

Widening of Geneva Conventions On Rebels and Guerrillas Urged

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GENEVA, May 12 — Red Cross experts have recommended that an international conference of government experts convening here May 24 consider broadening the guarantees of the Geneva conventions to include giving rebels in a civil war the status of belligerents.

A study made public today by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is sponsoring the conference of experts, said that under present conditions no legal government ever concedes that rebels have belligerent rights. Such rights are intended to afford combatants the protection and responsibilities of the international rules of war.

Another Red Cross study suggested that the Geneva conventions, signed in 1949 for the protection of prisoners, the sick, the wounded and noncom-

batants, be broadened to provide more protection for captured members of guerrilla forces.

Thirty-five Governments, including those of the United States and the Soviet Union, have accepted invitations to the conference of experts. Participants will act as individuals, but Jean Pictet, vice president of the International Committee, said they would constitute a "trial balloon." Their response, he said, will determine whether it is worthwhile to hold a full-dress conference next year of government representatives, with powers to decide on proposed changes in the conventions.

3 Reject Invitations

The governments of Communist China, Pakistan and Cuba are the only ones that rejected the invitations to the conference of experts. An International Committee spokesman said Pakistan had replied that she did not have experts available. While Peking and Havana had given no reason for refusing, Nationalist China, North Vietnam and South Vietnam were not invited.

Mr. Pictet told newsmen today that it was essential to fill the gaps in the Geneva conventions. Red Cross officials said the conventions were primarily intended to provide more humane conditions in international wars and should be broadened to make better provision for the civil wars and guerrilla fighting that have become frequent in recent years.

Article 13, which is the same in all four Geneva conventions, calls for only the most limited protection—mainly the prohibition of torture and execution without trial—to persons taken prisoner or wounded during civil wars or as members of guerrilla organizations.

They also make no provision for the inspections by the Red Cross to determine whether the guarantees for prisoners of war taken in international conflicts are being carried out.