

BOOK REVIEWS

- **Aileen McCorkell**, *A Red Cross in My Pocket, Derry/Londonderry, 1968-74*, Workers Education Association and Ulster Local History Trust Fund, U.K., 1992, 88 pp.

A Red Cross in My Pocket by Aileen McCorkell, founder President of the Derry/Londonderry branch of the British Red Cross, describes the activities of that branch between 1968 and 1974 at the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland.

The booklet, with its numerous practical examples, does not deal merely with the various activities to help the most disadvantaged (elderly people and the handicapped) or the many innocent victims.

Aileen McCorkell places special emphasis on the importance of the Fundamental Principles — and particularly the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality — in guiding National Society volunteer workers during times of disturbances and conflict.

In the nine chapters of her booklet, written in a lively and concise style, she demonstrates the usefulness of the Principles by placing them in the context of the events in Northern Ireland. By recounting the humanitarian activities carried out during the Battle of the Bogside (Chapter 2), then later in the “no go” areas (Chapter 5) or on the terrible Bloody Sunday of 30 January 1972 (Chapter 7), she explains the meaning of the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in real terms and in a way which is never boring.

The author, speaking from her own experience, also reminds us that humanitarian operations can never be carried out in isolation. She stresses the spirit of solidarity among her fellow Red Cross workers and the close cooperation which developed between the British Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations likewise very active in Northern Ireland, for instance the Order of Malta and the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

A Red Cross in My Pocket (the title refers to the Red Cross arm-band which Aileen McCorkell and her volunteers carried in their pockets during particularly dangerous missions) also gives a clearer idea of an important but often relatively little known period of recent history. This instructive, highly readable booklet will certainly be appreciated by all who wish to understand better how our Movement’s Fundamental Principles are put into practical effect in particularly difficult circumstances.

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