

that office for many years. As a member of the presidential council you gave the benefit of your considerable experience and humanity.

It is impossible to review everything you have done. But I would mention that you have represented us at many congresses, that you have undertaken missions which took you to the far corners of the world, in Australia and China, and that you upheld steadfastly and with enthusiasm the cause which you knew to be noble and worthy of being defended wherever you spread the good word, the message of the heart and of the mind which alone gives life to our work.

Mr. Siordet expressed his thanks in moving terms. He recalled some personal memories, expressed his attachment for the common cause and affirmed his faith in the indestructible ideal of the Red Cross.

New Year message for 1971

As in past years, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross sent a message, transmitted on radio and television in many countries, in French, English, German, Spanish and Italian :

Civilian populations reduced to famine, women and children buried beneath the ruins of their bombed homes, burnt-out ambulances, prisoners and detainees deprived of communication with their families and subjected to intimidation and torture, statesmen and diplomats kidnapped or assassinated, aircraft hijacked and their passengers held as hostages, unbridled violence and brutal repression; such was the horror of war during the year which is now drawing to a close.

With the escalation of hate and suffering, there is a risk of discouragement, resignation and capitulation to brute force. Such an attitude would be disastrous. The efforts of so many previous generations to establish international rules for peaceful co-existence and the protection of the human being must not be allowed to come to nought. The rule of law must be reaffirmed. We must believe in it. That is a duty of us all.

The task facing the Red Cross is clear. It is the development of international humanitarian law, the extension of the application of

that law and its adaptation to new forms of contemporary conflicts. The International Committee of the Red Cross has been concerned with the problem for a long time. It is now in a position to broach the stage of concrete measures. Strong in the unanimous support which the International Conference of the Red Cross voted for it in September 1969 at Istanbul, and in the recent official encouragement of the United Nations, the International Committee has convened for the first half of 1971 two conferences, one of governmental and the other of National Red Cross experts. The aim of these conferences is to propose rules for adoption by States to improve and extend international treaties relative to war victims. Civilians must be better protected; certain weapons and methods of warfare must be outlawed; captured combatants and political detainees must have their elementary rights better safeguarded and medical facilities and personnel must be respected. States must accept some limitation to their sovereignty for the benefit of selfless humanitarianism. That is the wish of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and its efforts will be directed to that end.
