

encourage further thought, to provide better assistance. But the effectiveness of humanitarian work cannot be measured primarily by the audience ratings nor by the clamour of the publicity-conscious. A commitment to aiding the victims requires modesty, tolerance and also, no doubt, a measure of silence.

The debate which Rufin would like to instigate is an important one. Great attention must be paid to the danger of humanitarian assistance being used for political ends. Rufin's book, more an outline than a thoroughgoing treatise (and the better for it!), represents a valuable contribution to the debate.

*Jean-Luc Blondel*

---

## THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS IN GREECE, 1967-1971 \*

### *Dangerous ground*

Many studies have been written on the issues relating to the protection of political detainees and to ICRC activities in favour of persons detained in their own countries.

Mr. Siegrist's study, an abridged version of the thesis presented for his doctorate in political science, is nevertheless of great interest, since the author—taking the specific case of the dictatorship in Greece as the starting point—attempts to draw conclusions which go far beyond the framework of that one conflict.

This readable and well-arranged book is divided into two distinct parts.

In the first, theoretical part, the author begins by recapitulating some basic themes, such as the origin of the ICRC, its aims, work and resources, and then turns to a highly sensitive and controversial issue—that of the ICRC's legal status. In a few densely-packed pages, Mr. Siegrist goes on to recall the origin of ICRC action in favour of political detainees, before examining the *legal bases* for such activities (the fundamental principles of the Red Cross, its doctrine, etc.).

---

\* Roland Siegrist, *The protection of political detainees: The International Committee of the Red Cross in Greece, 1967-1971*, Ed. Corbaz, Montreux, 1985, 171 pp.: English.

The second part of the book is wholly devoted to ICRC activities in Greece from 1967 to 1971.

Following a brief account of the fundamental geographical and economic factors, the author describes the protagonists of the Greek political scene and evokes the circumstances which led to the military takeover on 21 April 1967.

After describing the approaches which finally enabled the ICRC to work in Greece and to visit persons detained there, the author makes a detailed analysis of the various protection activities undertaken by the ICRC. He stresses their most positive aspects, such as the fact that the ICRC quite rapidly gained access to the vast majority of detainees, but does not hesitate to point out the shortcomings and even errors in ICRC activities at that time.

In this connection, Mr. Siegrist gives a very interesting interpretation of the factors which induced the Greek authorities to end ICRC activities in the country three years before the fall of the dictatorship.

According to the author, the ICRC can contemplate a long-term involvement only if its activities benefit the authorities and the detainees alike. In his view, the Greek authorities decided to halt ICRC activities in 1971 because they felt that the agreement concluded with the ICRC in 1969 gave political detainees more advantages than the authorities themselves could hope to draw from it on the political level.

Although the situation in Greece was in many respects exceptional, Mr. Siegrist's analysis is very interesting and can be applied to the majority of ICRC actions for political detainees.

From the academic viewpoint, the book is very richly documented: in addition to an extensive bibliography, Mr. Siegrist has based his work on numerous unpublished documents from the ICRC's archives.

While it is unfortunate that—presumably for linguistic reasons—the author was unable to consult more Greek sources, it is impossible to overemphasize the great interest of the information the author obtained in the course of numerous interviews with persons directly concerned by the events.

Through its intellectual rigour, wealth of information and sound interpretations, this work will render invaluable service in the study of “Greece of the colonels”, as well as in the more general study of ICRC activities in aid of political detainees.

*Antoine Bouvier*