

HENRY DUNANT INSTITUTE

THE MODERN STATE AND THE RED CROSS

On this subject the Henry Dunant Institute is organizing panel discussions to be held in Geneva from September 11-13, 1968, and about which it has the following to say by way of foreword.

Founded in 1963, the Red Cross is 105 years old. It has known over a century of continuous growth.

At the beginning, the Red Cross had only one role: to train "voluntary first-aiders" capable of giving assistance to the "wounded of armies in the field". These modest phalanxes have become legion. In virtually every country in the world, they now assume the most varied tasks in the fields of medicine, social welfare and education.

The ten articles of the first Geneva Convention, signed in 1864 initiated the long development of humanitarian law, and the four Geneva Conventions in force to-day form one of the master-pillars of international law.

The international bodies of the Red Cross, the International Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies, have earned, in war and peace, the respect of governments and the gratitude of millions.

There is no doubt that the Red Cross has repeatedly given conclusive proof of initiative and adaptability.

But over the same span of time, what upheavals the world has known!

From lint to penicillin, from cannon-ball to intercontinental ballistic missile, from the hegemony of a monarchical Europe to the sovereignty of newly independent states, from no rights for women to the female vote, from chancelleries to the proliferation

of international institutions; the mutations and transformations have been so frequent and so vast that the Red Cross must put the question: Has it not, in spite of everything, been overtaken? Has it kept abreast of the times? Is its view of the modern world sufficiently clear and realistic to enable it to keep moving with the times and to progress?

The very fact that the question arises, demonstrates that it must be answered.

As an instrument for study and research in the service of the Red Cross as a whole, the Henry Dunant Institute has been entrusted with this problem, of which the complexity is in direct proportion to the wide variety of Red Cross activities.

To enlighten the Red Cross on those features of the modern world which are of particular concern to it can best be attained through a series of panels each devoted to a specific aspect of the question.

Specialists of renown, chosen from circles outside the Red Cross, will be invited to analyse each particular subject. They will address leading Red Cross members, who will thus find themselves confronted with today's realities and demands.

The debates, after each conference, should lead to the definition of principles of action for the future guidance of National Societies, the International Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies in their day to day activities.

The topic for discussion at the first of these panels will be *The Modern State and the Red Cross*, for it is a fact that over the last century there have been radical changes in the State which directly affect such "auxiliaries to public authorities" as the Red Cross Societies.

This vast and important subject will be considered from three different angles:

I. The first lecture delivered will deal with:

The State and Health Protection

When the Red Cross was first formed there was no such thing as a Minister of Health in any country, whereas today, in many

parts of the world the tendency is for the State to look after the individual "from the cradle to the grave". Hence the question:

What scope should be left to private, and consequently, to Red Cross initiative?

to which the discussion following the lecture will endeavour to provide practical answers.

II. The subject of the second lecture will be:

The State and the Development of International Law

The Red Cross was the originator of treaty law applicable to war; it played the leading part in building up the "Law of Geneva".

Do modern methods of warfare still enable the Red Cross to promote and ensure respect for humanitarian law?

Should it concentrate on reforming the law of war and strengthening peaceful methods for the settlement of armed conflicts?

The discussion will therefore be concerned with the question:

What is to be the position of the Red Cross in the development of international law?

III. The third lecture will deal with:

States which have acceded to independence after decolonization: the key ideas inspiring them to the achievement of their national individuality.

The Red Cross matured in countries which had long been in existence and which were the most technically advanced at the time. Today, it is taking root in new countries whose needs are quite different. It is important to gain a clear view of this new structure.

Discussion on this theme should reply to the question:

What moral, social and perhaps politico-legal functions can Red Cross discharge in developing countries?