

Yugoslavia

Seminar on the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions amongst medical personnel

Continuing its effort to extend knowledge of the Geneva Conventions in its country, the Yugoslav Red Cross from December 7, to 9, 1967 organized an important seminar on the dissemination of these Conventions amongst medical personnel.

This event which was held at Basko Polje on the Dalmatian coast, not far from Split, was attended by some 230 participants who had come from every part of Yugoslavia. As the seminar's title indicated, these, beside members of the Yugoslav Red Cross, included civil and military doctors, nurses and the heads of hospital and medical establishments.

To animate and direct the work, the Yugoslav Red Cross had called upon the services of several well-known Yugoslav professors of international law, namely Mr. Andrassy, Mr. Bartos (prevented from attending at the last moment), Mr. Ibler and Mr. Radojkovic. It also had the excellent idea of inviting National Society representatives of neighbouring countries three of whom were able to attend. These were from the Bulgarian, Hungarian and Czech Red Cross Societies (Mr. Pushkarov, Mr. Pastor and Mr. Blaha respectively). The ICRC was represented by Mr. Wilhelm, Assistant Director and the League of Red Cross Societies by Mr. Dabney, Assistant Secretary-General.

Opened by General Mesterović, President of the Yugoslav Red Cross and under the direction of General Mezić, member of the Society's Executive Committee, the seminar devoted the first day to hearing several addresses on the Geneva Conventions in general, the legal protection of medical personnel and medical organization on a national level. Presented in summary form all these reports had been sent in advance to the participants.

During the two following days the seminar was divided into four discussion groups directed by the professors already mentioned. All participants thus had the possibility of raising a number of questions on various points in the reports, on certain practical cases which they might have to face in the event of hostilities as

doctors or in charge of hospitals, and on the application of the Geneva Conventions in the present armed conflicts. The general attention given to these discussions showed how successfully the seminar had been organized.

During the final session several conclusions were adopted which are given below in translation with the permission of the Yugoslav Red Cross. In his closing address, General Mezić stressed that anyone might be called upon one day either to benefit as a victim from the Geneva Conventions, or to apply them and that therefore everyone should know their principles. He also asked participants to pursue, in the circles or institutions which they represented, the work of dissemination started at the seminar. Finally, he indicated the intention of his National Society to organize similar seminars for other categories of the population.

Thanks to written translations of the principal reports and to the help of interpreters, the representatives of other Red Cross Societies and international Red Cross organizations were able to follow the seminar's work with keen interest, which was unanimously considered to have made a very positive contribution and set an example for other countries to follow.

The Yugoslav Red Cross must be congratulated for this event which required a very considerable amount of organizing, at a time when it had to undertake relief work as a result of the earthquake at Debar, which obliged its Secretary-General, Professor Patrognić to curtail his participation in the seminar.

CONCLUSIONS

Participants in the seminar on the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions amongst medical personnel, regard the organizing of such a seminar as being an important step in the realization of the duty incumbent on the Yugoslav State, by virtue of the obligations it has contracted, to disseminate these Conventions amongst the population generally and members of the armed forces.

The participants consider that efforts to disseminate the provisions of the Conventions must be intensified. To that end:

it is necessary

- that the Yugoslav army, the appropriate health authorities, the Yugoslav Red Cross and other interested organizations

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co-ordinate their activities as regards dissemination of the Conventions;

- that the provisions of article 21 on the regulation of the use and protection of the emblem and the name of the Red Cross be applied and that corresponding rules be drawn up;

it is recommended:

- to organize similar seminars within the Republics and communes;
- to Councils of the protection of communal assemblies to co-ordinate their work of disseminating the Conventions with a view to reaching the whole population;
- to use for dissemination purposes other available methods, such as conferences, publications, press, radio, television etc. . . .
- to disseminate the Conventions amongst the youth in schools, universities, in undertakings generally and also by pre-military training;
- to the Yugoslav Red Cross, universities, civil and military schools, other colleges of science and studies and also social organizations, to study the protection laid down by the Conventions, by pointing out their imperfections in order to contribute to the improvement and development of that part of humanitarian law;

it is proposed:

- to produce as soon as possible a publication containing the texts of the Conventions, together with rules of application, in order to make their dissemination possible;
- to publish the material of this seminar for transmission to Federal and other bodies and interested organizations and to draw up special publications suitable for the various groups of the population.

Participants in the seminar consider that it would be useful that all proposals and observations concerning the dissemination and study of the Conventions be conveyed to the Federal Committee of the Yugoslav Red Cross through the Republican Committees of the Yugoslav Red Cross.

Conscious of the importance of the Conventions, the participants are of the opinion that it is necessary to fight for the most complete respect to be given to the Conventions and they unreservedly condemn all infractions of the Conventions committed in present armed conflicts.