

EUROPEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The Red Cross and the Evolution of Modern Europe

This was the general subject of the European Regional Red Cross Conference which was held in Cannes, France, from 20 to 25 April 1970 under the chairmanship of Mr. Marcellin Carraud, President of the French Red Cross. Apart from the delegates of 28 National Societies, the President of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross as well as the leading lights of the League of Red Cross Societies and the ICRC were present. It was the first regional Conference in Europe since the one held in Belgrade, in 1947.

The meeting, which was organized by the French Red Cross under the auspices of the League of Red Cross Societies, was convened to examine the Red Cross programmes for the preparation and co-ordination of relief operations after disasters, medico-social activities in industrialized urban society, the contribution of Youth to the work of the Red Cross and the latter's progress in developing countries.

The opening session took place on 20 April in the Palais des Festivals. M^{lle} Marie-Madeleine Dienesch, representing the French Government, presided over the opening and the Prince and Princess of Liechtenstein as well as the Princess of Monaco graced the occasion with their presence. There were several speeches and we have quoted from them below:

Mr. M. Carraud, President of the French Red Cross: . . .It has become the custom to hold periodical regional Conferences with the aim of studying various problems that concern some countries more specifically. The Red Cross is, beyond doubt, universal, and its function is to take part in the struggle against the suffering of mankind throughout the entire world. But the Societies that constitute our movement may nevertheless benefit from meetings restricted to particular geographical areas, where they may exchange experiences and at the same time seek ways to improve co-operation among themselves, and thus ensure that the links of solidarity forged by our Societies around the world may continue to grow in strength and efficacy. . .

. . .The Red Cross has accomplished many great achievements, in the past as well as in more recent years. But, the more successes it scores, the more is society exacting in its attitude towards it. The Red Cross is expected to be present everywhere and to be capable of coping with ever more extensive and complex missions. It is essential, therefore, that it should be constantly moving forward.

Such results clearly cannot be attained unless a study in depth is made of the problems that have to be solved and of the methods to be applied.

A Conference on the lines of the one about to be opened today enables substantial progress to be made in this respect. While broadening the base of friendship that unites our Societies, it cannot but add to the force that sustains our movement in its development. . .

Mr. A. Vouillon, Mayor of Cannes: . . .Truly, André François-Poncet was right in saying that the story of Henry Dunant and the Red Cross was in the nature of a miracle. But it was, nevertheless, a "miracle" that was definitely not gratuitous.

It was born in the consciences and hearts of men, and day by day, you are fashioning it with your own hands.

I do hope that this Conference of Cannes, like that of 1919, will constitute for you, who are the promoters of Peace, and who stretch out your hand to peoples whose development is still impeded by ignorance, prejudice and want, a further step forward towards a future freed from at least some of the afflictions that still darken our present life.

Mr. J. Barroso, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the League of Red Cross Societies: . . . We have need of a good dose of optimism, security, hope. Technical progress is opening up new roads for us by reducing the field of the unknown and increasing the domination of man over nature.

In the field of science man is continually discovering new methods in his desire to prolong life. But what is the use of this tremendous effort if, in the most ridiculous paradox of his history, man also perfects the machine that may bring about his destruction?

Sometimes, when the sound of gunfire smothers our cry for peace and we feel the weight of our powerlessness to avoid war, we think that man has really lost his sense of direction.

It is not possible, it cannot be possible that after such bitter experiences we still believe that war is a solution.

Man's predominant interest should be man.

On many occasions, while Chairman of the World Federation of Red Cross Societies, I have insisted on the need for finding a formula which can lead us to the state of equilibrium desired to make peace possible. The Federation itself has adopted important resolutions bearing on this at its international meetings, and again today I wish to enjoin all the European Societies to present a common front, strong in principles and in action, so that these resolutions, especially those that we adopted during our last Conference in Istanbul, become the reality for which we are hoping.

Uncertainty breeds anxiety and agitation among the young generations. The lack of wisdom which governs the acts of adults wrecks the theoretical attempts at guidance and bad example destroys the noble aspirations of this generation which, in a very short time, will take the reins of our world.

Youth must be aware of this situation and must decide to face the future without renouncing its ideals. Only a youth which is healthy and clean, which rejects excess and vice, fights violence not by violence but by the spirit of service, a youth capable of sacrificing itself for others, trained to do good and which is able to handle its own destiny, only such a youth can give back to humanity the conscience that it has lost.

The youth of the world asks us for a reason for acting: what better reason could we give it than the necessity to be better than ourselves? Fortunately, some institutions, like ours, have remained faithful to their principles. In the Red Cross we have accumulated good will and put it completely at the disposal of our youth, in

order that by turning it to account they may succeed in their noble aspirations...

Mr. M. A. Naville, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross: ... We should now ask ourselves whether the moment has not come to undertake a sincere, lucid and methodical examination of the Red Cross's state of health. It is unthinkable that such a large and complex body as the Red Cross should be immune from the effects of the changes going on in the world. It would even be regrettable if Red Cross thinking were as an isolated lagoon, undisturbed by currents from the deep. We all know that the world is in mutation. All kinds of instincts, demands and imaginings have been released. So many principles considered sacrosanct, so many pretexts on which the world has long based its easy conscience, have been thrown overboard. Even the nature of war has changed: violence is perpetrated in the name of justice, and those who would claim innocence think their only choice lies between drug-taking or suicide by fire. Perhaps we are too inclined to believe that in the twilight of so many principles, those of the Red Cross shine on undimmed.

We are not gathered here for self-reproach, or to take stock of shortcomings, but to recognize the need for a study bearing on the future. We must redefine not only the why and the wherefore of Red Cross, but redefine also our methods. Through a joint analysis and recourse to sources of new inspiration, we must endeavour to find out what is still valid, alive and productive, what must be changed, and what must be discarded. Then we shall perhaps be better placed to reply to the fundamental questions which prompted the compiling of this meeting's agenda: to help youth in its quest for the absolute, to reconcile man with his environment, to ensure that relief shall not be hindered; which means restoring communication among men. And thus we shall be the better able to defend and promote those values which we hold dear, among the foremost of which is fellowship.

Mlle M.-M. Dienesch, Secretary of State for Social Welfare: ... It is really remarkable that only 5 years after a modest Genevese citizen, without any official position, had become aware of the problems posed by aid to wounded soldiers, was it possible to sign the first Geneva Convention, a truly novel diplomatic instrument as it created an original chapter of the law of nations. Humanitarian Law, as it has since been called, was, as we know,

to be developed in later conventions which resulted in the fundamental ensemble of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949.

It should be emphasized that this legal dynamism is due in great part to the International Committee of the Red Cross, centenarian pillar composed of Swiss citizens, guardian of the Conventions and final resort of all victims of all wars. This Committee is today continuing with resolution the work undertaken, under the leadership of President NAVILLE, whom I am pleased to welcome on this platform.

The task of building up humanitarian law is indeed still on the stocks, like the sociology of war itself. Today, peace is more and more often endangered without any violation of frontiers. Guerilla actions are tending to replace conventional conflicts. This does not make the interpretation and application of the Geneva Conventions any easier. It is all the more necessary that their principles should be known and respected, principles which are nothing but an extension of the well-known yet badly applied maxim: "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you". In our world full of noise and fury, where violence is finding more and more devotees, the Geneva law is like a fragile rampart that all men of good will must strengthen. I hope that the International Red Cross can contribute to this while remaining the sheltered haven from political storms that it has always been, as it is from its uncompromising neutrality that it draws its moral prestige and, in the end, its justification...

The work of the Conference was distributed among three Commissions (Relief—Medico-social and Youth problems—Development), whose work was based on reports presented by the League and by various National Societies. On this point, there is a very apposite passage from the report presented by the Belgian Red Cross which concerns the missions that the Red Cross can accomplish and the principles governing them.

1. The primary mission of the Red Cross is to be ready to discharge its obligations in time of war, for which it should prepare in peacetime. Its other duties, extensive and important as they are, are secondary. They shall not in any way delay or hinder the discharge of that mission.
2. The missions which the Red Cross undertakes shall in no way conflict with the basic principles by which it is governed. They

shall not, *inter alia*, jeopardize or impair its independence and impartiality.

3. The Red Cross, by the nature of its statutes, is an auxiliary to the public authorities; it may not thereby claim a monopoly in philanthropy or in medico-social work. Not only should it "leave other organizations to act alone if they are fully qualified to do so and it is in the interest of those helped" (J.Pictet: "Red Cross Principles", p. 118), but it must guard against the dangerous dispersal of its efforts which would render it ineffective.
4. The Red Cross must be continuously watchful that suffering is not left unremedied. Our institution must be ready to act when no other can do so.
The Red Cross must rectify any shortcomings, whilst at the same time doing pioneer work without, however, being obliged to continue an undertaking if other bodies carry it out properly-
5. In all missions it undertakes, the Red Cross must be constantly concerned to discharge them in a voluntary spirit and with dedication.

Finally, in the plenary session, several resolutions were adopted. We have quoted them because they reflect the essential concerns of the Conference and the ways to meet them that were put forward. They also demonstrate, as did the Istanbul Resolutions, the need today for the Red Cross to rethink its plan of action in an ever-changing world.

I

The Red Cross—Symbol of an Undivided World

The European Regional Red Cross Conference,

Considering that the primary mission of the Red Cross consists in arousing in mankind the feeling of solidarity and the desire to participate actively in any mutual assistance action,

Noting that these ideas have not yet sufficiently penetrated into the different circles responsible for the future of the European continent and the world, and that this situation gives rise to concern,

Takes note with satisfaction that the community of European Red Cross Societies has given further proof, on the occasion of this Conference, of a spirit devoid of all political or similar discrimination,

Thanks the French Red Cross for its initiative and its invitation which has enabled all the European Red Cross Societies to revive awareness of this community,

Takes advantage of this occasion to propose that the League of Red Cross Societies and all the National Societies be inspired by the following theme for a World Red Cross Day: *The Red Cross—Symbol of an Undivided World*¹

II

National and International Disaster Relief Preparedness

The European Regional Red Cross Conference,

In view of Resolution 24, adopted by the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross, entitled "Principles and Rules for Red Cross Disaster Relief" and governing Red Cross relief actions in the event of disaster, and the obligations which that resolution imposes on National Societies,

Considering the urgent necessity of adapting Red Cross machinery to undertake action appropriate to the particular conditions on the European continent facing demographic, social and industrial evolution,

1. Recommends National Societies to implement these Principles and Rules in a prompt and practical manner, particularly by requesting the Governments of their countries to respect them by mobilizing all their resources for putting them into action,
2. Regrets to note that some countries still have no national relief plan and urges the National Societies of those countries to do everything possible to ensure that such plans are drawn up, in which the National Society should in any case be integrated, in conformity with Red Cross Principles,
3. Urges National Societies to conclude with neighbouring countries agreements for mutual assistance in the event of disaster, and to encourage their Government to do likewise, leading to

¹ The theme chosen for World Red Cross Day in 1971 is: *Red Cross Working Round the Clock.*

more general agreements throughout Europe, and requests the League to provide a guide for National Societies on such agreements,

4. Attributes great importance to informing and educating the public on how to act in case of disaster and encourages National Societies to draw up and disseminate, with the assistance of the League, elementary rules covering both the action to be taken by spectators and the participation, in the interests of their own safety, of those directly affected by disasters.
5. Considers it essential to interest youth in relief work and, in particular, recommends National Societies to integrate youth into relief organizations so that they may be entrusted with responsibilities commensurate with their abilities, both for decision-making and implementation,
6. Invites National Societies to keep up-to-date, and communicate to the League an inventory of their resources in kind for relief actions, stating which of these they can make available for international action and under what conditions,
7. Considers it essential for National Societies and the League to maintain a continuous exchange of information on their ideas, their achievements, their experiences and the studies which they have made or are making in relief work.

III

Red Cross Participation in the Improvement of Human Environment

The European Regional Red Cross Conference,

Considering that the extraordinary speed of industrialization and the unprecedented development of technology, whilst enabling humanity to improve its living conditions by providing it with material facilities better adapted to its needs has, on the other hand, led to a serious deterioration of the human environment,

Considering that this deterioration is becoming increasingly acute,

Convinced that efforts on a national and international scale are necessary to improve this state of affairs,

Recalling Resolution No. XXXV adopted at the XXth International Conference at Vienna recommending National Societies to

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establish or extend their health, education and social welfare programmes,

Requests the Health and Social Service Advisory Committee of the League to study these problems, to put forward suggestions and work out proposals on active Red Cross participation in the improvement of the human environment.

IV

Red Cross Activities for the Handicapped and Elderly

The European Regional Red Cross Conference,

Having heard reports on various medico-social activities undertaken by National Societies in European countries,

Considering that medico-social work by National Societies should particularly benefit the physically, mentally and socially handicapped as well as elderly persons, through direct, human and personal action to supplement appropriately the work of the public authorities with special emphasis on prevention and health education,

Aware that medico-social needs are increasing very rapidly,

Asserts that the medico-social activities of Red Cross Societies should be integrated into an overall policy and a health and social plan which it is for responsible authorities to determine and in which they should associate National Red Cross Societies, providing if necessary the financial means, whilst at the same time respecting their independence and autonomy,

Recommends National Red Cross Societies therefore:

1. to intensify their work of informing the public on these problems,
2. to step up their contacts with the authorities to make them more aware of the increasing importance of medico-social problems,
3. to continue work for the benefit of the under-privileged and to promote their integration into normal life through better education of the public.

V

Participation of Youth in Community Service Activities

The European Regional Red Cross Conference,

Bearing in mind the importance of developing a humanitarian spirit amongst youth,

Considering that the Red Cross should offer young people the opportunity to develop a sense of community service, awaken their interest in Red Cross activities and thereby facilitate and promote their eventual integration into National Societies,

Recognizing the importance of involving the greatest possible number of young people in Red Cross activities,

Recommends that National Societies, with a view to increasing and intensifying the part which youth may and should take in its work, offer schools, youth organizations and unorganized youth the opportunity to take part in their community service activities without necessarily requiring of young people prior or subsequent formal membership of National Societies.

VI

**Participation of European National Societies
in the League Red Cross Development Programme**

The European Regional Red Cross Conference,

Considering that the problem of promoting the well-being of mankind represents one of the key problems of development in the contemporary world, the solution of which has an essential influence on the preservation of world peace,

Considering that one of the purposes of Red Cross activity is to contribute to the safeguarding of world peace and to co-operation between all peoples on a basis of equality and humanity,

Considering that the Red Cross can contribute to the progress of the developing countries in the sphere of health and social welfare, especially through the creation and strengthening of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in these countries,

Considering that the Development Programme constitutes one of the most significant action programmes of the Red Cross on the national and international level and it is necessary to expand and increase it,

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Considering that one of the prime duties of European Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in their international activity is to participate in the Development Programme,

Calls on all the National Red Cross Societies of Europe,

- a) to participate in the Development Programme as a normal activity and to contribute to it regularly through the League of Red Cross Societies;
 - b) to participate to the full in the Development Programme and to inform their members, the authorities, and the public of the importance and aims of the Programme with a view to obtaining the necessary support and assistance;
 - c) to offer their contribution to the Development Programme in different forms and activities benefiting from the general experience of the League and the National Societies in the past and in accordance with the needs of the developing countries and their development plans;
 - d) to extend active support to the efforts of the League in solving the basic problems of the Development Programme, primarily those involving long-term planning, improved and regular financing and the provision of well-trained delegates and logistic support;
 - e) to request their Governments to assist them, so as to enable them most actively to participate in aiding the developing countries, through the granting of appropriate privileges and financial and other assistance;
 - f) to co-operate, to co-ordinate their activities in this sphere of development and to exchange information on experience gained, so as to achieve, through the intermediary of the League, the maximum results and possible co-ordination with other agencies, both national and international, which are active in the field of development.
 - g) to ensure the implementation of the Development Programme in accordance with the principles of the Red Cross and therefore enable the Programme to contribute in greatest measure to the achievement of peace and co-operation between all peoples of the world.
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