

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

HONORARY DEGREE

Mr. J. Pictet, Doctor h. c. of Leyden University

The University of Leyden, in the Netherlands, awarded the degree of doctor *honoris causa* to Mr. Jean Pictet, ICRC Vice-President, at an official ceremony which took place on 8 February 1973, presided over by the University Rector, Professor A. E. Cohen, and attended by H. R. H. Princess Margriet of the Netherlands. After an address on the occasion of the University's 398th anniversary, the Rector presented the diploma to Mr. Pictet, whose career was outlined by Dr. F. Kalshoven, senior lecturer, in a speech in which he mentioned in particular Mr. Pictet's work and writings for the promotion of the Red Cross and international humanitarian law. He concluded by describing Mr. Pictet's important contribution to the "defence and advancement of humanitarian principles in a world where inhumanity is all too frequent".

In reply, Mr. Pictet expressed his gratitude for this distinction which did honour to his teachers, colleagues and collaborators. He referred to the determinant role of the Netherlands in the birth and development of the law of war. He concluded:

... Today, internationalists are aghast at the fearful escalation of violence throughout the world which strikes so many innocent people and bids fair to carry all before it; they are likewise awed at the increasing politicalisation of conflicts which results in victims' being used as a means for barter and sometimes considered as hostages.

Consequently we are obsessed with a doubt: will humanitarian law be accepted and applied for the benefit of people, or will civilisation destroy itself? Such is the dilemma. It is your generation—and it is to youth that I address myself—which will have the heavy responsibility of replying to that question.

We are some of those who see the rule of law as the only remedy to the evils which beset our troubled world. Humanitarian law adumbrates an era in which justice and charity will predominate over politics. Let us continue to fight for this cause without ever losing courage, for what is useful to the majority always triumphs in the long run.

The high honour awarded by the University of Leyden to Mr. Jean Pictet is a tribute also to the Red Cross principles as well as to him who revised them and gave them the clear and logical form which had become necessary.

MEDICAL ASSISTANTS IN AFRICA

The increasingly important role of medical auxiliaries within National Red Cross Societies and medical services has several times been referred to in the pages of International Review. Depending on the region, different names are given to them, such as medical assistant, medical aid, health worker, health officer, and so forth. Their functions may range from treating the commoner complaints by means of simple cures to more sophisticated methods calling for the application of various techniques.

In the USSR, for example, medical assistants do a great deal of useful work and are well qualified, being intimately acquainted with the people in their own district, to undertake prophylactic measures, give emergency medical treatment and first aid, and provide instruction on health matters. But medical assistants may also be of enormous help in many parts of the world where the shortage of doctors is widely felt, particularly in those developing countries where facilities for medical and nursing care are still inadequate for the whole of the population. According to Mr. King, in the Department of Social Medicine in the University of Zambia, Lusaka, the surest way to overcome this situation is to increase the number of medical assistants such as those already working in Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania,