

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

THE UNITED STATES BECOMES A PARTY TO THE GENEVA PROTOCOL

The Geneva Protocol was concluded on 17 June 1925 under the auspices of the League of Nations, and its depositary is the Government of the French Republic. The Protocol prohibits the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases and of bacteriological methods of warfare.

Several International Conferences of the Red Cross had adopted resolutions appealing to the Governments of States which had not done so to accede to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and the ICRC continued to devote great attention to this question. Following approaches made by the ICRC in 1966 to eighty Governments which were not bound at the time by the Protocol, a large number of them signified their ratification of this agreement. It is therefore gratifying to learn that the instruments of ratification of this Protocol were signed on 22 January 1975 by the President of the United States of America.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER AND HUMANITARIAN THOUGHT AND ACTION

This year being the centenary of the birth of Albert Schweitzer, *International Review* deems the occasion appropriate for a fresh tribute to a man whose life and work displayed such singleness of purpose.¹ With him, action closely followed thought, and thought always retained some-

¹ See *Revue internationale*, March 1955, July 1961, and *International Review*, October 1965.

thing born of experience conferring upon it exceptional weight, like the quality of self-evidence.

In 1905, Schweitzer was the incumbent of a Chair of Theology at the University of Strasbourg besides being an organist of recognized talent, when he decided to serve mankind in a more direct manner: he started along the road which led him into "the virgin forest". He gives a full picture of himself in his writings to explain his decision. "I wanted to become a doctor so as to work without speaking. For years I was unsparing of words. I enjoyed my work as a teacher of theology and as a preacher. Yet this new work would consist not in speaking of the religion of love, but in putting it into practice." So, at thirty years of age, he began to study medicine. On completing his studies, he left for Africa and devoted his energy to the sick who converged on the hospital he founded at Lambaréné.

He was also a thinker and meditated on the great problems of the contemporary world. Peace captured his attention in his later years, and a book has recently been published¹ about which Mr. J.-H. Rombach—several of whose articles we have already published—wrote the following:

It seems appropriate to draw attention this year to a book which brings to light an affinity between the thought of Dr. Schweitzer and the spirit underlying the Red Cross movement. Other publications about the doctor of Lambaréné are expected to be issued on this occasion, but this one is of special interest to those who are at present actively concerned with the improvement of international humanitarian law.

Dr. Winnubst's thesis, presented at the Faculty of Law at Groningen University, expounds the evolution of Schweitzer's thought on peace and on the menace hanging over the world's very existence through the development of atomic weapons. It was typical of Schweitzer that, before speaking out to the world, he studied the problem which caused him such grave concern from many angles and in great depth. An analysis of the books and texts on which he meditated in that period sheds light on the way his thought was taking shape. Towards the end of 1957, his writings and discourses contained increasingly pressing warnings of the immense dangers of nuclear weapons. His first objective was to obtain the discontinuance of nuclear experiments, and he was well aware of the force of public opinion in this as well as in other matters. In the numerous articles he wrote and from an examination of the exhaustive list of his publications on this subject during the next few years, we can follow his unremitting campaign for peace. The

¹ Benedict Winnubst, *Das Friedensdenken Albert Schweitzer*, Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam 1975.

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bibliography in this book is a valuable source for the study of peace and of humanitarian means to defend its cause.

It was inevitable that Albert Schweitzer, with such a universal mind as his, should take an interest in the Red Cross and its work. In 1953, he broadcast a message to the ICRC on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the birth of Henry Dunant. In his address he affirmed with great conviction what the idea and work of the Red Cross meant to him, and we believe it to be opportune today to quote here its conclusion. In its turn, the Red Cross extends its gratitude to a man who fought with all his strength to alleviate the sufferings of human beings:

“...The Red Cross is a much greater and more powerful body than its founder would ever have dared to imagine. But it represents something more; in our sombre world in the aftermath of war, it stands for a truth, which is that every human being is called upon to feel, think and act with the compassion and dedication inherent in his nature, and that nations, which are associations of human beings, have to behave in the same way.

We are reminded by the Red Cross of this ideal, of which we are well aware but to which we are only moderately loyal. It is taught by the Red Cross to people who know it not as yet, and it emboldens us to hope for a world other than the one we live in. We are profoundly grateful to the man who lit this beacon, shining in the darkness around us. It is up to us now to watch over it and keep it alight.”