

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE RED CROSS

The World Health Organization devotes to our movement a very fine number of its magazine *World Health*, entitled *Red Cross Centenary Album*. This includes photographs, some of which are in colour, together with descriptive texts connected with the principal catastrophes, wars, natural disasters, which since 1859, that is to say since Solferino, have torn various parts of the world asunder. On looking at these pictures others appear which call to mind relief actions accomplished under the sign of the Red Cross, representing great efforts to save, as quickly as possible, what could still be saved.

We can relive the six-year tragedy on a world scale of the Second World War summed up as follows : " Entire armies melted like wax in a brazier, leaving behind them men fleeing, millions of wounded and prisoners. ICRC delegates carried out hundreds of missions. Ten died while accomplishing their duty . . . wherever there was suffering the mere sight of a sign-plate bearing the Red Cross raised boundless hopes " . . .

Under the heading, *Flight, hunger and fear*, the misery of civilian populations is then recalled : " As war swept over Europe, millions of persons fled from their houses and took to the road. Families were scattered to the winds, millions of civilians were deported and interned . . ." Here again the ICRC had its rôle to play : the vast card-index of its Central Tracing Agency, destined originally for prisoners of war, of whom there is a striking picture, also contains the names of missing civilians.

The Album also contains photographs of many natural disasters during the course of which the National Societies have never ceased from saving lives, organizing relief distributions, caring for the wounded, the sick . . .

Due tribute is given both by word and illustration to the workers of our movement, of the countless tasks which they now have to undertake, tasks which far exceed the traditional action of the Red Cross, extending to the most varied social problems. Other passages, full of great interest, describe particular subjects such as the activities of a delegate of the ICRC during the Spanish Civil War, and "In the Congo: Red Cross and WHO", testimony to fruitful co-operation, and finally, "The great adventure of human blood", in which the benefits of blood transfusion are described as well as the ever greater rôle assumed by National Societies in this sphere.

This splendid publication thus calls to mind a hundred years of world history, a century during which the Red Cross has not ceased to be present, through the International Committee, the League and the National Societies. The Director of WHO, Dr. M. G. Candau, emphasizes, in an introductory tribute, the composition of the motive force of the humanitarian idea behind a movement which has now spread to all nations :

At the start of the centenary year of that historic event, the foundation of the Red Cross, it is fitting that the World Health Organization should pay homage to an institution whose rôle and achievements it is well able to appreciate.

The last hundred years have amply demonstrated the sagacity of the men who in creating the Red Cross sought to unify, foster and protect throughout the world those devoted individual efforts which, scattered, would be incapable of meeting the needs that in our modern world may arise at any moment from armed conflict or natural disaster. In addition to applying the humanitarian conventions of which it is the originator and guardian, the Red Cross has been a universal source of comfort and succour in circumstances where it alone was able to answer calls for help through its International Committee and the national Societies of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun that together form the League.

There is more than symbolic significance in the fact that the headquarters of the World Health Organization were established in Geneva, the birthplace of the Red Cross and the world centre of its activity. From the very beginning, this proximity has favoured a constant and

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fraternal co-operation that has been all the easier to realize since some of the basic principles of the older body are reflected in the WHO Constitution. Instances of co-operation in the recent past spring readily to mind : there was occasion to render immediate and extensive assistance to a large country that had newly achieved independence but whose people at the same time found themselves suddenly deprived of even the indispensable minimum of health protection ; there was also in another country the urgent need to provide treatment and rehabilitation services for thousands of sufferers from mass poisoning. In addition to such emergency measures—and there have been many others—the daily contact maintained between the Red Cross and WHO makes it possible for effective if unobtrusive concerted action to be taken at a moment's notice.

The World Health Organization is proud of its association with the great enterprise that sprang from the generous mind of Henry Dunant, and expresses the wish that in the centuries to come the Red Cross may continue to exert its efforts, which are among the most noble that man has ever pursued.
