

I do not agree with Draper's critical and sometimes devastating remarks on the relationship between humanitarian law and human rights (pp. 125 ff), which are to a certain extent contradictory. It is true that at the time when they were made, the process of revising international humanitarian law was accompanied by a great deal of human rights verbiage. But with the wisdom of hindsight, it must be said that the human rights impetus proved useful.

Draper's comments on world events are also to be recommended. These include his positive appraisal of the two Israeli judgements in the Eichmann case (pp. 174 ff), an article on the repatriation of Russian nationals at the end of the Second World War which strongly criticizes the position of the British government of that time (pp. 255 ff), and, last but not least, his legal analysis of the terrible massacre that occurred in the Beirut Palestinian refugee camps in 1982 (Draper concludes that the international legal responsibility of Israel is engaged, pp. 269 ff).

The book makes useful and challenging reading. For the record, its basic message is that the rule of law can and must be maintained to ensure that people are afforded protection even in the extreme situation of armed conflict.

MICHAEL BOTHE

Professor of Law

Johann Wolfgang Goethe University
Frankfurt/Main, Germany

Caroline Moorehead

**Dunant's Dream — War, Switzerland and the
History of the Red Cross**

Harper Collins, 1998, XXXI + 780 pages

Caroline Moorehead's book on the Red Cross is an account of Henry Dunant's dream: to assist victims of warfare without distinction or discrimination. This idea has not only become in itself part of the world's

heritage but is also at the origin of a worldwide movement — the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement — and of an organization — the International Committee of the Red Cross. The author has written a sometimes fascinating, always informative and very readable story about the Red Cross. Her experience as a writer for radio and television clearly had an influence on the clever way she presents the overwhelming mass of facts relating to an institution which is accused of working behind closed doors, and to the “obscure” Geneva Conventions. In particular, the author obviously likes to write about the people who shaped the Red Cross, with special emphasis on ICRC delegates in the field. That gives her many opportunities to switch from serious discourse on facts and figures to amusing stories. Since the ICRC has opened its archives dating back more than 50 years, the author had unlimited access to ICRC documents at least up to the end of the Second World War. This book will no doubt become essential reading for anyone looking for a comprehensive presentation not only of the history of the Red Cross, its activities during almost a century and a half, its institutions and the forces that have guided their activities, but also of the Geneva Conventions and the secrets of international humanitarian law. However, to claim that this is “the only authoritative book” on the subject (as the publisher does on the cover) may be somewhat overstating the case.

The following brief summary is intended to give an idea of how broad the subject matter covered by Moorehead’s book actually is. The first chapter features the man — Henry Dunant — and the book — *A memory of Solferino* — which are at the origin of the Geneva Conventions, the Red Cross Movement and the ICRC, whose common endeavour, in Dunant’s dream, was supposed to be to “humanize war”. The following chapters report on the negotiation and adoption, in 1864, of the original Geneva Convention and on the creation of Red Cross Societies all over Europe and in the United States. The first strong personalities, like Clara Barton and, in Geneva, Gustave Moynier, appear on the scene, but the author does not fail to give credit also to persons pursuing humanitarian goals outside the Red Cross Movement, such as Florence Nightingale.

During the numerous wars of the 19th century the different members of the Red Cross family established their identity: the National Societies as auxiliaries to the armed forces of their respective countries and the ICRC as a neutral intermediary between the warring parties. The First

World War obliged the Red Cross to cope with humanitarian problems of unprecedented magnitude. After the end of the war, the Red Cross Societies established the League of Red Cross Societies (today the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), and the Movement had to find a new structure, a process not without painful moments. “Never (...) was the International Committee’s fundamentally paradoxical position on war and its own power clearer than in the 1930s.” The wars in Ethiopia and Spain, and events in the Soviet Union and Germany obliged the “amiable gentlemen in Geneva” to find new ways to protect victims of violence through international law. That development was of course reinforced by the Second World War, as the author demonstrates in several chapters.

The remaining chapters lead up to Red Cross action in the most recent conflicts: Somalia, Rwanda, the Balkans. The author interviewed a great many delegates and former delegates who played a role in these contexts or who shaped the ICRC’s policy at headquarters. The picture she paints is a very lively one indeed and includes some rather colourful descriptions of members of the Committee and of individual delegates.

The author’s purpose, however, is not only to state the facts and discuss the forces which guide the Red Cross, but also to cover “issues and moral dilemmas which seem to have had the most determining effect on the growth of the modern Red Cross”. She does this on many occasions, with insight and great skill. There is but one such issue which should be mentioned in this short review: the ICRC’s decision, during the Second World War, not to speak out publicly on the crimes being committed in German concentration camps and, in particular, on the fate of the Jews caught in the Nazi extermination machinery. On the basis of the ICRC archives and on the findings of previous research — in particular by Jean-Claude Favez (*Une mission impossible*, Geneva, 1988) — the author recounts in great detail the discussions which led the Committee to the decision not to launch a public appeal. Her account of what an ICRC representative (quoted by the author) recently called “the greatest defeat in the 125-year history of our humanitarian mission” gives a clear picture of a “moral compromise” which is difficult to apprehend today. Although, in the author’s view, “there is no episode more important to [the ICRC’s] sense of itself than the decision taken that day”, she does not believe, like most other observers, that a dif-

ferent course of action involving a public statement would have changed the course of history.

On the other hand, it is surprising to note that the author does not make any reference to the ICRC's rather courageous attempt, a few days after the explosion of the nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, to draw the world's attention to the new dimension brought to warfare by "the bomb" and its horrendous potential for destruction. It was the same ICRC with the same President — Max Huber — who took that initiative on 5 September 1945. That this appeal to the great powers had no success in a world which was about to enter the Cold War is well known, but its moral weight is beyond doubt.

The book also has something to say about the *Bulletin*, the "first magazine" published by the ICRC in 1869 which today is called the *International Review of the Red Cross*. It seems that prior to the age of instant communication the *Review* was a mirror of the major concerns of the ICRC and of National Red Cross Societies and published a great deal of information on their activities. The author quite often quotes from old issues. It appears that at least sometimes the periodical was much more entertaining and fun to read than is probably the case today. Who would care to open the *Review* nowadays for information on whether stretchers would be better pulled by bicycles, reindeer, camels — or balloons?

In short, all those interested by the Red Cross, past and present, will gain much information and much benefit from reading Caroline Moorehead's description of *Dunant's dream*.

HANS-PETER GASSER

Editor

International Review of the Red Cross

The Red Cross was the brainchild of a young Genevan called Henri Dunant. In 1859 Dunant sought out the Emperor Napoleon III for assistance with a business venture in Algeria. Dressed in a light tropical suit - the prototypical "man in white" - Dunant wandered into the middle of the battle of Solferino, where the French and Italians were fighting the Austrians. Although the Red Cross had knowledge of the Holocaust, it eschewed public denunciation of policies of genocide, ostensibly lest it interfere with its programmes for prisoners of war. The men in Geneva were also shocked by the alacrity with which another nation, like Germany once in the vanguard of humanitarianism, systematically ignored every humane precept. Associated events. [Dunant, Henri Jean]. Associated places. Place in general. History, Ontario Red Cross 1914-1946 the story of Red Cross activities in Ontario in World War 1, in the peacetime Share this Share on twitter Share on facebook. Imperial War Museums home Connect with IWM. Henry Dunant (born Jean-Henri Dunant; 8 May 1828 – 30 October 1910), also known as Henri Dunant, was a Swiss humanitarian, businessman and social activist. He was the visionary, promoter and co-founder of the Red Cross. In 1901 he received the first Nobel Peace Prize together with Frédéric Passy, making Dunant the first Swiss Nobel laureate. During a business trip in 1859, Dunant was witness to the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino in modern-day Italy. He recorded his memories and experiences in