

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

THE RED CROSS AND THE ARMY

The co-operation which has always existed between the army medical services and the Red Cross is common knowledge. In a speech in Paris during the centenary celebrations of the French Red Cross, Inspector-General Dr. Debenedetti, Director of Army Medical Services and Vice-President of the French Red Cross, analysed the historical evolution which has been so important for both organizations.

It is still one of the essential tasks of the Red Cross to serve as an auxiliary to the army medical services and we believe readers will be interested in the following passages of Dr. Debenedetti's exposition in which he stresses the importance of that mission. He naturally makes reference to his own country, but the examples he quotes have their counterparts elsewhere.

... How great has been the change in the course of a hundred years. But such evolution is not abnormal. The Red Cross has always done, and still does, pioneer work. When its experiments have been successful, then the State takes over. The Red Cross discreetly withdraws, satisfied that it has been the spearhead of progress, acting on the impetus of its charitable calling. Thus the army medical service, with funds appropriated from the national budget, is now able to run the contingency hospitals and, upon mobilization, no longer needs the emergency hospitals of the Red Cross as it did in 1870 and 1914.

Does this mean the army no longer needs the Red Cross ? By no means ! The Red Cross is still the army's most valuable source of nurses in emergency ... and here I should explain the assistance which the Red Cross can give to the army and its medical service.

In the first place the Junior Red Cross can render signal service both to the army and the nation. By giving to adolescents of both sexes instruction in hygiene and nursing, it stimulates in young

people the will to serve, in keeping with the noble duty of the Red Cross. Those who imbibe at the Red Cross spring of altruism will certainly make excellent soldiers when they reach the age for conscription.

However, it is on first-aid development that more attention should be concentrated. The French Red Cross has the honour to be in the lead of a movement which is gathering strength. War-time events, particularly air raids on towns, revealed the merit of the men and women of all ages and from all walks of life who, immediately they were called upon, rushed to the scene of destruction, saving lives at the risk of their own. After the war first-aid services developed continuously. Whenever natural disasters have occurred, first-aid has proved its indisputable usefulness.

In order for first-aiders to carry out their activities efficiently, they must be trained in theory and practice. The training given by Red Cross instructors is highly satisfactory. How many hours of their time do these instructors and their pupils give up to first-aid activities! How enthusiastically do they take part in the Red Cross first-aid team conventions!

So successful has this Red Cross activity been that the army decided to follow the example. For several years first-aid has been an integral part of the army's compulsory recruit courses. In modern war, where dispersal of troops is customary, every soldier should know how to apply to himself or a wounded comrade the elementary principles of first-aid until the army medical service takes over. Some professionals, like the police and fire brigades, are given more thorough training, to which the Red Cross has greatly contributed.

Red Cross first-aiders when called up for military service are immediately appointed as instructors. The army medical service finds it a considerable advantage to have a source of fully trained male nurses. The recruiting branches—although there is no rule to this effect—readily assign qualified first-aiders to the medical service.

Honour, therefore, to the French Red Cross for having shown the army the usefulness of teaching first-aid. The army and the army medical service are grateful and trust to the Red Cross to continue performing such a useful mission.

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At this point let us consider the part played by the female personnel of the Red Cross in the event of mobilization. First there are the women ambulance drivers. Their job requires many attributes : courage, endurance, nursing ability, a sound experience in driving. In time of war they can replace male drivers who are required in motorized or armoured divisions. Consequently, the army attaches a great deal of importance to the training of these women ambulance drivers and it therefore appreciates this Red Cross activity and hopes that the dynamic leaders responsible for training in this field will continue to be as successful as in the past.

A new venture by the Red Cross is the flying nurses service, the *infirmières pilotes secouristes de l'air* (I.P.S.A.). In the course of recent campaigns these nurses have won a place of honour. Evacuation in any case is no mere transport of people and by air even less so. It is a technical feat involving the responsibility of doctors and their assistants. Flying doctors, it is true, are familiar with the problems of reviving casualties, particularly those of artificial respiration. The flying nurses who accompany them and who are in the main recruited from the members of the I.P.S.A. are able, thanks to their technical skill, humanity, courage and endurance, to co-operate in a manner which is highly appreciated. They are admired by patients and crews alike. In any type of aircraft, in all weathers, sometimes landing by helicopter or dropping by parachute, they go wherever they are needed. The army knows the devotion and enthusiasm of these brave and generous women and knows too that it can rely on the Red Cross I.P.S.A. in time of war or emergency.

In these days when secretaries are indispensable to doctors, the army medical service units must have medical secretaries. The Red Cross schools turn out excellent ones whose services would be valuable in the event of mobilization.

Social workers, although they do not come within the orbit of the army medical service are often in touch with this branch, especially in hospitals where their presence is greatly appreciated. It is the army social service which directs their activities. The Red Cross, whose schools not only give professional training but also instil its ideal and spirit into their pupils, can make social assistants available to the army in time of war. They would have the important

job of contributing, as a link between servicemen and their families, to maintaining army morale, that pre-requisite to victory. There is no need, therefore, to dwell at greater length on the service which would be performed by the Red Cross in recruiting volunteers among social workers.

For the nurse I have the most sincere admiration. How great is her mission and devotion! Ever present, gentle and patient, cheerful and calm as she lavishes care on the sick and injured, attending to their wants, no matter how tedious, comforting them in mind and body, watching over their nourishment and their diets, reassuring worried families, giving courage to the dying, consoling relatives, often telling white lies. What a noble vocation is this woman's preserve, for no matter how compassionate a man may be, he can never have her maternal word and gesture for the suffering. Alas, it is a vocation for which fewer and fewer heed the call. As if this profession were beyond their moral and physical strength, many nurses turn towards the more technical and less toilsome special branches. Caveant consules ... the day will come when it will be even more difficult to recruit nurses, just as doctors of the type who, in former days, for generation after generation, were family counsellors and a credit to the medical profession, are becoming more and more scarce.

The problem created by the shortage of nurses is one which affects the whole world. No doubt the solution is to be found in an improvement of their social and material conditions. Their rôle is truly indispensable, for progress in diagnosis and treatment demands increased technical skill and continuous vigilance. Life for nurses has been revolutionized. Perhaps it is this which explains the difficulty of recruiting them and of retaining their services for such a trying task.

We are indebted to the Red Cross for inculcating the vocational ideal in the future nurses training in its schools, engendering the devotion and enthusiasm which are characteristic of the Red Cross. The army benefits and is pleased to do so. Many of the civilian nurses working in military hospitals as well as the nurses of military status are former pupils of the Red Cross. This is something for which the army medical service is beholden.

After this general survey, we come to the main point.

MISCELLANEOUS

In time of war, the army medical service has its own nursing personnel who form, as it were, an "operational nucleus". Its strength is insufficient, however, to cope with all the army's requirements throughout the country. It is therefore essential to have recourse to a nursing reserve, just as doctor reservists are called up to reinforce the standing army medical corps. Automatically, the army medical service turns to the Red Cross, whose initial function was exclusively that of an auxiliary to the service. In spite of appeals from the Red Cross national, regional and local presidents, the number of recruits is not more than a fifth of the army medical service's requirements in the event of mobilization ...

At present, State registered nurses graduating from Red Cross schools have a wide choice of possibilities open to them. Most of them are attracted to positions within the purview of the Ministry of Health or the army. Others get married, and their responsibilities as housekeepers or mothers discourage them from undertaking any obligations in time of peace in the event of war.

And yet our wounded and sick will more than ever have need of nursing care ... and the army medical service always displays extreme comprehension for present-day problems.

For instance, nurses who enlist would receive the same pay as their colleagues making their career in the army, just as reservist officers receive the pay appropriate to their rank. They are given the most sound and legitimate guarantees, in particular those provided for in the military pensions fund regulations. In the same way as conscripts, they would be assured of their former jobs being available after hostilities. In any case, while there is peace, any undertaking may be cancelled on request. No more flexible contract could be imagined.

Nursing auxiliaries with a minor diploma—similar to the Red Cross lower certificate—may also enlist for the duration of a war.

In addition, Red Cross nurses and nursing auxiliaries would, as far as possible, of course, be grouped into teams maintaining contact with the Red Cross.

The army medical service is undoubtedly grateful to the Red Cross for the fine teaching in its nursing schools and in its excellent school for supervisory nursing staff, thanks to which the army has

at any time a reserve of nurses and nursing advisers imbued with the noble Red Cross ideal. In any case, it earnestly requests the Red Cross to appeal for volunteers to undertake to enlist in the event of war, with a hint that the ordinance of January 7, 1959, gives powers to draft into national defence persons whose services are deemed essential.

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It is hardly necessary, when the Red Cross is celebrating its centenary, to recall that its first mission, which Henry Dunant himself defined, was to act as an auxiliary to the army medical service.

The army medical service, for its part, has never failed to give the Red Cross the best help it could. What medical officer at some time in his career has not taught for the Red Cross or sat on examination boards, apart from the material assistance of all sorts which the army medical service has given.

The army medical service looks upon the Red Cross as its sister ; a sister to whom it is inseverably linked by faithful affection, strengthened by a common cause and by the trials which they have faced together.