

Commemoration in the world of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Henry Dunant

The 150th anniversary of the birth of Henry Dunant has been commemorated more or less worldwide. In its last issue, International Review reported on the celebration of this anniversary in Geneva, Dunant's birthplace; now it summarizes some of the ceremonies held elsewhere.

Switzerland

Bern

On the evening of 8 May, the Swiss Red Cross organized in Bern a commemoration ceremony attended by Mr. W. Ritschard, President of the Swiss Confederation, representatives of the Bern cantonal and municipal authorities, Mr. Alexandre Hay, President of ICRC, Mr. Adelfarasin, President of the League of Red Cross Societies, and many other leading figures.

Professor Hans Haug, President of the Swiss Red Cross, spoke the following words:

On the occasion of the anniversary we are celebrating today, mention has been made of the force which the Red Cross, that is to say Dunant's creation, represents for the victims of armed conflicts and disasters...

What if Dunant were to come back among us? Perhaps he would raise his cry of alarm not on a battlefield but in the field of everyday suffering. What would he think and say if he were to visit our 125 National Red Cross Societies? Doubtless he would be proud and happy to see the millions of volunteers working under our flag to make up for the deficiencies not only

of military but also of civilian health services. Perhaps he would congratulate all those who, in their own regions, are helping to promote health and social welfare, bringing human warmth to the sick, the wounded, the handicapped, the lonely, the lost and the hopeless.

Perhaps he would also call our attention to the problems of our industrialized and over-organized world: violence, pollution, the breakdown of family and community structures, dependence, loneliness and the lack of respect and love for our neighbour.

If Dunant came back among us he would surely tell us that the strength to deal with the world's scourges and injustices lies not only with our leaders or with others but is chiefly in the hands of each of us as individuals.

If Dunant were to return... ! We know full well that he won't and that it is up to us and us alone to keep an eye on all the "Solferino battlefields" in the world today, to keep our hearts and minds open and our imagination working to know where and how to act. It is up to us to denounce injustice, to prevent suffering and to foster solidarity with the cry of « Tutti fratelli ». It is up to us to act.

Heiden

A large crowd came to this small city in eastern Switzerland to pay tribute to the memory of Henry Dunant, who spent the last eighteen years of his life here. Those attending, with their flags and fanfares, were representatives of local sections of the Red Cross Societies of Switzerland, southern Germany and Austria, and followers of Dunant from all over the world. They got together at the church of Heiden for a ceremony at which they heard an address by Professor G. Thürer on "The Path of Henry Dunant" and a speech by Professor Hans Haug, President of the Swiss Red Cross, before moving to the Henry Dunant monument where they laid a wreath. They also visited the Henry Dunant Museum where Mr. Jakob Haug has a collection of souvenirs of the founder of the Red Cross, whom he knew in his youth. On this occasion the Swiss Cross awarded him its jubilee medal. After lunch, local school-children performed a play on Dunant's years of Heiden. All the celebrations were broadcast on radio and television. ICRC was represented at the Heiden celebrations by Mr. J. Burckhardt, a member of the International Committee.

Those attending took away a vivid impression of their day here: it was as though they were not honouring someone now dead but celebrating the birthday of a real live person who was simply invisible because of the size of the crowd.

Italy

Florence

On the initiative of its Florentine provincial committee, the Italian Red Cross organized a large get-together to celebrate Dunant's birthday in the city's prestigious Old Palace. The meeting was honoured by the presence of Dr. Angelo Savini-Nicci, General President of the Italian Red Cross, as well as by the city's civil and religious authorities; Mr. Paul Ruegger, a former ICRC President, delivered a fine speech:

... Behind the Red Cross movement there lay, as behind every great creation, one man and one idea. The man, whose birthday we are celebrating today, was a courageous figure with a lofty imagination and extraordinary powers of achievement.

His idea, conceived on the battlefield of Solferino in Lombardy in 1859, formulated three years later in Switzerland in his soon famous book and given material expression in the First Geneva Convention of 1864, was to create, throughout the world, relief societies consisting of volunteers grouped round an international committee based at Geneva. This idea was the signal for an unprecedented peaceful and humanitarian revolution...

I have long been of the belief that Henry Dunant's grand idea, as expressed in his "A Memory of Solferino", would not have had the triumphal outcome which fate and, I think, divine grace, have decreed, had the idea of the Red Cross—which took shape at Geneva—not been initially inspired in the atmosphere and heart of Italy... among the generosity of the modest, hard-working and profoundly humane Lombards who, seeing people suffer, removed the artificial barriers of nationality, political and all other differences and rallied to the cry of "Siamo tutti fratelli"...

The emphasis on voluntary service runs through Dunant's programme like a leitmotiv. Indeed, the major National Societies of today were brought into being by groups of volunteers... and, in the more developed relief bodies, voluntary service is of primordial and incalculable importance...

Solferino and Castiglione delle Stiviere

Several ceremonies were held on the very spots at which the Red Cross movement was conceived, namely, Solferino and Castiglione delle Stiviere.

During a ceremony held in front of the "Chiesa Maggiore" and attended by local authorities and representatives of the International

Red Cross, tribute was paid to Henry Dunant and to the women of Castiglione for their devotion to those wounded at the Battle of Solferino.

A Henry Dunant Room was inaugurated in the Castiglione Museum where temporary exhibitions were given by two guests of honour, namely, the Japanese Red Cross which displayed historical documents, and the League of Red Cross Societies which presented a collection of stamps.

The celebrations culminated in a gathering at the Red Cross Memorial at the top of Solferino Hill. There was a large audience to hear speeches by Mr. Henrik Beer, Secretary-General of the League of Red Cross Societies, Dr. Athos Gallino, a member of ICRC, and Ambassador Giusti, President of the San Marino Society.

Some 200 relief workers of the Italian Red Cross lit a flame of remembrance after the inauguration of commemorative plaques of new National Societies officially recognized since 1959.

Portugal

A large crowd attended the inauguration of a monument to Henry Dunant in Oporto on 8 May. Those present included H.E. Mario Firmino Miguel, Portugal's Defence Minister, and General Antonio Augusto Fernandes, President of the Portuguese Red Cross, as well as other authorities.

Another ceremony followed at Oporto's Red Cross offices; it was attended by the same notables, and medals and diplomas were awarded to various persons in gratitude for services rendered.

The ICRC was represented at both ceremonies by Dr. Athos Gallino, a member of the International Committee who, on behalf of ICRC, received the highest award of the Portuguese Red Cross—a diploma granted posthumously to Henry Dunant and a medal struck for the 150th anniversary of his birth.

Poland

Students from medical academies and from faculties of law, pedagogy and history attended a seminar at the Polish Red Cross centre in Warsaw on 11 and 12 May. They organized the meeting themselves and prepared their own reports and introductions to the debate.

The law students presented a paper on "The Development of International Humanitarian Law" and a report tracing the life and activities of Henry Dunant. The history students dealt with "The Development of Polish Humanitarian Thinking prior to the Birth of the Red Cross", and the students of pedagogy tackled the problem of "The Education of Young People in a Spirit of International Peace and Friendship by the Red Cross".

Speakers frequently stressed the need to stimulate student interest in international humanitarian law, to win the co-operation of students in all branches for the dissemination of humanitarian law among young people, and to prepare the background material essential for its dissemination. They also stressed that the Red Cross should give even more attention to the preparation of the essential material and introduce increasingly interesting ways of disseminating humanitarian law among youth from all walks of life.

Belgium

In Brussels, on 17 June, H.R.H. Prince Albert, National President of the Belgian Red Cross, unveiled a bronze bust of Dunant, erected in the Square de la Croix-Rouge. The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Health, the Burgomaster of Brussels, the Administrator General of the Belgian Red Cross and many other notables.

Ethiopia

On the evening of 8 May, a ceremony held at Addis Ababa's National Theatre was attended by the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Health and the mayor of the city. After an address by Sister Yeshi Teshome, Vice-President of the Ethiopian Red Cross, the National Theatre troupe performed a song and dance act. Two films were then shown: "Red Cross on a White Ground" by ICRC, and "Red Cross Disaster Front", a League film.

At other places, such as Awasa in Sidamo province, the day was marked by processions through the town by Red Cross Youth, and by folk-dancing; at Mekele in Tigre province, the local Red Cross organized similar festivities in which the authorities took part.

Some of these celebrations were attended by Mr. E. Leemann, the ICRC delegate in Ethiopia.

Syria and Lebanon

When the situation allowed, the ICRC delegates on mission took part in the ceremonies in honour of Henry Dunant.

In Lebanon, Mr. G. Deluz, an ICRC delegate, made an address on the occasion of 8 May, which was broadcast on Lebanese Television and later printed in the press in Arabic and French.

In Syria, the Damascus branch of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent organized a ceremony at the Arab Cultural Centre. Mr. D. Delapraz, head of the ICRC delegation, gave a speech on "Henry Dunant, Islam and Humanitarian Law". Another leading figure, Professor Chatti, then spoke on "Henry Dunant and his attachment to the Islamic Civilization".

These addresses were followed in both capitals by a showing of the film "The Delegates", which illustrates the activities of the ICRC delegation in Lebanon during the height of the civil war.

Publications

THE TIMES

The leading London newspaper *The Times* devoted a 6-page supplement in its edition of 8 May to the Red Cross and, more particularly, to ICRC. This supplement was prepared by the combined efforts of various departments of *The Times* and ICRC's Press and Information Division. The British Red Cross also played an active part in it.

A special run was made of this supplement on strong paper in a format reduced by half, copies of which are available at ICRC's Press and Information Division in Geneva.

A MEMORY OF SOLFERINO

First edition in Arabic

This celebrated work by Henry Dunant, already translated into several western and oriental languages, has just been published in Arabic by the Henry Dunant Institute on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the author's birth. Dunant's ideas have long been familiar in the Arab

countries, where there are many active Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It was therefore essential to make known in Arabic the work which gave birth to the movement initiated by Dunant, himself an authority on Arab affairs.

A Memory of Solferino was put into Arabic free of charge by Dr. Sami Girges. The text was entirely reproduced by hand and subsequently printed in offset. The book contains a map of the region in which the Battle of Solferino took place and the cover is illustrated with a battle scene and a photograph of Henry Dunant.

Biography of Henry Dunant in Danish

The Danish Red Cross has published a beautiful and finely illustrated booklet entitled "Henry Dunant, Founder of the Red Cross", which traces the life of Dunant and the events which marked the beginnings of the Red Cross. This 40-page work was written by Mr. Klavs Fremm and Mr. Poul Jul Andersen and came off the press in April 1978. The Danish Red Cross will use it for educating young people, but the general public, too, will surely read it with interest.

Two Bulletins of the Henry Dunant Society

We wish to herald the issue of Bulletins Nos. 2 and 3 of the Henry Dunant Society. The many interesting articles which they contain by authorities on Dunant seek to throw light on certain aspects of the character and personality of Dunant, who in many respects is still a mysterious figure; other contributions reveal the bonds between Dunant and some of his friends and correspondents. In Bulletin No. 3, Mr. J. Gomez de Rueda, a well-known figure in Red Cross circles, offers a genuine meditation on Dunant and his work; in a few lines he presents the reader with a number of valuable reflexions.

A simple footnote on page 42 of Bulletin No 2 informs us that an original work by Dunant, one of his apocalyptic paintings of mankind's future, is for sale. For lack of funds no buyer has yet been found.

The Henry Dunant Society, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of the man to whose memory it devotes its efforts, has also issued a commemorative medal in gold and silver. Its price is modest.

Any profit made by the Society from its sale will be devoted exclusively to the publication of Dunant's works. The medal may be obtained from the Society, in Geneva.

Coins, stamps and flowers

Lastly, we should like to mention that the Swiss Post Office is to issue a stamp bearing a likeness of Dunant this autumn, as it did in 1928 and 1935, and that the Swiss National Bank will be striking a 5-Swiss franc piece in his honour.

At Nyon a small town near Geneva, the municipal authorities have had a floral medallion laid in their gardens with motifs evoking the Red Cross. A charming initiative. While Geneva has its floral clock, so well-known among tourists, Nyon, through its flowers, is honouring the Red Cross on the anniversary of the birth of its principal founder.

