

*Disaster research is to ask scientific questions about Acts of God.* After giving my lecture in 1972 at the 'Exercise Helping Hand' and pleading for the setting up of an International Rescue Organisation, the IRO, I pursued the subject in a number of articles and came to the conclusion that there was great ignorance about disaster prevention, about rescue during disasters and the treatment of disaster victims afterwards; particularly psychological aid. Disaster research was a novel subject, never considered as a possible academic or industrial research subject and in urgent need of, at least, preliminary discussion.

When I was invited to give another overview lecture at a seminar on "Human Behaviour during Disasters" at the Australian Counter-Disaster College at Mount Macedon, Victoria, Australia, on 26 April 1984, I chose as my subject "Disaster Research". I published an Editorial about it in my own Journal, *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* Volume 9, page 193, six months later.

The unique Counter-Disaster College with Brigadier Ian Gilmore Director at the time; who issued my invitation to speak; was established by the Commonwealth of Australia following the Darwin Cyclone disaster of 1974. [See Title 315] Australia; spared earthquakes and volcanoes, often suffers from disastrous bush fires and floods. Regular courses of lectures and seminars on special subjects have trained many Australians in disaster management.

In my lecture I analysed the interdisciplinary nature of any future disaster research and suggested that lack of any academic, industrial or other infrastructural basis for such research explained its absence. I postulated that insurance companies might fund it, as they would have to pay lower indemnities to those who applied the results of appropriate research to their properties. Increasing numbers of disasters, due to the population explosion and other demographic factors, as well as the more frequent location of industry in disaster-prone areas like the North Sea, the Persian and Mexican Golfs, all meant higher loss payments for the insurance industry in the future.

I listed over 20 possible disaster research projects. These examples ranged from prediction and forecasting by analysis of historical and past disasters, the development of a simple scale of disasters, the training and education of people living in disaster areas, triage and other medical aspects, mathematical and other model investigations; to the evaluation of satellite images before, during and after disasters. Finally I paid a tribute to Noah as the first successful research and rescue coordinator, as the lessons of the Ark — analysis, equipment and training — are as valid today as they were in Noah's time.

Only in 1999, a book on the German Railway disaster at Eschede listed lessons learnt during the large rescue. I reviewed it in *ISR* Vol. 24/3, p. 171, 1999