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THE RED CROSS, A FACTOR FOR TRUE PEACE

More fervently than ever, people long for true peace, the kind of peace which can be guaranteed only by a profound change in relations between states. They know that rivalries between states, conflicts of interest, ideological ambitions, are the real reason for the unprecedented accumulation of the means of destruction, with all its attendant dangers.

This longing may succeed in opening the way for changes vital to the future of mankind. The duty of the Red Cross, if it is to remain faithful to its origins, is therefore to uphold this longing with all its strength, since it would not be the first time in the history of mankind that an irresistible protest welling up from the depths of the human heart had prevailed over a situation accepted for generations as immemorial, immutable, and inseparable from human society itself and from relations between States. The history of the Red Cross testifies to this : for over a century its work, always true to the principles of universality, impartiality and neutrality, has been causing the most remarkable and encouraging changes of conduct in time of war.

To this fundamental transformation the Red Cross makes a powerful contribution, by living its principles and spreading knowledge of them, by encouraging and helping States to establish ever closer links based on treaties in order to guarantee respect for humanitarian law and the preservation of true peace.

From the very first, the Red Cross adopted principles founded on a precise conception of the nature of man, his rights and duties. It is on the basis of these principles that the Red Cross is a factor for peace. Because of these principles and as long as it puts them into effect, the Red Cross is inseparable from true peace. In the League, the General Assembly is a peace assembly, an assembly for true peace.

Naturally, the Red Cross is aware of the restricted space in which it is able to move on the subject of peace and the complex problems relating to arms and disarmament, areas in which only the States have the necessary data to properly appreciate the scope of the decisions proposed and the possible consequences for their security.

The Red Cross, therefore, cannot be content to draw its inspiration from an ethic based on feelings. It also possesses an ethic based on responsibility and knows that its attitude in many areas may, unless it observes great caution, be used for aims opposed to its own, for political ends and power struggles which are the negation of all it stands for. It refuses to serve any other cause but peace by reconciliation. More than ever at this time of confusion and disturbances, the Red Cross intends to remain faithful to the teaching of its founder, full of wisdom and merit : to foster the idea of solidarity is to act against war.

The Red Cross cannot allow itself to become the instrument of any political idea or of national interests. The risk is always there when it comes to the problems of peace, arms and disarmament. It is not in fact capable of adopting one single theory concerning the causes of war or one single doctrine relating to measures for establishing peace. If it were to attempt to do so, it would inevitably turn into a political body. Yet, without any such theory and doctrine shared by the 129 National Societies (and incidentally by the ICRC), specific activities carried on by the Red Cross in matters of peace, arms and disarmament would be based merely on the most dangerous ambiguities. An these ambiguities would inevitably lead to the most pernicious type of political involvement, the type which remains hidden and does not declare itself. The result would be paralysis and impotence, soon followed by the breakup and disintegration of the International Red Cross. It would be the end of the Red Cross movement.

Such an occurrence would be a tragedy and would represent a truly retrograde step in the very nature of action for true peace. In a world growing increasingly hard, it is in fact essential for the Red Cross to

continue to be capable of assuming its specific responsibilities and not to destroy by its own acts the frail mechanism enabling it to intervene in conflicts and tensions which for a long time to come cannot but ^{be}from the real fabric of history.

It would be neglecting its essential duties if it ceased to defend with obstinacy the autonomy of the humanitarian sphere with regard to the political sphere ; if it ceased to affirm that its mission is, by its own action in its own field, to encourage the emergence of forces springing from such great depths within the human being as to transform the person's moral and mental composition to an extent which will constitute a decisive advance and a turning point in the history of the universe.

The Red Cross would betray itself if, on the pretext of serving the cause of peace more directly and specifically, it evaded its real responsibilities and in so doing moved away from its proper mission which remains irreplaceable. It must refuse to give in to the self-interested requests of those who are trying to turn to their own advantage, and to acquire power from, the supranational aspiration of human beings for genuine peace and disarmament.

The Red Cross must continue to be present at the tragedies and shocks of history and bring to them as much humanity as possible. In this way it will remain a leaven of peace in the history of mankind, which it helps to achieve a higher level of awareness, and, by the power of spiritual unity on a few fundamental principles, to succeed in preserving the present situation of no-war without alienation of freedom, without detracting from the sovereignty, integrity and dignity of human persons, and without encroachment upon the security of any country.

Convinced of its usefulness to the world, of its merit in the service of mankind, and eschewing timidity and complexes, the Red Cross should draw from this conviction the resolution necessary to state firmly what it is and what purposes it serves. It must repeat tirelessly that its everyday universal activities, its acts of peaceful mediation, are performed

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to protect life and health, to ensure respect for the human person, to break down the wall of indifference which is so powerful in destroying freedom. It teaches mutual understanding ; solidarity ; the spirit of fraternal help ; the reconciliation of all people without distinction of nationality, race or class ; friendship between nations - qualities which alone can be the foundation for true peace, that is, peace which is based not on power of some to the detriment of others, nor on the reign of a specific ideology, but enables each individual to achieve autonomy and fulfilment. This is the peace towards which the Red Cross asks those States which share its concern to work unceasingly. For this peace it brings them the support of hundreds of millions of men and women all over the world who place their trust in the Red Cross movement.