

The promotion of peace and humanity  
in the twenty-first century

What role for the Red Cross  
and the Red Crescent?

by Jacques Moreillon

Dealing with a question of this breadth may seem an impossible task. Furthermore, it would certainly not be intelligent to claim to have found the solution to the problem of peace and humanity. The first mark of intelligence is precisely knowing one's limits, and it is clear that we can only try to guess at potential answers to such a vast question; to do this we would need to look at the past so as better to understand the future.

**A matter of definition**

We in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement admittedly enjoy an advantage in dealing with issues such as *peace* and *humanity*, which is shared by no other world movement or organization. Indeed, for these two concepts we have *definitions* that, moreover, did not result from thoughts hastily committed to paper. They are the product of decades of shared experience within our Movement and of arduous negotiations on certain issues, mainly those pertaining to peace, which led to a consensus of the entire Movement as well as among the States party to the Geneva Conventions (through their acceptance of the Statutes of the Movement by the International Conference of the Red Cross).

Therefore, an examination of the role of our Movement in promoting peace and humanity calls first of all for a look at the origin of these terms within it.

Definitions of the words “humanity” and “peace” are given in the various texts common to our Movement. It is an important fact that today (though only since 1986) they appear in the Preamble to the Statutes of the Movement.<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1961 that the principle of humanity made its formal appearance in a resolution of the Council of Delegates meeting in Prague. It then became the first of the seven Fundamental Principles adopted unanimously by the International Conference of the Red Cross in Vienna in 1965. That was indeed a long interval: when we consider that it was the 10th International Conference in 1921 that signalled the start of recognition of Red Cross activities to promote peace with its solemn appeal “to all peoples to combat the spirit of war which is still rife throughout the world”. (Note the word “still”..., coming at the end of what was to be “the war to end all wars”).

The definition of peace adopted by our Movement appears in the Preamble to the *Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace* adopted by the World Red Cross Conference on Peace held in June 1975 in Belgrade. This programme (and hence the definition of peace) was ratified in turn by the Board of Governors of the League of Red Cross Societies<sup>2</sup> and by the Council of Delegates, both meeting in Geneva in October 1975. It is highly significant that in 1986 we incorporated the concepts of peace and humanity in the *Preamble to the Statutes of the Movement*, because this Preamble is as binding on governments as the Statutes also adopted by them. That means that, through our Statutes, the States party to the Geneva Conventions have also adopted a definition of peace ... something which the United Nations has not yet succeeded in doing, even though its primordial role is the maintenance of peace!

It should be underscored that this Preamble mentions four concepts. There again, in looking towards the future, three of them are of capital importance. The first is the Movement’s *mission*. The second concerns the seven *Fundamental Principles*. The third refers to the *mottos* of the Federation and of the ICRC and the fourth is the *definition of peace*.

I shall not dwell on the subject of the Movement’s mottos *Inter arma caritas* and *Per humanitatem ad pacem*, although they are the quintes-

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<sup>1</sup> The name “International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement” was adopted in 1986. Until then the designation “International Red Cross” had been used. The notion of Movement as such came into being in 1986 and was incorporated in the new Statutes.

<sup>2</sup> The League of Red Cross Societies changed its name in November 1991 and is now the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (hereinafter the Federation).

sence of what constitutes the Red Cross. But if we wish to make projections into the future, we will need to find answers to the following questions. Should we keep the same mission for our Movement? Should we cling to the same Fundamental Principles? What will be our vision of peace? And one cannot address the principles, in particular that of humanity, and peace without examining the Movement's mission, for ultimately, the principle of humanity and the definition of peace are but the means to an end. That end is our mission, in other words, the *raison d'être* of the Red Cross.

## The Movement's mission

Fifteen years ago the Red Cross conducted a reappraisal of its role which became known as the *Tansley Report*<sup>3</sup> and which proposed a new basic role for the Movement. I am recalling this because "from tradition, let us keep the flame rather than the ashes" or, to put it more prosaically, we must develop without trying to reinvent the wheel. Admittedly, times have changed, but experience should not be "a lamp that lights up only the ground we have covered": trying to rethink the future while ignoring the past would be a lack of intelligence, seriousness and modesty. Let us therefore draw on the lessons, *inter alia*, of the "Tansley experiment".

What was Tansley's central proposal? He wanted the Movement to assume one single basic role — the provision of emergency help on an unconditional and impartial basis, whenever and wherever human needs for protection and assistance exist because of a natural disaster or conflict. He said that the essential feature of the Red Cross was to act in cases of emergency, whether they occurred in wartime or in times of peace. The Movement did not accept his proposal but decided to retain the full range of social work done by the Red Cross, which constituted a large part of its activities, especially in what was then the Soviet Union and in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In short, the Movement did not intend to concern itself exclusively with emergency situations. Therefore, the definition of the Movement's mission, as finally adopted in Bucharest in 1977 following discussion of the Tansley Report, was *derived from its principle of humanity*. In the Preamble to the Statutes of the Movement,

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Tansley, *Final Report. An Agenda for Red Cross*, Joint Commission for a Re-evaluation of the Role of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1975, 129 pp.

that definition is given as follows: “to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being, in particular in times of armed conflict and other emergencies, to work for the prevention of disease and for the promotion of health and social welfare, to encourage voluntary service and a constant readiness to give help by the members of the Movement and a universal sense of solidarity towards all those in need of its protection and assistance”. This definition encompasses three concepts: *emergency situations* (in peacetime and wartime), *social work* by the Red Cross and the Red Crescent (i.e., day-to-day and long-term activities) and the *preparedness* so dear to Henry Dunant, which makes it possible to stand in readiness for any emergency. In short, the purpose is *to prevent and alleviate suffering and to preserve human dignity*.

For my part, while remaining open to dialogue, I can, however, hardly conceive of what else could be proposed as a mission for the Red Cross and, in the following pages my premise will be that it will remain the same for the foreseeable future, in other words, into the twenty-first century. But knowing what *vision* we should have of how to accomplish our mission, that is quite a different matter. Faced with a growing politicization of humanitarian work, especially by the various States and the UN, should we not accentuate the purely humanitarian dimension — or even the humanitarian integrity — of our mission? For although the politicization of humanitarian work offers short-term advantages, in the long term it can only be detrimental to it. Our Movement, in its universality, must aspire to be *the main autonomous force for humanitarian action* throughout the world. In a world whose former political bipolarity will be replaced by a new polarity, that of humanitarian concerns on the one hand and political interests on the other, is it not our vocation to become the main “pole of humanitarian action”?

I have often been asked to try to state the essence of the Red Cross. My own definition is that it is there “to help the helpless”. If we consider all those that the National Societies, the Federation, the ICRC, each in their own way are trying to help and to protect, the common denominator is that they are helpless and without protection. It is the prisoner who has been captured by the enemy, whether he is of the same nationality or not; it is the old woman on the sixth floor with no lift who can no longer come down to do her shopping; it is the victim of an earthquake, of flooding or famine whose government is no longer in a position to help. In an organized society, everyone has natural protection, that of the State or of his or her family (and here I am of course talking only about material protection, as divine protection is a realm in which the Red Cross — a

non-religious Movement — does not voice any opinion) and the Movement's mission is quite simply to help those who are no longer in a position to receive such assistance and protection. We therefore act as a substitute for the authorities, governments and civil society. This is why, if I had to answer the question as to whether our mission should remain the same in the coming century, I would be inclined to say yes. "Helping the helpless" has been the fundamental purpose of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement from the beginning. Identifying, recognizing and helping the weak should and probably will remain our principal mission in the future, if only on account of the scope of the concept of "helpless" and the dimensions of the task of bringing them assistance and protection.

If this is the case, *everything we do must henceforth be centred around our mission*, even more than in the past. The issues of structure, system, style, staffing and organization must all relate to our mission and must be interconnected, with that mission as the very core. To my mind, one of the mistakes too often made (not only within the Red Cross but also in some companies and other organizations) is the tendency to think in terms of structure and not of mission. Yet structure must be adapted to mission and not the other way round. As the Movement ponders its future, the first question it should ask itself is: "Do we wish to, or should we, maintain or modify our mission?" If we choose to maintain it (and possibly accentuate its strictly humanitarian, independent nature), what are the challenges (old or new) facing us and how can we make our Movement function better and more efficiently? How can we meet these challenges either within the framework of existing structures (even if it means changing the manner of working within these same structures) and/or by modifying these structures? Our Movement has many generous and imaginative thinkers and this is a major asset. But it is important to recall the advice given to handymen: "if it ain't broken ... don't fix it". I think that before trying to devise another machine, it would seem important to try to get the one we have to work the way it should. If that fails, then we can think of designing another machine ... but only if we are really sure that it will work better. *The Movement's mission should be and remain the crux of all such considerations.*

## Values and service

I will make yet another observation about our mission: our Movement is inspired by values and is devoted to serving our fellow man. Helping the weak, if we think about it, combines a choice of values and a sense

of service. The humanitarian response was born of compassion towards the sufferings of others. But compassion alone is not enough; it must be followed by action, for we are a Movement devoted to *action* and the thinking behind it is only a means to that end.

When I used to lecture on the Red Cross, I very often compared the way it works (especially in humanitarian law) with that of a four-speed engine. Those four speeds were: *compassion, action, reflection and codification*.

When Henry Dunant arrived at the battlefield in Solferino, his first sentiment was one of *compassion* (*cum-patire* in Latin or *sym-pathein* in Greek, that is “to suffer with”). If, at the heart of whatever we are doing within the Red Cross, we do not feel this first impulse of compassion towards the suffering of others, we have no future. When I think of the future, I am convinced that if we wish to continue helping the weak in the same spirit, it is absolutely imperative for the first impulse of the Red Cross to come from the heart. Sir Robert Baden-Powell, speaking about Scouting which he had founded said: “First of all I had an idea; then it became an ideal; the ideal evolved into an organization; and — if one is not careful — the organization could kill the ideal”. This great danger — of becoming merely an organization rather than remaining a Movement — is also hanging over the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, both nationally and internationally, and we cannot allow ourselves to forget the very essence of our *raison d'être*: a response that springs from the heart.

The second speed in our engine is *action*. During the battle of Solferino, Henry Dunant was not writing his book, he was caring for the wounded. He was doing so because that was the immediate emergency and, faced with the pain of the helpless, we can only justify our existence by action. And in a world that has become very competitive, this action assumes its full value if we are better prepared than anyone else to carry it out.

Next comes the third speed of the engine: *reflection*. If action is to be repeated or to be lasting, it needs to be codified and for that we need a time of reflection. Is it not remarkable that it took our Movement over a century to adopt its Fundamental Principles in 1965? The ICRC itself adopted its first Statutes only in 1915, after over forty years of existence. It took ten years of tough negotiations to work out the first Statutes of the International Red Cross in 1928 which — finally — amounted to “a peace treaty” between the League and the ICRC, under which the coordination of relief actions by National Societies remained assigned to the ICRC whenever a specifically neutral intermediary was needed, whereas

the Federation was given the task of developing National Societies and coordinating their peacetime activities. It also took us ten years to agree on a definition of peace. But those years of dialogue and negotiations were not wasted. They made it possible for a general consensus to be reached, thanks to which this definition of peace will be protected against the ravages of time. Moreover, in each generation, the Movement feels the need to redefine itself and it engages in some introspection. This is undoubtedly one necessary way in which the new generation can adopt the Movement, identify with it and make it theirs. Seen from this angle, what is important is not only this feeling of identification with it but also (and perhaps more so) the *process* by which it is engendered.

Reflection therefore, the third speed of our engine, leads to the fourth, *codification*. This also tends to favour action by guaranteeing the continuity of certain essential factors. It has been said of humanitarian law that, like the military, it is always one war late. I do not know if that is true of military but it certainly is of humanitarian law, for it proscribes the horrors that one has not been able to prevent in past wars. Henry Dunant saw the wounded abandoned on the battlefield of Solferino; that led to the original Geneva Convention on the wounded and the sick on the battlefield. The ICRC visited prisoners of war during the First World War, when they were without any form of protection. That paved the way for the Convention on the protection of prisoners of war. As for civilians, they were subject to bombardment and internment in concentration camps during the Second World War. So it was not until 1949 that the Fourth Geneva Convention protecting civilian internees was adopted, eventually followed in 1977 by the Additional Protocols prohibiting attacks on civilian populations. Today we are trying to prohibit the use of mines after being unable to prevent them being scattered throughout Cambodia, Afghanistan and elsewhere. In other words, this procedure whereby codification derives from tragedies that could not be prevented in the past is characteristic of the Red Cross, which in this way draws on its own experience to broaden its scope. The same applies to the process for the elaboration of the Statutes of the Movement and even of the agreements between the Federation and the ICRC.

## **And what of peace?**

It is noteworthy that it was within the framework of the principle of humanity that peace was mentioned for the first time in an official Red Cross document. This is therefore not an isolated notion. Indeed, the text

of the principle of humanity concludes thus: "... It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples". The word "lasting" is essential and is repeated in the definition of peace contained in the Statutes, which I should like to quote and comment upon in a forward-looking perspective. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference declared that: "*by its humanitarian work and the dissemination of its ideals, the Movement promotes a lasting peace, which is not simply the absence of war, but is a dynamic process of co-operation among all States and peoples; co-operation founded on respect for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality, human rights, as well as a fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of peoples*".

Here I should like to pay tribute — somewhat tragic in a way but nonetheless sincere — to a National Red Cross Society that was then the Red Cross of Yugoslavia. It was that Society that really launched the whole process leading to the adoption by the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement not only of the definition of peace, but also of a Programme of Action and Fundamental Guidelines for the Red Cross and Peace.<sup>4</sup> I am convinced that our friends in the Red Cross of Yugoslavia sensed at the time that it was important to promote peace through the Movement, as some of them had a foreboding of the impending tragedy and they wished to prevent war in their country. It is both encouraging and distressing to think that it was there that our definition of peace came into being, in a country where humanity has undergone one of its most severe setbacks in recent years for its inability to maintain peace. Yet, I consider it important to recall that Yugoslavia's proposal was tabled at the height of the Cold War at a special conference of what was then the League, held in 1975 in Belgrade, and that the ICRC joined in the process only subsequently.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that an internal debate then arose within the ICRC (should the ICRC deal with peace or not?) as peace was rather considered at the time to be the Trojan horse of the Soviet empire, while human rights were seen as that of the United States. The ICRC for its part, though an apostle of peace, feared that if it decided to follow this path, it would become bogged down in political issues. Voices

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<sup>4</sup> "Fundamental Guidelines for the Contribution of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to a True Peace in the World" were adopted by the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace (Aaland/Stockholm, September 1984).



were then raised within the ICRC, including mine, to say that the Committee could absolutely not remain on the sidelines: peace was a matter not only for the League but one of concern to the entire Movement. These views prevailed and the ICRC joined in the peace dialogue. As we have seen, the negotiations lasted a good ten years during a very difficult period. We did however succeed, through dialogue and through concessions on all sides, in arriving at what is today, at least in its conception, a unifying force within the Movement based on a general consensus and having the unanimous approval of the International Conference of the Red Cross — certainly no mean achievement! As I have said, it is today the only universally accepted definition of peace which an organization or a movement has managed to adopt. The United Nations has failed in this: it conducted lengthy debates before agreeing on a definition of aggression, but it never arrived at a definition of peace. (It should be noted that thanks to this achievement, negotiations on the new Statutes of the Movement lasted “only” five years, from 1981 to 1986, as we were able to concentrate on issues of organization, structure and operation ... precisely the issues which are being discussed anew today!)

It may therefore be worth dwelling somewhat on the process of consensus-building by which it was possible to arrive at a definition of peace and at two programmes of action for promoting it. Will this definition be maintained and will it remain valid? In this regard I would like to refer back to some ideas that I have already underlined in this document. The first key point is that the definition of peace in the Preamble to the Statutes of the Movement begins by stating that *by its humanitarian work and the dissemination of its ideals, the Movement promotes a lasting peace*”. That was one of the main points of negotiation. Should peace be a *direct* or *indirect* objective of the Movement? Should we strive to promote lasting peace directly or rather through our humanitarian work and the propagation of our ideals? It was finally decided that we could best make our unique contribution to peace through our actions and by spreading knowledge of our ideals (dissemination not only of humanitarian law but also of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross), rather than by trying to bring it about directly, at the risk of failing to fulfil our essential mission.

In fact when we speak of the contribution of the Red Cross to peace, it is not so much a matter of doing something else as of doing the same thing in a different spirit. On 10 May 1994, I represented the Red Cross at the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela whom I had visited several times between 1974 and 1976 when he was a prisoner on Robben Island. In 1992 I had the privilege of having a private conversation with

him for two hours in his hotel room in Oslo, during which we were able to examine in retrospect what the ICRC visits meant to him and his fellow prisoners and the lessons they had drawn from them. One thing struck me then: in Oslo, Mandela told me that the most important thing the ICRC had done, in terms of long-term implications, had been to obtain for the prisoners the right of access to news. Indeed, as they were being held in complete isolation and knew nothing of what was going on in the world, they risked remaining immobilized in the mentality of the Rivonia trial of 1964.<sup>5</sup> Had this “mental freeze” been maintained, they would have been incapable of negotiating as they did when released, as their thinking would have continued to be too strongly influenced by the past. The ICRC, by persisting in its request and finally managing to obtain access to news for political prisoners, thus played a key role in the restoration of social peace in South Africa. It took ten years of visits and representations before my successor in the post of ICRC Delegate-General for Africa was able, in 1980, to obtain access to news for the prisoners (moreover we were not alone: the activities of Helen Suzman and the appointment of a new Minister of Correctional Services also played a major part). That is a perfect example of what we mean by the *indirect contribution* of the Red Cross to peace: it is a strictly humanitarian action, but which has favourable and lasting political implications.

Another example: during the Iran-Iraq war, tens or even hundreds of thousands of soldiers were killed. Whereas the Red Cross had knowledge of over 100,000 Iraqi and Iranian prisoners of war, mainly by registering them during visits to prisoner-of-war camps and from correspondence in the form of Red Cross messages between detainees and their families, it was never possible to ascertain the names of soldiers killed in battle. In other words, each morning hundreds of thousands of families woke up wondering: “Is he alive, is he dead?”. As families are so large in that part of the world, there were millions of relatives who wondered each morning: “Is he alive, is he dead?”. Can we imagine the degree of tension and hatred engendered in a country by worry about persons whose whereabouts remained unknown, and the repercussions of that anxiety on the day-to-day life of millions of inhabitants? For the fact is that people do accept death, but they cannot accept not knowing. Even supposing that among the missing we do manage to find out which people are dead and which

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<sup>5</sup> The Rivonia trial opened on 29 October 1963 and ended on 12 June 1964 with life sentences for six South Africans including Nelson Mandela.

are still alive, can we imagine the extent to which this knowledge can ease the agony of uncertainty?

That was how we came to understand that the Red Cross is not a pacifist but a pacifying movement. Note the difference between a pacifist (for which peace is paramount) and a pacifying movement: by our humanitarian approach we contribute indirectly to diminishing hatred, thus helping to create a situation less fraught with tension. We will not bring about peace, let us not delude ourselves, but we do help foster a more peaceful climate.

At the same time we have given peace a definition containing elements that we can call "political notions". Why did we do so? That was also a part of the compromise, for there were those who said: if we are to contribute indirectly to peace we cannot afford to misjudge the component elements of that peace. For peace reigned in Nazi Germany of 1937. The peace that reigns completely unperturbed is the peace of cemeteries. Hence the crucial notion of *lasting* peace. The expression "*lasting peace*" is contained in the principle of humanity: "lasting peace amongst all peoples", sometimes called *true peace*. The expression "*lasting peace*" affirms that there cannot be true peace without justice, in the same way that true justice cannot exist without peace. Some would reply: "Justice is not the problem of the Red Cross!". I believe that the Red Cross must be aware of injustice, as we cannot be ignorant of the world around us, claiming to possess the elements of peace without taking an interest in the reasons for its absence, once we agree that peace is not simply the absence of war. That is also why we say that peace is a *dynamic process*. And that, to my mind, provides another answer to the question of our contribution to peace in the coming century. We should not consider it as a *status quo*: it is never static.

The world is in constant metamorphosis and peace is therefore a "dynamic process". A dynamic process of what? Of *cooperation*. Among whom? Among *States* and *peoples*. We cannot overlook States, because without them there is no international law. But neither can we deal with States alone. The Charter of the United Nations reads: "We the peoples of the United Nations" and not "We the States" or "The States members of the United Nations". Therefore, the concept of cooperation strikes a balance between States and peoples.

On what should this cooperation be based? *On respect for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality and human rights, as well as a fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of peoples*. To my mind, there is an element missing from this text, but we

preferred to leave it as such, rather than reexamine it with the risk of extending such reexamination to other points. The missing element is that of *respect for international law*. The problem with negotiating such texts is that we sometimes have to aim for the optimum rather than the maximum, for trying to achieve perfection could set us back; it was therefore considered better to leave untouched a definition that had taken so much negotiation, and not venture to perfect it.

This notion (the optimum versus the maximum) was also at work in the process leading to the adoption of the Movement's Statutes. We were aware of certain shortcomings, but trying to correct them entailed the risk of reopening an even more extensive debate that might have jeopardized the consensus reached on more important points. This is often the problem posed by the revision of statutes: you know where you begin but never where you will end up. In fact no-one can guarantee the final outcome, above all if it calls for the backing of governments and for a two-thirds majority of votes. Thus, I do not believe that some of the people, in 1981, who initiated the revision of the Movement's Statutes ended up in 1986 exactly where they had anticipated five years earlier. But such was the price of consensus.

Everything can be discussed, but one thing is certain: to table these questions at the International Conference, in the presence of the various States, without having first made sure that we have a consensus — if possible a genuine consensus — within the Movement would be mad (M.A.D. = Mutually Assured Destruction"! ). Experience has shown us that to obtain such consensus nothing can replace true dialogue, that the necessary time must be taken for it, that our mission must be central to it and that the most effective means must be sought of carrying out that mission.

To revert to the question of peace, what is the essential message for the future? The truth is that we cannot remain indifferent to the "political" components of peace, and that is why we have defined them. At the same time, however, our contribution to peace is indirect and unique to the Red Cross.

## **Facing the challenges of the future**

In 1981 we in the ICRC tried to reflect on the challenges that lay ahead and how they would affect our future. We concluded that the two main challenges to be met by the year 2000 would be, first, learning to live with chaos, then coping with the radicalization of ideologies.

Now, thirteen years later, as we look again at these challenges, I believe that the first challenge is still before us. Compared with the age of the gold exchange standard for example, or of the bipolar world dominated by the two superpowers, the present day and age is characterized by chaos that makes it unpredictable. It is very difficult to come to grips with chaos using fixed rules and this is one of the problems of humanitarian law. In the present situation, the principles will be the compass that shows us the north, so to speak. Here again, the principle of humanity comes into play to some extent, being as I have said the essence of the Red Cross. This principle, that is to say compassion for victims, may be considered as the driving force of the Movement, the four-speed engine which I have already mentioned. Without an engine, a car remains stationary.

But in addition to an engine, it also needs a steering wheel to guide it to its destination. The steering wheel is the principle of *impartiality* which advocates active assistance and protection, given without discrimination and in proportion to the needs of victims. When two wounded soldiers are taken to the surgeon's tent, naked, anaesthetized and ready for operation, the surgeon cannot tell friend from enemy. He first of all attends with complete impartiality to the one who is more critically wounded and hence in greatest need, be he friend or foe. It is this principle of impartiality that gives us direction and leads us to the victims. It is our steering wheel.

Next comes the principle of *neutrality*, very often misunderstood and resented, which is at times prejudicial to recruitment, especially of the young as it allows no scope for certain commitments. But let us not forget what it says: of the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross it is the only one that states its own objective. It reads: "*In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature*". The automobile which we used as our metaphor needs not only an engine and a steering wheel but also brakes, for otherwise it would fail to negotiate the next turn. The engine is humanity, the steering wheel impartiality and the brakes the neutrality that makes it possible to follow a strictly humanitarian route. In times of chaos, when law is and will continue to be difficult to observe, it is the principles that will continue to guide us.

Let us turn to the *radicalization of ideologies*. The fact is that, in 1981, we were more concerned over such factions as Pol Pot and Shining Path, which are parties of exclusion. It seems to me that we were then somewhat

less mindful than now of the phenomenon of extreme nationalism. But it is essentially the same concept, whereby the individual is treated in accordance with the passport he bears, his ethnic group, religion or his political persuasion. The result is that today many groups are facing very serious problems, especially in the countries of the former Soviet Union and of Eastern and Central Europe. The way the Red Cross should respond to this problem is no simple matter: it must abide by the Fundamental Principles, which in turn depends a lot on people. A Red Cross or Red Crescent Society is as good as its leaders. In all countries there are people who command universal respect and who display independence and courage, and it is with them that we should build the Red Cross. I know that it is easy to preach courage. But any of us could find ourselves facing physical threat or another situation of risk. The question is always the same: should we pull back? Should we give in so as to be able to continue our work or do we wish to remain independent at the risk of finding ourselves immobilized? Our room for manoeuvre is limited and our role in both the Federation and the ICRC is that of helping National Societies to maintain their independence, which is a *sine qua non* for remaining an authentic Red Cross, an authentic Red Crescent.

## Conclusion

I have been trying, with some caution, to address the issue of the Movement's future role in the promotion of peace and humanity. I believe that, in essence, our mission should remain that of helping the helpless. The principle of humanity must remain the driving force of our Movement, while impartiality, neutrality and the other principles will remain its guiding principles. Our contribution to peace must remain indirect to be effective, but must be based on an overall awareness of what constitutes peace.

Nonetheless, I still believe that, within those parameters, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement should look at the problems around it to see whether it could do more, do something else or act differently. I fear that today our Movement might be overly concerned with structure and not enough with its mission. Yet, for it to concentrate on its structure at the expense of its mission would be putting the cart before the horse. I believe that today we must reflect, for example, on the effects of the world imbalance; the gap between North and South; economic stagnation and its ramifications for the vulnerable populations in the North; the outcome of decades of development (the 1980s have been described as

*lost years* for the development of the South); the growing inequality between North and South; the direct linkage between environment and development; the effects of science on society; food and nutrition; what has been called “the peace dividend” (what to do with the savings believed to be generated by the end of the Cold War); the urban crisis; the problem of drugs and related issues such as AIDS.

Such are the problems to which the Red Cross can and must give even a partial response. Admittedly, we cannot do everything, but when I look to the future, I would like to put the problems that will confront tomorrow’s societies through a scanner so as to define, within the framework I have indicated (i.e., our mission and principles), what can and must be the response of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent to those problems. And I would place special emphasis on young people (a fairly natural reaction for one at the helm of a Movement comprising some 25 million young people throughout the world). It is a commonplace to say that the young are the adults of tomorrow. But at all events, I think that within the Red Cross and the Red Crescent we should be deeply concerned with the problems of youth, with illiteracy and lack of education, social alienation, spiritual values and health. It is symptomatic of our day and age that young people are finding ever fewer opportunities for education (and by education I mean the moulding of character and not just teaching). Schools are teaching more and more while educating less and less. Too often they are establishments engaged in imparting knowledge, not in the moulding of character. I believe that the Red Cross, because it represents values, has a role to play if it considers its contribution to youth as a contribution to the future.

Furthermore, there is the full range of new problems more directly related to the work of the Red Cross: the proliferation of “humanitarian” NGOs or NGOs purporting to be such; the involvement of States (individually or in groups) in “humanitarian” or pseudo-humanitarian activities; the famous “right of intervention”; the appearance of armed gangs spawned by the collapse of responsible structures of government; the impoverishment of the South and its implications for the National Societies; lack of interest in their development, in favour of operations that hit the headlines; the influence of a press that incites governments to change — not always for the better — their priorities and their objectives in situations of conflict.

To rise to these challenges, there must be peace within our Movement. Some find the Movement complicated and would like to simplify it. But it was born of life and life is not always simple. In fact the most efficient

biological form is also the most complex: man. Man's organs are structured according to their function. The same goes for the devices he constructs. A submarine is not built like a hot-air balloon because it must withstand the immense pressure of the water (as the ICRC must be able to stand up to the political pressures of conflicts), while the hot-air balloon must be lighter than air even though made up of elements that are heavier than air.

It is claimed that the camel is a horse designed by a committee! It is also said that the Creator wanted to make a creature that knows how to fly, walk, move above water as well as underwater. So he created the duck which does indeed use these four means of locomotion...but none of them well! For my part, I prefer a fish that knows how to swim and a bird that knows how to fly.

Keeping peace within the Movement is tantamount to executing our mission properly, fulfilling the purpose for which we are destined by our structure. The task is so great and the means so limited that the foremost duty of each and everyone, wherever they may be, is to strive loyally to do whatever they are best qualified for. Harmony in nature and in life springs from the balance between different constituent parts. Let us be harmonious in this and we shall have a spirit of peace within our Movement, the indispensable basis for trying to bring peace *outside* the Movement... today and in the twenty-first century.

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