

what conditions are these visits made? What is the relationship between prisoners and delegates?

The first part of the book offers a description, accompanied by comments from prisoners and delegates, of articles that were made in camps between 1900 and 1992 and have been collected by the Museum. Utensils, decorative objects, drawings and paintings, fabric and woven creations, and jewellery file before the spectator's eyes, like modest markers in the humanitarian memory.

The second part, of a legal nature, is devoted to excerpts taken from the basic instruments of international law on the protection of prisoners of war, internees and civilian detainees, persons deprived of their freedom, political detainees and prisoners of conscience.

The third and final part of the book provides valuable theoretical and practical information on a wide variety of aspects of the work to protect prisoners which is carried out by the ICRC, but also by other governmental and non-governmental organizations. We are familiarized in turn with the role of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency (CTA), the role of ICRC doctors during their visits to prisoners, the activities of the Committee against Torture of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and also those of Amnesty International.

With its attractively spaced out presentation, its illustrations and statistical tables, the book is not only an indispensable guide to the exhibition but also a very handy reference work for researchers and all those wishing to know more about the world of detention and the problems involved.

Jacques Meurant

BOOK REVIEWS

- Walter Zürcher, *Die Schweizer Handelsschiffe, 1939-1945*, Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, Herford, 1992, 170 pp.

This work, which describes the development of the Swiss Navy during the Second World War, tells how the ships used by the ICRC to carry Red Cross parcels for prisoners of war and relief supplies to civilians in countries occupied by the Axis powers managed to get through to their destination and the dangers they faced in doing so.

The book, which is illustrated with numerous photographs, also contains accounts by officers who served on board those vessels; for example, it retraces the epic voyage of an ICRC ship, the *S/S Henry Dunant*, which lifted anchor in Lisbon to ferry relief supplies to the Netherlands. It was forced by

the warring parties to sail as far north as Iceland and thence to Bergen, Göteborg and Malmö before finally being able to set course for Cuxhaven and its final destination Delfzijl. Thus a voyage which initially should have been routed through the English Channel and have lasted only a few days took more than two months from January to March 1945, in the depths of winter.

Françoise Perret

- *Médecin-général Inspecteur* Raoul Favre † (joint author), *L'Homme et les catastrophes* (Man and disasters), France-Sélection, Aubervilliers Cédex, 1992, 800 pp.

This book, which won the *Prix de la Protection Civile* (Civil Defence Prize), had been out of print for several years and has just been updated and republished.

By a disaster, writes General Favre, is meant a sudden, brutal disruption of the pre-established order between man and nature which has three kinds of destructive effects:

- extensive damage;
- a very high number of victims (dead, injured, homeless, etc.);
- the more or less complete disappearance of a local infrastructure to control outbreaks of lawlessness, to help the victims and to take care of the casualties.

Some disasters are due to the natural elements, i.e. water and fire:

- burst dams and dykes, flooding of various kinds;
- forest fires, urban conflagrations, ships ablaze.

In addition there are mining disasters, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, cyclones and hurricanes.

Others are man-made, resulting from the use of various technologies:

- transport accidents: air disasters (in flight or on the ground), and rail, road and sea disasters;
- the effects of conflicts which cause huge numbers of civilian and military casualties through the use of conventional, chemical, nuclear or biological weapons.

Technological progress has greatly increased the number and variety of disasters. At the same time the previous statistics have been modified by a spate of natural disasters throughout the world, whose effects are now given wider media coverage and are thus better known than in the past.

Each chapter ends with tables giving details of every type of disaster, dating back to the earliest known sources. They are supplemented with general worldwide statistics going back to the turn of the century.

The book is an invaluable reference work, especially for those who are directly or indirectly involved in relief work or responsible for protecting people from the effects of all kinds of disasters.