

The South African Red Cross endeavours to make the principles of international humanitarian law known to the general public. For that purpose it has published articles in the press and broadcast on the subject by radio and television.

This summary does no more than mention the action taken, but all who work for the dissemination of knowledge of humanitarian law will appreciate the sum of thought, work and dedication necessary to make a success of such undertakings.

MUSEUM OF THE SOVIET RED CROSS

In November 1979, Mr. V. A. Baltiyski, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, opened the Soviet Red Cross Museum in Moscow. Those present included the participants in the fifth plenary session of the Alliance's Executive Committee, veterans and staff of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the representatives of various organizations and associations.

Five years earlier, the *Soviet Red Cross Review* had asked readers to send in any objects and documents which could be used to illustrate the history of the Red Cross in the USSR. There was an extraordinarily big response to the appeal, and today the museum has a large collection of manuscripts and printed material, albums, medals and various objects dating from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, many of which are unique. The USSR Defence Ministry's museum of military medicine gave models of ambulance wagons, medical vehicles and aircraft of the type used during the First World War.

Each of the eight rooms of the museum is arranged like the interior of a field dispensary. Visitors moving through the various rooms may follow the development of the Red Cross in the USSR from the time it was founded under the Tsarist régime until today, and may learn all about its present organization and activities.

In the course of the one hundred and thirteen years of its existence, the Red Cross Society has become one of the most important institutions in the USSR. Very soon after coming to power, Lenin said: "We need a Red Cross which works sincerely and loyally for the State, the workers

and the peasants" and, in 1918, he signed in succession nine decrees which defined the essential tasks to be performed by the Society in the USSR. These decrees are exhibited in one of the museum's rooms, together with the portraits of eminent Red Cross workers at the time when the Society was reorganized after the establishment of the Soviet State. A section is given over, also, to its activities during the civil war after 1917 and to the tremendous work it did to counter the havoc caused by the disastrous drought in 1921.

The Alliance is a powerful auxiliary organization of the medical services. In one of the rooms one can see how medical assistants were trained 50 or 60 years ago to teach elementary notions of hygiene and health to the country's inhabitants. A special section is devoted to the Red Cross nurses, health instructors and medical units, whose dedication and heroism during the Second World War knew no bounds.

Another part of the museum displays the international activities of the Soviet Red Cross, the aid brought to the victims of disasters or armed conflicts in various countries and the work of Soviet doctors sent on mission abroad.

The medals and insignia of the Alliance and of other National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are displayed in a show-case, together with the presents and mementoes presented to the Soviet Red Cross in recent years.

The Soviet Red Cross Museum is a remarkable achievement, and it will certainly serve to spread knowledge of the Red Cross Principles and to inform visitors on the history and background of the National Society in the Soviet Union. ¹

¹ This article has been adapted from an account written by N. Ternova, of the Executive Committee of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, and which appeared in the January 1980 issue of the *Soviet Red Cross Review*.