

Under the programme, it was possible to deal successively with the introduction to group dynamics, Red Cross socio-medical activities, youth and the Red Cross, information, fund raising and the recruiting of members, relief training and the organization of relief in cases of disaster, the impact of socio-cultural factors on African Red Cross Societies, administration, organization, management and planning, as well as the structure and functioning of the Red Cross at national and international level, the Principles and the Geneva Conventions, and the specific activity of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

By means of active and dynamic methods of group training as well as practical work after briefings, the Training Institute sponsored by the League was successful in promoting Red Cross training and a better awareness of the background against which the humanitarian work was to develop.¹ We might add that the ICRC greatly appreciated the opportunity which the League afforded it of associating in the work of Regional Institutes.

LATIN AMERICAN RED CROSS REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

The organization of regional training institutes is undertaken by the League of Red Cross Societies to meet the needs of National Societies for training their officials. We mentioned at the time those that had been organized in Africa and Asia, while in this issue we print an account of the work accomplished at the Institute that was recently arranged at Dakar.

There had not yet been, however, any similar meetings on the American continent, and therefore the first Latin American Regional Training Institute, held from 9 to 30 September 1971, constituted an event of particular importance. It was declared open on behalf of the President of the Republic by his distinguished wife, Mrs. Maria Ester Zuno de Echeverria,¹ after which addresses

¹ *Plate.*

were given by several eminent persons: Mr. J. Barroso Chavez, Chairman of the Council of Governors of the League, Mr. S. Lopez Chavez, President of the Mexican Red Cross, and Mr. Romulo O'Farrill, President of the Regional Institute.

Participants included members of the National Societies of the following countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. Delegates of the Canadian and Spanish Red Cross Societies were also present. The international Red Cross institutions, too, were represented: the League by Miss Y. Hentsch, Acting Assistant Secretary General and Director of the Nursing Bureau, Mr. J. Gomez Ruiz, of the Regional Services Bureau, Mr. R. Bermudez, delegate for Latin America, and Mr. J. Vittani, of the League Relief Section, and the ICRC by Mr. E. Leemann, delegate.

The objectives were:

- (1) to become aware of the problems facing the Red Cross today and of its programmes in time of peace and in time of war;
- (2) to widen the understanding, and, as far as possible, to make a re-appraisal, of current Red Cross activities, with the aim of improving them and rendering them more efficacious;
- (3) to ameliorate communication techniques between the participants themselves, thanks to the experience gained in the course of the training received at the Institute. This has proved to be an excellent method because it allows each one to take an active part in the collective study of a particular problem.

The working groups that were constituted examined a number of subjects, including first aid, disaster relief, Junior Red Cross activities, relationship between the Red Cross and other organizations, and administration. Two of those subjects, namely disaster relief and youth, retained more particularly the attention of those taking part. With regard to the former, participants devised imaginary situations bringing into play the role their National Societies would have to carry out if their country were to be struck by this or that disaster. Those situations, discussed at plenary

meetings, gave rise to concrete, practical suggestions on the various ways a Society should take action in cases of disaster, whether at home in their own country or abroad in co-operation with sister Societies and the League.

In the discussions on Red Cross and Youth, participants were asked, as an exercise, to draw up directives on the organization and activities of young people within their own National Societies. They expressed the hope that the latter would carry out in practice those suggestions.

During the last week, each one of the various delegations presented an aspect of its National Society's work: thus, the Nicaraguan Red Cross delegate spoke of relief action in case of disaster (a volcanic eruption), and the Costa Rican representative presented a paper on the educational development plan and the Red Cross in Costa Rica.

The League delegates opened discussions on the Junior Red Cross, disaster relief work, nurses and the Red Cross, fund-raising and the relationship between paid staff and voluntary workers within a National Society. The delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, for his part, spoke of the ICRC's structure and mission. At a lecture, which was followed by a broad discussion, he mentioned the principles of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions and then presented to participants the school textbook "The Red Cross and My Country".

At the conclusion of this first Latin American Regional Training Institute, a questionnaire was circulated to participants. The replies submitted were a proof of the interest aroused by the theoretical and practical work carried out and of the utility of holding similar meetings which, in response to a general request, could well be renewed at national level in every Central American country.

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A few days later, also in Mexico, the first world Red Cross Youth Council was opened at Oaxtepec (Morelos State). It was inaugurated on 5 October by the Chairman of the Council of Governors of the League and by the President of the Mexican

Red Cross, and brought together the delegates of fifty National Societies at meetings that lasted until 12 October.

Every day, one or two papers were presented, followed by round table discussions during which participants gave their views on the hopes and wishes of the younger generation under the sign of the red cross, the red crescent and the red lion and sun, on all that our movement is able to offer them, and on how to take a more active share in humanitarian work.

THE EMPRESS SHÔKEN FUND

In 1963, the year of the Red Cross centenary, the Empress of Japan increased the Shôken Fund by a donation of 3,600,000 yen. The *International Review* published an article at the time in which it described the noble figure of the Empress Shôken (1850-1914), illustrated by a picture showing her on a visit to the Hiroshima military hospital, accompanied by the Emperor.¹

Following the recent visit of the Japanese sovereigns to the ICRC and the further generous contribution made by the Japanese Government to the Empress Shôken Fund, we wish to remind our readers of the meaning of this inalienable Fund.

“Shôken”, which means “lively and sparkling”, was the posthumous title bestowed on the Empress Haruko, wife of the Emperor Meiji, as a tribute to the qualities of her heart and mind. While renowned for her beauty and for the poetry she wrote, the Empress was still more noted for her goodness. She helped a great many philanthropic institutions and was also a patron of the Japanese Red Cross, founded in 1887. From the first, she and the Emperor took an interest in the development of humanitarian law. Thus Japan signed the 1864 Geneva Convention barely two years after the International Conference which had recommended its adoption.

¹ See *International Review*, October 1963.