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SUPPLEMENT

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RED CROSS PRINCIPLES

X

3. Voluntary Service

The Red Cross is an expression of private charity and a spirit of service ; it is an institution for the provision of voluntary relief.

The Red Cross was built up on a basis of voluntary service. Was not one of the first cares of Henry Dunant, when faced with the sufferings at Solferino, to awaken a sense of vocation, a desire to help, in women of the region? The movement was conceived from the first as a contribution by private charity to the relief of the evils which beset mankind, starting with war. Selfless service and spontaneous co-operation were counted upon from the very beginning, and the whole undertaking only appeared possible with the assistance of numerous volunteers ¹.

The voluntary service provided by the Red Cross has remained one of its most striking features. A clear picture of what it means is given in the movement's official texts. Thus the original Conference of 1863 which founded the Red Cross gave it the task of training "voluntary medical personnel" and of sending them to the battlefield. The conditions for the recognition of new Red Cross Societies stipulate that they must be accepted by their Governments as "Voluntary Aid Societies". The same demand is made in the League's principles. Finally, since 1906, the Geneva Convention has had a special

¹ Henry Dunant pointed this out as early as 1862 in his "A Memory of Solferino". "It is not mercenaries that are needed...", he wrote.

Article dealing with the personnel of " Voluntary Aid Societies ", who are placed on the same footing as the personnel of the army medical services, whom they assist. The above expression naturally includes National Cross Societies, which are the most important of the societies referred to ; since 1949 they have been expressly mentioned.

What does this notion of voluntary service imply? The word " voluntary " applied to a person, does not necessarily mean that he works without remuneration, but that he is working of his own free will, without being compelled to do so. In an army, volunteers are men who have enlisted of their own accord, without being called up by the authorities concerned, and also those who later volunteer to carry out some dangerous or difficult task. For the purposes of the Red Cross, the idea of voluntary service implies that such service is the result, not of compulsion, but of freely given adherence. This adherence may, however, take the form of an engagement involving, in its turn, obligations from which the volunteer cannot release himself : he has subscribed to them of his own free will, it is true, but he is nevertheless bound to respect their terms ; having once accepted the task, he cannot give it up or modify it as he thinks fit.

What really distinguishes a mercenary from a servant of the Red Cross, is that the former only enlists with a view to earning money, while the latter is above all concerned with the work to be done ¹.

As in the case of selflessness, the voluntary character of Red Cross action is directly linked with the fundamental principle of humanity : it is a means of putting it into practice. If the Red Cross is to fulfil its mission, it must inspire devotion and awaken a sense of vocation ; men and women imbued with a spirit of service, must come forward in large numbers

¹ That alone should ensure that nursing personnel receive the esteem and respect to which they are entitled but which is denied them in some countries where they are regarded as workers of an inferior grade, or even as servants.

and swell its ranks. Charity and a spirit of self-sacrifice are inseparable.

In a recent publication ¹ Mr. Jean G. Lossier showed that service is above all a matter of love : “ to serve means to give, to sacrifice part of oneself, part of what one is, of what one has, on behalf of others ”. Service is thus an act of faith : “ one takes the risk of losing the whole benefit of one’s sacrifice, of losing all one has staked, if one may put it so ”.

It is this individual, spontaneous spirit in which the Red Cross helps its fellow-men, that gives it its private character and enables it to supplement the assistance given by the public authorities. However well organized the official services of a State may be, they will never be able to deal with all requirements, meet all needs, guard against all misfortunes with the requisite tact and sympathy ². It will always be necessary to fall back to some extent on the goodwill and generous aspirations of the public. The truth of this is recognized everywhere, even in the countries where authority tends to be centralized. The Red Cross is the leaven of individual charity ; it organizes and groups goodwill and directs individual initiative into suitable channels. Its work is very often that of a pioneer or forerunner. It is essentially personal in its approach, not only to the victims whom it helps but also to those who lend it their assistance.

The Red Cross must therefore take care that the means it employs never make it lose sight of its ultimate purpose. And we do not mean one of the more or less utopian aims with which we like to adorn our undertakings with no cost to ourselves, but a very real purpose translated into terms of living reality. If the Red Cross were to lose the human touch, its direct contact with suffering, if it were to lose its voluntary character and become tied up with red tape, it would be like a flower which has been plucked and soon withers and dies. This danger, all the greater because it is not obvious, threatens

¹ *Sur l'Esprit de Service* — Studia philosophica, Vol. XII — Basle, 1953.

² What has become of St. Vincent de Paul’s admirable venture ? It is now simply public assistance with its paper forms, queues and pigeonholes !

nearly all the institutions of our epoch, especially when the have attained a high degree of development, when they are organized, with their own ranks and grades, when they are emancipated, in a word when they are an established part of the century. The machinery thus built up, having become an end in itself, will work and produce nothing, a great body with no eyes to see. It may be true that the duty produces the means, but it is also true that the means sometimes in its turn creates the duty. In this matter, the Red Cross can never be too vigilant. What use will admirable statutes, a balanced budget and a well-trained staff be to it, if it must lose its soul? Let it meditate on the old myth of Antaeus, and constantly draw new strength from the source from which it originally sprang.

Someone once said that to serve the Red Cross was, in certain respects, like taking vows¹. It is well to repeat that saying at a time when too many people who claim to serve the Red Cross are mainly concerned with making use of it. A man who is animated by a true spirit of service does not look for any reward other than the satisfaction he finds in the work he is doing. Nor does he expect any gratitude—for gratitude is very rarely encountered². But, to quote Lossier once again³, "acts of love bring unforeseeable returns". As he pointed out, service permits a human being to demonstrate his freedom, to assert himself, and emerge from his loneliness; it is really an exchange⁴.

As we have seen, the institution is bound to make its achievements known, in order to obtain the donations on which it subsists, but there is no need for individual members of the movement to speak about their actions. The true Red Cross worker keeps in the background and his work remains anonymous

¹ Quoted by Jacques Chenevière — *Revue de Paris*, June 1946.

² Selfishness is not the only reason. Since suffering is abnormal and hope never dies in the heart of man, a person who is delivered from his misfortunes is inclined to regard this as being in the natural course of events.

³ *Op. cit.*

⁴ "My gesture in stretching out my hand is at one and the same time a gift and a supplication" (LOSSIER, *ibid.*).

as far as possible. He knows that credit in the eyes of the world often reflects a fall in real values. The greatness of the Red Cross—like military glory, though in a different way—is made up of innumerable cases of unknown heroism. Last but not least, the true Red Cross worker will never spare himself trouble: he will take infinite pains; for he is conscious of his grave responsibilities: that the life and health of human beings may be at stake.

The question arises here of the remuneration of Red Cross personnel. In order to cope with its many tasks, the institution must be able to count on voluntary contributions, not only in the form of money, but of work. It therefore asks for unpaid assistance, and enlists voluntary (unpaid) workers¹.

The advantages to the Red Cross of this unpaid labour are obvious: besides making it possible to economize, it is calculated to increase the institution's independence and raise its credit. Although it is not for the Red Cross to measure the moral value of the devoted service it inspires in different individuals, it is nevertheless true that it will find in the gratuitous service of its members a quality of enthusiasm which conforms to its ideals and will serve as an example.

There are, however, definite drawbacks to depending on unpaid labour when one is engaged on a long-term undertaking or when the work demands specialized technical knowledge. The words written on the subject by Gustave Moynier and Louis Appia in 1867 are still so true today that we do not think we can do better than reproduce them here: "There is something attractive about the idea of unpaid service, but the people who would accept such a disinterested position might not be those upon whom one could most count. The warm-hearted impulse which led them to subscribe to that condition is liable to be chilled by contact with reality, and they might end by tiring more quickly than one would have

¹ Originally, the word "voluntary" ("bénévole" in French) only meant: "done willingly, without constraint". But in its present connotation, it has recently acquired the sense of something done without remuneration. To avoid confusion the word "unpaid" will be used to express this meaning in the following paragraphs.

thought... With a system of unpaid service, not only would the Committees have no authority over their agents, but they would be under an obligation to the latter and would often be at a loss how to repay them ; they would owe them too much consideration and be in a poor position to refuse them the favours they might ask. Unpaid workers sometimes cost more than the others. The only formal reservation which we feel we should make in regard to the application of this principle concerns the members of the Committees themselves. They are too keenly interested in the success of the work, and too directly responsible for it, for there to be any fear of their enthusiasm flagging... They should not be remunerated, but that will not prevent the Committees from allowing them the out-of-pocket expenses necessary for carrying out their duties.”¹

It is not among the rich that one finds the greatest number of generous people ; but it is obviously impossible for everyone to offer his services free of charge. On the other hand, the Red Cross must obtain the qualified assistance it needs. Part of its regular staff will therefore be paid employees. As we saw above, services can still be voluntary even when they are paid for. A piece of work does not lose its essential merit simply because it provides the livelihood of the man who carries it out. The place in the movement occupied by each member of its staff does not depend on whether he draws a salary or is unpaid. There can be no upper or lower category based on that factor.

The very nature of the Red Cross movement demands that it should not apply the laws of supply and demand to members of its staff. It must permit them to live, not in luxury, but respectably. And they, for their part, moved by similar motives, cannot forget the nature of the institution they serve. The remunerative character of the work must always be a matter of secondary concern to them. But although the Red Cross must always—and to a greater extent than any other organization—take the social and human factor into account in its relations with those it employs, it must also beware of

¹ *La guerre et la charité*, p. 224 and seq.

letting too much solicitude affect the efficiency of its work ; that will always be the first consideration. Here, as in so many other spheres, it is all a question of proportion.

The essential point is that the assistance given to the Red Cross should remain voluntary. Whether the members of its staff are unpaid or paid is, after all, of secondary importance. Depending on the duties to be carried out, National Societies will have both permanent employees, who will be paid, and occasional unpaid helpers, like the voluntary ambulance workers who have received special training enabling them to give first aid in case of accidents or sickness. But, as Gustave Moynier and Louis Appia said, it is most desirable that the members of the Central Committees should continue, so far as possible, to be unpaid. The work will benefit enormously from this. Requests for funds carry far more weight when they are voiced by completely disinterested parties.

Lastly, as Professor Max Huber showed so clearly¹, the Red Cross ideal demands that each of its bodies should not be simply a group of unconnected elements, but a real working community "all of whose members are consciously striving towards a higher purpose common to them all, where each keeps his own personality, but nevertheless submits willingly to the common cause and, despite the existence of different grades—a necessity in any organization—treats those under his orders as colleagues". Each servant of the Red Cross, whatever post he fills, must be regarded as a member of this living, fraternal community, and not as a mere cog in an inhuman machine. In this way a team spirit can be built up, and everyone will willingly help one another and see the good qualities of his colleagues before their faults, working joyfully together with the enthusiasm engendered by combined effort.

JEAN S. PICTET

(To be continued.)

¹ *Au service du CICR*, Geneva, 1944.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

In response to an invitation, M. F. Siordet, Vice-President of the ICRC, gave an address to the Académie de Médecine in Paris, on April 17, on the subject of the application and supervision of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. His speech was published in the "Bulletin de l'Académie nationale de Médecine".

* * *

Professor P. Carry, Member of the ICRC, M. R. Gallopin, Executive Director, and M. P. Kuhne visited London on May 24 to attend a meeting of the Executive Committee for the application of the provisions of Article 16 of the Peace Treaty with Japan.

It will be remembered that this Committee (appointed by the States signatory to the Treaty which benefit under the said Article) is composed of representatives of the United Kingdom, Pakistan and the Netherlands.

* * *

In order to execute the mandate entrusted to it by virtue of Article 16 of the San Francisco Treaty, the ICRC must fix how much of the funds received from the Japanese Government is to be allocated to the countries which are beneficiaries under Article 16, for the purpose of compensating their nationals who

suffered undue hardships during their captivity in Japan. In accordance with the decision taken by the beneficiary States, the amounts to be distributed will be proportionate to the total number of nationals of each State who were prisoners of war in Japanese hands.

As we are aware, in order to make this first allocation, the ICRC requested the States concerned to produce lists of the former prisoners of war. At present most of the lists have been received, and for the past few months have been checked by the ICRC departments concerned. It has been ascertained, unfortunately, that the lists received from each country (which are usually composed of tens of thousands of names) are not entirely correct, either because some names have been repeated, or through the inclusion of persons who are not beneficiaries under Article 16, whose names have to be deleted.

In view of these circumstances, the ICRC has been obliged to make a thorough check of all the lists received, basing its work, in particular, on the information contained in the Central Agency's card-indexes, and by making use of IBM machines which automatically reveal any repetition of names. In addition, the ICRC instructed its delegates in certain countries to undertake the checking of names in co-operation with the national authorities concerned.

We need hardly say that this work takes considerable time, and is a cause of further delay in executing the stipulations of Article 16. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it serves a useful purpose, since it is likely to result in a considerable difference between the first estimates and the final totals, and will enable the ICRC to distribute the funds available on the most equitable basis possible, between the various countries.

* * *

M. W. Michel and M. E. de Weck, who left Geneva at the end of March, are continuing their mission to the Far East. After visiting New Delhi, Pyongyang, Peking, Seoul and Tokyo, the International Committee's representatives went on to Hong Kong. From there M. Michel proceeded to Djakarta, to visit the Indonesian Red Cross. M. de Weck received instructions

to visit Manila and Saïgon, in order to continue the checking of the lists of Philippine and Viet Nam nationals who are likely to receive the compensation provided for in Article 16 of the Peace Treaty with Japan.

* * *

On April 24, M. A. Durand, delegate of the ICRC in Hanoi, handed over to the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam the pharmaceutical products and textiles donated by the Red Cross Societies of Canada, India and Luxemburg, and the Red Lion and Sun of Iran. He also presented that Society with a gift of milk powder from the International Sponsorship of War Orphans, and quinine from the ICRC.

These relief supplies, of a total weight of 5 tons, represented 57,000 Swiss francs in value.

* * *

Following the severe earthquake which occurred last March in the Lebanon, and caused the destruction of over two hundred villages, the ICRC sent 850 blankets and 50 sleeping-bags to the Red Cross of that country. The value of the gift amounted to 12,000 Swiss francs.

* * *

M. D. de Traz who, as the special representative of the International Committee, left in November last for the Middle East, has just returned to Geneva after seven months' absence. During his long mission which led him to Egypt, Israel, Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Iran, M. de Traz visited the authorities and National Societies of those various countries and met many persons with whom he discussed questions relating to the work of the ICRC in the Middle East. Among other subjects discussed on those occasions were those of the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions and the studies now being pursued by the ICRC for the purpose of the development of humanitarian law for a more efficient protection of the civilian population.

For more immediate and practical purposes, M. de Traz applied himself, in particular, to finding a solution for the problems confronting the Red Cross because of the tension existing between Israel and the Arab States. As already stated in the Revue internationale¹, the delegate of the ICRC was given all necessary authority to visit military and civilian prisoners in Israeli, Egyptian and Syrian hands, to converse, without witnesses, with their representatives, or their officers, and to take with him, on leaving, messages for transmission to their families.

* * *

We know that, during his journey in the Middle East, M. de Traz visited Cyprus where, in agreement with the British authorities, he was able to visit persons under detention as a result of recent events. He handed over, in the name of the ICRC, for the detained persons' benefit, a sum of 10,000 Swiss francs for the purchase of toilet requisites, tobacco, biscuits, etc. This gift was shared between the various places of internment.

* * *

The action started by the ICRC in December 1953 in favour of tuberculous refugees from Trieste and their families is now drawing to a close.

From the medical point of view, this action has produced the results hoped for. Out of a hundred patients, only fourteen cases of an incurable nature, or which require long treatment, still remain in the sanatorium. Four organisations have undertaken to provide for their material needs: Caritas catholica, the Commission for Orthodox Refugees, the Œuvre suisse d'entraide ouvrière and the Mouvement chrétien pour la paix. These organisations have, moreover, agreed to take care of four relatives of the remaining refugees. Hence, there are no more tuberculous patients in Leysin under International Committee's responsibility.

Furthermore, the Morzine centre where members of the patients'

¹ See *News Items*, February and April 1956.

families and several discharged patients were accommodated, is being closed down. During the past few months numerous refugees have been able to emigrate, or have been resettled in France or Switzerland. Three have gone to Belgium where they have been provided with accommodation and employment by the Entraide socialiste Belge. Following the negotiations entered into by the New Zealand Red Cross and M. L. Bossard, ICRC delegate in New Zealand, seven refugees have been allowed to settle in that country, although they have no relatives living there; three others have joined their families in Australia. Two families, representing altogether eight persons, have been able to settle in France, and three former patients who served apprenticeships in the Centre de rééducation professionnelle, Nantaux sur Lunain, with the financial help of the Aide Suisse à l'Europe, have left that institution to take up the work for which they were trained. Three refugees are on the point of leaving for Holland. We may also mention fourteen former patients whose emigration is delayed on medical grounds, and who have been temporarily resettled in Switzerland. They are under the responsibility of Caritas catholica and the Commission for Orthodox Refugees, which will look after them and provide for their needs until the negotiations being pursued by the ICRC, on their behalf, with the countries of emigration, have reached a successful issue.

In conclusion, we may say that the ICRC has still to deal with the emigration formalities in connection with four families, that is to say fifteen refugees altogether, who are awaiting, in France, the authority to proceed to countries overseas. Eleven of these persons have been given accommodation and employment and are self-supporting. It is to be hoped that a similar arrangement can soon be made for the four remaining refugees who have not yet taken up a normal life pending their resettlement in a country of their choice.
