

XVTH INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS CONFERENCE

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MORAL STANDARDS  
OF THE HEALTH PROGRAMME  
OF THE JUNIOR RED CROSS

*ITEM 20 ON THE AGENDA*



CZECHOSLOVAK RED CROSS

# MORAL STANDARDS OF THE HEALTH PROGRAMME OF THE JUNIOR RED CROSS

Modern hygiene has undoubtedly a strong moral side. It has brought us the knowledge that a great percentage of diseases is unnecessary because it is possible to prevent them. If a man gets this instruction, then it is his duty to avoid disease and, as far as he is able, to keep healthy. He is not a moral man, who through neglect of his own health lessens the full activity of his life and still more burdens the community with the care of him.

The Junior Red Cross since its very beginning has concerned itself with these prophylactic efforts in a quite practical way. It has encouraged personal cleanliness, hardiness, abstinence from poisons, especially from alcohol and nicotine, a regular medical examination, physical exercises in the open air and hygienic care of its own school buildings.

Another result of hygienic instruction is our knowledge as to the contagiousness of some diseases, a knowledge which gives us a moral command not to infect our fellowmen with our own contagion. It is not only our duty to save ourselves, but we

must also not harm anyone else through our own negligence. Therefore, if the members of the Junior Red Cross are taught to wash their hands before every meal, to use a handkerchief when sneezing and coughing, it is not only a question of hygienic care of one's own person, but also a regard for one's fellowmen. So we have again a moral result. Without regarding the interests of all it is not possible to insure the health interest of an individual. A man may hope to remain healthy only if the majority of people round him are also healthy.

Many diseases may be prevented only if all people unite for that purpose and if the fight against them is publicly organized. Against some contagious diseases it is necessary to organize prophylactic measures not only in the whole district but also in the whole nation and sometimes even in conjunction with the neighbouring states. So grows the consciousness of general responsibility in matters of health and the feeling of human solidarity gains strength. The shortsightedness of egoism is seldom so evident as in this field.

Whenever there is a question of technical and hygienic progress, it is clear that only with the collaboration of all can the welfare of an individual be safeguarded.

Institutions such as sewerage-systems, aqueducts, or clinics for mothers and nurslings must be public institutions which

benefit the health of the whole community. The Junior Red Cross is taught to pay attention to these matters; its magazine has special articles about them and when new bathing-places, playgrounds, or gardens are established, the members themselves must put their hands to the plough.

We are happy if small children master simple rules of health and cleanliness, such as the washing of hands, the brushing of teeth, the airing of rooms, all of which are closely related to the hygienic care of school buildings and school education. The Junior Red Cross is able to provide from its own resources commodities, such as wax for floors, wash-basins, towels, refuse-bins, house slippers, medicine-chests, and electric-cleaners.

In some places the Junior Red Cross establishes gardens, playgrounds, and dental clinics, which are also supported by the local Red Cross Society. The older children get a better and deeper education by means of lectures, books, exhibitions, and different courses. These older members are already expected to live a conscientious life according to their hygienic education. The methods of hygienic education are put into practice by the Junior Red Cross. They do not occupy a special hour or form a special subject in a school curriculum, but the hygienic education has to penetrate deeply through the whole school life. It must become an integral part of all school activity, able to give its own

impulses and influences and also to receive them. Modern hygiene emphasizes the importance of selfdiscipline and strong will-power from a health point of view.

It is not sufficient for a man to combat dangers of climate, catastrophes, and other external evils ; he must also get over his own bad instincts and feelings of malignity towards other people. Only then will he be physically and mentally balanced, only then will he remain healthy and be able to find a full joy in life.

Only such a man is a valuable member of human society. He is firm, he is never afraid, he does not allow himself to be provoked, or to be oppressed and he in turn never himself provokes or oppresses his fellows. The members of the Junior Red Cross are instructed to lead this harmonious life in which they are able to put in practice the rules of modern mental hygiene. Here also hygiene is closely related to morality. It is therefore possible to derive some positive moral rules from the recognized hygienic standards. The Junior Red Cross members are led to morality through a conscious hygienic life. The Red Cross and the Junior Red Cross are still more fortunate. They have their own moral basis besides hygiene.

The Red Cross was originally established to help sufferers. Therefore its hygienic programme will never be divorced from this primary activity and will never become its main purpose. The

Junior Red Cross members must try to owe nothing to human society; on the contrary, they must give it more than they receive from it. They will always be ready to help those to whom health, strength and self-reliance have been denied. They must therefore themselves have their own strong foundations, they must be perfectly healthy. This is the main motive of every Junior Red Cross member. So hygiene is a predominating part of his or her whole attitude towards life. In fact the members are never informed in an abstract manner about personal or school hygiene, but their efforts are always practically connected with service to their school-fellows and other people who need help. Elsewhere in the world some fears have been expressed that the cult of physical efficiency is being over-emphasized. Is not the modern world being governed by an exaggerated fashion? Does not a man who concentrates all his efforts upon his health and physical efficiency become in the end a selfish, haughty, combative, violent, unscrupulous creature and so an undesirable member of human society? These questions are very serious wherever the education of health and of physical efficiency is not connected with moral education and wherever health is allowed to follow exclusively its own aims. Such questions do not arise in the Junior Red Cross. Health and self-reliance in the Red Cross are only a means to an end, and the end always remains service to sufferers, that is to say, a moral end.

The Red Cross is in accord with those pedagogues, who believe that healthy children are more able to assimilate moral rules and requirements than sickly children, who cannot fully follow their spiritual education, being naturally very often too absorbed in selfish interests. The Red Cross recognizes this aim of education. It wishes to promote the spiritual evolution of life; therefore its health programme is a sublime moral movement, which is one of the hopes of humanity. The Red Cross was established especially to help sick and wounded people. Formerly we were not able to prevent diseases, therefore we only tried to cure them. To-day we know also how to prevent them and therefore we must prevent them. This idea of prevention is not only for the sick but also for the wounded. Shall we not be able to apply it still further? Shall we not learn how to prevent war, which brings innumerable sorts of wounds? We must try to do so with the aid of the Junior Red Cross. The idea of prevention has its source in a real and sincere Red Cross pacifism. This task is a most beautiful harmony of hygienic and moral Red Cross efforts and we trust that all nations join in these efforts.

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