

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1963)

Rubrik: The Red Cross Centenary

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 24.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

II. GENERAL ACTIVITIES AND PERMANENT RESPONSIBILITIES

THE RED CROSS CENTENARY

On February 17, 1863, the "Committee of Five" appointed by the Geneva Public Welfare Society, met in Gustave Moynier's office at 3 rue de l'Athénée, in order to draw up a memorandum on the ideas propounded by Henry Dunant in "A Memory of Solferino".

The second sentence of the Minutes drawn up by Henry Dunant who was acting as secretary, was : " the President, General Dufour, proposed, and Mr. Dunant seconded, that the Commission should declare its constitution as a permanent international committee ".

From the outset of its proceedings, therefore, the Committee of Five, which was to become the International Committee of the Red Cross, had clearly conceived the international and permanent character of its tasks.

This firm conception was a factor which contributed considerably to the success of this great Red Cross movement which, since that time, was never to cease functioning, bringing many benefits in the various forms of its humanitarian action : alleviation of suffering, respect for the human person, international mutual assistance.

Six months later, on August 25, the International Committee decided to convene a Conference of international experts in Geneva. This was held from October 26-29, 1863 in the Palais de l'Athénée, which had just been built. This Conference decided upon the emblem of the Red Cross and advocated the establishment in every country of a " Relief Society ", the present National Societies of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun.

It is therefore correct to say that the year 1863, which saw the birth of the International Committee, the adoption of the emblem of the institution and the establishment of National Societies, was the start of the Red Cross movement. Consequently, 1963 was proclaimed Centenary Year by the XIXth International Conference of the Red Cross (New Delhi 1957).

During the course of 1963 various commemorative ceremonies provided the President and members of the ICRC with opportunities to recall the milestones in the institution's history and to thank governments, National Societies, and the people of those countries, for their constant support of its work which is continuously developing.

At the ceremony on February 18 commemorating the first meeting of the Committee of Five, which was the origin of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the President said, in summing up the true character of the Committee's work: "so many principles affirmed, so many appeals made to the solidarity of peoples, so many approaches made to governments; finally lead to something very concrete which can be seen, touched and heard: men, women and children who suffer and to whom the envoy from Geneva brings healing and solace, so that those who could testify today, better than I and my colleagues, are those countless beings who saw the doors of their prisons half-open, who saw a hand offering them bread and milk, a look restoring some hope to them."

On March 15, Mr. Léopold Boissier gave an address entitled "The Peace which is alive" to a large audience at the Cercle interallié, in Paris. He outlined the diplomatic activities of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, pointing out the danger of international competition and the deterioration of international law. "However", he said, "if we wish to see a different spirit abroad, to see mankind regain confidence in its own destiny, it is to the man of today, sorely distressed as he is, to whom we must turn to ask of him that courage and faith which creates neither national nor social antagonism nor political intrigue. To convince man to rise up, to stir him to action, it is not grand words he needs to sustain him, but sound examples".

Such an example, Mr. Boissier went on to say, is the Red Cross movement and its achievements. He referred in particular to the Cuban crisis, to the solution of which the International Committee had contributed by assuming a task of an entirely new character.

Later, on May 8, when taking part in the inauguration of the Henry Dunant memorial, the President of the International Committee described how the initial idea of this great Genevese germinated and prospered, and he emphasized the latest developments. "The work", he said, "has not ceased to expand. Since 1949 it has extended its protection to civilian populations in enemy-occupied territories, to the victims of civil war and it comes to the aid more and more of persons overwhelmed by natural disasters, floods, earthquakes, fire and famine. The National Societies, ever more active, assisting those in every walk of life, struggle against occupational illness and give protection to children and support the aged."

From July onwards, with the approach of the events in Geneva for the celebration of the Centenary of the Red Cross, more and more visits and tributes were paid to the International Committee and its President.

The ICRC awarded him its Gold Medal and during the same official ceremony, he was also honoured by the presentation of the Medal of the Alliance Suisse des Samaritains. Moreover, the University of Geneva conferred an honorary doctorship on Mr. Boissier.

An impressive number of visitors came to ICRC headquarters during the centenary year. In August and September they averaged slightly more than 500 a week, including the leaders of new National Societies of the Red Cross in Africa and Asia who took part in a seminar at Founex near Geneva organized jointly by the League of Red Cross Societies, the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross.

The International Committee made special arrangements for groups of visitors who had given notice of their coming to be accompanied by personnel capable of giving explanations in French, English, German or Spanish. From June to December, six thousand people visited the ICRC.

In the second half of August several seminars on Red Cross activities in the event of armed conflict were held. Sessions were attended by large numbers of participants, due to the presence in

Geneva of National Red Cross Society delegations for the centenary celebrations.

Representatives from all the National Societies visited the ICRC during the summer, some of them in large numbers, such as the 120-strong delegation from the Japanese Red Cross, the Mexican Red Cross delegation with 140 senior members from its various sections and the 117 members of the South African contingent.

Centenary events in Geneva and in Switzerland

Celebrations in Switzerland took place between August 15 and September 15. They were organized by a "Centenary Commission of the Red Cross in Switzerland" specially formed for the purpose by the ICRC, the League and the Swiss Red Cross. Mr. F. Siordet, Vice-President of the ICRC, was Chairman of the Commission and Mr. Ed. J. Logoz, its Secretary-General.

The main events were :

1) *International Study Centre for Heads of Nursing Services*. Sessions were held in Lausanne from August 19-23, attended by nurses and nursing assistants having some experience in Red Cross activities and who were thus enabled to make an assessment of the new tasks to be faced by nursing personnel in the light of economic and social evolution in the world of today.¹

2) *International Red Cross Meeting of First Aiders*. This took place at the same time in Macolin, near Bienne. It was attended by qualified first-aid workers well versed in methods applied in their own National Societies. The work included a theoretical part (technical and general lectures, brief reports on first-aid activities in the participants' own countries) and a practical side involving exercises and demonstrations of team work.

3) *A World Conference of Educators* which was held during the same week in Lausanne with the object of permitting participation on a larger scale by the teaching profession in the dissemination of the Red Cross idea. Directors of National Societies of the Junior Red Cross took part in this Conference, as well as members of the

¹ See p. 38.

teaching profession at various levels (primary, technical, secondary, university), doctors and representatives of ministries of education and health from different countries. This Conference examined the programme of the Junior Red Cross, ways and means of including it in school curricula in a more general way and the possibility of developing as close a co-operation as possible between the teaching profession and the Red Cross, with special emphasis on trends in the world today.

4) *Seminar on Red Cross activities in the event of armed conflict, internal disturbances or international tension.* This took place, as mentioned earlier, at the headquarters of the ICRC.¹

5) *Camp fires and demonstrations* were organized in co-operation with the Army Medical Service and the Swiss Red Cross near Colombier (Neuchâtel) on August 24-25.

6) *Several general events* of interest to the public took place in Geneva from August 25 to 31. *Public lectures* were held at Geneva University on the theme "The Red Cross in the World Today" and "The Red Cross—Link between individuals and between the peoples of the world". *Public first-aid and nursing demonstrations* were held in co-operation with the Swiss Red Cross.

7) *Commemoration Day* was celebrated on September 1. The official ceremony took place during the morning, and in the afternoon a large procession of some 3000 participants passed through Geneva. The evening ended with a ballet and folk dancing.

8) *The Centenary Congress of the Red Cross.* This took place from August 27 to September 10. In the course of this Congress the Council of Delegates held its sessions and a summary of its work is given later on in this Report.²

9) *The International Red Cross Exhibition.* From August 15 until September 18 this exhibition was a great success, being visited by over one hundred thousand people. Originally planned to finish on September 15, it was prolonged to enable all the National Society delegations which had come to Geneva for the Centenary to examine

¹ See p. 43.

² See p. 47.

in detail this combined display of International Red Cross work and achievements during its first century of existence. This exhibition had indeed been planned as a medium of information and promotion for the Red Cross as a whole, designed to reach not only the well informed or even the specialist, but also the general public.

There were two main sections to the Exhibition, the Historical and the Topical :

a) *The Historical Section* presented in as attractive and as clear a manner as possible the milestones of Red Cross development from its foundation to the present.

b) *The Topical Section* showed how united and diversified is the Red Cross, illustrating all the tasks likely to confront it, how it copes with them, and its future outlook and projects. After recalling Red Cross principles, this section explained the structure and operation of Red Cross institutions and international conferences. It then showed the importance of the Geneva Conventions and reviewed future trends in humanitarian law. Other topics dealt with were assistance to military and civilian victims of armed conflicts, relief to victims of natural disasters, activities to promote health and the Junior Red Cross. Information services (the press, radio, television and cinema) were also well displayed.

Philately, numismatics and poster display relating to the Red Cross were also prominent. The many stamps, issued in the course of a century by 135 countries and territories; the medals, badges, decorations and pictures, traced the history of the Red Cross and presented it in this manner for the first time. These three sectors alone were a great attraction by reason of their beauty and originality.

There were two cinemas in the Exhibition, the larger one for a standard programme of general information, the smaller one for films of more particular interest.

Army medical services from several countries co-operated in the Exhibition, distinctly showing the parallel which exists between their activities and those of the Red Cross, as well as underlining the importance of the Geneva Conventions.

Manufacturers and commercial firms contributed displays of the most modern products and equipment used by the Red Cross.

Award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the ICRC and the League

In December, the ICRC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the third time. This great international distinction had been previously awarded to the ICRC in 1917 and 1944 for its humanitarian work during the two World Wars. The Centenary of the Red Cross was the occasion of the third award, shared this time with the League. When the Prize was presented to him in Oslo, the ICRC President delivered an address on "Some Aspects of the ICRC's Mission", emphasizing how, for the past century, the Red Cross field of action had grown and how its humanitarian work was an element of peace.

THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

The Centenary Congress of the International Red Cross included the meetings of the Board of Governors of the League of Red Cross Societies and those of the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross. The ICRC was particularly active in the work of the Council of Delegates, for which it had prepared many reports beforehand.

The Council of Delegates met in an atmosphere of good will and optimism, engendered and maintained by the seminars and conferences held during the preceding weeks, as well as by the profound impressions created by the commemorative ceremony and the procession on Sunday, September 1.

Sessions were held from August 28 to September 10 in the United Nations Building assembly hall, which had been obligingly made available for the Congress by the U.N. General Secretariat.

Several members of the ICRC General Affairs Division assumed the functions of secretary and rapporteur for the Commissions set up by the Council of Delegates to examine and discuss the seventeen reports submitted by the ICRC on items on the agenda.

The resolutions adopted by the Council of Delegates are a testimony to the institution's vitality one hundred years after its foundation.¹

¹ In particular, see p. 52.

The Council of Delegates comprises representatives from all National Societies, the ICRC and the League. Delegates from governments which are parties to the Geneva Conventions join the Red Cross representatives in assembly to constitute the International Red Cross Conference. The next of these should take place in Vienna in 1965 and the Centenary Congress has made a positive contribution to the preparatory work.

IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Geneva Conventions

Notifications and Accessions

By the end of 1963, 98 States were bound by the 1949 Geneva Conventions. In addition, ten powers, although not yet parties to these Conventions, were still bound by those of 1929, 1906 or 1864.

In the course of the year the following States became parties to the 1949 Conventions: Senegal (by declaration of continuity on April 23), Trinidad and Tobago (accession on May 17), Saudi Arabia (accession on May 18), Somalia (accession on July 12), Malagasy Republic (declaration of continuity on July 19), Federal Republic of Cameroon (declaration of continuity on September 21).

Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions

Distribution of the " Illustrated Manual ", published jointly by the ICRC and the League to promote dissemination of the Geneva Conventions in schools and Red Cross instruction centres, has continued extensively.

At the request of one government, the ICRC has drafted a handbook on acts and customs of war with particular emphasis on humanitarian law. This draft could later be available to other governments which so desire.

The Course of Five Lessons by Mr. Coursier, intended primarily for instruction in universities, met with a degree of success which justified its publication in French and English. The ICRC Infor-