

IN GENEVA

Norway's King Visits ICRC

On April 4, 1968, H. M. Olav V, King of Norway, honoured the International Committee of the Red Cross with a visit.¹ He was welcomed by the institution's President, Mr. S. A. Gonard, who conducted His Majesty to the assembly room and there presented the ICRC's Vice-Presidents, members and senior staff, as well as the Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General of the League. After the King had signed the Golden Book, Mr. Gonard delivered an address from which we quote:

It is not my intention to dwell here on the aims and activities of the International Committee, but rather to pay a tribute to Norway and its people, as personified by Your Majesty, for what they have done for Red Cross and for the sustained and generous assistance they have always granted to our institution.

From its very foundation, the Norwegian Red Cross Society took an active part in the relief actions organized by the International Committee during the many conflicts which have caused so much bloodshed in Europe. It displayed the full measure of its effectiveness during the First World War, when the great figure of Fridjoff Nansen emerged.

By his spirit, his courage, his bold initiative, he demonstrated that Norway was in the very forefront of international solidarity.

Nansen's relationship with the International Committee was one of unwavering confidence as may be seen, notably, from the letters he wrote and which Your Majesty may see displayed on this table with

¹ *Plate.* — ICRC President, Mr. S. A. Gonard, welcomes H.M. King Olav V of Norway to the institution's headquarters.

His Majesty at the Central Tracing Agency.

other documents. He later became the League of Nations First High Commissioner for Refugees, when, in a different yet vital manner he showed his capacity for giving effect to actions launched by our institution.

To each of our appeals, and sometimes even anticipating them, under the dynamic impulsion of its President, General Dale, the Norwegian Red Cross responded generously by donations of all kinds. To list them would but be a catalogue of all the actions our institution has undertaken over the past years for the benefit of the victims of internal disorders and conflicts which have successively erupted in the Congo, in Laos, in the Yemen, in Cyprus, in India and Pakistan, in Vietnam, in the Near East and recently, in Nigeria where the Norwegian Red Cross was the first to make available last Autumn a medical team which performed magnificent work in difficult and often dangerous circumstances.

At the same time the International Committee has viewed with appreciation the valuable assistance which the Norwegian people, through their Red Cross, have extended to the victims of natural disasters which have devastated so many unfortunate countries these last few years. That is why I particularly wished to have the Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Red Cross Societies with us here, during the visit with which Your Majesty honours us. When disaster strikes, the League co-ordinates international Red Cross relief action. I know, in addition, how deeply grateful our sister institution—the League—is for the invaluable support its development programme receives from the Norwegian Red Cross Society.

Norwegian Red Cross backing, both of the League and of the International Committee, is effective because the Society is strong, popular and active in Norway itself, under the high patronage of Your Majesty and that of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince for its Junior Section.

I should stress that despite the extension of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, in which Norwegian diplomatic representatives and legal experts played so active a part, humanitarian law does not yet cover every field of human suffering ; by which, Your Majesty, I mean the

suffering caused by the troubles and conflicts which occur within a State and that to which civilian populations with inadequate protection are exposed from the fearful dangers of modern weapons of war.

My colleagues and I warmly appreciate the concern which the Royal Norwegian Government and Red Cross constantly display for these problems as well as that of the prevention or peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Confronted with these vast problems and difficulties, the International Committee might lose courage were it not sure of being able to rely on receiving from certain governments, such as that of Norway, that understanding and support which alone enable it to accomplish its mission.

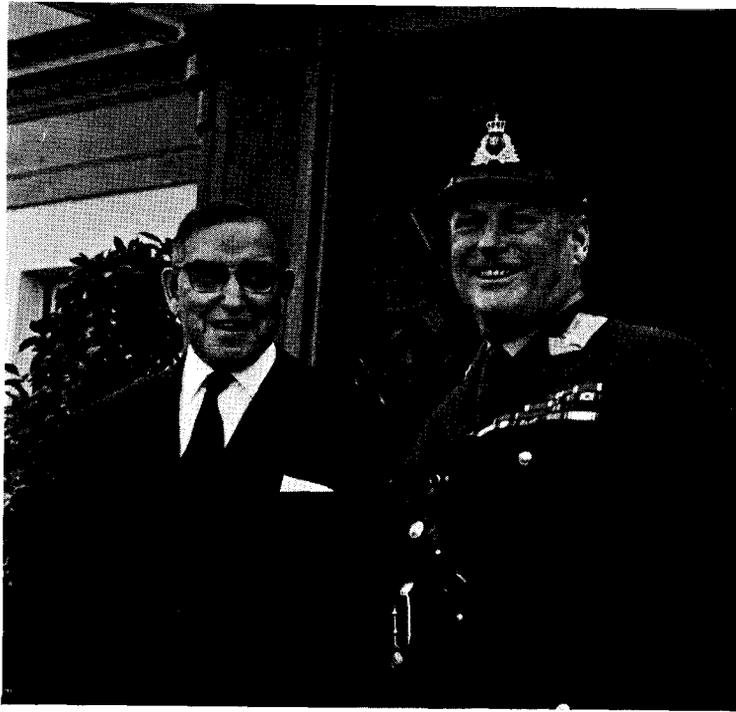
In this room, in which are displayed the first Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Henry Dunant and the three attributed to the International Committee by the Norwegian Parliament, symbolic of our relationship with Norway, Your Majesty's visit is a striking testimony of the unstinting support which you personally and your noble people give to our Committee's principles and action.

On behalf of my colleagues, of all the personnel of our institution and of our delegates who, in distant lands, risk their lives in the defence of our ideal, I express to Your Majesty our profound and respectful gratitude.

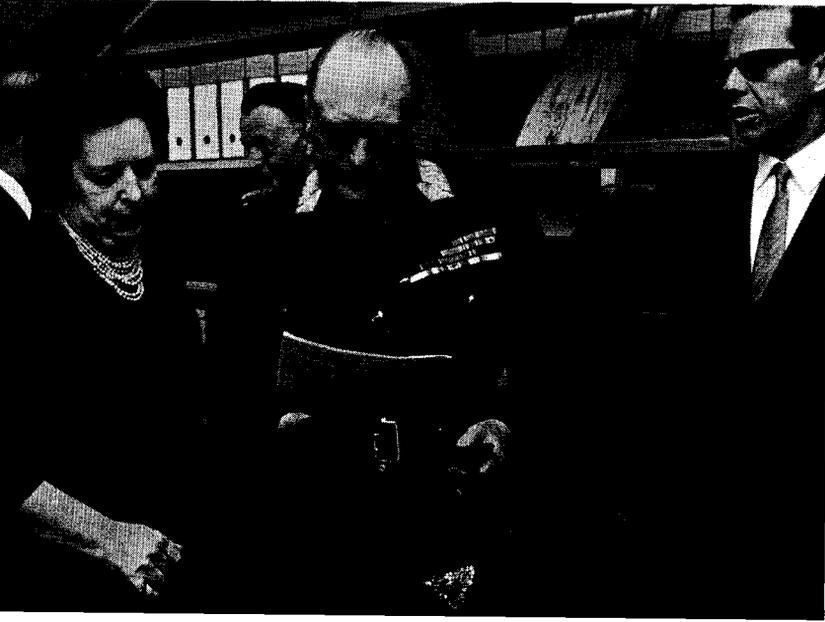
Replying to the ICRC President, His Majesty said:

May I say just a few words in answer to all the very kind and generous words which you pronounced to me. First of all, I would like to say how very pleased I am to be able to be present here, in Geneva, at the center of the International Red Cross. An institution which as you also mentioned is held in very great esteem in my country. This is one of the fundamental humanitarian international organisations which was designed to be the assistant in war and peril for the peoples and also to be the assistant when difficulties and natural catastrophes occur. It has for over a hundred years covered the field which its founder hoped it would. It has shown the world that it is possible to co-operate over the frontiers, even in times of stress, unrest and war. It is one of the links which give us all a hope for a future better and safer world

ICRC President, Mr, S. A. Gonard, welcomes H. M. King Olav V of Norway (right) to the institution's headquarters.



His Majesty at the Central Tracing Agency.



in which people from all parts of the world will be able to live in peace and understanding between each other. Even then the organisation of the Red Cross will not be superfluous because it is also in peace time, in more normal times, able to solve and assist in difficulties in innumerable parts of the world. It has given also the lead in how assistance can be given to people in need and distress because even if we get, which we all hope, lasting peace we would not have solved all the problems of mankind and it will be necessary under certain conditions always to have an organisation which is ready and capable of stepping in when mankind, with all his shortcomings can no longer keep going. With these words may I express again my gratitude for your kind words of recognition; for this opportunity of seeing you in your own home and residence; and the hope that the organisation you represent will continue to thrive and to grow in evidence and respect throughout the world.

After the projection of a short documentary film on the ICRC's work in the Yemen, made possible by generous and effective support from the Norwegian and other Red Cross Societies, His Majesty was conducted round the Central Tracing Agency. He then took leave of the ICRC, thus concluding a visit which testified to the excellent connection between Norway and the International Committee, and to the will to maintain and strengthen that link.

Meetings in Geneva

A delegation of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR consisting of Dr. Fiodor Zakharov, Vice-President and Mrs. Lilia Tcherkasskaya, Head of Foreign Relations, visited the ICRC in March 1968 to discuss questions of mutual interest.

Mr. S. A. Gonard, President of the ICRC, and Mr. R. Gallopin, Director-General for External Affairs, had a meeting on April 5, 1968 with U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The discussions were connected with various points of common interest and the work which the ICRC is carrying out in the theatre of several armed conflicts.