

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LEAGUE

The League of Red Cross Societies has issued its Annual Report for 1971. Excellent photographs illustrate the activities described in each chapter, and the 64 large-format pages contain the following items: Mexico meetings, relief, disaster relief preparedness, community services, health, social welfare, nursing, youth, information, international relations, and financial situation.

In his introduction to the Annual Report, Mr. Henrik Beer, Secretary General, briefly outlines the main tasks which the League had to shoulder last year. He refers to the growing importance of the League's Development Programme, one of the fundamental aims of which is to help National Societies, should they request it, to improve the structure of their organization and to get more firmly established in the country concerned, as well as to draw up programmes suited to the needs of the population and undertaken in conjunction with the national plans of each country. He concludes thus:

“As the participants in one Regional Training Institute put it, the Red Cross should carry out a twofold mission, that of the development and adaptation of its traditional activities, and also that of the constant search—in a pioneer spirit—for activities corresponding to the new needs and problems. This applies to the protection of the human environment, which no doubt gives the Red Cross new openings, since it is in line with its major concerns in the medico-social field. Even if its contribution can only be small, the League cannot ignore the impact of the various harmful effects on the environment and on the health of the individual, just as it continues to be involved in the tragic consequences of the abusive use of drugs among youth. The phase of hesitant measures is more-over terminated in these fields, since certain National Societies have already undertaken their own programmes in liaison with the public authorities, programmes likely to be followed by more National Societies and coordinated by the League.

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

Finally, there would be no necessity to recall here the interest taken by National Societies in the problems of peace, if young members of the Red Cross, with the support of adults, had not—at regional youth meetings and, in particular, the World Red Cross Youth Council which was held in Mexico—reiterated their concern at the development of localised conflicts and the many infringements of fundamental human rights, and insisted on the establishment of concrete programmes of education and activities to safeguard peace, and combat such scourges as racial discrimination. In the view of the Board of Governors, it will be a question of mobilising public opinion, and also of finding programmes adapted to the fight against disasters caused by man.

These decisions moreover correspond to the wish expressed by National Societies to commit themselves more actively than heretofore to the reaffirmation and development of humanitarian law. It is indeed true that the dissemination of the Red Cross Principles and the Geneva Conventions, as well as the adaptation of humanitarian law to the evolution of the international system, are of concern not only to the ICRC, the initiator and guide of the Law of Geneva, but also to National Societies. Never before, first in The Hague, and then in Geneva, at Conferences of Red Cross and government experts, and finally in Mexico at the meeting of the Council of Delegates, was it made so abundantly clear that the whole Red Cross has a great responsibility in this fundamental sphere for the protection of mankind.

1971 can therefore be considered as the key year in the life of the Red Cross movement, if the realisation of the importance of the reappraisal of the role of the Red Cross should, in the near future, lead to the affirmation of a united Red Cross, whose traditional and new services truly integrated into the life of the community make a powerful contribution to ensuring that the era of great change is also the era of great hope.”