

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

Norway

The periodical *Over alle grenser*, published by the Norwegian Red Cross, contained recently an article, a lengthy extract of which we print here. It describes how first-aiders in Norway work in most arduous conditions, always ready to go to the assistance of people in distress and accomplishing, under the sign of the red cross, their life-saving humanitarian task.

“ There goes the *Samaritan* ! ” exclaimed one of the men sheltering from the storm as he watched the raging waves. “ They’re crazy, those Alviks ! ”

He was referring to the daring of the two Alviks, father and son, for all those who know them—and who does not, in this place?—know full well, too, the boldness and resoluteness that one should have in order to venture out in such heavy seas.

For the twenty years that Gustav and Harald Alvik have been sailing their boat, no harm has befallen them. Every time they receive a call, their sturdy *Samaritan* is always ready to set sail, at all hours and in all seas. That is the main reason why this fine lifeboat has still remained in existence; it is in fact a floating ambulance, put into service after the end of the war by the First Aid Section of the Aalesund Red Cross. That is also why, although circumstances have changed in the last twenty years and although it is not called out as often as before, people are reluctant to put it out of commission.

The First Aid Section is obliged to make appeals to the public purse as well as to private persons for aid towards the upkeep of the *Samaritan*. Several formerly remote places which used to be connected with the mainland by the milk-boat are now visited regularly by a ferry-boat service which can, when needful, carry the sick to the hospital at Aalesund. Some districts which used to be visited by the Alviks’ boat possess today their own ambulance launch, while in an emergency, airplanes and helicopters may now be called upon.

Red Cross first-aiders, however, would very much like to keep the *Samaritan* going as long as there might be a need for it. The small boat continues every year to make a great number of runs to carry sick or casualty cases. Moreover, and that is an essential point, everyone in that area knows that those whose mission it is to carry out rescue work may be called night or day, in calm weather or in gales, may it be even Christmas Eve.

Helicopters and planes have all the same their own shortcomings: they cannot fly in bad weather or after nightfall. The ferries, too, ply according to fixed timetables and, at night, their crews are not available. In any case, it is so much easier to phone through to the Alviks; they, at least, are sure to put out to sea!

In an area such as Sunnmoere, where the largest fishing fleet in Norway is to be found, with rich fishing grounds only a few hours from the coast, accidents sometimes occur, and casualties must be quickly transported to hospital. The *Samaritan* renders immense service by sailing out to meet the ships, take off casualties and swiftly bring them back to the coast. It is often called for, too, when trawlers or coastal cargo ships have one of their men sick on board.

It was after the war ended that the First Aid Section decided to organize this service, as it was essential to have on hand a specially constructed vessel, fitted with stretchers and carrying equipment for providing first aid at sea. It proved to be highly useful in particular when a terrible landslide occurred in Saeboe Fjord and the hamlet of Risengrenda and outlying houses were completely buried beneath the mass of snow and earth. The Aalesund first-aiders rushed to the rescue aboard the *Samaritan* and succeeded, with the help of a relief team from Volda, to dig out all those who had been trapped. No further assistance was required. It is clear that this emergency service is an important safety factor for the inhabitants of the off-shore islands where conditions are often extremely harsh.

One could write a whole book on the adventures of the crew of the *Samaritan*. There was, for instance, that pitch-dark night when, navigating by watch and compass, they transported to the hospital at Aalesund in the nick of time a woman about to give birth to a baby; but there were also at least fifteen different occa-

sions when a mother was actually delivered of her child on board the boat, with the crew, turned into midwives, giving a hand; at other times relief supplies were carried to families in the remotest spots under the most frightful weather conditions. . .

New Look for two Red Cross Magazines

The German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany and the British Red Cross Society each publish a monthly magazine. Both publications are lavishly illustrated and always contain articles of a topical interest as well as commentaries on important subjects of the day. From January 1972, both these journals will be coming out under a new appearance. While that of the German Red Cross has kept its old name, *Deutsches Rotes Kreuz*, the British Red Cross has given its journal a different title, *Crosstalk*, and a new front cover. The first issue of *Crosstalk* carries an editorial by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the British Red Cross Society, in which he explains that the first objective is to bring members closer to one another and also to the people around them. Members should be better informed about their National Society's rôle in the changing social scene, so that they might be able to see their own work in a wider context and to act, so to speak, as living witnesses to the purposes and actions of the Society.

The journal of the German Red Cross now appears in a more compact format, and its readers, too, are urged to send in suggestions as to the content and appearance of the new edition, the first issue of which opens with an extensive general survey by the National Society's president.

Our best wishes are extended to the editors of both these magazines for success in their new venture.