

# INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

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## SOUTH EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC RED CROSS FORUM

*An important meeting of National Red Cross Societies of South East Asia and the Pacific took place in Sydney. The general delegate of the ICRC for Asia attended and followed the work with great interest. During his stay in Australia, he was invited—together with Mr. H. Beer, Secretary-General of the League—to go to Canberra for a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Paul Hasluck, and other officials of that Ministry for talks concerning problems of a humanitarian order.*

*The importance of the Sydney meeting is reflected in the number of participants and the matters discussed, some of which were of a technical nature. We therefore requested Mr. Kingsley Seevaratnam, Assistant Director of the League's Development Programme, to review the proceedings for our readers. It is to him that we owe the following article :*

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The South East Asian and Pacific Red Cross Forum was part of the Development Programme undertaken by the League of Red Cross Societies to strengthen National Societies in all parts of the world. This Forum took place in Sydney, Australia, from the 20th May to the 2nd June 1964, and was intended for all Societies, members of the League, in the south eastern region of Asia and the

Pacific. Delegates from the Red Cross Societies of Australia, Burma, Ceylon, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Federation of Malaya, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand took part in this Forum, totalling over 30 representatives. As hosts, the Australian Red Cross Society was responsible for the organisation of the Forum, in collaboration with the League. The aims of the Forum were :

1. To consider ways and means of building a closer bond between the League and individual National Societies.
2. To gain a closer understanding of the activities of our neighbouring Societies.
3. To discuss some of the subjects that were dealt with at the Centenary Congress of the International Red Cross, in 1963, that had a particular relation to the work of National Societies.

The Chairman of the Forum was Mr. L. G. Stubbings, Secretary General of the Australian Red Cross Society, and the Forum was formally declared open by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Eric Woodward, the opening ceremony being held at the Union Centre of the University of Sydney. Present at the opening ceremony were many governmental and regional representatives, as well as the delegations of the National Societies invited. The I.C.R.C. was represented by Mr. A. Durand, its representative for Asia, and the League Delegation was led by Mr. Henrick Beer, Secretary General, accompanied by Dr. Kingsley Seevaratnam, Assistant Director of the League's Development Programme and Miss N. Minogue, Deputy Secretary General of the Australian Red Cross, seconded to the League for the Forum.

With its emphasis on practice, the Forum consisted of plenary sessions and group work alternating with study visits to Australian Red Cross institutions. Discussion groups and technical demonstrations were skilfully combined so that these sessions enabled each Delegation to inform the others of their achievements and projects thanks to the effective and flexible methods used. A specific subject

was selected for each day and introduced by one or two delegations before being discussed by all the participants. Some especially important subjects had moreover been previously chosen to permit the representatives to prepare their questions and answers. At other times delegations were invited to explain "on the black-board" the activities, experiences and problems of their Societies in a given field.

The general subjects, which of course covered all Red Cross activities in peacetime, could thus be successfully examined in detail : from Information and Public Relations Services, to disaster relief, by way of membership recruitment, first aid, nursing, maternity and child welfare, Junior Red Cross, health education and accident prevention, blood transfusion and care of the sick and handicapped. The discussions were, of course, related particularly to the realities in the South East Asian and Pacific region.

Throughout the Forum, various visual techniques were used :— "chalk talks", coloured slides, films, demonstrations. Delegates saw practical aspects of the work of Red Cross in Australia when they visited a Veterans' Hospital, Divisional Headquarters and the Blood Bank.

The success of this meeting may be summed up in the words of the Chairman of the Forum, Mr. Stubbings :

"The Red Cross is a world-wide organisation that has a beginning but will never have an end. For while human needs and suffering continue, and while there are people with the spirit of compassion to offer the hand of assistance and the hand of friendship, there will always be a Red Cross.

We happen to be a group of individuals living at a time when there is still great need in the world. We have seen fit to serve Red Cross and we have been chosen by Red Cross to represent our Societies on this particular occasion. Our responsibilities and our obligations are heavy for when we leave here and return to our countries our work really begins. I think we have all learned a great deal that could be of value to our Societies, but at present we alone possess this knowledge. If we are to relate our experience in a positive way, we will have to convince our Councils, and this is not an easy task. We should not be discouraged if we cannot

achieve immediate results. Our friend from Japan has on several occasions mentioned that we must make haste slowly. We will have to match determination and enthusiasm with patience.

Whether you are here representing the League or representing a National Society, you must make your overall judgment as to the extent that these aims have been achieved. But I have already hinted that the full achievement may take not months, but even years to fulfil.

From Mr. Beer's opening address, we should recall that it was emphasized that the League is a clearing house for National Societies. The League Secretariat is fulfilling its true and proper function only when we are using it. No Society is expert in every field, and the League will need to draw on experts from one Society to help in the development of other Societies. Hence, one of our responsibilities as National Societies is to be prepared to make available our experts if and when we are called upon."

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