

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

STANDING COMMISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

The Standing Commission met in ordinary session on 22 September in Geneva.

Under the chairmanship of Angela, Countess of Limerick (British Red Cross), it was attended by the two International Committee representatives, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, President, and Mr. Jean Pictet, member, the two representatives of the League of Red Cross Societies, Mr. José Barroso-Chavez, Chairman of the League Board of Governors, and Mr. E. Villanueva-Vadillo, Vice-President of the Spanish Red Cross, and the members elected by the International Conference of the Red Cross, namely General James F. Collins, President of the American Red Cross, Dr. Ahmed Djebli-Elaydouni, President of the Moroccan Red Crescent, Sir Geoffrey Newman-Morris, President of the Australian Red Cross and Dr. Zaharov, Vice-President of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in place of Professor G. Miterev who was unable to attend for health reasons.

It will be remembered that, at its previous session in Cannes on 22 April, the Standing Commission had asked the ICRC and the League jointly to re-assess the role of the International Red Cross. On 22 September, it took note of the study programme—quoted below—which the two international institutions of the Red Cross had drawn up. It then began examining the problems to be expected in the organization of the XXIInd International Red Cross Conference.

PROGRAMME FOR A REAPPRAISAL OF THE ROLE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

1. Introduction

Faced with the new problems arising in a changing world, leaders of the International Red Cross organisations and of several National Societies some time ago undertook an examination of their institutions' functions and structures and realised the need for consolidated study.

This common concern was expressed at the Red Cross European Regional Conference and at a meeting of the Standing Commission, at Cannes (20-25 April 1970).

In his address at the opening session of the Conference, the ICRC President proposed that the Red Cross should review its present situation and study its objectives and resources.

*The Standing Commission took note of a communication from its Chairman concerning a reappraisal of the mission of the International Red Cross, that is to say of the National Societies, the ICRC and the League * in the light of present-day conditions. It requested the ICRC and the League to prepare "the broad outlines of this study for the meeting in September and present suggestions on the way in which it would be advisable to tackle the problem, and the cooperation that should be requested for this purpose".*

The objective of the planned study, therefore, is to appreciate and re-define the role and structure of the Red Cross in our contemporary society, in order to determine how, in a rapidly and constantly changing world, the Red Cross must adapt so that it may continue to strengthen its position and ensure its future in the service of mankind.

2. Plan of the study

2.1 Phase one: Inventory of present activities.

The International Red Cross activities will be classified methodically, with all information on the conditions under which they are carried out, on the needs to which they correspond, and on their relative importance in the overall workload of the various Red Cross bodies.

* Art. I (1) of the Statutes of the International Red Cross

2.2 Phase two : Evaluation of these activities.

The analysis of the elements obtained in the first phase will permit an evaluation of the extent to which these activities are adapted to the needs of the world today and the local environment, of the reasons for their development or of the difficulties arising in their implementation, notably concerning the methods utilised.

This second phase requires a thorough study of the rapidly changing human environment and will also include consideration of new fields of action for the Red Cross.

The analysis will provide the basis for an eventual re-adjustment of objectives, taking into account available and potential resources. During this phase the aid of experts inside and outside the Red Cross will be necessary.

2.3. Phase three : Reflections on the structure of the international Red Cross

The results of the second phase will be applied to the organisational structure considered as a means of carrying out Red Cross action.

This phase will involve the adaptation of organisational resources to the various Red Cross objectives, and will provide practical recommendations to improve their efficiency.

2.4. Phase four : Tentative projection into the future

Based on guidelines revealed during the earlier phases, with contributions from experts within the Red Cross itself and from outside specialists in fields of " prospective " studies, research will be oriented towards long-term extension of Red Cross activities.

This research on integration of Red Cross activities into the (future) society of the next decades could lead to a new range of objectives and programmes corresponding to the predictions of the structures of a future society.

3. Comments

The purpose of the study is to determine the place and function of the Red Cross in the world today and thereafter to deduce how they are likely to develop both in the immediate future and two or three decades hence.

Starting from an examination of present activities, the study aims to measure the extent to which the moral and material resources of the Red Cross are equal to the conditions of the world today. One will try to adopt a working method which is practical and objective, and which may lead to new priorities, adaptation of methods to new demands and a readjustment of structures. An inventory of its activities will be both objective and practical; it will reveal new priorities and the ways in which methods and structures should be adapted.

The "competitive" aspect of the International Red Cross will be assessed in terms of the "competition" within the public and private sectors, in order to identify its own specific function, objectives and methods.

The point of such a "check-up" is first of all to bring into the light and utilise those legacies from the past which still exert a living impact. The expansion of the Red Cross, its growth and consolidation throughout the world is a manifestation of its dynamic character. This dynamism must be harnessed to contemporary needs.

The increasingly rapid changes in the world and the new needs arising, might well open up yet unknown fields for potential Red Cross activities.

To a certain extent, the future will be what man makes of it through his aims and experience: so shall it be with the Red Cross which, setting itself an objective, will radiate its own lines of force for the future: its action should not be dictated by fleeting circumstances.

The study in question should chart a course for the various bodies of the Red Cross, enabling them to direct their efforts and enterprises in the right direction.

Red Cross unity, universality and capacity to adapt itself to changing conditions depend, as in any organisation, on the correlated action of its various interdependent organs. Special attention will therefore be given to the inter-relationship of the various international and national bodies of the Red Cross. Practical steps may be proposed for improving their cooperation in the discharge of their specific functions.

If their activities are better defined and coordinated, they will, with greater efficiency, adapt themselves to the working conditions which will be theirs in the future.