies, in Geneva, from 9 to 12 June 1970. Representatives of 23 National Societies of Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America took part in the meeting, which was organized by the League in close co-operation with the ICRC. The first meeting was held at the headquarters of the International Committee in January 1967. At the second meeting the ICRC was represented by Mr. Alain Modoux, Head of the Press and Information Division, and by Mr. Pierre Gaillard, Head of the Documentation and Dissemination Division, both of whom were accompanied by a number of officials.

The main items on the agenda were: information in the service of spreading the Red Cross idea; information in emergency situations and in the service of the permanent tasks of the Red Cross; co-operation in this field between the National Societies and the international Red Cross organizations; relations with mass media; information in developing countries; fund-raising and publicity; World Red Cross Day.

The exchange of views laid special stress on the need for the Red Cross world to study jointly, and particularly on a regional basis, the various ways of providing the public with better information. In this context, the participants gave special thought to the use of thoroughly modern techniques and to the quest for new methods whereby the young might become interested in Red Cross work and ideas.

Press Service

The end of the civil war in Nigeria and the events in Jordan during the autumn of 1970 gave the ICRC Press Service an opportunity to

establish closer contacts with representatives of the press, radio and television. Thus, during those crises, besides the usual press conferences which in theory were to be held once a month, the ICRC held a large number of information meetings; at the time of the Zerkas incident as many as two a day. In addition, countless telephone calls came from the press the world over. During peak periods such calls followed one another day and night at a rate of several hundred every 24 hours.

A great many radio and television networks devoted some of their programmes, either entirely or partly, to the Red Cross in general and to the ICRC in particular. At the time of the above-mentioned events, several teams went to West Africa and to the Middle East or else came to Geneva to make sound and pictorial recordings of the work carried out by ICRC delegates and by various ICRC services. The news documentary reports and interviews, most of which dealt with what was the main event of the day, were relayed across continents, frequently over several networks and often through the medium of international television bodies.

In addition to its press releases and news flashes, in 1970 the ICRC continued publication of its bimonthly information notes "The ICRC in Action", issued in English, French, Spanish and German. By the end of the year the circulation exceeded 3,500 copies. Although primarily intended for the press, "The ICRC in Action" is also distributed to Governments, National Red Cross Societies and international organizations, many political, economic and cultural societies and associations, and to several hundred persons who follow the ICRC's activities with interest.

Audio-visual Service

In connection with World Red Cross Day ¹, the ICRC Audio-visual Service filmed or recorded in its own studio a series of messages from leading figures in the Red Cross world, as well as a 30-minute radio programme. These films and recordings were produced in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Arabic, and several dozen copies were sent to National Red Cross Societies for dissemination on radio and television networks.

¹ See page 103 of this Report.

A great many radio reporters also made use of the services of the technicians of the Audio-visual Service in recording their interviews in the ICRC studio or transmitting radio programmes by landline, in Europe or even overseas.

Lastly, under its radio programme, the ICRC made six experimental broadcasts in 1970 from the Schwarzenburg station, near Berne, on 7210 KHz (41.60 m). The broadcasts drew 2,487 reports sent in by 596 listeners from 32 countries.

Visitors Service

During 1970, the Visitors Service received more than 4,300 persons at ICRC headquarters, including nearly 1,200 members of National Red Cross Societies and about 800 nurses. The visitors, who came, either in groups or individually, from all parts of the world, usually went round on a visit lasting two to three hours; the programme included talks with ICRC officials about the institution's various activities, a visit to the Central Tracing Agency and the radio station, and one or more films made in the field.

International Review of the Red Cross

Two versions of the *International Review of the Red Cross* are published by the ICRC every month, one in English and the other in French. A supplement in German and one in Spanish are also issued. The Review contains illustrations allowing readers to follow the work which the ICRC does in a number of countries as well as the specific activities of some National Societies.

In 1970, the Review commemorated several anniversaries which were important from a humanitarian standpoint. First, there was the 150th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, on which occasion the Countess of Limerick contributed a notable article in which she recalled the profound implications of the humanitarian struggle of "the Lady with the lamp", in Crimea and later in Great Britain. This was followed by the centenary of the 1870–1871 Franco-Prussian war, which saw the birth on the battlefield of Red Cross solidarity among

several nations. Then there was the fact that, in 1970, the 1906 Geneva Convention became a purely historic document. Lastly, International Education Year was celebrated by a searching study on "Education and Tomorrow's World".

Among the leading articles in the Review we may mention one by Mr. J. Freymond, Vice-President of the ICRC, on aid to the victims of the civil war in Nigeria, and a study by Mr. P. Laroque on teaching solidarity as a factor contributing to growing interdependence among men, as well as two articles by members of the Legal Division of the ICRC: "The Red Cross and Biological and Chemical Weapons" by Mr. J. Mirimanoff-Chilikine and "The Red Cross and Non-International Conflicts" by Mr. M. Veuthey. The August and September issues contain the report drawn up by the ICRC on its activities in the Middle East from June 1967 to June 1970.

There were special articles devoted to World Red Cross Day, which was commemorated on 8 May 1970. With the League's full agreement, the ICRC undertook to prepare the documentation for the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, who received a kit enabling them to inform a major proportion of the public in their countries regarding the essential principles of the Geneva Conventions and the humanitarian activities of the Red Cross in times of conflict. In addition, the Review published a number of articles written on that occasion by ICRC officials on problems of peace and the Geneva Conventions.

But apart from the theoretical studies and information of a general nature, the Review also reports on the ICRC's relief and humanitarian activities in various countries. There have always been illustrations to show the activities carried out in different places, as for instance in Jordan, where, from September 1970, the Red Cross rendered steadily increasing assistance, which was described in considerable detail. On reading the articles one realizes all that has been accomplished in various fields, particularly in the matter of relief, in regard to which the Review has reported meaningful figures from time to time.

Under the heading "In the Red Cross World", there are reports on the activities of National Societies as well as articles submitted to the Editor. There is information on some aspects of the practical and theoretical work carried out. A perusal of the list of countries in which National Societies are operating shows the universal nature of the

information published in the International Review of the Red Cross, which has included, too, reports on legal subjects and on the work of international organizations. One can thus follow what have been the most effective efforts made throughout the world to defend essential human rights, ensure better health, and disseminate the principles of maternal and child hygiene. If one further considers the records and the very considerable bibliography published, one can see that the Review is a living periodical in close touch with current events.

In this context, it may be recalled that a table of contents to the Review (in French) has been issued covering the years 1939 to 1961. This document, which may be obtained from the ICRC, comprises an author's index and a table of contents, and is a useful instrument for research into recent Red Cross activities, faithfully recorded by the ICRC's own publication.