

The Empress Shôken Fund ¹

At a plenary session of the Council of Delegates held on September 9, 1963 on the occasion of the Congress of the International Red Cross in Geneva, Mr. Léopold Boissier, who was presiding, made the announcement that H.I.M. the Empress of Japan proposed making a personal donation to the Shôken Fund. She thus wished to mark the year preceding the fiftieth anniversary of that fund, at the same time as the Centenary of the Red Cross in which she shows a special interest as patron of the National Society of Japan. Her gift, amounting to 3,600,000 yen, representing the equivalent of about 43,000 Sw.frs., is intended to increase the inalienable fund.

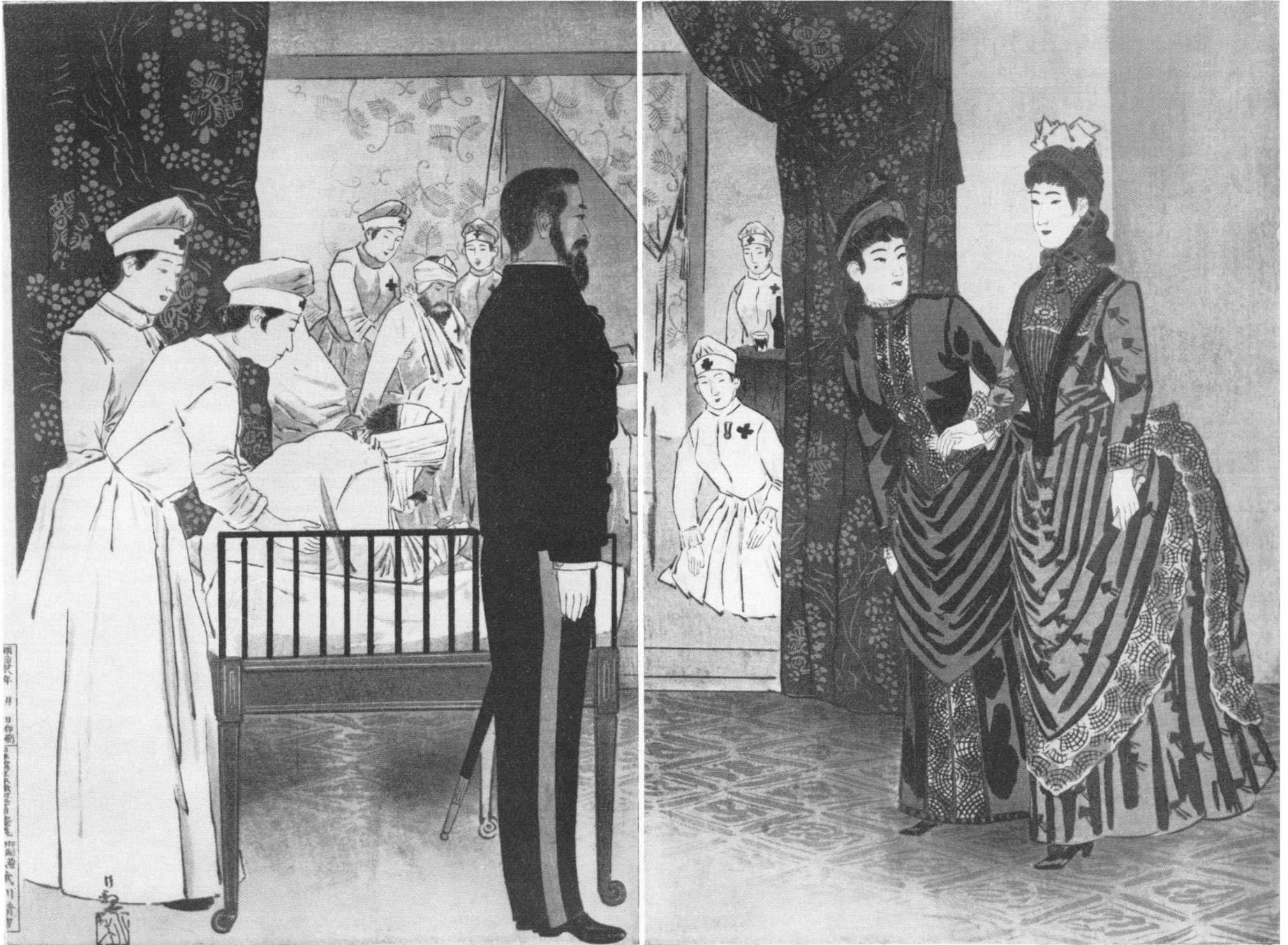
Mr. Boissier expressed, on behalf of the Council of Delegates, the gratitude of the whole Red Cross movement and he recalled the origins and purposes of the Empress Shôken Fund.

The International Review is therefore pleased to publish the following article, especially as this generous gesture by the Empress of Japan draws attention again to the Empress Shôken's intentions and to the aid which can be given as a result of her initiative. (Edit.).

I. A GREAT PROTECTRESS OF THE JAPANESE RED CROSS

Tadaka Ichijo, a nobleman at the Imperial Court of Japan, was the father of three daughters, the youngest of whom, born at

¹ It will be recalled that the International Review has undertaken the publication of a series of articles dedicated to the outstanding personalities who, within the Red Cross, took upon themselves to give generous support to a great cause. The article that follows, like those preceding it, was written by one of the ICRC staff, and forms part of the series of articles which has so far presented historical studies on the Empresses Augusta and Maria Feodorovna (See September 1961 and August 1962).



The Empress Shōken and the Emperor visiting the military hospital of Hiroshima

Kyoto on May 28, 1850, was called Haruko and was destined to a very high calling. This studious child became a young lady of grace and charm ; gifted with a lively intelligence, her mind eager for knowledge was soon to become devoted to the arts.

The attention of the Emperor Mutsu-Hito—called Meiji, which means “enlightened era”—was drawn to this accomplished young woman. She soon inspired such profound feeling that he asked for her hand in marriage and made of her an Empress of Japan whose memory is perpetuated by the good works founded in the course of her reign.

The festivities which took place on September 28, 1868 in the capital celebrated a marriage which was to be particularly happy and for forty years the imperial couple enjoyed the unswerving devotion of the people, to whom the Empress was the personification of perfect womanhood and for whom she never omitted to display admiration and respect.

On July 30, 1912, the Emperor died, but Haruko, now Dowager Empress, did not survive him for long. Less than two years after his death, she died on April 11, 1914, and was buried beside the Emperor in the Eastern Tomb of Fushimi-Momoyama, on the outskirts of Kyoto.

The Empress had devoted numerous long hours to the study of many problems relating to the welfare of the people and also to her favourite occupation, the composition of “Waka”—a typical form of Japanese poem. She alone enriched the forty thousand “Waka” existing at that time by no less than 1,090 new poems. She also wrote twenty-two works in prose and composed two songs.

Haruko found in her creative work not only great joy but also a means of serving the country she so dearly loved. In fact, the posthumous title *Shōken*, meaning “sparkling and lively”, proves how greatly she was esteemed for her virtues and endearing gifts.¹

Although the Empress was renowned for her beauty, she was even more so for her qualities of heart and the mind. She devoted herself constantly to those who suffered and when catastrophe

¹ *Plate.*

A leaflet has been produced, from which we have extracted two photos. They show the Empress at the bedside of wounded troops, accompanied by the Emperor, and at the Hiroshima Military Hospital, dignified and beautiful, accompanied by her maid of honour.

struck Japan, the victims could be sure that she would bring them succour and comfort.

When her many occupations left her time, the Empress liked to familiarize herself with the sciences which were developing in Asia and in the Western world and the essentials of which her extraordinary memory enabled her to retain. Her erudition in Japanese classical literature was such that she could recite whole works by heart.

In the field of sociology, the problem which seemed to her to be the most urgent was that of raising the living standards of the people. To this problem she ceaselessly applied her efforts, whether to develop existing organizations or, as was more often the case, to create new institutions and educational centres. The education of women was one of her main preoccupations and those institutions—in particular the “Teacher Training College for Women”—which were concerned with this could count on her moral and material support. She attended the inauguration ceremony of this school to make it known how close to her heart was this institution and subsequently she visited it from time to time to follow up its development and to observe what progress its pupils were making.

She dedicated her poem to this school :

Little use it has
The jewel or glass
That we neglect.
The same is said
Of the way ahead
For intellect.

The Imperial exhortation did not miss its target. It provided stimulus to the desire of Japanese women for emancipation and a full share in the active life of the country.

In a book entitled “Model Women” the Empress paid tribute to all those women, in Japan and elsewhere, who over the centuries have imprinted their personality and their aspirations upon succeeding generations. In the preface to the book, she issues the following declaration concerning the rôle of womanhood : “. . . The degree of family prosperity depends on feminine foresight or the lack of it.

“Thus, prosperity or lack of it is the basis of either the progress or the stagnation of human society. Consequently we must realize the importance of the responsibilities incumbent on woman.”

Philanthropic institutions could always call on their benefactress for assistance, for apart from her personal donations, she knew the art of guiding and stimulating public interest and of obtaining co-operation from the population.

The Empress also watched over the proper functioning of the Jikei Hospital in Tokyo, which gave free medical care to the indigent population. She was the President of the Patrons' Committee formed by ladies from Japanese society. She encouraged the sense of vocation amongst nurses who gave their services voluntarily and thanks to her donations it was possible to improve the work of the various departments of the hospital.

But it was the creation of the Japanese Red Cross which gave joy to the Empress Shôken. She gave it her patronage, for its humanitarian ideal was in accordance with the deep feelings of her own heart. The Emperor shared her enthusiasm for the work and the tasks accomplished by the Red Cross on an international scale. Already in 1874, during the Formosa campaign, the Sovereign had urged the Medical Services of his armies to follow the example of European Red Cross Societies by taking care of wounded without distinction of friend from foe.

Prince Arisugava, commanding the Imperial troops at the time of the Kyushiu revolt in 1877, repeated the Emperor's order. The insurgents had put up a desperate resistance and their ferocious struggle resulted in a great many victims. The capital became alarmed and Mr. Ivakura, the Imperial Vice-Chancellor, who had been initiated in Geneva into relief work in time of war, launched an appeal on behalf of the wounded. Donations in kind and in cash poured in and the willing workers grouped together in an "Association of Brotherhood", under the guidance of Prince Komatsu. Its members came to the help of victims and we shall see how, several years later, the by-laws of this association were revised and completed to become the by-laws of the Japanese Red Cross. In his memoirs, Henry Dunant tells how, in May 1877, this Society was given Government permission to begin its task and it then accomplished important work at the time of the Satsuma rising when much blood was shed.

The Emperor and Empress followed with the greatest of interest the work of the third International Red Cross Conference which took place in Geneva in 1884, and which was attended by representatives of governments already bound to the Convention of 1864. Various Japanese personalities, who were then in Europe, were invited to the meeting (Henry Dunant was a party to this move) and they returned to Japan with the desire that their country should be closely associated with this international movement. A year later the Japanese Government shared their views and on June 5, 1886, the official deed was signed in Berne. It was then that the by-laws of the "Haku-aisha" Society, about which we spoke earlier, came into force. Very soon the young Red Cross Society was the possessor of a model hospital in Tokyo, with a force of eighteen doctors and forty-three nurses, where thousands of patients were treated.

In 1888, when Mount Bantaizan erupted, the Society was immediately able to send doctors and medical supplies.

In 1890, the Japanese Red Cross came to the aid of the crew of a Turkish man-of-war which had become wrecked near Oshima island. During the terrible earthquake which ravaged the provinces of Owari and Mino in 1891, the Society was able to give immediate relief to numerous victims.

The National Society had some 28,000 members already in 1892. Its income was the equivalent of more than Sw.frs. 353,000 and its capital amounted to Sw.frs. 1,300,000. It was now set on a solid footing and fortunate that it was so, for in 1894 the Sino-Japanese war broke out. The Empress and the Central Committee worked intensively on behalf of the wounded and the sick of both armies. The Empress Shôken went to the Military Hospital in Hiroshima, where wounded from both sides were being treated. The records tell us how greatly the patients were moved by this noble woman's interest and kindness. Moreover, distressed at the sight of the wounded who had had to have limbs amputated, she arranged a supply of artificial limbs and followed up with keen interest the rehabilitation of the wounded. She even assumed the cost of hospital care for many wounded.

In 1900, the Japanese Red Cross again went into action at the time of the Boxer revolt. Its membership at that time was eight

hundred thousand. Then, in 1904, the Russo-Japanese war broke out and fighting soon became extensive.

Amongst the sixty thousand Russian prisoners held by the Japanese, were many wounded and sick and of these there were no less than seventeen thousand at Port Arthur. Loading and unloading of the wounded—250 with each voyage—was carried out by a human chain along which the stretchers were passed and the stretcher-bearers, after embarking the patients in the place assigned to them on board, then left the hospital-ship, which was ready to weigh anchor less than an hour after the loading of the first patient. For those days, this was a record.

Alas! reports from both parties to the conflict—despite these fine efforts—mentioned numerous infringements of the Geneva Convention in the course of the struggles in Manchuria, Korea, and the naval battles, which were particularly murderous. The Japanese Red Cross had dispatched to the various theatres of operation 70 relief detachments with stretcher-bearers, whilst 78 others remained available to the military and Japanese hospital-ships. The National Society received donations from the Austrian, English, German, Hungarian and other Red Cross Societies. Well-known doctors and nurses from these placed themselves at the disposal of the medical services of the armies of the belligerent States, thus once more giving striking proof of international solidarity.

The Empress, who witnessed the considerable work accomplished during this bloodshed, often under extremely difficult conditions, paid stirring tribute to all those who flocked to the Red Cross banner for the accomplishment of a humanitarian mission. The princesses, as well as a great many ladies of the nobility, were very active in the workshops making dressings and they paid visits to the hospitals and undertook the transmission of news between the wounded and their families.

This conflict, moreover, had international repercussions for it delayed the revision of the Convention on behalf of victims of naval warfare, which revision had been formally called for at a meeting in The Hague in 1899.

When peace was restored, the Empress and the Central Committee concentrated on consolidating the work of relief in time of peace and on treating the last of the wounded from the conflict

during which 78 Red Cross workers lost their lives. At the wish of the Emperor their names were inscribed amongst the Immortals in the temple of Yakukuni.

II. *WHAT IS THE SHÔKEN FUND?*

The IXth International Conference of the Red Cross was held in Washington in 1912. At the session which took place on May 8 the Chairman, Gustave Ador, who was at that time President of the ICRC, declared that the Japanese delegate had the privilege of announcing an important donation by Her Imperial Majesty. She proposed to set up a fund with a capital sum of 100,000 gold Yen for the purpose of reinforcing the assets of the Red Cross movement, in order to enable it to develop its international assistance programme. Thereupon Dr. Akiyama stated that His Sovereign had confidence in the Red Cross mission "founded on humanity and generosity", the first essential qualities of mankind, which would certainly become ever more active when relief was to be extended, not only to the sick and wounded troops in the field, but also to the victims of natural disasters which might occur in time of peace. She was aware that assistance of this nature would contribute to a better understanding of the spirit and principles of the Red Cross, whereof the sentiment of generosity and humanity, which inspires its servants, knows no boundaries or political distinctions. The Empress had expressed her confidence that the example of the Red Cross Societies would induce States to follow in their wake by cementing amongst themselves relations of an ever more amicable character.

The International Conference was invited to draw up for the Fund appropriate statutes and to submit a technical study on the matter to the next meeting. In the meanwhile, the Japanese Red Cross requested that it be given the custody of the donation and proposed to increase it by managing it in a manner which would ensure an annual revenue of at least 4%. This temporary arrangement was accepted with gratitude until a management committee could be set up and the Fund invested under the permanent control of the International Committee in Geneva.

Gustave Ador then spoke on behalf of the assembly to pay tribute to the august benefactress and he proposed that the Com-

mission of delegates should examine the Japanese representative's communication in order to decide upon the utilization of the Fund on behalf of persons injured in time of peace. The following day the Conference decided : *a*) that the Fund should bear the name of Her Majesty the Empress of Japan ; *b*) that it should be kept separate from other funds ; *c*) that the Japanese Commission should safeguard it until 1917 and, in accordance with its own suggestion, increase the capital by interest of at least 4% and, finally, *d*) that draft statutes should be drawn up for submission to the next international conference and that the ICRC should undertake to communicate this draft to all the Red Cross Societies.

The delegates unanimously adopted these proposals and passed a resolution which concluded with the following words :

. . . This Conference recognizes in this generous and significant gesture a convincing proof of that fraternity amongst the people of the earth which, in the face of suffering, recognizes no differences of race and condition, but only a sympathy and a sentiment of universal charity.

The Conference takes note with gratitude of the generous donation by H.M. the Empress and will endeavour to make use thereof, in accordance with the wishes of the royal donor.

It was not possible to turn towards the humanitarian work of peacetime, for the First World War broke out, burdening the Red Cross with the heaviest of tasks.

Hostilities finally ceased in 1918 and the International Committee in Geneva launched its appeal on November 27 to all Red Cross Societies and to the belligerents : " On November 11, armistice was declared on all fronts ; on land, on the sea and in the air, the terrible work of destruction and carnage has suddenly ceased and the world finally perceives the blessed face of Peace, so ardently desired ". The International Committee proposed a meeting of the Red Cross Societies, but it was only in 1921 that the delegates were able to unite in the " Athénée " building in Geneva, the birthplace of the Red Cross. At the time of this Xth International Conference it seemed but logical that the first distribution from the Shôken Fund should reach an exceptional figure, as a result of the war which had, until 1920, put a stop to the functioning of the Fund in the manner for which it had been created. The sum total which was allocated to the National Societies of France, Poland, Greece, Bulgaria and Denmark attained the figure of

Sw.Fr. 140,000 whilst, on a proposal by the Central Committees of Japan, Italy and Sweden, the balance went to the ICRC for the work of peace which it was called upon to undertake by sending missions to various countries who had so requested.

Gustave Ador, as we have said, recalled with gratitude, in 1914, the memory of the deceased noble Empress. He then informed the meeting that the capital of the Fund, increased by interest, had been exceedingly well managed up to 1920 by the Japanese Red Cross, three of the members of which were attending the Conference, accompanied by three delegates from their Government. From that time onwards the entire Fund has been in the hands of the International Committee and we shall show how, from Conference to Conference, the ICRC has acquitted itself of the task of allocating the revenue from the Fund to National Societies, in order to enable them to fulfil urgent projects. It is the international Conferences which have sanctioned the use made of the available income, in conformity with the proposals submitted to the International Committee by the Red Cross Societies themselves. Thus, the Conference of 1923, the XIth, which was also held in Geneva, gave its approval of the ICRC's management of the Fund for the years 1921 and 1922. The Japanese delegate, Mr. Kumazo Kuwata, praised the ICRC for its management after having evoked the memory of the Empress.

During the XIIth International Conference, in 1925, which also took place in Geneva, the balance-sheet which was submitted displayed a considerable increase in the capital. Indeed, the one hundred thousand Yen of 1912 were worth, on December 31, 1924, some Sw.Fr. 288,500. The interest earned was devoted to the struggle against tuberculosis and other contagious diseases, as well as to the relief of disaster victims. At the following Conference, in 1928 at The Hague, the ICRC declared a new distribution in favour of several National Societies.

In October 1930, the XIVth International Conference was held in the Palais des Académies in Brussels in the presence of the Queen of the Belgians. Once again the ICRC delegate was able to state that the Shôken Fund had considerably increased and that a large amount was to be distributed to National Societies.

At the XVth International Conference, which was held in the country of the donor, the Vice-President of the International Com-

mittee, on the basis of article 6 of the Statutes, and with the backing of the prior consent of three national committees, at first proposed the organization of a competition on an international scale open to medical personnel and to use for this purpose the sum of Sw.Fr. 13,000 which was available. A serious economic crisis having arisen, however, this sum was attributed to the ICRC itself, in order to offset, as it were, the losses sustained as a result of the diminished annual contributions from National Societies and also in view of the heavy expense of a mission to Latin America. Events had obliged the International Committee to install two documentation bureaux.

The Cuban delegate therefore moved that the Conference resolve unanimously to assign the amount envisaged for the competition for medical personnel to the ICRC in view of the immense services it had rendered. He pointed out that the ICRC's resources are problematic and do not give assurance for its future on a material basis, especially when unexpected events cause it to be confronted with important tasks. For the same reasons the delegate for Spain urged the Conference to give support to the Fund for the International Committee of the Red Cross, set up by the latter on May 1, 1931, with an inalienable capital of nearly one hundred and eleven thousand Swiss francs. This capital had fortunately increased rapidly, thanks to a grant by the Swiss Confederation of half a million francs and also by reason of donations from individuals. The XVth Conference approved this initiative and invited the Governments of States which were signatories to the Convention to follow the example of the National Societies and of the Swiss Confederation in their attitude towards the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Several years later, with the outbreak of the Second World War, the Geneva institution was confronted with even greater tasks. Without the considerable help of Switzerland it would not have been able to implement the vast assistance programmes spread over five continents. It was necessary to await the 1949 Diplomatic Conference for the formulation and voting of a resolution which henceforth ensured contributions from governments. In point of fact nearly every State is resolved today to grant financial support to the ICRC.

Reverting to the Tokyo Conference in 1934, the meeting was

informed that the Dowager Empress and her daughter had, from their own personal resources, allocated an additional one hundred thousand yen to the Shôken Fund as a tribute to the memory of their illustrious ancestor. Thus, on February 12, 1935, the ICRC was able to inform the National Societies by circular that the Shôken Fund, as a result of this valuable donation, had now attained the figure of Sw.Fr. 346,250.

The regulations governing the Fund up to that time were then modified. It was proposed that the International Committee retain the custody of all the capital, assuming the responsibility for investing it in the most advantageous conditions, but that the League, which was created in 1919, should be associated with the decisions to be taken concerning the periodic distribution of revenue, in accordance with articles VIII and IX of the Statutes of the International Red Cross, which were drawn up in 1928. The ICRC immediately agreed and suggested sending a declaration of gratitude to the two donors. The Conference rose to express its consent and its gratitude and the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the League emphasized how greatly his Board appreciated the ICRC's management and the fact that it would henceforth be associated with the ICRC in the attributions of the revenue from the Fund.

It was for the XVIth International Conference in London to ratify these amendments of the regulations. The new administrative commission for the Shôken Fund from then onwards comprised six members, three of whom were appointed by the ICRC and the others by the League, and its main function consisted in deciding on the contribution, each year—on April 11, the anniversary of the donor's birth—of the revenue from the Shôken Fund to those National Societies which, before December 31 of the previous year, submit application, giving their reasons and for the purpose of fulfilling the following objectives :

- a) assistance to relief organizations in peacetime ;
- b) the spreading of technical knowledge for the prevention and cure of tuberculosis and infectious diseases ;
- c) relief to victims of disasters.

In accordance with this well-established practice, distributions to National Societies continued up to 1941. They enabled the com-

pletion of transfusion centres, anti-tuberculosis dispensaries and first-aid posts, as well as the reinforcement of the struggle against vitamin deficiencies. Now that particular year a tornado of extreme violence had laid waste an area of Portugal and the National Red Cross had exerted itself to the limit; consequently, help was given by granting it an extraordinary distribution.

The Second World War prevented the International Conferences of the Red Cross from being held and it was only in 1948 that the XVIIth Conference took place in Stockholm, in the course of which the Joint Commission for the Shôken Fund announced that a total of 142,000 francs had been distributed in the meantime to the benefit of National Societies on five continents. At Toronto, in 1952, the Joint Commission declared four further distributions amongst fourteen Societies. Then, in New Delhi, at the XIXth Conference, the Commission submitted a list of grants in favour of sixteen new Societies. From 1956 to 1963, total grants represented almost 100,000 francs in favour of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and in Latin America.

Despite all the tribulations which have shaken the world since the creation of the Fund, the inalienable capital has increased and today stands at almost Sw.Fr. 487,000, whilst the revenue has enabled the distribution to National Societies and to the activities for peace carried out by the Red Cross to attain almost 700,000 francs. Thus was transformed into reality the wish of a generous and noble woman who, in the same manner as the Empress Augusta and the Empress Marie Feodorovna, has given such effective support to the work of the Red Cross across every frontier.

M. ICONOMOW