

The ICRC is Awarded the Antonio Feltrinelli Gold Medal

On 15 November 1969 the *Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* presented the International Committee of the Red Cross with the Antonio Feltrinelli gold medal which is awarded in recognition of actions of a high humanitarian and moral value or for work in medical science.¹

During the ceremony at the Palais Corsini in Rome, the President of the ICRC, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, delivered an address to the members of the Academy and to the many eminent guests.

“ This distinguished Academy’s decision to confer on the International Committee of the Red Cross the Antonio Feltrinelli gold medal is a noble gesture ”, he said “ of which I am most sensible and which is a particular honour, for it strengthens yet further the bonds which for more than a century unite Italy and our institution profoundly both historically and on the plane of friendship and trust. I know I speak for my colleagues on the International Committee when expressing our profound gratitude. This high distinction also fills with pride and joy the many people who, in co-operation with the ICRC in Geneva and elsewhere, devote themselves to the Red Cross mission. . . .

. . . It is well known that it was in Italy that the idea which was to become in a few years the world’s greatest movement of organized solidarity on a private level was born: the Red Cross. It is only right to state that the movement is one of the finest and most useful achievements, one of the most fascinating adventures of the human mind. . . .

¹ *Plate.* — Rome: In the name of the ICRC, of which he is the President, Mr. M. A. Naville receives the Antonio Feltrinelli Gold Medal.

... Henry Dunant was of course not the first to be moved by the horrors of war or to help the wounded of both sides in conflict. We must not forget Ferdinando Palasciano, an ardent defender of the neutral status of the wounded. But what came from that meeting of the Genevese spirit, inclined by tradition to assist others, and the warm fraternity and profoundly human feeling of the Italian people; what constituted the revolutionary innovation and the basic principle of the movement which was to be known as the Red Cross, was the recognition by States and armies that the man *hors de combat*, the man who had fallen in battle and was no longer able to defend himself, was entitled to the same care and protection whatever side he had fought on. This principle, so simple and yet so admirable, was in the course of a century to be enormously and unexpectedly developed."

The speaker then referred to the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the foundation and growth of National Societies. Describing the structure and action of the ICRC, he stated that its mission was to defend human dignity, to alleviate suffering wherever war raged or oppression prevailed, to provide relief and visit prisoners. It aided victims without drawing any distinction, and therein lay the guarantee of its impartiality. It was perhaps one of the few international organizations which could remain entirely independent of political, religious or military influence.

Mr. Naville then reviewed the missions undertaken during the last World War by the International Committee of the Red Cross for the benefit of military and civilian victims. Moral suffering being no less painful than the physical, the ICRC was concerning itself with the remedy. The Central Tracing Agency had been and still was an active centre where inquiries, letters, messages, lists, card indexes (45 million to-day) were the means which often permitted the anxiety of prisoners and their families to be allayed. However, the end of conflict did not put an end to the ICRC's mission. The ICRC continued to act to ensure respect for the spirit and the letter of the Conventions during conflicts or internal disorders. That was a step forward, since the ICRC concerned itself for political detainees; so far its delegates had been able to talk in private with more than 100,000 political detainees in more than forty countries.

“ . . . Whenever the Red Cross scope is broadened,” concluded the speaker, “ every time our delegates open a door hitherto closed, that means a little more humanity comes to the fore and a little more barbarity recedes. We intend to wage war on all forms of deliberate degradation of the defenceless human being. To those who can no longer make their voices heard, we wish at least to bring them our presence, so that all men who are oppressed, who are in irons, tortured and humiliated may feel they are not alone, not abandoned. For what is the purpose of the Red Cross if it is not the defence of an idea which, for centuries past, the *Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* has sought to illustrate: the idea of man’s dignity? ”.

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

The International Tracing Service, directed and administered by the ICRC since 1955, has recently produced a volume of considerable importance after several years work based on documents obtained over the past twenty years. This consists of 612 pages, in addition to an introduction of 50 pages and is entitled, *Vorläufiges Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS, 1933-1945*.¹ (Provisional list of concentration camps and their outside detachments, and of their places of detention dependent on the Reichsführer-SS in Germany and the German-occupied territories, 1933-1945.)

It will be recalled that the ITS published, from 1949 to 1951, a *Catalogue of Camps and Prisons in Germany and German-occupied territories, 1939-1945*. A new edition of this catalogue, now long out of date, is in the process of preparation. However, the new

¹ Internationaler Suchdienst, Arolsen, 1969, I. Band.