

Henry Dunant and Rudolf Müller

by Manfred Müller

Rudolf Müller, for many long years a fervent friend of Henry Dunant, whom he had met in Stuttgart where he was living, died on 27 August 1922. He was a friend of tireless devotion and used a large part of his resources to make Dunant's name known far and wide. It is very much thanks to him that Dunant's work, in founding the Red Cross and as promoter of the first Geneva Convention, was recognized. It is therefore only right that we should pay tribute to him on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. We are happy to publish an article by Mr. Manfred Müller, his son and in fact Henry Dunant's godson, who describes the faithful friendship that bound together two men dedicated to the same ideal. (Ed.)

A hundred years after the founding of the Red Cross, several more or less recent biographies, in German, which are based on records, some of them newly discovered, tell us about the men who faithfully assisted Henry Dunant in his more difficult hours. Among the earlier writings about Dunant we find the name of Rudolf Müller, a Stuttgart secondary school teacher, in connection with the few documents available at that time, although they contain no indication of the extent to which Müller's effective activity influenced Dunant's later life.

The fiftieth anniversary of the death of a man linked to Dunant by a close friendship of more than thirty years prompts us to consider Müller's devoted work and his merits with regard to the founder of the Red Cross.

It was by chance that the twenty-one year old student of philology became acquainted with Dunant, on the Stuttgart belvedere terrace, in the summer of 1877. He entered into conversation with a middle-aged gentleman, and they talked together a while in French. The young student realized that the stranger was a man of the world. Great was his surprise when that man finally introduced himself as the founder of the Red Cross. In his memoirs, Müller wrote thus about his meeting with Dunant: "That meeting had a strong influence over my life. I often visited Dunant in Stuttgart, where he stayed, on and off, from 1877 to 1885, and I remained in touch with him until his death in 1910".

During the years that Dunant spent in Stuttgart, he never gave the slightest indication of the desperate material and moral situation in which he found himself. To young Müller he was a fatherly friend who gave useful advice on his courses of study.

In his Heiden hospital retreat, under the care of Dr. Altherr, Dunant took fresh heart and applied himself to regaining recognition as founder of the Red Cross, a right to which he considered himself entitled and which had fallen into oblivion. He realized that he could achieve his purpose only through appropriate public activity. Dunant therefore asked Müller, on the occasion of the International Conference of the Red Cross held in Rome in 1892, whether he would be prepared to publish an article on the subject in the *Ulmer Tagblatt*, and offered to furnish some documents. The article appeared in March 1892, and Dunant was thoroughly satisfied with it. And that was the beginning of Rudolf Müller's activities to secure the rehabilitation of the founder of the Red Cross.

By that time, Dunant had gone over his book *A Memory of Solferino* and deleted some paragraphs that were no longer topical. The Winterthur branch of the Swiss Red Cross, with its secretary J. Pfister and Dunant's Berlin friends, offered to publish the new version of the book in German, and to supply the requisite funds, jointly with some Swiss Red Cross branches. Dunant, who was in quest of a translator, after conferring with Dr. Altherr, asked Rudolf Müller whether he would be willing to undertake the translation of his book about Solferino and his Memoirs into German. He also suggested that he write a history of the founding of the Red Cross and of the Geneva Convention, and said that he could furnish

authentic documents on the subject. While Müller was aware of the fact that he could only do the work requested by Dunant in his spare time, he agreed to the request, first because of his sympathy for Dunant's moral distress, but also because he did not want to fail the trust which his friend placed in him.

At the time, the book on the history of the birth of the Red Cross was the most outstanding service that Müller rendered Dunant. This book and the various translations kept him busy for several years, because he was obliged to peruse the countless letters, notes and documents supplied by Dunant, to seek information and to conduct a bulky correspondence.

Entstehungsgeschichte des Roten Kreuzes und der Genfer Konvention (mit Unterstützung ihres Begründers J. H. Dunant), by Rudolf Müller, was published in Stuttgart in 1897. The book, which was divided into three parts, opened with Dunant's "A Memory of Solferino", which had given the impetus to the Red Cross institution as a whole; its main part embodied Müller's study on the birth and development of the Red Cross and the Geneva Convention, and it ended with important selections from Dunant's hitherto unpublished "Memoirs". The subjects covered were:

- (a) The beginning of the Red Cross in France;
- (b) The Prussian Court and its sympathy for the relief mission;
- (c) The duties of women in times of war and of peace.

An appendix contained notes, documents and quotations.

The book was financed by cash donations. The Swiss donation had originally been meant to cover the book about Solferino. The German Red Cross made a large donation, as did the Dunant Foundation, created in Stuttgart, in 1896, by Adolf Gräter, a well-to-do business man, and Professor Rudolf Müller. This latter foundation had almost 25,000 Marks available.

Along with C. Lueder's book "*Die Genfer Konvention*", published in 1876, Müller's "*Entstehungsgeschichte*" is to this day the most outstanding basic document on the foundation of the Red Cross. More than any other, this book has helped to remind the world, after more than three decades, of Dunant and the decisive

part he played in founding the Red Cross. But the publication of this book had a further, and no less important, effect: in the competent circles of countries members of the Red Cross, it opened the way for Henry Dunant's rehabilitation.

In Dunant's name and in that of the Dunant Committee in Stuttgart, the book was sent to principalities and ministries, and also to outstanding figures in Germany and abroad. Other admirers of Dunant, such as the Dutch journalist Dr. C. F. Haje and the Norwegian army physician, Dr. Hans Daae, for their writings drew inspiration from Müller's book. The publication of "*Entstehungsgeschichte*" fulfilled Dunant's dearest wish. He prized the book very highly, and even in 1906, nine years after publication, which was long after he had been awarded the Nobel Prize, Dunant wrote Müller the following letter ¹ on his friend's fiftieth birthday:

8 March 1906

My dear Friend,

Thank you for your kind letter of the 3rd. I am glad that there has been something which has pleased you and reminded you of your octogenarian friend. And I hasten to use the occasion of your birthday, this month, to say once again how grateful I am for your constant friendship and for all the proofs of that friendship that you have given in your books and in the great publicity in which you have spared neither time nor effort. I can assure you that I realize how fortunate I have been to have found a historian and a man of your merit to relate the origins of the Red Cross and of the Geneva Convention.

With all good wishes to yourself and your dear family on the occasion of your fiftieth birthday, dear Friend, accept my best greetings.

H. Dunant

Even in his will, the aged Dunant still mentioned Müller's book.

In August 1897, Dunant received the City of Moscow Prize

¹ The letters have been translated by us. (*Ed.*).

Vendredi (3.16).
97.

Mon cher Ami,

Après coup du 1^{er} m'est bien passé et je vous en remercie. Ce grand prix de la Ville de Moscou qui m'a été décerné par le Congrès des Médecins du monde entier, au nombre d'environ 8000, est, en effet, un grand succès. Sans vous, je ne l'eusse pas obtenu, car votre livre y a beaucoup contribué. Comme vous avez bien fait de l'envoyer au Prof. Virchow! - Il était le président des présidents d'Honneur, de toutes nations, réunis en Comité pour décider du nom auquel le prix devait être décerné.

Après le télégramme de Moscou, il m'en est arrivés un de félicitations de la Légation de Russie à Berne, & de nombreuses lettres. Le Dr. Allen, qui n'en savait

.... Mais il ne voulait vous donner le
 prix qu'à la 2^e. distribution. C'est qu'il
 est sans doute son ami intime de M.
 Leroy et qu'il s'était déjà déclaré en
 sa faveur. La femme, au contraire,
 est pour vous. Elle est à M. Danc.
 C'est excellent que vous soyez venue
 ici; car vous et moi, nous luttons
 pour la même cause. Je l'ai dit plusieurs
 fois à mon mari: ce Leroy est assez bon
 mais c'est M. Dancé qui mérite le
 prix, et si vous ne voulez pas le donner
 à M. Dancé tout seul, il faut le donner
 à tous les deux. C'est ce que j'excuse
 proposé à M. Bj. à la fin de ma seconde
 lettre, et en effet, à la fin de l'entretien,
 M. Bj. consentit à partager, à la prochaine
 distribution, ^{le prix} entre vous et M. Leroy.

Notre tout dévoué

D. M. Müller

on the occasion of the International Congress of Doctors which met in that city. He informed Müller of this distinction, and added:

This Moscow Grand Prize which I have been awarded by the Congress of Doctors from the whole world is, indeed, a big success. Without you, I would never have obtained it, because your book contributed a great deal to this. How right you were to send it to Prof. Virchow! He was the President of Honorary Presidents, from all nations, meeting in a Committee to decide to whom the prize should be awarded.

No sooner did it become known that Alfred Nobel intended to create prizes for outstanding work, including a peace prize, than Müller decided to propose Henry Dunant as a candidate, and to prepare the necessary steps, secretly at first, using his book as the main source of documentation.

At Dunant's request, he sent it to the Norwegian army general staff physician, subsequently Norwegian army head physician, who already knew Dunant through correspondence. In sending the book, Müller took the opportunity of proposing co-operation with a view to having the Peace Prize awarded to Dunant. Dr. Hans Daae's reply was affirmative, and when they met in Stuttgart, the two prepared the ground for close co-operation. Dr. Daae was Müller's most outstanding partner, for he it was who, mainly through personal effort, approached leading figures in Norway and exercised great influence over public opinion in that country in favour of Dunant's nomination for the first Peace Prize.

In accordance with Dr. Daae's advice, Müller sent his book to the poet Björnsterne Björnson, a leading member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee. In the letter which accompanied the book, Müller proposed Dunant. Björnson's reply, however, was disappointing. It read thus:

Rome, 27 November 1898

Dear Professor Müller,

Under our rules, we are unfortunately obliged to elect the person who, during the last year, was most deserving in the cause

of peace. Although stupid and obstructive, this rule is none the less a rule. Added to this is the fact that our prize must be awarded only to those who have acted in a direct manner in the cause of peace. Your great friend has my full sympathy. Yours sincerely,

Björnst. Björnson

Björnson's refusal did not leave Müller inactive, and he decided to describe, in a letter drawn up in two parts, Dunant's activity for peace, and thus to justify his entitlement to the Peace Prize.

A few days later, Björnson replied to the first part of the letter dated 4 August 1900:

Faaberg, Norway, 9 August 1900

Dear Sir,

I have read your excellent letter and now await the second part. I shall submit both to my colleagues. Even if Dunant cannot receive the prize, it is distributed every year. I hope to see him rewarded. I read your book some time ago. I admire your splendid zeal. Yours sincerely,

B. Björnson

Müller translated Björnson's letter for Dunant, and added:

“This is already a splendid point gained, for Mr. Daae wrote to me that Björnson was entirely in favour of Mr. Passy.”¹

In December 1898, Dunant had the following to say about Frédéric Passy, who is today forgotten:

Mr. Passy has done much for the cause of peace : he is certainly well qualified. The poor man has just lost his second son, who was married, and the son's wife has also died. Only a year ago, he lost a son who was in Lausanne either as a young teacher or

¹ The author here wishes to thank Professor B. Gagnebin very sincerely for allowing him to read several letters preserved in the Dunant records, in the University Library of Geneva.

to finish his studies. Mr. Passy, a member of the Institute, was one of the first, in 1867, to start a campaign in France against war. He has published a great deal since then, and in 1872 I myself provided him with an opportunity to deliver an excellent speech on peace, at the Conferences of the Universal Alliance for Order and Civilization, which were entirely organized by myself.

Müller, who was determined to secure the first Peace Prize for Dunant, hastened to draw up the second part of his letter to Björnson. He mentioned this to Dunant in a letter dated 18 September 1900:

The letter covers nineteen foolscap pages. I do not think it can miss the mark. I sent Mr. Björnson twenty-one documents in a sealed and registered envelope. They are all numbered in chronological order. Unfortunately I did not have time to make a copy in order to be able to send you a translation later . . . Yours very sincerely,

R. Müller

The statement made by Dr. Daae in his aforementioned letter regarding Passy's prospects of receiving the prize crushed Rudolf Müller's hopes of securing the entire prize for Dunant alone, at the first award. He therefore wrote to Björnson suggesting that the prize be shared between Dunant and Passy, and gave the following reason:

Dunant is old, almost seventy-three. The privations and sufferings he has undergone have left him physically very weak. In the circumstances, even one year's wait may be too long.

The first Nobel Peace Prize was in fact shared in this manner. Dr. Daae wrote a long letter to Rudolf Müller who, on 6 December 1900, wrote to Dunant:

My dear Friend,

Thank you for your kind letter of 27 November. I have today received a letter from Mr. Daae, to whom I had sent a registered

letter to ascertain his whereabouts. He replied with a fifteen-page letter describing a visit which he made to Mr. Björnson on the 1st of this month. Mr. Bj. was very friendly. Bj. is very well disposed in your favour. He received my two letters and read them 'with great interest'. But he wanted to give you the prize only at the second award. He is no doubt a close friend of Mr. Passy's and has already pronounced in his favour. His wife, on the other hand, is on your side. She said to Mr. Daae: 'It's splendid that you have come here, because you and I are fighting for the same cause. I have told my husband several times: this Passy is all right, but Mr. Dunant deserves the prize, and if you do not want to give it to Mr. Dunant alone, then it must go to the two of them'. This was what I suggested to Mr. Bj. at the end of my second letter, and by the time we had finished talking Mr. Bj. had agreed to award the prize jointly to yourself and Mr. Passy, at the first award

Yours very sincerely,

R. Müller

The two letters which Rudolf Müller wrote to Björnsterne Björnson, and which were so successful in changing the opinion of that leading member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Dunant's favour, were not to be found for sixty years.¹ Now we know from the report of the Secretary of the Nobel Committee that these letters were, "at the author's request", translated into Norwegian by Dr. Daae and published under his name as a booklet entitled "*Dunants arbeide for fred*" (Dunant's Work for Peace). It was probably felt that a publication intended for Norway would have a favourable effect if it bore the name of a Norwegian rather than of a foreigner as the author.

It is evident that Rudolf Müller of Stuttgart, in close co-operation with Dr. Hans Daae, Norwegian army staff physician, made the

¹ Research in Oslo by Willy Heudtlass, at the time Head of the Press and Radio Service of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, revealed the contents of these letters. In *J. Henry Dunant*, published by W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, in 1962, Mr. Heudtlass gives a detailed account of the award of the Nobel Prize to Dunant. The author takes this opportunity to express his gratitude to Mr. Heudtlass as he used this book and quoted his assessment of Müller's book and of Dr. Daae's work, and the last sentence of Müller's letter to Björnson.

most important and even decisive contribution to the awarding of the first Nobel Prize to Dunant in 1901.

On 10 December 1901, Dunant and Passy were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize. Dunant's state of health did not allow him to receive the prize in person in Christiania. Latterly he had been sorely tried by worries. On 17 December, he wrote to R. Müller as follows:

My dear Friend,

I have not yet thanked you as I wanted to, and I cannot yet do so, even though I am not yet answering the scores of letters I have received. I have not even read them all, for I am extremely weak.

Yours sincerely,

H. D.

A few days later, he wrote to thank him:

20 December 1901

My dear Friend,

Things are quieter at last and I can write to thank you for all your kindness and for the trouble you have taken on my account about the Nobel Prize. You exerted considerable energy in defending my title at Christiania, and I am deeply grateful to you.

Yours sincerely,

H. Dunant

Apart from rehabilitation, it was always Dunant's wish to pay his creditors the debts contracted when he went bankrupt in 1867 and the debts arising from guarantees. According to his own estimate, they amounted to more than half a million francs. He thought the only means of raising such a sum would be the setting up of an "International Henry Dunant Fund", on the model of the English people's donation for Florence Nightingale, who had nursed English soldiers during the Crimean War. That fund represented the equivalent of more than a million Swiss francs.

“ That was a purely national act, whereas the creation of the Red Cross was international in scope ”, said Dunant. One-half of the Nobel Prize was about 104,000 Swiss francs. As he still counted on the “ Henry Dunant Fund ”, he did not, after thirty-four years, want to disperse the money among the creditors and their heirs. He deposited the money in Norway, and during his lifetime touched neither the capital nor the interest. Eventually, he drew up a will in which he left the entire sum, in equal shares, to Norwegian and Swiss charitable institutions.

Rudolf Müller, knowing how anxious Dunant was to settle all his debts, endeavoured with Clara Barton, founder and president of the American Red Cross and to whom he had sent a copy of his book, to establish contact with the Carnegie Endowment, but met with no success. Dunant did not lose heart, hoping to the last that he would be able to pay off his debts out of a supplementary donation from the American people. Despite Müller’s efforts, however, that hope was not fulfilled.

On 8 May 1908, Henry Dunant was eighty years old. He received congratulations from Switzerland and other countries. It was the last summit in his dramatic life. For the occasion, Rudolf Müller had a medal with his friend’s effigy struck at Stuttgart. The artistic work and the Latin text greatly pleased Dunant, who thanked him thus:

9 March 1908

My dear Friend,

The medal is superb and has given me the greatest pleasure. My heartfelt thanks go to you for all the care you have taken over it, for all the trouble to which you have gone. It has come out very well, and your artists are extremely skilful. I should be grateful if you would thank them on my behalf, when you have an opportunity Yours sincerely,

H. Dunant

From time to time, Müller visited his old friend at Heiden. There he would file documents, a task that Dunant would entrust to no one else. From Heiden, Müller wrote thus to his daughter who was on holiday:

You will be surprised to receive a further card from Switzerland. I have been in Heiden since Saturday and I meant to return to Stuttgart on Monday, but Mr. Dunant, with whom I spend a few hours every morning, will not let me go. I shall return to Stuttgart the day after tomorrow (Saturday).

Up to his death in 1910, Dunant corresponded with Müller¹. In his last letter, one day before his eighty-second birthday, he wrote:

7 May 1910

My dear Friend,

I have no good news for you : my stomach is continuing to trouble me and prevents me from writing. From day to day, I have wanted to write you a word or two, but this has been impossible. I am at the end of my tether. I have written this year to no one except you and my brother to whom I yesterday sent my New Year letter! . . . I look forward to news from you. My respects to Mrs. M. and greetings to your children. Yours sincerely,

H. D.

Rudolf Müller never asserted his friendship with the founder of the Red Cross. His multiple activities for Dunant might never have become known even to interested German-speaking Red Cross circles if—thirty years after Müller's death—the attention of the President of the German Red Cross had not been drawn to an obituary published in a newspaper in 1922, and if W. Heudtlass had not in his articles from 1953 onwards, and finally in his biography of Dunant, referred to Müller's work.

The award of the first Nobel Peace Prize to Dunant was for Rudolf Müller the crowning of tireless activity on behalf of his old friend. At Zurich in 1910, with Dr. Altherr and a few members of the family, he paid the last honours at Dunant's funeral.

Manfred MÜLLER

¹ *Plate.*