

France

The French Red Cross has published the summary record of the statutory General Assembly which it held in Paris in November 1971, at which a number of important matters were discussed. We would draw the attention of our readers to some of these matters by reproducing excerpts from the President's address which shows the extent to which this National Society has been active and continued to develop. As Mr. Marcellin Carraud pointed out, membership increased again in 1970 to reach 1,184,000 by the beginning of 1971.

The first thing we see from our records of the past twelve months is that it has, in general, been a good year. Our Red Cross has developed its activities satisfactorily and has continued to prove itself sound in life and limb.

This it has done in an atmosphere of national understanding resulting, on the one hand, from a true awareness of the usefulness of what we are doing for our fellow countrymen and most certainly, on the other hand, from the growing appreciation of the important role which our movement is having to assume at international level. The Red Cross is, in fact, establishing itself, the world around, as an organization the vocation of which no longer calls for discussion, unless to comment on the efficiency which it so frequently exhibits. No doubt there are many who do not know exactly what it does represent or how it goes about its business. Nevertheless, its name remains a symbol and is voiced whenever the need for relief is felt. This is a most comforting trend.

However, the multiplicity of tasks with which so many would like to burden it has led some people to wonder whether we have reached the eve of a turning-point in the history of the Institution founded by Henry Dunant. This preoccupation is voiced from time to time. Last year, our General Assembly itself took up the cry and asked that a study be undertaken to define what changes

might usefully be made in the mission and structure of our Society in order to adapt them to modern conditions.

It has been decided that a similar study should be made at international level for the Red Cross as a whole, which goes to show that it is a topical problem.

We cannot, however, be too careful in carrying out such a task as the future of our movement is at stake. There is always the temptation to add new sectors to our range of activities. But it is rarely wise to disperse one's forces. The main point would seem to be to start by setting an order of priorities.

We must, at all times, be able to meet current needs. It is by doing so that our movement has retained its vigour and displayed its continuity. And when I look back on the work accomplished over the past year, it is that continuity which is, to my mind, its main characteristic.

I shall now present you with my report on the activities of our Society over the past year, and sum up the current situation.

... Our achievements in the medico-social sphere during the year bear witness to our readiness to adapt to the needs of the moment.

The French Red Cross, through its collaboration with the public authorities, the number of its establishments and the variety of its achievements, forms a natural part of the medical facilities of our country ...

... Ambassador François-Poncet used to say that relief work was the mainspring of the Red Cross. It is, at any rate, an essential element and we must accord it all our attention. I cannot too strongly recommend to our Presidents that they should do all they can to ensure that they have available keen, well trained and well led teams.

Relief work offers us the means of catering to the aspirations of young men and women anxious to take up some selfless activity. They can join the teams from the age of 16 and they derive satisfaction from doing a real job of work, identical with that of the adults ...