

DEATH OF AN OUTSTANDING RED CROSS FIGURE

SACHIKO HASHIMOTO

It is with deep sorrow that the ICRC learned of the death in Tokyo on 6 October 1995 of Mrs Sachiko Hashimoto, former National Director of the Japanese Junior Red Cross and founder of the Henry Dunant Study Centre in Japan.

Mrs Hashimoto was one of the leading Red Cross figures of the past 50 years, a pioneering spirit who devoted her life to promoting the ideas of Henry Dunant and the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and to spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law.

Born in Shanghai in 1909, Mrs Hashimoto graduated from the Japan Women's University in 1930, and from 1946 on she taught English there and at the Japan Women's Social Education Association. She joined the Junior Section of the Japanese Red Cross Society in 1948 and attended many youth gatherings in Europe and the United States. In 1960 she was appointed National Director of the Japanese Junior Red Cross, and she initiated many youth projects both at home and abroad.

"My aim", she said, "is to encourage the growth of the free spirit of the volunteer through individual wisdom and creative cooperation. Thought without action is just as futile as action without thought".

Mrs Hashimoto's great merit was to have realized that in Japan, especially after the Second World War, many people had never heard of the Red Cross or knew only of its wartime activities for wounded or sick soldiers. She launched a vast youth education programme, setting up a volunteer sewing service for disaster victims in 1959, a hospital visits programme in 1960 and then a volunteer corps to help the disabled.

Mrs Hashimoto's gracious personality, dynamic leadership and deep commitment to the goals of the Red Cross earned her an international reputation that spread throughout South-East Asia after she organized "Konichiwa 70", a semi-

nar bringing together young people from the 18 countries of the South-East Asian and Pacific region. This seminar, which examined the responsibilities and obligations of Red Cross youth and the ways in which Red Cross ideals should be applied in practice, was a great success and a source of inspiration for many National Societies throughout the world.

After she retired in February 1971, Mrs Hashimoto set up the Henry Dunant Study Centre to disseminate the ideals of the founder of the Red Cross, a man for whom she had the deepest admiration. In connection with the Centre's activities, which involved research, training and publication programmes, she visited many research centres throughout the world, in particular the Henry Dunant Institute in Geneva, with which she remained in close contact to the end of her life.

Mrs Hashimoto's ideas are set out in her book *Henry Dunant and myself* and in the many articles which the *Review* had the privilege of publishing.

Both in recognition of her humanitarian activities and of her intellectual contribution to the Movement, Mrs Hashimoto was awarded the Henry Dunant Medal on 11 April 1972. Angela, Countess of Limerick, the then Chairwoman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross, commented on this award in the following terms:

“Since the beginning of her period of service with the Japanese Red Cross in 1948, Mrs Hashimoto has concentrated on the promotion of world peace through international understanding, and on the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions. It is no exaggeration to say that in its work to disseminate knowledge of the Conventions among young people, the Japanese Red Cross has been among the world leaders. Its achievements in this field have been almost wholly due to the efforts of Mrs Hashimoto, [who has] worked unceasingly for the promotion of the type of international understanding which is the only lasting basis for a peaceful world. The number of imaginative projects by which the youth of Japan have learned more about the rest of the world, and the forms of international activities which they have pioneered, have been outstanding”.

Today, Mrs Hashimoto's many friends mourn the passing of one who took a leading role in disseminating the principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and set a lasting example for the Movement's volunteers. The best way to perpetuate her memory is to make her words our own: “The Red Cross cannot solve the ills of the world, but at least it can certainly set it in the right direction, provide a compass with which to direct humanity. If we keep the Red Cross fire burning within us all along the way, there will always be light in any darkness, light to see the person before you and the person who comes after. One is never

alone when one is part of the Red Cross family. It is a big family stretching across continents and seas. I am proud to be a part of it as long as I live”.

Along with all her friends in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC, with which Mrs Hashimoto maintained close relations over the years, offers her family its heartfelt sympathy.

J. M.
