

## HISTORIA DE LA CRUZ ROJA ESPAÑOLA *In the service of history*

Wealth of content and a harmonious presentation are the most striking features of this *History of the Spanish Red Cross*, recently published by the Spanish Red Cross Society and written by Josep Carles Clemente, who is a well-known historian and journalist in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

The *History* is a magnificently illustrated album with photographs, contemporary engravings and other reproductions; it is also a very well-documented research by an historian who not only presents his readers with a chronological record of events, but also tries to supply evidence in support of the facts (mostly on the basis of hitherto unpublished documents) and analyzes them within their national and international contexts.

The Spanish Section of the International Association for Relief to Wounded Soldiers in Spain was founded on 6 July 1864 and first came under actual fire during the Third Carlist War—on 4 May 1872, to be precise, during the battle of Oroquieta, when Red Cross nurses and doctors evacuated and cared for the wounded and sick of both the Carlist and the legitimist forces. Beyond the humanitarian significance of this gesture, the Red Cross' work during the Carlist War marked the true beginning of the organization and the acknowledgment of its merits by the Spanish public of its time.

Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the Spanish Red Cross, which was gradually establishing its permanent structures, was called upon both inside Spain and overseas, at the time of the colonial wars: first during the "cantonalist" uprising of 1873 which set the south of Spain ablaze, then from 1897 to 1899 during the evacuations from Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The Spanish Red Cross arranged for the repatriation of soldiers and civilians to Spain.

The activities of the Spanish Red Cross in peacetime are also described in considerable detail. The author refers extensively to the archives and bulletins of the provincial and local Assemblies of the Spanish Red Cross to describe—using numerous statistics to illustrate his point—the development of medical and social welfare programmes since the flu epidemic which claimed so many victims in the years 1917 to 1919 and mobilized all the Red Cross' resources; the floods and earthquakes which struck several areas of the country during those same years; and the social strife that divided Spain during the "tragic week of Cataluña" in July 1909, during the general strike of 1917 and the revolution of October 1934.

<sup>1</sup> Josep Carles Clemente, *Historia de la Cruz Roja Española* (History of the Spanish Red Cross), Spanish Red Cross, Ed. Department of Information, Public Relations and Publications, Madrid, 1986, 340 p.

In this connection, the author shows how much the Spanish Red Cross owes to Queen Victoria Eugenia, who devoted so much of her time to humanitarian activities and who created the body of professional nurses and ladies engaging in voluntary Red Cross work which did such outstanding work during the First World War.

The book also contains an entire chapter on the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), in which the author gives an extensive description of the activities of ICRC delegates, in particular Dr M. Junod, and of the assistance provided to the victims of the war by various National Societies. The reader's curiosity remains somewhat unassuaged, however, when the author starts dealing with the situation of the Spanish Red Cross, which was soon split into two separate camps as a result of the Civil War. It would have been interesting to know more about the humanitarian work done by the "Madrid" and the "Burgos" branches of the Red Cross and of the relations between them. Josep Carles Clemente nevertheless describes the activities carried out by the various provincial committees, which all did a remarkable job, in particular the Lerida Committee, which from the outset of the war set up a hospital and an ambulance service, and organized a tracing and information service for families separated by the conflict.

During the Second World War, the Spanish Red Cross had the arduous responsibility of responding to needs on two different fronts at once: in Spain itself, where it had to deal with the disastrous effects of the Civil War and try and alleviate suffering in a country in ruins, while outside Spain the Second World War and the consequences it entailed in humanitarian terms laid an extremely heavy burden on the Society, the more so since Spain rapidly became the centre for the provision of international humanitarian assistance. Spain's position as a "non-belligerent" led to the exchange of prisoners on Spanish soil (in October 1943, 1,061 Germans were exchanged for 1,083 British citizens in Barcelona). The Spanish Red Cross was active in these various operations, caring for the wounded and sick and coordinating the exchange and repatriation of the prisoners.

The author finishes his book on a brief description of the Society's development since the Second World War, laying particular emphasis on the structural and statutory changes that gradually took place within the Society, on the creation and development of services to meet new and increasingly diverse requirements (the Youth Red Cross was founded in 1970 and the "Cruz Roja del Mar" in 1971). As from the late 1970s, the Society thus evolved into a dynamic institution which achieved international renown with the election of its President, the late Mr Enrique de la Mata Gorostizaga, to the position of President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in November 1981.

The conclusion to the book is by the current President of the Society, Mr Leocadio Marín, who describes the Spanish Red Cross, as it evolved over the years and acquired experience from the major events of the past century, gradually advancing from a philanthropic, generous and elitist institution to become an organization which has lost none of its generosity of spirit, but has

achieved greater and wider social involvement, and whose activities and commitment to the principles of the Movement represent a major contribution to justice and peace.

This *History of the Spanish Red Cross* is also a discovery—or a rediscovery—of Spanish contemporary history set against a background of humanitarian ideals.

Jacques Meurant

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## LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS EN EL SISTEMA INTERAMERICANO

### *Recopilación de instrumentos básicos*

In recent years the subject of human rights protection has grown steadily in dimension and importance in Latin America.

Effectively ensuring respect for human rights demands a thorough knowledge of such rights and how they are applied.

The fact that, until recently, no Spanish text existed which fully and systematically set out existing human rights instruments has led the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights to publish the above-mentioned work\*.

It is a very comprehensive compilation of the many legal instruments within the inter-American human rights system, the best known of which are undoubtedly the 1948 Organization of American States (OAS) Charter and the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights. This collection is intended both for academic circles and for the many human rights defence groups in Latin America.

The book is divided into four parts, each containing various instruments according to their legal standing; American Conventions (first part); Declarations (second part); Statutes and Regulations (third Part); OAS Resolutions on Human Rights (fourth part). The resolutions are listed according to the bodies which adopted them and subdivided according to the subject matter they deal with.

The table of contents is supplemented by an index of instruments in chronological order (up to the end of 1986) which makes for ease of reference.

In this introduction, Professor Héctor Gross Espiell briefly describes the inter-American human rights system and comments on how it works and on its various instruments. He especially refers to the differences between that system and those in other regions, in particular the European system. Although partly structural in nature, they also stem from the difference in economic, social and political backgrounds.

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\* *Los derechos humanos en el sistema interamericano, Recopilación de instrumentos básicos*, (Human rights in the inter-American system, Compilation of basic instruments), Daniel Zovatto G., compiler, Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, Costa Rica, 1987, pp. 358.