

United States

The American Red Cross has submitted its annual report for the period June 1959—June 1960 to the ICRC, so that we can offer our readers a survey of the numerous and effective activities of this National Society.

In their introductory message to the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman and the President of the American Red Cross observe, among other things, that “ the services performed in the past year justify a sense of increased confidence in the resilient strength of the American Red Cross for serving the people of our country and for responding to calls for help from other parts of the world.” The message refers to the work of adapting programmes to the ever-changing circumstances, which demand ever-new working methods, especially in “the co-ordination of voluntary resources and the grouping of chapters”.

The report opens with the services rendered to the armed forces and veterans. “ The Red Cross is a messenger between the men and women of the armed forces, whose units are broadly scattered around the world ”.¹ Thus, in the first place, the activity of the Red Cross consists in transmitting messages (over a million were carried last year, bringing both joyful and sorrowful news, but all invaluable for the families concerned). In addition, staff especially assigned to this work, lend a helping hand in solving family problems and, if necessary, providing material aid in the form of loans and grants to enable families to meet various economic difficulties.

This staff is also responsible for the traditional Red Cross programme. Assisted by thousands of trained volunteers, especially overseas, they care for the sick and wounded, as well as for mothers and children, so that the standard of health in the American communities abroad is kept at the same level as at home. In addition, a recreation programme, which is carried out each year at the request of the Department of Defense, was successfully continued in North Africa and Europe. The Red Cross centres in certain towns in Morocco and France promote friendly contacts between servicemen and the local inhabitants in order to increase

¹ *Annual Report for the Year ended June 30, 1960*, Washington.

mutual understanding. In Korea also a special recreation programme was prepared and carried out.

All these activities organized by the Home Service and the Overseas Recreation Department are essential to fulfil the Red Cross purpose of acting "in accord with the military authorities". A few figures will illustrate the extent of this work: during the year under review, 12,000 volunteers gave about 83,000 hours of service per month in the field of social welfare and recreation work in the hundred Army, Navy and Air Force hospitals.

A further important and often touching activity is that of providing relief in the case of natural disasters. Thus, within the United States, from Maine to Alaska and Hawai, the Red Cross participated in 325 relief operations during the year, bringing help to the victims of all types of natural disasters. Working in co-operation with community leaders and governmental agencies, and seconded by the different "chapters"—for drawing up and carrying out emergency plans—the Red Cross was able to come to the aid of those who had been forced to leave their homes and had lost all their belongings.

Internationally, the Disaster Services showed their flexibility, co-operating quickly and efficiently in relief operations on behalf of the victims of catastrophes, the most important being that in Chile. The American Red Cross worked in close co-operation with other organizations. A team was dispatched to assist the Chilean Red Cross and the authorities in administering relief to the 50,000 homeless persons. This aid was made possible by the generous contributions of the American people whose gifts in cash and in kind amounted to \$4,500,000, of which \$2,135,900 were distributed through the Red Cross.

We are going into this relief operation in more detail because we consider it to be a typical example of what can be achieved with a feeling of solidarity and strong discipline in an action carried out with a view to readaptation and providing for the future: the construction of villages on the island of Chiloe and in selected rural areas in Southern Chile, totalling 400 houses; the purchase of equipment and machinery to carry out the building project, and household furnishings for houses completed; filling 100,000 Christmas packages; assembling 150 school assistance sets

and 100 kindergarten sets; purchasing tools, sewing machines and other equipment for vocational schools; establishing youth rooms for activities in Red Cross "chapter" buildings; and planning financial grants to students hit by disaster losses to enable them to complete their education.

As the year ended, other projects were still under study. But apart from Chile, other countries have also been assisted by the American Red Cross: aid to 10,000 Moroccans paralyzed after eating adulterated cooking oil; Agadir, Cyprus, Formosa, Austria, Greece, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Libya, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines and Tunisia: the American Red Cross stepped in to help in all these countries.

Still in the field of international aid, it should be pointed out that this National Society co-operated in tracing missing persons and participated in the first internal study centre organized by the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva. Moreover, study programmes were arranged in this country for 31 National Societies; technical advice was given to other Societies on blood, nursing and disaster relief programmes. Adult and junior members of this Society and the Red Cross of various countries established personal contacts through exchange programmes, thus strengthening the ties between the Societies for the benefit of their common work.

The Nursing Services have put particular emphasis this year on the care for the aged; special courses were organized, designed to help men and women maintain good physical and mental health in their later years. These Nursing Services also went to work wherever a dangerous situation threatened, using jeeps, weasels, helicopters and other means of transport to reach the most distant localities in a minimum of time. Thus, the use of the most up-to-date means of transport is a further example of the efforts of the Red Cross to adapt itself to any conditions it might have to face.

In conclusion, we quote a few figures which will give an idea of the extent of the work being performed by the American Red Cross: 2 million men and women give their time, as voluntary helpers, while the Society has 12,900 paid employees (3,700 in the national organization and 9,200 in the 3655 chapters—which also include 2840 sub-chapters). The total annual income for the

period under review reached over 95 million dollars, while expenditures reached almost 87 million dollars, which included the expenses of : disaster services, blood services, educational programmes, international aid, information and health and nursing services.

There is still a great deal to be said concerning the activities of this National Society and the alert and dynamic spirit of its Juniors ; with remarkable energy it extends its closely-welded network over the entire country : volunteers, nurses, " grey ladies ", members of the Junior Red Cross, all have their own programmes which they carry out enthusiastically in the knowledge that the best of oneself is the part that one gives for others. This " giving of oneself " which we find in the National Societies is one of the most important characteristics of the spirit of our movement.
