

A COMPETITION ON THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

The efforts of the Japanese Red Cross to make the Geneva Conventions known in that country are common knowledge. We would mention, in passing, that the Japanese Radio contributes ; it broadcast a play from Tokyo in August 1964, depicting various situations to which the Geneva Conventions are applicable.

With the same object in mind, the Japanese Red Cross, in 1963, organized a competition intended to further knowledge of the Conventions among enlightened sections of the population. Competitors were required to submit treatises on one of the following subjects :

- 1.—*The Geneva Conventions and the humanitarian principles.*
- 2.—*The history and development of the Red Cross idea from its origin to the conclusion of the Geneva Conventions.*
- 3.—*The development of the humanitarian idea : its influence on the history of the Japanese Red Cross and the future of the Society.*
- 4.—*Can the Geneva Conventions constitute the basis of humanitarian ethics? If so explain how.*
- 5.—*The Geneva Conventions as a factor for rapprochement among nations.*

The competition was a pronounced success ; 190 entries were received from 188 contestants.¹

The age of competitors varied considerably, ranging from 15 to 76. The professions also were widely represented, including

¹ 30 % of the participants chose theme No. 1 ;
25 % theme No. 2 ;
18 % theme No. 3 ;
17 % theme No. 4 ; and
10 % theme No. 5.

teachers, doctors, soldiers, members of the police force, students, priests, lawyers, nurses, journalists, office employees, etc.

The jury to examine entries consisted of Mr. Masutaro Inoue, then Director of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Japanese Red Cross, Mr. Tōru Nakagawa, Director of the Treaties Bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Michel Testuz, ICRC delegate in Japan.

Prince Shimadzu, former President of the Japanese Red Cross as well as other dignitaries attended the official prize-giving ceremony.

The first and second prizes were a trip to Geneva where the winners were the guests of the ICRC and the League. The *International Review* mentioned in its issue of last July the visit of Mr. Kiichiro and Mr. Yoshito Sumiyoshi to the International Committee.

Another prize winner was Mrs. Yamanaka, whose entry was the inspiration for the play mentioned above which was broadcast by the Japanese Radio for the Centenary of the signing of the First Geneva Convention.

The Japanese Red Cross Society has just published in Tokyo, in Japanese, a book of 210 pages comprising the entries which received awards and the best of the runners-up.

The introduction to the book was written by Mr. Léopold Boissier, former President of the ICRC, and we give below a quotation of the main passages of his preface.

Like the rising sun, the inspiration of Japan's fine national emblem, the Red Cross sends forth a new light in the world.

This is expressed with intelligence and a spirit of humanity in the studies published by the Japanese Red Cross on the occasion of the Centenary of the Geneva institution.

It can be said that Henry Dunant's message polarized international law reflecting humanitarian ideas.

Till that time whatever was done to alleviate the suffering of war's victims depended on individual initiative stimulated by religion or legal doctrine but, strictly speaking, there were no

obligations common to States. The law of war was merely hypothetical.

The 1864 Geneva Convention was the start of a wide legal code which today lays down compulsory rules for all times and all countries.

Curiously enough, it was the provisions of a national law, contemporary with the First Geneva Convention, that led to the framing of international law along these lines.

Civil war was raging in the United States and, with the intention of minimizing the horrors of that conflict, President Lincoln promulgated a very humane set of regulations governing the conduct of armies in the field. These regulations provided the basis of international conventions which, like the Geneva Convention and mainly under the influence of the Red Cross movement, became what today constitutes international law.

Civil war also gave rise to the foundation of the Japanese National Red Cross Society in 1877, in order to alleviate the plight of the victims, and this Society's ceaseless work contributed to the development of ideas in favour of unqualified accession to the Geneva Conventions as they stand today.

This was most laudable and productive of great benefit ; the Centenary of the Red Cross is an occasion to show recognition of this.

Twelve studies selected from the many entries to the nationwide competition organized by the Red Cross are collected in this present volume . . .

Mr. Kiichiro Kosaka, who won the first prize, shows the position of the Geneva Conventions in contemporary international law and how its principles are equated to a humanitarian concept. He stresses the characteristic precept in favour of protected persons, such as the application of the Conventions to internal conflicts, the prohibition of reprisals against individuals, the abrogation of out-moded restrictive clauses, the positive provisions ensuring humane treatment. He concludes by replying affirmatively to the question : Can the Geneva Conventions constitute the basis of humanitarian ethics ?

Mr. Yoshitomi Takata first reviews the problem of international moral standards in the world of today. Then he goes on to examine the moral issues of war, with reference to the atomic bomb, and

shows how the hope of the world rests on the development of the principles enunciated by the Geneva Conventions.

Mr. Mitsusuke Nozaki stresses the scope of the Geneva Conventions on the national and individual levels.

Mr. Yoshito Sumiyoshi describes the present state of the law of war. He examines the inter-connection between the Geneva Conventions and peace and between the Conventions and humanitarian law ; his conclusions are similar to the two studies mentioned above.

Mr. Fusao Hanyu studies the implementation of the Geneva Conventions. He shows very closely how the principle of non-violence and respect for human dignity constitutes an advance in international relations.

Mr. Saburo Toyama's essay shows the fundamental structure of the Geneva Conventions then goes on to clarify the position of these Conventions in present-day and potential humanitarian law.

Starting from the idea expressed by Aristotle that man is a political animal, Mr. Takao Okuyama shows how the ethical rules of the Red Cross have become necessary for mankind.

After reviewing the humanitarian principles and stressing the importance of respect for human dignity, Mrs. Hiroko Endo boldly tackles the problem of sanctions provided for in the Conventions and she also shows the special place of the International Red Cross in the life of the people.

Mrs. Sonoko Yamanaka gives a very lively account of her personal memories and shows by reference to actual experience in 1942 how the Geneva Conventions can protect individuals when they are applied in all good faith by armed forces properly instructed in these regulations.

The third theme gives the authors an opportunity for highly interesting historical studies.

Mr. Kyuji Sato takes as his starting point the civil war which, as we already mentioned, gave rise to the foundation of the Japanese Red Cross ; he gives a summary of the history of this National Society and of the development of humanitarian ideas in Japan since that time. He describes the results achieved during the life of the League of Nations and the progress during what he styles the third period of the Red Cross.

Mr. Ikuzo Kikuci's essay referred to the origins of the Red Cross, recalling the great names of Florence Nightingale and Henry Dunant. In a particularly interesting chapter of his study of the evolution of ideas in Japan, he points out the "light of hope" for prisoners of war radiated by the spirit of Geneva and he concludes with a declaration of faith in the strengthening of protective regulations, especially those relating to non-combatants.

Finally, Mr. Giichi Fukushima draws analogies between Buddhism and the spirit of the Red Cross. He recalls what constituted the law of war in the Middle Ages and describes its evolution under the influence of Christianity and of Japanese Society, the spiritual life of which was inspired by Confucianism from the XVIIth century onwards. He concludes with a perspective of the future mission of the Japanese Red Cross and, with practical insight, he gives a bibliography to enable readers to refer to the works which he himself had consulted.

The importance of endeavours made in Japan, on the occasion of the Red Cross Centenary, to assimilate the spirit of the institution and to disseminate the essence of the Geneva Conventions among the public at large cannot be overstated.

It is therefore with great satisfaction that the International Committee of the Red Cross congratulates the authors of these essays and also the Japanese Red Cross itself, as well as all who participated in this competition.

This volume is a valuable guide for the implementation of the Geneva Conventions and the development of Red Cross ideas. As such it is destined to make its influence felt universally, for the Red Cross world will undoubtedly appreciate at its full value this important Japanese contribution to the common task.