

Ninth Award of the Henry Dunant Medal

At its meeting on 25 October 1985 in Geneva the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross decided to award the Henry Dunant Medal to Dr Olga Milosevic of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and to Mr Tom Willmott Sloper of the Brazilian Red Cross.

Dr Olga Milosevic is a member of the Presidential Commission for Health and Environment of the Assembly of the Yugoslav Red Cross and of the Yugoslav Red Cross training centre for personnel from National Societies of developing countries. She held the position of Secretary General of the Yugoslav Red Cross from 1947 to 1963.

Mr Tom Willmott Sloper is a member of the National Committee of the Brazilian Red Cross and a member of its Finance Commission. He was also a member of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross for several years and has played a very active role in the latter's development.

The Henry Dunant Medal is intended to acknowledge and reward exceptional services or acts of great devotion to the Red Cross performed by one of its members. It is the highest distinction awarded by the Red Cross. In principle the regulations permit it to be awarded to only five people every two years, but also allow the Standing Commission to reduce this number, or in exceptional cases to increase it.

Established by the Twentieth International Red Cross Conference in Vienna in 1965 and awarded for the first time on the occasion of the Twenty-first International Red Cross Conference in Istanbul in 1969, the Henry Dunant medal has been awarded to forty-one people, twelve being awarded posthumously.

Centenary of the Costa Rica Red Cross

Earlier this year, the Costa Rica Red Cross celebrated its hundredth anniversary. The ICRC delegated one of its members, Dr. Athos Gallino, to represent it at the jubilee festivities which took place in early May. In the speech he delivered on that occasion in San

José before the Costa Rican governmental authorities and the President of the Republic, Dr. Gallino conveyed the ICRC's congratulations and good wishes to the Costa Rica Red Cross, with which the ICRC has very special bonds of friendship and co-operation.

The International Review wishes to take this opportunity also to convey to the Costa Rica Red Cross its best wishes and sincere congratulations.

Speech delivered by Dr. Gallino for the Centenary of the Costa Rica Red Cross

It is a great pleasure for me to celebrate with you, dear friends of the Costa Rica Red Cross, the hundredth anniversary of your National Society. It is furthermore an honour for me to attend the jubilee festivities as the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the founder body of the Red Cross movement and in a way the "father" of the existing 136 National Societies, since it has the task, and the privilege, of granting them official recognition.

The President of the ICRC would have liked to express personally the high esteem in which he holds your Society and its achievements. Unfortunately, previous commitments have prevented him from being here today and he has asked me to convey to you the ICRC's message of friendship and his own admiration for your National Society's steadfast endeavours over a whole century to alleviate the suffering of the wounded, the sick and the victims of all kinds of disasters.

As has been the case in many other countries, the decision to set up a Red Cross Society in Costa Rica was taken under the pressure of events.

In early April 1885, several countries in Central America were at war, and the conflict—with all the hate, violence and cruelty such a situation usually engenders—was threatening to spread to Costa Rica as well. In that atmosphere of extreme tension, Bernardo Soto, then President of the Republic, decided to set up a Red Cross Society. The magnanimity and humanity of his decision are in such complete contrast to the passions then prevailing that it is well worth while to call to mind its wording:

"... whereas, considering the present state of war in Central America, it is deemed humanitarian and proper to set up in the

Republic of Costa Rica a Red Cross Society in accordance with the Geneva Convention...

a Red Cross Society is hereby founded in the Republic of Costa Rica... Its object is to evacuate and care for sick and wounded members of the armed forces, to whatever belligerent party they may belong..."

As can be seen, Henry Dunant's message of peace and solidarity with the wounded no longer able to fight, his appeal to care for them whatever side they belong to, had not only been heard in Costa Rica, but was actively supported and relayed by your country's highest authorities which upheld the provisions of the first Geneva Convention of 1864.

Fortunately, the war which threatened Costa Rica ended before your country was drawn into it.

After the First World War, in the wake of the terrible influenza epidemic which caused thousands of deaths in Costa Rica and in Europe, your Society set up a permanent structure and became international in its activities: it sent delegates to several American and European countries and, above all, it generously participated in relief operations for the victims of disasters in several other countries. Let us mention, for example, the donation sent in 1921 via the Spanish Red Cross to the wounded in Melilla, the funds raised in 1922 for the victims of an earthquake in El Salvador, for the starving children in Russia, etc.

At that time, your Society expanded rapidly and applied for recognition by the ICRC and for official membership in the family of the International Red Cross.

Fully aware of your Society's increasing activities and convinced of its firm allegiance to our movement's fundamental principles, the ICRC was happy to recognize it formally on 16 March 1922, a few days before it was granted membership of the League and took part as a full member in the Second Session of the League's General Council on 27 March 1922.

Your Society can rightly be proud of its achievements. Yet we know that its future goals are even more ambitious.

I am particularly happy that my presence here with you today, on this felicitous occasion, enables me to bear witness to the close ties which have been established between your Society and the ICRC, particularly in recent years, and to mention a few milestones in our fruitful co-operation.

One of the first was probably our collaboration in 1972 which, with your Society's dedication and the medicaments supplied by

our institution, made it possible to provide assistance to people wounded in the civil war in Nicaragua. In 1979, when the deterioration of the situation in Nicaragua made it necessary to set up and run an ICRC operational base at San José, in Costa Rica, your Society's full support was indispensable to the success of the operation.

A little later, in 1982, when the ICRC approached the Costa Rican government with a view to opening its delegation in San José, the support of your Society and of its President, Don Miguel Carmona Jiménez, was decisive.

Finally, in 1984, our joint co-ordination programme to develop the operational capacity of eight Red Cross branches situated along the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua further strengthened our co-operation.

It is necessary to call to mind your Society's noble activities which, through its 90 branches, extend over the entire territory of Costa Rica: running the blood bank, providing the country's most efficient ambulance service, not to mention the brigades of voluntary doctors and first-aid workers, the training programme, the committee of voluntary ladies and the reserve brigade. In this hospitable country, this land of refuge, so many men and women are conscious of their duty to show solidarity that your National Society can look forward with assurance to its second century of activity.

Confident of this, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, my colleagues and I express to you today our best wishes for the future. May the Costa Rica Red Cross, through its relief work on behalf of those who suffer, continue to be a powerful factor for peace among men and among nations.
