INTERNATIONAL RELIEF UNION

Report by the President of the Executive Committee

(Item 6 of the Agenda)
SUMMARY

I. Interventions by the Union ................................. 3
II. Organisation and Coordination of Relief. ........ 9
III. Scientific studies..................................................... 13
IV. Insurance.............................................................. 18
V. Collaboration of International Red Cross Bodies . 21
Report by the President of the Executive Committee of the International Relief Union

The report which Colonel Draudt submitted on behalf of the International Relief Union to the Fifteenth International Red Cross Conference at Tokyo, in 1934, related solely to the role of the Red Cross in the operation of the Union. In accordance with the fundamental idea of Senator Ciraolo, the promoter of the Union, namely, the organisation beforehand of assistance for populations stricken by disaster, it was indeed essential to determine, at the very beginning of the Union’s activities, questions concerning the methods and details of its co-operation with the Red Cross. Close collaboration between the two great sister institutions was indeed — to the great benefit of humanity — inevitable, more even because of their common ideal than because of the provisions of the 1927 Convention.

The report submitted in 1934 consequently gave no account of the activities of the Union which had, at that time, been in operation for only a little more than a year. The present report will therefore deal with the activities of the Union since the inaugural session of its General Council, which was held at Geneva in July 1933, and will give some account of the work accomplished and the results achieved both in the field of assistance to stricken populations and in that of the studies undertaken in regard to preventive measures against disasters and the co-ordination of the efforts of relief organizations.

I.

Interventions by the Union

During the five years that have elapsed since it began its work, the International Relief Union has had to intervene on two occasions only — the first time in January 1934 on the
occasion of the earthquake in Bihar and Orissa (India) and the second time in June 1935 after the earthquake at Quetta (Baluchistan).

The infrequency of such interventions must be regarded as very gratifying, for it shows that there have been very few catastrophes on so large a scale that the problem of dealing with their results has been too great for the resources of the country stricken or the efforts of the Red Cross Societies alone.

The Bihar and Orissa earthquake was, as will be remembered, one of the most serious that has ever occurred in any part of the world. It affected a region 1,500 kilometres in length and 500 kilometres in breadth and created widespread material destruction, damaging or completely destroying thousands of dwellings. That the number of deaths was relatively small was due to the fact that the catastrophe occurred in the afternoon when the people, the majority of whom are agriculturists, were away working in the fields.

As soon as news of the disaster was received, the following telegram was sent to the India Office in London:

"Geneva, January 17th, 1934. — Please convey to Government of India the sympathy of the International Relief Union. We should be grateful for any details concerning earthquake and organisation of relief. — CIRAOLO, President."

On January 23rd, the President and the Members of the Executive Committee of the Union, after consultations with their Permanent and Central Services at Geneva and Paris, decided to draw upon the modest funds at the Union's disposal in that preparatory period to the extent of £1,000 and to offer this sum to the Indian Red Cross Society as a contribution towards expenditure on emergency relief. The offer made to the India Office in London was accepted and the money was telegraphed to the Indian Red Cross Society at Delhi, which replied in the following telegram:

His Excellency the Viceroy sends warmest thanks for your most welcome donation of 1,000 pounds. — SAMARITAN.

On the same date, January 23rd, telegrams were despatched to the twenty-seven States that were at that time Members of the Union:

International Relief Union has advanced thousand pounds Indian Redcross for earthquake relief. On receipt telegram from Delhi International Redcross has requested . . . Redcrosses send
In response to this appeal, several Governments informed the Union of the arrangements made, in conjunction with the national Red Cross Societies, with a view to participation in the relief work undertaken on behalf of the victims of the earthquake in India.

The Greek Government stated that, in pursuance of an agreement reached with the Greek Red Cross Society, the latter was forwarding the sum of 40,000 drachmas. The Foreign Office assured the Union that the British Red Cross Society would receive from His Majesty’s Government every encouragement in whatever action it might undertake for helping in the relief work conducted by the Indian Red Cross Society. The Government of Ecuador announced that it proposed to give the Ecuador Red Cross Society its support with a view to sending a contribution for relief work. The Government of the Swiss Confederation added the sum of 3,000 Swiss francs to the 2,000 francs remitted by the Swiss Red Cross Society. The Government of Finland placed 5,000 Finnish marks at the disposal of the Finnish Red Cross Society as a contribution to the Indian relief fund. Finally, the German Red Cross Society stated that, in addition to its donation of 1,000 marks to the Indian Red Cross Society, it was, in its capacity of representative of the German Government in the International Relief Union, sending 500 marks as the German participation in the advance of £1,000 made by the Union.

The Union had reason to congratulate itself on the success of its appeal, for the latter had not only made possible the collection of considerable sums, but had also served as the occasion for concerted action between Governments and national Societies. Such action may rightly be regarded as a step towards giving effect to one of the measures which the Union deemed desirable, namely, the determination by the Governments of the part to be played by the Red Cross Societies in the event of disasters, and the co-ordination of the efforts of the Societies with those of the public services.

On May 31st, 1935, India suffered a further disaster. This time, the Baluchistan region was affected. An earth-
quake totally destroyed the town of Quetta and the townships of Tchaman, Kalat and Mustang, causing nearly 40,000 deaths and doing damage to the estimated extent of £2,200,000.

As soon as news of the catastrophe was received, Senator Ciraoolo, President of the Executive Committee, asked the Paris branch of the Permanent and Central Services to approach the Government of India with regard to the expediency of making an appeal. At the same time, Mr. Algernon Maudslay, a Member of the Executive Committee, approached the India Office in London on the same subject.

On June 8th, the India Office stated that the Government of India would be glad if the International Relief Union could make an appeal on behalf of the victims of the disaster, requesting only that this appeal should not be launched in the British Empire in order to avoid overlapping with the appeals made by the Viceroy in India and by the Lord Mayor of London in Great Britain. In compliance with this request, the President of the Union addressed the following telegram to the States Members of the Union:

View tragic consequences Baluchistan earthquake International Relief Union agreement with Government India requests participation States Members in relief victims in accordance Convention July twelfth 1927. Please forward funds Intersecours Geneva. Letter follows. — Ciraoolo, President Executive Committee International Relief Union.

The letter to which this telegram alluded gave details as to the extent of the catastrophe and the damage caused. It concluded as follows:

For the first time since its foundation, the International Relief Union (which today comprises 29 member States, including India) finds itself called upon to appeal to its members on behalf of the victims of a catastrophe of such dimensions as to exceed the resources of the stricken country. The Executive Committee of the Union is confident that the spirit of international solidarity which led to the creation of the Union will not be found lacking now that the time has come to proceed from theory to practice.

(Signed) Giovanni Ciraoolo,
President of the Executive Committee of the International Relief Union

As a result of this appeal, the International Relief Union was able, on August 5th, 14th and 22nd, to transmit by
telegraph to the Government of India the sum of £2,522, contributed by the following seven Governments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>10,000 leva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>£E200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1,500 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roumania</td>
<td>20,000 lei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2,000 Swiss frs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That the International Relief Union has intervened on only two occasions since the entry into force of the Convention of July 12th, 1927, is, as has been stated above, due to the fact that, apart from the two cases mentioned, no disasters of such exceptional gravity have occurred as to exceed the power or resources of the country stricken. When in any country which is a Member of the Union a disaster has taken place, the extent of which would seem to necessitate the assistance of other States Members, the Executive Committee has never failed to obtain, through its Permanent and Central Services, information as to the relief work that is contemplated and, when it has thought it expedient to do so, has offered its services to the Government concerned. The Executive Committee has, moreover, not been indifferent to catastrophes that have fallen upon States that are not Members. When, early in 1937, more than a million persons in the United States were affected by the terrible floods of the Mississippi and the Ohio, the President of the Executive Committee, Senator Cirioalo, telegraphed to Mr. Swift, the Vice-President of the American Red Cross Society, asking to what extent the International Relief Union might contribute to the relief work in favour of the victims of the floods. In his reply, Mr. Swift expressed his thanks for the offer of assistance stated and that the generosity with which the American people had responded to the appeal on behalf of the victims made any assistance from outside unnecessary.

Subsequently, the American Red Cross Society was good enough to send the Union very full documentary information concerning the really exceptional relief operations made necessary by the disaster. The Union’s Permanent and
Central Services made use of this material in a study that was published in the International Red Cross Review.1

The possibility of action in the territory of another non-member State was considered in connection with the war in Spain. It was at the request of one of the Members of the Union — Great Britain — that the Executive Committee met in extraordinary session on December 15th, 16th and 17th, 1936, for the purpose of deciding whether and, if so to what extent, the International Relief Union could intervene in favour of the victims of the civil war in Spain. After hearing a report by Mr. Algernon Maudslay on the economic situation in Spain and a report by M. André Mater, Legal Adviser to the Union, on the possibilities of the intervention then under consideration, in the light of the provisions of the Convention and of the Statute of the Union, the Executive Committee reached the conclusion that the Union was authorized to undertake work for the relief of a people whose normal conditions of existence had been modified as the result of a political upheaval. A reply in this sense was then transmitted to the British Government and the Executive Committee further stated that it would be prepared to devote a considerable part of its resources to urgent relief work as soon as it was able to secure assurances of such official and other collaboration as might be offered to it for the work proposed. Later, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs replied that, having regard to a statement made by the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Council of the League of Nations to the effect that the Spanish Government intended addressing themselves solely to the League of Nations, for the purpose of dealing with problems of health and relief, the British Government did not feel that the moment was opportune for an approach to the Spanish authorities on the lines laid down in the resolutions adopted by the Executive Committee of the International Relief Union.

The decision made in these circumstances by the Executive Committee showed that the Union was at all times prepared to consider any question relating to the relief of a population,

---

and that it would not hesitate, if necessary, for the purpose of expediting urgent relief work, to draw upon its own capital although, in normal circumstances, it refuses to touch this fund, although the income at its disposal is notoriously inadequate to cover its administrative expenses and the cost of its scientific studies. As regards the competence of the Union in respect of the relief of populations who are suffering as the result of social upheavals, this question must not be considered as settled by the decision of the Executive Committee. The General Council, which is the highest authority of the Union, has decided to include the consideration of this question in the agenda of its next session.

The interventions of the International Relief Union have hitherto been preceded on each occasion by an offer of service made by the Executive Committee of the Union to the Government of the country. During the session of the Third General Council of the Union, which was held at Geneva in December 1937, the delegate of the Greek Government, His Excellency M. S. Polychroniadès, pointed out the desirability of making a rule of this custom. This would obviate the possibility in certain cases of the Government of a stricken country hesitating, for reasons of prestige or discretion in regard to other States, to solicit assistance that was necessary if, for any reason, the offer of service had not been made. The General Council considered this question worthy of examination and decided that it should be studied with a view to its discussion at its next meeting. A report on this subject has already been drawn up and was approved in its main lines by the Executive Committee at its last session. It will be submitted for the consideration of the next General Council.

II.

Organisation and Coordination of Relief

When, in 1921, Senator Giovanni Ciraolo submitted to the Tenth International Red Cross Conference his plan for the foundation, by means of an international Convention, of an association of States for the purpose of preparing in advance and co-ordinating the emergency relief of populations stricken
by disaster, he laid particular emphasis on the fundamental part that would have to be played in the organisation of relief by the great specialist institutions and, in the very first place, by the Red Cross.

In 1927, the Convention by which the International Relief Union was created confirmed the views of the promoter of the Union, for it provided in Article 5 that: “In the establishment and working of the International Relief Union, the free co-operation is envisaged of national Red Cross Societies, in conformity with Article 25 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and of institutions or organisations constituting de jure or de facto unions of such societies”.

The role of the Red Cross organisation in the working of the Union was, moreover, as stated above, the subject of the report submitted by Colonel Draudt to the Tokyo Conference in 1934.

It is fitting at this point to pay a tribute to the admirable work which the Red Cross has done — without even waiting for the Convention which was to confer upon it an official mission in conjunction with the Union — to make possible the practical application of the great ideal of international solidarity in the face of natural disasters. The 1921 Conference, by welcoming Senator Ciraolo’s proposals and by adopting, in conformity therewith, a recommendation urging the Governments Parties to the Geneva Convention to sign the new Convention, had indicated the course which the international and national organisations of the Red Cross were to follow. In the same year, 1921, the International Red Cross Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies, in an agreement concluded with the object of ensuring their definite and constant collaboration, defined their respective spheres of action in the event of “disasters and exceptional distress in time of peace”. In 1924 the General Council of the League of Red Cross Societies instructed its secretariat “to assist, by all the means at its disposal, in the diffusion of the ideas embodied in Senator Ciraolo’s plan” and recommended national Societies to “undertake the task and assume the international duty proposed for them in the Ciraolo plan” and “to adopt, for this purpose, such amendments in their statutes as would enable them to comply with the requirements of the League of Nations and of the
Governments concerned." Further, a resolution of the General Council approved the creation, within the Secretariat of the League, of a Relief Section, whose duty it should be to collect general data relating to international relief, to place such information at the disposal of the national Societies and to facilitate the efforts of those Societies by endeavouring to co-ordinate their action. This Section was soon formed and, ever since August 1924, the League's Information Circular has furnished the national Societies with information as to the programme of action and of study of the new organ placed at their disposal. The first publication of the Relief Section was a study entitled *Secours en cas de calamité. La Croix-Rouge et son rôle national* (Relief in the event of disaster. The Red Cross and its national role). The introduction to this study quite properly emphasized the fact that Senator Ciraolo's plan, — "the basis on which the world organisation of efforts to combat the effects of disasters is built up ", — created for the Red Cross, through the important role which it gave to it in the mobilisation of efforts for international relief, responsibilities the first of which seemed to be that of preparing itself, with the greatest possible care, for the part that it was called upon to play in the sphere of action within the national territory.

Finally, in January 1937, the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Red Cross Committee jointly organized, in accordance with a resolution of the Fifteenth International Red Cross Conference, a Conference of Experts for the purpose of pursuing the study of the organization of relief services and of the role of the nurse and the voluntary auxiliary in time of war and of public disaster. It would be superfluous to mention here the remarkable studies submitted on that occasion, since they have been published in a volume which constitutes No. 1 of the Documents of the present Conference.

The efforts made by the national Societies themselves cannot be described in a few lines, and it is not possible to give a list here of all the Societies which, during recent years, have mentioned in their statutes, as one of their fundamental objects, the rendering of assistance to populations stricken by disaster. At the ninth session of the Executive Committee of the International Relief Union, in March 1937,
M. B. de Rouge, Secretary General of the League of Red Cross Societies, was able to announce that of 62 Red Cross Societies in the League, 33 were so organized as to be able to intervene in the event of disaster. M. de Rouge added that some ten Societies had, in addition, established systematic collaboration with their Governments on more or less definite lines. These are the American, Belgian, Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, German, Indian, Italian, Yugoslav and other Red Cross Societies.

This question of the agreement between Governments and Red Cross Societies is one of those about which the International Relief Union is most concerned. Experience has, in fact, shown that relief in the event of disaster is much more effective when there exist beforehand provisions under which a definite task is assigned to the organs qualified to intervene. The report by the Union to the Fifteenth International Red Cross Conference recommended that national Societies of countries Members of the Union should endeavour to conclude with the Government arrangements defining the role of the Red Cross in the event of disaster.

The Executive Committee of the Union, at its ninth session, after hearing the report by M. de Rouge to which reference has been made above, reached the conclusion that it was necessary to urge Governments and Red Cross Societies to enter into agreements of this kind. The same conclusion was reached by the Third General Council of the Union, which met in December 1937 and which, in its Resolution No. IV drew the attention of public authorities on the one hand and of national Societies on the other hand to the advantage that would be gained by defining their respective roles in time of disaster, with a view to ensuring the rapidity and efficacity of the measures to be taken. The resolution further recommended that the experts of the Union should lend their assistance in the conclusion of such agreements.

It is impossible to speak of the organisation of efforts to combat the effects of disasters without mentioning the rapprochement between the great relief organisations for which the General Councils of the Union have furnished the occasion. The Rules of Procedure of the General Council provide that the Executive Committee may invite, in a consultative capacity "... international relief associations
or other qualified organisations or institutions whose representation the Executive Committee considers likely to be of value for the deliberations of the General Council . . ."

At the last General Council of the Union there were fourteen institutions thus represented. The delegates of several of them took an active part in the Council's deliberations or submitted interesting reports on the work of their respective institutions in the field of relief.

III.

Scientific Studies

The report submitted by the Executive Committee of the International Relief Union to the Third Session of the General Council (December 1937) contained the following passage:

The friends of the International Relief Union are sometimes inclined to assume that practically its sole function is to furnish (Article 2, paragraph 1 of the Convention) or to coordinate (Article 2, paragraph 2) relief in exceptional disasters, to consider everything else as accessory or as a mere supplement to its action and to wonder what useful purpose it can serve in the interval between disasters or pending the occurrence of a catastrophe. The Committee is of opinion that Article 2 of the Convention establishes no order of preference as between the two activities it envisages for the International Relief Union. It lays upon it the duty to encourage the study of preventive measures. This provision suffices to authorize or even to render incumbent upon the Union a scientific activity as far-reaching as circumstances permit.

It would, indeed, be quite incorrect to maintain that the functions of the Union do not comprise that of contributing towards building up what might be termed the "general science of disasters". That it should do so is in conformity with the view of the promoter of the Union, whose efforts have, since the inception of his idea, been directed towards securing the collaboration of the scientific world.

It has, in fact, been made clear that, since the same kinds of disaster have always affected the same regions of the globe, scientific research and study should be directed towards determining, in respect of each phenomenon, its geographical zones, the intervals at which it recurs and the ravages it causes, with a view to supplying the autho-
rities and relief organisations with accurate data such as would enable them to prepare, sufficiently in advance, security measures appropriate to each region and proportionate to the risks that can be foreseen.

It will be sufficient if a brief reference is made here to the chief efforts made since 1921 with the object of ensuring the co-operation of scientists and co-ordinating their work for the purpose of the aims in view.

Following upon an initial memorandum inserted in the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge* (May 1923), under the title: *A propos du Projet Ciraolo: une carte mondiale de distribution géographique des calamités* (*In connection with the Ciraolo Plan: a world chart of the geographical distribution of disasters*), a first invitation was issued to the scientists of the whole world for the purpose of inviting them to collaborate in the preparation of an atlas which would show, in a series of maps, the geographical distribution of great natural disasters. It was originally with a view to collecting the necessary data for the preparation of these maps that there was founded, in 1924, under the auspices of the International Red Cross Committee and with the co-operation of the Geneva Geographical Society, a periodical entitled *Matériaux pour l'étude des calamités* (*Material for the study of Disasters*) which, from the time of its foundation up to December 31st last, has issued forty parts, representing some 4,000 printed pages.

The International Relief Union which, since 1933, has borne the cost of the printing and editing of this publication, has, as from the beginning of this year, adopted it as its organ under the more general title *Revue pour l'étude des calamités, Bulletin de l'Union internationale de secours* (*Review for the study of disasters. Bulletin of the International Relief Union*).

Once the *Matériaux* had been founded and the future existence of this publication assured, it became necessary to find for it qualified collaborators. This need gave rise, from 1924 onwards, to the "National Commissions for the Study of Disasters" founded in several countries. There are now about a dozen of these Commissions, and they have secured for the *Matériaux*, and will continue to secure for the new Review, the essential scientific collaboration.
Owing to the constant and enlightened collaboration of the members of these various commissions, the editors of the *Matériaux* have been able to insert, together with a wealth of data, a number of certain studies of real value, with the result that the Review is now known and appreciated in scientific circles.

The Commissions have themselves been able to publish important works. Special mention may be made in this connection of the remarkable series published by the Italian Committee.

The work of the Scientific Committees has, however, not been confined to the publication of memoranda. Their sessions have led to various resolutions being adopted and various recommendations made, of which some account will be found in the minutes of such meetings published in the *Matériaux*.

It was with the object of co-ordinating the work of these Committees and, if possible, of adding to their number, that, on the proposal of the International Relief Union, there was convened in Paris, in 1937, the first "International Conference for Protection against Natural Disasters".

Placed under the high patronage of the French Government and of the International Relief Union, this Conference met from September 13th to 17th last.

Senator Giovanni Ciraolo, President of the Executive Committee of the Union, was elected Honorary President and the chair was taken by Professor Edmond Rothé, Director of the Institute of Geophysics at Strasbourg, Chairman of the French Committee.

This Conference, which was admirably organized in every detail, thanks especially to the Secretary General of the French Committee, Professor Paul Vayssière, brought together not only distinguished scientists but also representatives of many institutions, both national and international, and of several Governments, which thus gave proof of their interest in the work undertaken by the International Relief Union.

The Conference placed special emphasis on the importance of the work done by the Union with a view to promoting
studies relating to the “Science of disasters” and, in the following terms, encouraged it to pursue its valuable efforts:

The first Conference for Protection against Natural Disasters, warmly approving the efforts made by the governing organs of the International Relief Union with the object of encouraging and promoting in all countries scientific and technical studies relating to the geography of natural disasters and to the problems of protection against such phenomena, recommends:

“that the International Relief Union should continue its efforts, at the same time assuring it of the gratitude it has earned for the impulse that has been given, thanks to its action, to scientific research calculated to render increasingly effective the efforts of mankind to defend itself against natural disasters.”

Several of the recommendations adopted at this first International Conference for Protection against Natural Disasters were the subject of careful consideration by the last General Council of the International Relief Union which, for its part, adopted at its last session (Geneva, December 1937) the two resolutions hereunder.

II. Organisation of Scientific Studies.
(Natural disasters).

The General Council approves of the action taken by the Executive Committee with the object of continuing to encourage and promote scientific and technical studies relating to the geography of natural disasters and the problems of protection against such calamities,

Notes with much satisfaction that it is thanks to the impulse given to this branch of research by the International Relief Union that it was possible to arrange for a first International Conference for Protection against Natural Disasters,

Expresses its gratitude to the French Committee for the Study of Disasters which, with the support of the French Government, was good enough to undertake the organization of this Conference,

Invites the Executive Committee to pursue its work in accordance with the programme set forth in the report on the organisation of scientific studies,

Recommends the said Committee to take all measures calculated to strengthen still further the ties of collaboration between the governing organs of the International Relief Union and centres of scientific and technical study.

III. Scientific Programme (in general).

The General Council, having regard to Paragraph 6 of the report by the Executive Committee embodying suggestions to be submitted for the consideration of the Council,

Recognizes that it would be desirable to collect, utilising for the purpose the resources that may be offered in this connection by sociology, documentary material relating to disasters in general and
their effects on populations, in a form available for use in the event of intervention.

Observes that the research in question is distinct from the scientific studies relating to natural disasters,

Notes that the general character of this research does not prejudge any decision that may in future be taken as to the expediency of extending, to a greater or less degree, interventions by the International Relief Union in certain kinds of disaster,

And consequently approves in principle the studies referred to in the above-mentioned paragraph.

The Office for Scientific Co-operation which has, for some months past, been attached to the Permanent and Central Service of the Union at Geneva will, to the extent made possible by the means placed at its disposal, take action in pursuance of these various recommendations and resolutions. Thus, for instance, arrangements have already been made and measures will be taken in order:

(a) to continue the publication of the Revue pour l'étude des calamités, Bulletin de l'Union internationale de Secours which is the successor to the Matériaux;

(b) to extend the system of National Committees for the Study of Disasters;

(c) to constitute a Permanent International Committee for Protection against Natural Disasters;

(d) to ensure the continuation and organization of international Conferences, similar to that which met in Paris from September 13th to 17th, 1937;

(e) to bring about increasingly close collaboration between the governing organs of the Union and the scientific world;

(f) to continue the studies relating to the extension of the principle of insurance to damage caused by the forces of nature;

(g) to collect, with regard to disasters in general and their effects on populations, documentary material in a form available for use in the event of intervention.

By doing this, the Union's Office for Scientific Co-operation will be working according to the real spirit of the Convention, which contemplates scientific studies amongst the most important means for the organisation of relief.
IV.

Insurance

In his original plan for the creation of an organization whose duty it should be to ensure relief for stricken populations, Senator CIRAOLÒ had proposed that the funds necessary for the accomplishment of this work should be collected "by means of an insurance against public disasters", each State being called upon to pay for this insurance in proportion to the number of its inhabitants. Senator CIRAOLÒ added that "in view of the difficulty experienced in balancing national budgets and of the fact that thrift in any form and for any purpose is a virtue of individuals much more than of social groups, States might, in their turn, take steps to ensure that this expenditure is borne by all their nationals without distinction". Senator CIRAOLÒ has explained this idea in the successive stages of development of his original proposal and, more particularly, in the book which he published on his Plan and the Convention for the International Relief Union¹.

It may be recalled that, after examination by the Tenth International Red Cross Conference, these proposals were submitted in 1922 to the League of Nations, which decided to have studies and enquiries carried out with a view to preparing the statute of an international association for the relief and assistance of populations stricken by disaster. The following year, the Secretary General of the League of Nations submitted to the Council a memorandum on the Ciraolo plan, the fundamental idea of which was described as follows:

The idea which forms the basis of Senator Ciraolo's proposal is that of inter-governmental co-operation on insurance principles. It envisages, in fact, the contribution by Governments of funds in advance to be utilized internationally through the various Red Cross Societies for the bringing of organized and adequate relief immediately upon the occurrence of any large scale disaster within the territory of one of the participating Governments.

The analogy between Senator CIRAOLÒ's plan and the institution of insurance against accidents necessarily led the Committee which the League of Nations set up for the purpose of studying the means by which effect could be given to that

¹ L’Unione internazionale di Soccorso, dal Progetto italiano alla Convenzione di Ginevra, 12 Luglio 1927, pp. 64 et seq.
plan, to consider the possibility of applying certain principles of insurance to the working of the international organ contemplated. An expert in questions relating to insurance was accordingly appointed to take part in the preparatory work for the diplomatic Conference of July 1927, by which the International Relief Union was to be brought into existence.

The diplomatic Conference itself, realizing the importance of the problem, and also its complexity, did not think that it was its duty to compel the Union to find a solution for it before this new question had been carefully studied in all its details and the Union had been able to consider the ways by which its objects could best be achieved. The Conference therefore did not explicitly mention insurance amongst the objects of the Union, but it made it the duty of the Union, as stated in Article 2 of the Convention, "to encourage the study of preventive measures against disasters". The Executive Committee of the Union has taken the view that this should be taken to mean all studies possible and therefore includes studies relating to the problem of insurance.¹

Amongst the first studies on this question, mention should be made of those which have appeared in *Matériaux pour l'étude des calamités*. From 1925 to 1937, this review has published nearly a dozen articles and reports concerning insurance against losses generally considered hitherto as uninsurable, namely, damage caused by the forces of nature.²

R. Montandon: "Le problème de l'assurance contre les dommages causés par les forces de la nature". *op. cit.*, No. 16.
P. de Greyerz: "Le fonds suisse de secours en cas de dommages non assurables". *op. cit.*, No. 19.
"L'Assurance et les secours en cas de calamités". *op. cit.*, No. 26.
Ugo Vanni: "Enquête statistique sur les mouvements sismiques. La théorie mathématique de l'assurance contre les dommages causés par les tremblements de terre". *op. cit.*, No. 37.
"La compensation pour les dommages non assurables en Suisse". *op. cit.*, No. 37.
"L'assurance des dommages causés par les forces de la nature". *op. cit.*, No. 38.
G. Ciriaolo: "L'Assicurazione contre le grandi calamità". *op. cit.*, No. 39.
Curt Rommel: "Bases de l'assurance contre les dommages causés par les éléments naturels". *op. cit.*, No. 40.
The Executive Committee of the International Relief Union felt, however, that it was not enough merely to offer the hospitality of a periodical to the authors of studies on the possibility of applying insurance to natural disasters. The question was so rich in possibilities that the Union was bound to consider it its duty to pursue itself the study of a form of assistance which might perhaps confer on populations a security hitherto unknown in the face of certain natural disasters.

The importance of the question was, moreover, demonstrated by the interest it had aroused in certain countries, more particularly Norway and Switzerland, where the principle of insurance against disasters had long been studied, although it had not been possible to give full effect to it. In those two countries, in the absence of a system of insurance, a relief fund has been constituted for the purpose of rendering assistance to the victims of certain catastrophes due to natural causes. Though, on the national plane, difficulties have been encountered in the matter of insurance against disasters, there is no proof that it could not be carried out on the international plane through an association of States such as the International Relief Union.

It was to investigate this question that the Executive Committee had recourse in 1937 to the services of an expert in this field, M. Hermann Lanz-Stauffer, Director of the Inter-Cantonal Reassurance Union, Berne. M. Lanz-Stauffer was good enough to accede to the request of the Executive Committee and submitted to the Third General Council of the Union (Dec. 1937) a report which aroused very keen interest amongst the delegates of the twenty-two Governments represented. Following on this report, the General Council instructed the Executive Committee to pursue the studies undertaken and, in particular, to consult insurance experts on the question. This programme is at present well on the way towards being carried out. At its last meeting, the Executive Committee, after considering a report submitted by one of its members, M. Camille Gorgé, decided to fix October 19th, 1938, as the date of the Study Conference contemplated by the General Council, and to invite thereto six experts to whom the Union will submit beforehand, in addition to the data it has already collected on the question.
of insurance, two supplementary reports of which M. Lanz-Stauffer has been good enough to undertake the preparation. The conclusions reached by this meeting of authorities in the insurance world will doubtless enable the Union to lay down a programme of practical work for the continuation of the study of the proposal and, if possible, for putting it ultimately into effect.

V.

Collaboration of International Red Cross Bodies.

The report by the International Relief Union to the Fifteenth International Red Cross Conference contained the text of the agreement concluded on July 14th, 1933, between the International Red Cross bodies and the Executive Committee of the Union. Under this agreement, the International Red Cross Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies undertook to provide the permanent and central services (or secretariat) of the Union at their cost, whilst the Executive Committee, for its part, undertook, in accordance with Article 16 of the Statute of the International Relief Union, to "employ its own administrative resources to supplement these services when necessary, either temporarily at times of emergency or when the permanent staff desired by the Executive Committee exceeds the financial capacity of the International Red Cross bodies".¹

When the Fifteenth Conference met, the Permanent and Central Services thus set up had been in operation for a year, and their work had already included the despatch or receipt of 2,000 letters, the drafting, printing and distributing of six publications, journeys across Europe and even to the Far East and the maintenance of liaison with the national Red Cross Societies, whose free co-operation is provided for in Article 5 of the Convention. In his message to the Fifteenth Conference, moreover, Senator Cirraolo, President of the Executive Committee, took pleasure in recognizing "the inestimable value of this early collaboration".

During the following years, the International Red Cross institutions continued to discharge the duty they had agreed

¹ See Article 1 of the Agreement.
to assume towards the Union, and placed at the disposal of the Executive Committee the staff, material and equipment of the secretariats of the Committee and of the League. The burden thus assumed by them became, however, increasingly heavy as the Union developed and extended its field of action. Accordingly, when the Union found its financial position somewhat improved in 1936, it was determined that the international Red Cross institutions should at once benefit by the new resources it derived from the increased revenue produced by its capital. The grant made by the International Relief Union towards the Permanent and Central Services, which amounted to 2,500 Swiss francs in 1936, was consequently increased, for the year 1937, to 15,500 Swiss francs, to permit of the engagement of a legal adviser in Paris and of a secretary at Geneva, the opening of special credits for travelling, special work, etc. At the same time as it reached these decisions regarding the budget, the Executive Committee of the Union conferred on its President full powers to study, in conjunction with the organizations providing the Permanent and Central Services, any improvements that might be desirable in the working of the International Relief Union. This decision met with the full approval of the Board of Governors of the League which, in a resolution adopted in November 1936, "authorises its representatives with the Union to comply with the view of the Executive Committee of the Union, aiming at gradually providing the Union with a supplementary service at its own expense".

The question of the strengthening of the Permanent and Central Services has continued to receive the full attention of the President of the Executive Committee. Many important tasks remain to be accomplished, and it is essential that the International Relief Union should have at its disposal adequate means for giving its work the full extension desirable. A tribute of gratitude must be paid for the invaluable co-operation it has hitherto received from the Red Cross organisations. This co-operation is, however, limited in the sense that the Union cannot reasonably ask these Organisations, whose means also are limited, to meet all the administrative requirements of the International Relief Union. It is only right that the latter should, from its own resources, contribute to the fullest possible extent towards
the development of the instruments for work which have been so generously placed at its disposal by the organs of the International Red Cross. This is the sense in which conversations have recently taken place between the President of the Executive Committee and the representatives of the International Committee and of the League, with regard to the question of the strengthening of the administrative services of the Union. Following on these conversations, which furnished proof, once more, of the spirit of friendly comprehension by which the Red Cross organisations are animated towards the International Relief Union, the Executive Committee at its last session, held in Paris in April, adopted the following resolution:

The Executive Committee,

Having heard the statement by its President on the need for supplementing the work of the Permanent and Central Services in complete conformity with the Agreement concluded on July 14th, 1933, between the International Relief Union, the International Red Cross Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies,

Recognizing that it would be difficult for the International Relief Union to discharge the duties incumbent upon it with the administrative means at present available and that, on the other hand, it could scarcely ask the Red Cross organisations to place further collaborators at its disposal,

Being convinced that, in these circumstances, the best solution consists in the addition to the Permanent and Central Services, at the cost of the Union, of a qualified person, the choice of whom shall be determined, as shall also the duties to be discharged by such person, in agreement with the International Red Cross bodies,

Taking note, moreover, of its President's desire that, during his absences from Geneva, he should be assisted, as he is entitled to be, in the discharge of the current work of the International Relief Union, by one of the members of the Executive Committee,

Authorizes him to make all the necessary arrangements with the Red Cross organizations and also to incur any expenditure that may be expedient for the purpose of improving the administrative services of the International Relief Union, in the sense indicated above,

And would be gratified if one of the members of the Executive Committee was good enough to respond to the appeal made by the President and assist him in the discharge of his duties.