

*IN GENEVA***New participant in the Geneva Conventions**

The International Committee of the Red Cross has received from the Federal Political Department in Berne a communication informing it that the Government of Sierra Leone has confirmed, under date of June 10, 1965, to the Swiss Federal Council, its participation in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, by a declaration of continuity. In fact, Sierra Leone considered itself bound by these Conventions since its accession to independence, namely April 27, 1961.

Sierra Leone is thus the 107th State formally participating in the humanitarian Conventions of August 12, 1949.

A Gift to the ICRC

A sun-dial, built by young Dutch artists and craftsmen and offered to the Red Cross by the Netherlands Committee for National and International Competitions of Professional Craftsmen, was inaugurated on August 6, 1965, in the grounds of the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross.¹ It is of brick and cement and measures about 5 feet high. On the dial itself, in the form of a concave hemisphere, are engraved not only the hours in Roman figures but also signs of the zodiac and the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun emblems.

The inauguration ceremony was held in the presence of Miss A. F. W. Lunsingh-Meijer, chargé d'affaires of the Netherlands Permanent Delegation to the European Office of the United Nations and the International Organizations, Mr. J. van Schreven, Consul General of the Netherlands in Geneva, representatives of the Netherlands Donating Committee—including Mr. E. Snoek, its chairman—representatives of the ICRC, the League, the Nether-

¹ *Plate*—Inauguration of the sun-dial in the ICRC grounds in Geneva: speeches by Mr. Laman Trip and Mr. L. Boissier.

lands Red Cross, the Geneva Section of the Swiss Red Cross as well as a number of Dutch and Swiss dignitaries including Dr. C. J. Bernard, Netherlands Red Cross delegate to the ICRC and the League.

A short address was delivered by Mr. Léopold Boissier. In the name of the ICRC, of which he is a member and of which he was for years the President, he warmly thanked the Netherlands Committee for National and International Competitions of Professional Craftsmen, and also the young people represented by that Committee. This sun-dial is a tangible testimony to their enterprise and skill. He recalled the centuries-old connections between Holland and Geneva and he concluded with a reminder, in the following terms, of the close link which the ICRC has maintained with the Netherlands for a century.

. . . The founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the Red Cross itself was due in no small measure to the support which the Netherlands citizens gave Dunant from the very beginning.

It was Dr. Basting, a Netherlands Army doctor, who, in 1863, conceived, with Dunant, the idea which seems to us quite simple but which was indeed ingenious; the neutralization of medical services in time of war. Again, it was Dr. Basting who, at the end of the 1863 Preparatory Conference, managed to persuade the delegations to accept this invaluable idea of neutralizing the army medical services. As you are aware, this proposal was subsequently accepted by the 1864 Conference which, in that year, instituted the First Geneva Convention.

Even before the signing of that Convention, however, another Netherlands citizen, Captain van de Velde, was sent by the International Committee to the scene of the fighting in the war waged by Austria and Prussia against Denmark. Capt. van de Velde went to the Danish side where he accomplished a magnificent work of pioneering; it was the first time that the International Committee was represented in a conflict.

Since that time, co-operation of this nature has unceasingly developed. It was of particular importance during the tragic events of the Second World War. To give you an idea of the extent to which this Committee assisted the victims of the heroic and noble resistance by the Dutch people against the aggressors, let me quote a few facts. The Netherlands Service was set up on May 13, 1940, that is to say, three days after the beginning of the invasion. This service first undertook to ensure the exchange of news between

Netherlands nationals in their own country and those who had gone abroad. It next attended to the needs of some 570,000 workers forcibly conscripted by the Occupying Power, hostages, and some 214,000 deportees in Germany. The number of enquiries set afoot to trace missing persons, and to send messages, amounted to several tens of thousands, apart from some 2,500,000 messages to or from civilian persons on all five continents. That is why the Central Tracing Agency, in that modest little building which some of you have visited, has some 350,000 card-indexes concerning Netherlands subjects who in one way or another were victims of the war. Much suffering is epitomized in that building, but also much hope and altruism.

But this sun-dial shows that time is passing and that the moment has come for me to conclude. What can we learn from this sun-dial? That we must not waste our time. That we must lose no time in making known the Red Cross, in ensuring that its principles are applied and in working for peace and international reconciliation. It is true that time is death's ally when wasted, but time can also consolidate constructive things such as friendships as strong and lasting as that which unites the people of the Netherlands to this small republic of Geneva and which links the Netherlands Red Cross to the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is with the hope that this sun-dial will bear witness to the strengthening of these spontaneous feelings that I once again thank the Netherlands Committee and all those, here or elsewhere, who contributed to this fine and inspiring work.

The second speaker was Jonkheer W. C. S. Laman Trip, Director of the Institute of Craftsmanship and member of the Netherlands Committee for National and International Competitions of Professional Craftsmen. He described how the idea of constructing this sun-dial and of offering it to the Red Cross was born; it testifies to the determination of the young Dutch craftsmen who took part in the competition to pursue their trade to the best of their ability and to compete in international professional competitions.

. . . The celebration of the International Red Cross Centenary was an excellent opportunity to call attention to this institution's work and it gave us great pleasure that some of your representatives in Geneva and the Netherlands organization helped us by their presence. It was no easy matter to decide what form the gift of

these young Dutch workers should take but we finally chose an instrument which in former days had its place in front of every important building and by which the sun enabled people to tell the time . . .

. . . That is why Mr. van der Wildt, who designed the sun-dial, did not abide by the usual shape, but aimed at two objectives : a form which would be more modern and which, through the work of many skilled hands, would be proof of Dutch craftsmanship.

Many technical problems arose which resulted in only two young Dutch craftsmen coming here to construct the whole unit from components made from Dutch material by young people in Holland. The construction work was supervised by an expert, Mr. Heyne ; he was able to implement this complicated project with the co-operation of the architect and of your technical department . . .

Mr. Laman Trip closed by informing those present of what induced the Netherlands Committee to donate this sun-dial, namely the conviction that here in this International Centre of the Red Cross, the sun will shine, even if only figuratively speaking, as " the source of the love and pity which inspires the Red Cross and which alleviates the plight of distressed humanity now and perennially " .

Finally, Mr. R. Heyne, instructor at the Institution of Craftsmanship, described the technical difficulties in constructing the sun-dial, and Mrs. Yagchi, of the ICRC Press and Information Department, replied to Mr. Heyne, requesting him to convey to the young people in Holland the sincere gratitude of the Red Cross.
