

The Netherlands

The Centenary of the Netherlands Red Cross was officially celebrated on September 1, 1967 at the Congress Centre in Amsterdam. The ceremony took place in the presence of H. M. Queen Juliana accompanied by Princess Beatrix and Princess Margriet. Also present were many Red Cross personalities who had come to the Netherlands to take part in the Board of Governors of the League and the Council of Delegates as well as branch members of the National Society from all parts of the country¹.

After Jonkeer G. Kraijenhoff had opened the session by recalling the importance of this anniversary for the Netherlands Red Cross, of which he is President, Mr. N. Roolvink, Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health, referred to the important part played in the nation by the Society founded by Royal Decree on July 19, 1867 and which was the first to bear the name of the Red Cross.

“A world without pain”, he said, “is unfortunately impossible to imagine and, for that reason, there exists an institution such as the Red Cross whose principles include giving help to those in need, nationally and internationally, without distinction of nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. A very precious thing which we cannot appreciate enough. The Netherlands Red Cross is part of the life of the population of our country and it is the real wish of the Government that it may remain so.”

The Minister, then, on behalf of the Government, offered gifts to the National Society: uniforms for 12,000 members of the Volunteer Corps and three ambulances with the most modern equipment. He also presented royal decorations to several Red Cross members.

The Presidents of the International Red Cross institutions then spoke, some of whose remarks we give below.

¹ *Plates.* — Official celebration of the Netherlands Red Cross Centenary.

- a) Centre, H. M. the Queen of the Netherlands and Princess Beatrix, with Jonkheer G. Kraijenhoff, National Society President between them. League and ICRC Presidents can also be seen in the front row.
- b) Final tableau.

The Countess of Limerick, Chairman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross said

We, from many other lands, welcome this opportunity of paying tribute to your magnificent record of achievements both in the cruel and demanding years of war, and the no less exacting but constructive activities of peace.

In all things most worth striving for, the Red Cross has a great opportunity and a leading part to play. First and foremost among these, I am sure we should all agree, is the advancement of world peace.

International unity is the only way to dispel national insecurity. With so much to divide nations the Red Cross is a great unifying force ... it is helping to bring about a better understanding between the peoples of the world.

Mr. Samuel A. Gonard, President of the International Committee spoke as follows.

Your present has its roots in history, a history whose profound significance I would like to emphasize by recalling that the Netherlands was one of the first countries to respond to the wish with which Henry Dunant concluded his book *A Memory of Solferino*. Dunant urged the setting up in each country of a national aid society for the nursing of the sick and wounded in the field. The Netherlands took part in the Geneva Conference in 1863, which is held to be the founding conference of the Red Cross and which was convened by the Committee of Five—later to be renamed the International Committee of the Red Cross. At that meeting, which can be said to have been an act of genuine faith in humanity, your country was represented by a man of noble character, Physician Officer Bastings. How can we not recall on this anniversary the name of this great and faithful friend of the promotor of the Red Cross, with whom he upheld the idea of the neutrality of the wounded and of the medical service. This was a question of capital importance for the Red Cross, and it was Bastings who, by dint of perseverance, succeeded in having it included in the programme of the 1863 Conference. A few years later a Society was set up in the Netherlands which has carried out so many national and international actions. It understood from the outset the universal character of our movement. Not only did it become increasingly merged into the life of the country, repeating its good work, widening and diversifying, but it was also among the first to give assistance to the victims of conflicts abroad.

I would add that never has the International Committee appealed in vain for your co-operation in its large-scale relief actions



Centre, H.M. the Queen of the Netherlands and Princess Beatrix, with Jonkheer G. Kraijenhoff, National Society President. League and ICRC Presidents can also be seen in the front row.

Official celebration of the Netherlands Red Cross Centenary

Final tableau





Ottawa, Rendez-vous 67, International Red Cross Youth Seminar: youth speaks to youth.

in various countries, and I avail myself of this opportunity to thank you for your generous support.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is delighted to be associated in this fine ceremony and to convey to you its good wishes and fraternal greeting.

The Chairman of the League Board of Governors said these words :

Over the last thirty years, the Netherlands Red Cross has participated in a large number of relief actions—an eloquent testimony to the assistance the Society has given to its sister Societies, by its regular response to the international appeals launched by the League Secretariat and its efficient collaboration.

As a member of the League, the Netherlands Red Cross guarantees, as far as possible, its assistance for relief actions following disasters in other countries. The National Society also regularly provides the League with blood plasma for less-favoured National Societies. It would take far too long to cite all the actions in which the Netherlands Red Cross has taken part, but I can assure you that if this assistance could be translated into figures it would be truly impressive.

A rendering was then given of the *Cantata Misericordium* for choir and orchestra by Benjamin Britten, composed in 1963 in Geneva especially for the Red Cross Centenary. Then followed the showing of a new film of the Netherlands Red Cross.

The ceremony ended with terms of congratulations and good wishes by Mr. F. J. J. M. van Thiel, President of the Second Chamber of the States-General and by Mr. W. Ch. J. M. van Lanschot, representing humanitarian organizations, whilst Jonkeer G. Kraijenhoff expressed his Society's appreciation. He paid tribute to the Queen for the interest which she and members of the Royal Family always showed in the Red Cross which gives it most valuable encouragement.

The guests of the Red Cross were then invited to an outing on the Amsterdam canals, followed by a reception given by the municipal authorities at the Rijksmuseum, thus terminating Centenary Day which had been organized so efficiently and with such generosity, imparting a feeling of confidence in the future.