

THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF THE RED CROSS

At its December 1977 session, the Assembly of the ICRC was compelled, for reasons of economy, to take a step which it took only very reluctantly: this was to cut down the number of issues of the *International Review of the Red Cross* from twelve to six per annum. From January 1978, therefore, the Review will appear every two months instead of once a month as was the case until now.

In April 1869, the Berlin Conference had decided on the “creation of an international bulletin, which would devote its pages to the work of relief for wounded soldiers, . . . which would put into contact the Central Committees of various countries, and which would bring to their notice the events, official or otherwise, of which they should be informed. The International Committee of the Red Cross was entrusted with editing this journal. . .”¹ The first issue of this *Bulletin international des Sociétés de secours aux militaires blessés* appeared in October 1869. In 1919, it adopted a new title: *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge et Bulletin international des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge*, which was shortened in 1955 to *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge*.

From January 1948 an abridged edition of the *Revue* was published in English; in 1949 an abridged Spanish edition, and in 1950 an abridged German edition appeared. In 1961, a full English version started to appear, similar in all respects to the French edition, while the full Spanish version was first issued in 1976.

In 1977, the *International Review* appeared in three full editions, running to about 750 pages in each of the three languages, and an abridged edition in German of about 220 pages for the whole year. For

¹ Our translation (*Ed.*)

the ICRC, which pays all the costs of publication, editing, translation, printing, distribution, etc., it has represented a considerable liability.

The ICRC is well aware of the long-standing importance of the *Review* in the Red Cross world: in its capacity as the official organ of the International Red Cross, it publishes for the National Societies the circulars of the ICRC, the resolutions and decisions of the international conferences, the accounts of the special funds the income of which is allocated to specific National Societies, and the lists of persons honoured by awards such as the Henry Dunant Medal and the Florence Nightingale Medal.

Secondly, through its articles and through the chronicle of events, documents, books and legal publications coming from sources other than the Red Cross but which are of direct concern to our movement, the *International Review* is the sole journal which is specialized in international humanitarian law and which works, month after month, towards its dissemination and development. In this respect, it is the only substantial review of the International Red Cross.

Thirdly, the *International Review* brings to the notice of its readers the ICRC's activities in Geneva and throughout the world, and we know that these reports are read with great attention by governments, international bodies and the numerous humanitarian organizations with which the ICRC co-operates. In addition, the *International Review* seeks to give an account of the most important activities of the National Red Cross Societies: regional meetings and seminars, the founding of new Societies, prominent anniversaries of long-established Societies, and special activities performed by them, to keep up the flow of information and the necessary links between them, consistent with the purpose of the original *Bulletin*.

But, like most periodicals of its kind, the *International Review of the Red Cross* can only keep afloat if the costs of publication are borne by a sponsor, which in this particular case is the ICRC. The relatively few paying subscriptions and income from advertisements do not cover more than a fraction of the expenses, so the burden is carried almost entirely by the ICRC. In the present circumstances, this burden has become too heavy and, to its great regret, the ICRC has felt compelled to take a grave step to reduce costs by cutting down on the number of issues in a year and discontinuing the use of illustrations. The editor of the *International Review* has been instructed to include, as far as possible,

the same material, but in a more condensed form, in such a way as to continue to maintain the high level of this publication and to keep up its function of international organ linking the members of the Red Cross world.

It is clear that cutting down the *International Review* by one-half will leave a gap which will be felt all the more as the Twenty-third International Red Cross Conference has just adopted a resolution on the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law and of the basic principles of the Red Cross. Notwithstanding, the ICRC feels that it cannot continue, all alone and without outside aid, the very considerable effort it has expended during many years to bring out four separate editions of the *Review* every month. Any proposals reaching the ICRC which might cause it to withdraw a decision which it hopes all the same to be only a provisional measure will be welcomed with gratitude: in any case, the ICRC would be only too happy to have the views of *International Review* readers.

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