

# THE SPLENDID WORK OF THE HUNGARIAN RED CROSS

BY

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In peace and war alike, the Hungarian Red Cross, as a member of the International Red Cross organization, takes its full share of the great philanthropic work so important to the world today. The Red Cross organizations of the belligerent States are self-sacrificingly engaged in works of charity and mercy in the war-stricken parts of Europe. Meanwhile, in one quiet corner of the Continent, the Hungarian Red Cross is doing its duty with the same devotion as that exhibited by the Red Cross organizations of the countries at war.

It may be said that *the Red Cross in Hungary has the support of the entire population*, whose aid it can rely on in its work. The various Hungarian social organizations cooperate with it, and their united strength makes it easier to cope with greater efficiency and assurance of success with the ever harder and greater tasks devolving upon it. In particular, close co-operation exists between the Red Cross and such associations as the *General Alliance of Retired Army Officers*, the *General Hungarian Firemen's Association*, the *General Municipal and County Ambulance Society*, the *Anti-Aircraft League* and the *Boy Scouts*, but, as already stated, it has the support of the entire population as well, even of the Hungarians who have drifted to America.

*In peace times one of the most important tasks of the Red Cross is to nurse the sick and succour the indigent. In the towns and villages it maintains hospitals and trains nurses, who not only attend the sick, but also visit the poor and needy. In 1940 there were 349 professional nurses working in the hospitals belonging to the Red Cross, but more important by far than that number is the fact that there are 2609 trained volunteers ready to respond to the call of the Red*

Cross when it has need of them. Great care is also being devoted to *the nursing of the sick at home*, and courses of training in that branch of sick-nursing have been attended by no fewer than 19,590 Hungarian women, who, should necessity arise, may be counted upon to make efficient nurses. The work of training hospital and visiting nurses is going on constantly; there are about 40 courses in progress every month.

But the nursing of the sick is not the only task undertaken by the Red Cross; it is also busily at work in every sphere of life where help is required. The speeding up of modern life is responsible for an increasing number of accidents, and this makes the establishment of first-aid stations supplied with all necessaries at various points on the high-roads, of very great importance. In 1940, 928 such first-aid stations were established. Their maintenance entails a very great financial sacrifice; yet it would be necessary to increase their number. The difficulty for the moment has been overcome by giving roadmen training in first-aid and supplying them with portable medicine-chests. Last year 564 roadmen were taught how to render first-aid. On the rivers, 29 first-aid stations have been set up, and motor lifeboats patrol the water on the watch for accidents, ready to hasten to the assistance of people in danger. Besides this, there are 23 alarm stations that sound a warning to boaters when a storm threatens. Last year a new department was added to the Red Cross: *an aerial ambulance department*. This proved necessary owing to the disastrous floods of that year, which cut off farms and even whole villages from the outside world. In cases of that sort supplies of medicine, food and clothing for the stricken population of the inundated areas were transported by aeroplane.

Important social work is being done by the Red Cross among the urban and village poor. The Red Cross plays a major rôle in the administration of *the charity work inaugurated by Madame Horthy*, the biggest scheme in the country for aiding the destitute. It is the Red Cross that distributes the gifts collected to those in need of them. Its members visit hospitals and look after the welfare of vagrants confined in detention barracks. *It establishes*

*libraries among the poorest and most neglected classes in the slums, gives legal and medical advice, organizes excursions and holidays for poor children, advises young people what jobs to choose, arranges story-telling afternoons for little children, and maintains infant schools where mothers obliged to go out to work may safely leave their little ones. For adolescents it has opened an office caring for the welfare of trade apprentices. It gives advice to, and provides work for, youths from the country, who often feel lost and lonely in town. It does all it can to prepare young people for practical life. It maintains courses for young agricultural labourers, and finds places in homes for apprentices, for young boys learning their trades. It provides the young people attending the courses with breakfast and dinner. It has created a Red Cross youth organization, boasting today of 3.259 groups with 117.513 members. The members of that youth organization do volunteer work, and play their part in the great tasks imposed on the Red Cross by special circumstances. Last year 529 youth groups assisted in the work of rescuing the victims of the disastrous floods, and later on helped to rebuild the houses that had been destroyed by the water.*

The care of the Polish refugees confronted the Red Cross with a difficult task. *Several thousand Poles were taken under its wing; those placed in camps were provided with medicine, food and clothing, and everything was done to ameliorate their lot. With the co-operation of the international Red Cross organizations many thousands of Polish refugees were able to establish contact with their families. The personal data of about 50.000 Poles were recorded and sent to the international headquarters of the Red Cross in Geneva, in order that fathers, mothers and children who had been separated and had drifted to different countries might be able to find one another again in the midst of the international upheaval.*

Similarly difficult tasks were laid upon the Red Cross after the restoration of parts of Hungary in 1939 and 1940. In both cases *tens of thousands of refugees driven out of their native land had to be cared for. The number of refugees from Slovakia and Rumania exceeded 100.000. Their care*

imposed a task of gigantic magnitude upon the Red Cross; and what made it harder was the unsympathizing attitude of the Rumanian and Slovak authorities, who, far from assisting the Red Cross, hindered it in its humane endeavours to let the relations of the refugees know what had become of the latter.

Last year the Red Cross made a collection of medicines and bandages for our Finnish brethren in their heroic struggle for freedom. It also opened depots at the big railway stations to aid the Germans who were being repatriated from Bessarabia. There the latter received warm food, and those who were ill were attended to.

The above is merely a brief and sketchy description of the self-sacrificing work being done by the Hungarian Red Cross. No article could give a full account of the activities of this splendid organization; to do so would require volumes. In the past the Hungarian Red Cross has always been at hand where help was required, and in future it will also always be where deeds of mercy and human charity are needed.

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