

## BOOKS AND REVIEWS

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EMILIO POITEVIN: " VUESTRA CRUZ ROJA " <sup>1</sup>

The author of this book, who carried out important and effective functions in the Guatemalan Red Cross, is now Honorary President and Medical Adviser of that National Society. He therefore knows full well the practical problems that beset the Red Cross in its task and the scope and difficulties of humanitarian action. Yet, with great breadth of vision, he has also made it the subject of reflection on the meaning of Henry Dunant's humanitarian act, on the value of his example and of the example of others who have devoted themselves to serving humanity: Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, Anna Nery . . .

The book which he has dedicated to the Red Cross will therefore be read with great interest, as may be gathered from some of the chapter headings: the origins of the humanitarian concept, the Geneva Conventions, the Red Cross doctrine, a history of the Red Cross in Guatemala, women and the work of the Red Cross, the future of the Red Cross, the Red Cross and civil protection.

This small volume will allow everyone to learn about the various activities of the Red Cross and the opportunity it provides of showing active human solidarity and helping the suffering. The book contains a number of illustrations relating to the history of humanitarianism and Guatemalan Red Cross activities.

J.-G. L.

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**New Hope for the Aged**, *World Health*, Geneva, April 1972.

The problem of caring for the aged has taken on new dimensions in the 20th century. As the quality of medical practice improves and as preventive medicine plays a more important role in our lives, the proportion of old people in our society increases. The result is an ever-growing number of old people—who may lack purpose, direction or hope.

Often, in its eagerness to prolong life, society has neglected to utilize the vast potential of the aged. In some respects we have taken a step

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<sup>1</sup> *Editorial José de Pineda Ibarra, Ministerio de Educación, Guatemala, 1971, 103 pp.*

backwards. Primitive man revered age. The octogenarian was the village wise man. In agrarian societies, the aged played important economic and social roles as long as they were physically able to do so. They were not a problem—they were considered an asset.

Often in 20th-century society those who are too old to keep up with the industrial pace are shunted to one side; those who are able to perform useful work are forced to leave their jobs because of arbitrary retirement policies.

Fortunately, many are beginning to recognize the problem and to come to grips with it. Although knowledge about aging and the aged is limited, efforts are made to design programmes and policies for the old-age population concerning employment, income, security, health, social welfare, education and such community services as employment counselling, and information and referral service. These programmes and policies are not meant for the exclusive use of older people; they are also at the disposal of other groups in society. . .

We are beginning to examine the positive contributions the aged can make to society. Economic and technological factors of employment of older workers, their pre-retirement and post-retirement programmes, income, security, social problems related to their mental health, the use of their leisure time, and their integration into community life are being investigated. . .

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**Alternative Methods of Vector Control, *WHO Chronicle*, 1971, No. 5.**

Hitherto the control of insect vectors has depended mainly on chemicals. However, the development of insecticide resistance among many vector species and the destruction of their natural enemies have served to increase rather than reduce the necessity for insecticides, so that a method intended to be temporary has become permanent. Increasing attention has therefore been paid to developing alternative methods of control that will not pollute the environment, that will act only (or mainly) on the target species, and that will avoid the problem of resistance.

The great difficulty with these alternative methods is that they require an adequate supply of staff trained in biological principles and entomological techniques and would thus increase the demands made on the resources of developing countries. On the other hand, they would depend less on equipment and supplies purchased from developed countries and so might prove to be more economical in the long run. . .

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