

## Iran

Ceremonies took place on May 14, 1962, in the presence of Princess Chams Pahlavi, to mark the Red Lion and Sun Day and the anniversary of Henry Dunant's birth. Dr. Abbas Naficy, Vice-President and Secretary-General of the Red Lion and Sun Society, made a speech which was reported in the Teheran newspaper of which we now reproduce the principal passages :

Nearly a hundred years ago the sights of a battlefield on the day following the battle gave Dunant the idea of a universal organisation on behalf of the wounded.

It is nearly a hundred years since the first white flag with the red cross silenced the gun-fire and saved the lives of thousands of unfortunate men suffering from the cruelty of war. Everywhere, throughout the world, millions of people are getting ready to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the Red Cross. Switzerland, perhaps, more than any other country, is preparing to celebrate this anniversary in September 1963, in Geneva.

There are many ways of celebrating an anniversary. It is generally an occasion for rejoicing and festivities. However, as far as the Red Cross is concerned, another element must dominate. . . . If it is legitimate to look back to a past which honours humanity, this must not be in order to draw vain glory from it. The successes of the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies should not be remembered for themselves, but because they are proof of what can be accomplished by men of goodwill. And the lesson which this past has to offer us, namely that the means devoted to the forces of destruction increase continuously, should give the impetus to a still more extensive search for the means of saving and preventing.

From the very outset, it was the intention of the Red Cross to achieve universality. The aim of the humanitarian mission which it undertook was to prevent and reduce suffering regardless of any consideration of race, belief, colour or political opinions.

Born of the desire to bring relief without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, the Red Cross's paramount desire is to protect life and health on the national and international level ; it promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and a lasting peace between all peoples. The National Societies are auxiliaries of the public authorities, but they are independent in their humanitarian activities and they retain an autonomy which enables them to act in accordance with the Principles of the Red Cross.

The work of the Red Cross is an inexhaustible subject and it puts me in mind of Romain Rolland's uplifting words : " The International Red Cross has been one of the few pure lights to brighten the darkness of these tragic years. It has been the comforter of millions of unfortunate people, the guardian of the Spirit, it has been human Fellowship in universal suffering. It remains for millions of hearts the annunciation of a better future ".

Shortly after the creation of the Red Cross, our country adhered to this international institution. In doing so, it was following the trail blazed by our great kings of the royal House of Achemenides, Cyrus, Cambises, Darius, who proclaimed themselves the protectors of good and of the light and ordered their subjects and their armies to wage war with moderation, to treat the vanquished with gentleness and kindness and who gave precepts of morality and love of one's neighbour ; our country accepted all the great humanitarian principles and signed the Geneva Convention towards the end of the 19th century.

Several years later, in 1922, the National Red Lion and Sun Society was founded and immediately undertook many important and worthwhile actions, particularly in the field of relief. But, to tell the truth, it has only been fully active for about the last twenty years, that is to say from the time when Her Imperial Majesty, the Shahinshah, took it under her protection. It was then that new statutes were promulgated giving the Red Lion and Sun a fresh impetus which resulted in its activities being extended throughout Iran.

Today, the emblem of the Red Lion and Sun flies over 132 centres in different parts of the country, which come under the direct control of headquarters and make up a total of 331 institutions

comprising dispensaries, first aid hospitals, blood transfusion centres, maternity homes, infants' nurseries, nursing schools, day nurseries and halls for public meetings. In Teheran itself, the Red Lion and Sun has set up an anti-cancer centre managed with the help and co-operation of the Medical Faculty. This centre, equipped with the most modern methods, is unique in our country. We have also set up an anti-tuberculosis centre and a child welfare centre, managed in co-operation with the Ministry of Public Health. Amongst our institutions in Teheran, we also have a model Children's Home, a first aid hospital, two blood transfusion centres, two dispensaries, a nursing school and a professional school.

Our telecommunications network, which never fails to arouse visitors' admiration, is the point of liaison between headquarters and the different provincial centres and enables us to have immediate information about events and disasters occurring anywhere in Iran ; we can bring immediate help to the victims by using our land and air transport facilities and depots, to rush first aid supplies to the disaster area.

Furthermore, thanks to donations, Government subsidies and relief supplies from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Red Lion and Sun was able in 1957 and 1958, to reconstruct thirty-three villages in Nahavand, which had been destroyed by an earth-tremor, and make a present of them to the villagers. In 1960, following the great earthquake at Lar, which destroyed the town, our Society was able to take immediate steps for the rebuilding of a new city, which was completed in one year.

In the field of education, the Red Lion and Sun has set up a "Junior Section", thereby giving young people the opportunity to act in a rational manner through a just programme, drawing inspiration from the ideas of kindness and solidarity. Finally, by setting up a voluntary aid organisation, it has made a very useful move towards attracting the co-operation of voluntary workers. This organisation, directed mainly by women, is extending its activities to every sector of our work and it represents the heart of the National Society because we know that nothing can replace maternal and feminine care at the bedside of those who are suffering.