

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

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### A. VERDOODT : « NAISSANCE ET SIGNIFICATION DE LA DÉCLARATION UNIVERSELLE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME »

It was on December 10, 1948, that the United Nations General Assembly, meeting in Paris, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ; this was subsequently adhered to by many States which at that time were not in existence. In addition, pending general treaties, it gave rise to regional treaties such as the European Convention on Human Rights (November 1950), as well as universal agreements on definitive rights, providing for specific legal sanctions.

The 1948 resolution was of course preceded by the work of a number of commissions. Mr Verdoodt has endeavoured to clarify the origin of the Declaration with the aim—which he successfully achieved—of tracing the various tendencies which were observable during the drafting of the preamble and articles of the Declaration. He also attempted to elucidate the final text on the basis of the preliminary work. He has thus set out the factual, ideological and moral reasons which induced the members of the preparatory commissions—government and non-governmental delegates—to choose some laws or wording in preference to others. For this, he had to undertake research and examination of United Nations documents concerning human rights and to analyse the comments which had been made on these documents, particularly those which were written by the authors of the Declaration.

This task of compiling and analysing documents was performed with thoroughness, and to the more useful effect as the author, as pointed out by Mr. René Cassin in his foreword, undertook not only to assemble the official documents but also to analyse the delegates' interventions which had been included in verbatim reports or in recordings. It was therefore in the light of earlier work that he gives an interpretation of the Declaration. It was not his intention

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<sup>1</sup>Etudes morales, sociales et juridiques, Editions Nauwelaerts, Louvain-Paris, p. 356.

to judge it morally and philosophically nor to take sides " in the controversy on any practical or legal interpretation ". It is because his study is so objective that it is so useful and enables members of the international legal community the better to understand the aims which they have set themselves.

It is a widely known fact that the Declaration of Human Rights is part and parcel of the general current of thought which led to the creation and development of the Red Cross. It may be noted that the *Revue internationale* (April 1949) has already published articles drawing the parallel between this Declaration and the Geneva Conventions. Mr. Verdoodt's book points to the general trend of efforts after the Second World War to safeguard essential human rights. It was only one year after the vote on the Declaration that the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, were drawn up.

J. G. L.

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B. and S. EPSTEIN : THE RED CROSS IN ACTION <sup>1</sup>

In March 1964, the *International Review* devoted an article to a book written by Beryl and Sam Epstein in 1963 under the title " The Story of the International Red Cross ". A condensed edition has now been published under another title.

It repeats the same general ideas as the earlier version and has the same factual and vivid description of historic events of concern to the Red Cross from the time of Henry Dunant and his prophetic views up to the Second World War. It also covers ICRC actions during civil wars and gives an account of actions undertaken by the League and by many National Societies.

Red Cross interventions during armed conflicts and natural disasters are illustrated as well as its work for the benefit of children in hospitals and for the training of nurses.

J.-G. L.

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<sup>1</sup> Macfaden-Bartell, New-York, 1965, 128 p. This book is intended for readers having only an elementary knowledge of English.