

## U.S.S.R.

On May 15, 1967, the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR celebrated the centenary of its foundation. The event was commemorated at a large meeting attended by senior officials of the USSR, including the Minister for Public Health, the members of the Presidium of the Alliance and guests from the International Red Cross institutions and many National Societies. There were some six thousand persons at the meeting which took place in the new Congress Hall of the Kremlin.

The session was opened by Professor G. A. Miterév, President of the Alliance, who described how it had developed in the course of the century and the great humanitarian work it undertook within the country and beyond. Mr. Demitchev, the Communist Party Secretary and Government Representative, then stressed the importance for the whole nation of the work carried out under the signs of the red cross and the red crescent and he announced that the Lenin prize for the year had been awarded to the Alliance. He pinned the medal to the Red Cross flag, thereby demonstrating in a tangible manner how the Government appreciated the work of the National Society by awarding it the highest honour in the USSR.

Other speakers included the Minister of Public Health, Mr. Petrovsky; the Vice-President of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic; and a medical student as a spokesman for youth. Greetings from the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross were delivered by its Chairman, the Countess of Limerick. She expressed her pleasure on being able to congratulate the Alliance for this great anniversary and recalled the National Society's outstanding contribution to the mission and international actions of the movement engendered and still inspired by Henry Dunant's work over a century ago.

Next day the VIth Ordinary Congress of the Alliance began and in the course of the first session the Vice-President of the ICRC, Mr. G. Bordier, and League Secretary-General Mr. H. Beer, spoke on behalf of the two international institutions, each paying well

deserved tribute to the Soviet Red Cross which, as Mr. Miterev had made clear in his opening speech, was a living and active force with a membership of some seventy million. Mr. Miterev had also mentioned the Alliance's efforts for peace which must be pursued resolutely.

After conveying the keen regret of Mr. S. A. Gonard, President of the ICRC, at being unable to attend, Mr. Bordier read the following message:

*The International Committee of the Red Cross, the founder of our universal movement, extends to the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics its best wishes on the occasion of the centenary of the foundation of the Red Cross in Russia. This wish is extended to the Congress of the Alliance, the members of its Executive Committee, its Presidium, to the Societies of member Republics of the Union and to the tens of millions of their members.*

*We in Geneva know the esteem your Society has earned in the service of men, women and children who suffer from sickness, natural disaster and other evils to which humanity is prey.*

*Faithful to the humanitarian tradition so admirably represented by Feodor Rhtitcher in the XVIIIth century and by the great surgeon Nikolaï Ivanovitch Pirogov in the XIXth century, Russia was one of the first States to participate in the framing of the 1864 Geneva Convention for the protection of the wounded and the sick of armies in the field; a Convention which she ratified in 1867. On May 17 of that year was constituted "the Russian Society for Assistance to the Sick and the Wounded", renamed the "Red Cross Society of Russia" in 1879. On August 7, 1918, Lenin signed the decree defining the activities of the "Soviet Red Cross" which took over the duties of the former Society.*

*Since that time the Alliance has unceasingly developed its beneficent action through its various medico-social activities and its Junior Red Cross, the importance of which cannot be too strongly emphasized as it trains the young for future responsibility in your vast democratic and popular organization.*

*We are also aware of the service the Alliance rendered the Soviet people during the tragic years from 1941 to 1945 and after the Second*

*World War, when it helped sister Societies and developed the Red Cross work for peace internationally by setting up and operating, inter alia, hospitals at Teheran, Addis Ababa, Phnom-Penh and Hanoi; when it sent medical teams to the Democratic Republic of Korea, China, Somalia, the Congo, Algeria and elsewhere; when it also sent generous donations to many places. The Alliance plays a rôle which is highly appreciated in the international meetings of the Red Cross such as the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross of which the Alliance's distinguished President, Professor Gueorgui Andréévitch Miterev, Vice-Chairman of the League, is the senior and one of the most active and respected members.*

*The International Committee of the Red Cross was pleased to learn that the Alliance has just been awarded the Order of Lenin. It warmly congratulates the Alliance for this great honour and extends the earnest wish that the Alliance will continue on its chosen path and thus alleviate more and more human suffering and contribute to the promotion of peace and understanding among the nations.*

In the absence of the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the League, Mr. José Barroso, the League Secretary-General, Mr. H. Beer, conveyed that body's greetings:

*When the League of Red Cross Societies brings you its greetings, it is no outside body that brings its compliments during these memorable days. You are a very important part of your own international federation. Without you it would not have the Universality and power to work for humanity and peace it has today.*

*Your Chairman, as Lady Limerick pointed out yesterday, serves with distinction as our Vice-Chairman. Prominent representatives of your society have served, as Nicolai Tchikalenko, or are serving, as professor Libov, on important posts on our staff.*

*Your remarkable services to your own country have been eloquently mentioned yesterday by representatives of the Party, the Trade Unions and your Minister of Health.*

*But we are entitled to thank you for your work on the international front. Your hospitals in many countries, your aid after disasters all over the world, your assistance to developing countries, and your policy of hospitality to sister societies so that they can profit from your ex-*

periences, are well known, and this is the occasion to bring the gratitude of those sister societies which are not here today.

Finally, we can, today, not avoid to think of the basic conditions for the acquisition of a happier life for all people on this earth, a lasting peace. You have always pushed very hard that your Federation, the League should be a better instrument for peace and it is our sincere hope that with the help of the Red Cross we should see, in our time, that all humanity as a whole can profit from this basic condition for human existence.

In this spirit I offer you, from your friends the world over our congratulations and wishes for the coming 100 years.

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Whilst he was in the USSR, Mr. Bordier observed for himself the practical work accomplished by the members of the Red Cross in factories and public institutions. He visited a factory where almost three quarters of the workers were members of our movement. In each workshop there was a rota of people to take charge of the first-aid post. He visited a sovkhose with a nursery and the model sanatorium at Riga.

In schools and universities there is a campaign to disseminate the rules of hygiene among youth and to combat infectious diseases, some of which are now being eradicated. Of the noteworthy activities, recruitment of blood donors is considered essential.

The authorities and Red Cross extended a warm welcome to their guests everywhere, showing them many interesting institutions and contriving to make their stay pleasant.

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The anniversary of the Alliance's foundation was celebrated with dignity. It was an occasion to demonstrate the growing importance of the National Society and its association with the daily life of the country. This was brought out recently in articles published in the *International Review*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *International Review*, August 1965 and March 1966.

In addition, the Review of the Soviet Red Cross had itself, in a series of articles, described the main aspects of the Society's history. We cannot conclude more appropriately than by taking a leaf from that history and recalling the outstanding figure at the origin of the Red Cross in Russia, N. I. Pirogov. The determination of this contemporary of Florence Nightingale and Henry Dunant to improve the plight of the wounded and the sick in armies in the field made him one of the prominent men in the outstanding events which soon led to the signing of the first Geneva Convention. It is fitting that we remember his contribution to the movement now that the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the USSR are celebrating their centenary and clearly showing remarkable efficacy today in the struggle against human suffering.

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