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Henry Dunant "the Believer"¹

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1. Introduction

When alive, he was first loved and idolized, then despised and vituperated. «Dunant, like a woman, conceives an action, and feels able to suggest it, Moynier for his part applies and implements what the other proposes...» (1).

This unfortunate sentence by Gigon, supported by the lack of "women" in his life, has among other things, been a source of tittle-tattle about his alleged homosexuality.

From this feminine sensibility comes suggestions, and then the strength of the skilful and worldly-wise lawyer (Moynier) makes them happen... All this, as we have recently explained, is a convenient and simplistic historical reading, if not something worse (2).

After the superannuation award of the Nobel prize, things started to change, many began to boast of having known Dunant and of the fact that he had been involved in their organisations. Over time the importance of Dunant increased and, as we have demonstrated in our studies and as claimed at international level, he became a symbol of goodness, a prophet who encouraged humanity to recoil from the horrors of war, a convinced pacifist (3).

There followed insanity (4, 5) and persecution mania until the end of his life. Maybe there was no good reason for this since he had been considered as the father of the International, but do we mean that of Karl Marx? Dunant had certainly made the universal fraternity his warhorse, and yes, he was the

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¹ This is the English version of the Italian article, this issue, p. 777.

founder of the international, but this was a humanitarian international for the fight against pain: "**All brothers**", was the acclamation of the Castiglione delle Stiviere.

On the 28th October 2000, the Masonic province of Florence, in an important conference marking the centenary of the award of the 1st Nobel peace prize to the great Henry, expressed their thoughts in this way: «The year 2001 presents itself as particularly suitable for a collective reflection on peace², the award of the 1st Nobel prize to the Masonic brother Henry Dunant; an extraordinary nineteenth-century personality, anticipator and promoter of international humanitarian law, and allows us to go beyond a celebration of remembrance and invites us to seek a draft of a critical path on the experience of the "Thoughts on peace", both historical and current».

The "waste of humanity", the "bankrupt", the mental patient of Heiden has become a "Masonic brother" (6). Conversely, for certain ultra-left personalities, also within the Red Cross, Dunant was an unscrupulous weapons dealer and it was to sell these to Napoleon III that he went to Solferino.

G. Mützemberg in his book "H. Dunant Le Prédestiné" reports the following writings by the Genevan:

«Vous savez que je déteste l'églises d'état..., mais je n'aime guère davantage les Baptistes, les Méthodistes, les Wesleyens ... Et tous les autres "istes" du monde. Je suis moi-même, et c'est assez... Je désire donc être enterré en terre comme un chien, sans aucune de vos cérémonies que je n'admets pas... J'ai en horreur la Chrétienté, je ne vois pas pourquoi la Chrétienté viendrait se permettre de me réclamer et de se mêler de ce qui ne la regarde pas... Je suis disciple du Christ comme au premier siècle et **rien** de plus» (7).

Now, recently the Historical Office of the Italian Red Cross (IRC) of Tuscany, in cooperation with the Historical Archive of the IRC of Rome, as part of documented research in the Vatican Archives has discovered material of definite importance that we believe will bring a clarifying contribution on this man of faith, Dunant. Here below we report the correspondence of 1896 (8) in the original language (French and Italian) with an English translation to one side, between Henry Dunant, a certain friend of his, the bishop Agostino Egger of San Gallo, and a certain gentleman called Weker, appointed by Cardinal Rampolla, Secretary of State to His Holiness Leo XIII.

² The terrible events of 11 September 2001 had just occurred.

2. 4th April 1896 letter from H. Dunant to a non-specified MonsignorPersonnelle.

4 Avril 1896.

Personal

4 April 1896



Honourable Sir,

Mais Honoré Monsieur,

Grâce à votre précieuse initiative, les Tournaisiens parlent beaucoup de dons, pensions, donations, — auxquels je ne crois pas; mais, puisque vous avez pris un si bienveillant intérêt à ma pauvre personne, oserais-je vous exprimer un vœu que votre position vous permettrait peut-être de réaliser; et qui, à mes yeux, serait plus précieuse que tout ce dont on parle.

Je n'ai jamais rien demandé pour moi-même, ni directement, ni indirectement, à aucune autorité quelconque; mais, dans le cas où il s'agit la chose se présente d'une façon toute différente. Voici ce vœu: le plus petit signe de bienveillance du Souverain Pontife, la plus petite marque de bonté.

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de Sa Sainteté, une ligne de Sa Main auguste et vénérée, ou la moindre chose venant du Saint Père, me comblerait de joie & de reconnaissance. Ce que je désire surtout c'est que le Souverain Pontife soit informé que l'Œuvre que j'ai conçue et qu'il m'a été donné d'accomplir, a été uniquement inspirée par l'Esprit du Christ, par le sentiment le plus vraiment catholique qui existe dans le monde, la pure charité. Trop longtemps et dès 1863 j'ai subi la calomnie que l'Œuvre, — dont la réalisation était ardemment désirée et poursuivie par moi, — était une œuvre de franc-maçonnerie; à ce sujet, on m'a desservi à Rome, en Autriche, &c.; et j'en ai souffert personnellement bien des années.



Thanks to your precious initiative, there is much talk in the press of gifts, pensions, donations, which I do not believe; but, since you have taken such a benevolent interest in my humble person, I would dare to express to you a wish, that your position may allow you to fulfil, which in my eyes would be the most precious of all that is being discussed.

I have never asked anything for myself either directly, or indirectly, of any authority; but in this case, the matter is a completely different thing entirely. Here is the wish: the smallest sign of benevolence by the Supreme Pontiff, the smallest sign of

kindness by His Holiness, a stroke of his august and venerated hand, or the smallest token coming from the Holy Father, would overwhelm me of joy and gratitude.

What I wish above all is that the Supreme Pontiff is informed that the Work that I have undertaken and that I have been able to conclude, was solely inspired by the Spirit of Christ, for the most truly catholic feelings that exist in the World, pure charity.

For too long since 1863, I have borne the slander that this Work, the realization of which I have ardently desired and pursued, was a work of freemasonry; in this way harm has beset me in Rome, Austria, and so on; I have personally suffered from it for many years.



l'adhésion de la Cour Pontificale
à la Convention de Genève en 26 juin 1868.

Si jamais je reçois un tel honneur, vous me feriez un plaisir immense en lui donnant la plus grande publicité possible. Il faut que toutes les cliques huguenotes comprennent enfin que je n'ai rien à voir ni à faire avec elles. — Combien je serais heureux si le pouvoir temporel était rétabli! Je suis un vieil aristocrate, et je l'ai toujours été. C'est mon amour pour le pouvoir temporel qui, de 1862 à 1864 a fait réussir, à Paris, la formation du Comité Central de France que j'ai créé. — C'est aussi, d'autre part, en me plaçant au-dessus de toutes les questions qui divisent l'humanité dans les domaines : national, religieux, social, politique, qu'il m'a été donné

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de réussir dans la création de cette Œuvre à laquelle tous les peuples de la terre se sont ralliés, et qui les concerne tous. — Si, au Souverain Pontife, était déléguée la décision des arbitrages entre toutes les nations de tous les Continents, leur solution dans toutes les questions qui les divisent, la guerre serait abolie de fait.

Veuillez agréer, je vous prie,
Très Honoré Monsieur,
l'assurance de mon
profond respect
J. H. Dunant

The adhesion of Papal Court to the Geneva Convention is in June 1868.

If I were to receive such a honour, You would do me an immense favour giving it the largest possible publicity. It is ultimately necessary that all Huguenot gangs understand that I have nothing to do with them. How lucky I would be if the temporal power were re-established. I am an old aristocrat, I always have been. This my love for the temporal power, from 1862 to 1864, has enabled, in Paris, the formation of the Central Committee of France that I have created. And also, on the other hand, showing myself to be beyond all the issues that divide humanity in national, religious, social, political fields, enabled me

to create this Institution for which all the peoples of Earth have rejoiced, and which is about everybody. If the decisions of arbitration between all the nations of all Continents, and the solutions to all issues that divide them were entrusted to the Supreme Pontiff, war would not be waged.

Most honourable Monsignor,
would you please welcome
the expression of my deepest respect
J. H. Dunant



3. 8th May 1896 letter from Bishop Egger to Cardinal Rampolla

A Son Em. le Cardinal Rampolla
Secrétaire de la Sainteté Léon XIII



Éminence!

Monsieur Jean Henri Dunant
l'auteur de la Convention de Genève, appelé
de la Croix rouge, est depuis une année en
mission à Heiden Canton d'Appenzell. En
s'efforçant pour le bien des peuples il
s'est oublié soi-même, cependant on attend
que l'Impératrice de la Russie lui accorde
une pension annuelle. Mais le pauvre
vieillard désire bien plus d'avoir une petite
marque de bonté de la Sainteté. Son b. l. t.
au nom du Pape lui fera grande joie, et
s'il y avait la signature du saint Père
même, ce serait le comble de son bonheur.
Monsieur Dunant est protestant, mais
un homme de bons sentiments, et estimé



St. G.

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dans toute l'Europe, quoiqu'elle ne soit
pas trop reconnaissante envers lui. Si
vous avez la bonté d'obtenir au bon vieil-
lard cette dernière consolation, j'espère
un bon effet aussi dans l'opinion pub-
lique. Il me paraît convenable, d'ajouter
une lettre de Mr. Dunant à mon ami
à St. Gall, dans laquelle il fait con-
naître ses sentiments.
Avec les sentiments de respect et
vénération, avec lesquels je suis

de Votre Éminence

le bien dévoué serviteur

St. Gall le 8 Mai 1896.

+ Augustin Egger Evêque



To Your Eminence Cardinal Rampolla
Secretary of His Holiness Leo XIII

Eminence!

Sir Giovanni Enrico Dunant, the
author of the Geneva Convention, known
as the Red Cross, has since a year ago been
retired in Heiden, a Canton of Appenzell.
Committing himself with all his strength
for the good of peoples, he has forgotten
about himself, while waiting for the
Empress of Russia to grant him a life
annuity. But the poor old man wishes
much more, to have a small sign of kind-
ness from His Holiness. A card in the
name of the Pope would give him great
joy, and if it has the signature of the Holy
Father himself, he would be at the height
of his happiness.

Sir Dunant is protestant, but he is a
good-natured man, and appreciated all

over Europe, although it has not shown
much gratitude to him. If you could be so
kind as to obtain for the good old man this
last consolation, I hope also for a good
effect on public opinion. It seems appro-
priate to enclose a letter from Sir Dunant
to a friend in San Gallo, in which he has
made known his feelings.

Please accept my feelings of respect
and veneration with which I am

for Your Eminence
the very devout servant

San Gallo, 8th May 1896

+ Bishop Agostino Egger

4. 21st May 1896 letter from Weker to Bishop Égger

Mgr. Agostino Eggen
 Vescom di
 Sargallo
 Svizzera
 21 Maggio 1896

Monsignor Agostino Égger
Bishop of
San Gallo
(Switzerland)

21st May 1896

The particular recommendation of Your Excellency and Right Reverend Lordship in his letter of the 8th of this month accompanied by the expression of the wishes of Signor Giovanni Enrico Dunant has induced His Holiness to satisfy that wish.

The August Pontiff has thus agreed to append a word and his signature on a portrait that with today's mail I have sent to Your Lordship's address. Would you take the pleasure of delivering it to the aforesaid Sir Dunant with some appropriate word that expresses the benevolence of the Holy Father for the work to which,

with much zeal, the meritorious author of the Geneva Convention has been devoting himself for many years.

With the utmost distinct sense of
esteem I remain

Yours Lordship Weker

La particolare raccoman-
dazione con cui V. S. Ill.ma
e R.ma nella sua lettera
del 1.° corrente accompagnava
l'espressione del desiderio del
signor Giovanni Curcio
Guinant ha indotto San-
tucci a soddisfare questo
desiderio. L'augusto Pontefice
vi s'è quindi degnato di
apporre un motto e la pro-
pria firma in una sua ri-
posta ^{che} ~~che~~ col contem-
poraneo corso di posta a far-
ci spedire all'indirizzo della
V. S. Voglia Ella darci la
piacevole cura di rimetter-
lo al predetto signor Gu-
inant con qualche offer-
tina per la quale si esprime
la benevolenza del Santo
Padre per l'opera a cui

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con tanto gel. si desidera da
molti anni il benevento
attore della Convegna
di Giarrai
Con anni della più
distinta, ritorna gode intanto
raffrontare
Di V. V. W. W.

5. 25th May 1896 letter from H. Dunant to Bishop Égger

Monsieur !

*qu'il plaise à Votre Grandeur
de daigner agréer l'humble hommage
de la reconnaissance dont je suis pénétré
pour l'honneur que Votre Grandeur a bien*

*A Sa Grandeur
Monsieur Augustin Egger,
Evêque de Saint Gall, 210
Saint Gall.*

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*voulu me faire, par la lettre en date du
24 mai, dont Votre Grandeur m'a honoré,
en me transmettant la belle photographie
du Saint-Père, qui m'a été destinée
par Sa Sainteté.*

*Ce témoignage auguste
de faveur apostolique, cette marque
insigne de bienveillance pontificale,
que j'apprécie et vénère plus que toute
autre chose au monde, remplit mon
cœur d'une joie profonde.*

*S'il daignait plaire à
Votre Grandeur de faire déposer
aux pieds du Souverain Pontife
l'humble hommage de la profonde*



To His Excellency
Monsignor Agostino Egger
Bishop of San Gallo

San Gallo

Monsignor!

Would Your Excellency gracefully
accept the humble compliments and grati-
tude with which I am overwhelmed for
the honour that Your Excellency has

benevolently bestowed with the letter
dated 24th May, as Your Excellency has
honoured me by forwarding me the beau-
tiful photograph of the Holy Father,
which was intended to me by His Holi-
ness.

This august witness of apostolic
favour, this great sign of pontifical benev-
olence, which I value and venerate more
than all the other things in this world, fills
me with deep joy.

If your Excellency would be so kind as
to lay down at the feet of the Sovereign
Pontiff my humble compliments and

*gratitude dont je suis pénétré pour
une telle grâce, pour une faveur aussi
rare, une bénédiction aussi précieuse,
ma reconnaissance serait bien grande.*

*Il en est de même au sujet
de Son Eminence le Cardinal Rampolla
Secrétaire d'Etat. Plaise à Votre Grandeur
de remercier Son Eminence de son intérêt
bienveillant, qui me touche profondément.*



*Daignez agréer,
Monsieur,*

*l'expression de la vive gratitude &
de la profonde vénération,
avec lesquelles,*

*Je suis,
de Votre Grandeur,
le très humble, très obéissant, très dévoué et
bien respectueux.*

J.H. Dunant

Heiden, 25 mai 1896.

6. 30th May 1896 letter from Bishop Égger to the Cardinal Rampolla



*A Son Honr. le Cardinal Rampolla,
Secrétaire d'Etat de Sa Sainteté Leon XIII.*



Eminence!

La grande bienveillance de Sa Sainteté envers Monsieur J.H. Dunant a rempli celui-ci d'une joie profonde et a fait une bonne impression sur le public. Mr Dunant mentionne dans la lettre qu'il jointe, quelles sont ses sentiments de reconnaissance envers le Saint Père et Votre Eminence. Je vous prie de les présenter à Sa Sainteté avec mes vifs remerciements.

En vous remerciant de votre bonté je vous prie d'agréer les sentiments de respect et vénération, avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être

de Votre Eminence

le très dévoué serviteur



St. Gall, le 30 Mai, 1896.

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+ Augustin Egger Evêque

deepest gratitude with which I am overwhelmed for such a boon, for such a rare favour, such a precious blessing, my gratitude would be great indeed.

At the same time I am also a subject of His Eminence, Bishop Rampolla, Secretary of State. Would Your Excellency please also thank His Eminence for his benevolent interest, which deeply touches me?

Please would Monsignor accept the expression of my keen gratitude and deep veneration, with which I remain a very humble, observant and respectful servant of Your Excellency.

J.H. Dunant

Heiden, 25 May 1896

To His Excellency the Cardinal Rampolla Secretary of State of His Holiness Leo XIII

Eminence!

The great benevolence of His Holiness towards Sir J.H. Dunant has filled him with a deep joy and has made a good impression on the public. Sir Dunant shows in the letter here enclosed, his feelings of gratitude towards His Holiness and Your Eminence. Please present them to His Holiness with my keen thanks.

In thanking you for your kindness, please accept my feelings of respect and veneration, with which I have the honour of being

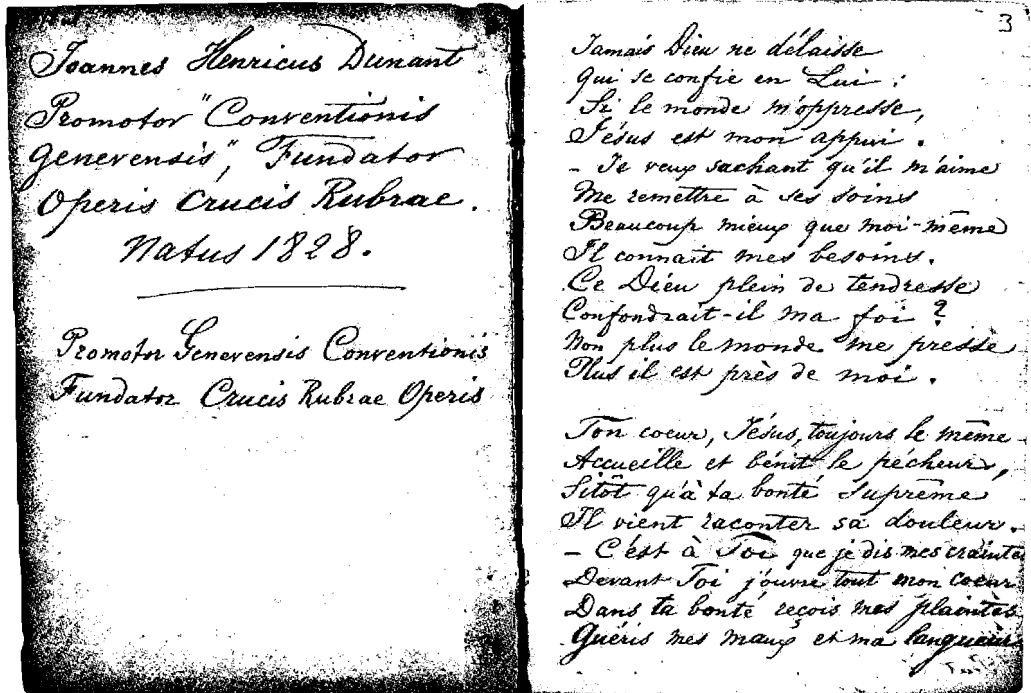
the very devoted servant
of Your Eminence

San Gallo, 30th May 1896

+Bishop Agostino Egger

7. Conclusion

To conclude, in manuscript n° 2117 (9) of "Memories" (notebooks lying at the Public Library of the University of Geneva, microfilms of which are now in the possession of the Historic Office of IRC of Tuscany) the written prayers in rhyme by Dunant have been discovered, we report an example.



God never abandons who trusts Him.
 If the world oppresses me, Jesus is my support.
 I want to know that he loves me
 to consign myself to his care.
 He knows my needs better than I do.
 This God full of tenderness
 Could he ever betray my faith?
 the world doesn't persecute me anymore
 the closer He is to me.
 Your heart, Jesus, always in any case blesses and
 always welcomes the sinner so that he
 tells his sorrow to Your supreme goodness.
 It is to you that I confide my fears

In front of You I open all my heart.
In Your goodness you receive my moans
cure my evils and my weakness.

In conclusion we cannot but accept the hypothesis of a great figure not attributable to any "istes", as he says, but certainly a disciple of Christ, inspired by a "divine breath", as he witnesses, at the moment of the creation of his Institution, the Red Cross. (10)

Acknowledgments

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