



THE STORY OF AN IDEA



JUNE 1859, SOMEWHERE IN NORTHERN ITALY: A SWISS BUSINESSMAN, HENRY DUNANT, IS ON HIS WAY TO MEET THE FRENCH EMPEROR NAPOLEON III, WHO IS MAKING WAR IN THE REGION. THE GENTLEMAN FROM GENEVA WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS BUSINESS WITH THE MONARCH.

THE ROAD IS LONG AND DIFFICULT. RIVERS HAVE TO BE CROSSED, EVEN WHERE THERE ARE NO BRIDGES.



AND THEN, CLOSE TO THE VILLAGE OF SOLFERINO:



I HOPE THE EMPEROR WILL RECEIVE ME.

GOOD HEAVENS!



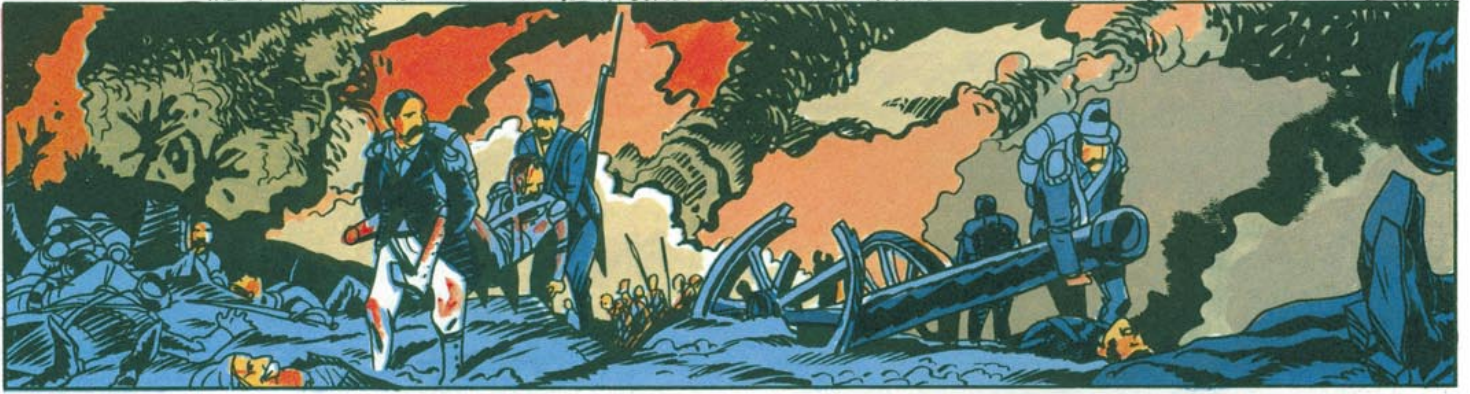
THE MEADOWS HAVE BECOME A BATTLEFIELD. HENRY DUNANT WATCHES HORRIFIED AS THE FRENCH AND AUSTRIAN ARMIES CLASH IN BLOODY SLAUGHTER.



BY EVENING THE PLAIN IS STREWN WITH THOUSANDS OF WOUNDED, DYING AND DEAD SOLDIERS.



THE ARMY MEDICAL CORPS ARE OVERWHELMED AND TOO DISORGANIZED TO BE ABLE TO COPE ...



HENRY DUNANT IS SO HORRIFIED THAT HE FORGETS WHAT HE HAS COME FOR. TURNING THE CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF CASTIGLIONE INTO A MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL, HE BEGINS TO ORGANIZE HELP.



HE DEVOTES HIMSELF TIRELESSLY TO HIS TASK.



... HE EVEN TAKES MESSAGES FOR THE VICTIMS' FAMILIES.



WOMEN WORK HARD AS NURSES, REFUSING TO BE DISCOURAGED OR REPELLED.

BACK IN GENEVA, DUNANT CANNOT FORGET

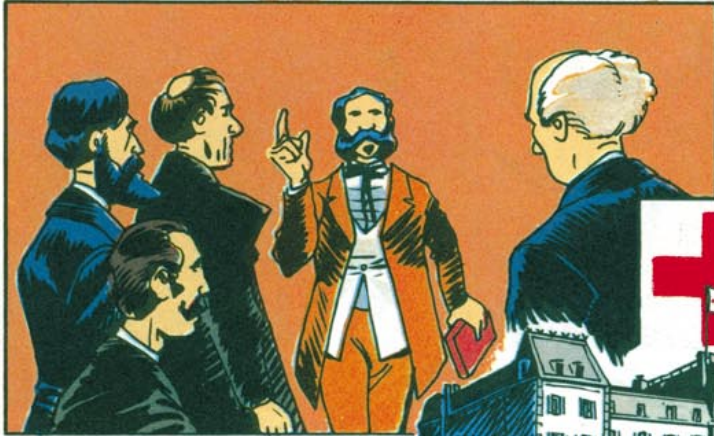


A MEMORY OF SOLFERINO.

HE WRITES A BOOK ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES WHICH ENDS WITH 2 PROPOSALS :
 -TO SET UP IN EVERY COUNTRY VOLUNTEER GROUPS TO TAKE CARE OF CASUALTIES IN WARTIME.
 -TO GET THE STATES TO AGREE TO PROTECT THESE FIRST-AID VOLUNTEERS.
 THE BOOK IS PUBLISHED IN 1862 AND IS A GREAT SUCCESS.
 AN IDEA IS BORN.

IN 1863 THE IDEA BECOMES REALITY. HENRY DUNANT, TOGETHER WITH FOUR OTHER CITIZENS OF GENEVA, CREATES THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AID TO THE WOUNDED, LATER TO BECOME THE ICRC. — THE FIRST NATIONAL SOCIETIES ARE FOUNDED.

IN 1864 A DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE ADOPTS A FIRST GENEVA CONVENTION FOR THE AMELIORATION OF THE CONDITION OF THE WOUNDED IN ARMIES IN THE FIELD.



THE WOUNDED AND SICK IN THE FIELD



TODAY THERE ARE 4 GENEVA CONVENTIONS THEY PROTECT:



THE WOUNDED, SICK AND SHIPWRECKED AT SEA



PRISONERS OF WAR



CIVILIANS IN TIME OF ARMED CONFLICT

AND TWO ADDITIONAL PROTOCOLS WHICH SUPPLEMENT THEM:

AS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC), IT HAS GREATLY DEVELOPED IT STILL SPECIALIZES IN HELPING THE VICTIMS OF ARMED CONFLICT.



BRINGING RELIEF AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CIVILIANS



VISITING PRISONERS OF WAR AND POLITICAL DETAINEES



FORWARDING FAMILY MESSAGES AND REUNITING FAMILIES



TEACHING THE RULES OF THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS AND THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT PRINCIPLES.

TODAY THERE ARE NEARLY 150 NATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES. ALTHOUGH THEY CONTINUE TO WORK IN TIMES OF CONFLICT, THEY ALSO HAVE MANY PEACETIME ACTIVITIES, FOR INSTANCE :

BLOOD DONATION AND DISEASE PREVENTION, ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES AND THE NEEDY, FIRST AID.



SINCE 1919
THEY ALL BELONG TO A FEDERATION:



THE LEAGUE OF REDCROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES.



THE LEAGUE SPECIALIZES IN BRINGING RELIEF TO THE VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS. IT ALSO COORDINATES THE WORK OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.