

“ Whilst the qualified nurse graduates after three years' training at any of the 33 schools recognized by the Swiss Red Cross, these practical nurses acquire their certificate after 18 months, that is in half the time. As a result, they may not administer actual treatment, such as injections, catheterism, etc. To quote the directives of the Swiss Red Cross : *Under supervision by a qualified nurse, the practical nurses take care of the chronically sick in institutions and hospitals ; without supervision they look after adults and children in need of attention but not of nursing care ; they will be entrusted with responsibilities in homes for the elderly, the convalescent, the disabled and other establishments ; they assist the nurses in hospitals ; in the general hospital they form part of the nursing team and work under the control of a qualified nurse ”.*

As can be seen, the practical nurse may really become a key worker capable of seconding the nurse and even of acting as her stand-in when the care required does not necessarily call for a qualified nurse.

Even before the roof goes on, the Neuchâtel school for practical nurses is already planning the training of the first group of candidates and is recruiting talent among the nursing aids working in the Chaux-de-Fonds hospital. Nearly every hospital has such nursing aids on its staff. They are young women who handle the menial chores, many of whom carry on their work year after year without any “ trade ” or recognized professional status. The chance of becoming a practical nurse, with a certificate issued by the Red Cross, ought to encourage these young women to undergo the necessary systematic training, especially as there is no maximum age limit restricting application.

Venezuela

It is always useful for a National Society to hold meetings of delegates of regional committees both for information purposes and for working parties. The great extent of the national territory,

particularly in the majority of the Latin American countries, does not however allow these to be arranged frequently.

The Venezuelan Red Cross in its interesting and well presented review entitled *Cruz Roja venezolana* (No. 162), gives detailed information on its Fourth National Convention which took place in Caracas in November 1963. The Government, which never fails to display its interest in the activities of the National Society, was represented in the plenary sessions by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and by the Governor of the Federal Capital district. Four commissions were constituted for the examination of the various items on the agenda, in particular the revision of the Red Cross bye-laws, the financing of Red Cross hospitals and the organization of regional sections in order to enable the Society to be represented and active throughout the whole country.

One of the oldest and most moving activities of the Venezuelan Red Cross is the operation of a children's home, which has just celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. The ICRC delegate for Latin America, Mr. Jequier, paid a visit to this home during his last mission to Venezuela. He reported on it to Geneva and particularly emphasized the great service performed by this work. Our readers will be interested in the report published by the Venezuelan Red Cross and which is reproduced below as submitted to the National Convention.

The children's home, "Concepción Palacios", is a modern building in Caracas, specially designed and surrounded by gardens.

This institution was founded thirty years ago. It is a home for 100 children under school age. Nearly 7000 boys and girls have each spent three months there. Their parents were facing social problems, one of the main causes being the mothers' entering hospital or the maternity ward.

The social service department of the Red Cross makes a thorough study of each case and on being admitted each child is given a complete medical check-up.

Each morning they put into practice the rules of hygiene and mutual assistance which have been taught even to the youngest. They then go to the dining room for a hearty breakfast with student nurses in attendance to ensure that the children who need take their

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vitamins or medicines. Then, they gather in a large room with their nursery teachers who read to them, after which the children practice drawing or handwork. Then comes bathing time under the supervision of a nurse who is there to look after the health of the children.

Lunch follows. The diet is varied and nutritious, having been worked out by the National Food Institute. The meals are served at fixed times so that the children may become accustomed to regular feeding habits. Lunch is followed by a rest period, although the older children may go to the nursery where a teacher endeavours to educate them and develop their faculties, their abilities, etc. by guiding their energies in all kinds of activities.

Time then for recreation in the gardens, where they amuse themselves on swings and in other ways until a bell sounds the hour of the evening meal. The children return to the dining room and after their meal they watch the children's programmes on the television before going to bed under the supervision of the head nurse.

Originally, "Concepción Palacios", founded in 1931 by the Venezuelan Red Cross, included a children's dispensary where they could be medically examined. In 1933 the first babies' home was inaugurated and in 1936 this was transferred to one of the annexes of the "Carlos J. Bello" hospital where infants could also have a play-room. In 1940, thanks to generous donations, the "Concepción Palacios" was able to acquire larger grounds. The National Red Cross undertook the construction of a building which was to cost over a million bolivars and was inaugurated in 1959.