

WORLD RED CROSS DAY

For the thirteenth year running, Radio-Genève organised the International Red Cross Broadcast, placed traditionally under the patronage of the ICRC, the League, the European Broadcasting Union and the International Radio and Television Organization. The broadcast took place on May 8 last, the anniversary of Henry Dunant's birth which is celebrated in a number of countries in memory of the founder of the Red Cross. It will be remembered that last year's programme was given by the Belgian Broadcasting corporation and included a cantata by Louis de Meester, on a poem of Karel Jonckheere's, entitled "Here is my blood", which is a salute to the blood donors' gesture of human fellowship.

This year it was the Principality of Monaco's turn to supply the broadcast's main programme, and Radio-Monte-Carlo presented "A memory of Solferino" in a gripping style easily understandable to the millions of listeners. Henry Dunant's book was adapted for radio by Marian-Georges Valentini, with music by Jean-Jacques Grunenwald. The play is in the form of a dialogue between Henri Dunant and the male nurses or the wounded; peasants are also heard, placing their trust in "The man in white". The dialogue is backed by and interspersed with music which conveys the atmosphere of tragedy, the desperate hurry, the agony, finishing on a calmer note which heralds hope. A woman's voice is then heard saying: "One hundred years have elapsed since "A memory of Solferino" was published. All the countries which, over a century, have heard Henry Dunant's call, are here tonight to celebrate this anniversary. Their answer to the passionate voice which still cries unceasingly throughout the world, for love, pity and human fellowship, is: "we are present".

This play was preceded by a series of messages from 28 stations in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. Other stations broadcast special programmes and in all 85 stations celebrated World Red Cross Day, a figure never before reached.

The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Léopold Boissier, spoke during the broadcast and gave the following message :

World Red Cross Day was instituted in 1948, and May 8 was chosen, as this is the date of Henry Dunant's birth.

Today, National Red Cross Societies exist in more than 80 States. Does this mean that 80 Governments are ready to draw inspiration from the ideal of peace and brotherhood in suffering which Henry Dunant tried to propagate in the world, nearly one hundred years ago? One would hardly think so to look at the state of the world over the last fifty years. But, it is precisely because there is doubt and because men are afraid of what the future holds, that everything which can instill confidence and encourage men to persevere in the work of peace and mutual aid, must be understood and supported. The Red Cross is in the forefront of institutions which have alleviated the sufferings of mankind. At the moment, it is in action everywhere where men are fighting each other, where they suffer hunger and exile, where they are overtaken by natural disasters, floods, earthquakes and drought. It is a certainty and a sure refuge for the distressed throughout the world, because it knows no frontiers. It asks everyone to believe in it and to be interdependent with one another.

This fellowship is closely connected with Henry Dunant's original gesture on the night of a great battle, when he approached a man who was suffering ; a simple gesture but one which has in some ways changed the face of the world.

Nothing better characterizes this universality than the radio broadcast of May 8. Heartfelt thanks are due to the directors of broadcasting and all who make it possible.

In the days following May 8, the television services of 6 European countries (France, Great Britain, Italy, Monaco, Switzerland and Yugoslavia) screened special programmes on the Red Cross. These were short documentary films, illustrating the activity of the National Societies of these countries. Thus, the anniversary of Henry Dunant's birth was commemorated by television also, whilst the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of "A memory of Solferino" was the occasion for the moving broadcast which we have just described.