

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

CENTENARY OF THE RED CROSS

The Significance of the Commemorative Day

The Commemorative Day which was celebrated on September 1, 1963, may be recalled as an important reminder of the Centenary of the Red Cross. In many countries various events took place, but it was in Geneva that the day was one of particularly striking celebration.

Starting in the morning at 9.15, a brief ceremony was held in the Jardin des Bastions in front of the Palais Eynard, in the course of which the Resolutions adopted at the International Conference of 1863 were read out, for they, as it were, constitute the deed of foundation of the Red Cross.¹ The federal, cantonal and municipal authorities were represented by outstanding personalities and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Secretary General of the League of Red Cross Societies also attended, as well as the heads of delegations sent by National Societies. A junior member of the Geneva Section of the Swiss Red Cross handed to Mr. Ambrosius von Albertini, the President of the Swiss Red Cross and of the Commemorative Day Celebrations, the Centenary flag, symbolic of solidarity among men.

Then, the participants at the opening ceremony went to the Grand-Théâtre where they were met by youths from all nations dressed in their national costumes and bearing the flags of their countries and of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the Red

¹ *Plate.*

Lion and Sun.¹ Here it was that the official ceremony took place (transmitted by television to two other halls). It was opened at 10.30 a.m. by an address of welcome from Mr. A. von Albertini. In addition, Mr. W. Spühler, President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. C. Duchemin, President of the Geneva State Council, Mr. L. Boissier, President of the ICRC, Mr. J. A. MacAulay, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the League, Mr. C. J. Burckhardt, member and former President of the International Committee, also delivered speeches, of which we publish extracts below.²

Mr. Willy Spühler, President of the Swiss Confederation :

...The Swiss people, in whose heart the Red Cross has held a place since its very foundation, is profoundly grateful to the world community of this institution. As a modest testimony of this gratitude, the Federal Council has proposed to the Swiss Federal Assembly to make available to the International Committee of the Red Cross on the occasion of its Centenary, a building to house its Central Tracing Agency and also the future Henry Dunant institute.

With all due modesty, we declare our belief that the idea and the work of the Red Cross have received from the Swiss people favourable political and spiritual reactions which have been wrought in the course of decades and centuries under the influence of their institutions and traditions. On this subject it is quite natural to call first of all to mind our neutrality and our independence. The existence and the activity, both of Switzerland and of the Red Cross, depend on the recognition and observance of these principles. Only the independent can be neutral, obeying neither orders nor suggestions from without and being bound by no exterior influence. And in the same manner as the equality of individuals and of cantons is necessary for the existence of the Swiss State, it is only the absolute equality of States—old or new, powerful or weak—as well as the equality of all men irrespective of race, creed and opinion, which enables the Red Cross to carry out its activities on a world-wide scale.

The first Geneva Convention was the first great break-through of law in the field of war, when it attempted to have ethical considerations accepted. The law of the Red Cross is a branch of international law which has withstood the assault of two world wars. The question might consequently be asked whether the task of the Red Cross should not be

¹ *Plate.*

² The speech delivered for the occasion by Mr. Carl J. Burckhardt may be read at the beginning of this issue of the *International Review*.

extended, in calling upon it to take part in efforts being made on an international level with a view to the maintenance of peace. If it is true that the destructive methods of modern warfare make protective measures and relief to defenceless populations problematic, the Red Cross principles might impel this institution to devote its efforts to the maintenance of peace. But the Red Cross may not assume such a mission unless, apart, of course, from obtaining the essential agreement of parties to a dispute, it is encouraged to do so by world opinion, that very opinion which so far has enabled it to put its ideal into practice. This would require an impulsion from mankind identical to that which sustained the Red Cross a hundred years ago. May the Centenary of the Red Cross release such a lasting upsurge of opinion. Such is the ardent wish of the Federal Council and the Swiss people.

Mr. Charles Duchemin, President of the Geneva State Council :

In the name of the authorities of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, in the name of the authorities of the city of Geneva and of all our population, it is an honour for me to wish you welcome to this city where, one hundred years ago, was born the most important humanitarian work in the entire world.

One of our fellow-citizens had been distressed by the horrors of war. His profound emotion inspired him to write a moving book. A private group studied how best to put his suggestions into practice for the care of the wounded.

A commission of five members, private individuals without any mandate, took upon itself to convene an international conference and it obtained the participation of sixteen governments.

It is with enthusiasm that we celebrate the Centenary of that meeting in 1863, the first international assembly held in our town.

The resolutions which were adopted consecrated the principles of help to the wounded, the training of voluntary nurses, the adoption of a distinctive and uniform sign—the red cross.

Already at the beginning of 1864, delegates were sent to Denmark and to Germany where war was being waged, and in August of that year a further conference was held, this time officially, where the first of the Geneva Conventions was signed.

. . . Two sentiments, it seems to us, should be expressed today :
—pride that our little town (the Geneva of 1863) was the birth-place of a great and magnificent idea.

—gratitude for those who, in every country, have helped to promote its radiation for the good of suffering humanity.

Let us hope that the events planned for today and for the weeks to follow will strengthen yet further the international work to which you are devoted and which has rightly been called " a light in the world ".

Mr. Léopold Boissier, President of the International Committee :

The International Committee of the Red Cross, the founder organization of our movement is grateful to those who have organized this day's events, for having arranged on the centenary of the first Red Cross conference, the memorable events which will commemorate one of the most important occurrences in contemporary history. By so doing, justice is rendered to Henry Dunant and honour is paid to the " Committee of Five " who founded their work on the realities of their time and the promises of the future, uniting for ever intelligence with the heart, thought with action . . .

. . . What will be the destiny of mankind in the course of the next 100 years, caught as it is between national rivalries, sustaining the shock of political and social doctrines, and drawn along by the rapid evolution of civilisations ? Will it be violent or peaceful ? No-one knows the answer, but you can rest assured that the International Committee of the Red Cross will have an ever increasing role to play in its capacity as neutral intermediary. And one can foresee the day when it will act on behalf of the individual, not only in case of war but also when forces unknown to-day, in one way or another menace the very existence of human life.

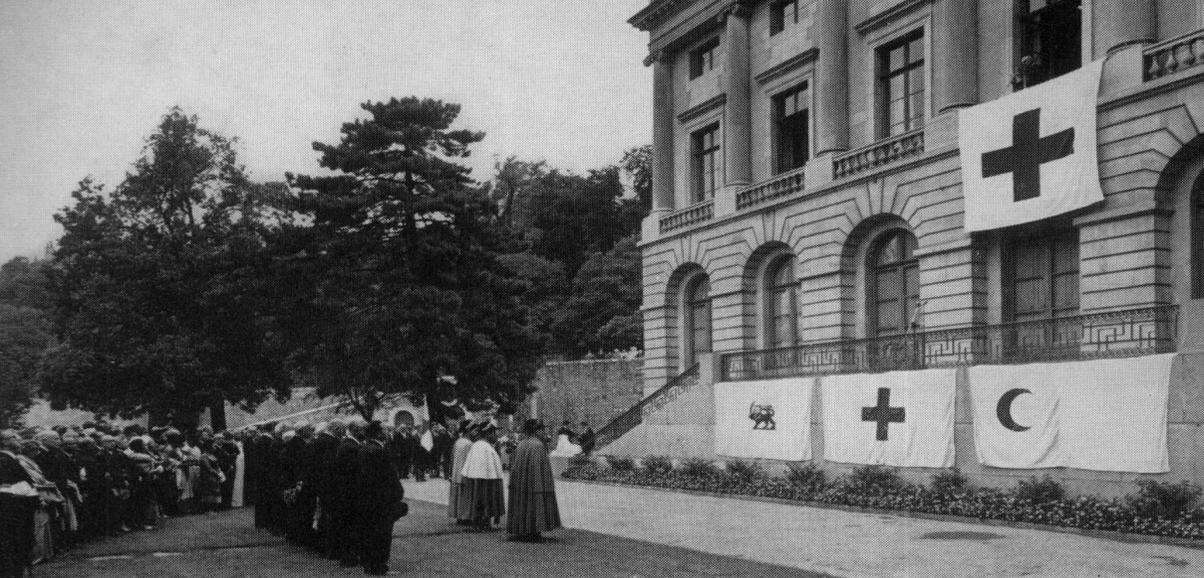
For such commitments the International Committee draws strength from the accomplishment of its daily tasks, the diversity of which reflect the tormented era in which we live. We must meet the ceaseless demand of new challenges, act in countries which even yesterday ignored the Red Cross and its work. We must adapt our methods and be patient. If success occasionally recompenses great effort, failures are frequent. But nothing matters if, little by little, the solidarity of men of goodwill affirms itself and helps to remove the shadows of ignorance and fear.

The International Committee, in conjunction with the National Societies and the League, its federative association, contributes to the service of peace through the dissemination and application of principles which are to all of us, men and women of the Red Cross, our most precious possession and can become the heritage of humanity as a whole.

It is our privilege to serve such a high ideal. Let it illumine the struggles that lie ahead and lead us to new victories.

Mr. John A. MacAulay, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the League :

The League of Red Cross Societies was founded on May 5, 1919. The League is described in its Constitution as the international federation of National Red Cross Societies, an association of unlimited duration having the legal status of a corporate body. In referring to National Red Cross Societies, the Constitution also and equally refers to the corresponding National Societies of the countries using in the place of the Red Cross the



The Authorities and the directors of our movement listening to the reading of the Resolutions of the Conference of 1863...

Photos Jean Zbinden

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Commemorative
Day



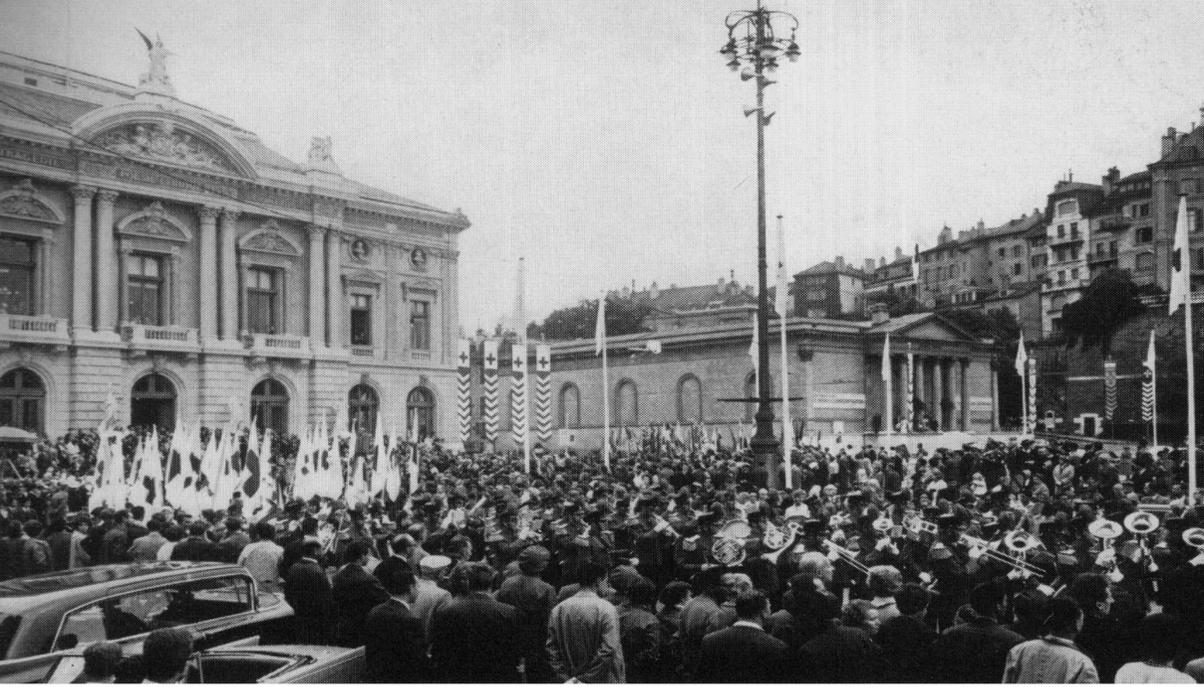
...are then welcomed by
juniors of the Red Cross
in front of the
Grand-Théâtre, Geneva.



Speech by Mr. W. Spühler,
President of the
Swiss Confederation...

... and by Mr. C.-J. Burckhardt,
member of the ICRC.





Representatives of the Authorities, of the ICRC and the League, as well as of the National Red Cross, Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun Societies in procession towards...

...the Henry Dunant memorial where Mr. von Albertini, President of the Swiss Red Cross pays tribute to the five founders.





Some hundred countries taking part in the procession of the Red Cross Centenary.



emblems admitted by the Geneva Convention, namely the Red Crescent Red Lion and Sun.

It will be seen that the League is the younger member of this unique organization known as the International Red Cross. It has been in existence for some 44 years. While it is far from reaching its own centenary, it feels that today's event is of major importance in its history. The Red Cross, both as an idea and as an institution is a unit, and we are all united in celebrating its centenary . . .

. . . On the occasion of this Centenary we should not forget that the League represents millions of voluntary workers to whom we owe an extreme debt of gratitude. The officers of the League have the honor of representing these voluntary members at this Centenary Celebration.

The federation of Red Cross Societies, the National Societies of Red Cross and the members of all National Societies reflect with pride on the history of the Red Cross and anticipate with confidence its ability to accomplish the great tasks which lie ahead. They also thank, with respect and gratitude the founding fathers of the International Red Cross.

The most constructive manner in which we can celebrate the centenary is to act in the spirit which has been referred to so eloquently by the other messages conveyed to us today. These same thoughts were well expressed by the founder and first president of the League, Henry P. Davidson, who said — "Our task involves not merely the effort to relieve human suffering, but to prevent it. Red Cross concerns itself not with the suffering of one people alone but the welfare of our fellow beings throughout the world. The Red Cross is not building for a day, but for all time."

This centenary is a great inspiration for our future work all over the world. Let one of our objectives be to add annually new national societies as well as millions of new Red Cross members in every corner of the globe. Let us urge at all times the observance by all, of our Red Cross principles.

With our increased stature let us strive to provide food, clothing and medical care for all suffering and needy people. Let us also work towards the solution of the world refugee problem. These are examples of tasks we can undertake if our organization is strong and vigorous.

We hope for the development of this great humanitarian movement which we serve so proudly and believe in so firmly. In this centenary year let us re-dedicate ourselves to the building of this great movement for all years to come. Let us remember as our founder and first president said that we are not building for a day but for all time. Let us also remember that the Red Cross strives aggressively to promote international understanding and that it is one of the few healing influences in the world today.

The musical part of the official ceremony was worthy of the occasion. It had been composed especially and was generously

offered to the Red Cross by the composers themselves and by Radio Genève and was performed at a world premier with the gracious participation of Mr. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone and Mr. Peter Pears, tenor, as well as the mixed choir "Le Motet de Genève". The orchestra of La Suisse romande played under the direction of Mr. Ernest Ansermet. The concert opened with *Inter Arma Caritas*, a prelude for orchestra by the Swiss composer Frank Martin, followed by *cantata misericordium*, for soloists, choir and orchestra by the British composer Benjamin Britten, and was concluded by *Per Humanitatem ad Pacem*, a postlude for orchestra by the Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski.

After the ceremony a procession was formed and went to the Henry Dunant monument in the Parc des Bastions¹. There, Mr. A. von Albertini delivered a moving speech as a tribute to the five founders, in which he concluded:

The strength of the idea which the Committee of Five inspired with such enthusiasm in those who held positions of responsibility a hundred years ago, was so great that it was to convince other mortals. It has become even deeper rooted in the conscience of succeeding generations. It has remained youthful and alive and has spread throughout the entire globe in a way which has never previously been seen. It has now become the largest and the most effective humanitarian movement in the world.

At this moment when the wreaths are being placed at the memorials erected in honour of Henry Dunant, at Heiden, at Zurich and here in Geneva, filled with a feeling of deep gratitude, I invite all members and friends of the Red Cross throughout the world to think once again with recognition of these men who formed the Committee of Five, the founder and the co-founders of the Red Cross. We could not honour them better than by attempting to continue today in a manner worthy of them, the task which was begun a hundred years ago.

Now more than ever we believe in the profound truths of the principles of the Red Cross and of the possibilities of putting them into practice. We hope that ever-increasing numbers will recognize them and that humanity's burning desire to be able to live in a happier world, free from fear and misery, in liberty and peace, will one day be realized. This is the wish we are making on this important day.

Wreaths were laid on the monument whilst the crowd observed a minute's silence.

¹ *Plate.*

In the afternoon a procession took place which included over 1,500 participants from about one hundred different countries. At its head marched the band and standard bearers¹, followed by groups representative of folklore and history, as well as teams of nurses, troops of the Medical Corps, auxiliaries and members of the Red Cross. The Centenary banner was borne by a member of the Dunant family. Later on a show was given including a " Cantata-reel ", composed by Maurice Zermatten and Jean Daetwyler, which was performed by children. There were also games and folklore dancing by several nations.

Official representatives and delegates, and the public as a whole, applauded and associated themselves very widely with these events, all of which, as was befitting, were most dignified.

¹ *Plate.*