THE RED CROSS AND HUMAN RIGHTS [1]

by F. Siordet

From the beginning of its existence the Red Cross has had two objectives: the setting up of relief societies and the promotion of rules in law justifying and facilitating relief action. At the present time it has two types of activity: relief in the field and the improvement of humanitarian law. It is this second activity, the Red Cross contribution to humanitarian law, which we shall consider here.

The life, behaviour and existence of human communities and the individuals of which they are composed are conditioned by two trends: to permit man's personal development for the benefit of which he makes his own contribution; to permit the community, whilst working for the good of its members, to develop and defend itself, if need be against individuals.

In a recent publication, Mr. Jean Pictet, Director-General for Legal Affairs and Member of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Lecturer at Geneva University, showed that the birth of humanitarian law was due to the opposition between humanity, which calls for action for man's benefit, and necessity, according to which the maintenance of public order justifies the use of force and the state of war justifies recourse to violence.[2] According to Mr. Pictet, the principle of humanitarian law is " Respect for the human being and his development shall be ensured to the fullest extent compatible with public order and, in time of war, with military necessity ". Although this statement of principle may not

[1] Extracts from an address in Geneva, in 1967, to the Summer School organized by the World Federation of United Nations Associations in co-operation with the International Student Movement for the United Nations.

[2] J. PICTET. *The Principles of International Humanitarian Law*, ICRC, Geneva, 1967.

satisfy idealists, it does, it must be admitted, correspond to the normal practice of States.

Humanitarian law has two distinct but complementary branches: human rights and the law of war. The start of human rights was the principle which Mr. Pictet expressed as follows: " The individual shall at all times be guaranteed the exercise of fundamental rights and liberties as well as living conditions suitable for his fit and proper development ". The latest statement of these rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The law of war, on the other hand, has been built up piecemeal, particularly during the last century, with the constant development of means of destruction. It is the outcome of conscience-searching and the awareness of war's true nature. The aim of war, according to the ideas by then prevalent, was to weaken the enemy's military power, so that belligerents should abstain from inflicting on an enemy harm out of proportion to this objective.

This principle gave rise to two offshoots:

The first of these is that genuine law of war which tends to impose the fewest possible rules for the conduct of military operations. It has been expressed in several laws such as the " Annex to the Hague Convention of October 18, 1907, Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land ", hence this branch of the law of war is known frequently as " the Law of The Hague ". On the basis of the principle laid down by article 22, i.e., " The right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited ", its aim is to protect non-combatants and restrict attacks to military objectives. It proscribes weapons causing needless damage; it prohibits pillage, needless destruction and treachery. The second offshoot was the 1864 Geneva Convention. It has been continually amended on Red Cross initiative and is now contained in the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, hence its name " the Law of Geneva " or " Law of the Red Cross ". It is this which we shall examine here.

The guiding principle of the law of Geneva is that anyone *hors de combat* or not taking direct part in hostilities shall be respected, protected and treated humanely: wounded and sick shall be cared for, no matter to what party in conflict they belong. This motivat-

ing principle gave rise to a series of fundamental practical principles which make up the four hundred odd articles of the Geneva Conventions.

What is the distinction between these two fields of humanitarian law, the declaration of human rights and the law of Geneva; and what have they in common? We shall first consider what distinguishes them. There are it seems to us four differences, relating to origin, scope, form, and legal character.

Origin.—The universal declaration of human rights was the outcome of an awakening of conscience and a claim to rights justified by a feeling of fraternity and equality among men, all too often stifled by living conditions for some human communities. The law of Geneva was the outcome of an awakening of conscience and the assertion of a moral duty which also was demanded by the same feeling of fraternity and equality.

Scope.—The universal declaration is precisely what it says: universal, that is to say man as a human being everywhere and always in all circumstances.

The Red Cross, originating in battle, was at first restricted, in that relief societies and humanitarian law were limited to military wounded and sick. Subsequently its scope was extended to other categories of war victims and, particularly after the First World War, when the advent of the League of Nations gave hope that there would be no more war, it turned its energies to peace-time activities and by degrees embraced all human suffering.

The relief society side of its activity developed enormously in some countries, attending not only to the relief but also to the prevention of suffering. There is no need to dwell here on the major rôle played in many countries by the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies and the League of National Red Cross Societies, their world federation, for the advancement of hygiene, the prevention of disease and for the collection, co-ordination and distribution of relief supplies during large scale natural disasters. However, in humanitarian law, which is the aspect we are concerned with here, its scope is still to alleviate or prevent suffering inflicted by war.

Form.—On the international level, and irrespective of resettlement agreements or other special treaties guaranteeing certain fundamental human rights, we are still at the stage of declarations. A declaration is not law. It states what is considered should be law in all countries. " The General Assembly (of the United Nations) proclaims this universal declaration of human rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations . . . etc." It is a manifestation of *lege ferenda.*

The Geneva Conventions are law. They form a code not of what is desirable but what is already admitted by all States parties to them, that is to say, in fact, the entire or nearly entire world.

Legal character.—The Universal Declaration lays on member States of the United Nations the moral obligation to do everything in their power to bring its provisions into force if they are not already included in national legislation. The Geneva Conventions as a whole have the force of law, they become national law in each of the countries which has ratified or acceded to them.

Another special point about these is that they contain no reciprocity clause; these always restrictive and emasculating clauses are to be regretted in humanitarian legislation. The Conventions are both a series of bilateral contracts and a form of solemn undertaking to the world . . .

Henry Dunant made two suggestions.[1] First the setting up of Societies for the relief of war wounded. He had them almost at once in, to begin with, about a dozen European countries. In time their number rose to the 109 National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies throughout the world today, with their 210 million members. Secondly, he appealed for some international principle, " sanctioned by a convention " which would be the basis of their work. The 1864 Convention gave him two such principles. The first of these was the neutralization of medical services and voluntary rescue workers whose action was not only

[1] " Would it not be possible in time of peace to set up societies with the aim of nursing wounded in time of war? Would it not be desirable that . . . a Congress formulate some international principle, sanctioned by a Convention . . . which might constitute the basis for societies for the relief of the wounded . . . ? " Henry Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino.*

recognized and considered justified, but also encouraged. The second is to be found in the first sentence of article 6 of that Convention: " Wounded or Sick Combatants, to whatever Nation they may belong, shall be collected and cared for ".

Thus not only were relief actions made legal and the discharge of what future Henry Dunant's would consider as a moral obligation made easier. This moral obligation, at least as far as armies were concerned, was converted into a legal duty. Wounded and sick combatants shall be collected and cared for. This was an obligation; an order to belligerents. Military leaders had a duty to conform to this principle and make arrangements in advance for it to be possible. Incidentally, it is not one of the least creditable actions of the promoters of the Red Cross that, by this means, they instigated a remarkable and salutary development of the army medical services.

It must not be forgotten that in the course of history treaties providing for the respect of military hospitals had been known previously. But these were bilateral agreements drawn up to suit the occasion by the generals of opposing forces at the beginning or in the course of and valid only for the duration of hostilities. These agreements were made necessary, as much by self-interest as by humanitarian feeling. Soldiers were professionals. They cost the sovereign whom they served a great deal. It was therefore an advantage, whilst seeking to destroy the enemy's military strength, to do so with the least expense. " Respect my hospitals and wounded and I shall respect yours ". Such, in most cases, was the significance of these reciprocal agreements. The Geneva Convention is quite another thing. It is a multilateral treaty concluded in time of peace not for a particular occasion but for all times. Its aim is to make of moral principle a legal obligation, not for the advantages to be derived therefrom but solely for its own virtue from the humane point of view.

So the Convention is a legal obligation. And it is for that, particularly at the time when it was the first of its kind, that it is of considerable importance, for legal duty implies law. The obligation to care for the wounded " to whatever nation they may belong " gives every wounded soldier the right to assistance. This means nothing less than that this article 6 and, for the first time in history,

an international convention of universal character, recognized and proclaimed the first human right, the right to life. To enjoin that every wounded man be helped, even if an enemy whom one was a moment previously entitled to kill, is to recognize and proclaim to the world that importance of human life which impelled Dunant to act.

This brings us to the heart of the matter, the Red Cross and human rights.

In this age of motor and traffic accidents, legislation in several countries makes it an offence not to help a person whose life is in danger. This precept is undoubtedly a descendant of the 1864 Geneva Convention and of the ideas which the Red Cross has spread throughout the world since then and which it illustrates by its action. Yet no such legislation existed when the 1864 Convention was drawn up. It is consequently the more remarkable that it was not due to some natural disaster that this obligation to care for the injured—that is to say, to respect life—was incorporated into international law but to a war, and through the law of war, applied in circumstances where anything goes, where to kill becomes legitimate.

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Thenceforth the trend initiated by the Red Cross with the Geneva Convention, that is to say the attempt to check violence and confront the " necessities of war " with " necessity of humanity " was to continue. It did so in accordance with a general pattern in the field we are considering, namely: events precede law. Governments are particularly sensitive about their national sovereignty especially in time of war. It would be futile to try to restrict their national sovereignty. They would consent to such restriction only if events convinced them that it was necessary and harmless to do so. Moreover, when a whole nation is concentrating on the war effort, when its existence is at stake, the highest principles which are admitted in time of peace are easily called into question. There is a tendency to respect them, if they appeared to be a hindrance, only to the extent that to ignore them would be a flagrant breach of the law and an affront to the law of nations and perjury of a sort.

It can be stated with certainty that if Solferino had not happened it would have been unthinkable to induce a number of States to sign a text such as the Geneva Convention. But the army medical services having been found wanting and their inadequacies having provoked such feeling throughout the world, whilst voluntary assistance had proved of such value without detracting from their authority, States consented to sanction, as it were, Dunant's initiative in order to enable it to be repeated when occasion arose with greater efficiency, because it would be organized beforehand. Similarly, observing that far from harming, but rather ennobling, State authority, they conferred the force of law on the moral principle which Dunant's own personal conviction had impelled him to obey.

Thus came about under the direct and indirect impetus of the Red Cross and the work of the International Committee : the Hague Convention of July 29, 1899 for the Adaptation to Maritime Warfare of the Geneva Convention; the revised Geneva Convention of 1906; the adoption in 1907 of the " Hague Regulations " already mentioned and which, let it be said again, limits the choice of means of inflicting harm on an enemy.

In addition, this regulation includes the first international statute relating to prisoners of war, who, according to its article 4, " must be humanely treated ". Why was this statute issued? Because from the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the ICRC, concerned for the plight of prisoners of war, set up for their benefit in Basle an information and relief agency. What else is a prisoner of war other than a soldier rendered *hors de combat* who suffers, if not from wounds, from the conditions of his captivity. He is therefore not an enemy but a man and should be treated as such.

After the First World War, the Geneva Convention was again revised in 1929 in the light of experience of the war. A third Convention was added, that of July 27, 1929 relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. In 29 articles, and based on drafts drawn up by the ICRC, it re-stated and developed considerably the principles affecting prisoners of war which were contained in the Hague Regulation of 1907. This new Convention was a genuine code for prisoners of war. There again law sanctioned previous events.

During the world conflict, and while the National Red Cross Societies of belligerent countries were extremely active on the national level, the ICRC in Geneva was by no means inactive on the international level. As it had done during previous conflicts, it opened a prisoners of war agency which, with its seven million index-cards, was to become known throughout the world. In addition, taking advantage of a clause in the Hague Regulations authorizing relief society delegates to distribute relief supplies in prisoner of war camps, it carried out a humanitarian control of the treatment to which prisoners were subject. It took note of shortcomings, proposed improvements, organized relief collections, suggested special agreements to belligerents, promoted and arranged repatriation or internment in neutral countries of seriously wounded or sick prisoners. In writing and by action it ceaselessly pleaded the cause of the prisoner and contributed to an improvement of the often rigid conditions in which he had to live.

These various forms of activity were in their turn legalized by the new law. Thanks to this more complete code the ICRC was able during the Second World War to carry out its beneficial work through the Central Agency with its 40 million index-cards. It forwarded across frontiers some 24 million family messages, carried out 11,000 visits to camps and thanks to a whole fleet of vessels chartered by it and flying its flag, it conveyed across the oceans through blockades some 450,000 tons of relief goods in the form of 90 million 5-kilo parcels and distributed them in the camps.

In 1949, after the Second World War, it had again acquired experience both in theatres of military operations where the Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War was applied and in regions where the Convention was not in force and had been applied only in part or not at all. The ICRC set itself the task of improving this humanitarian law which was, as it were, its brainchild. With the assistance of government and other experts in the various questions to be studied, it drew up draft amendments for the three existing Conventions relating to the Wounded and the Sick of Armies in the Field; the Wounded, the Sick and the Shipwrecked of the Armed Forces at Sea; and Prisoners of War. It also drafted a completely new Convention for the Protection of Civilians in Time of War, that is to say people in the hands of an

enemy, whether interned or not, either because they are resident on enemy territory or because their territory has been occupied by the enemy. The plight of millions of civilians during the Second World War in some occupied territories, where they were left to starve and of millions of others in concentration camps, showed how acutely such a Convention was required.

These four new Geneva Conventions with their 420 articles which sometimes go into minute detail, include provisions for control, both by the Protecting Power as a legal requirement and by the ICRC as a purely humanitarian function. A new feature is the provision of sanctions. According to the article 2 which is common to all four, they are applicable " to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them ". They are applicable also in the event of occupation, " even if the said occupation meets with no armed resistance ". Furthermore, they make deep inroads into the sacrosanct field of national sovereignty by laying down rules which, in the absence of full-fledged Conventions, must be observed in the event of conflict not of an international character, for example a rebellion. That States—almost all in fact—should agree in advance to assume undertakings towards a possible future rebel force, would have been unthinkable even thirty years ago. This is a legal victory in which the ICRC as the promoter of the law of Geneva and author of the draft Conventions of 1949 takes special pleasure. It is an achievement which shows that as a result of the desolation of the last world conflict, governments are more aware than ever of the value of Red Cross principles and fundamental human rights.

When considering the distinction between the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the law of Geneva, we stated that the former is a common objective to be reached and included in part in the national legislation of many countries or in bilateral or multilateral treaties but not universally applicable as a whole, whereas the Geneva Conventions are a code of law in force internationally.

We shall now briefly review the points on which the Geneva Conventions as they stand at present comply with the requirements of the Universal Declaration.

The foundation and the aim of the Universal Declaration are mentioned in the preamble: recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation; the objective is the advent of a world free from fear and want. To achieve these standards, these rights must be protected by the rule of law.

There is no preamble to the Geneva Conventions. A draft was submitted to the 1949 Diplomatic Conference, but the insistence of a number of delegations on including a reference to man's divine origin—to which many others could not subscribe—led the Conference to forgo any preamble. But the history and development of the law of Geneva are, after all, an excellent preamble.

What Dunant called the moral concept of the importance of human life is the foundation of the Conventions; it is recognition of the intrinsic value of every human being *per se*, irrespective of his value according to physical, political, scientific, military standards, etc., which varies. This intrinsic value, equal for everybody, is so great that, in the words of Max Huber, former President of the International Court of Justice at The Hague and former President of the ICRC: " When belligerents subordinate human life completely to the devastating struggle which they carry on, relief to man in suffering, merely by the fact of his suffering, may go to such length as to involve sacrifice ". The aim of the Conventions therefore, if not the advent of a world without suffering, is at least the prevention and alleviation of the sufferings of the greatest possible number of individuals in a world plagued by war.

If we consider the Red Cross not only from the legal point of view, but from the aspect of all the activities of National Societies and of the League, jointly with those within the sphere of the ICRC, we may almost say that, concurrently with other institutions and movements, such as the World Health Organization, the Red Cross does contribute to the advent of a world free from suffering. The Red Cross Conventions are a code of law protecting at least some of the fundamental human rights referred to in the preamble of the Universal Declaration.

The third paragraph of the preamble states that human rights should be protected by the rule of law if man is not to be compelled to have recourse as a last resort to rebellion against tyranny and

oppression. Irrespective of the selfless spirit of human fellowship, an appeal is here made to the interest of governments by alluding to rebellion which might be the price of tyranny scorning fundamental rights. This veiled threat is almost a way of inserting an additional article to the effect that any man has the right to revolt against tyranny and oppression.

There is nothing of the kind in the Geneva Conventions. It must be borne in mind that these Conventions, devoid of any " reciprocity clause ", are not only in the nature of bilateral agreements between possible future enemies, but also solemn, unqualified, undertakings by each to all.

The first article of the Universal Declaration, with its postulate that all human beings are born free and equal, etc., has no equivalent in the Geneva Conventions in which there would be no more reason to include this than there was to include a reference to the divine origin of man. On the other hand, the Conventions repeat no less than nine times the prohibition on discrimination laid down in article 2 of the Declaration. For instance, the common article 3 specifies that protected persons shall " in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria ". The use of the wording *adverse distinction* will be noted; it is not found in the Declaration. It is justified by the fact that circumstances may, for the application of the Conventions, require special consideration for such people as women, children and the sick.

In its article 3, the Declaration goes on: " Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person ". In the Geneva Convention the obligation to take care of enemy wounded is nothing less than the assertion of the right to life even in the turmoil of war and although the Conventions cannot proclaim the right to liberty, as they were drawn up precisely for the benefit of people deprived by law of all or part of their freedom due to their capture or due to occupation by the enemy, they do ensure, through the considerable details regulating internment conditions, that deprivation of liberty may never degenerate into slavery. Under the rule of the Geneva Conventions, the fate of people held by an enemy is no longer dependent on the captor's arbitrary decisions.

An idea of the achievements of the Geneva Conventions in the safeguarding of fundamental human rights may be obtained from the common article 3; it sets minimum standards in the event of conflict of a non-international character and summarizes the essentials of the four Conventions:

> *Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed* hors de combat *by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.*
>
> *To this end, the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:*
>
> a) *violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;*
>
> (corresponding articles 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration)
>
> b) *taking of hostages;*
>
> c) *outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment;*
>
> (preamble and article 5)
>
> d) *the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.*
>
> *The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.*
>
> (article 11)

Suffice to say that for the persons they are intended to protect, all these provisions are repeated in great detail in each of the Conventions where in addition it is stipulated that:

— the personal effects of prisoners of war shall be safeguarded;

— prisoners retain their civil rights;

— they may correspond with their families and receive relief parcels;

— they shall be allowed full liberty to practise their religion;

— intellectual, educational, recreational and sporting activities shall be encouraged and facilitated; and

— that all the provisions of the Conventions shall be subject to a dual control by the Protecting Powers and by the ICRC, to whose delegates the persons protected by one Convention or another shall not be denied access, in order to ensure that the law of Geneva, even during war, shall maintain the most vital of fundamental human rights.

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It may be thought that as they stand at present, the Geneva Conventions cover the whole field. There is however another sphere in which the Conventions have not penetrated. It is becoming more and more obvious that within States there may break out strife which, whilst not characteristic of armed conflict entailing the application of at least article 3 of the Conventions, nevertheless causes victims.

A government anxious to maintain order without recourse to armed force may order mass arrests of persons who are merely suspect. If such measures are accompanied by the suspension of constitutional guarantees and a state of emergency, these political detainees might find that their fate is dependent on decisions of the military administrative authorities. Although they are only suspect, guilty of no offence, they are detained as a precautionary measure to keep them from doing harm to the government or impeding its policies and to all intents and purposes their situation is that of the prisoner of war or of the civilian internee, without, however, the benefit of a protective statute such as the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. This situation is not one to which the Red Cross, any more than the champions of human rights, can remain indifferent. But the efforts of both have met more than ever with the barrier of national sovereignty and State security, the concept which, in the absence of any Convention protecting

civilians, denied the Red Cross and Protecting Powers access to concentration camps.

There are two possible solutions. The first is *legal.* It would consist of defining the rights of political refugees as human beings and of setting up by international agreement machinery for the protection of those rights. This would stop up the loop-hole on this point in human rights legislation. But the difficulties in the way of putting human rights into effect are well known. As Professor Donnedieu de Vabres so rightly said, " The requirements of State interest and security will always override individual rights and freedoms, if it is left to the State itself to fix the limits free of higher control ".

Article 3 might be extended to apply to these situations. This would require the convening of a Diplomatic Conference, yet there is little chance that the 120 States parties to the Geneva Conventions would agree to meet again to supplement the 1949 Conventions. There can, in addition, be no assurance that such a Conference would reach the desired result, at least not in present circumstances.

We are thus left with the *practical* Red Cross solution. This, in the absence of an applicable treaty clause, is buttressed only by the Red Cross principles. The Conventions are but an instrument. They are the expression, however imperfect, of principles which precede and transcend them. Governments may, if it suits them, stick strictly to the letter. The ICRC, for its part, for the very reason that it was the initiator of the Conventions, must abide by the spirit. It must apply the Conventions but not be hamstrung by them.

This is the practical way in which the ICRC operates. When the gravity of a situation impels it to take action, it has asked here and there permission to visit detention centres, inspect detention conditions—from the humanitarian point of view, needless to say—and in case of need to provide relief supplies. Government reactions differ. One might think, with the event preceding the law and, being found good, finally creating law, that the repeated and strictly humanitarian intervention of the ICRC would, in the long run, create favourable custom. However, in order to increase its chances as much as possible, the ICRC must proceed with caution. That is why on three occasions the ICRC consulted experts whose

advice enabled it to decide on policies and ways and means of enabling the Red Cross to intervene for the benefit of political detainees without being accused by the governments concerned of interference in national affairs. There is no denying that the experts' reports have helped the ICRC to open doors. They can help to create a more clement international practice pending the still distant legal regulation.

Another subject of serious concern is the backward state of the law of war itself, which regulates the conduct of military operations. Whereas the law of Geneva, from its 10 short articles at the start in 1864, has developed into the four truly monumental legal Conventions for the protection of man in war-time, the law of The Hague has remained essentially the same since the Regulation of 1907, the pre-aviation age and well before the invention of nuclear weapons. The result of this stagnation is all too clear. At the outset the two branches of the law of war seemed distinctive enough for each to develop along its own lines. However, with the great strides in the destructive power of weapons and methods of war, the two are inseparable, and the out-dated character of the law of The Hague cannot but jeopardize the proper application of the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC has drawn the attention of governments to this point on a number of occasions, particularly by its appeal in April 1950 concerning the use of weapons of uncontrollable effect, and by the 1957 Draft Regulations intended to re-state and adapt to present conditions, for the protection of civilian population, the limitations on means of harming an enemy. But this is a very important problem, and this article can do no more than bring attention to it.

Although the law of The Hague has failed to keep abreast of the times, through no fault of the Red Cross, the enormous progress achieved in the field of the Geneva Conventions is to be welcomed. The protection which was granted at first solely to military wounded and sick has been successively extended, improved and made to match a whole series of laws, to cover all categories of war victims in the hands of an enemy, and the scope of the Conventions was increased to embrace all forms of armed conflict. We cannot but admire the many studies, the patience, the persuasion and also the struggles required to achieve such progress.

At the same time it must be mentioned that each stage in this development is a corollary to a retrograde step of civilization. What does that mean? The purport of the first Geneva Convention was that a wounded soldier was not an enemy but just a man who had been neutralized, taking no further part in the fighting, and was, in fact, just another civilian. Now nobody at the time thought it necessary to provide protection for civilians who were not considered as active enemies; war was not made on civilians. No doubt they did from time to time become afflicted and sometimes suffered ruinous economic loss, but armies fought armies, not populations.

With the weapons of today and with total war the picture is quite different and for that reason, and because of the occurrence of large scale internment, it became necessary to demand for civilians a degree of protection at least equal to that granted to the armed forces. It is a topsy-turvy world.

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What can we conclude from this observation that the progress of law, no matter how remarkable, is apparently always behind that of the new barbarity in which humanity seems to be sinking? That we of the Red Cross, or defenders of human rights, are working in vain? That the proportion of people we save, no matter how numerous they are, will always be less than those who are destroyed or suffer or left simply to starve?

But we must not despair, for that would be to admit that men, " this being endowed with reason and consciousness " is really no longer worthy of the rights he claims and the protection granted to him. We all have a long task ahead of us The most resounding of world-shaking statements, the most humanitarian of Conventions and the wisest laws will be futile if they are not made known. It is not for nothing that the United Nations General Assembly, after adopting and proclaiming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, called upon all member States to publicize the text of the Declaration and " to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other

educational institutions . . . ". Nor is it for nothing that an article was included in the four Geneva Conventions stipulating that " the High Contracting Parties undertake, in time of peace as in time of war, to disseminate the text of the present Convention as widely as possible in their respective countries, and, in particular, to include the study thereof in their programmes of military and, if possible, civil instruction . . . ", for only when these Conventions have been read, marked, learned and inwardly digested will they become established.

Let us all work to that end.

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