

CUBA

During his last visit to Cuba, in February of this year, Mr. S. Nessi, ICRC Delegate General, asked the Cuban Red Cross for information about its activities. The National Society has accordingly been kind enough to prepare a memorandum for the ICRC, extracts of which we summarize below, to acquaint our readers with the many and varied activities, carried out with great efficiency, by the Cuban Society.

Relief in the event of disasters and other emergency situations

The Red Cross assumes responsibility for the work of medical brigades which go to the aid of the victims, with all the resources at their disposal. It co-ordinates the various national activities in such circumstances. It provides its assistance both inside the country and abroad, when disasters occur in Cuba or in other parts of the world.

Other national responsibilities

It co-operates in carrying out public health projects.

It provides transport for the sick and injured, being charged with this responsibility by the State, with equipment supplied by the State. This service is free and is for everyone. The personnel is specially trained to administer first aid.

A marine security and rescue service is at work on the beaches, in children's holiday camps and at swimming pools. Due to the steady increase in the number of recreation centres, it was necessary to provide a corresponding increase in the resources for action, employing the most modern life-saving techniques. All the personnel assigned to this Service are highly trained in first aid, enabling them to deal immediately with any crisis.

Courses are organized for this purpose, with the scientific and technical assistance of the Ministry of Public Health and the co-operation

of doctors, nurses, nursing assistants and other members of services concerned with public health.

In Cuba, commercial trade in human blood has been completely suppressed. The needs for blood throughout the country are met by voluntary donors, recruited by trade unions and mass organizations and also through campaigns undertaken by specialized organizations, including the Cuban Red Cross.

Work in preventive medicine and vaccination campaigns is carried out in both rural and urban areas.

One of the most spectacular successes of the mass vaccination campaigns directed by the Ministry of Health with the co-operation of Red Cross medical brigades, was the eradication of poliomyelitis. Every child under the age of nine years has been vaccinated. Likewise, the struggle against malaria has been so successful that according to qualified international organizations the disease has been wiped out in Cuba.

Aid is given to persons injured in natural disasters and accidents.

Assistance is provided in homes for the aged, in health centres, maternity centres, etc.

First aid workers are present at national and international sports events.

Medical assistance is given to industrial and agricultural workers. First aid and health workers of the Cuban Red Cross take an active part in this work.

Special attention should be drawn to the work carried out in this connection by the first aid and health workers of the Cuban Red Cross in putting into effect the plans for agriculture. They carry on their work in the sugar refineries, in co-operation with Public Health doctors and other specialists. They provide effective preventive action, devoting themselves to the health of the workers and to hygienic conditions in the production centres and the living quarters of the agricultural personnel. Every year, 7,000 members of the Red Cross health services are at work in this connection. They also organize meetings and film shows, and give advice to injured or sick workers.

Nursing

Co-ordination in nursing care has been arranged between the health brigades of the Red Cross and other health workers in order to develop particular activities, such as home care, health education, care for premature infants, etc. In addition, as part of the programme for nursing study, first aid courses have been instituted, enabling the graduating students to become teachers in the Red Cross health brigades.

Social services

The work of the National Society includes the following: help in carrying out the programme against tuberculosis and other diseases of the respiratory tract, along with vaccination campaigns; overseeing the hygienic aspects of working conditions in agricultural centres and industrial plants; making sure that people use medicines correctly, and informing them on how to prevent illness; help in the social rehabilitation of poor people—along with other major activities in the field of social services.

Youth activities

The Junior Red Cross has encouraged the formation of health brigades by young people and students. Co-ordinating its activities with those of the Ministry of Education and of mass organizations, it pursues such objectives as: training in first aid, prevention of accidents and contagious diseases, carrying out community programmes for home care, participation in Red Cross study centres, organization of first aid services in schools by properly trained members of the health brigades.

Diffusion of the Geneva Conventions

As part of its information material, the Cuban Red Cross has included documentation designed to spread awareness of the Geneva Conventions and Red Cross principles. It arranges the diffusion of this information through seminars, courses and study groups for its personnel.
