

Training of medical personnel and assistance to war-disabled

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross**

Band (Jahr): **- (1960)**

PDF erstellt am: **27.05.2024**

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TRAINING OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND ASSISTANCE TO THE WAR-DISABLED

Article VI, para 5 of the statutes of the International Red Cross lies at the basis of all the activities of the Medical Personnel Section of the ICRC. It in fact stipulates that the ICRC, in the event of a conflict, should contribute " to the preparation and development of medical personnel and medical equipment, in co-operation with the Red Cross organizations, the medical services of the armed forces, and other competent authorities."

This section must therefore keep itself informed of all arrangements which have been taken in countries which have had great experience in the recruitment, training and the organization of professional and auxiliary medical personnel. It must also help countries which are in the process of development and which wish to train sufficient numbers of persons capable of serving in the event of war, civil war, internal disturbances or natural disasters. It is obvious that the ICRC should have a thorough knowledge of the situation in these countries, in order to be in a position to adapt the training of this personnel to their own particular case. The International Committee can keep itself informed of their needs and of the help which it can bring them through missions and by taking part in international nursing conferences.

The Medical Personnel Section carried out this programme during 1960. It obtained the necessary information through either the specialized institutions for training medical personnel such as the World Health Organization or through the International Council of Nurses (ICN).

The Head of the section, Miss A. Pfirter, continued throughout 1960 the series of missions which she had undertaken previously. In April, she went to Hungary, where she had discussions with the directors of the Hungarian Red Cross, in connection chiefly with the training of medical personnel.

In May she attended the Thirteenth World Health Assembly in Geneva and the eleventh course organized by the World Federation of United Nations Associations. Miss Pfirter also visited the Advanced School of Nursing of the Swiss Red Cross, where she spoke of the principles of the Red Cross, the Geneva Conventions and the

activities of the ICRC, as well as of the organization of voluntary medical personnel in the event of a conflict.

The Medical Personnel Section kept in close contact with the National Nursing Associations, to which it forwarded requests for information from nurses wishing to work abroad under the exchange scheme organized by the International Council of Nurses. The year was noted furthermore for the large number of visits made by nurses, either individually or in groups, from Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Oceania, who were interested in the activities of the Medical Personnel Section.

Finally, the Section maintained regular contact with the National Red Cross Societies with whom it exchanged documentation.

War Disablement Section. — This section continued in 1960 its action on behalf of the young Italian blind and of those whose eyesight was seriously impaired. Since the beginning of this action, 53 children and youths received treatment ; during the course of the year 7 new patients were treated and operated on in Geneva and four former patients returned to the ophthalmological clinic for checks or for new treatment.

Continuing its relief action for war-disabled Algerian refugees in Morocco, the ICRC despatched 25 pairs of crutches to Rabat, fitted eight persons who had suffered amputation with artificial legs and supplied orthopaedic shoes to 3 disabled persons. Furthermore, the ICRC equipped the artificial limb workshop, which has been recently established at Sarajevo, with machines and special tools for the manufacture of certain types of artificial limbs. It also made a gift of 100 Braille watches to the French Association of the Blind in Paris.

The War Disablement Section also received many other individual requests for relief. Since it was not in a position to comply with these, it has endeavoured to interest other relief organizations, National Red Cross Societies, specialized institutions and social services in the matter.