

Telecommunication Service

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During 1971 the Sana'a rehabilitation centre, which was inaugurated in August 1970, pursued its twofold activity : the manufacture of protheses and ortheses and the training of Yemeni technicians.

By the end of the year, about 300 invalids had registered for a prothesis or orthesis. More than 170 protheses and ortheses were completed, and the disabled received physiotherapy treatment.

To ensure that the various tasks were successfully carried out, the ICRC maintained an orthopaedist and a physiotherapist in Sana'a.

Medical Personnel Section

The Medical Personnel Section answered numerous enquiries from nurses regarding employment, vocational training, in-service training, grants, recognition of foreign diplomas, applications to join ICRC missions. It maintained steady relations with the League's Nursing Bureau, the International Council of Nurses, the nursing bureaux of National Societies and national associations of nurses. In the course of her various missions, Miss Pfirter visited the Lebanese Red Cross, the Red Crescent Societies of Jordan, Kuwait, the Yemen Arab Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (in the process of being formed), and the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society, to acquaint herself with the Societies' different activities and to address them on the ICRC and the Geneva Conventions.

Publications : By the end of 1971, the brochure " The Rights and Duties of Nurses as defined by the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 " had appeared in eleven languages. Apart from the English, French, German and Spanish editions published by the ICRC, the National Societies of the following countries had had it translated into the language of the country : Belgium (Flemish), Czechoslovakia, Italy, Republic of Korea, Finland, Norway and Greece. The translation into Arabic was carried out by the Lebanese Red Cross, which undertook to disseminate that edition in the countries of the Middle East.

Telecommunication Service

On 29 March 1971, the ICRC and the League sent all National Societies a joint memorandum on Red Cross radio-communication and

on the setting up of a national and international emergency network. National Societies were asked to consider the feasibility of establishing an internal radio network and securing permission to operate radio links with other Red Cross bodies. The National Societies of the following thirteen countries obtained a radio designator with authorization to use ICRC frequencies where necessary : Ecuador, Honduras, Jordan, Khmer Republic, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Spain, Syria, Thailand, Venezuela and the Yemen Arab Republic.

In November 1970, the ICRC had applied to the Director of Telecommunications and the General Directorate of the GPO in Berne for a special permit to train radio operators who were members of the " International Missions Group " (IMG) and who would be available to be sent on mission within 48 hours in cases of conflict. The permit was issued on 1 March 1971, and the Telecommunication Service organized weekly half-hour transmission training, which ended in December 1971 owing to the outbreak of the conflict on the Asian subcontinent.

The activities of the ICRC Telecommunication Service increased in 1971.

Main station in Geneva (HBC-88) : The Telecommunication Service has two main stations in Geneva. One, inaugurated in 1964, has two radio ham-type transmitter-receivers. They are still in perfect working condition but cannot provide a round-the-clock service. The other, installed at the end of 1969, is fitted out with commercial equipment that can offer a 24-hour service. In 1971, it was completed by a 1-kW fully automatic RF-201/102 transmitter-receiver. Messages can be sent by radio-telegraphy, radio-telephony or radio-teleprinting, on frequencies ranging from 2 to 30 megacycles.

Moreover, the proposed transfer of the radio station is under way. The State of Geneva has given the ICRC a plot of land in the Commune of Versoix, for a period of twenty years as from 1 July 1971. The transfer, which will take place in 1972, will allow a distinct improvement in traffic conditions and eliminate the disturbances felt at ICRC headquarters owing to the electromagnetic field produced by the antennas installed on the building.

During 1971, the ICRC kept or installed radio stations in the following ten countries :

Yemen Arab Republic : Daily radio contact was maintained with the ICRC delegation in Sana'a by radio-telephony.

Jordan, Lebanon and Syria : The radio links set up between Amman, Beirut and Damascus at the end of 1970 continued to operate normally. Messages in this area are centralized in Amman through a radio-communication link which the delegates themselves operate by radio-telephony. A radio operator sent to Amman ensured the maintenance of the network, and the Amman-Geneva link is continuing to operate by radio-telegraphy, although it could certainly also operate by radio-telephony.

Venezuela : A radio station was installed at the Caracas seat of the ICRC delegation, and the first contact with Geneva took place on 8 August 1971.

Bolivia : During the ICRC operation in Bolivia, a radio station which a delegate had brought to La Paz was installed in the home of an amateur radio operator in that town. On the basis of the memorandum¹, he received a special permit from the Bolivian Government to make his antennae available to the ICRC delegates for their contacts with Geneva.

Ecuador : When the ICRC Regional Delegate was in Quito, another radio "ham" gave his services and was able to contact Geneva several times.

Pakistan, India and Bangladesh : Following the outbreak of the conflict in the Asian sub-continent, in December, the ICRC sent three radio operators out. The first radio link with the DC-6 made available to the ICRC by the Swiss Confederation took place on 27 December. The Islamabad and Dacca stations established contact with Geneva on 26 and 31 December respectively.

Altogether, the ICRC's station HBC-88 and the field stations exchanged 3,100 radiograms, totalling some 142,000 words. Radio-telephonic links between Caracas, La Paz and Guayaquil occupied 2,150 minutes. Lastly, Amman, Beirut and Damascus held some 2,700 radio-telephone conversations.

¹ See p. 60.