

Unforgettable characters emerge from this epic of human suffering, such as an amputee who calls himself "Fredy de Los Angeles", a young Salvadorean ex-guerilla who does not know who he is and whose case is being looked into by Jeanne from the Central Tracing Agency; Pikul, the Thai field officer who comes from the Golden Triangle and is utterly devoted to the Red Cross; Denise, a Swiss nurse abducted by guerrillas to tend one of their comrades; Barbara, a Canadian nurse, who must take terrible life-and-death decisions when she decides which of the wounded people arriving at the Camacupa hospital in Angola will receive priority care; Eric, who worked all out on the construction of a vast system to distribute drinking water throughout the Santa Cruz area, only to discover that the local inhabitants preferred to "go down to the river in the valley for their germ-laden, death-bringing water".

Why, then, would anyone want to be a delegate? Goeldlin asked a lot of them this question. They replied that they did it to go to interesting places and accomplish something through work that "has more to be said for it, morally, than other spheres of activity", to "improve the world", to "give substance to such a weird concept as neutrality" and to "watch over the application of international humanitarian law". Delegates often remember what they were told during their training: "The time will come, again and again, when you are acutely aware of your own powerlessness, of the limits of what we can do. You will find the enormity of the task discouraging. But you will also see that if you are able to save even one life, all the frustrations will have been worth while".

Michel Goeldlin's book is a tribute not only to the Swiss delegates of the ICRC but also to the local employees and the teams sent out by National Societies and other humanitarian organizations. The book and the striking photographs that illustrate it present a humanitarian profession that is fascinating and unique. It will doubtless inspire many others to follow the same vocation.

Jacques Meurant

JORNADAS DE DERECHO INTERNACIONAL HUMANITARIO

Round Tables on International Humanitarian Law

The first *Round Table on International Humanitarian Law*, organized by the Seville Provincial Assembly of the Spanish Red Cross and Seville University to mark the 125th anniversary of the Red Cross, was held from 5 to 7 May 1988. It was chaired by *Professor Carrillo Salcedo*, lecturer in public international law, and aroused such wide interest that a special course was organized on the subject from January to June the following year. The second

Round Table was set up within the framework of this course, on 4 and 5 May 1989.

A number of distinguished jurists presented papers on international legal instruments relating to armed conflicts, and these papers have now been published in the work mentioned above.¹

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to international law, *Professor Roberto Mesa*, who teaches international relations at Madrid University, opened the discussions at the first *Round Table* with a presentation on international relations at the time of the inception of the Red Cross Movement, describing the contradiction between violence and the yearning for peace, which constitutes the moral foundation of international relations and finds expression in humanitarian activity. *Professor Celestino del Arenal*, who also lectures at Madrid University, expanded on this theme with special emphasis on the Red Cross and peace in today's world. He demonstrated how the original purpose of the Red Cross, which was to provide assistance to the victims of armed conflict, has evolved to include an all-embracing concern for human life, freedom, dignity and justice and has gradually become a dynamic process of cooperation tending to establish lasting peace.

The law of war was introduced by *Colonel D. José Luis Rodríguez-Villante y Prieto*, Judge Advocate in the Spanish Navy and Director of the Study and Research Unit at the Spanish Red Cross Centre for the Study of International Humanitarian Law. His outline of the history of international humanitarian law was followed by an interesting analysis of the sources and underlying principles of the law, with a reference to the legal basis for each principle.

The adoption of the 1977 Additional Protocols was an important development in the law of armed conflicts, in relation both to the conduct of hostilities and the protection of persons. *José Antonio Pastor Ridruejo*, Professor of international law at Madrid University and UN Special Representative on the human rights situation in El Salvador, concluded the first *Round Table* with a discussion of the obstacles that lay in the way of general endorsement of the Protocols. He also emphasized their universal scope in view of the special nature of their subject-matter and their purpose.

The second *Round Table* was entirely devoted to the law of non-international armed conflicts. *Professor Roberto Mesa*, who teaches international relations at Madrid University, gave a talk on developments in the area of international relations and the progress achieved in codifying the relevant rules.

¹ *Jornadas de Derecho Internacional Humanitario (First and Second Round Tables on International Humanitarian Law)*, Seville University, Spanish Red Cross (Seville), *Asociación de Investigación sobre temas Iberoamericanos* (Association for Latin-American Studies), 2 vols., 1990, 97 pp. each.

Rául Benítez Manaud, researcher at the Interdisciplinary Research Centre, Independent University of Mexico, gave a detailed analysis of the crisis in Central America and of the conflict in El Salvador, emphasizing how closely political and military interests were intertwined, each momentarily gaining the upper hand, and the inevitably harmful consequences of this situation in humanitarian terms.

Jacques Meurant, Editor of the *International Review of the Red Cross*, reviewed the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross within the context of the conflict in El Salvador, with special emphasis on the protection afforded to the civilian population, visits to detainees, family reunifications, material and medical assistance and the dissemination of the Red Cross principles and international humanitarian law.

With regard to the repression of breaches of Protocol II, *José Luis Fernández Flores*, Professor of international law and Supreme Court Judge, was of the opinion that the lack of definition of what constitutes a violation of the Protocol leads to the assumption that failure to comply with all or any one of the treaty's provisions constitutes a breach. Breaches of Protocol II, as is the case for war crimes, can be repressed only if the necessary provisions are incorporated into national legislation.

As a conclusion to this second *Round Table*, *Professor Pastor Ridruejo* broached the question whether, from a legal standpoint, the rules contained in the Additional Protocols, or at least some of them, may be considered imperative. The reader is left to reflect on the imperative character of the nucleus of international rules pertaining to human rights which, according to the author, would help transform the provisions of the humanitarian treaties into principles of general international law.

The second volume, dealing with non-international armed conflicts, contains in annex a document from the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) Secretariat for the promotion and protection of human rights, entitled *La legitimidad de nuestros métodos de lucha* and dated 10 October 1988. This document sets out the main measures taken by the Front to protect the civilian population.

There can be no doubt that these two meetings and the many interesting papers published subsequently constitute a major contribution to the dissemination of international humanitarian law and complement national measures taken to fulfil the obligation to make IHL provisions as widely known as possible. The two volumes will thus be most useful for those involved in teaching and disseminating international humanitarian law.

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