

HENRY DUNANT INSTITUTE

A year ago, on 11 September 1968, Mr. Léopold Boissier opened the "Colloquium on the Modern State and the Red Cross" which had been organized by the Henry Dunant Institute. He had cheerfully assumed the presidency of this very young institution, pleased to continue serving the Red Cross and explore new fields.

Why this colloquium?

In the course of its 106 years, the Red Cross has developed in a manner which has often been remarkable. Yet, at the same time, what upheavals have occurred in the world! From lint to anti-biotics; from the cannon-ball to the inter-continental ballistic missile; from the hegemony of a monarchical Europe to the sovereignty of the new States; from no rights for women to the female franchise; from chancelleries to the proliferation of international institutions. The changes have been so numerous and far-reaching that the Red Cross might well ask itself whether it has not lagged behind. Are its views of the world today clear enough for it to see where it is going?

When a question arises, it must be answered. And the Henry Dunant Institute, an instrument of study and research, has been assigned the job of replying.

Discussion began with the State, a subject affecting the Red Cross because the National Societies are "auxiliaries to the public authorities", and on which outstanding specialists were requested by the institute to give their views. General André Beaufre, Professor Denise Bindschedler-Robert, of the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Dr. Pierre Dorolle, Assistant Director-General of WHO, and Canon Burgess Carr, each described trends in the modern State and deduced what role appeared to devolve on the Red Cross in the development of the law of war, promotion of health and assistance to developing countries.

These four very full and original expositions were a valuable instrument of work for the Red Cross. Thanks are therefore due to the Henry Dunant Institute for having put them together in a well presented fifty page publication ¹ which enriches the intellectual baggage of the Red Cross. They are given in the original languages.

The debates which followed the talks during the three day colloquy also contributed many facts and new ideas worthy of attention. These are available in a mimeographed 200 page document ² which clearly shows the work and concern of the Red Cross.

The French Television corporation on 11 December 1968 devoted its programme "Dossiers de l'Ecran" to the Red Cross. Of interest in this programme were the questions telephoned by the TV audience to the panel of experts. On that evening the panel consisted of representatives of the French Red Cross and of the International Committee.

The broadcast aroused keen interest, as was evident from the number of telephone calls. The 500 odd calls were recorded, together with the names and occupations of the TV spectators curious to know more or speak their mind about the Red Cross.

Obviously some advantage should be drawn from this form of opinion poll. The Henry Dunant Institute did so. Its head of research, Mr. Victor Segesvary, made a thorough analysis of these questions. His study gives a revealing insight into the public image of the Red Cross ³, public preferences and criticism and the shortcomings of information available to it.

This study is the first of a series which will be useful to the Red Cross as a whole.

¹ On sale at Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva, and Editions de l'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, price Sw. Fr. 4.50.

² On sale at Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva, price Sw. Fr. 10.—.

³ "L'attitude du public à l'égard de la Croix-Rouge"—available free in French from the Institute on request.