

# IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

---

## RE-APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF THE RED CROSS: PROGRESS AND PLANS

*As all institutions in a period of such rapid change as ours, the Red Cross is studying its mission in the world of today and tomorrow. It will be recalled that, in 1972, the ICRC and the League, in co-operation with National Societies, decided to examine the future of the movement by undertaking a complete study of it. A Joint Committee for Re-appraisal was established and Mr. Donald Tansley, Study Director, described in the February 1974 issue of the International Review the research and analysis carried out thus far. More recently, Mr. Tansley reported on the progress of the Study in a statement he made at the 90th Session of the League's Executive Committee in Geneva last October. As these questions are of interest to the whole Red Cross movement, we believed that it would be useful to summarize Mr. Tansley's statement for our readers.*

Our fact-gathering is not quite finished, but so far we have visited over 40 National Societies and have examined 23 of them in detail—their activities, structure, finances, relations with governments and with voluntary agencies. We have sought their views on a wide variety of questions.

These National Societies were a good representative sample of Red Cross: old Societies and new ones, well developed, strong Societies and weak Societies, in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia.

We have examined the work of the International Committee, in Geneva as well as in the field, and have accompanied ICRC delegates on their visits to prisons, refugee camps and to prisoners of war in places such as Zaire, Rhodesia, Israel and Cyprus.

We have studied the problems of relief provided by National Societies, the League and the ICRC and have observed relief operations in current disaster situations in Indo-China, the Sahel, Ethiopia and Japan. We have also sought the views of those other organizations who have worked in these operations.

We have attended training sessions, the XXIIInd International Conference of the Red Cross, regional Red Cross conferences, and various committee meetings of the League and ICRC. We have met a large number of people interested in humanitarian problems, from Red Cross, the United Nations, voluntary agencies, universities and research institutes. Perhaps most important of all, we have invited the views and listened to any person or agency who has wanted to speak or write about the Red Cross.

One of the conclusions that we have already reached as a result of our studies is this: the general public, even the so-called informed public, do not know very much about Red Cross, even though they may hold it in high regard. Worse still, we have found an appalling lack of knowledge about Red Cross within the organization.

For this reason, we want to put to use what we have learned in the course of our studies. We are planning to do this by publishing a series of background papers, which will attempt to describe in factual terms what Red Cross is and does. Each background paper will deal with a specific subject, for example:

- the present role of Red Cross in protection;
- the present role of Red Cross in assistance;
- health and welfare activities of Red Cross;
- Red Cross at the national level;
- Red Cross as a factor of peace;
- a selection of views on Red Cross.

In addition, we hope to be able to produce a background paper dealing with Red Cross philosophy, and another concerning future humanitarian needs.

We plan to begin production of these documents in the new year and to publish them in advance of the final report, which will be completed in June 1975.

What about the final report? I cannot, of course, talk about its conclusions at this point, but I can tell you something about the *nature* of the report and about the ground it will cover. First, the report will focus

on the *future* of the Red Cross—the present situation will already have been covered in the background papers.

The report will contain many firm recommendations. But on many subjects it may also contain options, choices, alternatives. On other subjects, it may contain no more than an attempt to isolate and define a basic question on a subject which we feel Red Cross must face if it is to be in command of its future. In essence, the final report will be an *agenda for discussion* by Red Cross bodies. And, in a sense, it is *after* the report that the real re-appraisal will begin—by the Red Cross.

The report will cover two broad topics:

- (1) the concerns of the Red Cross of the future;
- (2) the machinery of the Red Cross of the future.

The first will be dealt with under four major headings: *Protection, Assistance, Community Services, and Inculcation of Red Cross Values.*

Under the second, we shall ask ourselves the following questions:

What does each of the components of the Red Cross family (National Societies, the ICRC, the League, the International Red Cross) need to do to carry out its roles of the future? What strategy should each follow? What structure is required? What changes in finances, recruitment, training? What changes in attitude to enable Red Cross to adapt to its role in the world of tomorrow?

We cannot hope to provide firm answers on all of these questions. In large part, the answers must come from Red Cross leaders and Red Cross members. But I hope to provide some solutions, some guidelines, and some basis for discussion of all of these matters.

Before closing, I should like to tell you of two further conclusions we have reached.

Almost everywhere, we have found that *Red Cross is held in high regard.* And almost everywhere, *Red Cross has far more potential than it has begun to use.*

I hope that the re-appraisal of the role of the Red Cross will help to translate that potential into the most effective humanitarian services for those who need them.