

In the Red Cross and Red Crescent World

XIVth INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF RED CROSS AND HEALTH FILMS

(Sofia, 25 May-1 June 1991)

The XIVth International Festival of Red Cross and Health Films, like the previous festivals in this series, was organized by the Bulgarian Red Cross in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Unlike the previous festivals, however, this one was held in Sofia, the Bulgarian capital, and not in Varna, for reasons of economy.

More than 300 representatives from some fifty countries, from Red Cross and Red Crescent circles, the world of cinema and television and the medical profession, viewed 286 films which had been produced by various components of the Movement and by independent film-makers. The ICRC was represented at the festival by Ms. Michèle Mercier, head of the Communication Department, and Ms. Jette Sørensen, Information Officer responsible for contacts with the National Societies.

The films selected were divided into two categories:

- ***Red Cross and Health documentary films for the cinema and television***

- Red Cross/Red Crescent films
- Health and the environment
- Science and education
- Films for children

- ***Films based on fiction***

Each category of film was submitted to a separate international jury. The jury for the first category consisted of Mr. Yuri Zhironov, *Bulgaria* (Chairman), Mr. Vassil Zhivkov, *Bulgaria*, Mr. Lionel Tardif, *France*, Mr. Junichi Nakagawa, *Japan*, and Mr. Alan Rettig, *United States*. The jury for the second category was made up of Mr. Ivan Andonov, *Bulgaria* (Chairman),

Mr. Georgy Danailov, *Bulgaria*, Mr. Gaetano D'Ella, *Italy*, Mr. Alexander Lipkov, *USSR*, and Mr. Momcilo Stojanovic, *Yugoslavia*.

Mr. Alexandre Marinov, Head of International Relations at the Bulgarian Red Cross, said that the XIVth Festival was to be a "working festival", which would pursue quality at all costs. This made the event a unique cinematographic forum for films dealing with most pressing and difficult present-day problems in the medical and social sphere. The 1991 Festival programme did indeed directly address topical subjects and the themes covered were central to the concerns of the international community.

As the Festival's daily *Bulletin* put it: *"The world we live in is a world of insecurity. Disease, war and natural disasters are constantly on the rampage. Entire nations are seething with turmoil, as they endeavour to be masters of their destinies and blaze new paths of socio-economic and cultural development. And in the midst of these upheavals is a human being, numbed with pain and suffering, or else levelling bold criticism at statesmen and politicians, and relentlessly seeking social justice and happiness, peace and love among all humans.*

Children — the most vulnerable and defenceless among the inhabitants of this world — are once again in focus at this Festival. Suffering from incurable diseases or abandoned by their families, homeless starving vagrants in the streets of the big cities and in refugee camps, these young sufferers are a constant challenge to the complacency of the adults on whom they depend. Leading film directors of various nationalities have taken the risk of pleading for greater compassion and respect for the young children of the Earth, who must enjoy normal lives and proper education.

The environmental crisis that we are experiencing, the poisoned air, water, soil and food — do all these not deny human survival? Is life on our planet not endangered, and does an ecological catastrophe not loom on the horizon, and what about future generations if we live in fear of that danger? A group of works by the film industry and Red Cross Societies from different continents reflects a persistent search for an answer to these questions.

The socially significant diseases of our time have been a constant theme on the Red Cross screen. The prevention and treatment of diabetes and malignant tumours, the hazards of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, affecting mothers and children in particular, have yet again exercised the minds of the film-making community.

The films devoted to AIDS, the scourge of the late twentieth century, will be another forceful reminder of the need for greater social awareness and a healthier life-style. Undoubtedly, these are also the films in the programme that will touch the viewers' hearts, for they combine a high note of tragedy with an earnest appeal for deeper understanding and compassion for fellow human beings in distress".

At the closing ceremony on 1 June, sixteen prizes were awarded in the presence of Mr. Guy Deluz, ICRC Director-General. The major awards were as follows:

- The “Golden Ship” of the President of the Bulgarian Red Cross was awarded to the Icelandic Red Cross film “*Outcasts from Paradise*”;
- The League Grand Prix was awarded to the Netherlands Red Cross film “*Finger on the Pulse*”;
- The Grand Prix for the best feature film was won by “*Music Box*” (USA), by Kostantinos Costa-Gavras;
- The World Health Organization’s Special Prize went to the United States for “*The Feminine Mistake — The Next Generation*”.

Third International Communication Workshop

During the Festival the third International Communication Workshop was held, the first one having taken place during the 1987 Varna Festival. Thirty-five participants from twenty-two National Societies took part in this workshop, which was organized by the ICRC and the League, in conjunction with the Bulgarian Red Cross. The main items on the agenda were: the “Communicators’ Guide”, a work intended to help National Societies in their efforts to implement the Movement’s information policy and its identity programme; future themes for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on 8 May; *Red Cross/Red Crescent* magazine; and assessing the results of the World Campaign for the Protection of Victims of War.

Jette Sørensen

