

Radiocommunications

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As the annals of ICRC actions, with news from many National Societies, reports on humanitarian work and meetings, book reviews and photographic illustrations, the review is a vivid, consistently topical periodical.

It continues to be a chronicle of major national and international events affecting the Red Cross movement. For instance, one long article reported on the International Red Cross meetings which took place in The Hague in September, quoting not only the opening speeches and the reports by the commissions, but also the most important resolutions adopted. The VIII Inter-American Red Cross Conference which took place in Bogota was also thoroughly analysed, as well as the seminars organized by the League in Latin America and East Africa.

One of the review's regular features is a country by country account of ICRC activities and missions in regions torn by war, e.g. the Middle East, the Yemen, Vietnam and Nigeria. It has devoted several articles giving details of interventions which the International Committee was called upon to carry out. A case in point was the ICRC's work in the Congo and Rwanda. These chronicles, bearing witness to the institution's determination to assist victims everywhere, are well illustrated and in most cases quote the appeals launched by the Red Cross in order to safeguard humanitarian principles.

6. RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS

Emergency radiocommunications.—Already in 1966 the ICRC had equipped its mobile medical teams in the Yemen with portable radios to enable them to maintain contact with each other and with HBC 88, the central station in Geneva. This network operated daily without failure throughout 1967. Radio contact was sometimes made as frequently as three times in a single day.

Since October 26, 1967, a new radio link has been maintained with the ICRC mission in Nigeria, through a relaying station on Fernando Po, which also helped in maintaining regular communication with the Yemen by relaying urgent messages when conditions

were particularly unsuitable for direct broadcasting between that country and Switzerland.

During the year some 800 radiograms, totalling over 60,000 words, were exchanged in about 650 operating hours. In addition, the ICRC operators spent 960 hours on maintenance and perfecting the station and mobile sets.

A high performance direction-finding aerial was erected, and will be brought into service early in 1968.

The Red Cross emergency radiocommunication service, set up by specialists combining professional competence with the enthusiasm and ingenuity of experienced amateurs, is an important feature in support and control wherever the essential, rapid, reliable and regular contact between ICRC missions and their base cannot otherwise be guaranteed. It is the only direct contact through which the ICRC can keep abreast of needs in the form of supplies and personnel and thus meet those needs immediately, thereby ensuring the efficiency of its field delegations.

Trial links with stations accredited by National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies were not developed to the extent which was desirable because, for one thing, of organizational problems facing National Societies and for another, due to the tight working schedule of HBC 88 operators. Some interesting trials did take place however, particularly with the Red Cross of the Philippines, and a programme was drawn up to continue and extend this aspect of co-operation between National Societies and the international institutions of the Red Cross in 1968.

However, development of the system is hampered by the difficulty of recruiting operators for the mobile transmitting units in various parts of the world. The qualifications required restrict the number of applicants and additional efforts will be necessary to ensure that the Red Cross has a reserve of specialists capable of ensuring, often under difficult conditions, the proper operation of the network as well as the setting up and repairing of units.

Trial broadcasts.—Eighteen of these were made during the year, through the kind intermediary of the Swiss Short Wave Service, in order to check reception on 7210 kilocycles (41.61 m. band) which

has been allocated to the ICRC for emergency broadcasting of family news received by the Central Tracing Agency.

These trial broadcasts were heard in 40 different countries; they brought in 2,098 reports from 892 correspondents, of which 17 were official stations. 146 listeners tuned in to every one of these broadcasts.
