

BOARD OF DELEGATES

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ON THE RED CROSS PRINCIPLES

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Japanese Red Cross Society

Tokyo
July 23, 1961

ON THE RED CROSS PRINCIPLES

- The Counterproposal of the Japanese Red Cross Society -

1. The Proposal of the Standing Commission is timely.

A century of well filled and uninterrupted history of the movement of the Red Cross which has now united almost all the countries in the world, proves that this movement has won a rare success in the history of mankind. This is a brilliant victory indeed of human reason.

However, there are still in this world innumerable persons whom the Red Cross alone can help, and who are anxiously waiting for this assistance. In addition, our daily experiences also show, that, numerous victims of human or natural catastrophes suddenly find themselves in need of attention.

For this reason, we, who have the privilege and the honour to participate in this big movement, are bound to conserve the heritage of our predecessors, who have established and directed it throughout all vicissitudes, and to meditate on the principles which should guide us, without error, in this new cosmic era.

Nothing is more important at this moment for the Red Cross than to have a well established doctrine in order to know what it is, what it has to do and what it can expect in the days to come. The future of the Red Cross depends, more than anything else, on this universality.

It is in this sense that the Japanese Red Cross is very happy to recognize that the proposal of the Standing Commission, which has prepared a declaration in view of the centenary of our organization, is timely.

2. Three questions regarding the plan of the Standing Commission

The Japanese Red Cross has the honour to put some questions regarding the draft presented by the Standing Commission.

This draft, as the proposal itself explains it, is based on the work of Dr. Jean S. Pictet. Had this work not been accomplished, such a draft could never have been conceived, nay, even be considered. This proves the great value of Dr. Pictet's work, which has exercised such a great influence on the institutions of the Red Cross.

(1) If this is the case, for what reasons have the Standing Commission not adopted it, but considered it necessary to modify the formula which Dr. Pictet had established after such deep reflection? This is the first question.

Finding no explanation of this matter, we are obliged to presume a reason, and if our reflection is correct, the reason why the Commission has thought it necessary to change the formula of Dr. Pictet is not because it has discovered some doctrinal mistakes in the system of Dr. Pictet, but because the style of Dr. Pictet is too elevated and does not expressly mention the question of Peace nor that of medical activities in time of peace. The Commission may have thought also, very probably, that it was necessary to reduce the number of the principles in order to popularize them. Such a supposition is inevitable, if one compares the text established by Dr. Pictet with that prepared by the Standing Commission. However, our experience shows, on the contrary, how fascinating and popular the system of Dr. Pictet is, simply because the principles selected by him are so distinct and complete. We are quite sure that any other redaction would not gain such wide popularity. (We shall revert to this question at the end of this statement.)

(2) However, the difference between the two texts is not limited solely to this point. Another big difference we notice, is that the principles named "Organic" by Dr. Pictet are almost, if not entirely, eliminated in the text of the Commission. However, these organic principles, without which good relations between National Societies cannot be expected, are extremely important. In fact, without them, the universality on which the future of our movement depends can not be attained.

To be exact, the Standing Commission has chosen five fundamental principles and two organic principles to establish its 7 Principles, eliminating others. Then, it has inserted the notion of eight other principles under different titles as follows:-

Under the title of "Impartiality", it has introduced the notion of Equality and Due Proportion.

Under the title of "Independence", it has introduced Autonomy and Auxiliarity.

Under the title of "Voluntary Service", it has introduced Selflessness.

Under the title of "Unity", it has introduced Multitudinism.

Under the title of "Universality", it has introduced Equality and Solidarity of National Societies.

In other words, the title and the text do not correspond with each other any more. Certainly, the number of the principles was reduced, but their notion has become less clear, especially that concerning Humanity.

Two principles, Free Service and Foresight, seem to have been definitely rejected.

However, the principle of Free Service is very important for the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions, even if its application is sometimes difficult, as in the case of other principles. Only those who really know the sufferings of human beings can appreciate its moral value. Foresight is also an essential principle, especially for the development of the humanitarian law. Imagine, how many victims would have been saved, had the 4th Convention been adopted before the 2nd World War!

We wonder if our interpretation is not correct? This is our second question.

(3) There is still another point which is not entirely explicit. It concerns the relation between the fundamental principles of Oxford and the draft of the Standing Commission. As the proposal of the latter states that the "Declaration" will be put at the beginning of the Handbook, we presume that the Standing Commission wishes to conserve the principles of Oxford as they are. Is that the intention of the Standing Commission? This is the third question.

3. What is the principle?

How does the Japanese Red Cross consider these three questions?

(1) The first thing which the Japanese Red Cross wishes to mention, is that a principle is one thing and a program another. In its opinion, a program is a plan which shows how to solve a concrete problem, while a principle is a universally recognized criterion (which does not require an explanation) according to which one may decide, a priori, why one has to establish such a program and not another. The principles, so to speak, are the keys of the piano, while the programs are the music played by the notes of these keys. Their function is entirely different: we should not confuse one with the other.

(2) What are the circumstances under which we need the principles? We think there are three:-

- a) To meet new, unforeseen problems. (synthetic application)
- b) When we wish to establish rules, accords or resolutions. (legislative application)
- c) When we have to examine whether an institution is well organized, or a program established by it, follows the proper course. (analytic application)

The utility of having precise principles, is that they can serve as criteria for these three cases. Such is our opinion.

(3) Should this be so, the principles must necessarily possess the following faculties, without which they can never satisfy the above-mentioned three demands:

- a) To be of universal validity
- b) To be simple and abstract
- c) To be in necessary and sufficient numbers
- d) To be classified according to some order of value (viewed from the Red Cross standpoint)
- e) To have a logical relation amongst themselves, in order to enable combinations.

(4) To satisfy these conditions, each principle should be very distinct. (How can one compose a piece of music, if the notes of the key were combined beforehand?) There should be no repetition, nor a logical error amongst them. It is absolutely necessary that the principles constitute a clear and simple system in order to be comprehensible to all.

The Japanese Red Cross considers that the system established by Dr. Pictet entirely satisfies these conditions. It is worthy of the name of "Summary of the Principles". (For more advanced study, see Annex B: "On the Order of Principles as arranged by Dr. Pictet and the Application of his System". One will be surprised to find how simple his system is, and its practical utility.)

4. Regarding the concern of the Standing Commission

It is evident that a system of principles established in such a way can not, despite its simplicity, be formed like an advertisement, which everybody can easily understand. They will inevitably be arid and sober, just because they are not programs. This can not be helped.

With regard to the concern of the Standing Commission which wishes to treat the problems of Peace and Medicine in a more explicit manner, we think that these matters are already explained in full detail in the Principles of Oxford. Hence, we need not repeat them.

Therefore, the Japanese Red Cross has the honour to make the following proposal:

5. Solution (Counterproposal of the Japanese Red Cross)

(1) Paying respect to the idea of the Standing Commission, the Japanese Red Cross proposes to make a "Declaration" which will be placed at the beginning of the Handbook. This Declaration will be edited as simply as possible, in order that it can easily be kept in mind by all personnel. It will be rhythmical to that effect. Further, it will contain the essential of the principles, amongst others, the rule which Dr. Pictet has named "The Golden Rule of the Red Cross Principles"; that is "Whenever the Red Cross is faced with a dilemma, one must ask oneself where the interest of the victims lies." (Pictet: Red Cross Principles, pages 91, 95, 97)

In this way, we can avoid, as far as possible, the repetition of the same expressions used in the "Declaration" and in the "Principles".

The Golden Rule of the Red Cross Principles is a sacred rule which determines the choice and combination of the principles of the Red Cross themselves. Therefore, the Declaration would have capital importance worthy of being placed at the beginning of the Handbook. It would serve as an introduction to the Principles. We shall show you later the draft of the Declaration which we have prepared, as an example. (see Annex A)

(2) Next, we shall reproduce the complete table of the principles as written by Dr. Pictet at the end of his work, not forgetting the "Summary", which is most important, because the titles quoted therein are so judiciously chosen in order to enable the combination of the principles. (It would follow immediately after the "Declaration" to constitute the whole.)

(3) We shall keep the Principles of Oxford; they will keep their place in the Handbook with small modifications:

- a) In order not to confuse them with the new principles, we propose to change the title of the Principles of Oxford and name them "Fundamental Programs" and their "Application".
- b) It being now unnecessary, we propose to strike out the preamble of the Oxford Principles (Impartiality, Political, religious and economic Independence, Universality and Equality of National Societies).

The Japanese Red Cross thinks that such a solution should satisfy the wishes of the Standing Commission, although we have introduced the complete table of the principles of Dr. Pictet, which is, in our opinion, the best and the most complete one at present, and are keeping the

Principles of Ocford, which are excellent programs having practical and inestimable value for many operations, including the operation regarding Peace and Medicine.

6. A point, to which we have to pay attention

In conclusion, there is one point to which the Japanese Red Cross wishes to respectfully draw the attention of the eminent Delegates.

We have already published about ten thousand copies of the Japanese translation of the work of Dr. Pictet. The more we distributed, the greater the demand for further copies increased. This surely proves how fascinating the analysis of Dr. Pictet, to whom we pay our respects, is.* It can be anticipated that, should another form be adopted, the formula of Dr. Pictet itself will nevertheless remain intact. In consequence we shall have not only two interpretations, but also two designations of principles; one official, the other private. This, of course, is not a satisfactory solution. Was it not just to avoid such confusion, that we wished to declare the principles of the Red Cross?

Considering the fact that the work of Dr. Pictet has already been published, and is undoubtedly considered to be the best existing at this moment, we have no other alternative than to adopt it. This is our humble opinion.

In view of the importance of the issue the Japanese Red Cross has the honour to invite the Council of Delegates not only to study its proposal but also to support it.

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The following is the draft of the Declaration which we have the honour to submit to you, just as an example:

(To save time, we shall not read Annex B which we submit to you in writing, with the request, that it be kept on record.)

* One day our teacher of the JRC wrote us that she married according to the principle of Equality and gave birth to children according to the principle of Due Proportion.

(a suggestion)

G-332/61
ANNEX A

The Golden Rule
- Moral Code of the Red Cross -

PROCLAMATION

At all the times and everywhere in the world,
the Red Cross has only one and the same signification:

That is, "to fight against suffering and death,
and to ensure human dignity, without distinction."

Red Cross men!

Let us be in unison, in achieving this task!
Let us never be discouraged!

Let us never be indifferent
to the fate of any individual!

This is our oath:
the oath to the Red Cross Flag.

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If ever we are faced with a dilemma,
in applying the Red Cross Principles,

Let us ask ourselves, always and above all:
"Where lies the interest of the victims."

Red Cross men!

This is the surest way to determine the proper course,
without any possibility of error.

Here is the "Golden Rule" of the Red Cross,
which governs the Seventeen Principles.

This is the Code of the Red Cross, our Code of Honour,
which we proclaim today, with full solemnity.
