

NEWS OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

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Argentine

The review Cruz Roja Argentina (Buenos Aires, 1962, No. 386) has published an article entitled "The Argentine Red Cross and Disasters", by Dr. Francisco J. Martone, President of the National Red Cross, which explains in an original manner how a National Red Cross can act in the event of disasters. These problems are important and it gives us pleasure to reproduce Dr. Martone's article :

The Argentine Red Cross, faithful to a resolution of the IInd Conference of Berlin in 1869 stating in particular that the activities of Relief Societies in time of peace are necessary for the vigorous development of the Societies and the supplying of aid and relief in the calamities which can strike countries in peacetime, is ideal for the preparation of their action in time of war, seeks to put it into practice by every possible means, similarly to its sister Societies. In the same way, taking its inspiration from the resolutions of the Conferences of Geneva in 1884 (Resolution VII), St. Petersburg in 1902 (Resolution XII) and Geneva in 1923, it has created a relief bureau which possesses sections in its various provincial branches which are genuine "regional or local committees".

Heedful of the resolutions of the General Council and of the work of the League and the International Committee, it coordinates its assistance efforts in the event of national or international disasters so as to give aid along the lines prescribed, in fulfilment of the resolutions of the 1934 Tokyo Conference, of the Board of Governors of 1936, 1946 and 1950 and of those passed in Stockholm in 1948.

At home, it brings aid according to its means, helping those in failing health to take their place in society, since it is well aware that medicine today has become "reconstructive" and social. Moreover, it considers that each individual should bring a personal element to his action and contribute by his own effort to defend

what is a legitimate right, the right to health and mutual well-being. It is during great disasters that the Society's auxiliary service intervenes but it is, of course, always standing ready to face its tasks calmly and without need of improvisation.

The plan of action is as follows :

The Argentine Red Cross possesses a General Directorate for emergency and medical assistance, which can be considered as a command unit whose orders are carried out in each provincial branch and which acts in the event of public calamity (disasters, earthquakes, floods, cataclysms, fire, land-slides, etc.). To give warning either of great events which might endanger human life or of serious disasters (protection against radiation, contamination of every description, rescue work, removal of debris, excavations, guard against theft, civil defence against noxious or dangerous substances, transport of wounded, resuscitation, nursing, etc.) and taking into account the fact that the effectiveness of the relief depends on the promptness with which the alarm is given and on the immediate broadcasting of a state of alert to first-aid workers, of the rapid, sufficient and effective use of the means available and of the co-ordinated organisation of forces, the Argentine Red Cross has drawn up the following programme :

1. Adoption of the initials A.M.E. (Auxilio Medico Emergencia).
2. Co-ordination of all existing means, public or private, in a community, province or nation.
3. Co-ordination as far as possible between nations, so that they are ready for the creation of regional centres capable of acting rapidly at the outbreak of disasters, on an international level.
4. Appointment, in each regional centre, of people (emergency assistance committee) who endeavour to form teams of a permanent character (doctors, first-aiders, etc.). They must have the necessary equipment available, direct the work which circumstances require, while trying to maintain at all times the best possible liaison with the Government authorities, the League, the ICRC and other private institutions.

Action must be taken in various fields and in agreement with the different public and private services :

- a) *Telecommunications* : Press, radio, television.
- b) *Relief and rescue* : Fire service.
- c) *Work and transport* : Ministry of Public Works, Mines, Highways, Army (engineers). National health organisations, State Electricity and Gas.
- d) *Police and traffic control* : Federal and Provincial Police, National Constabulary, Traffic Police, Railway Services, Private Transport (voluntary), Private Aviation, Automobile Club, Touring Club, Undertakers.
- e) *Medical and relief assistance* : Health Service (on the municipal, provincial and national levels). Close relations with the League Relief Bureau and the National Red Cross Societies.
- f) *Sea and river police* : Department of the Navy, National Maritime Prefecture, Coastguards, etc.

In this respect, and with the sister Societies of the American continent in mind, the Argentine Red Cross has expressed the following wishes :

1. That all Red Cross Societies on the American continent co-ordinate their forces to ensure unity of action with regard to relief in each zone.
2. That each National Red Cross Society and the persons who direct the emergency or relief assistance services co-operate with the public and private authorities and ensure the unity of command and action, the latter being decentralised.
3. That in each National Society a commission responsible for emergency assistance be appointed, whose members must endeavour to form permanent relief teams capable of acting rapidly and effectively. A " medical depot " must be organised for the necessary equipment.
4. That each Red Cross, as part of its emergency or relief actions, ensure the formation of brigades upon which it can call in the event of disasters of every description.