

The Red Cross and Peace¹

THE ALLEVIATION OF WAR VICTIMS' SUFFERING — A RED CROSS CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROMOTION OF PEACE

We must be grateful to the organizers of this conference for choosing as its theme one of the major concerns of everyone who is devoted to the Red Cross—work on behalf of peace. Indeed, we should never forget that the fundamental reason for the existence of the Red Cross is to work for peace. It is also useful to recall what the Red Cross means by that glorious word: peace.

For too long, people considered peace to be only the absence of war. Nowadays, we know very well, however, that when the guns are finally silenced, a real state of peace does not necessarily ensue. Right before our eyes, there are so many examples of violence, arbitrary exercise of power, injustice and contempt for the most basic principles of humanity that we are compelled to recognize that the spirit of war predominates over the spirit of peace. The more or less veiled refusal to concede to large communities of people the right to their national identity, discrimination against certain minorities, obstacles to the essential freedoms of the individual—all these testify to a spirit of war. The will to destroy an adversary, whether physically or morally; the killing of innocent people; the systematic practice of torture and terror; the deliberate teaching of hatred: all are diametrically opposed to true peace—and thus to the principles of the Red Cross. And we who are here, all representatives of the Red Cross, should not be afraid to say so.

What we long for is a peace based on justice, a fair distribution of needs and resources, on respect, under all circumstances, for the prin-

¹ The two following texts were prepared and presented by the ICRC to the World Conference of the Red Cross on Peace held in June 1975 at Belgrade.

ciples of humanity. Some people would like to have us give more active support to the fight they are carrying on against social, economic and political structures which they regard as oppressive. Of course, the Red Cross, whose doctrine is based upon respect for the human personality, without any discrimination, recognizes these aspirations for more justice. Nevertheless, it is no more its function to advocate measures designed to change a political regime than it is to support the status quo. It would exhaust all of its energies if it sought to abandon the field which properly belongs to it.

It is up to the respective governments and the various international organizations they have established for the purpose to harmonize relations between nations, to define their respective areas of sovereignty, to set up an effective system for the settlement of international disputes. The Red Cross must not attempt to substitute itself for them or it will lose all the confidence it has earned and run the risk of discord and paralysis.

The true role of the Red Cross on behalf of peace is on a different level. It consists essentially in contributing, through its impartial relief activities, to the restoration of an atmosphere of mutual understanding, which may lead to foundations for a true peace, sounder than those which result from the mere balance of power. By working for an ever-wider application by belligerents of the principles of humanitarian law, the Red Cross, in the very midst of the turmoil, prepares the ground for the resumption of dialogue. Without wasting time in endeavouring to determine the responsibility for starting a conflict—which is not its task—the Red Cross intervenes on behalf of the victims, who have equal rights, no matter to what camp they belong, to be protected and assisted. In so doing, the Red Cross facilitates the reconciliation of hearts and minds, when the time comes. It helps all of us to recognize that we are all equally concerned with what happens in the world. This is perhaps the greatest Red Cross contribution to peace—the effort to develop this sense of solidarity in mankind. To carry out this task, it is essential for everyone to work together, before, during, and after periods of armed conflict.

The various action programmes we present below are all based upon the foregoing considerations and they all call for close co-operation in this spirit, between all the different organs of the Red Cross.

1. Preparatory action when armed conflict is feared

On a number of occasions, it was found that precious time might have been gained if certain protective measures had been taken prior to the outset of hostilities. For this reason, whenever circumstances permit, the ICRC, in consultation with the National Societies and governments concerned, seeks to define in advance the basis for possible humanitarian intervention, so that this may be more effective if the need eventually arises. Such initiative must be undertaken only with the utmost discretion, for it is vital above all not to risk aggravating tension between the parties. It would be useful therefore, whenever the danger of armed conflict arises between two States, for the leaders of the National Societies concerned to give their immediate attention to the various preparatory or preventive tasks incumbent upon them, especially in regard to the protection of potential victims, such as:

- Making contact with the responsible authorities to consider the assistance which the National Society may render them in order to put the Geneva Conventions into effect as rapidly and completely as possible—evaluating and strengthening the available resources in manpower and material; studying possibilities for neutralizing certain zones; protecting civilian nationals of the adverse party who might not be able to leave the national territory; and those functions which should be discharged even when there is no threat of armed conflict, namely the setting up of a national information office for civilians and missing persons; publicizing humanitarian principles, etc.
- Making preliminary contacts with the ICRC:
 - (a) to prepare possible action programmes;
 - (b) to facilitate studies by the ICRC, the League and/or various National Societies for emergency relief plans, for the evacuation of victims, etc.
 - (c) to permit the recruitment by the ICRC of the necessary extra personnel, doctors, nurses, delegates, radio operators, etc.
- Surveying the situation and co-operating with the ICRC delegates, whose first responsibilities will be to make contact with the authorities concerned, and to set up a rapid liaison system with the headquarters in Geneva, etc.

2. Implementation of Resolution XXI of the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross at Istanbul

As we recall, the XXIst International Conference recommended unanimously, in Resolution XXI, "that in cases of armed conflicts or of situations which are a threat to peace the ICRC shall, if necessary, ask the representatives of the National Societies of the countries concerned to meet together or separately with the ICRC to study the resolution of humanitarian problems involved and in agreement with the Governments concerned to examine what contribution the Red Cross could make to preventing the outbreak of the conflict or achieving a cease-fire or cessation of hostilities." In addition, the Resolution recommended "the National Societies to comply with the request of the ICRC and give it all desirable co-operation in this field."

The need has been shown again and again for maintaining contact between the various organs of the International Red Cross, when all other links are broken, to make possible a common effort to solve the manifold humanitarian problems resulting from conflict.

However, the attempts made by the ICRC to put Resolution XXI into effect have rarely been successful. The extreme psychological tension prevailing under the conditions envisaged in the resolution, the refusal by some governments to permit their own National Society to have any contact with the Society of an enemy country, the existence in one country of an unrecognized Society, too often present obstacles which are difficult to overcome.

In certain cases, nevertheless, it was possible for such contacts to be arranged, during periods of tension or actual hostilities, through the intermediary of the ICRC, or by sister Societies or directly by the Societies concerned (the Red Crescent Societies of Algeria and Morocco in 1964, the Red Cross Societies of Honduras and El Salvador in 1969, the Iraqi Red Crescent and the Iranian Red Lion and Sun in 1971, the National Societies of Ethiopia and Somalia in 1974, of Mali and Upper Volta in 1975, etc.). In other situations, governments resorted to the services of their National Societies when they felt they could not enter into direct negotiations with the adverse party. Results which have been obtained through such contacts encourage the ICRC to persevere in this field.

To facilitate the effective application of the resolution, it is up to the National Societies, at the right moment, to draw the attention of their governments to the possibilities provided by the resolution for humanitarian action and even for a cessation of hostilities.

The ICRC hopes, in the interest of victims, that National Societies will show their willingness to comply with this resolution, even when unrecognized organizations, inspired by the principles of the Red Cross, are involved. Meetings for purely humanitarian purposes cannot in any event affect the legal status of these Societies. Even less can they constitute interference in the general policies of the belligerents.

Contacts between Red Cross Societies are in order, not only before and during a conflict, but also after the cessation of hostilities, so as to deal with the aftermath of the conflict.

The ICRC therefore intends to explore actively every possibility that exists for the application of the resolution, and is prepared to offer its services at any opportune time.

3. Assistance rendered by National Societies to victims belonging to the adverse party

Such assistance, which is in keeping with the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and with those of humanity and of impartiality in the presence of suffering, has profound moral significance and carries particular weight in the fight for peace.

In immediate terms, of course, assistance given to an enemy who is *hors de combat* may constitute a burden and even a risk. How can one be certain that the wounded man on the battlefield, the soldier who surrenders or the enemy civilian is no longer capable of doing harm?

Apart from the fact that the humanitarian assistance rendered by the Red Cross does not interfere with legitimate measures of security which the authorities may take, it can be asserted that the long-term advantages of such a humane attitude are much more important than its drawbacks, in view of the progress which it makes possible on the difficult road leading to peace.

Conversely, experience has too often demonstrated the terrible consequences of disregard by combatants for the principles of humanity and of respect for the individual, along with the inevitable sequence of violence which results.

Specifically, what are the activities which National Societies can undertake, either in co-operation with the authorities or on their own responsibility, on behalf of enemy victims? It is impossible to enumerate them all, in the face of the multiplicity and the unforeseeable nature of the evils spawned by wars, but we can refer to some of those which are most familiar:

- Assistance to enemy wounded—as in the case of the action of Red Cross medical teams in Lebanon in 1969 and 1973, during internal armed conflict.
- The delivery of relief to enemy soldiers, including the wounded and sick in hospitals as well as prisoners of war in their camps—as in the case of the forwarding and distribution of parcels by the Indian and Pakistani Red Cross Societies in 1965 and in 1972 and 1973.
- The collection and transmission of family news through the Central Tracing Agency, to relieve the anxiety of families on both sides of the front.
- Assistance to civilian nationals of an enemy state, prevented by hostilities from leaving the country.
- Search for missing persons or for the graves of victims belonging to the adverse party.
- Support for the customary activities of the ICRC and for the approaches made by the National Societies to their respective governments with a view to the application of the Geneva Conventions, etc. In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that the role of the National Society in a period of crisis or armed conflict is much more to help its own government to respect its humanitarian obligations than it is to denounce the abuses and failings of the adversary.

We are not unaware of the serious difficulties which may be encountered in carrying out such activities, which usually run counter to public opinion, and of the considerable burden of work which normally falls on the shoulders of the National Societies in time of conflict. Let us remind ourselves however of the action of Henry Dunant at Solferino, which also ran counter to common sense. Although the women of Castiglione first rebuked Dunant for caring for the enemy wounded, they

rallied to the cry "Siamo tutti fratelli !" ("We are all brothers !") It was in this very spirit, on that day, on that battlefield, that the Red Cross was born. It appears essential therefore that the National Societies, to the utmost possible extent, should work to develop that type of activity, in view of its special importance as a contribution to the cause of peace. In doing this, they are being true to their vocation as a factor for the reconciliation of peoples.

4. Increasing the participation of National Societies in international relief activities

Active participation by National Societies in international relief activities is a tangible manifestation of the spirit of human solidarity which inspires members of the Red Cross, and is therefore a contribution to the spirit of peace. Resolutions XXVI and XXXI of the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross at Istanbul and Resolution VIII and Decision No. I of the XXIIInd Conference at Teheran defined the basis and determined the guiding principles for such participation.

It is important to have the maximum possible number of National Societies taking part, in proportion to their means and resources, in conformity with the fundamental principle of Red Cross universality. The League and the ICRC will study ways and means of increasing the number of Societies taking part in such activities, especially in providing qualified personnel.

5. Participation of National Societies in the development of ICRC relief activities beyond the confines of present-day law

Some of the tasks now being undertaken by the ICRC on behalf of the victims of conflicts or disorders, armed or otherwise, are not covered by any provisions of international humanitarian law. The ICRC has nevertheless undertaken them in order to meet needs which unquestionably exist and which are all the more urgent in that no other agency or institution seems capable of dealing with them. This is a constantly recurring phenomenon, particularly apparent in the field of humanitarian assistance, where Red Cross initiative has often served as the basis for studies aimed at the drafting of new treaty provisions. Action of this kind, based on practical needs, may assume widely different forms,

depending upon the circumstances. We may refer to the following examples:

- Assistance given to foreign civilians who are without protection in the territory of a country without normal diplomatic or consular relations with the country to which they belong. It is not necessary for such persons to be harassed, that is, to be arrested, prosecuted or otherwise persecuted in order to justify assistance by the Red Cross. It is sufficient for them to be confronted by any kind of difficulty which would not have occurred had they had the benefit of the protection provided for foreigners under international law in normal times. The forms of such assistance may vary greatly according to circumstances, as, for example, in the case of Koreans in Japan who wished to be repatriated to North Korea, between 1959 and 1967 and again in 1971; or of Pakistani civilians held in Bangladesh and military and civilian Bengalis held in Pakistan, after the conflict in the Indian sub-continent in 1970.
- Assistance to stateless persons, either *de facto* or *de jure*, forced to leave their countries of residence and to whom ICRC travel documents have to be given, as in the case of stateless persons from Egypt after the Suez conflict in 1957, from Uganda in 1972, etc.
- Assistance to various national minorities who need ICRC help or protection, following an armed conflict, as in the case of the Biharis in Bangladesh, or where no conflict has occurred, as in the case of Amazonian Indians, etc.
- Assistance to certain categories of victims on behalf of whom former belligerent States may agree upon a procedure for indemnization which the ICRC may be asked to organize and control, as in the case of former prisoners of war in Japanese hands and of victims of pseudo-medical experiments in Nazi camps.
- Assistance to political detainees and their families, to whom the ICRC has for several years been devoting a very substantial part of its energies and resources. Each year ICRC delegates visit such detainees at more or less regular intervals in some thirty countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe.

In addition, in fields already covered by the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC may in practice be called upon, in the interests of victims, to go beyond the juridical basis, in the strictest sense of the term, on which its intervention is founded. This is the case in territories occupied by Israel, where since 1967 the ICRC on its own initiative has been protecting Arab civilians. Many aspects of that mission, as the ICRC has shown in its annual reports, should be carried out by a Protecting Power—but even though provided for in the Geneva Conventions, no Protecting Power has been appointed, for want of an agreement between the parties.

If circumstances require, the ICRC will continue to offer its services and, with all the support which National Societies can give, will endeavour to develop these extra-legal activities, whose importance is obvious, not only for the persons benefiting directly from them, but also for peace, inasmuch as they sometimes make it possible to defuse certain conflict situations. Some of the precedents established may perhaps become in time the subject of new juridical instruments and in this way contribute to the development of international humanitarian law.

6. Activities of National Societies in the event of internal conflict

“In every country in which civil war breaks out, it is the National Red Cross Society of the country which, in the first place, is responsible for dealing, in the most complete manner, with the relief needs of the victims; for this purpose, it is indispensable that the Society shall be left free to aid all victims with complete impartiality.”

We must admit that the application of this resolution, passed by the Xth International Red Cross Conference at Geneva in 1921, often encounters great and sometimes insurmountable obstacles, both practical and juridical. The situation of a National Red Cross Society in an internal conflict is often extremely critical. Like the country itself, the Red Cross may be in danger of being torn apart by antagonistic forces.

Fortunately, this is not always the case. Some admirable examples have recently shown that it is possible to act effectively and impartially on behalf of the victims of both camps—as was done by the Red Cross Societies in Lebanon in 1958, in the Dominican Republic in 1965, in Malaysia in 1969, in the Philippines and Chile in 1973 and 1974, etc.

In carrying on their humanitarian activities, without any discrimination whatsoever, several Societies have been able to:

- provide emergency medical assistance for the wounded;
- arrange the neutralization of hospitals and other medical installations;
- intervene with the parties to a conflict to bring about a truce permitting the evacuation of the wounded, or forward relief;
- organize distribution of food to the civilian population;
- give active support to ICRC approaches on behalf of the prisoners taken on either side;
- provide for the widest possible dissemination of humanitarian principles, etc.

Some Societies have even been able to make a contribution towards talks designed to bring hostilities to an end.

All these Societies shared certain vital characteristics, without which they would have been unable to accomplish such works of peace:

- they enjoyed the full confidence of the authorities and of the whole population;
- they were sufficiently independent of their governments to act in conformity with humanitarian principles;
- their structure and composition were representative of the whole population of their country.

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Let us conclude with a phrase uttered by the great scientist Louis Pasteur: "I do not ask you what your race is, or what your religion is, but only what you suffer from." Far better than any long speech, these few words shed light on what the contribution of the Red Cross can be towards the spirit of peace.

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THE RED CROSS CONTRIBUTION
TO THE APPLICATION AND DEVELOPMENT
OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AS A FACTOR
FOR STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS OF PEACE

I. Dissemination and strengthened application of the Geneva Conventions

The Red Cross world having become increasingly over the past few years aware of the essential contribution that international humanitarian law makes to peace, the International Conference of the Red Cross, at Teheran in 1973, unanimously adopted Resolution No. XII voicing its firm belief that, in a world torn by violence, there was a pressing need for a widespread dissemination of and instruction in the Geneva Conventions, as an expression of basic Red Cross principles, and hence a factor for peace.

In its desire to give impetus to such dissemination, the ICRC made special approaches to governments and National Societies. Its purpose was to ensure that National Societies themselves should, on the one hand, take action in that field and, on the other, prevail upon their governments to discharge their obligations under the Geneva Conventions. This is obviously a long-term undertaking. The first steps have been taken, but there is still a long way to go, for many States have done nothing or hardly anything in the matter.

The target of the ICRC and National Societies in coming years will be to ensure that *all* governments take effective action to this end, particularly among their armed forces, police forces, and State and university authorities.

The endeavour to produce material for dissemination should therefore be supplemented and developed through parallel action in each country for the training of teams that can teach the essential principles of international humanitarian law and of the Geneva Conventions.

To achieve this, the ICRC submits the following programme to the attention of National Societies and governments:

A. The strengthening and institutionalization of co-operation between National Societies and their governments

Experience in a number of countries (e.g. Finland, Hungary, Poland and Romania) has shown the effectiveness in each State of a *permanent body* for the implementation and dissemination of the Geneva Conventions, composed of representatives of the principal Ministries concerned (Foreign Affairs, National Defence, Health, Education, etc.) and of qualified members of the National Society. That body studies and applies appropriate means for the systematic dissemination of the Conventions in the armed forces, in universities and among youth (material, personnel, planning). In an armed conflict, it would contribute to the implementation of the Conventions.

National Societies, whether acting on their own or, if they prefer, with ICRC aid, should in the first place *propose* to their authorities the establishment of a permanent committee. Once it is set up, they could take any *initiative* that circumstances may warrant in suggesting practical measures and co-operating, if need be, in carrying them out. By so doing they will be fully assuming their natural role as auxiliaries to the public authorities.

The ICRC, for its part, should remain in permanent contact with the National Societies and help them carry out what for most will be a new task.

B. Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions among the armed forces

The primary task of the permanent body described in paragraph A. will be to improve and intensify the teaching of the principles of humanitarian law among the armed forces. It will see to it that such teaching is carried out in a credible manner in order that officers may be aware of their responsibilities and that all ranks may be convinced that the principles of the Geneva Conventions constitute points of honour which must be respected in all circumstances.

Basing itself on last year's experience, in Geneva, with a group of officers from different parts of the world, the ICRC proposes to hold

a number of *regional seminars* in 1975 and 1976, with the co-operation of National Societies and the competent authorities. If that initiative meets, as it hopes, with the approval of National Societies, the ICRC will in due time put forward specific proposals.

C. Education of youth for peace

Pursuant to Teheran Resolution XII, the ICRC in 1974 submitted to National Societies a plan of action (based on an experiment carried out by the Austrian Red Cross) for the introduction of systematic Red Cross teaching in secondary schools. According to reports received in Geneva, nine National Societies (Thailand, France, India, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Bahrain, Spain, Sweden and Cambodia) have already acted upon this proposal and it is to be hoped that their example will be followed as widely as possible. In this context, the ICRC would recall the essential ingredients of its plan:

1. To organize *central courses* on the Red Cross for secondary school-teachers. The courses, which should be held periodically to ensure that the largest possible number of teachers are trained, might be given to about thirty teachers at a time. Their purpose would be, on the one hand, to impart knowledge about the International Red Cross (National Societies, the League and the ICRC) and the principles of humanitarian law, and, on the other, to put forward an educational programme for the teaching of those subjects.
2. To organize *regional courses* in which those having taken the central courses would teach one or more persons from each school in the region.
3. To carry out this *teaching in classes*. The teacher would take advantage of any suitable opportunity such as some topical event (World Red Cross Day, for instance) and use audio-visual methods as far as possible.

Knowing that it is often difficult to convey the Red Cross message to youth, the ICRC hopes that National Societies will make any suggestion they may consider appropriate in this context. It is pre-

pared to co-operate to the best of its ability, particularly in central courses.

On the other hand, to develop this proposal and facilitate its fulfilment, the ICRC avails itself of the opportunity of the Belgrade Conference to supplement its 1974 proposal as follows:

Publication of a teaching manual for secondary school teachers

Pursuant to Resolution XII of the XXIInd International Conference of the Red Cross held in Teheran, which requested the ICRC *inter alia* to support the efforts of governments and National Societies in preparing specialized and popular publications in various languages, the Committee now proposes the establishment of a teaching manual for secondary school teachers.

The manual would comprise:

- a statement of the basic principles of the Red Cross;
- a brief introduction to the history of the Red Cross;
- a statement on the organization and essential activities of National Societies, the League and the ICRC (Geneva Conventions);
- a chapter on the theme “The Red Cross, a factor for peace”.

It would appear advisable to link information on “The Red Cross, a factor for peace” with information on our movement’s other activities, although this will call for a specific description which should strongly contribute to the dissemination of the spirit of peace among youth at school. The ICRC, which with its primary school textbook has already achieved decisive results in this field, thanks to the active assistance of all the National Societies concerned, is convinced that such an educational manual will prove a useful instrument whereby the teaching profession can make the Red Cross better known and contribute to youth’s education in the ways of peace.

To afford the publication as wide a base as possible and ensure its universal diffusion, the ICRC proposes to appeal to National Society experts, in different geographical and language areas, to co-operate in the drafting.

National Societies would have to adapt the text to their own specific requirements and have it translated and distributed to teachers.

II. Information on the work in progress for the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law

“Since new and terrible methods of destruction are invented daily, with perseverance worthy of a better object. . .”

This was one of Henry Dunant’s arguments supporting his plea for relief societies for the care of wounded and sick soldiers (the future Red Cross Societies) and for a congress to adopt “some international and sacred principle, sanctioned by a convention” (the future Geneva Convention).

But that is ancient history; the pre-machine-gun era. Since then, a certain amount of progress has been made! For man today, it is the Present and the Future that count.

The Present is that, in spite of all the attempts to outlaw war, all the non-aggression pacts and disarmament conferences, armed conflicts break out or continue in various parts of the world. What is more, a few of the greater powers possess—and perhaps, tomorrow, it may be any country in the world—the means to exterminate all living creatures over a wide area.

The future will depend on the wisdom or the folly of men: either conflicts will continue, extending to genocide leading to an inconceivable sum of human suffering and mankind’s suicide, or, by dint of perseverance and reasoning by governments, institutions and individuals who have the welfare of their fellow-men at heart, peace will reign between human beings and between nations, a peace not founded on the fear of deterrents.

Since new conflicts may break out before that happy day dawns, the means must be found, parallel to the repeated efforts for peace, to reduce the sufferings which are inevitably caused by hostilities, and to make it easier to bring relief to victims. One of these means does exist; it is the Geneva Conventions of 1949. At this very moment,¹ the States parties to those Conventions are gathered at a Diplomatic Conference in order to reinforce them.

¹ February 1975.

The Red Cross takes an interest in this undertaking for several reasons. In the first place, all the Geneva Conventions and their successive revisions since 1864 have been the result of its initiative, and the draft additional Protocols now being examined by the Diplomatic Conference are the work of the ICRC after consultations with government and Red Cross experts. Secondly, those Conventions constitute a solemn declaration by States of the very principles of the Red Cross and their no less solemn undertaking to respect and apply them in all circumstances, even when war is most fiercely waged.

Would it be correct to say that the 1949 Geneva Conventions have been a failure because, twenty-five years after their signature, it has been found necessary to review them? By no means. The study and adoption of the additional Protocols seem rather to reaffirm the tenor of the Conventions by making them more explicit, developing and adapting their provisions wherever that may be necessary. There is no human achievement that cannot be perfected. Gaps must be filled, doubtful provisions corrected and shortcomings remedied wherever such defects become apparent by the passing of time and in the light of experience. Let us not forget that the 1949 Conventions were elaborated by about sixty countries and that today, as a result of numerous countries having acquired independence or because of other circumstances, the number of Contracting Parties has almost doubled. The problem therefore consists in finding among so many participants, whose origin, historical development, traditions and political, racial, religious or ideological notions are tremendously varied, a common denominator which would make it possible to attain—by universal, and therefore the most efficacious consent—the goal before us: to reduce suffering and to care for victims humanely. In short, we have to oppose the often uncontrolled atrocities of what are called the “requirements of war” by the erection of barriers constituting the still more imperative requirements of humanity and peace.

But the Red Cross is not merely interested in this problem. It has an essential role in the erection of the barriers, by drawing up the text—which has now been completed—of the draft Protocols, and sending people to participate in the Diplomatic Conference in their capacity as experts, as in the case of the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, or as members of government delegations, as in the case of certain representatives of National Societies, in order to create a climate of

understanding and goodwill favourable to the seeking of the common denominator referred to above.

The finest pacts are worth only the use made of them. With regard to the Geneva Conventions, while regrets may be expressed that, during past wars, they were not ratified by all the countries of the world, and that omissions and even violations occurred, it must be acknowledged that, as a general rule, in all those cases where they were legally in force and where they were more or less applied by belligerents, with the co-operation of the protecting Powers and the ICRC, the lives that were saved may be counted in millions, and in millions again the victims whom the Conventions made it possible to help.

The Conventions are pacts entered into between States. It is therefore the authorities of the belligerent parties who alone bear the responsibility for their application. But assistance may, nay must, be given to them. Everyone, and primarily the Red Cross, is concerned. The Red Cross, by its very function, is admirably placed to make known the principles, meaning and scope of the Conventions and, consequently, the advantage of the work now being done at the Geneva Conference. It can, moreover, contribute to the inculcation of a horror of war and a determination to respect undertakings entered into before the whole world, should a conflict unhappily break out. And this it can do, going beyond the complexity of the law and all juridical, political, military and other considerations, by constantly defending the cause of those for whom the Conventions exist: the human being, by which we mean any man, any woman, any child who, tomorrow perhaps, may be wounded, a prisoner, tortured, starving, or dying by the roadside.

Only too often do wars leave behind, not only ruin and devastation, but also an accumulation of hatred and resentment, the germs of future conflicts. The correct application of the Conventions, by reducing suffering, by allowing the enemy to aid his wounded or captive adversary, is bound to facilitate and hasten the restoration of a climate of peace between the antagonists, once the guns have been silenced.

At this moment, as the governments are deliberating the reaffirmation and reinforcement of the 1949 treaties, also known as the "Red Cross Conventions", the time seems ripe for undertaking here the study of the contribution which the Red Cross may make, by this means, too, to the creation of the spirit of peace.