

# IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

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## Colombia

When the VIIIth Inter-American Red Cross Conference met in Bogota, the Colombian Red Cross gave an account of its many activities in its review (1966, No. 59). It can thus be seen to what extent the Red Cross is present in many various fields. We now give some extracts from this number as proof:

The principal aid post is to be found at the Society's headquarters in Bogota. Doctors, nurses and assistant nurses are on permanent duty giving their services free, whilst ambulances are available to transport the sick and wounded who cannot be treated on the spot to the hospital. Between January and September 1966, 30,182 persons were moved in this way.

In 1966 the ambulance service of the Colombian Red Cross acquired new units, which, apart from transporting the sick and wounded, provide temporary first-aid posts set up by the Red Cross at public gatherings. In the same period they dealt with 2,684 cases.

In order to make it easier for people to obtain medicines in emergency at all times, the Red Cross has instituted a pharmaceutical service which dispenses medicines at cost price on presentation of a prescription.

It works in actively with the authorities to prevent and stamp out epidemics, either through its permanent aid post, or by inspections and collective vaccinations in factories and public or private establishments. Available to all, this post is also visited by those wishing to be issued with an international vaccination certificate entitling them to go abroad and it has recently obtained, thanks to the national health services, vaccines against measles and poliomyelitis, to be given to them free of charge. Between

January and September 1966, 18,132 anti-smallpox and 2,276 other various vaccinations were made.

“ National Aid ” is one of the services of the Colombian Red Cross which plays a big rôle in giving assistance. At the request of the armed forces, it has on several occasions given nursing treatment and operated a relief and vaccination service. During the same period in 1966, it has also given valuable help in fires, storms, floods, earthquakes, etc. The total amount of relief distributed (clothing, food, bedding according to climate, cooking utensils) has reached a figure of 210,293 pesos. Its provincial branches also carry out useful and effective work. Their warehouses are stocked and financed by the National Red Cross and the establishing of a new branch at Bucaramanga in eastern Colombia is being considered. This distribution of warehouses makes it possible to bring aid and assistance more rapidly to the victims of disasters; it also demands the training of volunteers who can organize and distribute relief in the different regions, in conformity with directives drawn up by the national directing staff.

As regards the training of volunteers, various courses in home care, first-aid and water rescue are given to workers, women voluntary assistants, military personnel, firemen, scouts, secondary school teachers, traffic police, schoolchildren, students, instructors, office workers and others. In addition, the Society has this year started the training of first-aiders. Volunteers receive theoretical and practical training in first-aid, Enrolment in these courses continues to increase.

Two courses lasting about three months have been organized in hospitals and at Red Cross headquarters. Their purpose is to train women voluntary aids, whose qualifications correspond to those of nursing assistants. Those attending the courses then become women Red Cross volunteers and as such render valuable service in the Society's centres and in hospital and social welfare establishments. Mention should also be made of the water safety courses which aim at training life-savers and instructors.

The Red Cross has installed a wireless station (HK3-SN). This is affiliated to the Colombian League of Amateur Radio Operators and, through the training of voluntary personnel, ensures emergency wireless links in the event of disaster. Amongst other things it has

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broadcast programmes on the Red Cross and first-aid and its transmissions result in maintaining public interest in the institution and its tasks.

The efforts of the women volunteers also deserve mention. They, in fact, devote part of their time in making clothes to be distributed free to the sick in welfare establishments. The school, founded in 1938, has without interruption trained nurses whose qualifications reach the official professional standard. Once they obtain a diploma they work in the Red Cross or State services or else in various governmental or private assistance and aid institutions in different parts of the country.

### Germany

#### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The review of the German Red Cross in the Democratic Republic of Germany published in a recent number (Dresden 1967, No. 3) some interesting information on that Society's relief work on the international level.

This shows its activities to have consisted in giving aid to the victims of conflicts and also in helping towards the development of newly formed Red Cross Societies. In 1966, nineteen despatches of relief supplies were made to a total value of about MDN 1,700,000 for a dozen Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies. The Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam received medicines, bandaging material, clothing, surgical instruments, blankets and bedding amounting to approximately MDN 260,000 and 1700 persons donated their blood free for victims in that country.

It was possible for the first time to send relief consisting of food and tonics (1,108,089 kgs) for famine areas in India. The Society took part for the second time to a larger extent in 1966 in the League's Development Programme by making available anatomy models, instruction charts and a set of slides of the German Museum of Hygiene, as well as blankets, bedding, hand

and bath towels to a value of MDN 100,000. These were distributed amongst eighteen Red Cross Societies, chiefly of new origin.

Relief sent to various parts of the world is marked on a map. Countries receiving aid were shown to be Algeria, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mali, Mongolian People's Republic, Pakistan, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In the framework of the Development Programme consignments were also sent to the following countries: Burma, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Singapore, Thailand, Venezuela and Zambia.

## Haiti

*As the International Review mentioned in its last number, Mr. Serge Nessi, ICRC delegate, recently visited Port-au-Prince. He has reported on the reconstitution of that country's National Society. The following is extracted from his report.*

On November 30, 1966, Dr. Victor Laroche was appointed President of the Haiti Red Cross. On assuming office the following month he formed new Executive and Central Committees, taking care to appeal to persons representing a wide variety of interests and anxious to work effectively for the reorganization and development of the Haiti Red Cross. These two committees, with Dr. Laroche as President, immediately set to work and drew up a plan of action for 1967 entitled "Project of a development programme". This plan, predominantly of a medico-social character includes a vaccination campaign, more especially against tetanus, diphtheria, typhoid and whooping cough, participation in the struggle against malnutrition, tuberculosis and diarrhoea, and the health education of the population. It is also proposed to train a certain number of first-aiders and, in a more general manner, to interest the young in questions of hygiene and first-aid. Public

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health education and the training of the young will be given publicity in newspapers, broadcasts, television programmes and by the distribution of various pamphlets.

Aware of their responsibilities and faithful to the principles of the Red Cross, the new leaders of the Haiti Red Cross have decided to make of their Society an institution capable of coming to the aid of the community and, as far as this is possible, to watch over the well-being of the entire population of Haiti.

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### Hungary

Desiring to make a contribution to the dissemination in Hungary of knowledge on the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the National Red Cross some time ago published in its monthly review a series of articles by Mr. Imre Pásztor. The first of these dealt with the origin and evolution of the Conventions from 1864 to 1929. The author then explained how, even before the Second World War, the need to bring these Conventions up to date had been felt and how the revised Conventions were signed in Geneva in 1949.

The author's further articles gave a brief analysis of each of the Conventions, describing their scope, their importance and also their shortcomings, particularly in the field of protection for civilians. He stressed the need for unremitting efforts to safeguard peace, to ensure respect for and wider application of the Conventions.

His concluding article emphasized the undeniable importance of the Geneva Conventions. In the absence of a utopian world without weapons, these Conventions will help to protect the victims of war and will curb violations of humanitarian regulations. "That is why", says the writer, "the universal Red Cross movement has been of immense service by instigating the Conventions which have been signed by a great many States and are today an integral part of international law."

## Nicaragua

We have already mentioned that a delegate of the ICRC, Mr. P. Jequier, has recently undertaken a mission to Managua. To this, which only concerned International Committee work, we would add how effective and prompt is the Nicaraguan Red Cross in times of civil disorders.

When serious troubles broke out in Managua, the National Society's first-aiders and ambulances immediately collected the wounded from the streets and, as a result of representations made by the President of the Red Cross, a truce was concluded.

Shortly after Mr. Jequier had visited persons detained in two prisons following on the events, the doctor of the Nicaraguan Red Cross was able to visit them, give them treatment and distribute medicines. At a meeting of the executive committee the ICRC representative explained the tasks devolving on the Geneva institution. From reports submitted by leading members of the National Society he could see its effectiveness at a moment when the country was passing through a difficult period and whose work was widely publicized in the press and on the radio and television networks.

Mention should be made *inter alia* of first-aid activities and of the fact that at week-ends voluntary first-aiders carrying stretchers and driving ambulances take over the transport of the sick and wounded. The Red Cross dispensary in Managua is open every morning where several doctors are in permanent attendance. This centre gives aid which is much appreciated by the population and especially by mothers arriving with their children for maternity and infant care consultations.

We would also mention that the Grey Ladies, committees of whom also exist in other Latin American countries, visit the sick in the general hospital and that a Junior Section actively helps in Red Cross work.