

Rumania

The Red Cross of the Rumanian Socialist Republic has kindly sent us the following article on some aspects of its activity, written by the editor of Sănătatea, the National Society's review.

The Rumanian Red Cross is a Society with old traditions. Rumania in fact acceded to the "Geneva Convention for the amelioration of the condition of the wounded in armies in the field" more than ninety-three years ago. Since then the Red Cross, working for humanity, has acquired wide sympathy in Rumania as well as considerable prestige beyond its frontiers.

Since the Second World War its work has been increasingly effective. It helps the social and medical State organizations in the relentless struggle against sickness, to reduce infant mortality and generally speaking for the health and happiness of the population.

In order to mark its appreciation of the Society's efforts, the Rumanian Government decreed a "Red Cross Week". This first took place in 1957 and since then it has been an annual event each September throughout the country. In 1967 it took place from September 17 to 23. It started with a broadcast and televised address by Mr. Anton Moisescu, President of the National Red Cross Council. The press published articles by Red Cross personalities and all newspapers gave accounts of the opening ceremony and the events of the National Society's Week.

For the Red Cross volunteers, this occasion not only represents a means of making known the effectiveness of their action within the medico-health services. Thanks to them, therefore, many people attended lectures on medical education given by doctors in towns and villages. There was in fact no urban or rural community in which these did not take place. Members of permanent medical units, medical teams and first-aid posts, whose work is much appreciated by the population, displayed their knowledge and ability at competitions called "The skilful medicals".

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Themes having been chosen by a jury, competitors had to resolve, in front of the public, problems in emergency relief and answer questions connected with hygiene and first-aid. They also took part in other tests such as "the mother knows—the child is the gainer".

These contests had wide repercussions and there is an increasing number of those joining medical formations.

Voluntary Red Cross workers play an important rôle in the recruitment of new blood donors and the heads of the medico-health services give them special consideration. By personal example and their sustained efforts they induce many to become donors. Thus in Red Cross Week they organized, as well as lectures and film showings produced by the Red Cross, moving meetings between blood donors and beneficiaries. This method of publicity showed itself to be most effective whose results surpassed expectations. In 1967, during the Week alone, the number of donors increased by several thousands.

Mention should also be made of voluntary Red Cross workers' participation in public hygiene and cleanliness in undertakings in towns and villages. In recognition, 162 of these received the Society's highest distinction, the badge "Outstanding in Red Cross work".

Red Cross Week is not only a way of affirming and increasing the National Society's efforts, but also a source of revenue. The decree mentioned above stipulates that, during that period a tax for the benefit of the Red Cross be imposed on artistic presentations and sporting events. The amount thus collected, about one million lei, is used to intensify publicity methods (films, posters, pamphlets, etc.).

Several months have passed since Red Cross Week in the Socialist Republic of Rumania, but, for me, the image of the centres I visited is still most vivid. Red Cross volunteers with their armlets engage the population to participate in preventive work, young girls stay beside victims in need of first-aid, whilst others give their assistance to the benefit of everybody's health.

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Recalling these facts, I again remark that at the Red Cross can be found all together, mothers of families, teachers, peasants, intellectuals, workmen and engineers.

Under its flag, bearing the motto " Inter Arma Caritas ", the Red Cross is inspired by several sentiments: humanity, friendship, love amongst men.

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The ICRC has recently received an interesting and well illustrated booklet¹, published in Moscow for the Centenary of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR in 1967². It first gives an account of the origin of the Red Cross in Russia, which at the beginning was presided over by the surgeon Nikolai Porogov. The various chapters: " Some History ", " Soviet Red Cross ", " Concern for the People ", " Visiting Nurses Bureaux " " Blood Donors ", " For Peace and Mutual Assistance ", recount the history and consistent development of our movement.

" One of the main features of the Soviet health service is its mass character, the fact of public participation in prophylactic and hygiene measures. The Red Cross, with long experience of assisting official health service institutions, now has more than 423 basic organizations, with over 67 million members. This makes it one of the biggest mass organizations in the country.

¹ " A Century in the Service of Man ", by Zoya Mayorova and Lilia Tcherkasskaya.

² See *International Review*, July 1967.