

MEETINGS IN CORDOBA

(5-10 May 1992)

- **Commission on the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Peace**

The Commission convened on 5 May in Cordoba in the course of the statutory meetings of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Headed by Mr. Claudio Caratsch, Vice-Chairman, the ICRC delegation consisted of Mrs. Renée Guisan, member of the ICRC, and Mr. Olivier Dürr, Head of the Division for Principles and Relations with the Movement.

The Commission, chaired by Mr. Maurice Aubert, met with its new membership and in line with its new mandate as adopted by the Council of Delegates in Budapest (November 1991).¹

Invited to give their opinion on the Commission's role, tasks and working methods, the members began by exchanging views on the subjects they would like to see addressed during their work. Two complementary options emerged during the discussions: (a) to continue to carry out studies and develop guidelines in the areas defined by the Council of Delegates in its Resolution 3 adopted in Budapest² and (b) to implement a concrete programme of action.

- **Executive Council of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

The Federation's Executive Council held its 29th session on 6 and 7 May in Cordoba. One of the main items on the agenda was the appointment of the next Secretary General of the Federation, to replace Mr. Pär Stenbäck who currently holds this post and will resign as of 31 August 1992. During the session, Mr. Stenbäck reported on his four years of work as head of the Secretariat.

Amongst the other points discussed was an update of the Federation's

¹ In this connection see *IRRC*, No. 286, January-February 1992, pp. 26-28 and 45-48.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

Strategic Work Plan for the 1990s and preparations for regional conferences scheduled for 1992 in Europe, Africa and Asia.

● **Second meeting of the members of the Federation's Executive Council and of the ICRC Assembly ("Yverdon II")**

On 31 August and 1 September 1991 members of the Federation's Executive Council and of the ICRC Assembly met in Yverdon les Bains, Switzerland, to consider measures to promote confidence-building amongst components of the Movement, to consolidate their activities and to enhance the image of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the face of current challenges.³ A second meeting of this kind took place in Cordoba on 9 and 10 May after the session of the Federation's Executive Council.

The ICRC delegation, headed by Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President, consisted of Mr. Pierre Keller, Vice-President, ten members of the Committee and three from the Executive Board and the administration.

Three groups each considered one of the following themes:

- What is the specific identity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and its components in an economically, politically and socially changing environment?
- Are the Movement's current governing and operational structures adequate for it to fulfil its humanitarian mandates effectively?
- In the framework of increasingly strong competition in the humanitarian field of endeavour, how can the Movement keep or acquire adequate human and financial resources?

The reports of the three groups were discussed in plenary; they will be sent in their final form to each National Society.

Their conclusions may be summarized as follows:

- With the current political, economic and social upheavals, it is absolutely necessary to coordinate international humanitarian operations more effectively with the UN agencies while at the same time maintaining the autonomy of the Movement's components and respect for the Fundamental Principles.
- In the same context, the Movement is increasingly likely to face a "humanitarian deficit" and will have to strengthen its image in order to remain financially afloat and meet requirements. This image can be enhanced by giving the public and donors a clearer idea of how much the

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25. See the report presented to the Council of Delegates by Mr. Pierre Keller, a member of the ICRC, in this connection.

Movement achieves in its humanitarian activities and the spirit in which it works.

- Not only do the Fundamental Principles point to the different image that has to be put across, they are the driving force of the Movement and the source of its cohesion, and each of its components must promote and respect them. One of these principles, universality, enjoins the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help each other, and it is essential that greater support be given to emerging and/or weaker Societies and that collective measures be taken *vis-à-vis* Societies whose leaders cannot or will not act in conformity with the Fundamental Principles.
- The principle of voluntary service was particularly stressed, for volunteers are vital to the Movement. Hence they must be restored to their due place and given supervision and training in line with their expectations, thereby enabling them to give of their best.

This meeting confirms the particular value of such gatherings for the components of the Movement to exchange views in an open-minded and constructive spirit, which will henceforth be known as “the spirit of Yverdon”.

Lastly, the Study Group on the future of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement set up by the Council of Delegates at its session in Budapest convened for the first time on 9 May in Cordoba. Its members were invited to participate in the “Yverdon II” discussions, which provided them with much food for thought.

