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TRAINING OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND ASSISTANCE TO THE WAR-DISABLED

The Statutes of the International Red Cross (Art. VI, 5) lay upon the ICRC the duty of contributing "to the preparation and development of medical personnel and medical equipment, in co-operation with the Red Cross organisations, the medical services of the armed forces and other competent authorities". The main purpose of the Medical Personnel Section of the ICRC is to collect information on the situation of medical personnel in all countries (recruitment, training, organisation and enrolment in the event of conflicts or natural disasters).

Although some countries are very well organised in this connection and make constant efforts to improve their medical equipment and increase the number of professional and auxiliary personnel, the position is different, unfortunately, in many other countries.

The ICRC must therefore help these countries by giving them advice or supplying them with educational and documentary material. This work requires a thorough knowledge of the situation in each country concerned, its political and social structure, habits and customs, in order to give it the benefit of the International Committee's own experience in this field.

During the past year the Medical Personnel Section continued its studies and research in this connection and obtained interesting information through the ICRC delegations abroad and international institutions. It also supplied several National Red Cross Societies with documentary and instructional material.

The Head of the Section (Miss A. Pfirter) also carried out various missions, one of which took her to London (in response to invitations from the British Red Cross Society and the International Council of Nurses), Paris and Bonn. Her discussions with the directorate of the British Red Cross gave her a clear picture of the great effort made in Great Britain in the training of medical personnel (first aid, care of the sick, ambulance work, organisation of mass casualty treatment, etc.). She also visited the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, the Depot and Training Establishment of the Q.A.R.A.N.C., Hindhead, and the Royal

College of Nursing, London ; the interviews mainly concerned the organisation and co-ordination of the armed forces, Civil Defence Service and the Red Cross in the event of a conflict.

The discussions of the representative of the ICRC with members of the Secretariat of the International Council of Nurses concerned the preparation of medical personnel, and especially post-graduate courses for professional nurses to train them for their duties in time of war.

In Paris she had interviews with the heads of the principal sections of the French Red Cross and thus became acquainted with this Society's numerous activities in technical and medico-social fields. The training of professional and auxiliary medical personnel for duties in time of war was also discussed.

In Bonn, Miss Pfirter was received at the General Secretariat of the German Red Cross ; various questions relating to medical personnel and assistance to the war-disabled were discussed. She also saw Frau Generaloberin v. Oertzen, President of the Association of Parent Establishments of the German Red Cross.

In response to an invitation to attend the 14th Meeting of the Nursing Advisory Committee of the League, Miss Pfirter went to Athens in September. She thus had the opportunity of seeing the efforts made in Greece for the training of medical personnel for duties in time of war.

A little later she returned to Great Britain, where she had been invited by the War Office to attend an Army Medical Exercise. Numerous visits were made by matrons, nurses, sister-tutors and heads of nursing schools and student nurses from various countries to the ICRC and its Medical Personnel Section in 1959. A study-week was organised, jointly with the League, on behalf of the Matrons of the Parent Establishments (Mutterhäuser) of the German Red Cross. A very complete programme had been prepared which included lectures on the activities of the Red Cross, the Geneva Conventions and the responsibility of the Red Cross nurse.

War Disablement Section. This section continued during the past year the tasks described in the previous Annual Report ¹. It

¹ See pp. 39-40.

brought to conclusion the action undertaken in behalf of 107 Austrian children and young people injured by the explosion of war material. It also made available the last gift of invalid chairs for " Volksdeutsche " and other German refugees in the German Federal Republic.

The ICRC continued its relief action in behalf of war-disabled Algerian refugees in Morocco ; it sent to Lousteau Hospital and the Rehabilitation Centre in Oujda 42 artificial eyes and 25 pairs of crutches ; it also arranged for some persons who had suffered amputation to be fitted with artificial legs by an orthopaedic firm in Casablanca.

The International Committee continued to provide special treatment at the Geneva eye hospital for Italian children and youths whose eyesight is lost or seriously impaired. In 1959 six new patients came to Geneva for operations and care and ten former patients for checks and further treatment. This action, to which Professor A. Franceschetti, Member of the ICRC, gives his personal attention, is being continued.

During the year the War Disablement Section received several hundred individual appeals, to which it gave effect so far as it was possible in conjunction with National Red Cross Societies and institutions dealing with assistance to the handicapped.