

*IN GENEVA***Tribute to the ICRC**

The World Veterans Federation, which held its XIth General Assembly in Lausanne, from May 1-6, wished to express to the International Committee of the Red Cross its gratitude for the immense work accomplished on behalf of the victims of two world wars and other conflicts.

In the course of a ceremony which took place on May 3 at the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the presence of members of the Committee and more than 250 veterans, Mr. W. Ch. J. M. Van Lanschot, President of the World Veterans Federation (WVF), presented to Mr. Jacques Freymond, Vice-President of the ICRC, a bronze plate "as a token of gratitude" from veterans of fifty-one countries¹.

Then, the members of the Executive Bureau and the delegates of the World Veterans Federation visited the Central Tracing Agency and saw a film on the history and work of the ICRC.

At the ceremony, Mr. Van Lanschot and Mr. Freymond gave the following addresses:

Mr. Van Lanschot :

"The Eleventh General Assembly of the World Veterans Federation is being held in Switzerland to enable us to join in the celebration of International Cooperation Year and, on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Founding of the United Nations, to pay tribute to that organization which we believe constitutes the focal point of man's struggle for a world of peace and freedom.

Neither our visit to Switzerland nor our recognition of achievement in the field of international cooperation would, however, be complete if we did not on this occasion also give expression to our gratitude to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The common interests and objectives of our two

¹ *Plate* : Mr. Van Lanschot presents a bronze plate as a token of gratitude to the ICRC ; Mr J. Freymond extends thanks.

On behalf of the World Veterans Federation, of which he is President, Mr. Van Lanschot presents a testimony of recognition to the ICRC...



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... and is thanked by Mr. J. Freymond, Vice-President of the ICRC

Photos J. Zbinden



organizations have produced a close and valued collaboration, and have enabled us in the WVF to understand and appreciate the many, fundamental contributions made by the Red Cross in support of humanitarianism and cooperation throughout the world.

We are honored to have with us today the distinguished representatives of the League of Red Cross Societies. In many countries, the member associations of the WVF enjoy productive relationships with the National Red Cross Societies, and we are grateful for the League's success in making the ideals of the Red Cross effective through international, national and local organizations and programs.

The millions of veterans and war victims who make up the World Veterans Federation claim a special competence in evaluating the significance of the ideas which underlie the Red Cross and the work which results from those ideas. In war, we have had intimate knowledge of the humanitarian services carried out under your famous symbol, and many of us here today will never forget the hope, the comfort, the preservation of life itself which has come to us as a result.

We have given in our own work special attention to the Geneva Conventions, which are at the heart of the Red Cross idea. During the 101 years since the signature of the first of these international agreements, a new humanitarian element has found its place in the realm of conflict. To the extent the Conventions have been observed, suffering has been reduced, compassion and reason have been given opportunity to work even in the midst of the tragedy and the unreason of war. For more than a century there has been an increasingly universal respect for the principles set forth in the Conventions. As we seek to promote the further development of international agreement and integrity as necessary bases for peace, we regard the Geneva Conventions as essential evidence that success is possible; they exist, they are realistic, they are when applied, effective. It is certain, therefore, that the history of these inspired examples of international cooperation, and their future impact, are among mankind's greatest successes in its quest for peace.

Today, as we strive together to give voice to the forces of reason and progress, we rejoice in the persistent confluence of ideas and action as carried out by the Red Cross and the WVF. Whether we speak of the propagation of the principles embodied in the Geneva Conventions, of the protection of the rights of prisoners of war and other deported or detained persons, of the rehabilitation of the disabled, of improved respect for human rights in general, of economic and social development in general—we are speaking of ideas and of actions which are basic components of the work of the Red Cross and of the WVF—we are speaking of ideas and actions which are basic components of peace and of human freedom.

The World Veterans Federation is, compared to the Red Cross, a young organization. This year, we will celebrate our fifteenth anniversary ; whereas the Red Cross spans more than a century. We know, however, that the inspiration which has motivated our membership in this generation has its roots in the experience of the veterans and the victims of all wars. I am confident, therefore, that we speak not only for ourselves, but also for all men and women of goodwill who, having experienced the horror and suffering of war, pay homage to those who work for peace. We speak for those who, having seen the torment of a world plagued by tyrannical concepts which deny the value of the individual, are resolved to strive relentlessly for the protection of human rights, and who give thanks to all who join in this effort.

For these reasons, we will be honored if on the occasion of our Eleventh General Assembly, you will accept this plaque. In grateful remembrance of what you have done, with faith in what the future contributions of your great movement will be, we say with all the sincerity those words can contain, " In Gratitude " ."

Mr. Freymond :

On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross, I would first and foremost like to express our institution's gratitude. The tribute paid to us today by the World Veterans

Federation and its twenty million members is a pleasure and an honour for us.

Many are the veterans of the two world wars, and of numerous other conflicts, whose names are contained in the records of the Central Tracing Agency, in the lists of the wounded and the sick, and of victims of all sorts. For all of them, the Red Cross has endeavoured to alleviate their suffering. We would have liked to do much more. There were many men whose suffering we were unable to relieve and many perished for want of that protection which in spite of all our efforts we were unable to grant them in view of the modest resources available. When conflicts break out our action in the midst of unleashed fury too often meets obstacles which are more political and psychological than material.

Your presence here today, along with other testimony, and the thoughts which you have been kind enough to express, justify our belief that in spite of this accumulation of difficulties the Red Cross has not failed in its mission during times of distress. And, when I say the Red Cross, I do not mean only the International Committee, but also the League and the National Societies of many countries.

You rightly said, Mr. President, last year, on the occasion of the commemoration of the Centenary of the First Geneva Convention, that "no one is better placed than the veterans to testify to the genuine and profound significance of the Geneva Conventions and the efforts of the Red Cross to prevent and relieve suffering". That is why the testimony of their gratitude which you bring us today moves us most deeply.

In a number of fields where the Red Cross carries out its works of relief, the World Veterans Federation, from its very early days, has co-operated with us to seek practical means of implementing joint humanitarian action, whether connected with humanitarian law, the tracing of missing persons or the bringing of aid to certain categories of war's victims. In all circumstances, you have shown that in principles and action on behalf of mankind, you are akin to us, and that you work for an ideal which in many ways is parallel to our own. Like you, we realize that "it is more than ever necessary to act

intelligently, creatively and practically in order to strengthen the principles of international co-operation and to give new impetus to the progress of humanity towards a world in which peace, liberty and justice are the universal objective”.

This sentence, taken from a report to the eleventh General Meeting of the World Veterans Federation seems to me perfectly to express the spirit which animates us all here.

The International Committee has the permanent mission of maintaining the spirit of the Red Cross on the international level and even more of bringing relief to victims throughout the world wherever they may be. We are pleased to know that you are at our side and that you are ready to support the action undertaken by the International Committee of the Red Cross as a modest neutral intermediary. At the present time of awesome industrial and scientific development, when everything seems concerted to lead humanity to a new world, where man is in danger of becoming no more than a mere number lost in the multitude, without individual personality, in the midst of increasing anarchy, it is comforting to know that the veterans of the whole world, together with the 188 million human beings of the Red Cross movement, are resolved to remain faithful to the principles which guide us and to make their beneficial influence effective.

Your support is essential to us. We are profoundly grateful for it.

Training course on the Geneva Conventions

On April 28, 1965, the International Committee of the Red Cross received at its headquarters a group of some fifty Swiss Army officers headed by Brigadier Jean Schindler ; they came to take part in an introductory course on the Geneva Conventions, organized with the assistance of the ICRC.

After being welcomed by Mr. Gonard, President of the ICRC and a former Swiss Army Corps Commander, the officers heard a number of lectures in German and in French on the Institution's activities in time of war. This was followed by a visit to the Central Tracing Agency.