

# IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

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## **NINTH INTER-AMERICAN RED CROSS CONFERENCE**

Organized jointly by the Nicaraguan Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies, this meeting was held in Managua from 1 to 5 December 1970. Twenty National Societies on the American continent were represented and the two international institutions of the Red Cross. Also in Managua were representatives of two European National Societies and several international organizations.

The opening session was held at the National Ruben Dario Theatre, in the presence of high officials of Nicaragua, including H. E. The President of the Republic, General Anastasio Somoza, who addressed the meeting. Other speakers took the floor, praising the spirit of the Red Cross whose permanence and example are more necessary than ever today, and recalling the urgency of providing better protection for individuals when internal or international conflicts break out. The meeting was addressed successively by Mgr. D. Chavez Nuñez, President of the Nicaraguan Red Cross; Mr. J. Barroso Chavez, Chairman of the League Board of Governors; and Mr. M. A. Naville, President of the ICRC.

That evening, the President of the Republic offered a brilliant reception in honour of the participants at the presidential palace.

The following day, the plenary session of the Conference was presided over by Mgr. Chavez Nuñez. Mr. Naville delivered a paper, which was heeded with attention, on the International Committee's activities since the 8th Inter-American Conference which took place at Bogotá in 1966, and on the projects of the institution of which he is president.

Mr. H. Beer reviewed the work of the previous four years and the programme of the League, of which he is Secretary-General. National Society representatives spoke on the work carried out by their Societies in their own countries.

During the afternoon a special meeting took place to consider the item: "Red Cross as a factor of peace, in face of political kidnapping, armed conflicts of non-international character and concerning political prisoners".

On 3 and 4 December working groups considered the subjects: 1) Medico-social activities; 2) Disaster relief; 3) Junior Red Cross; 4) Information and public relations. Mr. P. Basset and Mr. S. Nessi, who also represented the ICRC at Managua, took part in several of these meetings which gave rise to lively exchanges of views and demonstrated the interest of National Societies on the American continent in the dissemination of the humanitarian principles and of the Geneva Conventions and showed also the desire of youth to be more actively associated in the life and work of the Red Cross.

At the final plenary session, various resolutions were adopted. Three of them are of direct interest to the International Committee and we give the text hereunder. They deal with the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions, the Red Cross as a factor for peace and the dissemination in Latin America of the school textbook "The Red Cross and My Country" published by the ICRC.

To complete the picture, we would also mention that one resolution requests the League and the ICRC to produce up-to-date films. A decision was also reached to hold the next Inter-American Conference at Lima in 1974.

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### RESOLUTION 1

#### **Diffusion of the Geneva Conventions**

The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference,

*Noting with grave anxiety the recurrence of acts of violence and the persistence of disturbances in many parts of the world;*

*Aware of the fact that the Geneva Conventions cannot fulfil their essential role unless they are known to rulers and populations alike;*

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Recalling *Resolution No. XXI of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross (Vienna, 1965)*, *Resolution No. IX of the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross (Istanbul, 1969)*, and *recommendation No. XI of the IVth Meeting of Presidents of the National Red Cross Societies of the United States, Mexico, Central America and Panama (Mexico, 1969)*, for the diffusion and implementation of the Geneva Conventions;

Considering the memorandum addressed by the International Committee of the Red Cross on June 15, 1970, to the Governments of Latin America, and its Circular of August 26, 1970, to the National Societies;

Recommends the National Red Cross Societies of the Americas to initiate an active campaign for the diffusion of the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross and of the Geneva Conventions in their respective countries; and to utilize the documentation prepared to that effect by the ICRC;

Invites them at the same time to remind their respective governments of their obligations in this field and to request their support for the development of Red Cross projects.

### RESOLUTION 2

#### Red Cross—A Peace Factor

- I. *The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference considers, without prejudice to precepts established in Art. 3 of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, that when, in any country's territory, social, political, religious or any type of disturbances arise, even in the form of urban or rural guerrilla warfare from which bloody consequences derive, when individual or collective kidnappings in the air, on land or at sea occur, and whenever victims of any type exist, both authorities and rebels are bound to respect the victims' inherent rights as human beings. To this effect, the National Red Cross or the International Committee of the Red Cross, through its delegates, shall exhort the conflicting parties to observe and respect human rights.*

- II. *The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference considers that when events to which the foregoing article refers arise, the National Red Cross or the ICRC, through its delegates, must intervene when possible at the scene of the events, to give all victims, with no discrimination whatsoever, the quick and efficient humanitarian assistance which they need, and must be permitted, in case of kidnapping, to offer and to give their assistance to the kidnapped person(s) and to his (their) family to help them in all possible ways and even to serve as intermediary in his (their) rescue, keeping such secrecy and discretion as the case requires.*
- III. *The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference considers that in the specific case of kidnappings at sea or in the air, the National Red Cross or the ICRC, through its delegates, must offer its mediation and give assistance to passengers of the kidnapped vessels and inform the passengers' families of their condition through their respective Red Cross.*
- IV. *The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference considers that the National Red Cross or the ICRC, through its delegates, can and must visit prisoners resulting from events herein referred to, giving them all necessary assistance and demanding from their captors or keepers the humanitarian treatment to which they are entitled and the privileges granted them by international treaties.*
- V. *The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference considers that the Red Cross role in favour of the victims of the events herein referred to should never be interpreted as an attempt to lessen State sovereignty or the self-determination of peoples or as interference favouring any of the conflicting parties, and that in these as in all cases in which it intervenes, its function is strictly humanitarian and absolutely neutral.*
- VI. *The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference considers that in order for the Red Cross to be a real peace factor in face of growing violence over the entire world, the International Committee of the Red Cross must take into account the present and all those considerations tending toward this goal so as to find the appropriate means and legal instruments for States to recognize the scope and importance of its humanitarian mission.*

RESOLUTION 9

**Junior Red Cross**

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The IXth Inter-American Red Cross Conference

Considering: *That the ICRC has implemented the resolutions adopted by the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross held in Istanbul, by the publication of the textbook "The Red Cross and My Country" as well as of the "Teacher's Manual";*

*Thanks the ICRC for the Spanish version adopted for Latin America, and*

1) Recommends *all National Societies and governments to adopt this textbook and to ensure its greatest possible distribution in the schools;*

2) *Aware of the fact that the resources of the Red Cross are limited, and in view of the need to proceed with the distribution of these publications, deems it necessary that States participate in their financing.*

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**REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE — EAST AFRICA**

The first seminar of the Regional Training Institute for East Africa, sponsored by the League of Red Cross Societies, was held at Dar-es-Salaam from 3 to 27 November 1970. Some thirty representatives from seven National Societies of East Africa, Europe and America attended.

The ICRC, which had also been invited to send a representative, delegated to the Tanzania capital the Head of its Press and Information Division and also its two regional delegates for East Africa.

The subjects discussed at this first seminar of the Regional Institute mainly concerned general Red Cross principles, the Geneva Conventions, co-operation with governments, the United