

The Indian Red Cross, Mr. Chandrasekhar stated, may be rightly proud of having helped more than a million and a half women and children, sick and disabled, in regions affected by natural disaster during the year under review. More than 10,000 Red Cross distribution centres were organized during the two years of drought and distributed to disaster victims 10,000 tons of powdered milk and other foodstuffs, 50 million vitamin tablets and 250,000 articles of clothing and blankets.

“ We are conscious of the fact ”, he said, “ that we would not have been able to carry through this vast relief operation—much bigger than any project undertaken so far by the Indian Red Cross, or perhaps any sister society—without the most generous support that we received from the League, the ICRC, the government of India and many others from different parts of the world and from within the country.”

The report reviews the work carried out by the Indian Red Cross both nationally and internationally, which included dispatch of relief consignments to victims of conflicts, medico-social services, blood banks, nurse training, organization of family planning centres and the recruiting of more than 375,000 new adherents to the Junior Red Cross. Such were the operations successfully carried out by the National Society in the course of a particularly fruitful year.

Switzerland

The first National Red Cross Societies, including the Swiss Red Cross, were created as a result of Henry Dunant's wish to see civilians taking a voluntary part in caring for wounded and sick soldiers.

This obligation of placing trained, professional nursing personnel at the disposal of the Army Medical Service led the Swiss Red Cross to found in 1899 its own nursing school and to concern itself generally with the *development of treatment of the wounded*. Since

1951, this task, namely “ the professional development of female and male nurses and the supervision of their training in schools recognized by the Swiss Red Cross ” devolves upon it by Federal decree and its activity since then, connected with the medical and auxiliary professions, care of the chronic sick, ergotherapy, training of laboratory assistants, has been ever more widely extended.

In view of the increased dangers to which the civilian population would be subjected in a total war, the Red Cross can no longer restrict itself to supporting the Army Medical Service. It must also foresee how it can best *bring aid to the civilian victims* of an eventual conflict. This necessitated co-operating with the Federal Office of Civil Defence and this new and additional task figures in the revised statutes of the Swiss Red Cross of 1963. The public has in particular to be informed of possible dangers and measures to be taken as protection against them, to have personnel trained for civil defence needs and for civilian hospitals and to constitute sufficient reserves of equipment. To ensure the training of large numbers of nursing reinforcements (Samaritans, first-aiders, Red Cross auxiliary hospital nurses) the Swiss Red Cross also counts on the *assistance of its auxiliary institutions*. The large network of Samaritan sections of the *Alliance suisse des Samaritains*, the most important auxiliary institution of the Swiss Red Cross spreads out to all regions of the country and the most distant places. The 1250 or so sections of Samaritans in Switzerland today carry out the most valuable work for the people's well-being. However, the threat of a possible war renders it necessary to set up a system of aid in the event of disaster on as wide a base as possible.

With this end in view, the *Alliance suisse des Samaritains* increasingly extends its activity and will also participate in the development of civil defence by training Samaritans and first-aid workers. *First-aid measures* for saving lives can also be taught to adolescents and for this reason courses for young rescuers are regularly organized under the auspices of the Junior Red Cross and the Swiss Rescue Society.

The various Red Cross branches, for their part, organize *home-care courses* and *courses for voluntary auxiliary nurses* thanks to which women and young girls can acquire knowledge making them

capable of assisting professional nurses by carrying out certain simple duties at the bedside of the sick in hospital.

What is the end of all these efforts? It is that in each family there would be at least one person able to give elementary treatment to a sick or wounded person. This is advisable and necessary in time of peace when one considers our over-crowded hospitals and the frequency of accidents occurring not only outside but also in the home or else at work. In time of war, it is evident that the situation will be still more precarious. Apart from the fact that there would be a shortage of doctors, nurses, hospital beds, the morale of the population will be improved by knowing that many private individuals are prepared to face emergency situations and know at least what essential measures should be taken at the outset.

Besides treatment to be given to the wounded and sick, there is also assistance to *the aged and handicapped* whom the effects of indiscriminate warfare will not spare either. Arrangements must also be made to aid those people if necessary. In this connection, calls may be made upon voluntary Red Cross male and female assistants who at present are already accustomed, within the branches, to deal with aged and handicapped persons and could render valuable services in aid centres for the homeless and refugee camps.

As regards *assistance to the homeless*, it should be pointed out that in certain places those in charge of local civil defence organizations and Red Cross branches have combined to instal in common an improvised reception centre or a depot for material.

In the event of war or disaster, the *blood transfusion service* will also play a much larger part than in time of peace. The blood transfusion service of the Swiss Red Cross comprises regional centres whose principal task it is to supply preserves of fresh blood to hospitals and to the medical corps and also the Central Laboratory in Berne whose modern installations manufacture blood derivative products and kits. The Swiss Red Cross in addition has specialists available for the working of underground army workshops. It has, moreover, signed a contract with the army concerning the supplying of dried plasma and the blood transfusion service can in addition count on blood donations in military colleges.

Much reliance is placed on the young to publicise first-aid. Adolescents, in fact, learn with pleasure and facility, most of the time they like giving aid and assuming responsibility. Consequently, the Red Cross tries to win over the youth to its cause. In Switzerland, the *Junior Red Cross* has made fresh strides since the Second World War. Its programme of work aims at inculcating in the young the principles which it should follow in adult life; to serve the cause of health and help one's neighbour, to cultivate international friendship and understanding amongst peoples, to encourage the wish to be useful, to learn how to take responsibilities and to show tolerance to others. All these qualities are indeed indispensable for the maintenance of peace in all quarters. The Swiss Red Cross therefore hopes that by giving youth the opportunity of participating in its humanitarian work, to show it at the same time the path it should follow.¹

¹ The above article appeared in the review *La Croix-Rouge suisse*, Berne, 1968, No 1.