

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

MEETINGS AND EXCHANGES ON THE OCCASION OF THE RED CROSS CENTENARY

The Red Cross Centenary celebrations in Switzerland took place from August 15 to September 15. The International Review has already mentioned the success of the events and the opportunities which the lectures and seminars offered to specialists from all over the world, to exchange and compare experiences and to extend their knowledge of the Red Cross and its work.

It is a pleasure to revert to this subject with two articles. One of these is by Mr. Jean Pascalis, Deputy Secretary-General of the Swiss Red Cross, who has recalled for us the World Conference of Educators, the International Nursing Study Centre and the International Red Cross Meeting of First Aiders; three important events which gave rise to debates and the third of which involved demonstrations of the greatest interest. It is easy to understand the widespread attention aroused, in particular by the World Conference of Educators, when one reads in this issue the text of the resolutions which were adopted. Our thanks are therefore due to Mr. Pascalis for his contribution.

The second article deals with the seminar on the activity of the Red Cross on behalf of victims of armed conflicts. We owe this to Mr. René-Jean Wilhelm, adviser in the Legal Department of the ICRC, who was responsible for the organization of this seminar, the administrative and practical aspects of which devolved upon the International Committee. It will be remembered that all the Centenary celebrations were prepared jointly by the ICRC, the League and the Swiss Red Cross. It was the League which took charge of the practical organization of the World Conference of Educators and of the International Red Cross Meeting of First Aiders, whilst that of the International Nursing Study Centre was the responsibility of a committee composed of representatives of the Swiss Red Cross, the League and the ICRC.

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

The events organized in Switzerland to celebrate the Red Cross Centenary were intended to render useful services to our movement. It was the aim of the ICRC, the League and the Swiss Red Cross that these should essentially reinforce the institution rather than to glorify its past activity. Apart from the Commemorative Day celebrations, all the events had a utilitarian aspect: International Exhibition; Seminar on activities on behalf of victims of armed conflicts; World Conference of Educators; International Meeting of First Aiders; International Nursing Study Centre; Public Lectures; visits to Red Cross institutions; first aid demonstrations by Red Cross teams and the Swiss Army Medical Service; the Centenary Congress itself, its many related meetings and the International Study Centre for leaders of Junior Red Cross National Societies.

Of these practical demonstrations we would particularly like to mention here the importance of the three meetings which took place outside Geneva from August 19 to 23 and at which were gathered three categories of experts whose qualifications are essential for Red Cross activities, i.e.: educators, nurses and first aid workers.

These three meetings had certain aspects which were decidedly similar, but it is obvious that their importance and the influence which may be expected as a result of their respective achievements cannot be considered as identical. It should be pointed out that such international gatherings are always of value to the Red Cross for they contribute to its unity by the contacts which are formed and the exchanges of ideas and experiences which are carried on. The Centenary was an event for which the National Societies were disposed to undertake financial sacrifices in order to be able to send delegations which were numerous and well qualified:

Educators (43 nations; 130 participants)

First aiders (37 nations; 140 participants)

Nurses (29 nations; 83 participants)

World Conference of Educators — The aim of this Conference was no less than the re-thinking necessitated by the Junior Red Cross programme in terms of modern educational trends and social conditions, which are obviously very different from those

which were prevailing in 1925 when the first World Conference of Educators was held in Paris. At the Lausanne Conference there were fifteen representatives from Ministries of Education, sixty-three educators, school administrators and university professors as well as forty-six representatives of the Junior Red Cross and the Red Cross who took part in the proceedings. The subjects concerned constituted the threefold aspect of the basic programme of the Junior Red Cross, i.e.: 1) the protection of life and health; 2) mutual assistance; and 3) international friendship and understanding; as well as the reconsideration of all the world's problems and needs related thereto.

Dr. Etienne Berthet, Director General of the International Children's Centre, dealt with the "present-day tasks and future trends in health education". Hygiene instruction nowadays is taking on fresh and increasing importance not only, as is too often thought, in developing countries alone, but also and especially in the highly developed countries where new problems, no less serious than those of former times, have to be solved. "It is not sufficient merely to save life; we must help man to live. He must be shown the large share of responsibility which he has to assume in the protection of his own personal health and that of the community in general, which henceforth extends on a world-wide scale". Mr. Pierre François, Head of the Youth Section of the Department of Education of UNESCO, communicated his conviction in his talk on "Education of Youth in the Spirit of Voluntary Service". Youth's aspirations have undergone changes, its conception of mutual aid is no longer that which prevailed a few decades ago; but youth is willing to work in the service of its fellow-men. However, we must know how to discern the new needs relevant to new conditions of life and we must find new solutions to deal with them. Here again, the Red Cross must absolutely know how to adapt itself, as it has always known throughout its first century of existence. Drawing her inspiration from Mr. J. Pictet's book on the principles of the Red Cross, Mrs. Sachiko Hashimoto, Director of the Japanese Junior Red Cross, recalled the necessity to inculcate youth with humanitarian principles and those of the Geneva Conventions, particularly the principle of human kindness which remains one of the few motive forces capable of uniting mankind.

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

Stress must first and foremost be laid on the factors which are common to all men rather than on those which distinguish them from one another, such as differences of race, politics, society, culture and ideology.

These three expositions made a great impression on all those present. They constituted a fine basis on which to work. Other talks, no less topical, provided ample matter for discussion amongst the ten working parties which were formed in a manner appropriate to the interest, qualifications and language of the participants. Eight important recommendations were evolved. Nevertheless, the fruits of the work must now be accepted and digested throughout the world before the extent of the real success of this Conference can truly be assessed. There is no doubt, however, that new horizons have been opened to the Junior Red Cross. Rethinking of the whole problem will be required by many Junior National Societies and some vital revolutionary changes will have to be wrought.

International Red Cross Nursing Study Centre — The result of a study centre is not measured merely by an assessment of the work achieved nor by the number of recommendations drawn up. The spirit in which the work was carried out has also to be appreciated and appraised. In the three centres with which we are concerned the spirit was remarkable, but this was particularly the case amongst the nurses. Most of the National Societies have recourse to the nursing services for many types of activity, especially in the field of teaching where the work is arduous and where all day and every day dynamism and perseverance is called for.

Indeed, it often happens that these nurses work entirely on their own, particularly in the emergent countries where the task is immense and where resources are deficient. For this reason, apparently, all the participants greatly appreciated the contacts they were able to make at Lausanne, as well as the free exchange of ideas and the excellent "esprit de corps" which enabled them to return from whence they came, refreshed with renewed enthusiasm which cannot be but beneficial to the accomplishment of their difficult vocation. Apart from this it is also evident that the subject matter on which instruction was given was highly appreciated.

Everybody was convinced of the urgency of disseminating as widely as possible, especially in the nursing world, the principles of the Red Cross and of the Geneva Conventions and of the need for prompt utilization of the voluntary services as well as for knowledge enabling organization in order to carry out effective action.

But there again, the question arises "How?": How to work in teams, how to fire with enthusiasm, how to make dreary work interesting, how to recruit, instruct and employ voluntary workers, how to organize a nursing service and finally what the Red Cross is exactly and how to ensure that it is appreciated? On these subjects too, lectures were given; once again the effective and productive aspect of the work is revealed in the melting-pot of group activity. Advantage was taken of every imaginable procedure (symposiums, dissertations, conversations, demonstrative reconstructions etc.) to make the discussions and the submission of reports attractive.

International Meeting of First Aiders — It is in this sort of meeting that one realizes that first aid is a universal idea; that it does not differ very much from one end of the world to the other. It is not just an accumulation of techniques. It is in the first place something which is felt, an attitude of mind, a discipline. It is truly one of those factors mentioned by the Educators at Lausanne which can unite men instead of dividing them.

The Meeting at Macolin, near Bienne, was not a competition to stimulate rivalry amongst national teams and thereby to create winners and losers. What mattered was the inter-exchange of experiences, the comparison of methods, techniques and material, as well as the learning of combined operation. One day, during a large scale combined exercise, the participants were split up into international teams of four members. Despite this handicap, the members of the teams understood each other perfectly well without having to exchange a word to perform resuscitation procedure, to improvise a splint, to carry out a perilous rescue, just as they were able to give or to receive brief and precise orders.

For each day there was a particular theme: wounds and fractures, nautical safety, haemorrhage, transport, resuscitation

methods. Each person and team communicated a speciality in some particular field or other. Indeed, first aid must be adapted from country to country to suit specific situations and needs. Once again the courage, perseverance and skill of the first aiders were well in evidence.

There was opportunity to hear several talks both on the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions and on first aid, as well as to take part, as was the case in Lausanne for the educators and the nurses, in fruitful discussions, in the course of which were forged or strengthened those friendships which contribute to the true unity and finally to the effectiveness of the Red Cross.

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Seminar on the Activity of the Red Cross on behalf of Victims of Armed Conflicts

Aims. — In his welcome address to the participants, Mr. M. Bodmer, Vice-President of the ICRC and of the Centenary Commission in Switzerland, defined in the following terms the aims of the seminar held in Geneva :

“ When drawing up the programme of events for this summer, the Centenary Commission considered that amongst all the tasks undertaken today by the Red Cross and by the National Societies, in particular, a special place should also be reserved to tasks which for a long time solely occupied the Red Cross, namely those of aiding the victims of war. The Commission thought it was fitting, in this Centenary year, to examine how these tasks present themselves in the light of the evolution of the world, of the Red Cross and of ideas. It is for you to make this examination, basing yourselves both on the principles of activity in favour of the victims of conflicts and on their practical aspects, since the Red Cross is only living when it gives unceasing practical application to its principles taking new situations into account.

If, during the process of a most interesting development, the ICRC has itself had to act direct and in a practical manner on behalf of victims, National Societies have nevertheless, also in a

sphere which is of interest to us here, to remain active in accordance with the purposes for which they were originally created.

We are now touching, I think, exactly upon the special character of this seminar. For if it bears on the activities of the ICRC and the League, in particular as regards the theme of "international relief actions", the seminar must lay main emphasis on what the National Societies themselves have done and are able to do to come to the aid of the victims of conflicts and to prepare them for such contingencies. To my knowledge this is the very first time that the tasks of National Societies in this field have been reviewed in a complete and systematic manner."

In conclusion, Mr. Bodmer added with reference to the restricted character of the seminar:

"There is a deep reason to justify this and one which you are no doubt the first to understand and approve. Let us in fact admit it, the object of the seminar is a thankless one, as we have to envisage the possibility of armed conflicts, that is to say, a hypothesis which we ardently hope never to see realized. In the course of your work you will no doubt be told why and how this task is entirely compatible with the great desire for peace which animates all peoples and first and foremost, the Red Cross."

Participants in the seminar. — Representatives from twenty-five National Societies were registered to take part in the seminar, either well in advance or upon the opening of the seminar — which was open to all members of the Red Cross in Geneva at the time — and they followed the work of the seminar from beginning to end. These representatives came from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of Australia, Austria, Burundi, China, Congo, Ethiopia, France, Great Britain, Greece, India, Japan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, U.A.R., the United States, Upper Volta, the Yemen.

Furthermore, leaders from National Societies in the following countries attended some of the sessions, particularly those lasting two days: Cuba, Germany (Federal Republic), Iraq, Ireland, Korea (Democratic Republic), Salvador, Tunisia, Turkey. In all,

the leaders of more than thirty National Societies were present or represented at the seminar.

The qualities of these representatives (most of whom were leaders of National Societies), the attention which they devoted to the debates and also the fact that the participants were at close quarters, because they were more numerous than had been expected, created an atmosphere in the sessions of informality and cordiality as well as a readiness to talk which was found by all to be most felicitous.

The Work of the Seminar — In the course of seven sessions, under the chairmanship of Mr. C. Pilloud, Deputy Director for General Affairs of the ICRC, the debates covered the full programme as proposed to the National Societies. Each item on the programme was the subject of a brief introductory exposition, followed up by discussions, sometimes very lively. This brief report does not allow us to give an account of these interesting discussions which followed the introductory talks by members of the ICRC staff, so that we shall merely give an idea of the wide field covered by the work of the seminar by reproducing the programme:

I. INTRODUCTION

The basic principles : the struggle against unnecessary suffering ;
respect for the human being ; the Red Cross against war ;
The types of armed conflicts to be expected ;
Similarities with and differences from the tasks of the Red Cross in the
event of natural disasters ;
Attitude to be adopted in regard to public opinion.

II. PRACTICAL PEACETIME PREPARATION

A) *Activity of the National Societies within the scope of action envisaged in the Geneva Conventions* (the onus of which lies primarily with the government authorities).

— Dissemination of knowledge on the Geneva Conventions and issuing of identity cards — Description and registration of hospitals —

Information bureaux on victims of armed conflicts — Red Cross emblem (its meaning, its use, and the protection it affords) — Legislative measures.

- B) *Preparatory measures for which the National Societies are themselves primarily responsible.* — Preparation for the "mobilization" of the Society's personnel — Training of medical personnel and preparation of medical equipment — Participation in civil defence — Preparation for material assistance — Blood transfusion service.

III. ACTIVITY NECESSITATED BY CONFLICTS (during or after hostilities)

- A) *National Societies of countries involved in international conflict.* — Relief to nationals in the power of the enemy — Relief to enemy victims — Social activity on behalf of victims or their families — assistance to repatriated nationals — Activity in the field of information and tracing — transmission of civilian messages — Assistance to civil population sorely tried by hostilities — Support given to the ICRC activity, particularly to its delegates — Effect of occupation on the National Society of the Red Cross — Activity in the event of interruption of diplomatic relations or in case of international tension.
- B) *Activity in case of internal conflict (civil war, internal disturbances).* Application of article 3 and the principles of the Geneva Conventions — Rôle of National Societies and co-operation with the ICRC — Relief to the victims of events — Visits to various categories of detainees.
- C) *National Societies of countries not involved in conflict.* Delegation of personnel and despatch of medical equipment — Relief parcels to prisoners or sorely tried population — Refugee reception — Reception of certain categories of civilians (e.g. children) or military personnel — Help in exchange or repatriation of victims
- D) *International Relief* — Principles and co-ordination between the ICRC and the League — Relief actions incumbent on the ICRC — Relief actions incumbent on the League — Co-operation with bodies not forming part of the Red Cross.

Results — The work carried out during the seminar was fruitful from several points of view, but we shall restrict ourselves to mentioning only three aspects.

In the first place, there was the instructive character. For the young National Societies this constituted a synopsis and a useful

refresher course on all kinds of activities which a Society is able to carry out on behalf of victims of armed conflicts. In addition, the representatives from the older Societies could take this opportunity to familiarize themselves with these problems which might have been new to them or which might have involved certain aspects which they required to study more closely. Moreover, the interventions by National Society leaders of wide experience contributed to the utility of these refresher courses as much as, if not more than, the introductory expositions. In this respect, it can be said that the gathering of the young and the old Red Cross Societies turned out to be an extremely good idea.

In the second place, the discussions which followed the introductions enabled participants to bring out the problems which are at the present day of particular concern to the National Societies. As was to be expected, the rôle of National Societies in the event of internal conflicts was the subject which gave rise to the most debate. Amongst the many other subjects dealt with, mention must be made of the problem of relief action: the participants were the first to hear expositions relating to the principles and the practice followed in the co-ordination of relief action by the ICRC and by the League, both separately and jointly.

In conclusion, the work of the seminar enabled participants to draw up a series of proposals of a practical nature concerning specific tasks to be developed or undertaken in particular fields by the international organizations and especially by the ICRC. These proposals which will be contained in the final report on the seminar were of themselves additional testimony to the interest aroused by this event amongst those who took part.
