

BOOKS AND REVIEWS

GÖTZ FEHR: "GESCHICHTE DER MENSCHLICHKEIT" ¹

The author of this book, a former chairman of the League's Junior Red Cross Advisory Committee, well knows the problems facing Red Cross youth today and is one of the people who in accordance with his suggestion during the latest meeting of the Advisory Committee, studies the "motivation" of young people with relevance to our movement. One of the first essentials is that youth perceive throughout the history of the movement the guiding line of the awakening humanitarian spirit among men, as most recently and powerfully manifested in the Geneva Conventions. "These", Fehr says, "show that violence and war can be overcome. They are the proof that the humanitarian commandments are universally recognized".

The builders of tomorrow's world must also be aware of their responsibilities towards society. This booklet exhorts them to do so, clearly showing them the source of a new ideal of service to one's fellow-man and how, little by little, against odds, it became universally accepted in the XIX century and took hold in the conscience of humanity. The author, through a historical background from the movement's beginning to the present day, shows the ideas and events which stand out as landmarks.

Henceforth, convinced of the permanence of certain fundamental values, feeling that a humanitarian appeal resounding across the centuries cannot be ignored, everyone considers himself responsible towards every other human being and thus becomes master of the future. Self-interest is balanced by a knowledge of moral evolution from ancient times. These are advantages for the building of a civilization of which service is a major factor.

Mr. Fehr is mindful of the vast problems facing the world today and of the great efforts which are necessary to guide it in the direction which men of goodwill hope it will take. The stakes are

¹ Deutsches Rotes Kreuz — Schriftenreihe Nr. 34, Bonn, 1967, 46 p.

enormous; that is why, while asserting that the humanitarian spirit is the key to the future, he concludes his remarkable book by asking:

“ Will humanity avoid atomic war, a war of total destruction ?

The problem of survival is bound up with the question: ‘ will the humanitarian spirit prevail or not ’ ? This would mean the abandonment of armed power in favour of spiritual weapons to overcome poverty and conflicts and to ensure the rule of justice. In other words man must use the faculties with which he alone of living creatures is endowed: sentiment, reason and conscience. These gifts should enable us to transform the earth into a haven of peace, a place of spiritual values, and thus translate into reality the hope which guided humanity in the beginning ”.

Mr. Götz Fehr has written a book useful for teachers and students. The *International Review*, in subsequent issues, will reproduce some chapters from it which show the place and value of certain moral ideas in general evolutionary trends. It is a message of confidence for, in a way, it gives an understanding of how the past is a guarantee for the future.

In this the Red Cross has a rôle to fulfil, to maintain the humanitarian drive of pre-1863 and of the Red Cross founders. Chapters of particular interest are those in which the author recalls the work of the noble personalities who took up the defence of human beings, heedless of frontiers, nationality and religious and social prohibitions.

J.-G. L.

RENÉ MAHEU: “ LA CIVILISATION DE L’UNIVERSEL ”¹

This work consists of various articles, lectures and messages either written or spoken on different occasions and represents the interests of the author, Director-General of UNESCO, whose purpose it is here to collect elements of a universal civilization and

¹ Editions Laffont-Gonthier, Paris, 282 pages.