

BOOKS AND REVIEWS

RODOLFO OLGIATI: "WERKPLÄTZE EINER ZUKUNFT"¹

The title of this book is an excellent one, for it shows that the author, an honorary member of the ICRC, continues to look toward the future, and to try to discern its outlines. He is aware however that the world he dreams of is not the world that exists; that his longing for more justice and a better spirit of co-operation can only be fulfilled when a number of psychological, intellectual, political and spiritual transformations have taken place. As F.T. Wahlen says in his preface, "Rodolfo Olgiati is not a utopian, but a realistic thinker and an active idealist".

It is essential therefore to specify the sense in which such words as "service" and "philanthropy" are used. One chapter is devoted to the idea of service and its connotations in today's world. "The term 'philanthropy' remained in use long after the time of Henry Dunant to designate fraternal assistance rendered to those in need, which invariably offers something as well to the donor. Let us hope that this expression does not fall into disuse, for it connotes something that is more important today than ever before."

The author also examines the relation between "neutrality" and "assistance". He points out that Swiss neutrality has made it possible for Switzerland to play an active part in international affairs. It is in the same sense, he insists, "that the multiple activities of the ICRC must also be understood".

The author is engaged in a fight to improve the condition of mankind, and it is the hope of achieving this that inspires him, in a book in which most of the problems considered are Swiss. Yet we cannot nowadays accept a fragmentation of the world, in which nations, economies and cultures are more and more closely linked. So it is that Olgiati writes, "Whether we like it or not, a new world must be born and will be born. Some of our efforts, however contradictory they may seem, are making

¹ Verlag Herbert Lang, Bern and Frankfurt/M., 1975.

their contribution, albeit imperfectly, to the birth of this new world. Since no one individual can expect to see the final accomplishment of such a great human ideal, the important thing for him is to know that he is fighting for this ideal. If he devotes the best of himself to this fight, he will achieve the noblest possible creative action. Then, he will have a share in the future, because he will be serving the future."

J. H. DUNANT : "DENKEND AAN SOLFERINO"

The book written and published by Henry Dunant under the title *Un souvenir de Solferino* was translated into Dutch shortly after its appearance by Dr. J.H.C. Bastings, one of Dunant's closest friends. After more than a century, it was necessary to revise this translation. This task was undertaken by Mr. Carl Vandekerckhove, director general of the Belgian Red Cross (Flemish section). He has made an adaptation of the text, condensing it into selected chapters, generously illustrated and accompanied by a colour map of the Solferino region.

Mr. Eric Martin, President of the ICRC, has written a preface for the work, published as part of a series devoted to the great personalities in Red Cross history. The preface is reprinted below. It will be recalled that the International Review published last March an article by Mr. Vandekerckhove on Constance Teichmann, known as the "Angel of Antwerp".

The initiative undertaken by Mr. Carl Vandekerckhove is especially felicitous. It places at the disposal of readers a Dutch translation of A Memory of Solferino, the great work by Henry Dunant which was the starting point for the Red Cross concept.

"Our movement must again and again go back to its source to rediscover its original inspiration: benevolent and unreserved assistance given to victims of conflicts. As Henry Dunant wrote, 'Is not the blood which is shed in conflict the same as that which runs through the veins of all the people of the nation?' The tragic sight of the battlefield of Solferino evoked Dunant's anguished cry to the people of the world and thus led to the creation of the ICRC and of all the National Red Cross Societies and to the mobilization for more than a hundred years of men and women of good will for voluntary assistance to suffering people.