



REVUE INTERNATIONALE  
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

ET

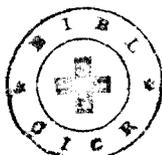
BULLETIN DES SOCIÉTÉS  
DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

SUPPLEMENT

*First Year, 1948*

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VOL. I



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## EDITORIAL NOTE

*FOR* some time past it has been considered desirable to publish either a short edition in English or at least a brief summary in that language of the present Review. This course will be followed henceforward, and each number will include a short supplement in English containing articles and information concerning the statutory activities of the International Committee.

This supplement will further comprise, either in extenso or in summary form, articles of general interest relating to humanitarian ideals or the principles upon which the institution of the Red Cross continues to rest.

*APPEAL RELATIVE TO THE REPATRIATION OF PRISONERS OF WAR*<sup>1</sup> (*Memorandum to Governments and Central Committees of National Red Cross Societies*)

Geneva, December 20, 1947.

In a memorandum dated August 21, 1945 and submitted to all the chief Powers holding Prisoners of War, as also to the International Allied Control Commission in Germany, the International Committee emphasised the fact that the captivity of prisoners of war could not be prolonged for an indefinite period.

In the following year, on July 2, 1946, in a note addressed to the Powers signatory to the Convention of July 27, 1929, who were still holding prisoners of war, the International Committee of the Red Cross drew attention to the fact that, according to the spirit of the Convention and in the absence of any peace treaty, it was incumbent upon the said Powers to take the initiative of repatriating prisoners of war.

The latter question has unfortunately not been wholly solved everywhere, and the International Committee therefore desire to make the following communication to Governments and to National Red Cross Societies :

At the present day several detaining Powers still hold large numbers of prisoners of war. It follows that two years after the close of hostilities these men are still awaiting their liberation. In spite of considerable improvement in their living conditions many of them are still detained in barbed wire enclosures, and under the supervision of armed guards. Although the Forces of which they were members no longer exist, they still wear uniform. They are deprived of any kind of private life, and opportunities for exchanging messages with their next of kin are strictly limited. The exercise of their civil rights is practically nullified ; their home life has been destroyed. Their individual abilities are running to seed and they are only considered in the light of the work they are compelled to do, as a rule for extremely

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue*, Dec. 1947, p. 935.

low wages. In short, they are kept beyond the pale of human society.

The capture of prisoners of war has only a single aim: to prevent enemy combatants taking up arms once more. The prolongation of such a state of affairs cannot be justified by any military consideration, as soon as hostilities are actually ended. For this reason a principle has been embodied in international law demanding that, as soon as possible after the close of hostilities, all prisoners of war who are not the subject of penal proceedings or sentences shall be repatriated.

Hostilities ceased over two years ago, and the measures taken by the victorious Powers give no grounds to hope that the said prisoners will regain their freedom before January 1, 1949.

Captivity in time of war seems, therefore, to have lost its primary justification. To-day, it is apparently maintained on account of the scarcity of labour in the detaining countries; it therefore becomes a compulsory labour service for ex-service men, who are nationals of countries compelled to furnish war reparations.

In view of this situation the International Committee of the Red Cross consider it a duty to point out how contrary the prolongation of such a state of affairs would be to the universally recognised principle of the respect of human personality and human rights, which constitutes the foundation on which the Red Cross itself is built.

#### *SHORT REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS DURING 1947*<sup>1</sup>

The year which has just come to an end was one of intensive action for the International Committee.

As in 1946, the *repatriation of prisoners of war* remained their chief concern in regard to this class of war victims. The Committee's position in this respect was made known by an appeal which they issued in November last, to all Governments and

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue*, Jan. 1948, p. 2.

National Red Cross Societies. While by December 31, there were no prisoners of war left in American, Belgian, Dutch or Luxemburger hands, the other Detaining Powers continued during 1947 to apply or to inaugurate repatriation schemes with effect over regular intervals until the end of 1948. All efforts have been made by the Committee's delegations to hasten or facilitate repatriations. The French Government proposed that prisoners of war might change their status to that of "free workers", by signing a year's contract, to which 80.000 PW agreed. The Committee was thereupon invited to extend their general protection to these workers, who have no diplomatic authority to defend their interests.

Many hundreds of thousands of prisoners, however, still remained in captivity, and the Committee continued their customary activities in their behalf, in order to improve their living conditions, and to give them legal assistance. The Committee's delegates paid over two thousand visits to camps and working detachments in Eastern and Western Europe (particularly in Poland and Czechoslovakia), also in the Middle East, Africa and the Far East. They were also in contact with "Surrendered Enemy Personnel", i.e. the men taken prisoner when Germany and Japan capitulated. The Committee obtained from the American authorities the assurance that they would enjoy prisoner of war status.

Relief activities in favour of prisoners of war were still actively pursued, although donations to this effect showed a marked decrease, in spite of collections made in numerous countries through the authorities, the National Red Cross Societies or persons of German origin.

Many prisoners of war become *permanently disabled*, and in this particular field the Committee continued their endeavours to supply documentary and technical assistance to the authorities and special institutions of various countries. The Committee were also in a position, principally in Eastern Europe, Austria and Germany, to forward the first donations for the equipment of homes for the war-disabled.

Numerous efforts were made in order to accelerate the repatriation of *civilian internees* still remaining in Australia and

India. In Italy, civilian camps were visited and given relief. A delegation was sent to Denmark to assist the numerous German refugees still resident in that country. Help was granted to the German minorities in the Eastern regions (improvements in the camps and convoys ; suspension of evacuations during the winter months ; co-operation with the International Refugee Organisation). In the Far East, the Committee's delegation in Java commenced transfer operations for 15,000 displaced Chinese nationals.

Apart from these activities resulting from the World War, the Committee were called upon to act in countries where fresh conflicts had broken out, namely Indochina, the Indian Archipelago, Greece, and Paraguay. They sent a medical commission on board the three British vessels to which the Jewish emigrants of the *Exodus* had been transferred, to give these refugees medical attention.

The services of the Committee were also required in the same regions for material relief. In Indonesia they facilitated the transmission to both parties of relief supplies sent in particular from Australia and the Muslim countries. In Indochina, they distributed relief supplies forwarded by the French Red Cross Society and by private donors to civilian or military detainees in the hands of the Viet-Nam authorities, and medical supplies to the local Red Cross organisations, for the benefit of the civilian population. In Greece, the first relief supplies were dispatched, with the consent of the authorities, to persons under detention, while the Committee contributed to the relief action for the Greek population.

The work of relieving civilian populations was by no means ended when, at the request of the League of Red Cross Societies, the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross was wound up at the end of 1946. The Committee endeavoured to give all possible support to the organisations which carried on this task. To this effect, they assisted the League in securing priority and free transport, offered part of their warehouse space and accepted to take charge, for the League's account, of the receiving, warehousing and reforwarding of supplies. In countries where an intermediary was necessary, the Committee's

delegations dealt with the receiving, transit or distribution of certain donations made to the League.

In a similar manner, the Committee supported the efforts of the "Centre d'entr'aide international aux populations civiles" and placed at this organisation's disposal the services of their delegations still resident in countries where the Centre was sending supplies. In addition, in order to encourage possible donors to aid the civilian populations, the Committee set up a Section which kept charitable organisations informed of appeals received, and published reports on living conditions among civilian populations. The Committee also, for the third time since the War, took an active part in launching a universal appeal in favour of all war victims.

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During the past year, the Committee have pursued with increasing care the vast enterprise, begun in 1945, of preparing *the revision of the Geneva Conventions*, and of drafting a *new Convention for the protection of civilians*.

After collecting the suggestions contributed by the National Societies, to whom the Committee had submitted their first proposals and drafts on the occasion of the Preliminary Conference held at Geneva in 1946, an exhaustive study of the entire field was made. This study was based on a mass of data relating to all the treaty stipulations under consideration. The Committee consulted, in particular, during a meeting held in Geneva in March 1947, the representatives of secular and religious institutions which had, in co-operation with the Committee, furnished spiritual or intellectual help to prisoners of war during hostilities.

From April 14 to 26, a Conference of Government Experts for the study of the Conventions for the protection of war victims sat in Geneva ; this was attended by sixty-nine delegates representing fifteen Governments which had acquired particular knowledge and experience in this field. On the basis of the Committee's proposals, of opinions submitted by National Red Cross Societies, and of drafts tabled by several Governments,

the Conference agreed upon revised drafts of the Geneva Convention for the relief of the Wounded and Sick, the Tenth Hague Convention of 1907 and the 1929 Convention relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War. The meeting also adopted a preliminary draft of a new Convention for the protection of civilians. Later on, the Committee consulted several Governments who had been unable to send representatives to the April Conference, in particular during a meeting held at Geneva in June.

The Committee further profited by the views expressed by the Commission of National Red Cross Societies for the Study of the Conventions, which met in Geneva from September 15 to 16, 1947. Finally, the Committee applied themselves to establishing final drafts, which will be submitted, at the end of February 1948, to all the National Red Cross Societies and Governments, as a preliminary to the Seventeenth International Red Cross Conference in Stockholm.

The Committee also participated in numerous international meetings; one of the most important of these was the Joint Commission of the League and the Committee for the revision of the conditions of recognition of National Societies.

The Committee have also devoted attention to the preparation of the coming International Red Cross Conference, to be held in Stockholm in August 1948. Ten years have passed since the last Conference, which took place in London in 1938; the coming Conference will therefore be highly important. The drafting of reports on the Committee's past activities, in execution of the tasks assigned them by the London Conference, and of various proposals, following their experience in many fields, has taken up most of the time of several of their departments.

Pending the issue of their General Report on their war activities, the Committee published a brief review of this work, written in plain narrative form and called "Inter Arma Caritas". This booklet, which has appeared in five languages, has been very well received in the Red Cross world.

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During 1947, the Committee recognised three new National Societies : the Lebanon Red Cross, the Red Cross of the Philippines and the Syrian Red Crescent, and was glad to welcome them as members of the International Red Cross.

The problem of reconstituting a National Red Cross Society in Germany has been given careful consideration. In the British and American Zones, the pursuit of this task was left to the delegates of the League of Red Cross Societies, while in the French Zone the Committee itself made constant endeavours to this end. They noted with deep satisfaction that the French Government agreed to the opening of numerous Red Cross branches in the chief provinces of this region. The Committee's delegation in Baden-Baden was wound up at the close of 1947, and the League is now following up this matter.

The past year enabled the Committee to establish closer contacts with the National Societies. A pleasing feature was the large number of visits paid to these Societies and to Governments.

In February one of the four members of the Central Management, M. G. Dunand, represented the Committee at the Fifth Pan-American Red Cross Conference, held in Caracas, where he contacted the Red Cross and the Government of Venezuela. Continuing his trip throughout Latin America, he visited the National Societies, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and, in most cases, the Heads of State in all the twenty Latin American Republics.

In October Dr. E. Gloor, Vice-President of the Committee, accompanied by Mr. F. Siordet and Dr. R. Marti, travelled to Belgrade to represent the Committee at the Regional Conference of European Red Cross Societies. After this meeting, the Committee's representatives visited the National Societies and the Governments of Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania.

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While 1947 was a year of untiring efforts, it was also one of grave financial anxiety. The first contribution of ten million Swiss francs, voted by the National Red Cross Societies meeting

at the Preliminary Conference in July 1946, should, it is true, have almost sufficed, both to cover ordinary expenditure in 1947 and to make good the deficit of three million francs incurred in 1946, other sources of receipts seeming to have run dry, or to be most uncertain. Though several National Societies have already paid in their share of this extraordinary contribution—and the Committee are particularly anxious to express their keen appreciation of this fact—these amounts were far from being sufficient.

If the Committee's work was not seriously endangered during 1947, this is due to the fact that besides donations from Red Cross Societies, resources were made available on which it had been impossible to count with any degree of certainty. These resources included, in particular, various balances of Government contributions, a large donation from the French Government in recognition of the work done in behalf of prisoners of war and of the ex-prisoners who are now "free workers", and a generous response from the Swiss people, to whom the Committee appealed once again this year.

The Committee have therefore been compelled to pursue the reduction of their expenses, where as they would have preferred to meet the multiple aspects of the great task which still remains to be done. Expenditure for 1947 was still large, since it amounted to seven million Swiss francs; this has now been cut down, for the second year in succession, by 40 per cent. Furthermore, the previous deficit of three million francs is still unpaid.

The financial situation thus remains precarious. It would greatly relieve the Committee if the National Societies which have not yet paid in their share of the extraordinary contribution, could see their way to doing so in the near future.

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THE RED CROSS AND TREATY PROTECTION  
OF CIVILIANS IN WAR-TIME <sup>1</sup>

The Red Cross is not only, by its very nature, one of the greatest of the many international institutions which have come into existence, but also one of the most firmly established and flourishing of them all. Whilst other institutions are suffering setbacks, each new difficulty merely strengthens its prestige and leads to an extension of its activities. From the day when the "Genevèse Public Utility Society" (*Société d'utilité publique de Genève*) decided to support Henry Dunant's plan and set up the "Committee of Five", which ultimately grew into the International Committee, its expansion has been uninterrupted.

What is the reason of this success? Doubtless it is linked with the spirit of loyalty and self-sacrifice which the work of such an institution calls forth. There is something in it that attracts and uplifts. Its servants do not only give their time and labour; they also give a part of themselves—that which is best in them. However, its splendid development is not altogether to be attributed to this. It is due also to the policy which the Red Cross has followed and to the practical wisdom of which it has so often given proof.

The most important factor of all was the principles which governed its organic growth. The Red Cross has developed slowly, its progress being determined by practical needs and the exact appreciation of existing resources. It is not the sudden outcome of a comprehensive plan, nor of a logically built-up scheme. It was in 1928 only that its empiric character was given a definite legal form. This, however, served only to consolidate and clarify the results of a slow but steady advance, without in any way hindering its subsequent development.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue*, Nov. 1947, p. 886.

It is perhaps of interest that another international institution, in a very different sphere, likewise preferred to follow the path of experience, rather than the royal road of improvisation, and is today reaping the reward of its patience. The Pan-American Union, like the Red Cross, had a modest beginning. Like the latter, it has climbed gradually and progressed by degrees. By a strange coincidence, it was also in 1928 that the scattered elements of its legal system were at length codified, at Havana. And, as in the case of the Red Cross, this systematization *a posteriori* merely hastened the rapidity of its progress.

Surely this prudent method is the best, since it is the only one which respects the laws of nature. Certainly the Red Cross owes its present flourishing condition in part to this.

But it owes it also to the sense of reality which it has always shown in the choice of its tasks and methods. No institution has been more successful in harmonizing realism with idealism, and in showing that these two principles, far from being opposed, may be complementary. The Red Cross, which rests upon a moral concept, cannot fail to be idealistic; yet it could very well not be realistic. But it is so, without any doubt, and with remarkable constancy and wisdom. Convincing proof of this is the way in which it has always recognized the occasions where humanitarianism, with its resulting benefits, may find a place even amidst the brutalities of war. Further, it has always sought to avoid wasting its strength and endangering its prestige in vain undertakings.

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The War of 1914 gave the Red Cross occasion to introduce important reforms, chief of which were the creation of the League of Red Cross Societies, the adoption of the 1928 Statutes and the signing of the two great Geneva Conventions relating to the treatment of sick and wounded members of the armed forces, and of prisoners of war.

The experience gained during the recent war may apparently lead to still greater changes. Although it is still too early to foresee exactly the adjustments which may have to be made in the organic structure of the institution, the need for revising

the whole system of treaty stipulations set up by the Conventions already stands forth plainly in its main lines. The first task will be to revise the two 1929 Conventions, to amend and strengthen their provisions, in the light of the experience gained from their recent application. Secondly—and more important still—it is necessary to extend to civilians the juridical protection hitherto afforded only to combatants in the field and to certain persons officially attached to the armed forces.

The need for treaty stipulations protecting civilians—principally those who are exposed to enemy attack—was already felt after the first World War. The Tokyo Draft, adopted by the XVth International Red Cross Conference in 1934, attempted to fill this gap. But it was still only a draft when war broke out in 1939, and has been rendered practically obsolete by subsequent events. The inadequacy of existing legislation became more than ever apparent in the light of the deportations, the taking of hostages, the torture and scientific assassination, which the Red Cross found itself powerless to prevent. On the outbreak of hostilities the International Committee succeeded, it is true, in obtaining from the belligerents the undertaking that enemy aliens interned in their territory should enjoy the same privileges as those granted to prisoners of war under the 1929 Convention. The populations of the occupied regions, on the other hand, were deprived of any legal guarantees whatever, except for the two or three vague and out-of-date articles, applicable to them and embodied in the Regulations annexed to the IVth Hague Convention of 1907.

This tragic insufficiency did not prevent the International Committee from trying to help those who were suffering as the result of such a state of affairs. The Committee tried to give the detainees what moral and material aid it could, and to exercise some measure of control over the conditions to which they were subjected. A report published in February, 1946, on its work for civilians in concentration camps in Germany, reveals some of these efforts<sup>1</sup>. All who are acquainted with its constant endeavours in the face of a thankless task, fully

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue*, March 1946, p. 164-247, and April 1946, p. 279-344.

appreciate its perseverance. But the disproportion between the results secured and the energy expended is flagrant. In the absence of any legal stipulations or formal obligations, the International Committee could but appeal to the conscience or the good will of the belligerents. It is scarcely surprising that these appeals were often left unanswered.

In the last analysis, civilians need protection not only against the brutality or perversity of certain governments or ideologies, but also against the wider consequences of the changed conditions obtaining in modern warfare.

Hitherto, international law drew a fundamental distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and tried to stress this difference. How can we maintain this distinction today? Although the evolution of modern warfare, its technical metamorphosis, has perhaps not wholly abolished this distinction, it has in any case rendered it less clear-cut and shown it to be, more often than not, wholly unjustifiable. In modern mechanized warfare, all the vital forces of belligerent nations help to build up their countries' power. Factories and construction yards, transport, economics, scientific discovery—all are just as important as the physical endurance of armies and the strategy of general staffs. This kind of warfare uses weapons which strike blindly and wreak mass destruction. Men no longer fight with swords or bayonets; they no longer direct artillery fire against particular targets. Torpedoes are launched against merchant-ships in convoy, sinking them with all on board. The quarter, or half, of a city can be destroyed in one night by air bombardments. The appalling ravages of atomic energy have made their appearance. Aircraft and rockets, by their speed and range, have transformed the time-honoured concepts of military strategy, and now spread death and destruction practically over the entire universe. How then, and why, should combatants and non-combatants be divided into two separate and essentially distinct categories?

The whole perspective is changed. This is the real reason why—quite apart from the “crimes” of recent date, which are still fresh in our memories—it is absolutely essential to bring about the reform of present legislation, and to extend (with the

necessary adaptation) to civilians the humanitarian principles which, under the existing Conventions, are applicable only to members of the armed forces.

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The work has already begun. On February 15, 1945, the International Committee informed Governments and National Red Cross Societies that it planned the revision of the two 1929 Conventions, and the conclusion of new agreements for the protection of civilians<sup>1</sup>. Whilst the National Societies were similarly studying this problem, the Committee—after gathering all available information regarding the experience gained during the late war—proceeded, as after the first World War, to enter into preliminary discussions. The first step was the Preliminary Conference of National Red Cross Societies, held in Geneva, from July 26 to August 3, 1946<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, a Conference of Government Experts met, also in Geneva, from April 14 to 26, 1947<sup>3</sup>, and made a thorough examination of the numerous questions to be dealt with. Guided by these discussions, the International Committee is now drafting specific proposals. These will probably be the subject of further study, in particular at the forthcoming International Red Cross Conference at Stockholm, in August 1948, before receiving the definite sanction of a Diplomatic Conference.

Such an undertaking cannot be hurried. Doubtless it would be wise, in view of the present international situation, to avoid unnecessary delay; nevertheless, hasty procedure must not imperil the quality of the final documents which will crown so much patient effort.

In fact, the Red Cross is entering upon a field which is somewhat foreign to its habitual domain, and the difficulties with which it will meet must not be underestimated. This is, of course, not the first time that it has widened its scope, or trodden new paths. But, this time, the venture is more hazardous. To pass from the Geneva Convention to the Convention relating

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue*, Feb. 1945, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, Aug. 1946, p. 637.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, April, p. 277, May, 1947, p. 367.

to prisoners of war was an important step, but not nearly so sudden or arduous as that which must now lead the Red Cross towards the protection of civilians.

In this case, far novelty of the problems raised, and the lack of experience in this connexion, the number and variety of the questions involved, and, above all, their close bearing on the necessities of war and the policies of the belligerents, make the task of the Red Cross far more laborious.

The existing Conventions apply solely to sick or wounded members of the armed forces, or to prisoners of war. They cover only clearly determined classes of persons who are subject to strict discipline and commanded by responsible officers. The new Convention, on the other hand, will apply to an immense and unorganized concourse of people of all kinds, spread throughout the whole territories governed *de jure* or *de facto* by the belligerent Powers. This difference alone makes it obvious that the implementing of such an agreement will be far more arduous. Breaches and violations of such an accord will be inevitable, and probably more numerous and more difficult to prevent or remedy than before. Treaty protection of civilians—even if only for the reasons outlined above—is likely to prove much less effective than that of combatants.

Further, the task is made more delicate by the risk of colliding with the exigencies of war, and of failing to determine with sufficient precision—sometimes no easy matter—how far the Red Cross may go, in practice, in the pursuit of its humanitarian work.

We sometimes have an unrealistic conception of the possibility of “humanizing” war. We believe that, in order to conquer brute force, in the name of ethics, we have simply to build up a system of legal interdictions. Let nations engage in battle, let their very existence, their liberty, the fundamental values of their civilization be at stake, let their primitive passions and instincts be unleashed—and it will be vain to believe that ethics, even when reinforced by law, can stop them, or at least make them renounce what they consider to be the essentials of victory.

Legal experts and diplomats have not always kept this fact in mind; hence certain weaknesses in the Hague Conventions. The Red Cross, on the contrary, has never failed to recognize

the basic requirements of military action. Today, however, it is submitted to a test which is more exacting, in this respect, than all previous ones.

It is comparatively easy to ensure the protection of the sick and wounded, and of prisoners of war, without impairing the strength of belligerent States or interfering with their war policies, since the persons concerned are out of the actual fighting. Unhappily, the problems raised by the protection of civilians are not always so easily solved. They often touch upon "sore" spots, or reach into realms where the belligerents may object to any hindrance being placed to their freedom of action.

If any useful work is to be done, we must avoid these danger zones. To insist on entering them would only weaken the new Convention and impair the moral authority of the Red Cross, by making it the sponsor of a system which was too vulnerable.

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Two or three examples will suffice to illustrate the foregoing.

Article 2 of the Tokyo Draft <sup>1</sup> recognized to aliens resident in enemy territory at the outbreak of hostilities, the right to leave this territory, and to obtain for this purpose the necessary permits. Detention was authorized under Article 4 in two instances only: (1) persons liable to mobilization immediately or within the space of a year; (2) persons whose departure might reasonably be opposed in the interests of the security of the detaining Power.

The reasons underlying these two Articles are understandable; their weakness is, however, soon obvious. The first objection which comes to mind concerns the phrase "persons liable to mobilization": has it the same meaning today as for the authors of the 1934 Draft? The International Committee rightly pointed out in their Report (Vol. III, p. 5) to the Conference of Government Experts of April, 1947, that modern warfare has made necessary the "mobilization" of *all* the forces of a country, even of those persons who formerly were not called upon, such as women, children, the physically unfit, and so on. Thus the Tokyo formula no longer fulfils the intentions of the drafters;

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<sup>1</sup> See *Revue*, 1934, p. 649.

its efficacy is impaired. What should be done in these circumstances? Should it be replaced by a more restricted and more rigid formula? Or must we confess that, under the conditions of modern warfare, it is impossible—except in an entirely arbitrary fashion—to define *a priori* the cases where a belligerent State may be entitled to detain enemy aliens who find themselves in its territory? The second solution seems the only right one; it alone allows the humanitarian mission of the Red Cross to be reconciled with the legitimate anxiety of belligerents whose vital interests are equally involved. It is not by disregarding this anxiety that any practicable system can be built up. We should make the best of a difficult position and concentrate our efforts elsewhere. For, if belligerents have the right to detain civilians whose departure they consider undesirable, they may, in return, be required to grant suitable living conditions to the aliens they keep under their jurisdiction. The organization of these conditions, the proper definition of the moral and physical guarantees which the latter imply, together with the effective control of their application—these should be the aims of the future Convention. If the Convention is limited to these, it may succeed. If, however, it attempts to go further, it will run a serious risk of becoming a dead letter.

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Another example might be given. The means of destruction now available to belligerent nations are a direct menace to civilian populations. Neither rockets nor atomic bombs make any distinction between “combatants” and “non-combatants”. They spread death over vast areas, and their effects cannot be limited to a definite target. Nothing is safe from them.

What is the solution? The first idea which comes to mind is to forbid their use. The common anxiety demands this. It is a simple and radical remedy—on paper, at least. But it is not only on paper that these appalling weapons must be abolished. Now, can anybody seriously believe that to abolish them effectively, we have only to declare them unlawful? Is it conceivable that any Convention, however categorical and impressive, would be able to protect humanity against their ravages, solely by

virtue of mutual engagements? Past experience clearly does not justify such confidence, and the men now giving thought to the problem of atomic energy—statesmen, scientists, government officials, and business men—warn us against this attitude.

The United Nations Commission on Atomic Energy, in its report to the Security Council of December 31, 1946, declared:

“An international agreement outlawing the production, possession and use of atomic weapons is an essential part of any such system of international control of atomic energy. An international Convention to this effect, if standing alone, would fail. . . . . To be effective such an agreement must be an integral part of a treaty providing for a comprehensive system of international control and must be fortified by adequate guarantees and safeguards in the form of international supervision, inspection and control”, able to enforce the respect of the terms of the Convention.

Prohibition pure and simple will not suffice to spare humanity the horrors of the atomic bomb and other instruments of mass destruction. The only escape would be to eradicate war itself, or perhaps to set up a system of control such as that envisaged by the Commission on Atomic Energy, which comprises the creation of a powerful international institution with far-reaching authority. This at once places the problem far beyond the range of the Red Cross. It does not lie in the realm of humanitarian conventions, but in that of politics. There the Red Cross may not venture, and must avoid doing so, if it is to maintain the character which is indispensable for the accomplishment of its mission.

Thus it would be a mistake for the Red Cross to seek to limit or forbid the use of new weapons. It would be committing itself to an undertaking which it lacks the means to carry out. Moreover, the introduction of ineffective provisions would most likely endanger the efficacy of its whole system of treaty provisions. Once again—however regrettable this may seem—the wiser course is to recognize its limitations, and not to transgress them.

The prohibition of instruments of mass destruction, therefore, lies beyond the scope of the Red Cross. Perhaps, however, measures could be taken which would mitigate the effects of these weapons to a certain degree. We might, for instance,

revert to the idea of " safety " zones or localities. Even if this plan could not be carried out as originally intended, it might at least be adapted to the technical conditions—in so far as these may be foreseen—of some future war. Would it not be possible, notwithstanding the atomic bomb, to guarantee, as a preventive measure, some degree of protection to certain classes of civilians, such as children, expectant and nursing mothers, and so on ? True, this would be only a palliative, but it would cast a ray of hope in the surrounding gloom. Instead of cherishing our illusions, let us rather face the worst and use our " little grey cells " to find out what remains for us to do.

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The task at present confronting the Red Cross is both magnificent and highly delicate. In face of new perils and new disasters, it must not shirk its responsibilities. Its tutelary role will be extended over a vast domain, where opportunities for good work will be multiplied. But the dangers will be many also, and tact and realistic outlook will be needed more than ever before if it is not to fail.

The political state of the world complicates this task still further. One would like to leave this fact out of the picture, but this is unfortunately impossible.

The increasing opposition between the Soviet and Western systems is making its paralyzing effects felt on all hands. Even the Red Cross, despite its purely humanitarian aims, cannot hope to escape these effects. It is obvious that the Red Cross, if it is to be really useful, must be universal, and that all the Powers likely to be involved in a future conflict must be associated in its work. A Convention to which the great majority of the States subscribe, but whose limitations are emphasized by certain absences, thus reflecting the rivalries of the present political scene, would be a most imperfect instrument. Whatever its intrinsic value, it would in reality leave the problem unsolved.

Of all present difficulties, this is certainly not the least. No doubt it can be surmounted ; but we must give it the most serious thought, and not rely on a miracle to solve it for us.