

On a practical plane, despite marked differences between the National Societies, both in their programmes of activities and in their working methods, the participants succeeded in finding grounds for agreement on most of the subjects discussed, and they enunciated several significant conclusions:

- the spread of knowledge of international humanitarian law, though primarily a duty of the States, should be one of the principal concerns of the Red Cross in general, and particularly of each National Society within its own country;
- the work of dissemination ought not to be limited to the Geneva Conventions; it should include the fundamental principles of the Red Cross;
- this work cannot be dissociated from the encouragement of a spirit of peace, and should never make war appear “acceptable”;
- since it is an ideal that is to be disseminated, the work should be done by persons motivated by a deeply held belief in this ideal.

All those taking part in the seminar considered that its success was largely due to the fact that it was organized by the Polish Red Cross, in a country that has suffered from centuries of conflict and that has paid a heavy price for its profound conviction that any dialogue which brings nations together helps to prevent war.

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## BOARD VOTES NEW LEAGUE CONSTITUTION

*The League's Board of Governors voted a new constitution for the world federation during an extraordinary session held in Geneva 1-6 November.*

*The International Review of the Red Cross, in its December 1976 issue, published an account of this important session of the League Board of Governors and gives below some additional details.*

The new Constitution defines the general object of the League as being "to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by the National Societies with a view to the prevention and alleviation of human suffering and thereby contribute to the maintenance and the promotion of peace in the world".

It also codifies for the first time the principal functions of the League, particularly in the fields of disaster relief and preparedness, health activities, the education of young people and the promotion of the Red Cross principles and ideals.

### **New statutory bodies**

Under the new Constitution a General Assembly will replace the Board of Governors as the supreme authority of the League. Made up of all member Societies of the federation, it will meet once every two years. In between sessions of the Assembly, League business will be carried on by an Executive Council, which will meet twice a year. The Council will be made up of 26 members: 16 National Societies elected by the Assembly, and the President and nine Vice-Presidents of the League.

### **League officers**

The League President and Vice-Presidents (formerly the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen) are to be elected by the Assembly for a four-year term of office. They may not hold office for more than two consecutive terms. Eight Vice-Presidents will be appointed by the Assembly after its election of eight National Societies based on fair geographic distribution; each National Society running for election must first nominate a candidate from its Society for a Vice-Presidential post. The ninth Vice-President will be, as now, *ex officio* the President of the National Society of the country in which the League has its headquarters.

The Secretary General of the League will be appointed by the Assembly on the proposal of the Council for an indefinite term of office. His responsibilities, particularly in relation to financial matters, are more clearly defined.

### **Observers authorised**

For the first time observers will be formally authorised to attend ordinary sessions of the League's governing body. Specifically mentioned are the International Committee of the Red Cross and intergovernmental organisations with which the League has consultative status. Other

organisations with which the League works and National Societies in the process of formation may also be invited to attend sessions of the Assembly.

A preamble to the Constitution has been introduced, setting forth the seven Principles of the Red Cross and reaffirming the mottos "Inter arma caritas" and "Per humanitatem ad pacem" as an expression of the ideals of the Red Cross movement as a whole.

Among other additions to the League statutes:

- the rights and duties of National Societies are spelt out, together with the conditions for their admission to, and suspension from, the League;
- co-operation between the League and the International Committee of the Red Cross is dealt with more specifically and the federation is given wider powers to develop activities and conclude agreements with its sister organisation;
- rules are laid down for the organisation of regional Red Cross conferences by the League.

During the session the Board also approved a series of financial regulations and staff rules.

### **First major updating**

By adopting the 37 articles of the new Constitution the Board updated a statutory document which had been revised—and then only partially—only three times since the foundation of the League in 1919. The changes are meant to give the League a constitution corresponding to its present-day role; they clarify and complete the original Constitution, streamline the executive machinery of the federation and give greater continuity to the direction of its affairs. The powers of its collective and individual bodies are now more clearly defined, as are those of its deliberative and advisory bodies.

The revised Constitution will come into force once the complementary Rules of Procedure have been adopted by the next session of the Board of Governors. This will be held immediately prior to the XXIIIrd International Conference of the Red Cross, which will take place in Bucharest, Romania, in October 1977.

A new draft of the Rules of Procedure, reflecting the provisions of the newly-adopted Constitution, will be prepared for the Bucharest meeting

by the Constitution Revision Commission whose mandate was extended for one more year by the Board. The Commission was set up in 1970 to prepare the draft texts on which the extraordinary session worked. As in the case of the Constitution the Commission will draw extensively on proposals from National Societies in drafting the new Rules.

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### INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS MUSEUM AT CASTIGLIONE

The Steering Committee of the International Red Cross Museum held its annual meeting at Castiglione on 11 March. The Italian Red Cross was represented by the Presidents of the local committees of Mantua, Verona, Milan, Brescia and Castiglione.

The Committee adopted after consideration a new set of rules for the running of the Museum. These rules do not affect the Museum statutes, but do bring them into line with the regulations of museums in Lombardy in general. The Committee approved the report for 1976 drawn up by Mr. Mutti, the Museum Director, and giving in the main an account of the exhibition organized by the ICRC in that year. The Committee also approved the Museum's accounts for the financial year.

Following the recent death of the Committee President, Mr. Emilio Ondei of Brescia was elected as the new President. Mr. Boletti continues as one of the two vice-presidents and Mr. Pierre Gaillard of the ICRC was elected as the second vice-president in place of Mr. Marc Gazay, who has announced his forthcoming departure from the League. The new League representative on the Committee will be Mr. Murdoch, Director of the League Information Bureau, and the representative for the Henry-Dunant Institute will be Mr. Akerhielm.

For 1978, the 150th anniversary of Henry Dunant's birth, the Museum will organize a special event at Castiglione.

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